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# **Rhizomatic poetry. A form of political engagement against capitalist society in twenty-first-century France.**

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# Abstract

The main purpose of this thesis is to offer a Deleuzo-Guattarian reading of the poetry of Jacques Sivan, Vannina Maestri, and Jean-Michel Espitallier, as well as some selected excerpts from the literary magazine *Java*, founded and directed by these three authors from 1989 to 2006, to demonstrate how the concept of the rhizome is affecting contemporary French poetry, and to show that what is defined as ‘rhizomatic poetry’ in this thesis can attack capitalist society.

The concept of the rhizome was elaborated by Deleuze and Guattari in 1976 in ‘Le Rhizome’ and conceived as an image of thought based on the logic of connection, multiplicity, and heterogeneity able to challenge the functioning of the hierarchical, tree-like image of thought based on the logic of binary oppositions and hierarchical relations at the basis of capitalist society. Deleuze and Guattari consider that hierarchical or arborescent thought is a source of oppression in capitalist society, and they criticise the unimaginative way of life that derives from it. As post-structuralists and deconstructionists, they believe that the way rhizomes evolve – unstructured, horizontal, and chaotic – can be replicated in thought to deconstruct or undo the capitalist model. In that sense, rhizomatic thought is an effective tool to transform society and free human existence from the capitalist regime.

The idea of rhizomatic thought has been influencing the way Twenty-first-century French poetry engages in the fight against capitalism. As exemplified by the body of work by Sivan, Maestri, and Espitallier, a large group of contemporary French poets is using the rhizome as a model of writing and build their poetry collections as rhizomatic books – books that follow the rhizomatic logic and prompt their readers to think accordingly.

# Acknowledgments

I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisors Prof. Akane Kawakami and Dr. Nathalie Wourm for their invaluable advice, encouragement and assistance throughout my studies.

My gratitude extends to Vannina Maestri and Jean-Michel Espitallier for the time they gave me in answering my questions about their poetry.

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# Abbreviations

The books, articles and interviews below will be referred to several times, and are given abbreviations as follows.

<i>AJB</i>	Jacques Sivan, Charles Pennequin, <i>Alias Jacques Bonhomme</i> (Paris: Al Dante, 2014).
<i>AO</i>	Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, <i>Capitalisme et Schizophrénie : L'Anti-Œdipe</i> , 2 vols (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1972), I.
<i>AS</i>	Vannina Maestri, <i>A Stazzona</i> (Paris: Al Dante, 2011).
<i>CC</i>	Gilles Deleuze, <i>Critique et clinique</i> (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1993).
<i>DLC</i>	Jean-Michel Espitallier, <i>De la célébrité : Théorie et pratique</i> (Paris: Éditions 10/18, 2012).
<i>DT</i>	Jacques Sivan, <i>dernier télégramme : quotidien culturel subventionné par le ministère de la médecine légale</i> (Limoges: dernier télégramme, 2008).
<i>DV</i>	Jacques Sivan, <i>Des Vies sur Deuil Polaire</i> (Paris: Al Dante, 2012).
<i>EDR</i>	Vannina Maestri, <i>envie de rien</i> (publie.net, 2008).
<i>GPG</i>	Jean-Michel Espitallier, <i>Gasoil : Prises de guerre</i> (Paris: Flammarion, 2010).
<i>GPP</i>	Jérôme Game, 'Poésie Pensante', <i>Java</i> , 21-22 (2001), 24-39.
<i>K</i>	Deleuze, Gilles, Félix Guattari, <i>Kafka : Pour une littérature mineure</i> (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1975).
<i>LB</i>	Jacques Sivan, <i>Le Bazar de l'Hôtel de Ville</i> (Paris: Al Dante, 2006).
<i>LF</i>	Félix Guattari, <i>Lignes de fuite. Pour un autre monde de possibles</i> (Paris: Éditions de l'Aube, 2011).
<i>LT</i>	Vannina Maestri, 'Journal. Petite notes sur le Land-text', in <i>poésie ? détours</i> , ed. Christophe Marchand-Kiss (Paris: Textuel, 2004), 12-39.
<i>M</i>	Vannina Maestri, <i>mobiles</i> (Paris: Al Dante, 2005).
<i>M&amp;M</i>	Maestri, Vannina, 'Vannina Maestri: Montage et Minage', interviewed by Emmanuèle Jawad, in <i>diacritik</i> , 21 September 2016, < <a href="https://diacritik.com/2016/09/21/vannina-">https://diacritik.com/2016/09/21/vannina-</a>

	<a href="#">maestri-montage-et-minage-creation-et-politique-5/&gt;</a> [Accessed 12 June 2020].
<i>MP</i>	Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, <i>Capitalisme et Schizophrénie : Mille Plateaux</i> , 2 vols (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1980), II.
<i>M2</i>	Vannina Maestri, <i>mobiles 2</i> (Paris: Al Dante, 2010).
<i>NT</i>	Christophe Hanna, 'Notion de « textes »', <i>Java</i> , 27-28 (2005-2006), 217-221: <i>NT</i> .
<i>OA</i>	Jacques Sivan, Pigot Cédric, and Blackbush Adèle, <i>om_anaksial</i> (Paris: Al Dante, 2011).
<i>QP</i>	Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, <i>Qu'est-ce que la philosophie ?</i> (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1991).
<i>Sj</i>	Jacques Sivan, Jacques Sivan, <i>similijake</i> (Paris: Al Dante, 2008).
<i>TR</i>	Jean-Michel Espitalier, <i>Tourner en rond : De l'art d'aborder les ronds-points</i> (Paris: Puf, 2016).

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# Glossary

## Capitalist society

In this thesis, the expression ‘capitalist society’ has been used to refer to the Western world based on the model of Félix Guattari who, in *Lignes de Fuites. Pour un autre monde de possibles*, identifies it with ‘le monde diurne, normal, civilisé, blanc, phallocratique, scolarisé, hiérarchisé, etc.’.<sup>1</sup> This is despite the fact that in the last thirty years as an effect of Westernisation, capitalist ideology has been spreading all over the world, also in countries which are not traditionally culturally capitalist.

## Process of social production / social production

The expressions ‘process of social production’ and ‘social production’ used in this thesis refer to the ongoing process through which human groups actualise their societies and create the world.<sup>2</sup> This thesis underlies the idea that the world and what we take as reality, is not naturally given but it is produced by human beings.<sup>3</sup> Social production is the cognitive process through which human beings organise matter, assign an identity and function to themselves and the bodies around them, produce a collective imaginary, and create the institutions aimed at maintaining order (AO, p. 11).

## Territorialisation / Deterritorialisation

Territorialisation is a term which is strongly connected to the idea of ‘social production’. From a Deleuzo-Guattarian perspective, territorialisation is the process that occurs during social production;

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<sup>1</sup> Félix Guattari, *Lignes de fuite. Pour un autre monde de possibles* (Paris: Éditions de l’Aube, 2011), p. 24. Henceforth, all references to this volume will occur in the text preceded by *LF*.

<sup>2</sup> Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, *Capitalisme et Schizophrénie. L’Anti-Œdipe*, 2 vols (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1972), I. Henceforth, all references to this volume will occur in the text preceded by *AO*.

<sup>3</sup> *AO*, pp. 7-23; *LF*, p. 33; Peter L. Berger, Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: a Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (London: Penguin Books, 1967), p. 121.

it is the process through which something is coded, organised and stabilised.<sup>4</sup> Deterritorialisation, on the contrary, is the process through which something is decoded. It is freed from its identity and function and given a new identity and function.<sup>5</sup> Deleuze and Guattari consider the process of deterritorialisation to be a highly revolutionary process, one in which society can be transformed and reshaped anew.

## **Deterritorialisation of language**

Deleuze and Guattari talk about the deterritorialisation of language in *Kafka. Pour une littérature mineure* and describe it as a work on language aimed at disrupting the syntax, morphology, and semantics of Standard language. This thesis uses the expression ‘deterritorialisation of language’ to refer to the process of linguistic manipulation carried out by the poets under analysis in this study.<sup>6</sup>

## **Line of flight**

The concept of line of flight is strictly related to the concept of deterritorialisation. The line of flight is what triggers deterritorialisation. It can be anything from a natural phenomenon to an idea that can affect the way people think and, from there, lead them to rethink the identity and role of the things that compose their society and their reality.<sup>7</sup>

## **Image of thought**

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<sup>4</sup>Adrian Parr, ‘Deterritorialisation/Reterritorialisation’, in *The Deleuze Dictionary*, ed. by Adrian Parr, 2nd edn (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), pp. 69-72; Deborah Hauptmann, Andrej Radman, ‘Northern Line’, in *Deleuze and Architecture*, ed. by Hélène Frichot, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press), pp. 40-60 (p. 46).

<sup>5</sup> Parr, ‘Deterritorialisation/Reterritorialisation’, pp. 69-72.

<sup>6</sup> Deleuze, Gilles, Félix Guattari, *Kafka : Pour une littérature mineure* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1975), pp. 35-50. Henceforth, all references to this volume will occur in the text preceded by *K*.

<sup>7</sup> Tasmin Lorraine, ‘Lines of flight’, in *The Deleuze Dictionary*, ed. by Adrian Parr, 2nd edn (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), pp. 147-148.

From a Deleuzo-Guattarian perspective, the image of thought can be seen as the mental schema used by human beings to make sense of the world and subsequently organise it.<sup>8</sup> Throughout *Mille Plateaux*, Deleuze and Guattari distinguish between two different images of thought, the arborescent and the rhizome.<sup>9</sup> Throughout the book, Deleuze and Guattari suggest that capitalist society underlies the arborescent mental schema, that has been at the basis of Western societies since ancient times, and is a source of oppression and inequality (*MP*, p. 22). This is because it functions according to the logic of binary oppositions and hierarchical relations (*MP*, p. 25). In opposition to the arborescent image of thought, the two philosophers conceive the rhizome, an image of thought based on the logic of multiplicity, connection and heterogeneity and capable of disrupting the cognitive habits of social groups using the arborescent schema to make sense of the world (*MP*, pp. 14-20, p. 37).

## Rhizome

For Deleuze and Guattari, the rhizome does not solely indicate the image of thought based on the logic of connection, heterogeneity, and multiplicity, but also any assemblage that emerges from the application of this logic. Deleuze and Guattari describe the world in terms of assemblages or machines. In *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie ?* and *Mille Plateaux*, the two philosophers use them synonymously<sup>10</sup> and they conceive them as a complex arrangement 'of objects, bodies, expressions, qualities, and territories that come together for varying periods of time to ideally create new ways of functioning'<sup>11</sup>. An assemblage can be seen as a network of elements functioning in accordance to the logic through which the assemblage has been created. As Deleuze and Guattari explain, assemblages do not exist per sé, but they are always created by an agent, which is itself part of the assemblage.<sup>12</sup> For them everything is an assemblage, from the book to the human being, and this is because everything is an amalgamation of different elements that come into being through a series of connections.<sup>13</sup> For example, from a Deleuzo-Guattarian perspective, the book is an assemblage

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<sup>8</sup> Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie ?* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1991), p. 41. Henceforth, all references to this volume will occur in the text preceded by *QP*.

<sup>9</sup> Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, *Capitalisme et Schizophrénie : Mille Plateaux*, 2 vols (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1980), II, p. 22. Henceforth, all references to this volume will occur in the text preceded by *MP*.; Gregg Dimitriadis, Greg Kamberelis, *Theory for Education*, (London Routledge, 2006), p. 89.

<sup>10</sup> Ekin Erkan 'Against the virtual: Kleinherenbrink's externality thesis and Deleuze's machine ontology', *The Journal of Natural and Social Philosophy*, 16 (2020), 442-559 (p. 506); Manola Antonioli, 'The Literary Machine',

<sup>11</sup> Graham Livesey, 'Assemblage', in *The Deleuze Dictionary*, ed. by Adrian Parr, 2nd edn (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010) pp. 18-19.

<sup>12</sup> Thomas Nail, 'What is an assemblage', *SubStance*, 46 (2017), 21-37 (p. 27).

<sup>13</sup> Nail, p. 28.

because it is an arrangement of signs that come into being due to a writer that assembles them. Similarly, society is a mega-assemblage as it derives from the connection of all the assemblages that have been created by the individuals belonging to a given social group. Deleuze and Guattari prefer using the term 'assemblage' or 'machine' rather than 'system' or 'structure' because, in their view, the idea of assemblage further highlight the arbitrariness of its configuration and the fact that they can be reconfigured at any moment by changing the connections that structure it.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Simon Choat, *Marx through Post-Structuralism. Lyotard, Derrida, Foucault, Deleuze* (London: Continuum, 2010), p. 136.

# Delimitation of the subject

The contemporary French poetic panorama is characterised by the presence of two nearly opposite kinds of poetry: the *nouveau lyrisme* and deconstructionist poetry.<sup>15</sup> Neo-lyricism developed in the 1980s with a generation of authors mostly born in the 1950s, influenced by the classical literary heritage, Marxism, and structuralism. As Jean-Michel Maulpoix, one of the most important exponents of the group, writes:

Ceux que l'on appelle « nouveaux lyriques » sont pour la plupart des poètes nés dans les années 50. Cette génération était adolescente à l'époque des avant-gardes. Elle n'a pas participé à la grande fête subversive de mai '68 ; elle l'a considérée plutôt comme un déroutant spectacle. Elle a par contre commencé d'écrire et de publier dans un contexte de crise et de reflux des idéologies. Elle s'est nourrie d'histoire littéraire aussi bien que de marxisme, de psychanalyse et de structuralisme. Elle a le plus souvent trouvé sa voix contre les bousculades théoriques des décennies antérieures.<sup>16</sup>

Neo-lyricism manifests itself as a modern revisitation of the traditional lyrical tendencies (personal enunciation, taste for emotions, musicality) that characterised poetry for centuries that got abandoned by avant-gardists and neo-avant-gardists: '«Le nouveau lyrique»', Maulpoix explains, 'est un lyrique qui cherche son chant, sa voix, voire ses propres traits dans le décousu de la prose.'<sup>17</sup> In *Sorties*, Jean-Marie Gleize refers to neo-lyricism as 'repoésie' – brilliantly synthesising its features.

Par rapport à la *poésie* (*lapoésie*), que serions-nous tentés d'appeler la *repoésie* ? Un ensemble de propositions qui a tenté de se structurer au tournant des années 1980. De quoi s'agit-il ? Il s'agit d'une réaction à ce qui s'était passé durant les vingt années précédentes, essentiellement l'emprise exercée par les courants néo-avant-gardistes :

- a) Les « textualistes », du côté de la revue *Tel Quel*, [...].
- b) Les « formalistes », du côté de la revue *Change*, [...].<sup>18</sup>

Gleize coins the term 'repoésie' by adding the suffix '-re', meaning 'back' or 'again',<sup>19</sup> to the noun 'poésie', used to designate lyrical poetry.<sup>20</sup> As the elements contained in the term 'repoésie' suggest,

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<sup>15</sup> Nathalie Wourm, *Poètes français du 21<sup>ème</sup> siècle : Entretien* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2017), pp. 1-9; Jean Michel Maulpoix, *Pour un lyrisme critique* (Paris: José Corti, 2009), p. 11.

