

Table of Contents

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2. Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, edited by Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon, 1980).
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intellectual operations nor yet effects of intellectual operations. Intelligent practice is not a step-child of theory. On the contrary theorising is one practice amongst others and is itself intelligently or stupidly conducted.

There is another reason why it is important to correct from the start the intellectualist doctrine which tries to define intelligence in terms of the apprehension of truths, instead of the apprehension of truths in terms of intelligence. Theorising is an activity which most people can and normally do conduct in silence. They articulate in sentences the theories that they construct, but they do not most of the time speak these sentences out loud. They say them to themselves. Or they formulate their thoughts in diagrams and pictures, but they do not always set these out on paper. They 'see them in their minds' eyes'. Much of our ordinary thinking is conducted in internal monologue or silent soliloquy, usually accompanied by an internal cinematograph-show of visual imagery.

This trick of talking to oneself in silence is acquired neither quickly nor without effort; and it is a necessary condition of our acquiring it that we should have previously learned to talk intelligently aloud and have heard and understood other people doing so. Keeping our thoughts to ourselves is a sophisticated accomplishment. It was not until the Middle Ages that people learned to read without reading aloud. Similarly a boy has to learn to read aloud before he learns to read under his breath, and to prattle aloud before he prattles to himself. Yet many theorists have supposed that the silence in which most of us have learned to think is a defining property of thought. Plato said that in thinking the soul is talking to itself. But silence, though often convenient, is inessential, as is the restriction of the audience to one recipient.

The combination of the two assumptions that theorising is the primary activity of minds and that theorising is intrinsically a private, silent or internal operation remains one of the main supports of the dogma of the ghost in the machine. People tend to identify their minds with the 'place' where they conduct their secret thoughts. They even come to suppose that there is a special mystery about how we publish our thoughts instead of realising that we employ a special artifice to keep them to ourselves.

(3) KNOWING HOW AND KNOWING THAT

When a person is described by one or other of the intelligence-epithets such as 'shrewd' or 'silly', 'prudent' or 'imprudent', the description

imputes to him not the knowledge, or ignorance, of this or that truth, but the ability, or inability, to do certain sorts of things. Theorists have been so preoccupied with the task of investigating the nature, the source and the credentials of the theories that we adopt that they have for the most part ignored the question what it is for someone to know how to perform tasks. In ordinary life, on the contrary, as well as in the special business of teaching, we are much more concerned with people's competences than with their cognitive repertoires, with the operations than with the truths that they learn. Indeed even when we are concerned with their intellectual excellences and deficiencies, we are interested less in the stocks of truths that they acquire and retain than in their capacities to find out truths for themselves and their ability to organise and exploit them, when discovered. Often we deplore a person's ignorance of some fact only because we deplore the stupidity of which his ignorance is a consequence.

There are certain parallelisms between knowing *how* and knowing *that*, as well as certain divergences. We speak of learning how to play an instrument as well as of learning that something is the case; of finding out how to prune trees as well as of finding out that the Romans had a camp in a certain place; of forgetting how to tie a reef-knot as well as of forgetting that the German for 'knife' is 'Messer'. We can wonder *how* as well as wonder *whether*.

On the other hand we never speak of a person believing or opining *how*, and though it is proper to ask for the grounds or reasons for someone's acceptance of a proposition, this question cannot be asked of someone's skill at cards or prudence in investments.

What is involved in our descriptions of people as knowing how to make and appreciate jokes, to talk grammatically, to play chess, to fish, or to argue? Part of what is meant is that, when they perform these operations, they tend to perform them well, i.e. correctly or efficiently or successfully. Their performances come up to certain standards, or satisfy certain criteria. But this is not enough. The well-regulated clock keeps good time and the well-drilled circus seal performs its tricks flawlessly, yet we do not call them 'intelligent'. We reserve this title for the persons responsible for their performances. To be intelligent is not merely to satisfy criteria, but to apply them; to regulate one's actions and not merely to be well-regulated. A person's performance is described as careful or skilful, if in his operations he is ready to detect and correct lapses, to repeat and improve upon successes, to profit from the examples of others and so forth. He applies criteria in performing critically, that is, in trying to get things right.

This point is commonly expressed in the vernacular by saying that an action exhibits intelligence, if, and only if, the agent is thinking what he is doing while he is doing it, and thinking what he is doing in such a manner that he would not do the action so well if he were not thinking what he is doing. This popular idiom is sometimes appealed to as evidence in favour of the intellectualist legend. Champions of this legend are apt to try to reassimilate knowing *how* to knowing *that* by arguing that intelligent performance involves the observance of rules, or the application of criteria. It follows that the operation which is characterised as intelligent must be preceded by an intellectual acknowledgment of these rules or criteria; that is, the agent must first go through the internal process of avowing to himself certain propositions about what is to be done ('maxims', 'imperatives' or 'regulative propositions' as they are sometimes called); only then can he execute his performance in accordance with those dictates. He must preach to himself before he can practice. The chef must recite his recipes to himself before he can cook according to them; the hero must lend his inner ear to some appropriate moral imperative before swimming out to save the drowning man; the chess-player must run over in his head all the relevant rules and tactical maxims of the game before he can make correct and skilful moves. To do something thinking what one is doing is, according to this legend, always to do two things; namely, to consider certain appropriate propositions, or prescriptions, and to put into practice what these propositions or prescriptions enjoin. It is to do a bit of theory and then to do a bit of practice.

Certainly we often do not only reflect before we act but reflect in order to act properly. The chess-player may require some time in which to plan his moves before he makes them. Yet the general assertion that all intelligent performance requires to be prefaced by the consideration of appropriate propositions rings unplausibly, even when it is apologetically conceded that the required consideration is often very swift and may go quite unmarked by the agent. I shall argue that the intellectualist legend is false and that when we describe a performance as intelligent, this does not entail the double operation of considering and executing.

First, there are many classes of performances in which intelligence is displayed, but the rules or criteria of which are unformulated. The wit, when challenged to cite the maxims, or canons, by which he constructs and appreciates jokes, is unable to answer. He knows how to make good jokes and how to detect bad ones, but he cannot tell us or himself any

Now let's come back to more precise details. We accept, alongside the development of technico-scientific structures in contemporary society, the importance gained by the specific intellectual in recent decades, as well as the acceleration of this process since around 1960. Now the specific intellectual encounters certain obstacles and faces certain dangers. The danger of remaining at the level of conjunctural struggles, pressing demands restricted to particular sectors. The risk of letting himself be manipulated by the political parties or trade union apparatuses which control these local struggles. Above all, the risk of being unable to develop these struggles for lack of a global strategy or outside support; the risk too of not being followed, or only by very limited groups. In France we can see at the moment an example of this. The struggle around the prisons, the penal system and the police-judicial system, because it has developed 'in solitary', among social workers and ex-prisoners, has tended increasingly to separate itself from the forces which would have enabled it to grow. It has allowed itself to be penetrated by a whole naive, archaic ideology which makes the criminal at once into the innocent victim and the pure rebel—society's scapegoat—and the young wolf of future revolutions. This return to anarchist themes of the late nineteenth century was possible only because of a failure of integration of current strategies. And the result has been a deep split between this campaign with its monotonous, lyrical little chant, heard only among a few small groups, and the masses who have good reason not to accept it as valid political currency, but who also—thanks to the studiously cultivated fear of criminals—tolerate the maintenance, or rather the reinforcement, of the judicial and police apparatuses.

It seems to me that we are now at a point where the function of the specific intellectual needs to be reconsidered. Reconsidered but not abandoned, despite the nostalgia of some for the great 'universal' intellectuals and the desire for a new philosophy, a new world-view. Suffice it to consider the important results which have been achieved in psychiatry: they prove that these local, specific struggles haven't been a mistake and haven't led to a dead end. One may even say that the role of the specific intellectual must

become more and more important in proportion to the political responsibilities which he is obliged willy-nilly to accept, as a nuclear scientist, computer expert, pharmacologist, etc. It would be a dangerous error to discount him politically in his specific relation to a local form of power, either on the grounds that this is a specialist matter which doesn't concern the masses (which is doubly wrong: they are already aware of it, and in any case implicated in it), or that the specific intellectual serves the interests of State or Capital (which is true, but at the same time shows the strategic position he occupies), or, again, on the grounds that he propagates a scientific ideology (which isn't always true, and is anyway certainly a secondary matter compared with the fundamental point: the effects proper to true discourses).

The important thing here, I believe, is that truth isn't outside power, or lacking in power: contrary to a myth whose history and functions would repay further study, truth isn't the reward of free spirits, the child of protracted solitude, nor the privilege of those who have succeeded in liberating themselves. Truth is a thing of this world: it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint. And it induces regular effects of power. Each society has its régime of truth, its 'general politics' of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true.

In societies like ours, the 'political economy' of truth is characterised by five important traits. 'Truth' is centred on the form of scientific discourse and the institutions which produce it; it is subject to constant economic and political incitement (the demand for truth, as much for economic production as for political power); it is the object, under diverse forms, of immense diffusion and consumption (circulating through apparatuses of education and information whose extent is relatively broad in the social body, not withstanding certain strict limitations); it is produced and transmitted under the control, dominant if not exclusive, of

a few great political and economic apparatuses (university, army, writing, media); lastly, it is the issue of a whole political debate and social confrontation ('ideological' struggles).

It seems to me that what must now be taken into account in the intellectual is not the 'bearer of universal values'. Rather, it's the person occupying a specific position—but whose specificity is linked, in a society like ours, to the general functioning of an apparatus of truth. In other words, the intellectual has a three-fold specificity: that of his class position (whether as petty-bourgeois in the service of capitalism or 'organic' intellectual of the proletariat); that of his conditions of life and work, linked to his condition as an intellectual (his field of research, his place in a laboratory, the political and economic demands to which he submits or against which he rebels, in the university, the hospital, etc.); lastly, the specificity of the politics of truth in our societies.

And it's with this last factor that his position can take on a general significance and that his local, specific struggle can have effects and implications which are not simply professional or sectoral. The intellectual can operate and struggle at the general level of that régime of truth which is so essential to the structure and functioning of our society. There is a battle 'for truth', or at least 'around truth'—it being understood once again that by truth I do not mean 'the ensemble of truths which are to be discovered and accepted', but rather 'the ensemble of rules according to which the true and the false are separated and specific effects of power attached to the true', it being understood also that it's not a matter of a battle 'on behalf' of the truth, but of a battle about the status of truth and the economic and political role it plays. It is necessary to think of the political problems of intellectuals not in terms of 'science' and 'ideology', but in terms of 'truth' and 'power'. And thus the question of the professionalisation of intellectuals and the division between intellectual and manual labour can be envisaged in a new way.

All this must seem very confused and uncertain. Uncertain indeed, and what I am saying here is above all to be taken as a hypothesis. In order for it to be a little less confused, however, I would like to put forward a few

‘propositions’—not firm assertions, but simply suggestions to be further tested and evaluated.

‘Truth’ is to be understood as a system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation and operation of statements.

‘Truth’ is linked in a circular relation with systems of power which produce and sustain it, and to effects of power which it induces and which extend it. A ‘régime’ of truth.

This régime is not merely ideological or superstructural; it was a condition of the formation and development of capitalism. And it’s this same régime which, subject to certain modifications, operates in the socialist countries (I leave open here the question of China, about which I know little).

The essential political problem for the intellectual is not to criticise the ideological contents supposedly linked to science, or to ensure that his own scientific practice is accompanied by a correct ideology, but that of ascertaining the possibility of constituting a new politics of truth. The problem is not changing people’s consciousnesses—or what’s in their heads—but the political, economic, institutional régime of the production of truth.

It’s not a matter of emancipating truth from every system of power (which would be a chimera, for truth is already power) but of detaching the power of truth from the forms of hegemony, social, economic and cultural, within which it operates at the present time.

The political question, to sum up, is not error, illusion, alienated consciousness or ideology; it is truth itself. Hence the importance of Nietzsche.

Note

1 Foucault’s response to this final question was given in writing.

practice of objectivity that privileges contestation, deconstruction, passionate construction, webbed connections, and hope for transformation of systems of knowledge and ways of seeing. But not just any partial perspective will do; we must be hostile to easy relativisms and holisms built out of summing and subsuming parts. "Passionate detachment"¹² requires more than acknowledged and self-critical partiality. We are also bound to seek perspective from those points of view, which can never be known in advance, that promise something quite extraordinary, that is, knowledge potent for constructing worlds less organized by axes of domination. From such a viewpoint, the unmarked category would *really* disappear—quite a difference from simply repeating a disappearing act. The imaginary and the rational—the visionary and objective vision—hover close together. I think Harding's plea for a successor science and for postmodern sensibilities must be read as an argument for the idea that the fantastic element of hope for transformative knowledge and the severe check and stimulus of sustained critical inquiry are jointly the ground of any believable claim to objectivity or rationality not riddled with breathtaking denials and repressions. It is even possible to read the record of scientific revolutions in terms of this feminist doctrine of rationality and objectivity. Science has been utopian and visionary from the start; that is one reason "we" need it.

A commitment to mobile positioning and to passionate detachment is dependent on the impossibility of entertaining innocent "identity" politics and epistemologies as strategies for seeing from the standpoints of the subjugated in order to see well. One cannot "be" either a cell or molecule—or a woman, colonized person, laborer, and so on—if one intends to see and see from these positions critically. "Being" is much more problematic and contingent. Also, one cannot relocate in any possible vantage point without being accountable for that movement. Vision is *always* a question of the power to see—and perhaps of the violence implicit in our visualizing practices. With whose blood were my eyes crafted? These points also apply to testimony from the position of "oneself." We are not immediately present to ourselves. Self-knowledge requires a semiotic-material technology to link meanings and bodies. Self-identity is a bad visual system. Fusion is a bad strategy of positioning. The boys in the human sciences have called this doubt about self-presence the "death of the subject" defined as a single

ordering point of will and consciousness. That judgment seems bizarre to me. I prefer to call this doubt the opening of nonisomorphic subjects, agents, and territories of stories unimaginable from the vantage point of the cyclopean, self-satiated eye of the master subject. The Western eye has fundamentally been a wandering eye, a traveling lens. These peregrinations have often been violent and insistent on having mirrors for a conquering self—but not always. Western feminists also *inherit* some skill in learning to participate in revisualizing worlds turned upside down in earth-transforming challenges to the views of the masters. All is not to be done from scratch.

The split and contradictory self is the one who can interrogate positionings and be accountable, the one who can construct and join rational conversations and fantastic imaginings that change history.¹³ Splitting, not being, is the privileged image for feminist epistemologies of scientific knowledge. "Splitting" in this context should be about heterogeneous multiplicities that are simultaneously salient and incapable of being squashed into isomorphic slots or cumulative lists. This geometry pertains within and among subjects. Subjectivity is multidimensional; so, therefore, is vision. The knowing self is partial in all its guises, never finished, whole, simply there and original; it is always constructed and stitched together imperfectly, and *therefore* able to join with another, to see together without claiming to be another. Here is the promise of objectivity: a scientific knower seeks the subject position, not of identity, but of objectivity, that is, partial connection. There is no way to "be" simultaneously in all, or wholly in any, of the privileged (i.e., subjugated) positions structured by gender, race, nation, and class. And that is a short list of critical positions. The search for such a "full" and total position is the search for the fetishized perfect subject of oppositional history, sometimes appearing in feminist theory as the essentialized Third World Woman.¹⁴ Subjugation is not grounds for an ontology; it might be a visual clue. Vision requires instruments of vision; an optics is a politics of positioning. Instruments of vision mediate standpoints; there is no immediate vision from the standpoints of the subjugated. Identity, including self-identity, does not produce science; critical positioning does, that is, objectivity. Only those occupying the positions of the dominators are self-identical, unmarked, disembodied, unmediated, transcendent, born again. It is unfor-

fortunately possible for the subjugated to lust for and even scramble into that subject position—and then disappear from view. Knowledge from the point of view of the unmarked is truly fantastic, distorted, and irrational. The only position from which objectivity could not possibly be practiced and honored is the standpoint of the master, the Man, the One God, whose Eye produces, appropriates, and orders all difference. No one ever accused the God of monotheism of objectivity, only of indifference. The god trick is self-identical, and we have mistaken that for creativity and knowledge, omniscience even.

Positioning is, therefore, the key practice in grounding knowledge organized around the imagery of vision, and much Western scientific and philosophic discourse is organized in this way. Positioning implies responsibility for our enabling practices. It follows that politics and ethics ground struggles for and contests over what may count as rational knowledge. That is, admitted or not, politics and ethics ground struggles over knowledge projects in the exact, natural, social, and human sciences. Otherwise, rationality is simply impossible, an optical illusion projected from nowhere comprehensively. Histories of science may be powerfully told as histories of the technologies. These technologies are ways of life, social orders, practices of visualization. Technologies are skilled practices. How to see? Where to see from? What limits to vision? What to see for? Whom to see with? Who gets to have more than one point of view? Who gets blinded? Who wears blinders? Who interprets the visual field? What other sensory powers do we wish to cultivate besides vision? Moral and political discourse should be the paradigm for rational discourse about the imagery and technologies of vision. Sandra Harding's claim, or observation, that movements of social revolution have most contributed to improvements in science might be read as a claim about the knowledge consequences of new technologies of positioning. But I wish Harding had spent more time remembering that social and scientific revolutions have not always been liberatory, even if they have always been visionary. Perhaps this point could be captured in another phrase: the science question in the military. Struggles over what will count as rational accounts of the world are struggles over *how* to see. The terms of vision: the science question in colonialism, the science question in exterminism,¹⁵ the science question in feminism.



An Intellectual Adventure

In 1818, Joseph Jacotot, a lecturer in French literature at the University of Louvain, had an intellectual adventure.

A long and eventful career should have made him immune to surprises: he had celebrated his nineteenth birthday in 1789. He was at that time teaching rhetoric at Dijon and preparing for a career in law. In 1792, he served as an artilleryman in the Republican armies. Then, under the Convention, he worked successively as instructor for the Bureau of Gunpowder, secretary to the Minister of War, and substitute for the director of the Ecole Polytechnique. When he returned to Dijon, he taught analysis, ideology, ancient languages, pure mathematics, transcendent mathematics, and law. In March 1815, the esteem of his countrymen made him a deputy in spite of himself. The return of the Bourbons forced him into exile, and by the generosity of the King of the Netherlands he obtained a position as a professor at half-pay. Joseph Jacotot was acquainted with the laws of hospitality and counted on spending some calm days in Louvain.

Chance decided differently. The unassuming lecturer's lessons were, in fact, highly appreciated by his students. Among those who wanted to avail themselves of him were a good number of students who did not speak French; but Joseph Jacotot knew no Flemish. There was thus no language in which he could teach them what they sought from him. Yet he wanted to re-

spond to their wishes. To do so, the minimal link of a *thing in common* had to be established between himself and them. At that time, a bilingual edition of *Télémaque* was being published in Brussels.* The thing in common had been found, and Telemachus made his way into the life of Joseph Jacotot. He had the book delivered to the students and asked them, through an interpreter, to learn the French text with the help of the translation. When they had made it through the first half of the book, he had them repeat what they had learned over and over, and then told them to read through the rest of the book until they could recite it. This was a fortunate solution, but it was also, on a small scale, a philosophical experiment in the style of the ones performed during the Age of Enlightenment. And Joseph Jacotot, in 1818, remained a man of the preceding century.

But the experiment exceeded his expectations. He asked the students who had prepared as instructed to write in French what they thought about what they had read:

He expected horrendous barbarisms, or maybe a complete inability to perform. How could these young people, deprived of explanation, understand and resolve the difficulties of a language entirely new to them? No matter! He had to find out where the route opened by chance had taken them, what had been the results of that desperate empiricism. And how surprised he was to discover that the students, left to themselves, managed this difficult step as well as many French could have done! Was wanting all that was necessary for doing? Were all men virtually capable of understanding what others had done and understood?¹

Such was the revolution that this chance experiment unleashed in his mind. Until then, he had believed what all con-

* Fénelon's didactic and utopian 24-volume novel, *Télémaque* (1699), recounts the peregrinations of Telemachus, accompanied by his spiritual guide, Mentor, as he attempts to find his father, Odysseus. In it, Fénelon proposes an "Art of Reigning" and invents an ideal city, Salente, whose peace-loving citizens show exemplary civic virtue. The book was extremely displeasing to Louis XIV, who saw himself in the portrait of Idomeneus. But it was much admired by Enlightenment philosophers, who proclaimed Fénelon one of their most important precursors. In terms of Jacotot's adventure, the book could have been *Télémaque* or any other.

—TRANS.

scientious professors believe: that the important business of the master is to transmit his knowledge to his students so as to bring them, by degrees, to his own level of expertise. Like all conscientious professors, he knew that teaching was not in the slightest about cramming students with knowledge and having them repeat it like parrots, but he knew equally well that students had to avoid the chance detours where minds still incapable of distinguishing the essential from the accessory, the principle from the consequence, get lost. In short, the essential act of the master was to *explicate*: to disengage the simple elements of learning, and to reconcile their simplicity in principle with the factual simplicity that characterizes young and ignorant minds. To teach was to transmit learning and form minds simultaneously, by leading those minds, according to an ordered progression, from the most simple to the most complex. By the reasoned appropriation of knowledge and the formation of judgment and taste, a student was thus elevated to as high a level as his social destination demanded, and he was in this way prepared to make the use of the knowledge appropriate to that destination: to teach, to litigate, or to govern for the lettered elite; to invent, design, or make instruments and machines for the new avant-garde now hopefully to be drawn from the elite of the common people; and, in the scientific careers, for the minds gifted with this particular genius, to make new discoveries. Undoubtedly the procedures of these men of science would diverge noticeably from the reasoned order of the pedagogues. But this was no grounds for an argument against that order. On the contrary, one must first acquire a solid and methodical foundation before the singularities of genius could take flight. *Post hoc, ergo propter hoc*.

This is how all conscientious professors reason. This was how Joseph Jacotot, in his thirty years at the job, had reasoned and acted. But now, by chance, a grain of sand had gotten into the machine. He had given no explanation to his "students" on the first elements of the language. He had not explained spelling or conjugations to them. They had looked for the French words that corresponded to words they knew and the reasons for their

grammatical endings by themselves. They had learned to put them together to make, in turn, French sentences by themselves: sentences whose spelling and grammar became more and more exact as they progressed through the book; but, above all, sentences of writers and not of schoolchildren. Were the schoolmaster's explications therefore superfluous? Or, if they weren't, to whom and for what were they useful?

The Explicative Order

Thus, in the mind of Joseph Jacotot, a sudden illumination brutally highlighted what is blindly taken for granted in any system of teaching: the necessity of explication. And yet why shouldn't it be taken for granted? No one truly knows anything other than what he has understood. And for comprehension to take place, one has to be given an explication, the words of the master must shatter the silence of the taught material.

And yet that logic is not without certain obscurities. Consider, for example, a book in the hands of a student. The book is made up of a series of reasonings designed to make a student understand some material. But now the schoolmaster opens his mouth to explain the book. He makes a series of reasonings in order to explain the series of reasonings that constitute the book. But why should the book need such help? Instead of paying for an explicator, couldn't a father simply give the book to his son and the child understand directly the reasonings of the book? And if he doesn't understand them, why would he be any more likely to understand the reasonings that would explain to him what he hasn't understood? Are those reasonings of a different nature? And if so, wouldn't it be necessary to explain the way in which to understand them?

So the logic of explication calls for the principle of a regression ad infinitum: there is no reason for the redoubling of reasonings ever to stop. What brings an end to the regression and gives the system its foundation is simply that the explicator is the sole judge of the point when the explication is itself explicated. He is the sole judge of that, in itself, dizzying question:

has the student understood the reasonings that teach him to understand the reasonings? This is what the master has over the father: how could the father be certain that the child has understood the book's reasonings? What is missing for the father, what will always be missing in the trio he forms with the child and the book, is the singular art of the explicator: the art of distance. The master's secret is to know how to recognize the distance between the taught material and the person being instructed, the distance also between learning and understanding. The explicator sets up and abolishes this distance—deploys it and reabsorbs it in the fullness of his speech.

