

La division sociale ~ Social division

The divisions of social relationship certainly exist, they are real, he does not deny it and confidently listens to all those (and they are numerous) who discuss them; but in his eyes, and doubtless because he somewhat fetishizes language, these real divisions are absorbed in their interlocutive form: it is interlocution which is divided, alienated: hence he experiences the entire social relationship in terms of language.

Moi, je ~ Myself, I

An American (or positivist, or disputatious: I cannot disentangle) student identifies, as if it were self-evident, *subjectivity* and *narcissism*; no doubt he thinks that subjectivity consists in talking about oneself, and in speaking well of oneself. This is because he is a victim of the old couple, the old paradigm: *subjectivity/objectivity*. Yet today the subject apprehends himself *elsewhere*, and “subjectivity” can return at another place on the spiral: deconstructed, taken apart, shifted, without anchorage: why should I not speak of “myself” since this “my” is no longer “the self”?

The so-called personal pronouns: everything happens here, I am forever enclosed within the pronominal lists: “I” mobilize the image-repertoire, “you” and “he” mobilize paranoia. But also, fugitively, according to the reader, everything, like the reflections of a watered silk, can be reversed: in “myself, I,” the “I” might not be “me,” the “me” he so ostentatiously puts down; I can say to myself “you” as Sade did, in order to detach within myself the worker, the fabricator, the producer of writing, from the subject of the work (the Author); on the other hand, not to speak of oneself can mean: *I am He who does not speak about himself*; and to speak about oneself by saying “he” can mean: *I am speaking about myself as though I were more or less dead*, caught up in a faint mist of paranoid rhetoric, or again: I am speaking about myself in the manner of the Brechtian actor who must distance his character: “show” rather than incarnate him, and give his manner of speaking

a kind of fillip whose effect is to pry the pronoun from its name, the image from its support, the image-repertoire from its mirror (Brecht recommended that the actor think out his entire role in the third person).

Possible affinity of paranoia and distancing, by the intermediary of narrative: the “he” is epic. Which means: “he” is wicked: the nastiest word in the language: pronoun of the non-person, it annuls and mortifies its referent; it cannot be applied without uneasiness to someone one loves; saying “he” about someone, I always envision a kind of murder by language, whose entire scene, sometimes sumptuous, even ceremonial, is *gossip*.

And sometimes, the mockery of all this, “he” gives way to “I” under the simple effect of a syntactic confusion: for in an extended sentence, “he” can refer without warning to many other referents than me.

Here is a series of outdated propositions (if they were not contradictory): *I would be nothing if I didn't write. Yet I am elsewhere than where I am when I write. I am worth more than what I write.*

Un mauvais sujet politique ~ A political misfit

Aesthetics being the art of seeing the forms detach themselves from causes and goals and constitute an adequate system of values, what could be more contrary to politics? Now he could not rid himself of the aesthetic reflex, he could not help *seeing* in some political behavior he approved of, the form (the formal consistency) which it assumed and which he found, as it turned out, hideous or ridiculous. Thus, especially intolerant of blackmail (for what underlying reason?), it was above all blackmail that he saw in the politics of states. By an even more displaced aesthetic sentiment, the taking of hostages always multiplying in the same form, he came to the point of being disgusted by the mechanical character of these operations: they fell into the discredit of all repetition: *another one!*

what a bore! It was like the refrain of a good song, like the facial tic of a handsome man. Hence, because of a perverse disposition to *see* forms, languages, and repetitions, he gradually became a *political misfit*.

Le surdétermination ~ Overdetermination

Ahmad Al Tifashi (1184–1253), author of *Hearts' Delights*, describes a male prostitute's kiss as follows: he thrusts his tongue into your mouth and turns it obstinately. We may take this for the demonstration of *overdetermined* behavior; for from this erotic practice apparently anything but in conformity with his professional status, Al Tifashi's prostitute derives a triple advantage: he shows his erotic competence, safeguards the image of his virility, and yet compromises his own body very little, whose interior he denies you by this very assault. Where is the principal theme? It is a subject, not complicated (as current opinion says with irritation), but *composed* (as Fourier would have said).

La surdi té à son propre langage
~ Deaf to one's own language

What he listened to, what he could not keep from listening to, wherever he was, was the deafness of others to their own language: he heard them not hearing each other. But as for himself? Did he never hear his own deafness? He struggled to hear himself, but produced in this effort no more than another aural scene, another fiction. Hence to entrust himself to writing: is not writing that language which has renounced producing *the last word*, which lives and breathes by yielding itself up to others so that they can hear you?