<sup>16</sup> Jean-Michel Maulpoix, '1980 Articuler. Un lyrisme critique ?', *Jean-Michel Maulpoix Cie, Poésie – Prose – Critique Littéraire – Photographie*, <<https://www.maulpoix.net/articuler.html>> [Accessed 12 October 2018].

<sup>17</sup> Jean-Michel Maulpoix, '1980 Articuler. Un lyrisme critique ?', [online].

<sup>18</sup> Jean-Marie Gleize, *Sorties* (Mercuès: Questions Théoriques, 2009), p. 39.

<sup>19</sup> 're', in *Le Petit Robert*, ed. by Josette Rey-Debove, Alain Rey (Paris: Le Petit Robert, 2013), p. 2131.

<sup>20</sup> Jean-Marie Gleize, 'La poésie n'est pas une solution', *Faire Part*, 26-27 (2010), 63-70 (pp. 68-69).

the ‘repoésie’ is a type of poetry that returns to lyricism. As Gleize puts it: ‘La repoésie, c’est la poésie. La poésie retrouvée’<sup>21</sup>. Neo-lyricists defend the classical notion of poetry as the expression of the poet’s inner world and consider lyricism as the manifestation of its authentic essence.<sup>22</sup> They reproach their predecessors, which is to say avant-gardists and neo-avant-gardists, for their impersonal style. This, they believe, shifted poetry away from its true nature.<sup>23</sup> As Jean-Michel Espitallier explains in *Caisse à outils : Un panorama de la poésie française aujourd’hui*, ‘[Mais] le lyrisme s’est [lui aussi] affirmé en opposition aux rigorismes de l’avant-garde, soucieux de maintenir une espèce d’essence de la poésie contre les dérives jugées impersonnelles et dangereusement asséchées. Lesquelles jouaient justement à repousser les effets du lyrisme...’.<sup>24</sup>

Deconstructionist poetry stands as the opposite of neo-lyrical poetry. Delineating itself since the end of the 1980s, deconstructionist poetry completely breaks with the literary tradition.<sup>25</sup> Although deconstructionist poets criticise avant-gardists for being too dogmatic in their theoretical reflections, they adopt their formal instruments to deconstruct the classical notion of poetry as a lyrical form and to explore new aesthetic possibilities.<sup>26</sup> With deconstructionist poets, poetry configures itself as a series of experimental artistic objects that Gleize calls ‘post-poésie’, and describes as such:

- ces objets ne travaillent pas à partir d’une intériorité créatrice, d’une expérience personnelle, ils excluent toute dimension expressive ;
- ces objets n’obéissent à aucune intention esthétique particulière, ils ne se réfèrent à aucun système de valeur esthétique, conventionnel ou moderniste ;
- ces objets sont très liés à leurs modes de production et de reproduction (logiciels de mise en page, de manipulation des images ou du son, etc.) ;
- ces objets sont fortement réflexifs, métatechniques, métadiscursif : ils font ce qu’ils disent, ils disent ce qu’ils font, ils explicitent, aussi bien, ils donnent à voir la façon dont nos représentations conditionnent notre perception et nos discours ;
- ces objets se caractérisent enfin (et c’est ce qui est le plus immédiatement spectaculaire) par les dispositifs de montage qu’ils mettent en œuvre : citations, prélèvements, échantillonnages, boucles, formatage, compactage, hiérarchie graphiques, etc. Montage, traitement d’un matériau hétérogène.<sup>27</sup>

Deconstructionist poets disregard any poetic convention, transforming poetry into a hybrid unclassifiable object. Deconstructionist poetry escapes any definition of poetry that has so far been

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<sup>21</sup> Gleize, *Sorties*, p. 40.

<sup>22</sup> Jean-Michel Maulpoix, *Pour un lyrisme critique*, pp. 24-25; S, p. 39; Jean-Michel Espitallier, *Caisse à outils : Un panorama de la poésie française aujourd’hui* (Paris: Pocket, 2006), p. 86..

<sup>23</sup> Jean-Michel Espitallier, *Caisse à outils*, p. 86.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 86.

<sup>25</sup> Wourm, *Poètes français du 21<sup>ème</sup> siècle*, pp. 1-2.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>27</sup> Gleize, *Sorties*, pp. 41-42.

proposed by literary history, losing the specificity that has characterised it for centuries. As Gleize explains:

On voit bien que toute une part de cette poésie contemporaine en perte de spécificité se trouve désormais en contact, en interaction avec des gestes, des objets, des dispositifs relevant de l'art contemporain, des arts plastiques – installations, performances, vidéo, multimédia, etc. Non seulement la poésie ne se dit plus en poème, mais de surcroît, elle est contaminée par l'image, le sonore, non ou infralinguistique, le chorégraphique, etc. De plus en plus impure, la poésie ne ressemble plus à rien.<sup>28</sup>

From this perspective, the term 'post-poésie', coined by Gleize by adding the suffix 'post', meaning 'after' or 'later',<sup>29</sup> to the term 'poésie', used to indicate lyrical poetry, perfectly describes its nature. Deconstructionist poetry is a type of poetry that comes after what has been traditionally considered as poetry breaking with any connection to the poetic past.<sup>30</sup> Deconstructionist poets inaugurate an experimental phase that completely redefines poetry as a genre. This is why, as Antoine Compagnon observes, it is no longer possible to talk about contemporary poetry with traditional literary categories: 'Il est difficile, voire impossible de rendre compte des œuvres contemporaines à partir de la grille des genres. Les questions traditionnelles ne semblent plus pertinentes'.<sup>31</sup> The paths undertaken by deconstructionist poets to redefine poetry are multiple. Deconstructionist poetry has no manifesto. This gives poets the total freedom to experiment with the linguistic and aesthetic features of poetry. Each text has its own unique traits that open it up to an infinite number of possible definitions. As Gleize explains, in *À noir : Poésie et Littéralité*, 'La poésie que nous disons « contemporaine » est désormais sans définition, ou si l'on préfère, ouverte à une infinité de définitions possibles [...]'.<sup>32</sup> Deconstructionist poetry is what Jérôme Game simply refers as 'poetry' in his book *Poetic Becomings : Studies in Contemporary French Literature* and define as a hybrid text that encompasses 'both experimental prose (even when it is subtitled roman by publishers) and verse, comprising a continuum with porous borders that makes up a substantial proportion of the innovative literature written in France today'.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Gleize, *Sorties*, pp. 42-43.

<sup>29</sup> 'post', in *Le Petit Robert*, ed. by Josette Rey-Debove, Alain Rey (Paris: Le Petit Robert, 2013) p. 1976.

<sup>30</sup> Jean-Marie Gleize, *Sorties*, pp. 41-42.

<sup>31</sup> Antoine Compagnon, 'Treizième leçon : Modernité et violation des genres', *Fabula* <<https://www.fabula.org/compagnon/genre13.php>> [Accessed 12 June 2021].

<sup>32</sup> Jean-Marie Gleize, *À noir : Poésie et Littéralité* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1992), p. 102.

<sup>33</sup> Jérôme Game, *Poetic Becomings : Studies in Contemporary French Literature* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2011), p. 20.



The present study seeks to answer the urgent call expressed by Nathalie Wourm, at the end of *Poètes Français du 21ème siècle: Entretiens*, to examine the political significance of deconstructionist poetry. The linguistic and aesthetic work carried out by deconstructionist poets to redefine poetry on the model of avant-gardists and neo-avant-gardists is often not only motivated by the will to break with traditional poetic forms, but it is also and more significantly motivated by politics. This is the case with the poets analysed in this thesis: Jacques Sivan, Vannina Maestri, and Jean-Michel Espitallier. Influenced by the post-structuralist idea that language is an instrument used by society to circulate its logic, ideas, beliefs, and values, these poets purposely work on the language and aesthetic features of poetry to interfere with their circulation and potentially prompt readers to feel and perceive the world differently. For Sivan, Maestri, and Espitallier, political struggles do not pass through a discussion and reflection on political issues, as is the case, for instance, for socialist realists. Socialist realists' works are considered to be straightforwardly political due to the way they openly deal with social issues, whereas Sivan, Maestri, and Espitallier engage politically through the manipulation of the signs used by society to transmit its ideology.

By working on language and the traditional formal features of poetry, the authors selected for this study construct their texts as actual *livres-rhizome*. The notion of the *livre-rhizome* was set out by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, two of the most important exponents of French post-structuralism, in 1976 in 'Le Rhizome', in which they define it as a book capable of circulating an alternative model of thinking to that at the basis of capitalist society (*MP*, pp. 34-37). For this reason, deconstructionist poetry can also be called rhizomatic poetry.

The choice of analysing the work of Sivan, Maestri and Espitallier is very straightforward; they are three of the main contemporary French deconstructionist poets, openly against the capitalist system, and the founders of *Java*, one of the most influential poetry magazines of the 1990s.<sup>34</sup>

This thesis equally interrogates to what extent Deleuze and Guattari's anti-capitalist philosophy has influenced it. As it emerges from Wourm's book, deconstructionist poets are all directly or indirectly influenced by deconstructionist and post-structuralist philosophy, particularly by Deleuze and Guattari. Sivan, Maestri, and Espitallier's work provide interesting materials to analyse this point as they are all three openly influenced by the two philosophers, and in particular by their way of criticising the capitalist world.

From now on, to stress the anti-capitalist implications of deconstructionist poetry and the influence that Deleuze and Guattari's thought has exercised on it, it will be referred to as rhizomatic poetry.

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<sup>34</sup> Jacques Sivan was born in Barcelonnette in 1955 and died in Paris in 2016. Vannina Maestri was born in 1956. Jean-Michel Espitallier was born in Barcelonnette in 1957.

Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's idea of the minor and major uses of language can be useful to fully grasp the political significance of the linguistic work of deconstructionist poets, and in particular the authors selected for this study. However, before introducing this idea, it is necessary to explain the conception of language held by these two authors. Throughout their career, Deleuze and Guattari explain that language does not belong to the field of communication or information, as structuralists generally suggest, but rather to the field of order and commands:

La maîtresse d'école ne s'informe pas quand elle interroge un élève, pas plus qu'elle n'informe quand elle enseigne une règle de grammaire ou de calcul. Elle « enseigne », elle donne des ordres, elle commande. Les commandements du professeur ne sont pas extérieurs à ce qu'il nous apprend, et ne s'y ajoutent pas. Ils ne découlent pas de significations premières, ils ne sont pas la conséquence d'informations : l'ordre porte toujours et déjà sur des ordres, ce pourquoi l'ordre est redondance. La machine de l'enseignement obligatoire ne communique pas des informations, mais impose à l'enfant des coordonnées sémiotiques avec toutes les bases duelles de la grammaire (masculin-féminin, singulier-pluriel, substantif-verbe, sujet d'énoncé-sujet d'énonciation, etc.). L'unité élémentaire du langage – l'énoncé –, c'est le mot d'ordre. Plutôt que le sens commun, faculté qui centraliserait les informations, il faut définir une abominable faculté qui consiste à émettre, recevoir et transmettre les mots d'ordre.<sup>35</sup>

Si nous étions amenés à dire que le langage a toujours été un système de l'ordre et pas de l'information ; c'est des ordres qu'on vous donne et pas des informations qu'on vous communique. On aurait l'impression que c'est évident. On ouvre les nouvelles à la télévision, qu'est-ce qu'on reçoit ? On ne reçoit pas d'abord des informations, on reçoit d'abord des ordres.<sup>36</sup>

Deleuze and Guattari conceive language as a social construct or, to use their terminology, an 'agencement collectif' (*MP*, p. 101). Language, they suggest, is shaped and used by society to construct and maintain its structures.<sup>37</sup> During linguistic interactions, they observe, speakers do not pass along information, rather they emit, transmit and adhere to society's order-words. Order-words can loosely be described as the disciplinary codes that society expects its members to comply with (*MP*, p. 100).

Nous appelons *mots d'ordre*, non pas une catégorie particulière d'énoncés explicites (par exemple à l'impératif), mais le rapport de tout mot ou tout énoncé avec des présupposés implicites, c'est-à-dire avec des actes de parole qui s'accomplissent dans l'énoncé, et ne peuvent s'accomplir qu'en lui. Les

<sup>35</sup> Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, '*Capitalisme et Schizophrénie : Mille Plateaux*, 2 vols (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1980), II, pp. 95-96. Henceforth, all references to this volume will occur in the text preceded by *MP*.

<sup>36</sup> Ver Deter, 'Gilles Deleuze sur le Langage', YouTube, 24 November 2012, <[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wfwh3aX4\\_1o](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wfwh3aX4_1o)> [Accessed 6 October 2019].

<sup>37</sup> Ronald Bogue, *Deleuze's Way: Essay in Transverse Ethics and Aesthetics* (London: Routledge, 2007), p. 20.

mots d'ordre ne renvoient donc pas seulement à des commandements, mais à tous les actes qui sont liés à des énoncés par une « obligation sociale ». Il n'y a pas d'énoncé qui ne présente ce lien, directement ou indirectement. Une question, une promesse, sont des mots d'ordre. (*MP*, p. 100)

As Deleuze and Guattari observe, 'Le langage n'est ni informatif ni communicatif, mais ce qui est très différent, transmission de mots d'ordre' (*MP*, p. 100). With language, society instructs its members how to think and behave:

Quand on vous informe, on vous dit ce que vous êtes censé devoir croire. En d'autres termes, informer, c'est faire circuler un mot d'ordre. Les déclarations de police sont appelées à juste titre des communiqués. On nous communique de l'information, on nous dit ce que nous sommes censés être en état ou devoir ou être tenus de croire.<sup>38</sup>

As will be explained in more detail in Chapter 1, society is shaped by human beings through the act of thinking. Deleuze and Guattari understand the act of thinking to be the process through which human beings differentiate and assemble the formless chaotic matter to produce their society's structures (*QP*, p.117). Language is amongst the instruments that human beings use to collectively instruct how to think and, thus, create order.<sup>39</sup> Language has the function of what Guattari calls 'un équipement collectif' (*LF*, p. 33) and defines as 'un harnachement, une armature qui me fait me tenir droit, qui m'assigne une place, ses rets et me maintient sur les rets, sur la bonne voie, qui donne un axe à ma pensée : c'est un tuteur'<sup>40</sup>. Language provides human beings with an identity, a way of existing, and a vision of the world that enables them to organise and order it.

Deleuze and Guattari distinguish between major and minor uses of language. (*MP*, pp. 130-131).