This privileged status of speech does not suppress the regression ad infinitum without instituting a paradoxical hierarchy. In the explicative order, in fact, an oral explication is usually necessary to explicate the written explication. This presupposes that reasonings are clearer, are better imprinted on the mind of the student, when they are conveyed by the speech of the master, which dissipates in an instant, than when conveyed by the book, where they are inscribed forever in indelible characters. How can we understand this paradoxical privilege of speech over writing, of hearing over sight? What relationship thus exists between the power of speech and the power of the master?

This paradox immediately gives rise to another: the words the child learns best, those whose meaning he best fathoms, those he best makes his own through his own usage, are those he learns without a master explicator, well before any master explicator. According to the unequal returns of various intellectual apprenticeships, what all human children learn best is what no master can explain: the mother tongue. We speak to them and we speak around them. They hear and retain, imitate and repeat, make mistakes and correct themselves, succeed by chance and begin again methodically, and, at too young an age for explicators to begin instructing them, they are almost all—regardless of gender, social condition, and skin color—able to understand and speak the language of their parents.

And only now does this child who learned to speak through his own intelligence and through instructors who did not ex-

plain language to him—only now does his instruction, properly speaking, begin. Now everything happens as though he could no longer learn with the aid of the same intelligence he has used up until now, as though the autonomous relationship between apprenticeship and verification were, from this point on, alien to him. Between one and the other an opacity has now set in. It concerns *understanding*, and this word alone throws a veil over everything: understanding is what the child cannot do without the explanations of a master—later, of as many masters as there are materials to understand, all presented in a certain progressive order. Not to mention the strange circumstance that since the era of progress began, these explications have not ceased being perfected in order better to explicate, to make more comprehensible, the better to learn to learn—without any discernible corresponding perfection of the said comprehension. Instead, a growing complaint begins to be heard: the explicative system is losing effectiveness. This, of course, necessitates reworking the explications yet again to make them easier to understand by those who are failing to take them in.

The revelation that came to Joseph Jacotot amounts to this: the logic of the explicative system had to be overturned. Explication is not necessary to remedy an incapacity to understand. On the contrary, that very incapacity provides the structuring fiction of the explicative conception of the world. It is the explicator who needs the incapable and not the other way around; it is he who constitutes the incapable as such. To explain something to someone is first of all to show him he cannot understand it by himself. Before being the act of the pedagogue, explication is the myth of pedagogy, the parable of a world divided into knowing minds and ignorant ones, ripe minds and immature ones, the capable and the incapable, the intelligent and the stupid. The explicator's special trick consists of this double inaugural gesture. On the one hand, he decrees the absolute beginning: it is only now that the act of learning will begin. On the other, having thrown a veil of ignorance over everything that is to be learned, he appoints himself to the task

of lifting it. Until he came along, the child has been groping blindly, figuring out riddles. Now he will learn. He heard words and repeated them. But now it is time to read, and he will not understand words if he doesn't understand syllables, and he won't understand syllables if he doesn't understand letters that neither the book nor his parents can make him understand—only the master's word. The pedagogical myth, we said, divides the world into two. More precisely, it divides intelligence into two. It says that there is an inferior intelligence and a superior one. The former registers perceptions by chance, retains them, interprets and repeats them empirically, within the closed circle of habit and need. This is the intelligence of the young child and the common man. The superior intelligence knows things by reason, proceeds by method, from the simple to the complex, from the part to the whole. It is this intelligence that allows the master to transmit his knowledge by adapting it to the intellectual capacities of the student and allows him to verify that the student has satisfactorily understood what he learned. Such is the principle of explication. From this point on, for Jacotot, such will be the principle of *enforced stultification*.*

To understand this we must rid ourselves of received images. The stultifier is not an aged obtuse master who crams his students' skulls full of poorly digested knowledge, or a malignant character mouthing half-truths in order to shore up his power and the social order. On the contrary, he is all the more efficacious because he is knowledgeable, enlightened, and of good faith. The more he knows, the more evident to him is the distance between his knowledge and the ignorance of the ignorant ones. The more he is enlightened, the more evident he finds the difference between groping blindly and searching methodically, the more he will insist on substituting the spirit for the letter, the clarity of explications for the authority of the book. Above

* In the absence of a precise English equivalent for the French term *abrutir* (to render stupid, to treat like a brute), I've translated it as "stultify." Stultify carries the connotations of numbing and deadening better than the word "stupefy," which implies a sense of wonderment or amazement absent in the French. —TRANS.

all, he will say, the student must understand, and for that we must explain even better. Such is the concern of the enlightened pedagogue: does the little one understand? He doesn't understand. I will find new ways to explain it to him, ways more rigorous in principle, more attractive in form—and I will verify that he has understood.

A noble concern. Unfortunately, it is just this little word, this slogan of the enlightened—understand—that causes all the trouble. It is this word that brings a halt to the movement of reason, that destroys its confidence in itself, that distracts it by breaking the world of intelligence into two, by installing the division between the groping animal and the learned little man, between common sense and science. From the moment this slogan of duality is pronounced, all the perfecting of the ways of *making understood*, that great preoccupation of men of methods and progressives, is progress toward stultification. The child who recites under the threat of the rod obeys the rod and that's all: he will apply his intelligence to something else. But the child who is *explained to* will devote his intelligence to the work of grieving: to understanding, that is to say, to understanding that he doesn't understand unless he is explained to. He is no longer submitting to the rod, but rather to a hierarchical world of intelligence. For the rest, like the other child, he doesn't have to worry: if the solution to the problem is too difficult to pursue, he will have enough intelligence to open his eyes wide. The master is vigilant and patient. He will see that the child isn't following him; he will put him back on track by explaining things again. And thus the child acquires a new intelligence, that of the master's explications. Later he can be an explicator in turn. He possesses the equipment. But he will perfect it: he will be a man of progress.

Chance and Will

So goes the world of the explicated explicators. So would it have gone for Professor Jacotot if chance hadn't put him in the

presence of a *fact*. And Joseph Jacotot believed that all reasoning should be based on facts and cede place to them. We shouldn't conclude from this that he was a materialist. On the contrary, like Descartes, who proved movement by walking, but also like his very royalist and very religious contemporary Maine de Biran, he considered the fact of a mind at work, acting and conscious of its activity, to be more certain than any material thing. And this was what it was all about: *the fact was* that his students *had learned* to speak and to write in French without the aid of explication. He had communicated nothing to them about his science, no explications of the roots and flexions of the French language. He hadn't even proceeded in the fashion of those reformer pedagogues who, like the preceptor in Rousseau's *Emile*, mislead their students the better to guide them, and who cunningly erect an obstacle course for the students to learn to negotiate themselves. He had left them alone with the text by Fénelon, a translation—not even interlinear like a schoolbook—and their will to learn French. He had only given them the order to pass through a forest whose openings and clearings he himself had not discovered. Necessity had constrained him to leave his intelligence entirely out of the picture—that mediating intelligence of the master that relays the printed intelligence of written words to the apprentice's. And, in one fell swoop, he had suppressed the imaginary distance that is the principle of pedagogical stultification. Everything had perforce been played out between the intelligence of Fénelon who had wanted to make a particular use of the French language, the intelligence of the translator who had wanted to give a Flemish equivalent, and the intelligence of the apprentices who wanted to learn French. And it had appeared that no other intelligence was necessary. Without thinking about it, he had made them discover this thing that he discovered with them: that all sentences, and consequently all the intelligences that produce them, are of the same nature. Understanding is never more than translating, that is, giving the equivalent of a text, but in no way its reason. There is nothing behind the written

page, no false bottom that necessitates the work of an *other* intelligence, that of the explicator; no language of the master, no language of the language whose words and sentences are able to speak the reason of the words and sentences of a text. The Flemish students had furnished the proof: to speak about *Télémaque* they had at their disposition only the words of *Télémaque*. Fénelon's sentences alone are necessary to understand Fénelon's sentences and to express what one has understood about them. Learning and understanding are two ways of expressing the same act of translation. There is nothing beyond texts except the will to express, that is, to translate. If they had understood the language by learning Fénelon, it wasn't simply through the gymnastics of comparing the page on the left with the page on the right. It isn't the aptitude for changing columns that counts, but rather the capacity to say what one thinks in the words of others. If they had learned this from Fénelon, that was because the act of Fénelon the writer was itself one of translation: in order to translate a political lesson into a legendary narrative, Fénelon transformed into the French of his century Homer's Greek, Vergil's Latin, and the language, wise or naïve, of a hundred other texts, from children's stories to erudite history. He had applied to this double translation the same intelligence they employed in their turn to recount with the sentences of his book what they thought about his book.

But the intelligence that had allowed them to learn the French in *Télémaque* was the same they had used to learn their mother tongue: by observing and retaining, repeating and verifying, by relating what they were trying to know to what they already knew, by doing and reflecting about what they had done. They moved along in a manner one shouldn't move along—the way children move, blindly, figuring out riddles. And the question then became: wasn't it necessary to overturn the admissible order of intellectual values? Wasn't that shameful method of the riddle the true movement of human intelligence taking possession of its own power? Didn't its proscrip-

tion indicate above all the will to divide the world of intelligence into two? The advocates of method oppose the nonmethod of chance to that of proceeding by reason. But what they want to prove is given in advance. They suppose a little animal who, bumping into things, explores a world that he isn't yet able to see and will only discern when they teach him to do so. But the human child is first of all a speaking being. The child who repeats the words he hears and the Flemish student "lost" in his *Télémaque* are not proceeding hit or miss. All their effort, all their exploration, is strained toward this: someone has addressed words to them that they want to recognize and respond to, not as students or as learned men, but as people; in the way you respond to someone speaking to you and not to someone examining you: under the sign of equality.

The fact was there: they had learned by themselves, without a master explicator. What has happened once is thenceforth always possible. This discovery could, after all, overturn the principles of the *professor* Jacotot. But Jacotot the man was in a better position to recognize what great variety can be expected from a human being. His father had been a butcher before keeping the accounts of his grandfather, the carpenter who had sent his grandson to college. He himself had been a professor of rhetoric when he had answered the call to arms in 1792. His companions' vote had made him an artillery captain, and he had showed himself to be a remarkable artilleryman. In 1793, at the Bureau of Powders, this Latinist became a chemistry instructor working toward the accelerated forming of workers being sent everywhere in the territory to apply Fourcroy's discoveries. At Fourcroy's own establishment, he had become acquainted with Vauquelin, the peasant's son who had trained himself to be a chemist without the knowledge of his boss. He had seen young people arrive at the Ecole Polytechnique who had been selected by improvised commissions on the dual basis of their liveliness of mind and their patriotism. And he had seen them become very good mathematicians, less through the calculations Monge

and Lagrange explained to them than through those that they performed in front of them.* He himself had apparently profited from his administrative functions by gaining competence as a mathematician—a competence he had exercised later at the University of Dijon. Similarly, he had added Hebrew to the ancient languages he taught, and composed an *Essay on Hebrew Grammar*. He believed, God knows why, that that language had a future. And finally, he had gained for himself, reluctantly but with the greatest firmness, a competence at being a representative of the people. In short, he knew what the will of individuals and the peril of the country could engender in the way of unknown capacities, in circumstances where urgency demanded destroying the stages of explicative progression. He thought that this exceptional state, dictated by the nation's need, was no different in principle from the urgency that dictates the exploration of the world by the child or from that other urgency that constrains the singular path of learned men and inventors. Through the experiment of the child, the learned man, and the revolutionary, the method of *chance* so successfully practiced by the Flemish students revealed its second secret. The method of equality was above all a method of the will. One could learn by oneself and without a master explicator when one wanted to, propelled by one's own desire or by the constraint of the situation.

The Emancipatory Master

In this case, that constraint had taken the form of the command Jacotot had given. And it resulted in an important consequence, no longer for the students but for the master. The students had learned without a master explicator, but not, for all that, without a master. They didn't know how before, and

* Antoine François Fourcroy (1755–1809), chemist and politician, participated in the establishment of a rational nomenclature in chemistry. The principal work of the mathematician Joseph Louis de Lagrange (1736–1813) was the *Mécanique analytique* (1788). The mathematician Gaspard Monge (1746–1818) helped create the Ecole Normale and founded the Ecole Polytechnique.—TRANS.

now they knew how. Therefore, Jacotot had taught them something. And yet he had communicated nothing to them of his science. So it wasn't the master's science that the student learned. His mastery lay in the command that had enclosed the students in a closed circle from which they alone could break out. By leaving his intelligence out of the picture, he had allowed their intelligence to grapple with that of the book. Thus, the two functions that link the practice of the master explicator, that of the savant and that of the master had been dissociated. The two faculties in play during the act of learning, namely intelligence and will, had therefore also been separated, liberated from each other. A pure relationship of will to will had been established between master and student: a relationship wherein the master's domination resulted in an entirely liberated relationship between the intelligence of the student and that of the book—the intelligence of the book that was also the thing in common, the egalitarian intellectual link between master and student. This device allowed the jumbled categories of the pedagogical act to be sorted out, and explicative stultification to be precisely defined. There is stultification whenever one intelligence is subordinated to another. A person—and a child in particular—may need a master when his own will is not strong enough to set him on track and keep him there. But that subjection is purely one of will over will. It becomes stultification when it links an intelligence to another intelligence. In the act of teaching and learning there are two wills and two intelligences. We will call their coincidence stultification. In the experimental situation Jacotot created, the student was linked to a will, Jacotot's, and to an intelligence, the book's—the two entirely distinct. We will call the known and maintained difference of the two relations—the act of an intelligence obeying only itself even while the will obeys another will—emancipation.

This pedagogical experiment created a rupture with the logic of all pedagogies. The pedagogues' practice is based on the opposition between science and ignorance. The methods chosen to render the ignorant person learned may differ: strict or gentle

methods, traditional or modern, active or passive; the efficiency of these methods can be compared. From this point of view, we could, at first glance, compare the speed of Jacotot's students with the slowness of traditional methods. But in reality there was nothing to compare. The confrontation of methods presupposes a minimal agreement on the goals of the pedagogical act: the transmission of the master's knowledge to the students. But Jacotot had transmitted nothing. He had not used any method. The method was purely the student's. And whether one learns French more quickly or less quickly is in itself a matter of little consequence. The comparison was no longer between methods but rather between two uses of intelligence and two conceptions of the intellectual order. The rapid route was not that of a better pedagogy. It was another route, that of liberty—that route that Jacotot had experimented with in the armies of Year II, the fabrication of powders or the founding of the *Ecole Polytechnique*, the route of liberty responding to the urgency of the peril, but just as much to a confidence in the intellectual capacity of any human being. Beneath the pedagogical relation of ignorance to science, the more fundamental philosophical relation of stultification to emancipation must be recognized. There were thus not two but four terms in play. The act of learning could be produced according to four variously combined determinations: by an emancipatory master or by a stultifying one, by a learned master or by an ignorant one.

The last proposition was the most difficult to accept. It goes without saying that a scientist might do science without explicating it. But how can we admit that an ignorant person might induce science in another? Even Jacotot's experiment was ambiguous because of his position as a professor of French. But since it had at least shown that it wasn't the master's knowledge that instructed the student, then nothing prevented the master from teaching something other than his science, something he didn't know. Joseph Jacotot applied himself to varying the experiment, to repeating on purpose what chance had once produced. He began to teach two subjects at which he was notably

incompetent: painting and the piano. Law students would have liked him to be given a vacant chair in their faculty. But the University of Louvain was already worried about this extravagant lecturer, for whom students were deserting the magisterial courses, in favor of coming, evenings, to crowd into a much too small room, lit by only two candles, in order to hear: "I must teach you that I have nothing to teach you."² The authority they consulted thus responded that he saw no point in calling this teaching. Jacotot was experimenting, precisely, with the gap between accreditation and act. Rather than teaching a law course in French, he taught the students to litigate in Flemish. They litigated very well, but he still didn't know Flemish.

The Circle of Power

The experiment seemed to him sufficient to shed light: one can teach what one doesn't know if the student is emancipated, that is to say, if he is obliged to use his own intelligence. The master is he who encloses an intelligence in the arbitrary circle from which it can only break out by becoming necessary to itself. To emancipate an ignorant person, one must be, and one need only be, emancipated oneself, that is to say, conscious of the true power of the human mind. The ignorant person will learn by himself what the master doesn't know if the master believes he can and obliges him to realize his capacity: a circle of *power* homologous to the circle of powerlessness that ties the student to the explicator of the old method (to be called from now on, simply, the Old Master). But the relation of forces is very particular. The circle of powerlessness is always already there: it is the very workings of the social world, hidden in the evident difference between ignorance and science. The circle of power, on the other hand, can only take effect by being made public. But it can only appear as a tautology or an absurdity. How can the learned master ever understand that he can teach what he doesn't know as successfully as what he does know? He cannot but take that increase in intellectual power as a deval-

uation of his science. And the ignorant one, on his side, doesn't believe himself capable of learning by himself, still less of being able to teach another ignorant person. Those excluded from the world of intelligence themselves subscribe to the verdict of their exclusion. In short, the circle of emancipation must be *begun*.

Here lies the paradox. For if you think about it a little, the "method" he was proposing is the oldest in the world, and it never stops being verified every day, in all the circumstances where an individual must learn something without any means of having it explained to him. There is no one on earth who hasn't learned something by himself and without a master explicator. Let's call this way of learning "universal teaching" and say of it: "In reality, universal teaching has existed since the beginning of the world, alongside all the explicative methods. This teaching, by oneself, has, in reality, been what has formed all great men." But this is the strange part: "Everyone has done this experiment a thousand times in his life, and yet it has never occurred to someone to say to someone else: I've learned many things without explanations, I think that you can too. . . . Neither I nor anyone in the world has ventured to draw on this fact to teach others." To the intelligence sleeping in each of us, it would suffice to say: *age quod agis*, continue to do what you are doing, "learn the fact, imitate it, know yourself, this is how nature works."⁴ Methodically repeat the method of chance that gave you the measure of your power. The same intelligence is at work in all the acts of the human mind.

But this is the most difficult leap. This method is practiced of necessity by everyone, but no one wants to recognize it, no one wants to cope with the intellectual revolution it signifies. The social circle, the order of things, prevents it from being recognized for what it is: the true method by which everyone learns and by which everyone can take the measure of his capacity. One must dare to recognize it and pursue the *open* verification of its power—otherwise, the method of powerlessness, the Old Master, will last as long as the order of things.

Who would want to begin? In Jacotot's day there were all kinds of men of goodwill who were preoccupied with instructing the people: rulers wanted to elevate the people above their brutal appetites, revolutionaries wanted to lead them to the consciousness of their rights; progressives wished to narrow, through instruction, the gap between the classes; industrialists dreamed of giving, through instruction, the most intelligent among the people the means of social promotion. All these good intentions came up against an obstacle: the common man had very little time and even less money to devote to acquiring this instruction. Thus, what was sought was the economic means of diffusing the minimum of instruction judged necessary for the individual and sufficient for the amelioration of the laboring population as a whole. Among progressives and industrialists the favored method was mutual teaching. This allowed a great number of students, assembled from a vast locale, to be divided up into smaller groups headed by the more advanced among them, who were promoted to the rank of monitors. In this way, the master's orders and lessons radiated out, relayed by the monitors, into the whole population to be instructed. Friends of progress liked what they saw: this was how science extended from the summits to the most modest levels of intelligence. Happiness and liberty would trickle down in its wake.

That sort of progress, for Jacotot, smelled of the bridle. "A perfected riding-school," he said. He had a different notion of mutual teaching in mind: that each ignorant person could become for another ignorant person the master who would reveal to him his intellectual power. More precisely, his problem wasn't the instruction of the people: one *instructed* the recruits enrolled under one's banner, subalterns who must be able to understand orders, the people one wanted to govern—in the progressive way, of course, without divine right and only according to the hierarchy of *capacities*. His own problem was that of *emancipation*: that every common person might conceive his human dignity, take the measure of his intellectual capacity, and decide how to use it. The friends of Instruction were certain that

true liberty was conditioned on it. After all, they recognized that they should give instruction to the people, even at the risk of disputing among themselves which instruction they would give. Jacotot did not see what kind of liberty for the people could result from the dutifulness of their instructors. On the contrary, he sensed in all this a new form of stultification. Whoever teaches without emancipating stultifies. And whoever emancipates doesn't have to worry about what the emancipated person learns. He will learn what he wants, nothing maybe. He will know he can learn because the same intelligence is at work in all the productions of the human mind, and a man can always understand another man's words. Jacotot's printer had a retarded son. They had despaired of making something of him. Jacotot taught him Hebrew. Later the child became an excellent lithographer. It goes without saying that he never used the Hebrew for anything—except to know what more gifted and learned minds never knew: *it wasn't Hebrew*.

The matter was thus clear. This was not a method for instructing the people; it was a benefit to be announced to the poor: they could do everything any man could. It sufficed only to *announce* it. Jacotot decided to devote himself to this. He proclaimed that one could teach what one didn't know, and that a poor and ignorant father could, if he was emancipated, conduct the education of his children, without the aid of any master explicator. And he indicated the way of that "universal teaching"—*to learn something and to relate to it all the rest by this principle: all men have equal intelligence*.

People were affected in Louvain, in Brussels, and in La Haye; they took the mail carriage from Paris and Lyon; they came from England and Prussia to hear the news; it was proclaimed in Saint Petersburg and New Orleans. The word reached as far as Rio de Janeiro. For several years polemic raged, and the Republic of knowledge was shaken at its very foundations.

All this because a learned man, a renowned man of science and a virtuous family man, had gone crazy for not knowing Flemish.

2

The Ignorant One's Lesson

Let's go ashore, then, with Telemachus onto Calypso's island. Let's make our way with one of the visitors into the madman's lair: into Miss Marcellis's institution in Louvain; into the home of Mr. Deschuyfeleere, a tanner transformed by Jacotot into a Latinist; into the Ecole Normale Militaire in Louvain, where the philosopher-prince Frederick of Orange had put the Founder of universal teaching in charge of educating future military instructors:

"Imagine recruits sitting on benches, murmuring in unison: 'Calypso,' 'Calypso could,' 'Calypso could not,' etc., etc.; two months later they knew how to read, write, and count. . . . During this primary education, the one was taught English, the other German, this one fortification, that one chemistry, etc., etc."

"Did the Founder know all these things?"

"Not at all, but we explained them to him, and I can assure you he profited greatly from the Ecole Normale."

"But I'm confused. Did you all, then, know chemistry?"

"No, but we learned it, and we gave him lessons in it. That's universal teaching. It's the disciple that makes the master."

There is an order in madness, as in everything. Let's begin, then, at the beginning: *Télémaque*. "Everything is in everything," says the madman. And his critics add: "And everything is in *Télémaque*." Because *Télémaque* was apparently the book

12. See, in particular, Jacques Rancière, *Le Philosophe et ses pauvres* (1983).
13. See Jacques Rancière, *Aux bords du politique* (1990).
14. Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York, 1969).
15. *Révoltes logiques* collective, "Deux ou trois choses que l'historien ne veut pas savoir," *Le Mouvement social*, 100 (July-Sept. 1977).
16. Bourdieu, *Reproduction*, p. iv.

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2. J. S. Van de Weyer, *Sommaire des leçons publiques de M. Jacotot sur les principes de l'enseignement universel* (Brussels, 1822), p. 11.
3. J. Jacotot, *Enseignement universel: Langue maternelle*, 6th ed. (1836), p. 448; *Journal de l'émancipation intellectuelle*, 3 (1835-36): 121.
4. J. Jacotot, *Enseignement universel: Langue étrangère*, 2d ed. (1829), p. 219.