La symbolique d'État ~ Symbolics of State

I am writing this on Saturday, April 6, 1974, a day of national mourning in memory of Pompidou. All day long, on the radio, "good music" (to my ears): Bach, Mozart, Brahms, Schubert.



L'espace du séminaire est phalanstérique, c'est-à-dire, en un sens, romanesque. C'est seulement l'espace de circulation des désirs subtils, des désirs mobiles; c'est, sans l'artifice d'une socialité dont la consistance est miraculeusement exténuée, selon un mot de Nietzsche: "l'énchevêtrement des rapports amoureux"

The space of the seminar is phalanstERIC, i.e., in a sense, fictive, novelistic. It is only the space of the circulation of subtle desires, mobile desires; it is, within the artifice of a sociality whose consistency is miraculously extenuated, according to a phrase of Nietzsche's: "the tangle of amorous relations"

“Good music,” then, is funereal music: an official metonymy unites death, spirituality, and the music of a certain class (on strike days, the radio plays only “bad music”). My neighbor, who ordinarily listens to pop music, doesn’t turn on her radio today. Thus we are both excluded from the symbolics of State: she because she does not endure the signifier (“good music”), I because I do not endure the signified (Pompidou’s death). Doesn’t this double amputation make the music, thus manipulated, into an oppressive discourse?

Le texte symptomal ~ The text as symptom

How can I manage to keep each of these fragments from never being anything but a *symptom*? —Easy: let yourself go, *regress*.

Système / systématique ~ System / systematics

Is it not the characteristic of reality to be *unmasterable*? And is it not the characteristic of any system to *master* it? What then, confronting reality, can one do who rejects mastery? Get rid of the system as apparatus, accept *systematics* as writing (as Fourier did).

Tactique / stratégie ~ Tactics / strategy

The movement of his work is tactical: a matter of displacing himself, of obstructing, as with bars, but not of conquering. Examples: the notion of intertext? It has actually no positivity; it serves to combat the law of context; *acknowledgment* is made at a certain moment as a value, but not out of exaltation of objectivity, instead to oppose the expressivity of bourgeois art; the work’s ambiguity has nothing to do with the New Criticism and does not interest him in itself; it is only a little machine for making war against philological law, the academic tyranny of correct meaning. This work would therefore be defined as: *a tactics without strategy*.

Plus tard ~ Later

He has a certain foible of providing “introductions,” “sketches,” “elements,” postponing the “real” book till later. This foible has a rhetorical name: *prolepsis* (well discussed by Genette).

Here are some of these projected books: a History of Writing, a History of Rhetoric, a History of Etymology, a new Stylistics, an Aesthetics of textual pleasure, a new linguistic science, a Linguistics of Value, an inventory of the languages of love, a fiction based on the notion of an urban Robinson Crusoe, a summa on the *petite bourgeoisie*, a book on France entitled—in the manner of Michelet—*Our France*, etc.

These projects, generally heralding a summative, excessive book, parodic of the great monument of knowledge, can only be simple acts of discourse (prolepses indeed); they belong to the category of the dilatory. But the dilatory, denial of reality (of the realizable), is no less alive for all that: these projects live, they are never abandoned; suspended, they can return to life at any moment; or at least, like the persistent trace of an obsession, they fulfill themselves, partially, indirectly, *as gestures*, through themes, fragments, articles: the History of Writing (postulated in 1953) engenders twenty years later the idea of a seminar on a history of French discourse; the Linguistics of Value, however remotely, orients this very book. *The mountain gives birth to a mouse?* This disdainful proverb must be reversed in a positive sense: the mountain is not any too much to make a mouse.

Fourier never describes his books as anything but the heralds of the perfect Book, which he will publish later (perfectly clear, perfectly persuasive, perfectly complex). The Annunciation of the Book (the *Prospectus*) is one of those dilatory maneuvers which control our internal utopia. I imagine, I fantasize, I embellish, and I polish the great book of which I am incapable: it is a book of learning and of writing, at once a perfect system and the mockery of all systems, a summa of intelligence and of pleasure, a vengeful and tender book, corrosive and pacific, etc. (here, a foam of adjectives,

an explosion of the image-repertoire); in short, it has all the qualities of a hero in a novel: it is the one coming (the *adventure*), and I herald this book that makes me my own John the Baptist, I prophesy, I announce . . .