Il n'y a [donc] pas deux sortes de langues, mais deux traitements possibles d'une même langue. Tantôt l'on traite les variables de manière à en extraire des constantes et des rapports constants, tantôt, de manière à les mettre en état de variation continue. (...). « Majeur » et « mineur » ne qualifient pas deux langues, mais deux usages ou fonctions de la langue. (*MP*, pp. 130-131).

When speakers make a major use of language, Deleuze and Guattari explain, they conform to the rules of grammar; they make a normative use of standard language and circulate the order-words at the basis of the society they belong to (*MP*, pp. 130-131). When, on the contrary, they make a

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<sup>38</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Deux régimes de fous : Textes et entretiens 1975-1995*, ed. by David Lapoujade (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 2003), pp. 298-299.

<sup>39</sup> Robert, Porter, *Deleuze and Guattari: Aesthetics and Politics* (Cardiff: University of Wales, 2009), p. 2.

<sup>40</sup> Liane Mozère, 'Préface', Félix Guattari, *Lignes de fuite. Pour un autre monde de possibles* (Paris: Éditions de l'Aube, 2011), pp. 7-13, p. 8.

minor use of language, they sabotage grammatical rules, interfering with the circulation of the order-words at the basis of the established order and potentially setting the conditions for reconfiguring the structures of society (*MP*, pp. 130-134). This is because a minor use of language can affect the way readers think, enabling them to see the world from new perspectives other than those embodied in standard language.

Deleuze and Guattari describe the minor use of language with reference to the literary work of Franz Kafka:

[Sans doute,] dans l'empire autrichien, le tchèque est langue mineure par rapport à l'allemand ; mais l'allemand de Prague fonctionne déjà comme langue potentiellement mineure par rapport à celui de Vienne ou de Berlin ; et Kafka, Juif tchèque écrivant en allemand, c'est à l'allemand qu'il fait subir un traitement créateur de langue mineure, construisant un continuum de variation, négociant toutes les variables pour, à la fois, resserrer les constantes et étendre les variations : faire bégayer la langue, ou la faire « piauler »..., tendre des tenseurs dans toute la langue, même écrite, et en tirer des cris, des clamés, des hauteurs, durées, timbres, accents, intensités. On a souvent marqué deux tendances conjointes des langues dites mineures : un appauvrissement, une déperdition des formes, syntaxiques ou lexicales ; mais en même temps une curieuse prolifération d'effets changeants, un goût de la surcharge et de la paraphrase. (*MP*, p. 131)

Deleuze and Guattari's interpretation of language can be used to illuminate the political significance of poetry. In relation to the major or minor uses of language an author can make, poetry can have a minor or major nature. When poetry is constructed through a major use of language, it adheres and conforms to the established order; it carries its ideas, values, and beliefs. When, on the contrary, poetry is constructed through a minor use of language, it interferes with the transmission of the order-words that define the functioning of the dominant order, prompting readers to think in new and unexpected ways that can potentially lead to the actualisation of new societies. Against the art for art's sake conception of literature, which is still often promoted by mainstream narratives, Deleuze and Guattari refuse the idea of literature as a purely aesthetic object detached from the world and so unable to have tangible effects on it. As they observe, any literary text, regardless of genre, is a social event, an 'affaire du peuple' (K, p. 32) This is because literature is made of language. Language, as has been explained, is a social construct; its 'rules, conventions, vocabulary, and so on, are invented by collections of individuals'<sup>41</sup> to produce their society's structures.

This study will adopt this Deleuzo-Guattarian perspective as it is key to the discovery of the ontological-political potential of rhizomatic poetry.

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<sup>41</sup> Ronald Bogue, *Deleuze on Literature* (London: Routledge, 2003) p. 109.

This thesis positions itself within a long academic tradition. The reflection on the political potential of literature, and particularly of poetry, is a traditional *topos* of literary studies. However, although many studies have been dedicated to this subject, only few have specifically focused on the way contemporary French poetry engages in the struggle against capitalist society and uses Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy as a theoretical framework. The most recent study in this field is a PhD thesis defended in 2017, by Daisy Sainsbury: 'Pour une littérature mineure': linguistic experimentation in the work of Dominique Fourcade, Olivier Cadiot and Christophe Tarkos', which investigates the effects of linguistic experimentation on society through the work of these three authors.

Although my project has a similar theoretical framework to Sainsbury's, and shares an important research question on the impact of linguistic manipulation on society, my study is very different. This project focuses on a different group of authors and specifically analyses the relationship between what can be called Twenty-first-century French rhizomatic poetry and capitalist society. More precisely, my project investigates the relationship between Sivan's 'logosonoscope', Maestri's 'land-texte' and Espitallier's poetry to understand to what extent they affect capitalist society and their role within the broader context of political activism.

I develop my argument by addressing the following questions:

- 1) How does Deleuze and Guattari's thought influence contemporary French poetry?
- 2) What is rhizomatic poetry?

Focusing on the selected texts by Sivan, Maestri and Espitallier, further questions arise:

- 3) Why can their poetry be considered rhizomatic? Why can their poetry be used to explain the relationship between Twenty-first-century poetry and capitalist society? How can poetry politically engage in the struggle against capitalist society in the 21st century? What is the relationship between capitalist society and rhizomatic poetry? What aspects of capitalist society does rhizomatic poetry struggle against and denounce? Can rhizomatic poetry overthrow the established order and inaugurate a revolution? How can rhizomatic poetry pave the way for new worlds and ways of being?
- 4) Can the writing and reading of rhizomatic poetry be conceived as a strategy for political activism in the 21st century? Why?

At the present time, only few studies have been dedicated to Sivan, Maestri, and Espitallier. The most important studies on Maestri and Espitallier are 'Architects and Poets: Vannina Maestri, Nathalie

Quintane, and Jean-Michel Espitalier, and the poetry of Buildings’ by Nathalie Wourm, which explores the hybridisation of poetry and the relationship between poetry and architecture through the lens of Deleuze and Guattari’s philosophy, and ‘Cut-up et montage d’un sujet constructiviste dans la poésie de Vannina Maestri’, by Jérôme Game, which analyses the use of the cut-up and the concept of the poetic ‘I’ in Maestri’s poetry.

The three most important studies on Sivan are ‘L’écriture moléculaires de Jacques Sivan’, ‘Sivan/Duchamp’, and ‘Poétique d’économie textuelle’, respectively by Emmanuèle Jawad, Gaëlle Théval, and Luigi Magno. All three essays were published in *La poésie moléculaires* de Jacques Sivan, a series of essays and extracts of poetry collections by Sivan, published after his death in 2017. The first essay examines the linguistic features of Sivan’s poetry, the second examines its relationship with Duchamp’s poetry, and the third examines the influence of Denis Roche, Francis Ponge and Ezra Pound on Ponge’s poetry. By studying texts by Sivan, Maestri, and Espitalier, this thesis therefore fills a gap in the knowledge on their poetics, poetry, and editorial activity.

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The overall structure of this thesis takes the form of five chapters. Chapter 1, ‘Rhizomatic poetry and capitalist society’ provides the background information required to understand my argument. This chapter is organised into two main sections. The first section, drawing on Deleuze and Guattari’s conceptualisation of capitalist society, explains the idea of capitalist society that underpins this thesis. The second section, after introducing the ideas of the *rhizome* and *livre-rhizome*, elaborated on by Deleuze and Guattari, conceptualises rhizomatic poetry, particularly what can be considered as Twenty-first-century French rhizomatic poetry. It explains what its general features are and contextualises it within the anti-capitalist tradition of French poetry.

Chapter 2, ‘Jacques Sivan and the ‘logosonoscope’. The creation of new worlds’, focuses on Sivan’s rhizomatic poetry, which he refers to in terms of the ‘logosonoscope’. This chapter is composed of three main sections. The first section, ‘Introduction’, contextualises Sivan’s poetics within the lively philosophical debate on the creation of the world and life, which has marked the history of a major branch of philosophy since ancient times. The second section, ‘The *logosonoscope*: Sivan’s conceptualisation of rhizomatic poetry’, conceptualises the idea of the *logosonoscope*, in relation to Ponge’s ideas of the *logosope* and *objeu* and Deleuze and Guattari’s ideas about the *livre-rhizome* and *littérature mineure*. It explains how, for Sivan, the *logosonoscope* can engage in the fight against capitalist society and pave the way for new worlds and life possibilities. The third section, ‘The *logosonoscope*: the sign of a new world’, analyses five of Sivan’s poetry collections (*Le Bazar*

*de l'Hôtel de Ville* (2006), *om\_anaksial* (2011), *Des Vies sur Deuil Polaire* (2012), *Alias Jacques Bonhomme* (2014)) to exemplify how the *logosonoscope* can set the conditions for new worlds and life possibilities.

Chapter 3, 'Vannina Maestri and the *land-texte*. Mapping the world as an insurrectional act against capitalist society' explores Maestri's rhizomatic poetry, which she calls 'land-texte'. It shows how, by creating what Deleuze and Guattari call maps and rhizomes, Maestri constructs her texts as instruments able to fight against capitalist society to set the conditions for new potential socio-political organisations. This chapter develops around four main sections. The first section, 'Introduction', conceptualises Maestri's anti-capitalist discourse within the non-violent anti-capitalist debate of the black bloc movement. It explains that, with *black blocs*, a poetry collection published in 2009, Maestri ideologically connects her rhizomatic poetry to the anti-capitalist struggle led by the non-violent black bloc. The second section, 'The *land-texte*: a conceptualisation', conceptualises Maestri's idea of the *land-texte* by aligning it with that of land art and *livre-rhizome*, which, as Maestri explains, represent starting points for the elaboration of her poetics. The third section, 'The *land-texte*: an insurrectional act against the capitalist order', explains how the *land-texte* can be used as an instrument able to both denounce the violence of capitalist society and reveal the possibility of shaping a new socio-political order. The fourth section, '*Land-textes*: the beginning of a revolution', shows how Maestri's *land-textes* can be seen as the first step towards a social revolution that can set the conditions for the reconstruction of the world and establish new ways of being. This chapter mainly works on the following poetry collections: *débris d'endroits* (1999), *mobiles* (2005), *envie de rien* (2008), *il ne faut plus s'énervier* (2008), *black blocs* (2009), *mobiles 2* (2010), *A Stazzona* (2011).

In the appendix, a transcript of an email interview between Vannina Maestri and the author of the thesis has been inserted.<sup>42</sup> This interview underpins the argument of the chapter, especially in the first section which presents Maestri's idea of poetry. Maestri was asked specific questions about the influence of Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy on her writing and the relationship between her poetry and capitalist society.

Chapter 4, 'Jean-Michel Espitallier. For a symptomatology and treatment of capitalist society', analyses Espitallier's poetry. This chapter is organised into three main sections. The first section, 'Espitallier's rhizomatic poetry: a conceptualisation', argues that Espitallier's poetry can be seen from a Deleuzian perspective, as an enterprise of health. First, starting from the Deleuzian idea that the actualisation of any type of society blocks thought, which causes a sort of neurosis, this section argues

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<sup>42</sup> See Appendix 1.

that capitalist society can be considered as a disease that affects human beings today.<sup>43</sup> It then conceptualises Espitallier's idea of poetry to explain how and why it can be seen as both a diagnostic tool for what the chapter calls the 'capitalist disease' and a cure for this disease. However, it will be argued that this cure is only palliative. This is because human beings cannot live outside society, and therefore thought is inevitably destined to always be trapped in the mental circuits that society stimulates it to construct. The second section 'Poetry as a tool to analyse, diagnose and treat capitalist disease' examines *Gasoil : Prises de guerre* (2000), *Le Théorème d'Espitallier : Poésie* (2003), *En guerre* (2004), *Army* (2008), *Z5* (2010), *De la Célébrité : Théorie et pratique* (2012), *Tourner en rond : De l'art d'aborder les ronds-points* (2016) as concrete examples of how Espitallier's poetry analyses, diagnoses and treats the disease of capitalism. This section is divided into two sub-sections. The first sub-section, 'Towards a genealogy of the social disease and an aetiology and general description of the capitalist disease', focuses on *Z5* and *Tourner en rond*. It argues that these two poetry collections can be used to reveal the cause of the capitalist disease, that is to say the logic of binary oppositions and hierarchical relations that regulates its functioning, and to describe the mechanism of how it spreads. The second sub-section, 'For a symptomatology and treatment of capitalist disease' explains how *De la Célébrité*, *Army*, *En guerre*, *Le Théorème d'Espitallier* and *Gasoil* can be used as tools to reveal, analyse, and treat some of the symptoms of the capitalist disease, such as celebrity culture, violence, and the conception of science as a tool allegedly able to describe a certain objectivity in the world. It argues that Espitallier's use of language, typographic features, and irony create a series of defamiliarizing effects that can challenge capitalist ideology and the logic of binary oppositions and hierarchical relations at its basis, setting the conditions for the world to recover from the capitalist disease, and thus reshape itself.

In the appendix, there is a transcript of an email interview between Jean-Michel Espitallier and the author of this thesis.<sup>44</sup> Espitallier was asked specific questions about his poetry as an enterprise of health, the political potentiality of his text, the influence of Jean Tinguely's anti-machine on his writing process, and the relationship between his poetry and the capitalist world. This interview was used to reinforce and clarify the conceptualisation of Espitallier's poetry.

Chapter Five, *Java*, discusses the editorial activity of Sivan, Maestri and Espitallier by introducing some volumes of *Java*, the literary magazine founded by the three poets in 1989. The chapter also presents some other poetico-political projects that have characterised the French poetic panorama of the last thirty years – in particular those of Jérôme Game, Christophe Hanna, Olivier

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<sup>43</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Critique et clinique* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1993), pp. 13.14. Henceforth, all references to this volume will occur in the text, preceded by CC.

<sup>44</sup> See Appendix 2.



Cadiot, Philippe Boissard, Sylvain Courtoux, Jérôme Bertin, and Christophe Fiat. Given the international nature of *Java*, which often promoted foreign artists, a section will also be dedicated to Swiss poet Lorenzo Menoud to highlight how the deconstructionist and anti-capitalist tendencies of Twenty-first-century French poetry are also characteristic of contemporary foreign poetry.

The last section, 'Conclusion', summarises the observations made in the thesis and argues that twenty-first-century rhizomatic poetry can be used as an effective political tool to engage in the fight against capitalist society and inaugurate what can be called, from a Guattarian perspective, a molecular revolution, a revolution that anyone can begin at any time by changing their mode of thinking.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Félix Guattari, *La Révolution Moléculaire* (Paris : Union Générale d'Éditions, 1977).

# Chapter 1

## Rhizomatic poetry and capitalist society

‘[...] rien n’est beau, rien n’est amoureux, rien n’est politique sauf les tiges souterraines et les racines aériennes, l’adventice et le rhizome.’(MP, p. 24)

This chapter provides the background information necessary to understand the argument developed in this thesis. It is structured as two sections. The first section defines the idea of capitalist society at the basis of the thesis. The second section defines the idea of rhizomatic poetry.