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1. J. Jacotot, *Enseignement universel: Mathématiques*, 2d ed. (1829), pp. 50-51.
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3. *Journal de l'émancipation intellectuelle*, 3 (1835-36): 15.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 380.
5. B. Gonod, *Nouvelle exposition de la méthode de Joseph Jacotot* (1830), pp. 12-13.
6. J. Jacotot, *Enseignement universel: Langue maternelle*, 6th ed. (1836), pp. 464-65.
7. *Journal de l'émancipation intellectuelle*, 3 (1835-36): 9.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 11.
9. *Ibid.*, 6 (1841-42): 72.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 73.
11. *Ibid.*
12. C. Lorain, *Refutation de la méthode Jacotot* (1830), p. 90.
13. Jacotot, *Langue maternelle*, p. 271; *Journal de l'émancipation intellectuelle*, 3 (1835-36): 323.
14. *Journal de l'émancipation intellectuelle*, 3 (1835-36): 253.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 259.
16. *Ibid.*, 4 (1836-37): 280.
17. Jacotot, *Langue maternelle*, p. 422.
18. A. Destutt de Tracy, *Observations sur le système actuel d'instruction publique* (Year IX).
19. J. S. Van de Weyer, *Sommaire des leçons publiques de M. Jacotot sur les principes de l'enseignement universel* (Brussels, 1822), p. 23.
20. Plato, *Cratylus*, 399c: "Alone among the animals, man was called *anthropos* precisely because he examines what he sees (*anathron ha opope*)."
21. J. Jacotot, *Enseignement universel: Musique*, 3d ed. (1830), p. 349.
22. See Plato, *Phaedrus*, 274c/277a; and Jacques Rancière, *Le Philosophe et ses pauvres* (1983), especially p. 66.
23. *Journal de l'émancipation intellectuelle*, 5 (1838): 168.
24. J. Jacotot, *Mélanges posthumes de philosophie panécastique* (1841), p. 176.
25. *Journal de l'émancipation intellectuelle*, 3 (1835-36): 334.
26. B. Froussard, *Lettre à ses amis au sujet de la méthode de M. Jacotot* (1829), p. 6.

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2. *Ibid.*, p. 229.
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7. *Journal de l'émancipation intellectuelle*, 4 (1836-37): 430-31.
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9. Jacotot, *Langue maternelle*, p. 330.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 33.

Saidiya Hartman

The Anarchy of Colored Girls
Assembled in a Riotous Manner

Esther Brown did not write a political tract on the refusal to be governed, or draft a plan for mutual aid or outline a memoir of her sexual adventures. A manifesto of the wayward: Own Nothing. Refuse the Given. Live on What You Need and No More. Get Ready to Be Free—was not found among the items contained in her case file. She didn't pen any song lines: *My mama says I'm reckless, My daddy says I'm wild, I ain't good looking, but I'm somebody's angel child.* She didn't commit to paper her ruminations on freedom: *With human nature caged in a narrow space, whipped daily into submission, how can we speak of potentialities?* The cardboard placards for the tumult and upheaval she incited might have said: Don't mess with me. I am not afraid to smash things up. But hers was a struggle without formal declarations of policy, slogan, or credos. It required no party platform or ten-point program. Walking through the streets of New York City, she and Emma Goldman crossed paths, but failed to recognize one another. When Hubert Harrison encountered her in the lobby of the Renaissance Casino after he delivered his lectures on "Marriage versus Free Love" for the Socialist Club, he noticed only that she had a pretty face and a big ass. Esther Brown never pulled a

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soapbox onto the corner of 135th Street and Lenox Avenue to make a speech about autonomy, the global reach of the color line, involuntary servitude, free motherhood, or the promise of a future world, but she well understood that the desire to move as she wanted was nothing short of treason. She knew firsthand that the offense most punished by the state was trying to live free. To wander through the streets of Harlem, to want better than what she had, and to be propelled by her whims and desires was to be ungovernable. Her way of living was nothing short of anarchy.

Had anyone ever found the rough notes for reconstruction jotted in the marginalia of her grocery list or correlated the numbers circled most often in her dog-eared dream book with routes of escape not to be found in Rand McNally's atlas or seen the love letters written to her girlfriend about how they would live at the end of the world, the master philosophers and cardholding radicals, in all likelihood, would have said that her analysis was insufficient, dismissed her for failing to understand those key passages in the *Gruntdrisse* about the ex-slave's refusal to work — *they have ceased to be slaves, but not in order to become wage labourers* — she nodded in enthusiastic agreement at all the wrong places — *content with producing only what is strictly necessary for their own consumption* — and embraced *indulgence and idleness as the real luxury good*; all of which emphasized the limits of black feminist politics. What did they know of Truth and Tubman? Or the contours of black women's war against the state and capital? Could they ever understand the dreams of another world which didn't trouble the distinction between man, settler, and master? Or recounted the struggle against servitude, captivity, property, and enclosure that began in the barracoon and continued on the ship, where some fought, some jumped, some refused to eat. Others set the plantation and the fields on fire, poisoned the master. They had never listened to Lucy Parsons; they had never read Ida B. Wells. Or envisioned the riot as a rally cry and refusal of fungible life? Only a misreading of the key texts of anarchism could ever imagine a place for wayward colored girls. No, Kropotkin never described black women's mutual aid societies or the chorus in *Mutual Aid*, although he imagined animal sociality in its rich varieties and the forms of cooperation and mutuality found among ants, monkeys, and ruminants. Impossible, recalcitrant domestics weren't yet in his radar or anyone else's. (It would be a decade and a half before Marvel Cooke and Ella Baker wrote their essay "The Bronx Slave Market" and two decades before Claudia Jones's "An End to the Neglect of the Problems of the Negro Woman.")

It is not surprising that a *negress* would be guilty of conflating idleness with resistance or exalt the struggle for mere survival or confuse petty acts

for insurrection or imagine a minor figure might be capable of some significant shit or mistake laziness and inefficiency for a general strike or recast theft as a kind of cheap socialism for too fast girls and questionable women or esteem wild ideas as radical thought. At best, the case of Esther Brown provides another example of the tendency to exaggeration and excess that is common to the race. A revolution in a minor key was hardly noticeable before the spirit of Bolshevism or the nationalist vision of a Black Empire or the glamour of wealthy libertines, fashionable socialists, and self-declared New Negroes. Nobody remembers the evening she and her friends raised hell on 132nd Street or turned out Edmund's Cellar or made such a beautiful noise during the riot that their screams and shouts were improvised music, so that even the tone-deaf journalists from the *New York Times* described the black noise of disorderly women as a jazz chorus.

Wayward Experiments

Esther Brown hated to work, the conditions of work as much as the very idea of work. Her reasons for quitting said as much. Housework: *Wages too small*. Laundry work: *Too hard*. Ran away. General Housework: *Tired of work*. Laundress: *Too hard*. Sewing buttons on shirts: *Tired of work*. Dishwasher: *Tired of work*. Housework: *Man too cross*. Live-in-service: I might as well be a slave. At age fifteen, when she left school, she experienced the violence endemic to domestic work and tired quickly of the demand to care for others who didn't care for you. She ran the streets because nowhere else in the world was there anything for her. She stayed in the streets to escape the suffocation of her mother's small apartment, which was packed with lodgers, men who took up too much space and who were too easy with their hands. She had been going around and mixing it up for a few years, but only because she liked doing it. She never went with men *only* for money. She was no prostitute. After the disappointment of a short-lived marriage to a man who wasn't her baby's father (he had offered to marry her but she rejected him), she went to live with her sister and grandmother and they helped her raise her son. She had several lovers to whom she was bound by need and want, not by the law.

Esther's only luxury was idleness and she was fond of saying to her friends, "If you get up in the morning and feel tired, go back to sleep and then go to the theatre at night." With the support of her sister and grandmother and help from gentlemen friends, she didn't need to work on a regular basis. She picked up day work when she was in a pinch and endured a six-week stretch of "Yes, Mrs. I'll get to it" when coerced by need. So really,

she was doing fine and had nearly perfected the art of surviving without having to scrape and bow. She hated being a servant, as did every general houseworker. Service carried the stigma of slavery; white girls sought to avoid it for the same reason—it was *nigger work*. Had her employers suspected that the better the servant, the more severe the hatred of the mistress, Esther would not have been “entrusted to care for their precious darlings.”

Why should she toil in a kitchen or factory in order to survive? Why should she work herself to the bone for white people? She preferred strolling along Harlem’s wide avenues and losing herself in cabarets and movie houses. In the streets, young women and men displayed their talents and ambitions. It was better than staying home and staring at four walls. In Harlem, strolling was a fine art, *an everyday choreography of the possible*; it was the collective movement of the streets, headless and spilling out in all directions, yet moving and drifting en masse, like a swarm or the swell of an ocean; it was a long poem of black hunger and striving. The bodies rushing through the block and idling on corners and hanging out on front steps were an assembly of the damned, the venturous, and the dangerous. “All modalities sang a part in this chorus” and the refrains were of infinite variety. On the avenues, the possibilities were glimmering and evanescent, even if fleeting and most often unrealized. The map of the *might could* or *what might be* was not restricted to the literal trail of Esther’s footsteps or anyone else’s. Hers was an errant path cut through the heart of Harlem in search of the open city, *l’ouverture*, inside the ghetto. Wandering and drifting was how she engaged the world and how she perceived it. The thought of what might be possible was indistinguishable from moving bodies and the transient rush and flight of black folks in this city-within-the-city. Streetwalking in the black capital emboldened the wayward, shored up the weary, stoked the dreams of the wretched, and encouraged wanderlust.

As she drifted through the city, a thousand ideas about who she might be and what she might do rushed into her head, but she was uncertain what to make of them. Her thoughts were inchoate, fragmentary, wild. How they might become a blueprint for something better was unclear. Esther was fiercely intelligent. She had a bright, alert face and piercing eyes that announced her interest in the world. This combined with a noticeable pride made the seventeen-year-old appear substantial, a force in her own right. Even the white teachers at the training school, who disliked her and were reluctant to give a colored girl any undue praise, conceded she was very smart, although quick to anger because of too much pride. She insisted on being treated no differently than the white girls, so they said she was

trouble. The problem was not her capacity; it was her attitude. The brutality she experienced at the Hudson Training School for Girls taught her to fight back, to strike out. The teachers told the authorities that she had enjoyed too much freedom. It had ruined her and made her into the kind of young woman who would not hesitate to smash things up. Freedom in her hands, if not a crime, was a threat to public order and moral decency. *Excessive liberty had ruined her.* The social worker concurred, “With no social considerations to constrain her, she was ungovernable.”



Esther Brown was wild and wayward. She longed for another way of living in the world. She was hungry for enough, for otherwise, for better. She was hungry for beauty. In her case, the aesthetic wasn't a realm separate and distinct from the daily challenges of survival, rather the aim was to make an art of subsistence, a lyric of being young, poor, gifted, and black. Yet, she did not try to create a poem or song or painting. What she created was Esther Brown. *That was the offering, the bit of art, that could not come from any other. She would polish and hone that. She would celebrate that everyday something had tried to kill her and failed.* She would make a beautiful life. What was beauty if not “the intense sensation of being pulled toward the animating force of life?” Or the yearning “to bring things into relation . . . and with as much urgency as though one's life depended upon it.” To the eyes of the world, her wild thoughts, dreams of another world, and longing to escape from drudgery were likely to lead to tumult and upheaval, to open rebellion. Esther Brown didn't need a husband or a daddy or a boss telling her what to do. But a young woman who flitted from job to job and lover to lover was considered immoral and destined to become a threat to the social order, a menace to society. Detective Brady said as much when he arrested Esther and her friends.



What the law designated as crime were the forms of life created by young black women in the city. The modes of intimacy and affiliation being fashioned in the ghetto, the refusal to labor, the forms of gathering and assembly, the practices of subsistence and getting over were under surveillance and targeted by the police as well as the sociologists and the reformers who gathered the information and made the case against them, forging their lives into tragic biographies of poverty, crime, and pathology. The activity required to reproduce and sustain life is, as Marx noted, a definite form of expressing life, it is an art of survival, social poesis. Subsistence—scraping

by, getting over, making ends meet—entailed an ongoing struggle to produce a way to live in a context in which poverty was taken for granted and domestic work or general housework defined the only opportunity available to black girls and women. The acts of the wayward—the wild thoughts, reckless dreams, interminable protests, spontaneous strikes, nonparticipation, willfulness, and bold-faced refusal redistributed the balance of need and want and sought a line of escape from debt and duty in the attempt to create a path elsewhere.

Mere survival was an achievement in a context so brutal. How could one enhance life or speak of its potentialities when confined in the ghetto, when daily subjected to racist assault and insult, and conscripted to servitude? *How can I live?*—It was a question Esther reckoned with every day. Survival required acts of collaboration and genius. Esther's imagination was geared toward the clarification of life—"what would sustain material life and enhance it, something that entailed more than the reproduction of physical existence." The mutuality and creativity necessary to sustain life in the context of intermittent wages, controlled deprivation, economic exclusion, coercion, and antiblack violence often bordered on the extralegal and the criminal. Beautiful, wayward experiments entailed what W. E. B. DuBois described as an "open rebellion" against society.

This speculative history of the wayward is an effort to narrate the open rebellion and beautiful experiment produced by young women in the emergent ghetto, a form of racial enclosure that succeeded the plantation. The narrative utilizes the reports and case files of the reformatory, private investigators, psychologists, and social workers to challenge the primary tenets of these accounts, the most basic of these assumptions being that the lives represented required intervention and rehabilitation and that the question—who are you?—is indistinguishable from one's status as a social problem. The method is critical fabulation. State violence, surveillance, and detention produce the archival traces and institutional records that inform the reconstruction of these lives; but desire and the want of something better decide the contours of the telling. The narrative emulates the errant path of the wayward and moves from one story to another by way of encounter, chance meeting, proximity, and the sociality created by enclosure. It strives to convey the aspiration and longing of the wayward and the tumult and upheaval incited by the chorus.

For the most part, the history of Esther and her friends and the potentiality of their lives has remained unthought because no one could imagine young black women as social visionaries, radical thinkers, and innovators in

the world in which these acts took place. This latent history has yet to emerge: *A revolution in a minor key* unfolded in the city and young black women were its vehicle. It was driven not by uplift or the struggle for recognition or citizenship, but by the vision of a world *that would guarantee to every human being free access to earth and full enjoyment of the necessities of life, according to individual desires, tastes, and inclinations*. In this world, free love and free motherhood would not be criminalized and punished. To appreciate the beautiful experiments of Esther Brown and her friends, one needs first to conceive something as unimaginable and unprecedented as *too fast girls* and *surplus women* and *whores* producing “thought of the outside,” that is, thought directed toward the outer bound of what is possible. Such far-reaching notions of *what could be* were the fruit of centuries of mutual aid, which was organized in stealth and paraded in public view.

Collaboration, reciprocity, and shared creation defined the practice of mutual aid. It was and remains a collective practice of survival for those bereft of the notion that life and land, human and earth could be owned, traded, and made the private property of anyone, those who would never be self-possessed, or envision themselves as acquisitive self-interested proprietors, or measure their life and worth by the ledger or the rent book, or long to be the settler or the master. Mutual aid did not traffic in the belief that the self existed distinct and apart from others or revere the ideas of individuality and sovereignty, as much as it did singularity and freedom. The mutual aid society survived the Middle Passage and its origins might be traced to traditions of collectivity, which flourished in the stateless societies that preceded the breach of the Atlantic and perdured in its wake. This form of mutual assistance was remade in the hold of the slave ship, the plantation, and the ghetto. It made good the ideals of the commons, the collective, the ensemble, the always-more-than-one of existing in the world. The mutual aid society was a resource of black survival. The ongoing and open-ended creation of new conditions of existence and the improvisation of life-enhancing and free association was a practice crafted in social clubs, tenements, taverns, dance halls, disorderly houses, and the streets.



Esther had been working for two days as a live-in domestic on Long Island when she decided to return to Harlem to see her baby and have some fun. It was summer and Harlem was alive. She visited her son and grandmother, but stayed at her friend Josephine's place because she always had a house full

of folks dancing, drinking, carousing, and vamping. Esther had planned to return to her job the next day, but one day stretched into several. People tended to lose track of time at Josephine's place. Five West 134th street had a reputation as a building for lover's secret assignations, house parties, and gambling. The apartment was in the thick of it, right off Fifth Avenue in the blocks of Harlem tightly packed with crowded tenements and subject to frequent police raids. Esther was playing cards when Rebecca arrived with Krause, who said he had a friend he wanted her to meet. She didn't feel like going out, but they kept pestering her and Josephine encouraged her to give it a try. Why not have some fun?



Do you want to have a good time? Brady asked. Rebecca gave him the once-over. A smile and the promise of some fun was all the encouragement Rebecca needed. Esther didn't care one way or the other. She suggested they go back to Josephine's, but Brady didn't want to, so they decided to hang out in the hallway of a nearby building. A tenement hallway was as good as any lounge. In the dark passage, Brady snuggled up with Rebecca, while his friend tried to pair up with Esther. Krause asked Brady for fifty cents to go buy some liquor. That was when Brady said he was a detective. Krause took off quick, as if he knew what was coming as soon as the man opened his mouth. He would have gotten away if Brady hadn't shot him in the foot.

At the precinct, Detective Brady charged Krause with White Slavery, and Esther and Rebecca with Violation of the Tenement House Law. They were taken from the precinct to the Jefferson Market Court for an arraignment. Since they were seventeen years old and didn't have any previous offenses they were sent to the Empire Friendly Shelter while they awaited trial, rather than confined in the Tombs, which was what everyone called the prison cells above the Jefferson courthouse. A day later the charges were dismissed against Krause because the other detective failed to appear in court. They were waiting to appear before the judge when Krause sent word that he was free. Esther and Rebecca wouldn't be so lucky. It was hard to call the cursory proceedings and routine indifference at the Women's Court a hearing, since the magistrate court had no jury, produced no written record of the events, required no evidence but the police officer's word, failed to consider the intentions of the accused, or even to require the commitment of a criminal act. *The likelihood of future criminality* decided their sentence rather than any violation of the law. The magistrate judge barely looked at the two colored girls before sentencing them to three years at the reformatory. The

social worker recommended they be sent to Bedford Hills to rescue them from a life in the streets.



Harlem was swarming with vice-investigators and undercover detectives and do-gooders who were all intent on keeping young black women off the streets, even if it meant arresting every last one of them. Street strollers, exhausted domestics, nocturnal creatures, wannabe chorus girls, and too loud colored women were arrested on a whim or suspicion or likelihood. In custody, the reasons for arrest were offered: Loitering. Riotous and Disorderly. Solicitation. Violation of the Tenement House Law. Who knew that being too loud, or loitering in the hallway of your building or on the front stoop was a violation of the law; or making a date with someone you met at the club, or arranging a casual hookup, or running the streets was prostitution? Or sharing a flat with ten friends was criminal anarchy? Or the place where you stayed was a disorderly house, and could be raided at any moment? The real offense was blackness. Your status made you a criminal. The tell-tale sign of future criminality was a dark face.

Until the night of July 17, 1917, Esther Brown had been lucky and eluded the police, although she had been under their gaze all the while. The willingness to have a good time with a stranger or the likelihood of engaging in an immoral act—sexual intimacy outside of marriage—was sufficient evidence of wrongdoing. To be willing or *willful* was the offense to be punished. The only way to counter the presumption of wrongdoing and establish innocence was to give a good account of one's self. Esther failed to do this as did many young women who passed through the court. It didn't matter that Esther had not solicited Krause or asked for or accepted any money. She assumed she was innocent, but the Women's Court found otherwise. Esther's inability to give an account of herself, capable of justifying and explaining how she lived or, at least, willing to atone for her failures and deviations, were among the offenses levied against her. She readily admitted that she hated to work, not bothering to distinguish between the conditions of work available to her and some ideal of work that she and none she knew had ever experienced. She was convicted because she was unemployed and "leading the life of a prostitute." One could lead the life of a prostitute without actually being one.

With no proof of employment, Esther was indicted for vagrancy under the Tenement House Law. Vagrancy was an expansive and virtually all-encompassing category, like *the manner of walking* in Ferguson, it was a ubiquitous

charge that made it easy for the police to arrest and prosecute young women with no evidence of crime or act of lawbreaking. In the 1910s and 1920s, vagrancy statutes were used primarily to target young women for prostitution. To be charged was to be sentenced since the Women's Court had the highest rate of conviction of all the New York City courts. Nearly 80 percent of those who appeared before the magistrate judge were sentenced to serve time. It didn't matter if it was your first encounter with the law. Vagrancy statutes and tenement house laws made young black women vulnerable to arrest and transformed sexual acts, even consensual ones with no cash exchanging hands, into criminal offenses. What mattered was not what you had done, but the prophetic power of the police to predict future crime, to anticipate the mug shot in the bright eyes and intelligent face of Esther Brown.

The Future of Involuntary Servitude

In 1349, the first vagrancy statute was passed in England. The law was a response to the shortage of labor in the aftermath of the Black Plague and it was designed to conscript those who refused to labor. The vagrancy laws of England were adopted in the North American colonies and invigorated with a new force and scope after Emancipation and the demise of Reconstruction. They replaced the Black Codes, which had been deemed unconstitutional, but resurrected involuntary servitude in guises amenable to the terms liberty and equality.

In the South, vagrancy laws became a surrogate for slavery, forcing ex-slaves to remain on the plantation and radically restricting their movement, recreating slavery in all but name. In northern cities, vagrancy statutes too were intended to compel the labor of the idle, and, more importantly, to control the propertyless. Those without proof of employment were considered *likely to commit* or be involved in vice and crime. Vagrancy statutes provided the legal means to master the newly masterless. The origins of the workhouse and the house of correction can be traced to these efforts to force the idle to labor, to manage and regulate the ex-serf and ex-slave when lordship and bondage assumed a more indirect form. The statutes restricted and regulated black movement and punished the forms of intimacy that could not be categorized or settled by the question: *Is this man your husband?* Those without proof of employment and refusing to labor were in all likelihood guilty of crime—vagrancy or prostitution.

Vagrancy was a status, not a crime. It was *not* doing, withholding, non-participation, the refusal to be settled or bound by contract to husband or

employer. This refusal of a social order based on monogamous marriage or wage labor was penalized. Common law defined the vagrant as “someone who wandered about without visible means of support.” William Blackstone in his 1765 *Commentaries on the Law of England* defined vagrants as those who “wake on the night and sleep in the day and haunt taverns and ale-houses and roust about; and no man knows from where they came or whither they go.” The statutes targeted those who maintained excessive notions of freedom and imagined that liberty included the right *not* to work. In short, vagrants were the deracinated—migrants, wanderers, displaced persons, and strangers.

Status offenses were critical to the remaking of a racist order in the aftermath of slavery and accelerated the growing disparity between black and white rates of incarceration in northern cities at the beginning of the twentieth century. While the legal transformation from slavery to freedom is most often narrated as the shift from status to contract, from property to subject, from slave to Negro, vagrancy statutes make apparent the continuities and entanglements between a diverse range of unfree states—from slave to servant, from servant to vagrant, from domestic to prisoner, from idler to convict and felon. Involuntary servitude wasn’t one condition—chattel slavery—nor was it fixed in time and place; rather it was an ever-changing mode of exploitation, domination, accumulation (the severing of will, the theft of capacity, the appropriation of life), and confinement. Antiblack racism fundamentally shaped the development of “status criminality.” In turn, status criminality was tethered ineradicably to blackness.

Not quite two centuries after the conspiracy to burn down New York was hatched at a black-and-tan dive called Hughson’s Tavern, black assembly and the threat of tumult still made New York’s ruling elite quake in fear. The state was as intent on preventing the dangers and consequences posed by *Negroes assembled in a riotous manner*. Gatherings that were too loud or too unruly or too queer; hotels and cabarets that welcomed black and white patrons; black-and-tan dives frequented by Chinese men and white girls or black women with Italian paramours; or house parties and buffet flats offering refuge to pansies, lady lovers, and invert—were deemed disorderly, promiscuous, and morally depraved. These forms of intimate association and unregulated assembly threatened the public good by transgressing the color line and eschewing the dominant mores. The lives of the wayward were riotous, queer, disposed to extravagance and wanton living. This promiscuous sociality fueled a moral panic identified and mobilized by the city’s ruling elite to justify the extravagant use of police power.

Penal laws against disorderly conduct, disorderly houses, disorderly persons, unlawful assembly, criminal anarchy, and vagrancy were intended to regulate intimacy and association, police styles of comportment, dictate how one assumed a gender and who one loved, and thwart free movement and errant paths through the city.