If he often foresees books to write (which he does not write), it is because he postpones until later what bores him. Or rather, he wants to write *right away* what it pleases him to write, and not something else. In Michelet, what makes him want to rewrite are those carnal themes, the coffee, the blood, the sisal, the wheat, etc.; thus one will construct a thematic criticism for oneself, but in order not to risk it theoretically against another school—historical, biographical, etc.—for the fantasy is too egoistic to be polemical, one declares that one is concerned with no more than a *pre-criticism*, and that the “real” criticism (which is that of other people) will come later.

Being incessantly short of time (or you imagine yourself to be), caught up in deadlines and delays, you persist in supposing that you are going to get out of it by putting what you have to do in order. You make programs, draw up plans, calendars, new deadlines. On your desk and in your files, how many lists of articles, books, seminars, courses to teach, telephone calls to make. As a matter of fact, you never consult these little slips of paper, given the fact that an anguished conscience has provided you with an excellent memory of all your obligations. But it is irrepressible: you extend the time you lack by the very registration of that lack. Let us call this *program compulsion* (whose hypomaniacal character one readily divines); states and collectivities, apparently, are not exempt from it: how much time wasted in *drawing up programs*? And since I anticipate writing an article on it, the very notion of program itself becomes a part of my program compulsion.

Now let us reverse all this: these dilatory maneuvers, these endlessly receding projects may be writing itself. First of all, the work is never anything but the meta-book (the temporary commentary) of a work to come which, *not being written*, becomes this

work itself: Proust, Fourier never wrote anything but such a “Prospectus.” Afterward, the work is never monumental: it is a *proposition* which each will come to saturate as he likes, as he can: I bestow upon you a certain semantic substance to run through, like a ferret. Finally, the work is a (theatrical) *rehearsal*, and this rehearsal, as in one of Rivette’s films, is verbose, infinite, interlaced with commentaries, excursions, shot through with other matters. In a word, the work is a tangle; its being is the *degree*, the step: a staircase that never stops.

Tel Quel ~ Tel Quel

His friends on *Tel Quel*: their originality, their *truth* (aside from their intellectual energy, their genius for writing) insist that they must agree to speak a common, general, incorporeal language, i.e., political language, *although each of them speaks it with his own body*. —Then why don’t you do the same thing? —Precisely, no doubt, because I do not have the same body that they do; my body cannot accommodate itself to *generality*, to the power of generality which is in language. —Isn’t that an individualistic view? Wouldn’t one expect to hear it from a Christian—a notorious anti-Hegelian—such as Kierkegaard?

The body is the irreducible difference, and at the same time it is the principle of all structuration (since structuration is what is Unique in structure). If I managed to talk politics *with my own body*, I should make out of the most banal of (discursive) structures a structuration; with repetition, I should produce Text. The problem is to know if the political apparatus would recognize for very long this way of escaping the militant banality by thrusting into it—alive, pulsing, pleasure-seeking—my own unique body.

Le temps qu’il fait ~ What the weather is doing

This morning the woman in the bakery said: *It’s still lovely, but the heat’s lasting too long!* (people around here always feel that it’s too lovely, too hot). I add: *And the light is so beautiful!* But the

woman does not answer, and once again I notice that short-circuit in language of which the most trivial conversations are the sure occasion; I realize that *seeing the light* relates to a class sensibility; or rather, since there are “picturesque” lights which are certainly enjoyed by the woman in the bakery, what is socially marked is the “vague” view, the view without contours, without object, *without figuration*, the view of a transparency, the view of a non-view (that unfigurative value which occurs in good painting and never in bad). In short, nothing more cultural than the atmosphere, nothing more ideological than what the weather is doing.

Terre promise ~ Promised land

He regretted not being able to embrace all avant-gardes at once, he regretted being limited, too conventional, etc.; and his regret could be illuminated by no sure analysis: just what was it he was resisting? What was he rejecting (or even more superficially: what was he *sulking over*) in one place or another? A style? An arrogance? A violence? An imbecility?

Ma tête s'embrouille ~ My head is confused

On a certain kind of work, on a certain kind of subject (usually the ones dissertations are made of), on a certain day of life itself, he would like to be able to post as a motto this old-wives' remark: *My head is confused* (let us imagine a language in which the set of grammatical categories would sometimes force the subject to speak in the aspect of an old woman).