### 1.1 What is capitalist society?

Today’s world is dominated by capitalist society, which has been the object of numerous studies in the last two hundred years. Beyond their different goals and approaches, almost all these studies agree that capitalist society is a socio-political formation that subordinates its whole organisation to capital. However, they disagree in regards to whether capitalist society is natural or not.

Drawing on Adam Smith’s theories on human nature and the liberal market from *The Theory of Moral Sentiment* and *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, capitalism’s defenders generally present the capitalist system as a social order that has always existed and always will exist because it is rooted in human nature.<sup>1</sup> For Adam Smith, indeed, human beings *are* naturally driven to barter and make profit through self-interest.<sup>2</sup> This approach ignores the completely different roles of the market and capital in pre-capitalist societies and the possibility that there is no such thing

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<sup>1</sup> Christopher J. Berry, Maria Pia Paganelli and Craig Smith, *The Oxford Handbook of Adam Smiths* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. XIX; Johan Fornäs, *Capitalism: A Companion to Marx’s Economy Critique* (London: Routledge, 2013) p. 262.

<sup>2</sup> Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nation*, 5 vols (Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Black, 1776), I, pp. 7-8.

as a single human nature that determines the organisation of societies. Thinkers such as Michel Foucault, and Deleuze and Guattari, suggest that what human beings *are* changes throughout time and depends on the social-political context in which they live. This thesis is based on this idea and the conception of capitalist society as a social order resulting from a specific mode of social production – the capitalist – that began to delineate itself in the fifteenth century.<sup>3</sup>

Social production can be conceived, from a Deleuzo-Guattarian perspective, as the process through which human beings construct order, that which is generally referred to as the world, or reality.<sup>4</sup> For Deleuze and Guattari order is built by human groups. This idea is also at the basis of numerous constructionist theories that have developed in the last sixty years, since the publication of *The Social Construction of Reality: a Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* by Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann. Berger and Luckmann explain that order ‘is not part of the ‘nature of things’’,<sup>5</sup> and it cannot be derived from the ‘laws of nature’;<sup>6</sup> rather it is ‘a human product, or, more precisely, ‘an ongoing human production’<sup>7</sup>. However, Deleuze and Guattari and Berger and Luckmann are not the first thinkers to conceive of order as a human product. In the Western tradition, numerous are the philosophers who have suggested something similar. David Hume, for example, was amongst the first to suggest the artificiality of social order and to consider it to be a human construction.<sup>8</sup> Beyond the shared idea that order is a human construct, thinkers and philosophers have described this process differently.

My thesis adopts a Deleuzo-Guattarian perspective. Deleuze and Guattari describe social production as the differentiation and assemblage of particles in chaos (*AO*, p. 11). The two philosophers do not conceive of chaos as a void or a disorder but rather as a virtual mass of indistinguishable particles:<sup>9</sup>

On définit le chaos moins par le désordre que par la vitesse infinie avec laquelle se dissipe toute forme qui s’y ébauche. C’est un vide qui n’est pas un néant, mais un *virtuel*, contenant toutes les particules possibles et tirant toutes

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<sup>3</sup> Michel Beaud, *A History of Capitalism: 1500-2000*, trans. by Tom Dickman, Anny Lefebvre, 2nd edn (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2001), p. 13.

<sup>4</sup> This idea is suggested throughout *AO*. Deleuze and Guattari drew this theory from that of Karl Marx, according to which the material world is created by individuals. Marx conceived of production as the process through which human beings collectively transform the environment – for the German philosopher, this process ‘is always pursued within a social context’ (Joseph O’ Malley, ‘Preface’, in Karl Marx, *Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. XVII).

<sup>5</sup> Peter L. Berger, Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: a Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (London: Penguin Books, 1967), p. 70.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 221.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 69.

<sup>8</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Empirisme et Subjectivité*, 8th edn (Paris: Puf, 2015); Karl Marx, *Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right*; ‘David Hume: Imagination’, *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy* <<https://iep.utm.edu/hume-ima/>> [Accessed 25 August 2022].

<sup>9</sup> In *L’Anti-Œdipe*, Deleuze and Guattari refer to the particles and forms in chaos in terms of ‘flux’.

les formes possibles qui surgissent pour disparaître aussitôt, sans consistance ni référence, sans conséquence. C'est une vitesse infinie de naissance et d'évanouissement. (*QP*, pp. 117-118)

Through this process of differentiation and assemblage, human groups create meaning,<sup>10</sup> their imaginary, and define 'the rules of the game'<sup>11</sup> of the social formation that they produce whilst doing so. During social production, human groups define 'what/who is part of it, what/who does what, how they do it, and what/who has authority and jurisdiction.'<sup>12</sup> In other words, during social production, human groups provide an identity, role, and position for the particles in chaos and, in relation to the complexity of the society that they generate, the institutions aimed at structuring and maintaining order.<sup>13</sup> Deleuze and Guattari describe social formations as mega-machines: 'a complex arrangement of bodies, qualities, expressions, objects, and territories'.<sup>14</sup> The two philosophers favour the term 'machine' to the term 'structure' as the latter 'implies the existence of a fully-formed whole, rather than dynamic and ever-changing connections'.<sup>15</sup> With their conception of social production, Deleuze and Guattari stress the dynamism of such a process and the idea that order, and thus social formations, are not fixed and immutable but in a constant process of becoming.<sup>16</sup> In *Mille Plateaux* and *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie ?* Deleuze and Guattari replace the word 'machine' with 'assemblage'. However, the meaning they assign to the two concepts is usually the same.

At the basis of Deleuze and Guattari's conception of social production, there is an anti-essentialist vision of the world and of the things of which it is composed.<sup>17</sup> The idea that reality is constructed by human groups implies the belief that the things of which it is composed start to *be* and *exist* only through social production, when they are coded or territorialised. Deleuze and Guattari use the terms coding and territorialisation to refer to the process through which something is constructed, is given an identity and function, and is inscribed within society.<sup>18</sup> This idea is in open opposition to essentialism, for which any existing thing would be the expression of an alleged inner essence that

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<sup>10</sup> This is why throughout *Lignes de fuite. Pour un autre monde de possibles* Guattari describes social production as a process of semiotisation.

<sup>11</sup> Ian Fouweather, Bas Bosma, 'The Desire to Rethink Power AND Performativity AND Process', in *Organization Studies*, (2021), <<https://doi.org/10.1177/0170840621997622>> [Accessed 11 July 2022].

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., [online].

<sup>13</sup> AO; Gilles Deleuze, *Empirisme et Subjectivité*; Jamie Murray, *Deleuze & Guattari: Emergent Law* (London: Routledge, 2013); Félix Guattari, *Lignes de fuite. Pour un autre monde de possibles* (Paris: Éditions de l'Aube, 2011), pp. 33-38.

<sup>14</sup> Livesey 'Assemblage', in *The Deleuze Dictionary*, pp. 18-19 (pp. 18-19).

<sup>15</sup> Choat, p. 136.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 136.

<sup>17</sup> AO, p. 34; Laurence Simmons, *Knowing Animals*, (Leiden: Brill-Rodopi, 2007), p. 161.

<sup>18</sup> Johnathan Roffe, 'Capitalism', in *The Deleuze Dictionary*, by Adrian Parr, 2nd edn (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), pp. 40-42 (p. 41); Liane Mozère, 'Devenir-femme chez Deleuze et Guattari', *Cahier du genre*, 38.1(2005), <<https://www.cairn.info/revue-cahiers-du-genre-2005-1-page-43.htm>> [Accessed 12 September 2022] (para 2 of 19); Maria Nichterlein, John R. Morss, *Deleuze and Psychology. Philosophical provocations to psychological practices*, (London: Routledge, 2017), p. 127; Parr, 'Deterritorialisation/Reterritorialisation', in *The Deleuze Dictionary*, pp. 69-72.

‘make the *thing* what it is, and *without* which it *would* be not that *kind of thing*’<sup>19</sup>. Outside society, the things of which the world is composed only *exist* materially in a chaotic flow. In *L’Anti-Œdipe*, the two philosophers clearly suggest this when they claim that ‘tout est production’ (AO, p. 10) and that this production coincides with the production of the real: ‘il n’y a qu’une seule *production*, qui est celle du *réel*’ (AO, p. 40). The idea that there is nothing else apart from production and that this production is the production of reality, in the sense of order, which for them coincides with societies, implies that everything existing and making up reality starts to *be* and *exist* only through the process through which human groups actualise their society/create order. This interpretation is further confirmed by their famous quotation: ‘il n’y a que du désir et du social’ (AO, p. 36). Contrary to traditional psychoanalysis, for Deleuze and Guattari, desire is not a lack, but rather a productive psychic force that enables human beings to connect and create order, that is to say actualise their societies.<sup>20</sup> The idea that there is nothing except for ‘du désir’, that is to say the force that enables us to produce social order, and ‘du social’, reinforces the idea that everything is social, that the identity and function of the bodies that compose chaos derive from the process of social production.<sup>21</sup> A similar observation is proposed by Berger and Luckman, though their discourse is limited to human beings rather than all existing bodies as in the case of Deleuze and Guattari’s observation. Berger and Luckmann observe, in fact, that outside society, ‘human existence [...] would be existence in some sort of chaos’<sup>22</sup>. The conception of chaos at the basis of Berger and Luckman resonates with that of Deleuze and Guattari as presented above.

What is outside society, however, can never be empirically experienced. As Bergman and Luckmann write: ‘Such chaos is, [however], empirically unavailable, even though one may theoretically conceive of it’.<sup>23</sup> This is because, as they explain throughout *The Social Construction of Reality*, and Deleuze and Guattari suggest throughout *L’Anti-Œdipe* and *Mille Plateaux*, human existence always arises within a given social field from which it is inseparable.<sup>24</sup> Human beings shape society but society shapes the human being.<sup>25</sup> Without society, human beings would not exist and

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<sup>19</sup> George Lakoff, in Sandeep Prasa, ‘Names of Things and Stuff: An Aristotelian Perspective’, in *Language, Logic, and Concepts: Essays in Memory of John Macnamara*, ed. by Ray Jackendoff, Paul Bloom, Karen Wynn, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2022), pp. 119-146 (p. 128).

<sup>20</sup> AO, p. 32; Jihai Gao, ‘Deleuze’s conception of desire’, in *Deleuze Studies*, vol. 7 (2013), 406–20.

<sup>21</sup> This is why Manuel De Landa, in *Deleuze and the Social* defines Deleuze’s conception of ontology in terms of ‘social ontology’ (Manuel De Landa, ‘Deleuzian Social Ontology and Assemblage Theory’, in *Deleuze and the Social*, ed. by Ian Buchanan, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), pp. 250-266).

<sup>22</sup> Berger, Peter L., Thomas Luckmann, p.69.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 69.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 69; AO; MP; This idea has been expressed also by Émile Durkheim, according to which society ‘transcends and yet is immanent in the individual’. (Edward A. Tiryakian, *Sociologism and Existentialism. Two perspectives on the individual and society*, (Hoboken, Prentice Hall, 1962), p. 22).

<sup>25</sup> Nicholas Greenwood Onuf, *World of Our Making: Rules and Rule in Social Theory and International Relations* (London: Routledge, 1989), p. 46.

without human beings there would not be any society. Human being and society are interdependent, and one needs the other to exist and to define its mode of existence.<sup>26</sup>

As Collin Flinn observes the construction of order, that is to say social production, always results from a collective cognitive effort.<sup>27</sup> The process of social production can in fact be seen as a mental process. As American philosopher and physicist David Bohm argues throughout *Thought as a System*, it is thought, which he considers to be ‘a primarily collective phenomena’,<sup>28</sup> that creates the world.<sup>29</sup> A similar perspective has been expressed by Jiddu Krishnamurti. It is not coincidental that the two thinkers had a conversation on this topic which even resulted in a book publication: *The Limits of Thought: A Conversation between David Bohm and Jiddu Krishnamurti*.

The idea that social production is a mental process goes back to the ancients; the role of thought in the construction of order was already present in both ancient Greek and oriental philosophy.<sup>30</sup> In modern times, this idea has been promoted by numerous authors. Hume is one of the most important. In his political texts, such as *A Treatise on Human Nature*, Hume explained that social order is a product of imagination.<sup>31</sup> Although he did not talk about thinking in broad terms, he considered imagination to be the mental faculty that enabled human beings to shape the world. For Hume, imagination was not only the creative faculty of creating mental images but also a creative force that would enable human beings to form abstract and general ideas, reason from causes to their effects, sympathize, or share feelings with other individuals, project feelings onto objects, conceive institutions, and elaborate laws.<sup>32</sup>

It is not coincidental that Deleuze was influenced by Hume and even dedicated a whole text, *Empirisme et Subjectivité*, to his political thought. However, in *Empirisme et Subjectivité*, Deleuze not only presents Hume’s social theories, but uses them to set out his own. What emerges from the text is that Deleuze, like Hume, shares the conception of humankind as an inventive species capable of using their mind to build their world, and the idea that the world is an artifice, an imaginary construction.<sup>33</sup> Key ideas of the text are the identification of a direct relation between thought and the Outside, what he later conceives as virtual chaos in his collaborative works with Guattari, and the

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<sup>26</sup> Anthony Faramelli, *Resistance, Revolution, and Fascism, Zapatismo and Assemblage Politics* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), p. 61.

<sup>27</sup> Collin Finn, *Social Reality* (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 13 and p. 21.

<sup>28</sup> Lee Nichol Oji, ‘Foreward’, in David Bohm, *System as a Thought*, 2nd edn (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. XI-XVII (p. XIII).

<sup>29</sup> David Bohm, *Thought as a system*, (London: Routledge, 1992).

<sup>30</sup> Vir Singh, *All is mind. The Skolimowskian Philosophy of the Participatory Mind* (Partridge India, 2014), pp. 19-20; Matthew McKenzie, *Buddhist Philosophy and the Embodied Mind: A Constructive Engagement* (London: Rowman, 2022), pp. 105-130.

<sup>31</sup> David Hume, *A Treatise on Human Nature* (General Press: New Delhi, 2018); Deleuze, *Empirisme et Subjectivité*.

<sup>32</sup> ‘David Hume: Imagination’, [online].