Esther Brown was confronted with a choice that was no choice at all: volunteer for servitude or be commanded by the law. Vagrancy statutes were implemented and expanded to conscript young colored women to domestic work and regulate them in proper households, that is, male-headed households, with a proper *he*, not merely someone pretending to be a husband or merely outfitted like a man, not lovers passing for sisters or a pretend *Mrs.* shacking up with a boarder, not households comprising three women and a child. For state authorities, black homes were disorderly houses as they were marked by the taint of promiscuity, pathology, and illegality, sheltering nameless children and strangers, nurturing intimacy outside the bounds of the law, not organized by the sexual dyad, and not ruled by the father; and producing criminals not citizens. The domestic was the locus of danger; it threatened social reproduction rather than ensured it. *Is this man your husband? Where is the father of your child?* Such questions, if not answered properly, might land you in the workhouse or reformatory. With incredible ferocity, state surveillance and police power acted to shape the black household and regulate intimate life. Affiliation and kinship organized along alternate lines, *an open mesh of possibilities*, was suspect and likely to yield crime. The discretionary power granted the police in discerning *future crime* would have an enormous impact on black social life and the making of the ghetto.

The plantation, the ghetto, and the prison were coeval; one mode of confinement and enclosure did not supersede the other, but extended the state of servitude, violence, and death in a new guise. The afterlife of slavery unfolded in a tenement hallway and held Esther Brown in its grasp. Plainly put, the Negro problem in the North was the arrival of the ex-slave in the city, and the moral panic and the race riots that erupted across the country document the reach of the plantation and the enduring status of the black as fungible life, eternal alien, and noncitizen.

The plantation was not abolished, but transformed. The problem of crime was the threat posed by the black presence in the city; the problem of crime was the wild experiment in black freedom; and the efforts to manage and regulate this crisis provided a means of solidifying and extending the color line that defined urban space, reproducing the disavowed apartheid of everyday life.

State violence, incarceration, and controlled depletion defined the world that Esther Brown wanted to destroy. It made her the sort of girl who would not hesitate to smash things up.

Contraband Love

The letter her ex-husband sent didn't say if the article appeared in the metro column of *The Amsterdam News* or the New York City Briefs in *The Chicago Defender* or the City News section of the *New York Herald*, in which case only a few lines dedicated to the when, where, and how would have appeared, just the cold hard facts, perhaps accompanied by statistics that documented the rising rate of prostitution, or the increasing numbers of young colored women arrested for solicitation and violation of the Tenement House Law. It would not have been a showy or sensationalist headline like *Silk and Lights Blamed for Harlem's Girl Demise* or a lead story of moral crisis and sexual panic manufactured by vice commissions and urban reformers. If the details were especially sordid, a column or two might be devoted to a young woman's demise.

All her ex-husband said was that "a rush of sadness and disbelief had washed over him" as he tried to figure out how *his Esther, his baby*, had come to be involved in such trouble. He encouraged her to be a good girl and he promised to take care of her when she was released, something he had failed to do in the few months they lived together as husband and wife in her mother's home. Now that it was too late, he was trying to be steady. The letter was posted on army stationery and it was filled with assurances about his love, promises about trying to be a better man and pleading that she try to do better. *You will not live happy*, he cautioned, *until [your] wild world end(s)*. He hoped she had learned a *long lost lesson in the wild world of fun and pleasure*.

Esther's grandmother and sister didn't know that she had been arrested until they saw her name in the daily newspaper. They were in disbelief. It wasn't true. It couldn't be. Anyone in Harlem could tell you that stool pigeons were paid to lie. Everyone knew Krause was working for the cops. He would sell his own mama for a dollar. Besides, if anyone was to blame for Esther's trouble, her grandmother thought, it was her mother, Rose. She was jealous of the girl, mostly because of the attention paid to Esther by the men boarding in the rented rooms of her flat. Rose was living with one of them as her husband, although the relation, properly speaking, was outside the bounds of the law.

When Rose heard the news of her daughter's arrest it confirmed what she believed: the girl was headed for trouble. Some time in the country and not running the streets might steady her, she confided to the social worker,

tipping the hand that would decide her daughter's fate. What passed for maternal concern was a long list of complaints about Esther's manner of living. Rose told the colored probation officer, Miss Campbell, that her daughter had "never worked more than six weeks at a time and usually stayed in a place only a couple of weeks." She just wouldn't stay put or keep a job. She had a good husband and she left him. She was young and flighty and did not want to be tied down to one husband. What more was there to say?

The neighbors told a different story. *The mother is the one who needs to be sent away.* Everyone knew Rose Saunders consorted with one of the men who lodged in her apartment. "What kind of example is that for a girl? That's no straight road."

The letter from Esther's girlfriend was nothing like her husband's. It didn't plead for her to be a good girl or beg her to leave the wild world behind or caution her to take the straight road, but instead reminded her of all the pleasures awaiting her when she received her *free papers*, not the least of these being Alice's love:

Dear Little Girl, Just a few lines to let you know that everything is o.k. I suppose you think I was foolish to leave Peekskill but I could not stand the work. I have not been used to working so hard when I leave Bedford and why should I do so when I don't have to, you stay where you are as you expect to live in New York when you are free. . . . It will surprise you, I am going to be married next month, not that I care much but for protection. I went to New York Sunday and seen quite a number of old friends and heard all the scandal and then some . . . New York is wide open, plenty of white stuff & everything you want so cheer up there are plenty of good times in store for you. So I must close with the same old love wishing you well.

It is not clear if Esther had the chance to read Alice's letter. This missive of contraband love was seized by prison authorities and included with the disciplinary reports and the notes from the staff meetings, augmenting the folio of documents that formed the case file and invited greater punishment.

Attitude: She is inclined to be sullen and defiant. Came to Bedford with the impression that this was a very bad place and decided that she would not let any of the matrons run over her." She said "If they keep yelling at her they'll find that isn't the way to treat Esther Brown." And "Esther Brown isn't going to stand for that."

Note: Patient is a colored girl with good mentality who has had her own way and enjoyed much freedom. The influence of her family and her environment have both been bad. She is the hyperkinetic type which craves continually activity and amusement.

Riot and Refrain

The reporters were most interested in what happened to the white girls. Ruth Carter, Stella Kramer, and Maizie Rice were the names that appeared in the newspapers. Ruth was the first one to tell the State Prison Commission about the terrible things done to them at Bedford Hills: they were handcuffed in the cells of Rebecca Halls, they were stripped and their mouths gagged with dirty rags and harsh soap, they were beaten with rubber hoses and handcuffed to their cots, they were hung from the doors of their cells with their feet barely reaching the ground, they were given the “water treatment” and their faces immersed in water until they could hardly breathe, and they were isolated for weeks and months behind the double doors of the cells in the Disciplinary Building. The double door prevented any light from entering and the lack of air made the dank smell of the dark chamber and their waste and rank unwashed bodies unbearable. The stench, the sensory deprivation, and the isolation were intended to break them.

There were two hundred and sixty-five inmates and twenty-one babies. The young women ranged in age from fourteen to thirty and the majority were city girls exiled to the country for moral reform. They came from crowded tenements. Eighty percent of the young women at Bedford had been subjected to some form of punishment—confined in their rooms for a week, confined in the cells of Rebecca Hall, confined in the Disciplinary Building. Even the State Prison Commission was forced to concede it was cruel and unusual punishment. It was a reformatory in name only and there was nothing modern or therapeutic about its disciplinary measures. When asked if hanging girls up, handcuffing them, and beating them with hoses was abusive, one matron replied: “If you don’t quell them or rule them with an iron hand you cannot live with these people.” When questioned as to why she failed to mention such punishments, the prison superintendent, Miss Helen Cobb, responded that she hadn’t mentioned such practices because she considered them “treatment,” not punishment.

The smallest infractions invited harsh punishment: a complaint about dinner, a sheet of stationery found tucked under a mattress, or dancing in a lewd manner might be punished with a week locked in your room or confined in Rebecca Hall or stripped and tied to a cell door in the Disciplinary building. Black girls were more likely to be punished and to be punished more harshly.

Loretta Michie was the only colored girl quoted in the newspaper article. The prison authorities resented that the inmates had been named at all. It fueled the public hysteria about the abuses and endowed the atrocities

with a face and a story. Loretta and several other black women testified before the State Prison Commission about how Miss Cobb and Miss Minogue treated them. Perhaps it was because the sixteen-year-old had curly hair, dark brown eyes, and a pretty face that she caught the attention of the reporters and prompted them to record her name. Perhaps it was the graphic account of brutality that made her words more noteworthy than the others. Did she describe more vividly the utter aloneness of the dungeon, how it felt to be cut off from the world and cast out again, and that in the darkness shouting out and hearing the voices of others was your lifeline; or how your heart raced because you were afraid you might drown, even when you knew it was just a pail of water, but hell it might as well have been the Atlantic. The fight to breathe waged again. How long could one live under water? The world went black and when your eyes opened you were beached on the dark floor of an isolation cell. Was the body suspended from the door of a neighboring cell yours too? The pain moving and cutting across the body shared by all those confined in the ten cells of the D.B.? The newspaper offered a pared-down description: Loretta Michie testified that she had been “handcuffed to the bars of her cell, with the tips of her toes touching the floor, for so long that she fell when she was released.” She also noted that the colored girls were assigned to the worst jobs in the kitchen, the laundry, and the psychiatric unit.

Other women reported being stripped and tied naked to their cots, they were fed bread and water for a week, they were strung up and suspended in their cells, denied even the small relief of toes touching the ground. Esther too could have told them about Rebecca Hall; like Loretta Michie she had been confined in the Disciplinary Building several times; she could have told them about Peter Quinn and the others slapping and kicking the girls had she been asked to appear. But Peter Quinn didn’t need anybody to testify against him. He was one of the few guards who owned up to some of the terrible things he had done, mostly to make Miss Cobb look bad. By his own admission, he helped string up girls about one hundred times. He was the one who “showed Miss Minogue how to first handcuff a girl to the cell partition with her hands back of her, and that he knows that at that time the feet were always wholly on the floor.” Under the direction of Miss Minogue the practice “just grew” to lift them a little higher.

In December 1919, the women in Lowell Cottage made their voices heard even if no one wanted to listen. Lowell, Flowers, Gibbons, Sanford, and Harriman were the cottages reserved for black prisoners. After a scandal about interracial sex and “harmful intimacy” erupted in 1914, segregation had been imposed and cottages sorted by race as well as age, status, addiction,

and capacity. A special provision of the Charities Law permitted the state to practice racial segregation while safeguarding it from legal claims that such practices were unconstitutional and a violation of the state's civil rights laws.

The newspaper described the upheaval and resistance of Lowell Cottage as a sonic revolt, a "noise strike," the "din of an infernal chorus." Collectively the prisoners had grown weary of gratuitous violence and being punished for trifles, so they sought retribution in noise and destruction. They tossed their mattresses, they broke windows, they set fires. Nearly everyone in the cottage was shouting and screaming and crying out to whoever would listen. They pounded the walls with their fists, finding a shared and steady rhythm that they hoped might topple the cottage, make the walls crumble, smash the cots, destroy the reformatory so that it would never be capable of holding another "innocent girl in the jailhouse." The "wailing shrieking chorus" protested the conditions of the prison, insisted they had done nothing to justify confinement; they refused to be treated as if they were not human, as if they were waste. The *New York Times* reported: "The noise was deafening. Almost every window of the cottage was crowded with Negro women who were shouting, angry and laughing hysterically. The uproarious din emanating from the cottage smote the ears of the investigators before they got within sight of the building." Songs and shouts were the vehicle of struggle.

The chorus spoke with one voice. All of them screamed and cried about the unfairness of being sentenced to Bedford, arrested in a frame-up, the three years of life stolen. Were they nothing or nobody? Could they be seized and cast away and no one in the world would care or even give a damn? Were Harriman and Gibbons and Sanford and Flowers also up in arms? A month after Miss Minogue put her in a chokehold, beat her head with a set of keys, pummeled her with a rubber hose, Mattie Jackson joined the chorus. Thinking about her son and how he was growing up without her made her wail and shout louder. It is not that she or any of the others imagined that their pleas and complaints would gain a hearing outside the cottage or that the findings of the New York State Commission of Prisons would make any difference for them. This riot, like the ones that preceded it and the ones that would follow in its wake, was not unusual. What was unusual was that the riot had been reported at all. The state investigation of abuse and torture at the reformatory made rioting colored women a newsworthy topic.

Loretta, or Mickey as some of her friends called her, beat the walls, bellowed, cursed, and screamed. At fourteen years old, before she had her first period, before she had a lover, before she penned lines like "sweetheart

in my dreams I'm calling you," Mickey waged a small battle against the prison and the damned police and the matrons and the parole officers and the social workers. She was unwilling to pretend that her keepers were anything else. The cottages were not homes. Miss Cobb didn't give a damn about her and Miss Minogue was a thug in a skirt. The matrons were brutes and not there to guide or provide counsel or assist them in making better lives, but to manage and control, punish and inflict harm. They let you know what they thought: you were being treated too well and each cruel punishment was deserved and the only way to communicate with the inmates, especially the colored girls. Miss Dawley, the sociologist, interviewed them. She asked questions and wrote down everything they said, but her recommendation was always the same: prison is the only place for her.

Mickey rebelled without knowing the awful things the prison staff said about her in their meetings—she was simple-minded and a liar, she thought too much of herself, “she had been with a good many men.” The psychologist, Dr. Spaulding, said she was trying to appear young and innocent, but clearly wasn't. Was it possible that she was just fourteen years old? Miss Cobb decided the matter: “let's just assume she is eighteen.” Everyone believed prison was the best place for a young black woman on an errant path.

Staying out all night at a dance with her friends or stealing \$2.00 to buy a new dress so she could perform on stage was sufficient cause to commit her. Mickey cursed and pummeled the wall with her fist and refused to stop no matter how tired. She didn't care if they threw her in the Disciplinary Building every single day, she would never stop fighting them, she would never submit.

Disciplinary Report: Very troublesome. She has been in Rebecca Hall and the Disciplinary Building. Punished continually. Friendship with the white girls.

She had been in the D.B. more times than her disciplinary sheet revealed. In Rebecca Hall, she schemed and plotted and incited the other girls to rioting and disorder. She was proud to have been the cause of considerable trouble her entire time at Bedford. When confined in the prison buildings, she managed to send a few letters to her girlfriend. The love letter seized by the matron was written in pencil on toilet paper because she was not allowed pen and paper in confinement. The missive to her girlfriend Catherine referred to the earlier riots of 1917 and 1918 and expressed the spirit of rage and resistance that fueled the December action in Lowell:

I get so utterly disgusted with these g-d—cops I could kill them. They may run Bedford and they may run some of the pussies in Bedford but they are never going to run Loretta Michie. . . . It doesn't pay to be a good fellow in a joint of this kind, but I don't regret anything I ever done I have been to prison (Rebecca Hall) three times and D.B. once and may go again soon and a few others and myself always got the Dirty End. Everytime prison would cut up in 1918 or 1917 when police came up whether we were cutting up or not we were [there]. . . . They would always string us up or put us in the Stairway sheets but we would cut up all the more. Those were the days when J.M. [Julia Minogue] was kept up all night and all day we would wait until she go to bed about 1 o'clock at night and then we would start and then we would quiet down about 4 o'clock and start again about 8 in the morning. . . . Then there was a good gang here then we could have those days back again 'if' we only had the women but we haven't so why bother. . . . I have only one more day but when you've had as much punishment as I have you don't mind it. Well the Lights are being extinguished so Good Night and Sweet pleasant dreams. Loyally yours, Black Eyes or Mickey

Lowell Cottage roared with the sounds of upheaval and revolt. They smashed the windows of the cottage. Broken windows linked the disorder of the prison to the ghetto, explained the sociologist in a lecture on the culture of poverty. Glints and shards of shattered glass were the language of the riot. Furniture was destroyed. Walls were defaced. Fires started. Like Esther Brown, Mickey didn't hesitate to smash things up. The cottage mates yelled and shouted and cursed for hours. Each voice blended with the others in a common tongue. Every utterance and shout made plain the truth: riot was the only remedy within reach.



It was the dangerous music of upheaval. En masse they announced what had been endured, what they wanted, what they intended to destroy. Bawling and screaming and cursing made the cottage tremble and corralled them together into one large pulsing formation, an ensemble reveling in the beauty of the strike. Young women hanging out of the windows, crowding at the doors, and huddling on shared beds sounded a complete revolution, an upheaval of the given, an undoing and remaking of values, which called property and law and social order into crisis. They sought redress among themselves. The call and the appeal transformed them from prisoners into rioters, from inmates to fugitives, even if only for thirteen hours. In the discordant assembly, they found a hearing in one another.

The *black noise* emanating from Lowell Cottage expressed their rage and their longing. It made manifest the latent rebellion simmering beneath the surface of things. It provided the language in which “they lamented their lot and what they called the injustice of their keepers at the top of their voices.” To those outside the circle it was a din without melody or center. The *New York Times* had trouble deciding which among the sensational headlines it should use for the article, so it went with three: “Devil’s Chorus Sung by Girl Rioters.” “Bedford Hears Mingled Shrieks and Squeals, Suggesting Inferno Set to Jaz[z].” “Outbreak Purely Vocal.” What exactly did Dante’s Inferno sound like when transposed into a jazz suite? For the white world, jazz was a synonym for primal sound and savage modernism. It was raw energy and excitement, nonsense and jargon, empty talk, excess, carnal desire: it was slang for copulation and conjured social disorder and free love rather than composition or improvisation.

You can take my tie
 You can take my collar
 But I’ll jazz you
 Till you holler

Sonic tumult and upheaval—resistance as music had to be construed as jazz. It was the only frame to make legible their utterances. In the most basic sense, the sounds emanating from Lowell were the free music of those in captivity, the abolition philosophy expressed within the circle. If freedom and mutual creation defined the music, so too did it define the strike and riot waged by the prisoners of Lowell. “The Reformatory Blues,” a facile label coined by the daily newspapers to describe the collective refusal of prison conditions, was Dante filtered through Ma Rainey and Buddy Bolden. Their utterances were marked by the long history of black radical sound—whoops and hollers, shrieks and squawks, sorrow songs and blues. It was the sound track to a history that hurt.

The chants and cries escaped the confines of the prison, even if their bodies did not: “Almost every window [of the cottage] was crowded with negro women who were shouting, crying, and laughing hysterically.” Few outside the circle understood the deep resources of this hue and cry. The aesthetic inheritance of “jargon and nonsense” was nothing if not a philosophy of freedom that reached back to slave songs and circle dances—struggle and flight, death and refusal became music or moaning or joyful noise or discordant sound.

For those within this circle, every groan and cry, curse and shout insisted slavery time was over. They were tired of being abused and confined, and they wanted to be free. Those exact words could be found in the letters written by their mothers and husbands and girlfriends: “I tell you Miss Cobb, it is no slave time with colored people now.” All of them might well have shouted, *No slave time now. Abolition now. In the surreal, utopian nonsense of it all*, and at the heart of riot, was the anarchy of colored girls: treason en masse, tumult, gathering together, the mutual collaboration required to confront the prison authorities and the police, the willingness to lose oneself and become something greater—a chorus, a swarm, an ensemble, a mutual aid society. In lieu of an explanation or an appeal, they shouted and stomped and screamed. How else were they to express the longing to be free? How else were they to make plain their refusal to be governed?

Outsiders described the din as a swan song, to signal that their defeat was certain and they would return to their former state as prisoners without a voice in the world and to whom anything might be done. There was little that was mournful in the chants and curses, the hollers and squawks. This collective utterance was not a dirge. As they crowded in the windows of the cottage, some hanging out and others peeking from the corners, the dangerous music of black life was unleashed from within the space of captivity, a raucous polyphonic utterance that sounded beautiful and terrible. Before the riot was quashed, its force touched everyone on the grounds of the prison and as far away as the tenements, rented rooms, and ramshackle lodging houses of Harlem, Brooklyn, and Staten Island.

The noise conveyed the defeat and the aspiration, the beauty and the wretchedness that was otherwise inaudible to the ears of the world; it revealed a sensibility at odds with the institution’s brutal realism. What to make of the utopian impulse that enabled them to believe that anyone cared about what they had to say? What convinced them that the force of their collective utterance was capable of turning anything around? What urged them to create a reservoir of living within the prison’s mandated death? What made them tireless? The next month, the prisoners confined in Rebecca Hall waged another noise strike. “Prisoners began to jangle their cell doors, throw furniture against the walls, scream, sing, and use profanity. In the opinion of one of the noisemakers, “the medley of sounds, ‘the Reformatory Blues,’ may yet make a hit on Broadway, even if the officials appear to disdain jazz.” They carried on all night in the prison building. They rioted again in July, August, and November.

The chants and cries insisted: We want to be free. The strike begged the question: Why are we locked up here? Why have you stolen our lives? Why do you beat us like dogs? Starve us? Pull our hair from our heads? Gag us? Club us over the head? It isn't right to take our lives. No one deserved to be treated like this.

All those listening on the outside could discern were: "gales of catcalls, hurricanes of screams, cyclones of rage, tornadoes of squalls." The sounds yielded to "one hair-raising, ear-testing Devil's chorus." Those inside the circle listened for the love and disappointment, the longing and the outrage that fueled this collective utterance. They channeled the fears and the hopes of the ones who loved them, the bad dreams and the nightmares about children stolen away by white men and lost at sea. The refrains were redolent with all the lovely plans about what they would do once they were free. These sounds traveled through the night air.

Voices in the Chorus

This speculative history of Esther Brown is based on the "Statement of the Girl," the interviews with her family members, the verified history, personal and institutional correspondence, notes of staff meetings found in Bedford Hills Correctional Facility, 14610–77B Inmate Case Files, Records of the Department of Correctional Services, New York State Archives. The New York State Archives required that the names of the prisoners be changed to maintain the privacy of the records. See Inmate File #s 2507, 2503, 2466, and 4092. The Bedford prison files are very detailed, particularly until the year 1920, when the Laboratory of Social Hygiene conducted extensive intake interviews of the girls and women upon their arrival. The intake process included personal interviews, family histories, interviews with neighbors, employers, and teachers, psychological tests, physical examinations, intelligence tests, social investigators' reports, as well as the reports of probation officers, school report cards, letters from former employers, and other state records (from training schools and orphanages). Following a two-week evaluation of the compiled materials, physicians, psychologists, social workers, sociologists, and prison superintendents met to discuss each individual case. The idea of indeterminate sentencing was based on the notion that punishment must be tailored to the requirements of the individual prisoners. In practice, this resulted in sentences as long as three years for status offenses and the likelihood of future crime. The files contain personal correspondence, discussions of sexual history, life experiences, family background, hobbies, as well as poems and plays written by the prisoners. The case file intended to produce deep knowledge of the individual in a genre that combined sociological investigation with literary fiction creating a statistical portrait of the young women. The importance of the case file was critical to prison reform and the idea that probation, punishment, and parole must be individually suited to each offender; this approach favored indeterminate sentencing. In practice, this meant that for status offenses and the likelihood of future criminality or the likelihood to become morally depraved a young woman might spend three years confined at Bedford and be entangled with the criminal justice system and under state surveillance for a decade of her life. The case was grounded in a hermeneutics of suspicion and a horizon of reform. It was an exemplary product of the therapeutic state.

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ATTENTION AND WILL

by Simone Weil

We do not have to understand new things, but by dint of patience, effort and method to come to understand with our whole self the truths which are evident.

Stages of belief. The most commonplace truth when it floods the *whole soul*, is like a revelation.

We have to try to cure our faults by attention and not by will.

The will only controls a few movements of a few muscles, and these movements are associated with the idea of the change of position of nearby objects. I can will to put my hand flat on the table. If inner purity, inspiration or truth of thought were necessarily associated with attitudes of this kind, they might be the object of will. As this is not the case, we can only beg for them. To beg for them is to believe that we have a Father in heaven. Or should we cease to desire them? What could be worse? Inner supplication is the only reasonable way, for it avoids stiffening muscles which have nothing to do with the matter. What could be more stupid than to tighten up our muscles and set our jaws about virtue, or poetry, or the solution of a problem. Attention is something quite different.

Pride is a tightening up of this kind. There is a lack of grace (we can give the word its double meaning here) in the proud man. It is the result of a mistake.