And yet: *at the level of his body*, his head never gets confused. It is a curse: no value, lost, secondary state: always consciousness: drugs excluded, yet he dreams of them: dreams of being able to intoxicate himself (instead of getting sick right away); anticipating from a surgical operation for at least once in his life an *absence*, which was denied him for lack of a general anesthesia; recovering every morning, upon waking, a head swimming a little, but whose interior remains fixed (sometimes, falling to sleep with something

worrying me, upon first waking it has disappeared; a white minute, miraculously stripped of meaning; but the worry rushes upon me, like a bird of prey, and I find myself altogether back where I was, *just as I was the day before*).

Sometimes he feels like letting all this language rest—this language which is in his head, in his work, in other people, as if language itself were an exhausted limb of the human body; it seems to him that if he could take a rest from language, he could rest altogether, dismissing all crises, echoes, exaltations, injuries, reasonings, etc. He sees language in the figure of an exhausted old woman (something like an antique cleaning woman with worn hands) who sighs for a certain *retirement* . . .

Le théâtre ~ Theater

At the crossroads of the entire *oeuvre*, perhaps the Theater: there is not a single one of his texts, in fact, which fails to deal with a certain theater, and spectacle is the universal category in whose aspect the world is seen. The theater relates to all the apparently special themes which pass and return in what he writes: connotation, hysteria, fiction, the image-repertoire, the scene, grace, the Orient, violence, ideology (which Bacon once called a “phantom of theatre”). What has attracted him is less the sign than the signal, the poster: the science he desired was not a semiology but a *signalitics*.

Not believing in the separation of affect and sign, of the emotion and its theater, he could not *express* an admiration, an indignation, a love, for fear of signifying it badly. Hence, the more moved he was, the more lusterless. His “serenity” was merely the constraint of an actor who dares not come on stage lest he perform too badly.

Incapable of making himself convincing to himself, yet it is the very conviction of others which in his eyes makes them into creatures of theater and fascinates him. He asks the actor to show

him a convinced body, rather than a true passion. Here perhaps is the best theater he has ever seen: in the Belgian dining car, certain employees (customs officer, policemen) were sitting at a corner table; they ate their meal with so much appetite, comfort, and care (choosing the spices, the pieces, the appropriate tableware, preferring at a knowing glance the steak to the insipid chicken), with manners so perfectly applied to the food (carefully scraping off their fish the suspect cream sauce, tapping their yogurt in order to remove the seal, scratching their cheese instead of peeling it, using their fruit knife as if it were a scalpel), that the whole Cook service was subverted: they were eating the same things as we were, but it was not the same menu. Everything had changed, from one end of the car to the other, by the single effect of a *conviction* (relation of the body not to passion or to the soul but to pleasure, to bliss).

Le thème ~ The theme

Thematic criticism has come under a certain suspicion in recent years. Yet we must not abandon this critical notion too readily. The theme is a useful notion to designate that site of discourse where the body advances *under its own responsibility*, and thereby thwarts the sign: the “gnarled,” for instance, is neither signifier nor signified, or both at once: it pins down here and at the same time refers farther away. In order to make the theme into a structural concept, a certain etymological delirium is necessary: as the structural units are in one case or another “morphemes,” “phonemes,” “monemes,” “gustemes,” “vestemes,” “erotemes,” “biographemes,” etc. Let us imagine, according to the same formation, that the “theme” is the structural unit of the thesis (ideal discourse): what is posited, outlined, advanced by the utterance, and remains as *the availability of the meaning* (before being, occasionally, its fossil).

Conversion de la valeur en théorie

~ Conversion of value into theory

Conversion of Value into Theory (distractedly, I read on my file card: “convulsion,” which is fine too): one might say, parodying Chomsky, that all Value is *rewritten* (→) as Theory. This conversion—this convulsion—is an energy (an *energon*): discourse is produced by this translation, this imaginary displacement, this creation of an alibi. Having originated in value (which does not mean that it is any the less warranted for that), theory becomes an intellectual object, and this object is caught up into a larger circulation (it encounters a different *image-system* of the reader).

La maxime ~ The maxim

An aphoristic tone hangs about this book (*we, one, always*). Now the maxim is compromised in an essentialist notion of human nature, it is linked to classical ideology: it is the most arrogant (often the stupidest) of the forms of language. Why then not reject it? The reason is, as always, emotive: I write maxims (or I sketch their movement) *in order to reassure myself*: when some disturbance arises, I attenuate it by confiding myself to a fixity which exceeds my powers: “*Actually, it’s always like that*”: and the maxim is born. The maxim is a sort of *sentence-name*, and to name is to pacify. Moreover, this too is a maxim: it attenuates my fear of seeking extravagance by writing maxims.