<sup>33</sup> Deleuze suggests this idea throughout *Empirisme et Subjectivité*.

social nature of the 'I'.<sup>34</sup> Deleuze further develops these ideas in his texts with Guattari. In *L'Anti-Œdipe*, Deleuze and Guattari explain that social production arises in the unconscious (AO, p. 34). Deleuze and Guattari propose their idea of the unconscious in open opposition to the Freudian conception. For Freud, the unconscious is considered to be the part of the mind populated with the private wishes and desires of the individual that society would repress but that nonetheless influence conscious mental activity and 'distort the perception of the self and others'.<sup>35</sup> As Carl Ratner observes Freud's idea of the unconscious is based on a romantic vision of humankind, 'the idea of a non-social individual who possesses endogenous ideas, feelings, and motives but who cannot express them in an intolerant society'.<sup>36</sup> Deleuze and Guattari are very critical of this conception and elaborate their own idea of the unconscious as a factory for the social to explain the social nature of everything, including thought (AO, p. 64). For Deleuze and Guattari, the unconscious is like a factory producing social order from the production of desire.<sup>37</sup> For the two philosophers, desire is a productive psychic force. Contrary to Freud and traditional psychoanalysis, Deleuze and Guattari conceive desire not as a lack but rather as a driving force that enables human beings to socially produce.<sup>38</sup> What is interesting in Deleuze and Guattari's idea of the unconscious is, not only that the unconscious is productive but that it is itself produced by the process of social production that it triggers (AO, pp. 19-35 and pp. 163-324). As Brent Adkin observes, for Deleuze and Guattari, 'social and psychic are manifestations of the same process [...]. Psychic and social are the result of the same machinic connections [...]'.<sup>39</sup> For Deleuze and Guattari, social production is a mental process that not only produces social order but also creates a mode of thinking. With their idea of the unconscious, Deleuze and Guattari reject any kind of non-social conception of the individual. The individual does not think because they are, pace Descartes; rather human beings are something because they think and through their thought and mental activity they produce order, coding themselves and all the bodies around them. Deleuze and Guattari explicitly attack this assumption in *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie ?*. In the last text that they wrote together, the two philosophers explain that 'c'est le cerveau qui pense et non l'homme, l'homme étant ce dernier seulement une cristallisation cérébrale' (QP, p. 210). With this claim, Deleuze and Guattari openly overcome the Western Cartesian tradition according to which being

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid.; 'Gilles Deleuze', *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/deleuze/>> [Accessed 23 July 2022].

<sup>35</sup> Carl Ratner, 'The Unconscious: A Perspective from Sociohistorical Psychology', in *The Journal of Mind and Behavior*, vol. 15 (1994), pp. 323-42 (p. 324).

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 324.

<sup>37</sup> Clayton Crockett, *Radical Political Theology: Religion and Politics after Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), p. 119.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 119; AO, p. 58 and p. 64; Brent Adkins, *Death and Desire in Hegel, Heidegger and Deleuze*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), p. 12.

<sup>39</sup> Brent Adkins, *Death and Desire in Hegel, Heidegger and Deleuze*, p. 146.

would precede thought. The idea that it is thought that thinks, and not the individual, suggests that it is thought (that virtually) precedes being.<sup>40</sup> What human beings are depends on the process of social production, on the way thought codes, that is to say interprets them, attributing to them a certain identity, role, and position within the structures of society (*QP*, p. 210; *AO*, p. 11-12, p. 36). As Audrone Žukauskaitė observes, for Deleuze and Guattari, it is not the man that organises matter, but the brain/thought: ‘The brain for Deleuze and Guattari expresses the vital activity that characterises and organises both organic and inorganic matter’.<sup>41</sup>

The way thought organises matter depends on the image of thought. Deleuze and Guattari conceive the image of thought as ‘l’image de la pensée, l’image qu’elle se donne de ce que signifie penser, faire usage de la pensée, s’orienter dans la pensée’ (*QP*, p. 41). The image of thought can be seen as seed-thought, a mental scheme that arises as soon as human beings make sense of the world and that instructs them how to organise chaotic matter. The image of thought can be seen as what cognitivists generally refer to as a ‘cognitive schema’ and conceive of as the tool that thought creates to make sense of the world to ‘categorize objects and events’.<sup>42</sup>

This process is collective, as Deleuze and Guattari suggest throughout *L’Anti-Œdipe*. Human beings naturally tend to gather and their brains are naturally wired to connect in order to collectively interpret matter and create order. Without agreement and consensus amongst human beings, it would not be possible for society to be actualised, for order to be produced. In order to create this agreement and consensus, human groups deploy a series of semiotic regimes such as language (*LF*, p. 33). Before being an instrument that enables communication, Deleuze and Guattari explain in *Mille Plateaux*, language is an instrument of power that human beings are naturally predisposed to invent and use to shape their societies (*MP*, pp. 95-96). Language enables humans to ‘systematise and structure’<sup>43</sup> chaotic matter and ideas. As Liane Mozère writes, language is ‘un harnachement, une armature qui me fait me tenir droite, qui m’assigne une place dans ses rets et qui me maintient sur les rails, sur la bonne voie, qui donne un axe à ma pensée : c’est un tuteur’ (*LF*, p. 7). Through language human beings assign an identity to themselves and the things around them, define their way of existing and that of the other things around them, and circulate their ideas and beliefs. Language is the vehicle for the norms and conventions of the society that have shaped it by providing its members with a vision

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<sup>40</sup> Thought *virtually* precedes being because they arise at the same time.

<sup>41</sup> Audrone Žukauskaitė, ‘Interspecies Sonification: Deleuze, Ruyert, and Bioart’, *Aberrant Nuptials. Deleuze and Artistic Research*, 2vols (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2020), II, pp. 421-428 (p. 425).

<sup>42</sup> Randy Larsen, David Buss & others, *Personality Psychology. Domains of Knowledge about Human Nature*, 3rd edn (London: McGraw Hill, 2021) p. 284; ‘Schema’, in *Britannica Encyclopedia*, <<https://www.britannica.com/science/schema-cognitive>> [Accessed 11 September 2022].

<sup>43</sup> Iain Campbell, ‘Deleuze and Guattari’s Semiorhythmology: A Sketch for a Rhythmic Theory of Signs’, *Rhuthmos. Plateforme internationale et transdisciplinaire de recherche sur les rythmes dans les sciences, les philosophies et les arts*, <<http://www.rhuthmos.eu/spip.php?article2644>> [Accessed 11 August 2022].



of the world. (*MP*, p. 96). Signs, including language, Guattari explains, capture human thought; they equip thought with ‘une « vision » du monde, ce que Roger Chambon appelle une « parution » du monde et qui devrait, selon lui, être distinguée d’une simple représentation pour être entendue comme une « perception productive »’ (*LF*, p. 20).

The way the brain/thought codes and interprets the elements in chaos is completely arbitrary (*LF*, p. 20). This explains the variety of different ways that societies have been actualised across time and geographic areas. In *L’Anti-Oedipe*, Deleuze and Guattari present a universal history of Western social formations. Contrary to the genealogical vision of history as an evolutionary process of the adaptation and improvement of previous social formations, Deleuze and Guattari propose an anti-genealogical vision of history.<sup>44</sup> Deleuze and Guattari’s anti-genealogy is based on the idea that the passage from one social formation to another derives from what they call a process of ‘deterritorialisation’ and ‘reterritorialisation’ (*AO*, pp. 163-324). From a Deleuzo-Guattarian perspective, ‘deterritorialisation’ can be seen as the mental process through which the bodies of which society is composed are opened up to becoming.<sup>45</sup> Through deterritorialisation, a body is freed from its identity, role, and position and opened up to new interpretations that can pave the way for the construction of new socio-political organisations. ‘Reterritorialisation’, on the contrary, can be seen as the mental process through which a certain body gets re-inscribed/coded again, that is to say given an identity, role, and position within the structures of a given society.<sup>46</sup>

Capitalist societies arose from the deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation of the market, or to put it simply, from a shift in the way of conceiving the market. This happened when European countries began to consider capital as their supreme value and ultimate objective. Before the actualisation of capitalist society, capital, as it is known today, did not exist (*AO*, p. 269). In pre-capitalist societies, money primarily had a political function (*AO*, p. 223 and p. 269). It was a symbol of political subordination.<sup>47</sup> As Deleuze and Guattari observe, in pre-capitalist society, ‘[...] l’argent ne commence pas par servir au commerce. [...] Le rapport du commerce avec l’argent est synthétique, non pas analytique. Et fondamentalement l’argent est indissociable, non pas du commerce, mais de l’impôt comme entretien de l’appareil d’Etat’ (*AO*, p. 233).

In pre-capitalist societies, the economy was subordinated to politics, and it was not competitive.<sup>48</sup> In capitalist societies, on the contrary, any human activity is subordinated to the

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<sup>44</sup> Paul Patton, *Deleuze and the Political* (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 30; Simon Choat, *Marx Through PostStructuralism: Lyotard, Derrida, Foucault, Deleuze* (London: Continuum, 2010), p. 140.

<sup>45</sup> Parr, ‘Deterritorialisation/Reterritorialisation’, pp. 69-72 (p. 70).

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 69-72.

<sup>47</sup> Eugene W. Holland, *Deleuze and Guattari’s ‘Anti-Oedipus’: A Reader’s Guide* (London: Continuum, 2002), p. 66.

<sup>48</sup> Ellen Meiksins Wood, *The Origin of Capitalism*, 2nd edn (London: Verso Books, 2017), pp. 21-23; Lawrin Armstrong, *The Idea of a Moral Economy. Gerard of Siena on Usury, Restitution, and Prescription*, (Toronto: Toronto University

economy,<sup>49</sup> transforming the human being into an *animale economicus*.<sup>50</sup> In capitalist society, the identity, function, and role that people are assigned depend on their role in the market, or more generally in the production of capital.<sup>51</sup> In the capitalist system, the process of social production is guided by economic laws (*AO*, pp. 16-17). The identity, role, and position that individuals have is economic by nature (*LF*, p. 69), and social relations are reinvested within the economic grid.<sup>52</sup> As Guattari explains, in capitalist societies: ‘Les rapports personnologiques codés, du type noble-valet, maître-apprenti, s’effacent au profit d’une régulation des rapports « humains » généraux, fondés, pour l’essentiel, sur des systèmes de quantification abstraite portant sur le travail, les salaires, la « qualification », les profits, etc.’ (*LF*, p. 69).

As Deleuze and Guattari observe, the passage from pre-capitalist to capitalist societies occurred when ‘le capital devient le corps plein, le nouveau socius, ou la quasi-cause qui s’approprie toutes les forces productives’ (*AO*, pp. 269-270). Capital appropriated the productive forces of production when the capitalist bourgeoisie became the dominant class and seized control of culture. Gramsci’s idea of the dominant ideology proves itself to be a useful concept to explain this point. Gramsci conceived of cultural hegemony as the cultural dominance of the dominant class over other classes from the idea that ‘man is not ruled by force alone, but also by ideas.’<sup>53</sup> and he saw that culture is used by the dominant classes in order to obtain ‘spontaneous consent’<sup>54</sup> for their directions and to influence the masses’ perception of the world. By seizing control of culture, the capitalist bourgeoisie produced a dominant ideology based on the ethics of profit.

The passage from pre-capitalist to capitalist society was a long process, which started in feudal societies with the ascendancy of the urban bourgeoisie (*LF*, p. 49). However, the real shift in the conception of money was triggered by the discovery of America in 1492.<sup>55</sup> This event marked the beginning of colonisation, a phenomenon that completely transformed the market, opening up the way to capitalism.<sup>56</sup> New trade routes opened, money acquired new meaning, and commerce became

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Press), p. 12; Alfredo Saad-Filho, *Value and Crisis. Essays on Labour, Money, and Contemporary Capitalism*, (Leiden: Brill-Rodopi, 2020), p. 201.

<sup>49</sup> Meiksins Wood, pp. 25-26; Sheri Berman, *The primacy of politics. Social Democracy and the Making of Europe’s Twentieth Century*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 2.

<sup>50</sup> Tristan Weddigen, ‘Alien Spotting: Damian Hirst’s Beagle 2 Mars Lander Calibration Target and The Exploitation of Outer Space’, in *Imagining Outer Space: European Astroculture in the Twentieth Century*, ed. by Alexander C.T. Geppert, 2nd edn (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2018), p. 346; Carlos Rodriguez-Sickert, ‘Homo economicus’, in *Handbook of Economics and Ethics*, ed. by Jan Peil, Irene van Staveren (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2009), pp. 223-229 (p. 223).

<sup>51</sup> *AO*, pp. 16-17; Meiksins Wood, p. 23 and p. 26.

<sup>52</sup> Meiksins Wood, p. 7.

<sup>53</sup> Thomas R. Bate, ‘Gramsci and the Theory of Hegemony’, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 36.2 (1975), 351-366.

<sup>54</sup> Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ed. and trans. Quentin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (London: Elecbook, 1999), p. 12.

<sup>55</sup> Meiksins Wood, pp. 146-147; Margaret Vallencourt, *Technology of the Industrial Revolution* (New York: Britannica Educational Publishing, 2016) p. 16.

<sup>56</sup> Meiksins Wood, p. 3.

large-scale.<sup>57</sup> This process was facilitated by the emergence of strong nation-states that ‘succeeded in providing the basic social conditions, such as uniform monetary system and legal codes, necessary for economic development’.<sup>58</sup> Mercantilist theories spread, and from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries, European nation-states started to promote trade and manufacturing, and as a result the bourgeoisie grew.<sup>59</sup> Mercantilism is a social practice based on the promotion of the ‘governmental regulation of a nation’s economy for the purpose of augmenting state power at the expense of rival national powers’.<sup>60</sup>

Everywhere around Europe, the mercantilist bourgeois ‘were moved by the ambition to increase the wealth of their states at the expense of the wealth of the other countries.’<sup>61</sup> The capitalist ideology began to take shape based on the search for and maximization of profit.<sup>62</sup> Mercantilism represents a first step towards the emergence of the capitalist mode of thinking and of capitalist societies. However, the real shift occurred with the Industrial Revolution. It is with the Industrial Revolution that it became possible to talk about a capitalist mode of thinking and of capitalist societies.<sup>63</sup> The Industrial Revolution represented a real turning point in history.<sup>64</sup> It started in the United Kingdom, in the eighteenth century, from 1760 on, then spread to the rest of Europe, and from there to the rest of the world.<sup>65</sup> The technological and scientific development achieved during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries gradually improved the living conditions of people in Europe.<sup>66</sup> As a result, Europe saw rapid but gradual demographic growth. This increased the demand for goods and pushed innovators to look for ‘novel ways of giving the people what they needed, wanted, and desired’.<sup>67</sup> New machines and techniques were introduced, and goods that were once crafted by hand on a small scale began to be produced in mass quantities.<sup>68</sup> New industries rapidly developed, and agriculture

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<sup>57</sup> Margaret Vallencourt, pp. 16-17.

<sup>58</sup> Robert L. Heilbroner, ‘capitalism’, in *Britannica*, <<https://www.britannica.com/topic/capitalism>> [Accessed 30 June 2022].

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, [online].

<sup>60</sup> ‘mercantilism’, in *Britannica*, <<https://www.britannica.com/topic/mercantilism>> [Accessed 30 June 2020].

<sup>61</sup> C. H. Wilson ‘Trade, Society, and the State’, *The Cambridge Economic History of Europe. The economy of expanding Europe in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century*, ed. by E. E. Rich, 8 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), IV, pp. 485- 576, p. 573

<sup>62</sup> Ellen Meiksins Wood, p. 26.

<sup>63</sup> Antonio Brancati, Trebi Pagliarini, *Il nuovo dialogo con la storia*, II, p. 316.