Attention, taken to its highest degree, is the same thing as prayer. It presupposes faith and love.

Absolutely unmixed attention is prayer.

If we turn our minds towards the good, it is impossible that little by little the whole soul will not be attracted thereto in spite of itself.

Extreme attention is what constitutes the creative faculty in man and the only extreme attention is religious. The amount of creative genius in any period is strictly in proportion to the amount of extreme attention and thus of authentic religion at that period.

The wrong way of seeking. The attention fixed on a problem. Another phenomenon due to horror of the void. We do not want to have lost our labour. The heat of the chase. We must not want to find: as in the case of an excessive devotion, we become dependent on the object of our efforts. We need an outward reward which chance

sometimes provides and which we are ready to accept at the price of a deformation of the truth.

It is only effort without desire (not attached to an object) which infallibly contains a reward.

To draw back before the object we are pursuing. Only an indirect method is effective. We do nothing if we have not first drawn back.

By pulling at the bunch, we make all the grapes fall to the ground.

There are some kinds of effort which defeat their own object (example: the soured disposition of certain pious females, false asceticism, certain sorts of self-devotion, etc.). Others are always useful, even if they do not meet with success.

How are we to distinguish between them? Perhaps in this way: some efforts are always accompanied by the (false) negation of our inner wretchedness; with others the attention is continually concentrated on the distance there is between what we are and what we love.

Love is the teacher of gods and men, for no one learns without desiring to learn. Truth is sought not because it is truth but because it is good.

Attention is bound up with desire. Not with the will but with desire — or more exactly, consent.

We liberate energy in ourselves, but it constantly reattaches itself. How are we to liberate it entirely? We have to desire that it should be done in us — to desire it truly — simply to desire it, not to try to accomplish it. For every attempt in that direction is vain and has to be dearly paid for. In such a work all that I call 'I' has to be passive. Attention alone — that attention which is so full that the 'I' disappears — is required of me. I have to deprive all that I call 'I' of the light of my attention and turn it on to that which cannot be conceived.

The capacity to drive a thought away once and for all is the gateway to eternity. The infinite in an instant.

As regards temptations, we must follow the example of the truly chaste woman who, when the seducer speaks to her, makes no answer and pretends not to hear him.

We should be indifferent to good and evil but, when we are indifferent, that is to say when we project the light of our attention equally on both, the good gains the day. This phenomenon comes about automatically. There lies the essential grace. And it is the definition, the criterion of good.

A divine inspiration operates infallibly, irresistibly, if we do not turn away our attention, if we do not refuse it. There is not a choice to be

made in its favour, it is enough not to refuse to recognize that it exists.

The attention turned with love towards God (or in a lesser degree, towards anything which is truly beautiful) makes certain things impossible for us. Such is the non-acting action of prayer in the soul. There are ways of behaviour which would veil such attention should they be indulged in and which, reciprocally, this attention puts out of the question.

As soon as we have a point of eternity in the soul, we have nothing more to do but to take care of it, for it will grow of itself like a seed. It is necessary to surround it with an armed guard, waiting in stillness, and to nourish it with the contemplation of numbers, of fixed and exact relationships.

We nourish the changeless which is in the soul by the contemplation of that which is unchanging in the body.

Writing is like giving birth: we cannot help making the supreme effort. But we also act in like fashion. I need have no fear of not making the supreme effort — provided only that I am honest with myself and that I pay attention.

The poet produces the beautiful by fixing his attention on something real. It is the same with the act of love. To know that this man who is hungry and thirsty really exists as much as I do — that is enough, the rest follows of itself.

The authentic and pure values — truth, beauty and goodness — in the activity of a human being are the result of one and the same act, a certain application of the full attention to the object.

Teaching should have no aim but to prepare, by training the attention, for the possibility of such an act.

All the other advantages of instruction are without interest.

Studies and faith. Prayer being only attention in its pure form and studies being a form of gymnastics of the attention, each school exercise should be a refraction of spiritual life. There must be method in it. A certain way of doing a Latin prose, a certain way of tackling a problem in geometry (and not just any way) make up a system of gymnastics of the attention calculated to give it a greater aptitude for prayer.

Method for understanding images, symbols, etc. Not to try to interpret them, but to look at them till the light suddenly dawns.

Generally speaking, a method for the exercise of the intelligence, which consists of looking.

Application of this rule for the discrimination between the real and the illusory. In our sense perceptions, if we are not sure of what we see we change our position while looking, and what is real becomes evident. In the inner life, time takes the place of space. With time we are altered, and, if as we change we keep our gaze directed towards the same thing, in the end illusions are scattered and the real becomes visible. This is on condition that the attention be a looking and not an attachment.

When a struggle goes on between the will attached to some obligation and a bad desire, there is a wearing away of the energy attached to good. We have to endure the biting of the desire passively, as we do a suffering which brings home to us our wretchedness, and we have to keep our attention turned towards the good. Then the quality of our energy is raised to a higher degree.

We must steal away the energy from our desires by taking away from them their temporal orientation.

Our desires are infinite in their pretensions but limited by the energy from which they proceed. That is why with the help of grace we can become their master and finally destroy them by attrition. As soon as this has been clearly understood, we have virtually conquered them, if we keep our attention in contact with this truth.

Video meliora . . . In such states, it seems as though we were thinking of the good, and in a sense we are doing so, but we are not thinking of its possibility.

It is incontestable that the void which we grasp with the pincers of contradiction is from on high, for we grasp it the better the more we sharpen our natural faculties of intelligence, will and love. The void which is from below is that into which we fall when we allow our natural faculties to become atrophied.

Experience of the transcendent: this seems contradictory, and yet the transcendent can be known only through contact since our faculties are unable to prevent it.

Solitude. Where does its value lie? For in solitude we are in the presence of mere matter (even the sky, the stars, the moon, trees in blossom), things of less value (perhaps) than a human spirit. Its value lies in the greater possibility of attention. If we could be attentive to the same degree in the presence of a human being...

We can only know one thing about God — that he is what we are not. Our wretchedness alone is an image of this. The more we contemplate it, the more we contemplate him.

Sin is nothing else but the failure to recognize human wretchedness. It is unconscious wretchedness and for that very reason guilty wretchedness. The story of Christ is the experimental proof that human wretchedness is irreducible, that it is as great in the absolutely sinless man as in the sinner. But in him who is without sin it is enlightened.

The recognition of human wretchedness is difficult for whoever is rich and powerful because he is almost invincibly led to believe that he is something. It is equally difficult for the man in miserable circumstances because he is almost invincibly led to believe that the rich and powerful man is something.

It is not the fault which constitutes mortal sin, but the [degree of light in the soul when the fault, whatever it may be, is accomplished.

Purity is the power to contemplate defilement.

Extreme purity can contemplate both the pure and the [impure: impurity can do neither: the pure frightens it, the impure absorbs it. It has to have a mixture.

From *Gravity and Grace*, translated by Emma Craufurd, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1952. Originally published as *La Pesanteur et la Grace*, Plon, Paris, 1947.

Édouard Glissant

The Baton Rouge Interviews

with Alexandre Leupin

translated by

Kate M. Cooper

LIVERPOOL UNIVERSITY PRESS

LES ENTRETIENS DE BATON ROUGE

avec Alexandre Leupin

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Key Signs and Key Things:

An Introduction to Édouard Glissant's Essays

Entering Glissant's works is to discover a new world, in which many of our assumptions are challenged: first, concerning our material and natural environment and second, regarding philosophy, criticism, theory and thought. Glissant is indeed one of those very rare individuals, an original thinker. Although in his early years he followed a classic university curriculum in philosophy, ethnology, literature and history at the Université de la Sorbonne, ultimately resulting in a Master's degree, he never abandoned a dual vision rooted in his formative years spent in the former French colony of Martinique and, later on, in his contact with European culture. His thought is therefore a hybridization of these two backgrounds, a mixing that he will maintain, elaborate and develop beyond those two mainstays all his life long, while keeping a critical distance with respect to those two constitutive spaces.

This will allow him to escape the pitfalls of academic silos, of misleading universals, of closed systems of thought, of critical ghettos, of identity politics, of the reduction of poetry and thought to ideology. All these tenets are regularly contested by Édouard Glissant. He also rejects labels like Francophonie, postmodernism and postcolonialism. As a matter of fact, his thinking sets aside all determinations and constraints, 'even those that he has formulated *for himself*' (this volume, p. 20), to open itself to a radical freedom. It calls for its readers to open a space of listening beyond their own prejudices, assumptions and presuppositions.

He thus positions himself freely and independently outside the current state of academic criticism, which, in the humanities tends to produce an infinite fragmentation of disciplines and subfields that ignore each other and don't talk to each other: a hermetic and hermeneutic obscurantism that obliterates beauty and literature. All disciplines, all manifestation of art and beauty, contribute to the development of his thought.

Glissant's reader should always keep in mind that his primary means of expression, which supersedes all others, is poetry, whether it manifest itself in novels, plays, poems or essays. He eschews the abstract dryness of customary philosophical prose and thus shows his affinity with the pre-Socratics, the first philosophers, who wrote the first treatises on nature in verse. Glissant's thought is always open to the power of a rich imaginary and imagery which is consubstantial with all his writings, whatever their genres.

Glissant proposes a thinking of general blending, not only of notions, but of material objects, including the materiality of poetry. Hence, for example, in the present book, the great Western epics (the *Aeneid*, the *Song of Roland*) will be put into dialogue with the epics of Latin America (the *Popol Vuh* and the *Chilam Balam*). In *La cohée du Lamentin*, the stallion from the Lascaux cave (15,000 BCE) is placed side by side with Uccello's chivalric mounts (fifteenth century) and the dying horse in Picasso's *Guernica* (1937). These relations between cultural objects don't transcend space and time, since they are considered in their materiality and historical origins; rather, they are contrasted and synthezized in their material copresence in our imaginary.

I said that Glissant was an original thinker. These examples show, however, that his uniqueness does not reside upon a *tabula rasa*. Quite to the contrary, his thinking is built upon the entirety of human history and culture: this past is not restricted to a specific region or time, and boundaries are shattered. In addition, everything past is submitted to what he calls 'the prophetic vision of the past': he looks on history for what could shape and inspire the future, hence producing a reinterpretation of our diverse histories. Hegel's Minerva Owl, which took flight at dusk to enlighten the obscurities of past philosophical thinking, can also, in Glissant's work, fly away at dawn, towards a future of endless possibilities. There is no immutable fixity, even the past changes, we can find in long past cultures signs that have been repressed, forgotten or occulted and that may presage unforeseen futures.

While Glissant adopts the process of Hegelian dialectics, he rejects the philosopher's Absolute Knowledge, by which man, thought and history come to definitive synthesis and closure in Hegel. Such is his dictum: when Western History comes to an end, histories begin.

Let us now review some of the major notions at work in Glissant's thought at work in essays his as well as in his creations, which cannot be separated: poetry thinks, and 'philosophy is an art'. In order to clarify things, we need to isolate them somewhat artificially, while being aware that Glissant's work is a unified, immense, and evolving flux, where everything is organically linked to everything.

In opposition to root-identity, supposedly closed upon itself and excluding those who do not partake in its blood or cultural genealogy, Glissant proposes *relation-identity*, which is defined by the exchanges, not only between individuals, but also between cultures: 'I change, by exchange with the other, without losing myself or denaturing myself'. Identity is thus not immovable, it is submitted to change by the exchange with others, without being absorbed and erased by otherness. In brief, obliquely, through detours (which is an element of his poetics), he practices a conceptualization of identity that differs radically from identity politics and its related literary theory. Glissantian identity does not hark back, in a reactionary fashion, to root identity (or identity defined by prejudice), but on the contrary opens the way for future and unending redefinitions.

Identity raises the question of filiation and origins; in Glissant's vision, there is no pure origin, a One from which everything would derive. This can be verified at the level of genetics, but also as far as cultural geneses are concerned. It is not only Caribbean cultures that are born from diverse civilizational strands, but also Western cultures, which emerged from historical, dialectical struggles, for example the battle between the Greco-Roman heritage and Catholicism. Culture is thus always the result of a *digenesis*. This applies also to abstract theories and critical inquiry, which reduce complexity through a unifying coherence, hence discarding differences.

Glissant is aware of the present intermingling of cultures and people, immeasurably quickened today by the internet and globalization. However, he found the inspiration for his notion of *creolization* in the rapid advent of creole languages, ushered in by colonization and slavery. Creolization designates the interpenetrations of cultures, defining the state of the present world. It is thus for Glissant the preeminent sign of modernity, which make of our times a *globality* to be distinguished from economic *globalization*, which has, after all, no cultural ambition. If we practice the prophetic vision of the past, we can readily see that creolization was a major factor in the emergence of European cultures, which were built upon the remnants of Roman colonies. Hence, Glissant's affinity with the Middle Ages, which he studied at the Sorbonne, and which gave me, as a medievalist, the idea of the interviews that led to the publication of the present book.

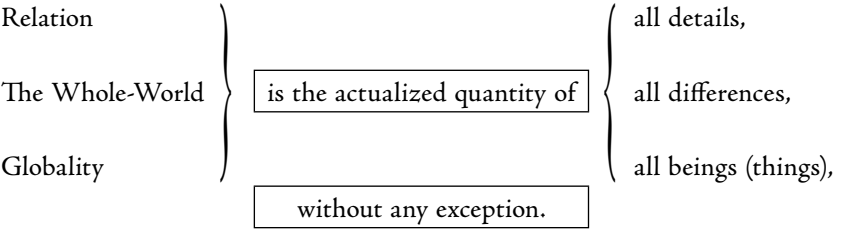
Globality lends itself to a pondering of totality, even if we are in an age deeply suspicious of the concept because of its association with the totalitarianisms, left and right, of the twentieth century, and their millions of victims. But Glissant's totality is not to be confused with its dystopian manifestations in the last century, first because it is all-inclusive, without, of course, exclusion regarding races, sexes, cultures; second because totalization

is by Glissant an open-ended process, welcoming an unpredictable future and ready to consider what will develop. Totalitarianism entails a rigid and exclusionary fixity, whereas Glissantian totality is neither static nor descriptive; it gets rid of any notion of supremacy that was consubstantial with the triumph of the Aryan race or the proletariat and made totality a raw political grab of power. Totality is prospective and open to change and always becoming, which explains that no statement, past or present, is definitive. Late in his work, Glissant will name totality the *Whole-World*, which is not only a notion, but the all-encompassing weighting of things, down to the most minute material details, from the past and the present, from nature and culture.

Glissant’s master notion is without a doubt *Relation*. It appears indirectly in his first essay, *Soleil de la conscience*, published in 1956, and then will accompany every stage of the concrescence of his works. Relation is not to be confused with or confined to the relationship of an Ego to another, or of a group to another, since it has a truly limitless extension and potential for application. As Jacques Coursil states, ‘Relation has no outside.’*

Over the years, Glissant expressed Relation in different ways, but some elements of the definition have remained stable. This permanent core I name a *logion*, a self-explanatory statement that is at once central to thought and not subject; Glissant’s logia are not catchphrases to be recited with an incantatory tone, but crystallizations of thoughts that have been meticulously pondered and thus beg for active interpretations. They are prods for our thinking.

In the following schema, the Relation *logion* is highlighted by a text box.



‘Actualized quantity’ is carefully pondered to designate material things in the world (words, poetry and thoughts included). As such, Relation

* ‘La Catégorie de la relation dans les essais d’Édouard Glissant, philosophie d’une poétique’, in Jacques Chevrier, dir., *Poétiques d’Édouard Glissant* (Paris: Presses de l’université de Paris-Sorbonne, 1999), <http://www.edouardglissant.fr/coursil.pdf>.

marks a rupture with metaphysics and ontology, which, from Plato and Aristotle through Heidegger, focuses on Being as an abstraction from material reality. Being designates the abstract essence of things (beings) and *qualities* are added to it (like time, place, colour, etc.). Glissant's thought instead posits quantity at its core, meaning 'material things in the world' (*étants* in French, *beings* in English).

'Without any exception' denotes the totalizing aspect of Glissant's thinking: nothing is excluded, Relation can be applied to everything. It is thus closely related to the Whole-World, past, present and future.

The 'unstable' elements (Relation, the Whole-World, globality; details, differences, beings) are variants that are commutable and substitutable: they are hence approximate synonyms which induce, at any moment, a different angle to the core of the definition. The use of certain elements depends on their pertinence to the moment they are uttered, what the Sophists, whom Glissant admired, called the *kairos*. The interplay of these combinations indicates that there is no hierarchy between the notions, no primary elements or principles upon which other notions depend and from which they can be derived. As he states in the interviews: 'Relation has only Relation principles'.

Allow me to give two examples extracted from the present volume.

First, an apparent tautology, a serpent which bites its tail: 'Relation is unnamable. Why? Because it cannot be named'. This tautology is resolved by Glissant's own answer: Relation cannot be named, i.e. given a definitive, conceptual form, 'because it is unpredictable'. Relation is open to the future, a future still unknown to us. Hence, naming Relation is always too early, because it is an endless process of becoming whose figure we don't know in our present.

Second, an axiom: 'Relation is not a happy ending [*un bon devenir*]'. Here, Glissant at the same time follows and dissociates himself from Hegelian dialectics. For Hegel, there was a happy ending to the historical process, Absolute Knowledge, when, his task done, the philosopher could return to the serene contemplation of nature. But, as we know and as Glissant emphasizes, historical dialectics are never-ending. Even as Western History comes to a close, different histories emerge elsewhere. That means that Hegelian negativity, which contradicts the initial thesis, is still at work. Relation doesn't prejudice negativity, doesn't moralize it, since it has a crucial role to play in the emergence of future positivenesses, whose forms we cannot fathom. Hence this statement that was made during an interview: 'Relation has no morality'.

In other words, the final synthesis is always to be construed. Relation cannot ever morally prejudice what will happen.

Édouard Glissant's thought is a radical transmutation of all thought and all human culture; it soars beyond our horizons, meticulously extracted from what has been thought from the origin of thinking to the present day; beyond the One and the Heraclitean Logos (through the multiple copresence of all languages), beyond the Parmenidian and Heideggerian Being (through the consideration of the variety of beings), beyond singular identity (through relations between communities), beyond all universals, be they Catholic or philosophical, beyond the Hegelian system (through the poetic imaginaries of future histories), beyond the academic discourse (through the unpredictability of becoming), beyond filiations and cultural traditions (through the meticulous and prophetic re-reading of the past, which becomes an exciting future in its incompleteness); it is a flight beyond the partly illusory mastery that philosophy, science, theory usually tend to impose on beings.

Glissant's works, which consider all causalities and all determinisms to, in the end, overcome them, open all cultures to an abyssal and exalting freedom, not without its frights – the 'thought of trembling' perhaps:

The power of imaginaries is an everyday utopia, it is realistic when it prefigures what will allow for a long time to accompany actions that do not tremble. Actions that do not tremble would remain sterile if the thought of world totality, which is trembling, did not support them. This is where philosophy is applied, and also the poem's thought. (*Philosophie de la Relation*, 2009, p. 56)

The critical rereading of all constraints does not lead to a new domination or a vague, shapeless anarchy, but, if I may in turn allow myself an oxymoron, a non-masterly mastery.

This is Édouard Glissant's message: to teach us to live poetically in an unlimited freedom and in the responsibility due to the *Other of thought* (that is, beings in the world that cannot be framed by the abstraction of thought); to open us to the future of an unpredictable becoming, where the essential contours of Relation and the Whole-World are already beginning to be drawn and anticipated.

For a more detailed interpretation of Glissant's thought, see my *Édouard Glissant, philosophe, Héraclite et Hegel dans le Tout-Monde* (Hermann, 2016), a translation of which will soon be published by the State University of New York Press in their series 'Contemporary French Thought'.

A Timeline for Édouard Glissant

21 September 1928	Édouard Godard is born in the Morne Bezaudin, Martinique.
1935–1939	Primary school, Le Lamentin, Martinique.
1938	Édouard Godard is recognized by his father and becomes Édouard Glissant.
1939–1945	High school.
1944	Glissant founds and directs a journal, <i>Franc Jeu</i> .
1946	He leaves Martinique to study ethnology and philosophy (under the philosopher Jean Wahl) in France, at the Université de la Sorbonne.
1948	Publication of Glissant's first poems in the journal <i>Les temps modernes</i> , founded by Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir.
1950	Glissant marries Yvonne Suvélor in Paris. He collaborates with the journal <i>Présence africaine</i> .
1952	He receives a Master of Arts in Philosophy. His thesis, under Gaston Bachelard's direction, is entitled <i>Découverte et conception du monde dans la poésie contemporaine</i> .
1953	Glissant contributes to the journal <i>Les Lettres nouvelles</i> , founded by Maurice Nadeau and Maurice Saillet. <i>Un champ d'îles</i> (poems) (Paris, Instance).
1955	<i>La terre inquiète</i> (poems) (Paris, éditions du Dragon).
1956	<i>Les Indes</i> (poem) (Paris, Le Seuil). <i>Soleil de la conscience, Poétique I</i> (essays) (Paris, Le Seuil). Glissant participates in the first congress of black writers and artists in Paris.

- 1958 *La Lézarde* (novel) (Paris, Le Seuil), which receives the Théophraste Renaudot Prize.
- 1959 Glissant participates in the second congress of black writers and artists in Rome.
- 1960 *Le sel noir* (poems) (Paris, Le Seuil).
Glissant participates in the FAGA (Front Antillo-Guyanais pour l'Autonomie).
He signs the *Manifeste des 121* or *Declaration on the right of insubordination in the Algerian War*.
- 1961 *Le sang rivé* (poems) (Paris, Le Seuil).
Visit to Cuba. Glissant is forbidden to stay in Martinique and assigned to reside in Metropolitan France, as one of the leaders of Antillean separatism.
- 1964 *Le Quatrième Siècle* (novel) (Paris, Le Seuil).
Glissant marries Jacqueline Marie Amélie Hospice in Paris.
- 1965 Glissant is allowed to return to Martinique.
- 1967 He creates the *Institut Martiniquais d'Études* (IME), a private school, where many artists and writers will be taught.
- 1969 *L'Intention poétique, Poétique II* (essays) (Paris, Le Seuil).
- 1971 Glissant founds the journal *Acoma*, hosted by the Parisian publisher Maspéro.
- 1975 *Malemort* (novel), (Paris, Le Seuil).
- 1978 *Monsieur Toussaint* (theatre play) (Paris, Le Seuil).
- 1979 *Boises* (poems) (éditions Acoma, Martinique).
- 1980 He defends his PhD in sociology at the Sorbonne University with *summa cum laude*.
- 1981 *Le Discours antillais* (essay) (Paris, Le Seuil), based on his PhD.
La case du commandeur (novel) (Paris, Le Seuil).
- 1982–1988 Director of the *Courrier de l'Unesco* (journal).
Glissant meets Sylvie Sémavoine.
- 1985 *Pays rêvé, pays réel* (poems) (Paris, Le Seuil).
- 1987 *Mahogany* (novel) (Paris, Le Seuil).
- 1988 Glissant is named distinguished professor and director of the Center for French and Francophone Studies at Louisiana State University.

- 1989 Doctor *honoris causa* from the Collège universitaire de Glendon, University of York, Canada.
Wins the Puterbaugh Prize and lectures at the University of Oklahoma, Norman, under the aegis of *World Literature Today*.
- 1990 Glissant moves from Le Seuil to Gallimard.
Poétique de la Relation, Poétique III (essay) (Paris, Gallimard).
Discours de Glendon (essay) (Toronto, editions du GREF).
Director of the Caribbean Carbet Prize.
- 1991 *Fastes* (poems) (Toronto, éditions du GREF).
- 1993 *Tout-Monde* (novel) (Paris, Gallimard).
Glissant is named honorary president of the International Parliament of Writers (Paris), of which he was one of the founding members.
He is named doctor *honoris causa* by the University of the West Indies, first in Trinidad, then in Jamaica.
- 1994 He is named distinguished professor at the City University of New York Graduate Center.
Les Grands Chaos (poems) (Gallimard, Paris).
- 1996 *Faulkner, Mississippi* (essay) (Paris Stock).
Poèmes complets, Introduction à une poétique du divers (essay) (Gallimard, Paris).
- 1997 *Traité du Tout-Monde, Poétique IV* (Paris, Gallimard).
- 1998 Glissant marries Sylvie Sémavoine in New Jersey.
- 1999 *Sartorius. Le roman des Batoutos* (novel) (Paris, Gallimard).
- 2000 *Le Monde incréé, poésie* (theatre) (Paris, Gallimard), which includes three plays:
Conte de ce que fut la tragédie d'Askia (1963)
Parabole d'un moulin de la Martinique (1975)
La Folie Celat (1987).
- 2002 Creation of the Édouard Glissant Prize at the University of Paris-VIII (Vincennes) in collaboration with La maison de l'Amérique latine and, later, the Institut du Tout-Monde.
- 2003 *Ormerod* (novel) (Paris, Gallimard).