(Telephone call from X: he tells me about his vacation, but never asks a single question about mine, as if I had not stirred for the last two months. I do not regard this as indifference; rather the demonstration of a defense: *where I wasn’t present, the world has remained motionless*: great security. It is in this fashion that the immobility of the maxim reassures perturbed organizations.)

Le monstre de la totalité ~ The monster of totality

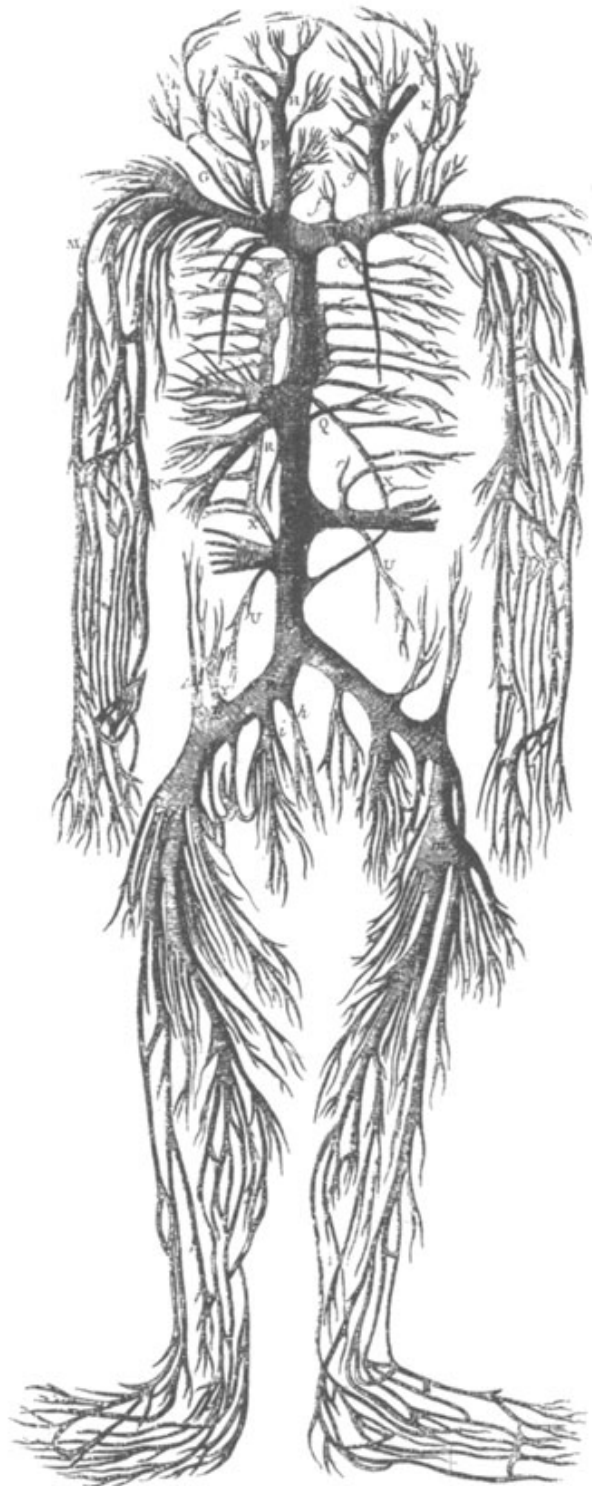
“Let us imagine (if we can) a woman covered with an endless

garment, itself woven of everything said in the fashion magazine . . .” (*Système de la Mode*). This imagination, apparently methodical since it merely sets up an operative notion of semantic analysis (“the endless text”), actually (secretly) aims at denouncing the monster of Totality (Totality as monster). Totality at one and the same time inspires laughter and fear: like violence, is it not always *grotesque* (and then recuperable only in an aesthetics of Carnival)?

Different discourse: this August 6, the countryside, the morning of a splendid day: sun, warmth, flowers, silence, calm, radiance. Nothing stirs, neither desire nor aggression; only the task is there, the work before me, like a kind of universal being: everything is full. Then that would be Nature? An absence . . . of the rest? Totality?

August 6, 1973–September 3, 1974

*To write the body.
Neither the skin, nor the muscles, nor the bones,
nor the nerves, but the rest: an awkward, fibrous,
shaggy, raveled thing, a clown's coat*



Anatomie

Front. View