<sup>64</sup> Antonio Brancati, Trebi Pagliarini, *Il nuovo dialogo con la storia*, II, p. 316.

<sup>65</sup> ‘Industrial Revolution’, in *Britannica*, <<https://www.britannica.com/event/Industrial-Revolution>> [Accessed 30 June 2022].

<sup>66</sup> K.S. Madhavan, *Business & Ethics – an oxymoron?* (Shri Ranga: Shingo Institute of Japanese Management, 2008), p. 30.

<sup>67</sup> Jeff Horn, *The Industrial Revolution: History, Documents, and Key Questions* (Santa Barbara: ABC-Clio, 2016), p. XXII).

<sup>68</sup> ‘Industrial Revolution’, in *History Channel* <<http://www.history.com/topics/industrial-revolution/industrial-revolution>> [Accessed 13 Jan 2021].

changed completely.<sup>69</sup> This process was facilitated by the availability of primary resources from the colonies. Thus began the Industrial Revolution and, with it, industrial capitalism.

The transformation of agriculture and manufacturing was accompanied by a shift in the conception of the economy, social relations, and the concept of work, transforming the life of millions of people all over the world.<sup>70</sup> First of all, mercantilism was replaced by free-trade policies, based on the idea that the search for personal interest could improve the living conditions of the whole community, as explained by Adam Smith in *The Wealth of Nations*.<sup>71</sup> Economy also started to become independent from politics and to rule over politics, as witnessed by Marx, who already in the nineteenth century, denounced governments for subordinating politics to the needs of the economy, in the interest of the dominant class, the industrial bourgeoisie.<sup>72</sup> It is during the industrial revolution that the bourgeoisie, and in particular the industrial bourgeoisie, rose up to become the dominant class as a result of the process of industrialisation, subordinating any human activity to the production of capital (*LF*, pp. 48-51). The economic orientation of the way human groups in Western countries created order reconfigured social relations in essentially economic terms.<sup>73</sup>

From 1800 until the 1970s, capitalism was essentially industrial, and life developed around the rhythm of the factories. Today, as Franco ‘Bifo’ Berardi suggests in *The Uprising: On Poetry and Finance*, the rhythm is essentially financial and life orbits around the banks.<sup>74</sup> Whereas in nineteenth-century capitalist systems, capital was accumulated in the hands of rich Western families, after the Second World War, capital began to be accumulated in and by banks, which now represent the actual political centres of society. Banks, like factories before the Second World War, affect and influence the development of entire states, subordinating the lives of millions of people to their conditions.

After the Second World War, industrial capitalism could no longer sustain itself due to a lack of investment possibilities.<sup>75</sup> The only way to keep capitalism alive was by transforming the emphasis of capitalism from an industrial to a financial focus.<sup>76</sup> This process of transformation ended in the 1970s with the collapse of Bretton Woods (1973), the oil crises (1977) and the subsequent

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<sup>69</sup> Michel Beaud, p. 124; Italo Talia, *Forme, strutture, politiche della città* (Napoli: Liguori Editore, 2007), p. 7.

<sup>70</sup> Brancati, Pagliarini, *Il nuovo dialogo con la storia*, II, p. 316.

<sup>71</sup> Will Kenton, ‘What is Mercantilism?’, in *Investopedia*, <[shorturl.at/BLQ02](https://www.investopedia.com/terms/m/mercantilism.asp)> [Accessed 4 July 2022]; Norman McCord, *Free Trade: Theory and Practice from Adam Smith to Keynes*, (Exeter: David & Charles, 1970).

<sup>72</sup> Ian Fraser, Lawrence Wilde, *The Marx Dictionary* (London: continuum, 2011), p. 35

<sup>73</sup> *LF*, p. 69; Meiksins Wood, p. 67.

<sup>74</sup> Franco ‘Bifo’ Berardi, *The Uprising: On poetry* (South Pasadena: semiotext(e), 2012), p. 23 and p. 28.

<sup>75</sup> Bernard Paulré, ‘Finance et accumulations dans le capitalisme post-industriel’, *Multitudes*, 1.32 (2008), 77-89 (pp. 84-85).

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 80-86.

deregulation of the market.<sup>77</sup> However, this does not mean that industrial capitalism no longer exists, as testified by the millions of workers exploited around the world daily, especially in developing countries, where there are limited work regulations, or none at all. Rather, it means that the production of capital is no longer solely the prerogative of factories. Today, profit is not only made from the purchase and sale of goods but also, and especially, through investment in financial products, such as bonds and stocks.<sup>78</sup>

Since the fifteenth century, non-European countries have found themselves implicated in Western socio-political games. Their natural resources were exploited by Europeans, and later by Americans, to extract the materials necessary to produce goods, and their citizens enslaved to become a cheap workforce.<sup>79</sup> Today, all the countries around the world are beholden to capitalism – as witnessed by the existence of the World Bank. However, it is imperative to say that although all the countries around the world have a role in the capitalist system, the capitalist ideology is not always dominant. This is the case for example with China and India. Although China and India are two emergent capitalist countries, the capitalist ideology seems to influence their foreign politics more than it does their internal socio-political organisation. Nevertheless, in the last thirty years, as a result of the processes of Westernisation, also known as globalization, and ‘cross-cultural interactions’ made possible by media and technology, whose advent is intrinsically capitalist, things are changing.<sup>80</sup> Capitalist values increasingly influence the life of people in non-Western countries.<sup>81</sup> The circulation of the capitalist mode of thinking based on competition, search for profit and accumulation of capital have created a global order, a global society.<sup>82</sup> However, this process is still in progress, and it is not completely accurate to define all of the countries in the world as capitalist or as fully capitalist as Western countries. For this reason, with the expression ‘capitalist society’, this thesis specifically refers to the Western world. Western countries are the birthplace of capitalism and are all profoundly capitalist. Though there are some formal differences related to their national traditions,

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<sup>77</sup> Antonio Brancati, Trebi Pagliarani, *Il nuovo dialogo con la storia. Il Novecento*, 3 vols (Milano: La Nuova Italia, 2007), III, pp. 464-466.

<sup>78</sup> Edemilson Paraná, *Digitalized Finance: Financial Capitalism and Informational Revolution* (Leiden: Brill, 2019), pp. 1-2.

<sup>79</sup> Meiksins Wood, p. 150.

<sup>80</sup> Amardeep Singh, ‘globalisation’, in <<https://www.lehigh.edu/~amsp/eng-11-globalization.htm>> [Accessed 28 July 2022]; Helena Norberg-Hodge, ‘Helena Norberg-Hodge: Globalised Monoculture is Consuming The Planet’, interviewed by C.J Poluchroniou, <<https://truthout.org/articles/globalized-monoculture-is-consuming-the-planet-an-interview-with-helena-norberg-hodge/>> [Accessed 11 August 2022]; Kenneth Keniston, ‘Cultural diversity or Cultural Monoculture. The impact of the Information Age, unpublished paper delivered at the Conference on the ‘Global Village’ (Bangalore, 2 November 2 1998), <[http://web.mit.edu/~kken/Public/papers1/Cultural\\_Diversity.htm](http://web.mit.edu/~kken/Public/papers1/Cultural_Diversity.htm)> [11 September 2022]

<sup>81</sup> Ozay Mehet, *Westernizing the Third World. The Eurocentricity of Economic Development Theories*, 2nd edn (London: Routledge, 1999).

<sup>82</sup> Norberg Hodge, [online].

like, for example, their languages, culinary habits, and governability policies, they all share the same capitalist vision of the world, values, and beliefs. This is the justification for my choice of the expression ‘capitalist society’ to refer to the Western world; it follows the model of Guattari who, in *Lignes de Fuite*, talks about the capitalist world in the singular form to refer to the ‘monde diurne, normal, civilisé blanc, phallogratique, scolarisé, hiérarchisé, etc.’ (*LF*, p. 24), that is to say the Western world.

## 1.2 For a definition of rhizomatic poetry

As shown in the first section of this thesis, poetry, like any other literary text, is ontologically political. This is because it is made of language, and language is used by human groups to produce a socio-political order. In this regard, the concepts of minor and major literature are particularly useful for explaining poetry’s political potential. Major literature circulates society’s order-words, that is to say social norms and conventions through a standard use of language, reinforcing society’s functioning.<sup>83</sup> Minor literature, on the other hand, manipulates language, interfering with the circulation of social norms and conventions and potentially setting the conditions for overthrowing the established order (*K*, pp. 22-39). Minor language manipulates the morphology, syntax, and semantics of language and deforms the vision of the world that they transmit (*K*; pp. 42-44; *MP*, pp. 128-132). This manipulation has the potential to stimulate thought to think differently and, from there, to create a breach in the system, in the way human groups make sense of their experience and the world.<sup>84</sup> The sense-making process is a mental process led by the brain. The manipulation of language can manifest itself in the misspelling of words, the elimination of punctuation, the use of irony or the adoption of strategies of ‘détournement sémantique’, in which language is used to transmit an opposite meaning to that which it usually transmits.

Deconstructionist poetry surely fits with the definition of minor literature. Many contemporary French poetry collections disrupt society’s order-words by adopting ‘une méthode de type rhizome’ as a model of writing (*MP*, p. 12). The concept of the rhizome was invented by Deleuze and Guattari in 1976, a year after the publication of *Kafka. Pour une littérature mineure*, and it was published as

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<sup>83</sup> Claire Colebrook, *Gilles Deleuze* (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 120.

<sup>84</sup> Christa Albrecht Crane, ‘Style. Stutter’, in *Gilles Deleuze. Key Concepts*, ed. by Charles J. Stivale, 2nd edn (Chesham: 2012), pp. 121-130 (p. 129); Ronald Bogue, ‘Minoritarian + Literature’, in *Deleuze Dictionary*, ed. by Adrian Parr, 2nd edn (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), pp. 170-171.

a booklet in the same year, before being inserted as the introduction to *Mille Plateaux* in 1980. Deleuze and Guattari conceive of the rhizome as an alternative image of thought in open opposition to the hierarchical, tree-like image of thought, the cognitive scheme, that is the basis of capitalist society today.<sup>85</sup> In *Mille Plateaux*, Deleuze and Guattari explain that Western societies have traditionally used an arborescent image of thought to organise themselves based on the logic of binary oppositions and hierarchical relations (*MP*, p. 22). This logic makes thought organise the elements in chaos into binary pairs (e.g., ‘true/false, normal/abnormal, black/white, male/female, reason/unreason’)<sup>86</sup> through a hierarchical schema. In addition, Deleuze and Guattari explain, the arborescent image of thought ‘impose le verbe être’ (*MP*, p. 36). This leads thought to attribute a fixed identity to the particles of chaotic matter. The hierarchical, tree-like shape image of thought, Deleuze and Guattari explain, is responsible for the traditional hierarchical organisation of Western societies and is the cause of social oppression.<sup>87</sup> The hierarchical structure of social relations, in fact, derives from the arborescent logic used to make sense of the world.

In opposition to the arborescent image of thought, Deleuze and Guattari propose the rhizome, an alternative mental scheme based on the logic of connectivity, heterogeneity, and multiplicity. The rhizome, the two philosophers suggest throughout *Mille Plateaux*, can potentially challenge the social order produced by arborescent thinking, opening the way to new socio-political organisations and ways of being.

The term ‘rhizome’ comes from botanics, referring to ‘the thick stem of some plants, which lies under the ground and has roots and leaves growing out of it’.<sup>88</sup> Both the shape and growth of this kind of stem, Deleuze and Guattari suggest, describe the functioning of rhizomatic thinking. Just like rhizomatic stems, which first develop horizontally and then in any possible direction, rhizomatic thought develops in all the possible directions allowed by the morphology of the brain. As Deleuze and Guattari observe: ‘La pensée n’est pas arborescente, et le cerveau n’est pas une matière enracinée, ni ramifié’ (*MP*, p. 24). Cerebral tissue presents an irregular and discontinuous morphology:

La discontinuité des cellules, le rôle des axones, le fonctionnement des synapses, l’existence de micro-fentes synaptiques, le saut de chaque message par-dessus ces fentes, font du cerveau une multiplicité qui baigne, dans son plan de consistance ou dans sa glie, tout un système probabiliste incertain, *uncertain nervous system.* (*MP*, p. 24)

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<sup>85</sup> Saul Newman, *From Bakunin to Lacan: Anti-Authoritarianism and the Dislocation of Power* (Oxford: Lexington Books, 2001), p. 105.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 105.

<sup>87</sup> *MP*, p. 24; Dimitriadis, Kamberelis, p. 89.

<sup>88</sup> ‘Rhizome’, in the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, ed. by Chris Fox and others, 8th edn (Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2006), p. 1413.

The brain is not a continuum of cells, a 'single continuous network'<sup>89</sup> of cerebral substances, but rather an uncertain probabilistic system. The one hundred billion nerve cells that connect to make human beings think rhizomatically allow for an infinite number of possible connections (*MP*, p. 24).

Unlike arborescent thinking which traps thought in rigid linear and vertical mental paths, rhizomatic thinking is free to trace ever new mental paths according to the logic of connection, multiplicity and heterogeneity which is its basis (*MP*, pp. 13-20).

By doing so, rhizomatic thinking can deconstruct the mental scheme at the basis of capitalist society to challenge its order and organisation, setting the conditions for the production of new potential socio-political organisations and ways of existing.<sup>90</sup> The connections produced by the rhizome result in a kind of assemblage, or machine, two terms used by Deleuze and Guattari to refer to structure, that they call 'rhizome', just like the image of thought which generates it. The rhizome (assemblage) is a decentralised structure<sup>91</sup> in constant transformation made up of different heterogeneous substances without beginning or end (*MP*, p. 31).

Deleuze and Guattari describe the rhizome in relation to six points, or to use their words, 'principes'. The first and second principles are the 'principes de connexion et d'hétérogénéité' (*MP*, p. 13). These principles explain that in a rhizome everything is connected to everything else regardless of its nature. In a rhizome, even the most disparate things assemble: '1° et 2° Principes de connexion et d'hétérogénéité: n'importe quel point d'un rhizome peut être connecté avec n'importe quel autre, et doit l'être' (*MP*, p. 13).

The third principle is the 'principe de multiplicité' (*MP*, p. 14). This principle suggests that the rhizome is by its very nature multiple. It is a decentralised structure, with neither object nor subject, arising through the connections between diverse substances (*MP*, p. 31).

Le rhizome ne se laisse ramener ni à l'Un ni au multiple. Il n'est pas l'Un qui devient deux, ni même qui deviendrait directement trois, quatre ou cinq, etc. Il n'est pas un multiple qui dérive de l'Un, ni auquel l'Un s'ajouterait (n+1). Il n'est pas fait d'unités, mais de dimensions, ou plutôt de directions mouvantes. [...] Il constitue des multiplicités linéaires à *n* dimension, sans sujet ni objet, étables sur un plan de consistance, et dont l'Un est toujours soustrait (n-1). (*MP*, p. 31)

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<sup>89</sup> Susan Goetz Zwirn, 'Butterflies of the Soul: Cajal's Neuron Theory and Art', *The Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 49.4 (2015), 105-119 (p. 107).