- 2004 Glissant is named doctor *honoris causa* by the University of Bologna, Italy.
- 2005 *La Cohée du Lamentin, Poétique V* (essay) (Paris, Gallimard).
- 2006 *Une nouvelle région du monde, Esthétique I* (essay) (Paris, Gallimard).
Glissant founds the Institut du Tout-Monde in Paris.
The French president Jacques Chirac asks for his participation in the founding of a National Center of Slavery.
- 2007 *La Terre magnétique, les errances de Rapa Nui, l'île de Pâques* (with Sylvie Séma) (Paris, Le Seuil).
Mémoires des esclavages (Paris, Gallimard).
Quand les murs tombent. L'identité nationale hors-la-loi? (pamphlet) with Patrick Chamoiseau (Paris, Galaade).
- 2008 *Les Entretiens de Baton Rouge*, interviews with Alexandre Leupin (Paris, Gallimard).
- 2009 *Philosophie de la Relation*, Paris, Gallimard.
L'intraitable beauté du monde, adresse à Barack Obama (pamphlet) (Paris, Galaade).
Manifeste pour les produits de haute nécessité (pamphlet) (Paris, Galaade).
- 2010 *10 mai. Mémoires de la traite négrière, de l'esclavage et de leurs abolitions* (essay) (Paris, Galaade).
La terre, le feu, l'Eau et les Vents, une anthologie de la poésie du Tout-Monde (poetry) (Paris, Galaade).
L'imaginaire des langues, interviews with Lise Gauvin (Paris, Gallimard).
- 3 February 2011 Death in Paris.
- 2015 Glissant's archives are declared a national treasure by the French government and transferred to the National French Library (BNF).

Timeline established with the help of Professors Jean-Pierre Sainton and Raphaël Lauro.

‘The aim of writing is not to incite political action’

Édouard Glissant. I remember designating the notion of centre, of periphery, in *The Ripening*,* where, to speak about Paris, France, and the government, I use the word ‘Centre’ with a capital C.

That was the first time I used the word. The problem is that I was in fact writing *The Ripening* when I was already in France, which is to say, already in the Centre. One can truly understand the relationship of a centre to a periphery only by having an experience of the Centre. This is because the centre designates itself as centre, but conveys what it is only by being unmarked as the Centre. Seen from the periphery, representation of the centre can appear to be mythical.

Writing *in* the Centre, one becomes aware that there is perhaps an ex-centric thinking, displaced outside the norm of the centre. Without going into bombast and excesses, I can say that when I was writing *The Ripening* I began to understand that there is a fundamental idea of ex-centric thought, interesting in relation to a form of centred thought. That’s the experience that I had in France, in Paris, an experience that I have related in a book, *The Sun of Consciousness*.** In it, I go back to the themes of a poetics of measure and immoderation, and the comparison of landscapes between themselves: the landscape of the spring and the meadow so dear to the Middle Ages studied by Ernst Robert Curtius,*** and the landscape of the

* *The Ripening* – French title: *La Lézarde* – was Glissant’s first novel, published in 1958. It won the prestigious Prix Renaudot.

** *The Sun of Consciousness* – French title: *Soleil de la Conscience* – was Glissant’s first book, published in 1956. This book-length essay introduced many of the key concepts in Glissant’s work. It inaugurated the *Poétique* (Poetics) strand of his work.

*** Ernst Robert Curtius (1886–1956) was a German literary scholar and medievalist. His best-known study is *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, first published in German in 1948.

earthquake and the jungle, the jungle landscape that I was beginning then to detect and appreciate in the poetics of Saint-John Perse.* As a result, the fact of having gone to, lived in, and experienced the Centre, not only as a mythical centre but as what it truly was, undoubtedly authorized me to set up this separation between an ex-centric way of thinking and a centred thought, a separation that I later tried to establish as often as possible. Moreover, the French poets whom I had befriended were themselves outliers in relation to the centred discourses which surrounded them, but which held little interest for them. These were ex-centric personalities, not in their lives, but in their poetry making, their writing, and their poetics. The phenomenon always impassioned me. Giroux, for example, was already tending toward a kind of silence, a sort of paring down of speech into absolute silence. If I couldn't share this with him, I could still appreciate it. And then there were the poets, such as Jacques Charpier and Jean Laude,** who displayed a rare sort of confidence in rhetorical speech and gesture. This position interested me still more, since I thought (and continue to think) that the rhetoric of our writing, of us other poetic writers who were, shall we say, generally from the South, passes through this confidence in our language. We are not fearful in this regard, we are not stingy with respect to words, we are neither prudent nor reticent, and we have no shame of accumulation, repetition, or baroque scale. These two rhetorical orders – the word that runs dry and the word which multiplies—I cannot say that we designated them in a decisive manner at the time, but we were conscious of them, we had a premonition of them, and we predicted them. My association with these poets, who were all among my very best friends, was for me something remarkable.

I've already spoken about the debate that existed in my life between this frequentation and my organic relationship with my Antillean brothers. For example, when I participated in the Antillo-Guyanese Front, in Paris (in 1960), well, my French friends knew nothing of this aspect of my existence, just as the Antilleans knew nothing about what I discussed with these same poets. In other words, there was a sort of established division. But as I've already affirmed, and I want to reiterate the point, this division really didn't exist: what I was looking for in both cases was that ex-centric

* Saint-John Perse was the pseudonym of Alexis Léger (1887–1975). He was a French poet and diplomat, awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1960. Glissant had a particular interest in Perse as he was born in Guadeloupe.

** Charpier and Laude were poets who belonged to the Parisian literary circles Glissant frequented in the 1950s.

discourse, and in both cases I found resources and useful assistance for this very quest. I repeat it because repetition and resifting help me delve into the problem.

In a completely innocent and instinctive manner, and not at all in a learned way, I want to emphasize this concerning the struggles of decolonization: for a time, they constituted the veritable decentralization of thought, practiced, among others, by Franz Fanon. But I was perturbed by the way that these struggles had been continued, for example, in Africa or in a number of other countries in the world that I knew, with so many deaths, so many sacrifices: I had the presentiment that these struggles had been conducted according to the same model of those who were being opposed. And it was later, at a tranquil distance, that I tried to see how this model had determined the struggles. I arrived at the question of identity, of the definition of identity as Being. These struggles of decolonization, which had necessitated so many sacrifices, so many deaths, and so many wars, had been pursued on the very principle that the West had formulated, the principle of identity as a unique root. I didn't hesitate to join in these struggles, but I was beset by misgivings. The decolonizations had been followed by a series of agonizing disappointments: peoples who had heroically fought were afterwards torn apart in a fierce, internal way. Without doing any critical work, they adopted ideas of territorial power, of military force, the very concept of the State, and the rest, all of which opened them to corruption. This demonstrated by contrast that the decolonizations had been absolutely necessary, but that, even if they were not any less heroic, they had not been accompanied by an adequate work of critical reflection with respect to the very ideas that the West had proposed to the world. There was much more to this than the expression of an intellectual viewpoint. It was a troubling misgiving that was to colour my reflections, and more importantly, the reflections of many others.

Alexandre Leupin. I am sure that calling into question, not the colonial struggles themselves, but the manner in which they were carried out, had consequences for you concerning your conception of writing.

É.G. Yes, and in a direct way, because the question that I was always asked at that time (and which, by the way, no one ever asks me now) was multiple, and formulated in this manner: 'But finally, tell us, for whom do you write? Could what you write be understood by a person who cuts sugar cane, or by a Tonkinese farmer/farmhand? Isn't the first function of writing to

contribute to the heroic struggles being waged?' Generally speaking, it was not a question of political writing in the ordinary sense that one attributes to it in the West, but instead, the question of writing intervening in the quick of combat as a means of hastening this combat and influencing its outcome. I was always very categorical in my response. Writing did not have the function of inciting political action (a great theme during the era when the Sartrean conception of writing prevailed). This vision seemed false to me. Perhaps I wasn't analysing it in all its subtleties and details. Still, I thought that if one devoted writing solely to the aims of a popular struggle, a community or national struggle, and if in the work of writing one forgot what there was behind these struggles, meaning the most unobtrusive foundations of a culture, its opacities of Being and tremblings of knowledge, then the work of the writer was not being accomplished, but instead, and no less necessary, the work of a pamphleteer or an engaged journalist or militant eager to get results.

Getting to what there was behind this struggle, to whatever there was of a cultural awareness behind the struggle, often meant being brought back to the perspective of the one who says: 'Yes, but you only have to describe the life of the people, their condition, etc., and culture will be transmitted in that way'. I wasn't at all sure that this was the case, and I am still unconvinced. At that time, I considered most of the engaged, militant, and suffering descriptions of struggling colonized countries to be just as vain and folkloric as the paradisiacal descriptions produced by colonization: in neither case were the underlying terms elucidated. If one wanted to sketch out or approximate orders, disorders, points, lines of projection and prospect, it was necessary to go further and deeper than this primary militancy of writing. I am sure (without actually saying it to myself or others) that I was at some time restricted by this displacement of writing. This is perhaps why my life as a militant was unknown to my French poet friends and that my participation in poetic exposés in France was not followed by my militant friends. This fact created a certain discomfort in me. What I believe, and I'll say it again, is first of all that my position – not consenting simply and ingenuously to the primacy (primal nature) of the struggle – was the right one, and it was difficult to resist this imperative at the time. In the second place (and I'm not saying that this proved me right, because it's absurd to think about being right or wrong under any circumstances whatsoever), the course of events clearly showed the inadequacy of our work on these issues, an inadequacy that remains to this very moment as we speak. To put it plainly, in the panorama of our current world, the proliferation of writings has not yet sketched out the structuring vectors of

what lies underneath (but not *in depth*), of what we don't yet see. Again, the reality of writing is to try to reveal these structuring vectors, which concern relations between cultures just as much as the definition of the cultures themselves. If we didn't do one together with the other, it seems to me we would be missing the mark. A great many writers of the countries of the South have undergone these upheavals. You see how the *continuum of the collective*, so difficult to restore, ultimately corresponds to the *discontinuity of the person*, which must be withstood no matter what.

A.L. Is it necessary for an Antillean, North American, Columbian, etc., to write for Antilleans, North Americans, Colombians on Antillean, etc. subjects? It's a very simple question, but I think that you surprise your public a lot because you refuse to be relegated to one category or another.

É.G. I'm in agreement with you on this issue, but we have to be careful: it is not a simple dichotomy. The question is not at all whether an Antillean or North American writer should write for 'his/her' public on issues that interest a much wider audience. What about a Dane or a Montenegrin? Let's posit that writing should go beyond those phenomena, even if one is writing about subjects that concern one's own land, one's own entourage, and the problems that afflict them. For example, Faulkner wrote only about his own Mississippi, or only about the problems of the deep South in the United States. Very rare are the Faulknerian texts that 'take place' in London or in Europe during the First World War. But it is in the processes of writing that he absolutely goes beyond this localization, it is the process of writing that permits him at the same time to veil and unveil his subject. And we know that the nature of his subject leads him not to recite directly this unnameable subject (the damnation of the southern United States), but to invent almost in spite of himself the very form of modern literatures, *differed writing*, which will consist of speaking without speaking while speaking. It is the process of writing which adds this something, and which makes it so that what Faulkner writes is valuable for everyone in the world.

What I call exotic or folkloric literature is a literature which, in its writing, concerns only its own object, the object of the work. It is in the successions of writing that transcendence occurs. It is altogether illuminating that, as regards Faulkner, it is the writing that discomfited, shocked, and bogged readers down in their approach to his work. If Faulkner had explored the same themes in an available folkloric style, specifically as a *story-teller* (which would have resulted in something far removed from

his narrative detours), he surely would have been more appreciated, but would have been classified as a secondary writer. Certainly, one can unfold stories of and about one's own land, but it can be done only with a complete absence of complacency in writing. Another example: Aimé Césaire displays a merciless lucidity in his *writing of the Martinican land*, and that is the asceticism of *Notebook of a Return to My Native Land*.^{*} Writing, through its own process, seeks something beyond narration alone, and in so doing, necessarily transcends the framework which it describes, which it writes. In the actual world, that something else which it seeks is, I'll repeat, whatever is unprecedented, unwarranted, invisible and unheard in the texture of relations between humanities and cultures. That which sets up and constitutes the reality of what I call the actual Chaos world of society. All nuances, individual and collective, and all riches, of structures and twists, undergo this process. Centres and peripheries are reciprocal within it. The writer changes perspective.

The question would thus be: is there a limit to writing, even as its object could seem limited on the horizon of the world? My response, a truly personal one, proposes that the only limit of writing would be for it to renounce saying everything, or to pretend to say only nothing. Between these distances, Relation wanders and enlightens.

* *Notebook of a Return to the Native Land* – French title: *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* – is a poem by Martinican writer and statesman Aimé Césaire published initially in 1939.

The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House
Audre Lorde

I agreed to take part in a New York University Institute for the Humanities conference a year ago, with the understanding that I would be commenting upon papers dealing with the role of difference within the lives of American women: difference of race, sexuality, class, and age. The absence of these considerations weakens any feminist discussion of the personal and the political.

It is a particular academic arrogance to assume any discussion of feminist theory without examining our many differences, and without a significant input from poor women, Black and Third World women, and lesbians. And yet, I stand here as a Black lesbian feminist, having been invited to comment within the only panel at this conference where the input of Black feminists and lesbians is represented. What this says about the vision of this conference is sad, in a country where racism, sexism, and homophobia are inseparable. To read this program is to assume that lesbian and Black women have nothing to say about existentialism, the erotic, women's culture and silence, developing feminist theory, or heterosexuality and power. And what does it mean in personal and political terms when even the two Black women who did present here were literally found at the last hour? What does it mean when the tools of a racist patriarchy are used to examine the fruits of that same patriarchy? It means that only the most narrow parameters of change are possible and allowable.

The absence of any consideration of lesbian consciousness or the consciousness of Third World women leaves a serious gap within this conference and within the papers presented here. For example, in a paper on material relationships between women, I was conscious of an either/or model of nurturing which totally dismissed my knowledge as a Black lesbian. In this paper there was no examination of mutuality between women, no systems of shared support, no interdependence as exists between lesbians and women-identified women. Yet it is only in the patriarchal model of nurturance that women "who attempt to emancipate themselves at perhaps too high a price for the results," as this paper states.

For women, the need and desire to nurture each other is not pathological but redemptive, and it is within that knowledge that our real power I rediscovered. It is this real connection which is so feared by a patriarchal world. Only within a patriarchal structure is maternity the only social power open to women.

Interdependency between women is the way to a freedom which allows the I to be, not in order to be used, but in order to be creative. This is a difference between the passive be and the active being.

Advocating the mere tolerance of difference between women is the grossest reformism. It is a total denial of the creative function of difference in our lives. Difference must be not merely tolerated, but seen as a fund of necessary polarities between which our creativity can spark like a dialectic. Only then does the necessity for interdependency

become unthreatening. Only within that interdependency of difference strengths, acknowledged and equal, can the power to seek new ways of being in the world generate, as well as the courage and sustenance to act where there are no charters.

Within the interdependence of mutual (nondominant) differences lies that security which enables us to descend into the chaos of knowledge and return with true visions of our future, along with the concomitant power to effect those changes which can bring that future into being. Difference is that raw and powerful connection from which our personal power is forged.

As women, we have been taught either to ignore our differences, or to view them as causes for separation and suspicion rather than as forces for change. Without community there is no liberation, only the most vulnerable and temporary armistice between an individual and her oppression. But community must not mean a shedding of our differences, nor the pathetic pretense that these differences do not exist.

Those of us who stand outside the circle of this society's definition of acceptable women; those of us who have been forged in the crucibles of difference -- those of us who are poor, who are lesbians, who are Black, who are older -- know that survival is not an academic skill. It is learning how to take our differences and make them strengths. For the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house. They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change. And this fact is only threatening to those women who still define the master's house as their only source of support.

Poor women and women of Color know there is a difference between the daily manifestations of marital slavery and prostitution because it is our daughters who line 42nd Street. If white American feminist theory need not deal with the differences between us, and the resulting difference in our oppressions, then how do you deal with the fact that the women who clean your houses and tend your children while you attend conferences on feminist theory are, for the most part, poor women and women of Color? What is the theory behind racist feminism?

In a world of possibility for us all, our personal visions help lay the groundwork for political action. The failure of academic feminists to recognize difference as a crucial strength is a failure to reach beyond the first patriarchal lesson. In our world, divide and conquer must become define and empower.

Why weren't other women of Color found to participate in this conference? Why were two phone calls to me considered a consultation? Am I the only possible source of names of Black feminists? And although the Black panelist's paper ends on an important and powerful connection of love between women, what about interracial cooperation between feminists who don't love each other?

In academic feminist circles, the answer to these questions is often, "We do not know who to ask." But that is the same evasion of responsibility, the same cop-out, that keeps

Black women's art our of women's exhibitions, Black women's work our of most feminist publications except for the occasional "Special Third World Women's Issue," and Black women's texts off your reading lists. But as Adrienne Rich pointed out in a recent talk, which feminists have educated themselves about such an enormous amount over the past ten years, how come you haven't also educated yourselves about Black women and the differences between us -- white and Black -- when it is key to our survival as a movement?

Women of today are still being called upon to stretch across the gap of male ignorance and to educated men as to our existence and our needs. This is an old and primary tool of all oppressors to keep the oppressed occupied with the master's concerns. Now we hear that it is the task of women of Color to educate white women -- in the face of tremendous resistance -- as to our existence, our differences, our relative roles in our joint survival. This is a diversion of energies and a tragic repetition of racist patriarchal thought.

Simone de Beauvoir once said: "It is in the knowledge of the genuine conditions of our lives that we must draw our strength to live and our reasons for acting."

Racism and homophobia are real conditions of all our lives in this place and time. I urge each one of us here to reach down into that deep place of knowledge inside herself and touch that terror and loathing of any difference that lives there. See whose face it wears. Then the personal as the political can begin to illuminate all our choices

*Prospero, you are the master of illusion.
Lying is your trademark.
And you have lied so much to me
(Lied about the world, lied about me)
That you have ended by imposing on me
An image of myself.
Underdeveloped, you brand me, inferior,
That s the way you have forced me to see myself
I detest that image! What's more, it's a lie!
But now I know you, you old cancer,
And I know myself as well.*

~ Caliban, in Aime Cesaire's A Tempest

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A THOUSAND
PLATEAUS
*Capitalism and
Schizophrenia*

Gilles Deleuze
Félix Guattari

Translation and Foreword by Brian Massumi



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Contents

Translator's Foreword: Pleasures of Philosophy <i>Brian Massumi</i>	ix
Notes on the Translation and Acknowledgments	xvi
Author's Note	xx
1. Introduction: Rhizome	3
Root, radicle, and rhizome—Issues concerning books—The One and the Multiple—Tree and rhizome—The geographical directions, Orient, Occident, America—The misdeeds of the tree—What is a plateau?	
2. 1914: One or Several Wolves?	26
Neurosis and psychosis—For a theory of multiplicities—Packs—The unconscious and the molecular	
3. 10,000 B.C.: The Geology of Morals (Who Does the Earth Think It Is?)	39
Strata—Double articulation (segmentarity)—What constitutes the unity of a stratum—Milieus—The diversity within a stratum: forms and substances, epistrata and parastrata—Content and expression—The diversity among strata—The molar and the molecular—Abstract machine and assemblage: their comparative states—Metastrata	
4. November 20, 1923: Postulates of Linguistics	75
The order-word—Indirect discourse—Order-words, acts, and incor-	

Authors' Note

This book is the companion volume to *Anti-Oedipus* (paperback ed., University of Minnesota Press, 1983). Together they make up *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*.

It is composed not of chapters but of "plateaus." We will try to explain why later on (and also why the texts are dated). To a certain extent, these plateaus may be read independently of one another, except the conclusion, which should be read at the end.

1. Introduction: Rhizome

7 vedi NOTE

XIV piano piece for David Tudor 4
 disegno del 1968
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SYLVANO BUSSOTTI

The two of us wrote *Anti-Oedipus* together. Since each of us was several, there was already quite a crowd. Here we have made use of everything that came within range, what was closest as well as farthest away. We have assigned clever pseudonyms to prevent recognition. Why have we kept our own names? Out of habit, purely out of habit. To make ourselves unrecognizable in turn. To render imperceptible, not ourselves, but what makes us act, feel, and think. Also because it's nice to talk like everybody else, to say the sun rises, when everybody knows it's only a manner of speaking. To reach, not the point where one no longer says I, but the point where it is no longer of any importance whether one says I. We are no longer ourselves. Each will know his own. We have been aided, inspired, multiplied.

A book has neither object nor subject; it is made of variously formed matters, and very different dates and speeds. To attribute the book to a subject is to overlook this working of matters, and the exteriority of their relations. It is to fabricate a beneficent God to explain geological movements. In a book, as in all things, there are lines of articulation or segmentarity, strata and territories; but also lines of flight, movements of deterritorialization and destratification. Comparative rates of flow on

these lines produce phenomena of relative slowness and viscosity, or, on the contrary, of acceleration and rupture. All this, lines and measurable speeds, constitutes an *assemblage*. A book is an assemblage of this kind, and as such is unattributable. It is a multiplicity—but we don't know yet what the multiple entails when it is no longer attributed, that is, after it has been elevated to the status of a substantive. One side of a machinic assemblage faces the strata, which doubtless make it a kind of organism, or signifying totality, or determination attributable to a subject; it also has a side facing a *body without organs*, which is continually dismantling the organism, causing asignifying particles or pure intensities to pass or circulate, and attributing to itself subjects that it leaves with nothing more than a name as the trace of an intensity. What is the body without organs of a book? There are several, depending on the nature of the lines considered, their particular grade or density, and the possibility of their converging on a "plane of consistency" assuring their selection. Here, as elsewhere, the units of measure are what is essential: *quantify writing*. There is no difference between what a book talks about and how it is made. Therefore a book also has no object. As an assemblage, a book has only itself, in connection with other assemblages and in relation to other bodies without organs. We will never ask what a book means, as signified or signifier; we will not look for anything to understand in it. We will ask what it functions with, in connection with what other things it does or does not transmit intensities, in which other multiplicities its own are inserted and metamorphosed, and with what bodies without organs it makes its own converge. A book exists only through the outside and on the outside. A book itself is a little machine; what is the relation (also measurable) of this literary machine to a war machine, love machine, revolutionary machine, etc.—and an *abstract machine* that sweeps them along? We have been criticized for overquoting literary authors. But when one writes, the only question is which other machine the literary machine can be plugged into, must be plugged into in order to work. Kleist and a mad war machine, Kafka and a most extraordinary bureaucratic machine . . . (What if one became animal or plant *through* literature, which certainly does not mean literarily? Is it not first through the voice that one becomes animal?) Literature is an assemblage. It has nothing to do with ideology. There is no ideology and never has been.

All we talk about are multiplicities, lines, strata and segmentarities, lines of flight and intensities, machinic assemblages and their various types, bodies without organs and their construction and selection, the plane of consistency, and in each case the units of measure. *Stratometers, deleometers, BwO units of density, BwO units of convergence*: Not only do these constitute a quantification of writing, but they define writing as always the measure of something else. Writing has nothing to do with

signifying. It has to do with surveying, mapping, even realms that are yet to come.