<sup>90</sup> Felicity J. Colman, 'Rhizome', in *The Deleuze Dictionary*, by Adrian Parr, 2nd edn (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), pp. 232-235 (p. 235).

<sup>91</sup> In *Mille Plateaux*, Deleuze and Guattari use the term 'assemblage' to refer to structures. This is to stress the fact that assemblages are not as fixed as structure and can change.



The fourth principle is the ‘principe de rupture assignifiante’ (MP, p.16). This principle explains that a rhizome has no beginning nor end. It is a process of permanent metamorphosis. The connections that make a rhizome change constantly, incessantly transforming its shape and nature: ‘[le rhizome] n’a pas de commencement ni de fin [...]’. Une telle multiplicité ne varie pas ses dimensions sans changer de nature en elle-même et se métamorphoser’ (MP, p. 31).

The fifth and sixth principles are the ‘principes de cartographie et de décalcomanie’ (MP, p. 19). These two principles further develop the fourth principle. They suggest, in fact, that a rhizome is a multiplicity that can be incessantly assembled and disassembled, creating ever new possibilities.

Tout autre est le rhizome, *carte et non pas calque*. Faire la carte, et pas le calque. [...] La carte ne reproduit pas un inconscient fermé sur lui-même, elle le construit. Elle concourt à la connexion des champs, au déblocage des corps sans organes, à leur ouverture maximum sur un plan de consistance. [...] La carte est ouverte, elle est connectable dans toutes ses dimensions, démontables, renversable, susceptible de recevoir constamment des modifications. (MP, p. 20)

In ‘Le Rhizome’, Deleuze and Guattari explain that literature is a useful instrument for circulating rhizomatic logic. In the booklet, the two philosophers distinguish between three different kinds of books, defined in relation to their underlying logic, and from there the effects that they produce on the world, on social reality. The suitability of literature for circulating the rhizomatic logic relies on the fact that, as Deleuze and Guattari explain, human groups create social order through semiotic regimes, like language, which transmit their mode of thinking, their set ideas, values, beliefs, vision of the world, with the logic at their basis. Literature is made of signs and is therefore ontologically suitable for transmitting modes of thinking.

By developing the literary theories elaborated in *Kafka*, where they distinguish between minor and major literature, in ‘Le Rhizome’, Deleuze and Guattari identify three possible kinds of books: the ‘livre-racine’, the ‘livre-radicelle’ and the ‘livre-rhizome’ (MP, pp. 11-12 and p. 37). What distinguishes them is the logic and vision of the world at the basis of each and, thus, the effects that they produce on thought, and thus on the social body. According to the logic that a writer follows in its construction, a book can reinforce the logic and vision of the world at the basis of the established order or deviate from it, partially or completely.

For Deleuze and Guattari, the *livre-racine* follows the logic of binary opposition and hierarchical relation that has characterised Western thought since ancient times and reproduces its linear and vertical structure. As Deleuze and Guattari write:

[...] le livre-racine. [...] C'est le livre classique, comme belle intériorité organique, signifiante et subjective [...]. Le livre imite le monde, comme l'art, la nature : par des procédés qui lui sont propres, et qui mènent à bien ce que la nature ne peut pas ou ne peut plus faire. La loi du livre, c'est celle de la réflexion, le Un qui devient deux. [...] Un devient deux : chaque fois que nous rencontrons cette formule, fût-elle énoncée stratégiquement par Mao, fût-elle comprise le plus « dialectiquement » du monde, nous nous trouvons devant la pensée la plus classique et la plus réfléchie, la plus vieille, la plus fatiguée. [...] La logique binaire est la réalité spirituelle de l'arbre-racine. (MP, p. 11)

This kind of book is what was defined as major literature in the previous section as it makes a major use of language, and it can be used to describe texts that reinforce the ideas, values, and beliefs at the basis of the established order.

The *livre-radicelle* or *fasciculé* reflects the logic of binary opposition and hierarchical relation, which regulates the functioning of the hierarchical, tree-like image of thought, as well as the logic of multiplicity, connection, and heterogeneity, which regulates the functioning of the rhizome.

Le système-radicelle, ou racine fasciculée, est la seconde figure du livre, dont notre modernité se réclame volontiers. Cette fois, la racine principale a avorté, ou se détruit vers son extrémité ; vient se greffer sur elle une multiplicité immédiate et quelconque de racines secondaires qui prennent un grand développement. [...] La plupart des méthodes modernes pour faire proliférer des séries ou pour faire croître une multiplicité valent parfaitement dans une direction par exemple linéaire, tandis qu'une unité de totalisation s'affirme d'autant plus dans une autre dimension, celle d'un cercle ou d'un cycle. [...] Autant dire que le système fasciculé ne rompt pas vraiment avec le dualisme, avec la complémentarité d'un sujet ou d'un objet, d'une réalité naturelle et d'une réalité spirituelle : l'unité ne cesse d'être contrariée et empêchée dans l'objet, tandis qu'un nouveau type d'unité triomphe dans le sujet. [...] le livre reste image du monde, chaosmos-radicelle, au lieu de cosmos-racine. (MP, pp. 12-13)

The *livre-radicelle* thus has an ambiguous function as it both reinforces some of the ideas underpinning the established order while challenging others. The *livre-radicelle* can be seen as something in between what was called major and minor literature in the previous section. Neither its conformism to the established order nor its anti-conformism is sufficient to fully make it a *livre-racine* or *livre-rhizome*.

The *livre-rhizome* is ontologically minor. The book-rhizome is constructed according to the logic of connection, heterogeneity, and multiplicity. Deleuze and Guattari conceive of it as a 'machine de guerre' (MP, p. 10), an expression that they use to refer to any kind of assemblage shaped using an alternative model of thinking to that at the basis of the established order (MP, p. 434 and p. 464). Rhizomatic texts, they suggest, deeply affect a society's dominant way of thinking based on the logic of binary oppositions and hierarchical relations (MP, p. 34). This is because the logic of connection,

multiplicity, and heterogeneity that underpin them show the world from a different perspective than that at the basis of the established order, and their minor use of language enables them to interfere with the transmission of society's rules and conventions. As Deleuze and Guattari explain, language is an instrument of power; it is the instrument that societies use to instruct people how to see the world and, from there, organise it to create social order (*MP*, pp. 95-96). Rhizomatic texts disrupt grammar rules that, as Deleuze and Guattari write, are 'des marqueurs de pouvoir' (*MP*, p. 96) through a variety of strategies that will be presented in Chapters Two, Three, and Four when we analyse poetry by Sivan, Maestri, and Espitallier, and that we can here summarise as the manipulation of morphology, syntax, and semantics of language.

By following the rhizomatic model of thinking, the group of French contemporary poets analysed in this thesis put together their poetry collections as *livre-rhizomes* to engage in the fight against capitalist society. The rhizomatic logic that underpins these poetry collections can 'instaurer une logique du ET ' and 'renverser l'ontologie' (*MP*, pp. 36-37) deconstructing the binary and hierarchical vision of the world as traditionally promoted by Western societies.

In this thesis, poetry resulting from the rhizomatic model of thinking is called 'rhizomatic poetry'. Rhizomatic poetry coincides with the idea of deconstructionist poetry, as elaborated by Wourm and *post-poésie*, as elaborated by Gleize, which was previously presented in the introduction, and it refers to a series of experimental texts that stand at the porous boundaries between different genres. What is called 'poetry' in this thesis, shorthand for rhizomatic poetry, is not a codified genre, but an *ensemble* of texts which sit at the intersection of different literary and non-literary genres, and which characterise contemporary French literary production.

### **1.3 Rhizomatic poetry between tradition and innovation**

Before focusing on the poetic production of Sivan, Maestri and Espitallier to exemplify some of the aesthetico-political paths that rhizomatic poetry takes to engage in the fight against capitalist society, this section contextualises their work within the anti-capitalist tradition of French poetry that began with the Symbolists in the nineteenth century. The aim is to explain its unique characteristics and role within the history of French poetry. To this end, its features will be compared with those of Symbolist and twentieth-century avant-gardes.

### 1.3.1 Twenty-first-century rhizomatic poetry and political engagement

Twenty-first-century rhizomatic poetry positions itself in the wake of the poetico-political battles inaugurated by the Symbolists. Although the romantics had already criticised industrialisation, it is with the Symbolists that it became possible to talk about actual anti-capitalist poetico-political projects.

The Symbolists reproached the bourgeoisie, and thus capitalist society, for its ‘esprit vulgaire’ and its material and utilitarian ideology.<sup>92</sup> The Symbolists attached their poetic projects to anarchism to attack the capitalist system. As Patrick McGuinness observes in *Poetry and Radical Politics in fin de siècle France. From Anarchism to the Action Française*, all the most influential Symbolists – Kahn, Saint-Pol-Roux, Quillard, Paul Adam, Griffin and Mallarmé – flirted with anarchism.<sup>93</sup> After the institutionalisation of the Symbolist movement with the publication of Jean Moréas’s ‘Manifeste symboliste’ in *Le Figaro* in September 1886, Symbolists and anarchists reciprocally invited each other to their official events.<sup>94</sup> Symbolist magazines, such as *La revue Blanche*, *Le Mercure de France* and *Les Entretiens politiques et littéraires*, even dedicated large sections to anarchists and anarchism.<sup>95</sup>

By supporting each other, anarchists and Symbolists reinforced their political projects. However, they developed them very differently.<sup>96</sup> Nineteenth-century anarchists attacked capitalist society and its bourgeois ideology in a series of violent actions on the streets of Paris.<sup>97</sup> This is why historians often refer to the last decade of the nineteenth century as an ‘ère des attentats’.<sup>98</sup> Symbolists, by contrast, as Mallarmé’s texts exemplify, did so by writing poetry from the idea that Standard French and the traditional formal features of poetry were embodiments of the socio-political order.<sup>99</sup> As Mary Lewis Shaw writes, ‘Stéphane Mallarmé’s essay *Crise de vers* (*Crisis of Verse*) describes the Symbolist poets’ ‘freeing’ of verse – an aesthetic liberation prepared earlier in the century by

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<sup>92</sup> Patrick McGuinness, *Poetry and Radical Politics in fin de siècle France: From Anarchism to the Action Française* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 107; Jacqueline Genet, *La poésie de William Butler Yeats* (Villeneuve d’Ascq: Presses Universitaires du Septentrion, 2007), p. 84.

<sup>93</sup> McGuinness, p. 76.

<sup>94</sup> Richard Shryock, ‘The Symbolist Movement: Anarchism and the Avant-Garde in Fin de Siècle France’, in *Anarchism and the Avant-Garde: Radical Arts and Politics in Perspective*, ed. by Carolin Kosuch (Leiden: Brill-Rodopi, 2019), pp. 13-36 (p.18).

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 20-21.

<sup>96</sup> Shryock, p. 25.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>99</sup> Mary Shaw Lewis, *The Cambridge Introduction to French Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 3-5; Thierry Roger, ‘Art et Anarchie à l’époque symboliste : Mallarmé et son groupe littéraire’, *Fabula*, (2014), <<https://www.fabula.org/colloques/document2443.php>> [Accessed December 2020] (para 1 of 35).

Victor Hugo (1802–1855) and other Romantic poets – as a moment of significance determined by and comparable to the (1789) French Revolution’.<sup>100</sup>

Mallarmé’s contemporaries considered his work was to be by an anarchist militant and *Un coup de dés* as the literary equivalent of an anarchist terrorist attack. This was for the lack of order of the text. In the text, Mallarmé played with the typographical, semantic and syntactic features of poetry to challenge the order, as exemplified by the following fragment.

*COMME SI*

Une insinuation      simple  
                                  au silence      enroulée avec ironie  
    ou  
    le mystère  
    précipité  
    hurlé  
  
                          dans quelque proche      tourbillon d’hilarité et d’horreur  
  
                                  voltige      autour du gouffre  
    sans le joncher  
    ni fuir  
  
    et en berce le vierge indice

*COMME SI*

101

Mallarmé pushed forward the poetic experimentalism inaugurated by Baudelaire. Baudelaire has the merit of popularising the use of prose in poetic production, opening up the way to a phase of experimentalism. Baudelaire was not the first to break with verse. It was Aloysius Bertrand that first introduced prose into poetry.<sup>102</sup> As Baudelaire himself explains, the idea of prose poetry came to him

<sup>100</sup> Shaw Lewis, p. 4.

<sup>101</sup> Stéphane Mallarmé, *Un coup de dés jamais n’abolira le hasard*, <[https://writing.upenn.edu/library/Mallarme-Stephane\\_Coup\\_1914\\_spread.pdf](https://writing.upenn.edu/library/Mallarme-Stephane_Coup_1914_spread.pdf)> [Accessed 11 July 2022], p. n/a.

<sup>102</sup> Aloysius Bertrand, *Gaspard de la Nuit*, (Paris : Livre de Poche, 2002).

from ‘quelque chose d’analogue’, namely a prose poem in *Gaspard de la Nuit*, published by Aloysius Bertrand in 1842.<sup>103</sup>

With regard to Mallarmé as literary anarchist, Gustave Lanson’s article on Mallarmé’s poetry is revelatory. Lanson was a literary critic and historian of the late nineteenth century, and the author of one of the first political studies of Mallarmé’s poetry – ‘La poésie contemporaine : M. Stéphane Mallarmé’. The study is particularly interesting for being the first to draw a parallel between Mallarmé’s poetics and the anarchist project.

S’il n’y avait, dans le cas de M. Mallarmé, qu’une fantaisie de littérateur, je n’aurais pas insisté. Ce qui donne de l’importance, une sérieuse et large valeur, c’est que son art est l’équivalent littéraire de l’anarchie.<sup>104</sup>

Mallarmé never hid his political intentions. In his diary, he even explained that he used literature to attack the established order: ‘je ne sais pas d’autre bombe, qu’un livre’<sup>105</sup> ‘Il n’y a d’autre explosion qu’un beau livre’.<sup>106</sup> For his political sensitivity, literary critic Julia Kristeva calls him ‘un anarchiste prudent’<sup>107</sup>, and Jean-Paul Sartre defines his political strategy as ‘un terrorisme de la politesse’<sup>108</sup>.

However, contrary to what one may imagine, in the light of their connections to anarchism, most Symbolists did not aim to change society entirely. Most Symbolists were not interested in challenging the status quo or denouncing the living conditions of the poorest.<sup>109</sup> Their primary goal was to address the bigotry and vulgar taste of bourgeois society by shocking it with eccentric texts.<sup>110</sup> As the many supportive articles dedicated to Ravachol testify in Symbolist magazines,<sup>111</sup> what

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<sup>103</sup> Charles Baudelaire, ‘À Arsène Houssaye’, *Gallica. Les essentiels. Littérature*, <<https://gallica.bnf.fr/essentiels/ baudelaire/ spleen-paris/arsene-houssaye>> [Accessed 12 July 2022]; Jean-Luc Steinmetz, ‘Introduction’, in Charles Baudelaire, *Spleen de Paris*, (Paris: Livre de Poche, 2003), pp. 21-23.