A first type of book is the root-book. The tree is already the image of the world, or the root the image of the world-tree. This is the classical book, as noble, signifying, and subjective organic interiority (the strata of the book). The book imitates the world, as art imitates nature: by procedures specific to it that accomplish what nature cannot or can no longer do. The law of the book is the law of reflection, the One that becomes two. How could the law of the book reside in nature, when it is what presides over the very division between world and book, nature and art? One becomes two: whenever we encounter this formula, even stated strategically by Mao or understood in the most "dialectical" way possible, what we have before us is the most classical and well reflected, oldest, and weariest kind of thought. Nature doesn't work that way: in nature, roots are taproots with a more multiple, lateral, and circular system of ramification, rather than a dichotomous one. Thought lags behind nature. Even the book as a natural reality is a taproot, with its pivotal spine and surrounding leaves. But the book as a spiritual reality, the Tree or Root as an image, endlessly develops the law of the One that becomes two, then of the two that become four . . . Binary logic is the spiritual reality of the root-tree. Even a discipline as "advanced" as linguistics retains the root-tree as its fundamental image, and thus remains wedded to classical reflection (for example, Chomsky and his grammatical trees, which begin at a point S and proceed by dichotomy). This is as much as to say that this system of thought has never reached an understanding of multiplicity: in order to arrive at two following a spiritual method it must assume a strong principal unity. On the side of the object, it is no doubt possible, following the natural method, to go directly from One to three, four, or five, but only if there is a strong principal unity available, that of the pivotal taproot supporting the secondary roots. That doesn't get us very far. The binary logic of dichotomy has simply been replaced by biunivocal relationships between successive circles. The pivotal taproot provides no better understanding of multiplicity than the dichotomous root. One operates in the object, the other in the subject. Binary logic and biunivocal relationships still dominate psychoanalysis (the tree of delusion in the Freudian interpretation of Schreber's case), linguistics, structuralism, and even information science.

The radicle-system, or fascicular root, is the second figure of the book, to which our modernity pays willing allegiance. This time, the principal root has aborted, or its tip has been destroyed; an immediate, indefinite multiplicity of secondary roots grafts onto it and undergoes a flourishing development. This time, natural reality is what aborts the principal root, but the root's unity subsists, as past or yet to come, as possible. We must ask

if reflexive, spiritual reality does not compensate for this state of things by demanding an even more comprehensive secret unity, or a more extensive totality. Take William Burroughs's cut-up method: the folding of one text onto another, which constitutes multiple and even adventitious roots (like a cutting), implies a supplementary dimension to that of the texts under consideration. In this supplementary dimension of folding, unity continues its spiritual labor. That is why the most resolutely fragmented work can also be presented as the Total Work or Magnum Opus. Most modern methods for making series proliferate or a multiplicity grow are perfectly valid in one direction, for example, a linear direction, whereas a unity of totalization asserts itself even more firmly in another, circular or cyclic, dimension. Whenever a multiplicity is taken up in a structure, its growth is offset by a reduction in its laws of combination. The abortionists of unity are indeed angel makers, *doctores angelici*, because they affirm a properly angelic and superior unity. Joyce's words, accurately described as having "multiple roots" shatter the linear unity of the word, even of language, only to posit a cyclic unity of the sentence, text, or knowledge. Nietzsche's aphorisms shatter the linear unity of knowledge, only to invoke the cyclic unity of the eternal return, present as the nonknown in thought. This is as much as to say that the fascicular system does not really break with dualism, with the complementarity between a subject and an object, a natural reality and a spiritual reality: unity is consistently thwarted and obstructed in the object, while a new type of unity triumphs in the subject. The world has lost its pivot; the subject can no longer even dichotomize, but accedes to a higher unity, of ambivalence or overdetermination, in an always supplementary dimension to that of its object. The world has become chaos, but the book remains the image of the world: radicle-chaosmos rather than root-cosmos. A strange mystification: a book all the more total for being fragmented. At any rate, what a vapid idea, the book as the image of the world. In truth, it is not enough to say, "Long live the multiple," difficult as it is to raise that cry. No typographical, lexical, or even syntactical cleverness is enough to make it heard. The multiple *must be made*, not by always adding a higher dimension, but rather in the simplest of ways, by dint of sobriety, with the number of dimensions one already has available—always $n - 1$ (the only way the one belongs to the multiple: always subtracted). Subtract the unique from the multiplicity to be constituted; write at $n - 1$ dimensions. A system of this kind could be called a rhizome. A rhizome as subterranean stem is absolutely different from roots and radicles. Bulbs and tubers are rhizomes. Plants with roots or radicles may be rhizomorphic in other respects altogether: the question is whether plant life in its specificity is not entirely rhizomatic. Even some animals are, in their pack form. Rats are rhizomes. Burrows are too, in all of their func-

tions of shelter, supply, movement, evasion, and breakout. The rhizome itself assumes very diverse forms, from ramified surface extension in all directions to concretion into bulbs and tubers. When rats swarm over each other. The rhizome includes the best and the worst: potato and couchgrass, or the weed. Animal and plant, couchgrass is crabgrass. We get the distinct feeling that we will convince no one unless we enumerate certain approximate characteristics of the rhizome.

1 and 2. Principles of connection and heterogeneity: any point of a rhizome can be connected to anything other, and must be. This is very different from the tree or root, which plots a point, fixes an order. The linguistic tree on the Chomsky model still begins at a point S and proceeds by dichotomy. On the contrary, not every trait in a rhizome is necessarily linked to a linguistic feature: semiotic chains of every nature are connected to very diverse modes of coding (biological, political, economic, etc.) that bring into play not only different regimes of signs but also states of things of differing status. *Collective assemblages of enunciation* function directly within *machinic assemblages*; it is not impossible to make a radical break between regimes of signs and their objects. Even when linguistics claims to confine itself to what is explicit and to make no presuppositions about language, it is still in the sphere of a discourse implying particular modes of assemblage and types of social power. Chomsky's grammaticality, the categorical S symbol that dominates every sentence, is more fundamentally a marker of power than a syntactic marker: you will construct grammatically correct sentences, you will divide each statement into a noun phrase and a verb phrase (first dichotomy . . .). Our criticism of these linguistic models is not that they are too abstract but, on the contrary, that they are not abstract enough, that they do not reach the *abstract machine* that connects a language to the semantic and pragmatic contents of statements, to collective assemblages of enunciation, to a whole micropolitics of the social field. A rhizome ceaselessly establishes connections between semiotic chains, organizations of power, and circumstances relative to the arts, sciences, and social struggles. A semiotic chain is like a tuber agglomerating very diverse acts, not only linguistic, but also perceptive, mimetic, gestural, and cognitive: there is no language in itself, nor are there any linguistic universals, only a throng of dialects, patois, slangs, and specialized languages. There is no ideal speaker-listener, any more than there is a homogeneous linguistic community. Language is, in Weinreich's words, "an essentially heterogeneous reality."¹ There is no mother tongue, only a power takeover by a dominant language within a political multiplicity. Language stabilizes around a parish, a bishopric, a capital. It forms a bulb. It evolves by subterranean stems and flows, along river valleys or train tracks; it spreads like a patch of oil.² It is always possible to break a language

down into internal structural elements, an undertaking not fundamentally different from a search for roots. There is always something genealogical about a tree. It is not a method for the people. A method of the rhizome type, on the contrary, can analyze language only by decentering it onto other dimensions and other registers. A language is never closed upon itself, except as a function of impotence.

3. Principle of multiplicity: it is only when the multiple is effectively treated as a substantive, "multiplicity," that it ceases to have any relation to the One as subject or object, natural or spiritual reality, image and world. Multiplicities are rhizomatic, and expose arborescent pseudomultiplicities for what they are. There is no unity to serve as a pivot in the object, or to divide in the subject. There is not even the unity to abort in the object or "return" in the subject. A multiplicity has neither subject nor object, only determinations, magnitudes, and dimensions that cannot increase in number without the multiplicity changing in nature (the laws of combination therefore increase in number as the multiplicity grows). Puppet strings, as a rhizome or multiplicity, are tied not to the supposed will of an artist or puppeteer but to a multiplicity of nerve fibers, which form another puppet in other dimensions connected to the first: "Call the strings or rods that move the puppet the weave. It might be objected that *its multiplicity* resides in the person of the actor, who projects it into the text. Granted; but the actor's nerve fibers in turn form a weave. And they fall through the gray matter, the grid, into the undifferentiated. . . . The interplay approximates the pure activity of weavers attributed in myth to the Fates or Norns."³ An assemblage is precisely this increase in the dimensions of a multiplicity that necessarily changes in nature as it expands its connections. There are no points or positions in a rhizome, such as those found in a structure, tree, or root. There are only lines. When Glenn Gould speeds up the performance of a piece, he is not just displaying virtuosity; he is transforming the musical points into lines, he is making the whole piece proliferate. The number is no longer a universal concept measuring elements according to their emplacement in a given dimension, but has itself become a multiplicity that varies according to the dimensions considered (the primacy of the domain over a complex of numbers attached to that domain). We do not have units (*unités*) of measure, only multiplicities or varieties of measurement. The notion of unity (*unité*) appears only when there is a power takeover in the multiplicity by the signifier or a corresponding subjectification proceeding: This is the case for a pivot-unity forming the basis for a set of biunivocal relationships between objective elements or points, or for the One that divides following the law of a binary logic of differentiation in the subject. Unity always operates in an empty dimension supplementary to that of the system considered (overcoding).

The point is that a rhizome or multiplicity never allows itself to be overcoded, never has available a supplementary dimension over and above its number of lines, that is, over and above the multiplicity of numbers attached to those lines. All multiplicities are flat, in the sense that they fill or occupy all of their dimensions: we will therefore speak of a *plane of consistency* of multiplicities, even though the dimensions of this "plane" increase with the number of connections that are made on it. Multiplicities are defined by the outside: by the abstract line, the line of flight or deterritorialization according to which they change in nature and connect with other multiplicities. The plane of consistency (grid) is the outside of all multiplicities. The line of flight marks: the reality of a finite number of dimensions that the multiplicity effectively fills; the impossibility of a supplementary dimension, unless the multiplicity is transformed by the line of flight; the possibility and necessity of flattening all of the multiplicities on a single plane of consistency or exteriority, regardless of their number of dimensions. The ideal for a book would be to lay everything out on a plane of exteriority of this kind, on a single page, the same sheet: lived events, historical determinations, concepts, individuals, groups, social formations. Kleist invented a writing of this type, a broken chain of affects and variable speeds, with accelerations and transformations, always in a relation with the outside. Open rings. His texts, therefore, are opposed in every way to the classical or romantic book constituted by the interiority of a substance or subject. The war machine-book against the State apparatus-book. *Flat multiplicities of n dimensions* are asignifying and asubjective. They are designated by indefinite articles, or rather by partitives (*some couchgrass, some of a rhizome . . .*).

4. Principle of asignifying rupture: against the oversignifying breaks separating structures or cutting across a single structure. A rhizome may be broken, shattered at a given spot, but it will start up again on one of its old lines, or on new lines. You can never get rid of ants because they form an animal rhizome that can rebound time and again after most of it has been destroyed. Every rhizome contains lines of segmentarity according to which it is stratified, territorialized, organized, signified, attributed, etc., as well as lines of deterritorialization down which it constantly flees. There is a rupture in the rhizome whenever segmentary lines explode into a line of flight, but the line of flight is part of the rhizome. These lines always tie back to one another. That is why one can never posit a dualism or a dichotomy, even in the rudimentary form of the good and the bad. You may make a rupture, draw a line of flight, yet there is still a danger that you will reencounter organizations that restratify everything, formations that restore power to a signifier, attributions that reconstitute a subject—anything you like, from Oedipal resurgences to fascist concretions. Groups

and individuals contain microfascisms just waiting to crystallize. Yes, couchgrass is also a rhizome. Good and bad are only the products of an active and temporary selection, which must be renewed.

How could movements of deterritorialization and processes of reterritorialization not be relative, always connected, caught up in one another? The orchid deterritorializes by forming an image, a tracing of a wasp; but the wasp reterritorializes on that image. The wasp is nevertheless deterritorialized, becoming a piece in the orchid's reproductive apparatus. But it reterritorializes the orchid by transporting its pollen. Wasp and orchid, as heterogeneous elements, form a rhizome. It could be said that the orchid imitates the wasp, reproducing its image in a signifying fashion (mimesis, mimicry, lure, etc.). But this is true only on the level of the strata—a parallelism between two strata such that a plant organization on one imitates an animal organization on the other. At the same time, something else entirely is going on: not imitation at all but a capture of code, surplus value of code, an increase in valence, a veritable becoming, a becoming-wasp of the orchid and a becoming-orchid of the wasp. Each of these becomings brings about the deterritorialization of one term and the reterritorialization of the other; the two becomings interlink and form relays in a circulation of intensities pushing the deterritorialization ever further. There is neither imitation nor resemblance, only an exploding of two heterogeneous series on the line of flight composed by a common rhizome that can no longer be attributed to or subjugated by anything signifying. Rémy Chauvin expresses it well: "the *aparallel evolution* of two beings that have absolutely nothing to do with each other."⁴ More generally, evolutionary schemas may be forced to abandon the old model of the tree and descent. Under certain conditions, a virus can connect to germ cells and transmit itself as the cellular gene of a complex species; moreover, it can take flight, move into the cells of an entirely different species, but not without bringing with it "genetic information" from the first host (for example, Benveniste and Todaro's current research on a type C virus, with its double connection to baboon DNA and the DNA of certain kinds of domestic cats). Evolutionary schemas would no longer follow models of arborescent descent going from the least to the most differentiated, but instead a rhizome operating immediately in the heterogeneous and jumping from one already differentiated line to another.⁵ Once again, there is *aparallel evolution*, of the baboon and the cat; it is obvious that they are not models or copies of each other (a becoming-baboon in the cat does not mean that the cat "plays" baboon). We form a rhizome with our viruses, or rather our viruses cause us to form a rhizome with other animals. As François Jacob says, transfers of genetic material by viruses or through other procedures, fusions of cells originating in different species, have results analogous to

those of "the abominable couplings dear to antiquity and the Middle Ages."⁶ Transversal communications between different lines scramble the genealogical trees. Always look for the molecular, or even submolecular, particle with which we are allied. We evolve and die more from our polymorphous and rhizomatic flux than from hereditary diseases, or diseases that have their own line of descent. The rhizome is an anti-genealogy.

The same applies to the book and the world: contrary to a deeply rooted belief, the book is not an image of the world. It forms a rhizome with the world, there is an *aparallel evolution* of the book and the world; the book assures the deterritorialization of the world, but the world effects a reterritorialization of the book, which in turn deterritorializes itself in the world (if it is capable, if it can). Mimicry is a very bad concept, since it relies on binary logic to describe phenomena of an entirely different nature. The crocodile does not reproduce a tree trunk, any more than the chameleon reproduces the colors of its surroundings. The Pink Panther imitates nothing, it reproduces nothing, it paints the world its color, pink on pink; this is its becoming-world, carried out in such a way that it becomes imperceptible itself, asignifying, makes its rupture, its own line of flight, follows its "aparallel evolution" through to the end. The wisdom of the plants: even when they have roots, there is always an outside where they form a rhizome with something else—with the wind, an animal, human beings (and there is also an aspect under which animals themselves form rhizomes, as do people, etc.). "Drunkenness as a triumphant irruption of the plant in us." Always follow the rhizome by rupture; lengthen, prolong, and relay the line of flight; make it vary, until you have produced the most abstract and tortuous of lines of n dimensions and broken directions. Conjugate deterritorialized flows. Follow the plants: you start by delimiting a first line consisting of circles of convergence around successive singularities; then you see whether inside that line new circles of convergence establish themselves, with new points located outside the limits and in other directions. Write, form a rhizome, increase your territory by deterritorialization, extend the line of flight to the point where it becomes an abstract machine covering the entire plane of consistency. "Go first to your old plant and watch carefully the watercourse made by the rain. By now the rain must have carried the seeds far away. Watch the crevices made by the runoff, and from them determine the direction of the flow. Then find the plant that is growing at the farthest point from your plant. All the devil's weed plants that are growing in between are yours. Later . . . you can extend the size of your territory by following the watercourse from each point along the way."⁷ Music has always sent out lines of flight, like so many "transformational multiplicities," even overturning the very codes that structure or

arborify it; that is why musical form, right down to its ruptures and proliferations, is comparable to a weed, a rhizome.⁸

5 and 6. Principle of cartography and decalcomania: a rhizome is not amenable to any structural or generative model. It is a stranger to any idea of genetic axis or deep structure. A genetic axis is like an objective pivotal unity upon which successive stages are organized; a deep structure is more like a base sequence that can be broken down into immediate constituents, while the unity of the product passes into another, transformational and subjective, dimension. This does not constitute a departure from the representative model of the tree, or root—pivotal taproot or fascicles (for example, Chomsky's "tree" is associated with a base sequence and represents the process of its own generation in terms of binary logic). A variation on the oldest form of thought. It is our view that genetic axis and profound structure are above all infinitely reproducible principles of *tracing*. All of tree logic is a logic of tracing and reproduction. In linguistics as in psychoanalysis, its object is an unconscious that is itself representative, crystallized into codified complexes, laid out along a genetic axis and distributed within a syntagmatic structure. Its goal is to describe a *de facto* state, to maintain balance in intersubjective relations, or to explore an unconscious that is already there from the start, lurking in the dark recesses of memory and language. It consists of tracing, on the basis of an overcoding structure or supporting axis, something that comes ready-made. The tree articulates and hierarchizes tracings; tracings are like the leaves of a tree.

The rhizome is altogether different, a map and not a tracing. Make a map, not a tracing. The orchid does not reproduce the tracing of the wasp; it forms a map with the wasp, in a rhizome. What distinguishes the map from the tracing is that it is entirely oriented toward an experimentation in contact with the real. The map does not reproduce an unconscious closed in upon itself; it constructs the unconscious. It fosters connections between fields, the removal of blockages on bodies without organs, the maximum opening of bodies without organs onto a plane of consistency. It is itself a part of the rhizome. The map is open and connectable in all of its dimensions; it is detachable, reversible, susceptible to constant modification. It can be torn, reversed, adapted to any kind of mounting, reworked by an individual, group, or social formation. It can be drawn on a wall, conceived of as a work of art, constructed as a political action or as a meditation. Perhaps one of the most important characteristics of the rhizome is that it always has multiple entryways; in this sense, the burrow is an animal rhizome, and sometimes maintains a clear distinction between the line of flight as passageway and storage or living strata (cf. the muskrat). A map has multiple entryways, as opposed to the tracing, which always comes back "to the same." The map has to do with performance, whereas the trac-

ing always involves an alleged "competence." Unlike psychoanalysis, psychoanalytic competence (which confines every desire and statement to a genetic axis or overcoding structure, and makes infinite, monotonous tracings of the stages on that axis or the constituents of that structure), schizoanalysis rejects any idea of pretraced destiny, whatever name is given to it—divine, anagogic, historical, economic, structural, hereditary, or syntagmatic. (It is obvious that Melanie Klein has no understanding of the cartography of one of her child patients, Little Richard, and is content to make ready-made tracings—Oedipus, the good daddy and the bad daddy, the bad mommy and the good mommy—while the child makes a desperate attempt to carry out a performance that the psychoanalyst totally misconstrues.)⁹ Drives and part-objects are neither stages on a genetic axis nor positions in a deep structure; they are political options for problems, they are entryways and exits, impasses the child lives out politically, in other words, with all the force of his or her desire.

Have we not, however, reverted to a simple dualism by contrasting maps to tracings, as good and bad sides? Is it not of the essence of the map to be traceable? Is it not of the essence of the rhizome to intersect roots and sometimes merge with them? Does not a map contain phenomena of redundancy that are already like tracings of its own? Does not a multiplicity have strata upon which unifications and totalizations, massifications, mimetic mechanisms, signifying power takeovers, and subjective attributions take root? Do not even lines of flight, due to their eventual divergence, reproduce the very formations their function it was to dismantle or outflank? But the opposite is also true. It is a question of method: *the tracing should always be put back on the map*. This operation and the previous one are not at all symmetrical. For it is inaccurate to say that a tracing reproduces the map. It is instead like a photograph or X ray that begins by selecting or isolating, by artificial means such as colorations or other restrictive procedures, what it intends to reproduce. The imitator always creates the model, and attracts it. The tracing has already translated the map into an image; it has already transformed the rhizome into roots and radicles. It has organized, stabilized, neutralized the multiplicities according to the axes of signification and subjectification belonging to it. It has generated, structuralized the rhizome, and when it thinks it is reproducing something else it is in fact only reproducing itself. That is why the tracing is so dangerous. It injects redundancies and propagates them. What the tracing reproduces of the map or rhizome are only the impasses, blockages, incipient taproots, or points of structuration. Take a look at psychoanalysis and linguistics: all the former has ever made are tracings or photos of the unconscious, and the latter of language, with all the betrayals that implies (it's not surprising that psychoanalysis tied its fate to that of linguistics).

Look at what happened to Little Hans already, an example of child psychoanalysis at its purest: they kept on BREAKING HIS RHIZOME and BLOTCHING HIS MAP, setting it straight for him, blocking his every way out, until he began to desire his own shame and guilt, until they had rooted shame and guilt in him, PHOBIA (they barred him from the rhizome of the building, then from the rhizome of the street, they rooted him in his parents' bed, they radicled him to his own body, they fixated him on Professor Freud). Freud explicitly takes Little Hans's cartography into account, but always and only in order to project it back onto the family photo. And look what Melanie Klein did to Little Richard's geopolitical maps: she developed photos from them, made tracings of them. Strike the pose or follow the axis, genetic stage or structural destiny—one way or the other, your rhizome will be broken. You will be allowed to live and speak, but only after every outlet has been obstructed. Once a rhizome has been obstructed, arborified, it's all over, no desire stirs; for it is always by rhizome that desire moves and produces. Whenever desire climbs a tree, internal repercussions trip it up and it falls to its death; the rhizome, on the other hand, acts on desire by external, productive outgrowths.

That is why it is so important to try the other, reverse but nonsymmetrical, operation. Plug the tracings back into the map, connect the roots or trees back up with a rhizome. In the case of Little Hans, studying the unconscious would be to show how he tries to build a rhizome, with the family house but also with the line of flight of the building, the street, etc.; how these lines are blocked, how the child is made to take root in the family, be photographed under the father, be traced onto the mother's bed; then how Professor Freud's intervention assures a power takeover by the signifier, a subjectification of affects; how the only escape route left to the child is a becoming-animal perceived as shameful and guilty (the becoming-horse of Little Hans, a truly political option). But these impasses must always be resituated on the map, thereby opening them up to possible lines of flight. The same applies to the group map: show at what point in the rhizome there form phenomena of massification, bureaucracy, leadership, fascization, etc., which lines nevertheless survive, if only underground, continuing to make rhizome in the shadows. Deligny's method: map the gestures and movements of an autistic child, combine several maps for the same child, for several different children.¹⁰ If it is true that it is of the essence of the map or rhizome to have multiple entryways, then it is plausible that one could even enter them through tracings or the root-tree, assuming the necessary precautions are taken (once again, one must avoid any Manichaean dualism). For example, one will often be forced to take dead ends, to work with signifying powers and subjective affections, to find a foothold in formations that are Oedipal or paranoid or even worse,

rigidified territorialities that open the way for other transformational operations. It is even possible for psychoanalysis to serve as a foothold, in spite of itself. In other cases, on the contrary, one will bolster oneself directly on a line of flight enabling one to blow apart strata, cut roots, and make new connections. Thus, there are very diverse map-tracing, rhizome-root assemblages, with variable coefficients of deterritorialization. There exist tree or root structures in rhizomes; conversely, a tree branch or root division may begin to burgeon into a rhizome. The coordinates are determined not by theoretical analyses implying universals but by a pragmatics composing multiplicities or aggregates of intensities. A new rhizome may form in the heart of a tree, the hollow of a root, the crook of a branch. Or else it is a microscopic element of the root-tree, a radicle, that gets rhizome production going. Accounting and bureaucracy proceed by tracings: they can begin to burgeon nonetheless, throwing out rhizome stems, as in a Kafka novel. An intensive trait starts working for itself, a hallucinatory perception, synesthesia, perverse mutation, or play of images shakes loose, challenging the hegemony of the signifier. In the case of the child, gestural, mimetic, ludic, and other semiotic systems regain their freedom and extricate themselves from the "tracing," that is, from the dominant competence of the teacher's language—a microscopic event upsets the local balance of power. Similarly, generative trees constructed according to Chomsky's syntagmatic model can open up in all directions, and in turn form a rhizome.¹¹ To be rhizomorphic is to produce stems and filaments that seem to be roots, or better yet connect with them by penetrating the trunk, but put them to strange new uses. We're tired of trees. We should stop believing in trees, roots, and radicles. They've made us suffer too much. All of arborescent culture is founded on them, from biology to linguistics. Nothing is beautiful or loving or political aside from underground stems and aerial roots, adventitious growths and rhizomes. Amsterdam, a city entirely without roots, a rhizome-city with its stem-canals, where utility connects with the greatest folly in relation to a commercial war machine.

Thought is not arborescent, and the brain is not a rooted or ramified matter. What are wrongly called "dendrites" do not assure the connection of neurons in a continuous fabric. The discontinuity between cells, the role of the axons, the functioning of the synapses, the existence of synaptic microfissures, the leap each message makes across these fissures, make the brain a multiplicity immersed in its plane of consistency or neuroglia, a whole uncertain, probabilistic system ("the uncertain nervous system"). Many people have a tree growing in their heads, but the brain itself is much more a grass than a tree. "The axon and the dendrite twist around each other like bindweed around brambles, with synapses at each of the thorns."¹² The same goes for memory. Neurologists and psychophysiolo-

gists distinguish between long-term memory and short-term memory (on the order of a minute). The difference between them is not simply quantitative: short-term memory is of the rhizome or diagram type, and long-term memory is arborescent and centralized (imprint, engram, tracing, or photograph). Short-term memory is in no way subject to a law of contiguity or immediacy to its object; it can act at a distance, come or return a long time after, but always under conditions of discontinuity, rupture, and multiplicity. Furthermore, the difference between the two kinds of memory is not that of two temporal modes of apprehending the same thing; they do not grasp the same thing, memory, or idea. The splendor of the short-term Idea: one writes using short-term memory, and thus short-term ideas, even if one reads or rereads using long-term memory of long-term concepts. Short-term memory includes forgetting as a process; it merges not with the instant but instead with the nervous, temporal, and collective rhizome. Long-term memory (family, race, society, or civilization) traces and translates, but what it translates continues to act in it, from a distance, off beat, in an "untimely" way, not instantaneously.

The tree and root inspire a sad image of thought that is forever imitating the multiple on the basis of a centered or segmented higher unity. If we consider the set, branches-roots, the trunk plays the role of *opposed segment* for one of the subsets running from bottom to top: this kind of segment is a "link dipole," in contrast to the "unit dipoles" formed by spokes radiating from a single center.¹³ Even if the links themselves proliferate, as in the radicle system, one can never get beyond the One-Two, and fake multiplicities. Regenerations, reproductions, returns, hydras, and medusas do not get us any further. Arborescent systems are hierarchical systems with centers of signification and subjectification, central automata like organized memories. In the corresponding models, an element only receives information from a higher unit, and only receives a subjective affection along preestablished paths. This is evident in current problems in information science and computer science, which still cling to the oldest modes of thought in that they grant all power to a memory or central organ. Pierre Rosenstiehl and Jean Petitot, in a fine article denouncing "the imagery of command trees" (centered systems or hierarchical structures), note that "accepting the primacy of hierarchical structures amounts to giving arborescent structures privileged status. . . . The arborescent form admits of topological explanation. . . . In a hierarchical system, an individual has only one active neighbor, his or her hierarchical superior. . . . The channels of transmission are preestablished: the arborescent system preexists the individual, who is integrated into it at an allotted place" (signification and subjectification). The authors point out that even when one thinks one has reached a multiplicity, it may be a false one—of what we call the radicle

type—because its ostensibly nonhierarchical presentation or statement in fact only admits of a totally hierarchical solution. An example is the famous *friendship theorem*: "If any two given individuals in a society have precisely one mutual friend, then there exists an individual who is the friend of all the others." (Rosenstiehl and Petitot ask who that mutual friend is. Who is "the universal friend in this society of couples: the master, the confessor, the doctor? These ideas are curiously far removed from the initial axioms." Who is this friend of humankind? Is it the *philosopher* as he appears in classical thought, even if he is an aborted unity that makes itself felt only through its absence or subjectivity, saying all the while, I know nothing, I am nothing?) Thus the authors speak of dictatorship theorems. Such is indeed the principle of roots-trees, or their outcome: the radicle solution, the structure of Power.¹⁴

To these centered systems, the authors contrast acentered systems, finite networks of automata in which communication runs from any neighbor to any other, the stems or channels do not preexist, and all individuals are interchangeable, defined only by their *state* at a given moment—such that the local operations are coordinated and the final, global result synchronized without a central agency. Transduction of intensive states replaces topology, and "the graph regulating the circulation of information is in a way the opposite of the hierarchical graph. . . . There is no reason for the graph to be a tree" (we have been calling this kind of graph a map). The problem of the war machine, or the firing squad: is a general necessary for n individuals to manage to fire in unison? The solution without a General is to be found in an acentered multiplicity possessing a finite number of states with signals to indicate corresponding speeds, from a war rhizome or guerrilla logic point of view, without any tracing, without any copying of a central order. The authors even demonstrate that this kind of machinic multiplicity, assemblage, or society rejects any centralizing or unifying automaton as an "asocial intrusion."¹⁵ Under these conditions, n is in fact always $n - 1$. Rosenstiehl and Petitot emphasize that the opposition, centered-acentered, is valid less as a designation for things than as a mode of calculation applied to things. Trees may correspond to the rhizome, or they may burgeon into a rhizome. It is true that the same thing is generally susceptible to both modes of calculation or both types of regulation, but not without undergoing a change in state. Take psychoanalysis as an example again: it subjects the unconscious to arborescent structures, hierarchical graphs, recapitulatory memories, central organs, the phallus, the phallus-tree—not only in its theory but also in its practice of calculation and treatment. Psychoanalysis cannot change its method in this regard: it bases its own dictatorial power upon a dictatorial conception of the unconscious. Psychoanalysis's margin of maneuverability is therefore very

limited. In both psychoanalysis and its object, there is always a general, always a leader (General Freud). Schizoanalysis, on the other hand, treats the unconscious as an acentered system, in other words, as a machinic network of finite automata (a rhizome), and thus arrives at an entirely different state of the unconscious. These same remarks apply to linguistics; Rosenstiehl and Petitot are right to bring up the possibility of an "acentrated organization of a society of words." For both statements and desires, the issue is never to reduce the unconscious or to interpret it or to make it signify according to a tree model. The issue is to *produce the unconscious*, and with it new statements, different desires: the rhizome is precisely this production of the unconscious.

It is odd how the tree has dominated Western reality and all of Western thought, from botany to biology and anatomy, but also gnosiology, theology, ontology, all of philosophy . . . : the root-foundation, *Grund*; *racine*, *fondement*. The West has a special relation to the forest, and deforestation; the fields carved from the forest are populated with seed plants produced by cultivation based on species lineages of the arborescent type; animal raising, carried out on fallow fields, selects lineages forming an entire animal arborescence. The East presents a different figure: a relation to the steppe and the garden (or in some cases, the desert and the oasis), rather than forest and field; cultivation of tubers by fragmentation of the individual; a casting aside or bracketing of animal raising, which is confined to closed spaces or pushed out onto the steppes of the nomads. The West: agriculture based on a chosen lineage containing a large number of variable individuals. The East: horticulture based on a small number of individuals derived from a wide range of "clones." Does not the East, Oceania in particular, offer something like a rhizomatic model opposed in every respect to the Western model of the tree? André Haudricourt even sees this as the basis for the opposition between the moralities or philosophies of transcendence dear to the West and the immanent ones of the East: the God who sows and reaps, as opposed to the God who replants and unearths (replanting of offshoots versus sowing of seeds).¹⁶ Transcendence: a specifically European disease. Neither is music the same, the music of the earth is different, as is sexuality: seed plants, even those with two sexes in the same plant, subjugate sexuality to the reproductive model; the rhizome, on the other hand, is a liberation of sexuality not only from reproduction but also from genitality. Here in the West, the tree has implanted itself in our bodies, rigidifying and stratifying even the sexes. We have lost the rhizome, or the grass. Henry Miller: "China is the weed in the human cabbage patch. . . . The weed is the Nemesis of human endeavor. . . . Of all the imaginary existences we attribute to plant, beast and star the weed leads the most satisfactory life of all. True, the weed produces no lilies, no battleships, no Ser-

mons on the Mount. . . . Eventually the weed gets the upper hand. Eventually things fall back into a state of China. This condition is usually referred to by historians as the Dark Age. Grass is the only way out. . . . The weed exists only to fill the waste spaces left by cultivated areas. *It grows between*, among other things. The lily is beautiful, the cabbage is provender, the poppy is maddening—but the weed is rank growth . . . : it points a moral."¹⁷ Which China is Miller talking about? The old China, the new, an imaginary one, or yet another located on a shifting map?

America is a special case. Of course it is not immune from domination by trees or the search for roots. This is evident even in the literature, in the quest for a national identity and even for a European ancestry or genealogy (Kerouac going off in search of his ancestors). Nevertheless, everything important that has happened or is happening takes the route of the American rhizome: the beatniks, the underground, bands and gangs, successive lateral offshoots in immediate connection with an outside. American books are different from European books, even when the American sets off in pursuit of trees. The conception of the book is different. *Leaves of Grass*. And directions in America are different: the search for arborescence and the return to the Old World occur in the East. But there is the rhizomatic West, with its Indians without ancestry, its ever-receding limit, its shifting and displaced frontiers. There is a whole American "map" in the West, where even the trees form rhizomes. America reversed the directions: it put its Orient in the West, as if it were precisely in America that the earth came full circle; its West is the edge of the East.¹⁸ (India is not the intermediary between the Occident and the Orient, as Haudricourt believed: America is the pivot point and mechanism of reversal.) The American singer Patti Smith sings the bible of the American dentist: Don't go for the root, follow the canal . . .

Are there not also two kinds of bureaucracy, or even three (or still more)? Western bureaucracy: its agrarian, cadastral origins; roots and fields; trees and their role as frontiers; the great census of William the Conqueror; feudalism; the policies of the kings of France; making property the basis of the State; negotiating land through warfare, litigation, and marriages. The kings of France chose the lily because it is a plant with deep roots that clings to slopes. Is bureaucracy the same in the Orient? Of course it is all too easy to depict an Orient of rhizomes and immanence; yet it is true that in the Orient the State does not act following a schema of arborescence corresponding to preestablished, arborified, and rooted classes; its bureaucracy is one of channels, for example, the much-discussed case of hydraulic power with "weak property," in which the State engenders channeled and channelizing classes (cf. the aspects of Wittfogel's work that have not been refuted).¹⁹ The despot acts as a river, not as a fountainhead, which is still a

point, a tree-point or root; he flows with the current rather than sitting under a tree; Buddha's tree itself becomes a rhizome; Mao's river and Louis's tree. Has not America acted as an intermediary here as well? For it proceeds both by internal exterminations and liquidations (not only the Indians but also the farmers, etc.), and by successive waves of immigration from the outside. The flow of capital produces an immense channel, a quantification of power with immediate "quanta," where each person profits from the passage of the money flow in his or her own way (hence the reality-myth of the poor man who strikes it rich and then falls into poverty again): in America everything comes together, tree and channel, root and rhizome. There is no universal capitalism, there is no capitalism in itself; capitalism is at the crossroads of all kinds of formations, it is neocapitalism by nature. It invents its eastern face and western face, and reshapes them both—all for the worst.

At the same time, we are on the wrong track with all these geographical distributions. An impasse. So much the better. If it is a question of showing that rhizomes also have their own, even more rigid, despotism and hierarchy, then fine and good: for there is no dualism, no ontological dualism between here and there, no axiological dualism between good and bad, no blend or American synthesis. There are knots of arborescence in rhizomes, and rhizomatic offshoots in roots. Moreover, there are despotic formations of immanence and channelization specific to rhizomes, just as there are anarchic deformations in the transcendent system of trees, aerial roots, and subterranean stems. The important point is that the root-tree and canal-rhizome are not two opposed models: the first operates as a transcendent model and tracing, even if it engenders its own escapes; the second operates as an immanent process that overturns the model and outlines a map, even if it constitutes its own hierarchies, even if it gives rise to a despotic channel. It is not a question of this or that place on earth, or of a given moment in history, still less of this or that category of thought. It is a question of a model that is perpetually in construction or collapsing, and of a process that is perpetually prolonging itself, breaking off and starting up again. No, this is not a new or different dualism. The problem of writing: in order to designate something exactly, an exact expressions are utterly unavoidable. Not at all because it is a necessary step, or because one can only advance by approximations: an exactitude is in no way an approximation; on the contrary, it is the exact passage of that which is under way. We invoke one dualism only in order to challenge another. We employ a dualism of models only in order to arrive at a process that challenges all models. Each time, mental correctives are necessary to undo the dualisms we had no wish to construct but through which we pass. Arrive at the magic formula we all seek—PLURALISM = MONISM—via all the dualisms that are

the enemy, an entirely necessary enemy, the furniture we are forever rearranging.

Let us summarize the principal characteristics of a rhizome: unlike trees or their roots, the rhizome connects any point to any other point, and its traits are not necessarily linked to traits of the same nature; it brings into play very different regimes of signs, and even nonsign states. The rhizome is reducible neither to the One nor the multiple. It is not the One that becomes Two or even directly three, four, five, etc. It is not a multiple derived from the One, or to which One is added ($n + 1$). It is composed not of units but of dimensions, or rather directions in motion. It has neither beginning nor end, but always a middle (milieu) from which it grows and which it overflows. It constitutes linear multiplicities with n dimensions having neither subject nor object, which can be laid out on a plane of consistency, and from which the One is always subtracted ($n - 1$). When a multiplicity of this kind changes dimension, it necessarily changes in nature as well, undergoes a metamorphosis. Unlike a structure, which is defined by a set of points and positions, with binary relations between the points and biunivocal relationships between the positions, the rhizome is made only of lines: lines of segmentarity and stratification as its dimensions, and the line of flight or deterritorialization as the maximum dimension after which the multiplicity undergoes metamorphosis, changes in nature. These lines, or lineaments, should not be confused with lineages of the arborescent type, which are merely localizable linkages between points and positions. Unlike the tree, the rhizome is not the object of reproduction: neither external reproduction as image-tree nor internal reproduction as tree-structure. The rhizome is an antigenealogy. It is a short-term memory, or antimemory. The rhizome operates by variation, expansion, conquest, capture, offshoots. Unlike the graphic arts, drawing, or photography, unlike tracings, the rhizome pertains to a map that must be produced, constructed, a map that is always detachable, connectable, reversible, modifiable, and has multiple entryways and exits and its own lines of flight. It is tracings that must be put on the map, not the opposite. In contrast to centered (even polycentric) systems with hierarchical modes of communication and preestablished paths, the rhizome is an acentered, nonhierarchical, nonsignifying system without a General and without an organizing memory or central automaton, defined solely by a circulation of states. What is at question in the rhizome is a relation to sexuality—but also to the animal, the vegetal, the world, politics, the book, things natural and artificial—that is totally different from the arborescent relation: all manner of "becomings."

A plateau is always in the middle, not at the beginning or the end. A rhizome is made of plateaus. Gregory Bateson uses the word "plateau" to

designate something very special: a continuous, self-vibrating region of intensities whose development avoids any orientation toward a culmination point or external end. Bateson cites Balinese culture as an example: mother-child sexual games, and even quarrels among men, undergo this bizarre intensive stabilization. "Some sort of continuing plateau of intensity is substituted for [sexual] climax," war, or a culmination point. It is a regrettable characteristic of the Western mind to relate expressions and actions to exterior or transcendent ends, instead of evaluating them on a plane of consistency on the basis of their intrinsic value.²⁰ For example, a book composed of chapters has culmination and termination points. ~~What takes place in a book composed instead of plateaus that communicate with one another across microfissures, as in a brain? We call a "plateau" any multiplicity connected to other multiplicities by superficial underground stems in such a way as to form or extend a rhizome. We are writing this book as a rhizome. It is composed of plateaus. We have given it a circular form, but only for laughs. Each morning we would wake up, and each of us would ask himself what plateau he was going to tackle, writing five lines here, ten there. We had hallucinatory experiences, we watched lines leave one plateau and proceed to another like columns of tiny ants. We made circles of convergence. Each plateau can be read starting anywhere and can be related to any other plateau. To attain the multiple, one must have a method that effectively constructs it; no typographical cleverness, no lexical agility, no blending or creation of words, no syntactical boldness, can substitute for it. In fact, these are more often than not merely mimetic procedures used to disseminate or disperse a unity that is retained in a different dimension for an image-book. Technonarcissism. Typographical, lexical, or syntactic creations are necessary only when they no longer belong to the form of expression of a hidden unity, becoming themselves dimensions of the multiplicity under consideration; we only know of rare successes in this.²¹ We ourselves were unable to do it. We just used words that in turn function for us as plateaus. RHIZOMATICS = SCHIZOANALYSIS = STRATOANALYSIS = PRAGMATICS = MICROPOLITICS. These words are concepts, but concepts are lines, which is to say, number systems attached to a particular dimension of the multiplicities (strata, molecular chains, lines of flight or rupture, circles of convergence, etc.). Nowhere do we claim for our concepts the title of a science. We are no more familiar with scientificity than we are with ideology; all we know are assemblages. And the only assemblages are machinic assemblages of desire and collective assemblages of enunciation. No signification, no subjectification: writing to the *n*th power (all individuated enunciation remains trapped within the dominant significations, all signifying desire is associated with dominated subjects). An assemblage, in its multiplicity, necessarily acts on semiotic flows,~~

material flows, and social flows simultaneously (independent have just recapitulation that may be made of it in a scientific or theoretical ops, not There is no longer a tripartite division between a field of reality (the we the and a field of representation (the book) and a field of subjectivity (an author). Rather, an assemblage establishes connections between certain multiplicities drawn from each of these orders, so that a book has no sequel nor the world as its object nor one or several authors as its subject. In short, we think that one cannot write sufficiently in the name of an outside. The outside has no image, no signification, no subjectivity. The book as assemblage with the outside, against the book as image of the world. A rhizome-book, not a dichotomous, pivotal, or fascicular book. Never send down roots, or plant them, however difficult it may be to avoid reverting to the old procedures. "Those things which occur to me, occur to me not from the root up but rather only from somewhere about their middle. Let someone then attempt to seize them, let someone attempt to seize a blade of grass and hold fast to it when it begins to grow only from the middle."²² Why is this so difficult? The question is directly one of perceptual semiotics. It's not easy to see things in the middle, rather than looking down on them from above or up at them from below, or from left to right or right to left: try it, you'll see that everything changes. It's not easy to see the grass in things and in words (similarly, Nietzsche said that an aphorism had to be "ruminated"; never is a plateau separable from the cows that populate it, which are also the clouds in the sky).

History is always written from the sedentary point of view and in the name of a unitary State apparatus, at least a possible one, even when the topic is nomads. What is lacking is a Nomadology, the opposite of a history. There are rare successes in this: also, for example, on the subject of the Children's Crusades: Marcel Schwob's book multiplies narratives like so many plateaus with variable numbers of dimensions. Then there is Andrzejewski's book, *Les portes du paradis* (The gates of paradise), composed of a single uninterrupted sentence; a flow of children; a flow of walking with pauses, straggling, and forward rushes; the semiotic flow of the confessions of all the children who go up to the old monk at the head of the procession to make their declarations; a flow of desire and sexuality, each child having left out of love and more or less directly led by the dark posthumous pederastic desire of the count of Vendôme; all this with circles of convergence. What is important is not whether the flows are "One or multiple"—we're past that point: there is a collective assemblage of enunciation, a machinic assemblage of desire, one inside the other and both plugged into an immense outside that is a multiplicity in any case. A more recent example is Armand Farrachi's book on the Fourth Crusade, *La dislocation*, in which the sentences space themselves out and disperse, or else

jostle together and coexist, and in which the letters, the typography begin to dance as the crusade grows more delirious.²³ These are models of nomadic and rhizomatic writing. Writing weds a war machine and lines of flight, abandoning the strata, segmentarities, sedentariness, the State apparatus. But why is a model still necessary? Aren't these books still "images" of the Crusades? Don't they still retain a unity, in Schwob's case a pivotal unity, in Farrachi's an aborted unity, and in the most beautiful example, *Les portes du paradis*, the unity of the funereal count? Is there a need for a more profound nomadism than that of the Crusades, a nomadism of true nomads, or of those who no longer even move or imitate anything? The nomadism of those who only assemble (*agencent*). How can the book find an adequate outside with which to assemble in heterogeneity, rather than a world to reproduce? The cultural book is necessarily a tracing: already a tracing of itself, a tracing of the previous book by the same author, a tracing of other books however different they may be, an endless tracing of established concepts and words, a tracing of the world present, past, and future. Even the anticultural book may still be burdened by too heavy a cultural load: but it will use it actively, for forgetting instead of remembering, for underdevelopment instead of progress toward development, in nomadism rather than sedentariness, to make a map instead of a tracing. RHIZOMATICS = POP ANALYSIS, even if the people have other things to do besides read it, even if the blocks of academic culture or pseudoscientificity in it are still too painful or ponderous. For science would go completely mad if left to its own devices. Look at mathematics: it's not a science, it's a monster slang, it's nomadic. Even in the realm of theory, especially in the realm of theory, any precarious and pragmatic framework is better than tracing concepts, with their breaks and progress changing nothing. Imperceptible rupture, not signifying break. The nomads invented a war machine in opposition to the State apparatus. History has never comprehended nomadism, the book has never comprehended the outside. The State as the model for the book and for thought has a long history: logos, the philosopher-king, the transcendence of the Idea, the interiority of the concept, the republic of minds, the court of reason, the functionaries of thought, man as legislator and subject. The State's pretension to be a world order, and to root man. The war machine's relation to an outside is not another "model"; it is an assemblage that makes thought itself nomadic, and the book a working part in every mobile machine, a stem for a rhizome (Kleist and Kafka against Goethe).

Write to the n th power, the $n - 1$ power, write with slogans: Make rhizomes, not roots, never plant! Don't sow, grow offshoots! Don't be one or multiple, be multiplicities! Run lines, never plot a point! Speed turns the point into a line!²⁴ Be quick, even when standing still! Line of chance, line

of hips, line of flight. Don't bring out the General in you! Don't have just ideas, just have an idea (Godard). Have short-term ideas. Make maps, not photos or drawings. Be the Pink Panther and your loves will be like the wasp and the orchid, the cat and the baboon. As they say about old man river:

He don't plant 'tatos
Don't plant cotton
Them that plants them is soon forgotten
But old man river he just keeps rollin' along

A rhizome has no beginning or end; it is always in the middle, between things, interbeing, *intermezzo*. The tree is filiation, but the rhizome is alliance, uniquely alliance. The tree imposes the verb "to be," but the fabric of the rhizome is the conjunction, "and . . . and . . . and . . ." This conjunction carries enough force to shake and uproot the verb "to be." Where are you going? Where are you coming from? What are you heading for? These are totally useless questions. Making a clean slate, starting or beginning again from ground zero, seeking a beginning or a foundation—all imply a false conception of voyage and movement (a conception that is methodical, pedagogical, initiatory, symbolic. . .). But Kleist, Lenz, and Büchner have another way of traveling and moving: proceeding from the middle, through the middle, coming and going rather than starting and finishing.²⁵ American literature, and already English literature, manifest this rhizomatic direction to an even greater extent: they know how to move between things, establish a logic of the AND, overthrow ontology, do away with foundations, nullify endings and beginnings. They know how to practice pragmatics. The middle is by no means an average; on the contrary, it is where things pick up speed. *Between* things does not designate a localizable relation going from one thing to the other and back again, but a perpendicular direction, a transversal movement that sweeps one *and* the other away, a stream without beginning or end that undermines its banks and picks up speed in the middle.