<sup>104</sup> Gustave Lanson, ‘La poésie Contemporaine : M. Stéphane Mallarmé (1893)’, *Lyrik Theorie*, <[http://www.lyriktheorie.uni-wuppertal.de/texte/1893\\_lanson.html](http://www.lyriktheorie.uni-wuppertal.de/texte/1893_lanson.html)> [Accessed 12th October 2018].

<sup>105</sup> Stéphane Mallarmé, *Œuvres complètes*, 2 vols (Paris: Gallimard, 2003), II, p. 660.

<sup>106</sup> Stéphane Mallarmé, in Uri Eisenzweig, *Fiction de l’anarchie*, (Paris: Christian Bourgois, 2001), p. 198.

<sup>107</sup> Julia Kristeva, *La révolution du langage poétique : L’avant-garde à la fin du XIX siècle : Lautréamont et Mallarmé* (Paris : Éditions du Seuil, 1985), p. 428.

<sup>108</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *Mallarmé : La lucidité et sa face d’ombre* (Paris: Gallimard, 1986), p. 151. Mallarmé was not the only Symbolist poet to make a connection between bombs and books. Pascal Quillard expressed a similar idea in an article, ‘L’Anarchie par la littérature’, published in *Les Entretiens politiques et littéraires* in 1892 : ‘Il faut avouer que l’explosion de quelques bombes de dynamite frappe de terreur les esprits vulgaires. Mais cet affolement de surprise dure peu, juste le temps de fournir prétexte aux représailles de la police et de la magistrature [...]. Au contraire, la puissance destructrice d’un poème ne se disperse pas d’un seul coup : elle est permanente et sa déflagration certaine et continue. (Pascal Quillard, in ‘L’Anarchie par la littérature’, in Thierry Roger, [online], (para 27 of 33).

<sup>109</sup> Symbolists usually had elitist attitudes and felt superior to both the bourgeoisie and the proletariat (Shryock, pp. 26-27); Pierre Aubery, ‘The Anarchism of the Literati of the Symbolist Period’, *French Review*, 42.1 (1968), 39-47 (p. 46).

<sup>110</sup> Shryock, p. 25.

<sup>111</sup> Ravachol was one of the most famous anarchist militants of the end of the nineteenth century. See: ‘Ravachol François Claudius Kœnigsten’ in *Encyclopédie Universalis France*, <<http://www.universalis.fr/encyclopedie/ravachol>> [Accessed 15 June 2019].

Symbolists appreciated the most in anarchism was its transgressiveness and radicality.<sup>112</sup> Symbolists were deeply fascinated by the spectacular and radical terrorist attacks carried out by anarchists from which they took inspiration to manipulate the language and aesthetic features of their poetry.<sup>113</sup>

The Symbolists' position, however, reflected the internal division of the anarchist movement, or spectrum. Scholars of anarchism usually talk about anarchism as a spectrum due to the variety of different ideological positions that can be identified within the movement.<sup>114</sup> Already in the nineteenth century, as Pietr Alekesevi Kropotkin observes, it was possible to distinguish between at least six major schools of thought within the anarchist movement: the mutualist, the collectivist, the individualist, the communist, the literary and the Christian.<sup>115</sup> Although Kropotkin's classification is accurate, it is possible to simplify the different anarchist tendencies into two main categories: individual anarchism and social or collective anarchism.<sup>116</sup> As Curran explains:

[...] individual anarchists privilege the individual within the community and favour autonomous solutions to social problems. Social anarchists instead favour communal responses to social problems. While viewing the individual as key, social anarchists believe that individual flourishing can only occur in a communitarian society.<sup>117</sup>

Individual anarchists did not and still do not aim at totally revolutionising society and so engaged in primitive and counterproductive attacks.<sup>118</sup> Social or collective anarchists, on the contrary, aim(ed) to completely overthrow the established order and set the conditions for the construction of new societies.<sup>119</sup>

This simplification proves itself to be very useful to understanding the anarchist positions of the Symbolists. Most Symbolists were more sympathetic towards what can be identified as individualist anarchism than with social or collective anarchism.<sup>120</sup>

Symbolism is not the only literary group tied with anarchism.<sup>121</sup> Another is Dadaism, a movement founded in the Cabaret Voltaire in Zürich in 1916, in response to the horror of the First

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<sup>112</sup> Shryock, p. 25.

<sup>113</sup> McGuinness, pp. 90-91.

<sup>114</sup> Ruth Kinna, *Anarchism: A Beginner's Guide* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2005) p. 14.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17 and p. 20.

<sup>116</sup> Giorel Curran, *21<sup>st</sup> Century Dissident: Anarchism, Anti-Globalization and Environmentalism* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006), p. 23.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>120</sup> McGuinness, p. 96.

<sup>121</sup> Daniela Padularosa, 'Anti-Art? Dada and Anarchy', in *Anarchism and the Avant-Garde: Radical Arts and Politics in Perspective*, ed. by Carolin Kosuch (Leiden: Brill-Rodopi, 2019), pp. 99-128.

World War, before flourishing in many other countries such as France, Germany, Spain, the USA.<sup>122</sup> The Cabaret Voltaire was an artistic club set up by Hugo Ball in collaboration with his partner Emmy Henning in 1915, and it is today considered to be the birthplace of Dadaism's.<sup>123</sup>

Amongst the most important personalities associated with Dadaism are Hugo Ball, Jan Harp, and Tristan Tzara, who would later become one of the key personalities in Dada Paris.<sup>124</sup> Dadaism was imported to Paris by Francis Picabia and Tristan Tzara, who respectively moved to the French capital in 1919 and 1920.<sup>125</sup> Though Dada Paris had a short life, it had a great impact on the aesthetico-political battles of the twentieth century. Picabia and Tzara attracted the attention of young André Breton, Paul Éluard, Georges Ribemont-Dessaignes, and Philippe Soupault, whose names are generally associated with Surrealism, the movement that Breton founded in 1924 following the split with Tzara.<sup>126</sup> These young French poets were connected to magazines like *Sic*, *Nord-Sud*, and *Littérature*, where they wrote about the irrational.<sup>127</sup> They found in the radical aesthetic-project of Dadaism the perfect means through which to express their revolt.

Dadaism presented itself as a revolutionary movement. Dadaism rejected any kind of social convention and aimed at wiping the slate clean to prepare the conditions for a new society, as suggested by Tzara's *Manifeste du Dadaïsm*, redacted in 1918: 'Que chaque homme crie : il y a un grand travail destructif, négatif à accomplir. Balayer, nettoyer. La propreté de l'individu s'affirme après l'état de folie, de folie agressive, complète, d'un monde laissé entre les mains des bandits qui déchirent et détruisent les siècles.'<sup>128</sup> In his manifesto, Tzara explains what Dadaism is, and what emerges is the idea that Dadaism is an instrument, or to use Max Ernst's image 'une bombe'<sup>129</sup>, to dismantle the established order.

Dada soulève tout  
[...]  
DÉGOÛT DADAÏSTE

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<sup>122</sup> Raihan Kadria, 'Dadaist Poker: The Body and Reformation of Form', ed. by Elza Adamowicz and Eric Robertson, *Dada and Beyond*, 2 vols (Leiden: Brill Rodopi, 2011), I, pp. 187-197, p. 187; Nick Heat, 'Dada: a short history', *libcom.org*, 25 November 2009, <<https://libcom.org/article/dada-short-history>>. [Accessed 12 July 2022]; Theresa Papanikolas, *Anarchism and the Advent of Paris Dada: Art and Criticism, 1914-1924* (London: Routledge, 2010).

<sup>123</sup> House of Switzerland, 'Emmy Ball-Hennings : une dadaïste de la première heure', <[shorturl.at/eqDLR](https://shorturl.at/eqDLR)> [Accessed 12 July 2022].

<sup>124</sup> Michel Sanouillet, *Dada à Paris*, (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2010), <<https://books.openedition.org/editions-cnrs/8798?lang=fr>> [Accessed 12 July 2022].

<sup>125</sup> Michel Brix, *Histoire de la littérature française, Voyage guidé dans les lettres du XIème au XXème*, (Louvain-la-Neuve: de Bock, 2010), p. 330; Jacques Chastenet, *Quand le bœuf montait sur le toit*, (Paris : Librairie Arthème Fayard, 1958), p.62.

<sup>126</sup> Chastenet, p. 62.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid., p. 62.

<sup>128</sup> Tristan Tzara, 'Manifeste Dada 1918', *André Breton*, <<https://www.andrebretton.fr/work/56600101000418>> [Accessed 12 July 2022].

<sup>129</sup> Max Ernst, in Henri Béhar, 'La colombe poignardée: Dada Politique', *Dada and Beyond*, I, pp. 21-36 (p. 32).



Tout produit du dégoût susceptible de devenir une négation de la famille, est dada ; protestation aux poings de tout son être en action destructive : DADA ; connaissance de tous les moyens rejetés jusqu'à présent par le sexe public du compromis commode et de la politesse : DADA ; abolition de la logique, danse des impuissants de la création : DADA ; de toute hiérarchie et équation sociale installée pour les valeurs par nos valets : DADA; chaque objet, tous les objets, les sentiments et les obscurités, les apparitions et le choc précis des lignes parallèles, sont des moyens pour le combat : DADA; abolition de la mémoire : DADA; abolition de l'archéologie : DADA; abolition des prophètes : DADA; abolition du futur : DADA; croyance absolue indiscutable dans chaque dieu produit immédiat de la spontanéité : DADA; saut élégant et sans préjudice d'une harmonie à l'autre sphère; trajectoire d'une parole jetée comme un disque sonore cri; respecter toutes les individualités dans leur folie du moment : sérieuse, craintive, timide, ardente, vigoureuse, décidée, enthousiaste; peler son église du tout accessoire inutile et lourd; cracher comme une cascade lumineuse la pensée désobligeante ou amoureuse, ou la choyer — avec la vive satisfaction que c'est tout à fait égal — avec la même intensité dans le buisson, pur d'insectes pour le sang bien né, et doré de corps d'archanges, de son âme. Liberté : DADA DADA DADA, hurlement des douleurs crispées, entrelacement des contraires et de toutes les contradictions, des grotesques, des inconséquences : LA VIE.<sup>130</sup>

As Ribemont-Dessaignes observes, the Dadaist revolt was total; Dadaism 'était contre tous les pouvoir, pour tous les libertés possibles'.<sup>131</sup> Dadaists used art as the means to develop a project against the society that caused the war, that is to say bourgeois society.<sup>132</sup> Although they did not formally join any anarchist group, they had an anarchist attitude; as Henri Béhar observes, Dadaists rejected authority, supported spontaneous revolt, and believed in the masses.<sup>133</sup> These (collectivist) anarchist tendencies were translated into art by transforming the 'political concept of anarchy into aesthetic and linguistic practices'<sup>134</sup> through the 'cultivation of the irrational'.<sup>135</sup> In the French literary field, this meant inventing new techniques that contributed to the development of the aesthetic experimentalism of the so-called 'révolution mallarméenne'<sup>136</sup> and the artistic innovations introduced by Futurism and Guillaume Apollinaire, which had appeared a couple of years before the emergence of Dadaism in France. By carrying forward the typographical work inaugurated by Mallarmé, with

<sup>130</sup> Tristan Tzara, 'Manifeste Dada 1918', [online].

<sup>131</sup> Georges Ribemont-Dessaignes, *Déjà jadis ou du mouvement dada à l'espace abstrait*, (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1958), p. 185

<sup>132</sup> Heat, [online].

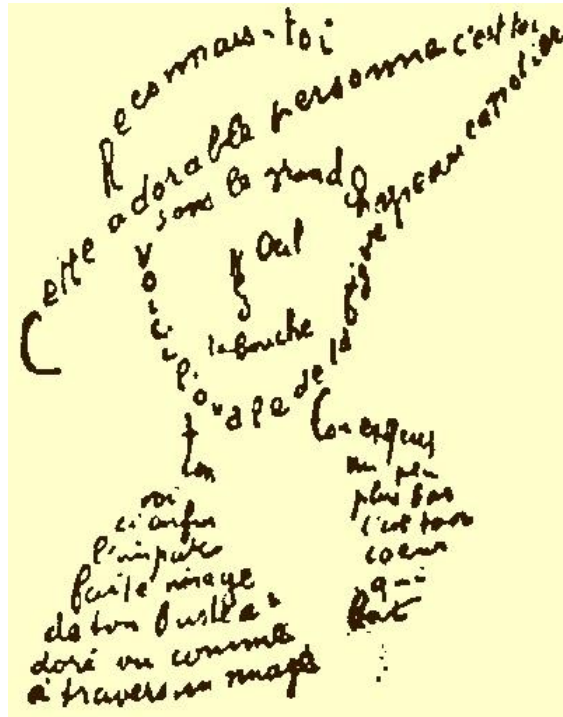
<sup>133</sup> Béhar, p. 27.

<sup>134</sup> Padularosa, p. 99.

<sup>135</sup> Papanikolas, p. 12.

<sup>136</sup> Claude Le Bigot, 'À propos de la 4ème personne du singulier. Remarques sur le statut énonciatif du sujet lyrique', *Les polyphonies poétiques : Formes et territoires de la poésie contemporaine*, ed. by Claude Le Bigot, (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2003), pp. 343-358, p. 353

*Calligrammes*, Apollinaire became famous for the invention of a new poetic genre, the *calligramme*, a type of graphic poem, in which the typographical disposition of words reproduces the shape of the objects described in the text.<sup>137</sup> Here is an example.



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In order to pursue their political battle, Dadaist poets introduced a series of techniques aimed at deconstructing meaning,<sup>139</sup> based on the idea that this could shock the reader, and from there, force them to ‘reflect anew upon new conventions and traditions and social agreement on all levels’<sup>140</sup> to change their conduct of life.<sup>141</sup>

In ‘Pour faire un poème dadaïste’, Tzara explains one of the paths a poet might follow in order to write a Dadaist poem, and from there to deconstruct meaning.

Prenez un journal  
Prenez des ciseaux  
Choisissez dans ce journal un article ayant la longueur que vous comptez  
donner à votre poème.

<sup>137</sup> Alexandra Lukes, ‘À l’écoute des Calligrammes d’Apollinaire’, *Revue d’Histoire Littéraire de La France*, 121.1 (2021), 35–46; Katherine Shingler, ‘Perceiving Text and Image in Apollinaire’s Calligrammes’, *Paragraph*, 34.1 (2011), 66–85.

<sup>138</sup> Guillaume Apollinaire, ‘Untitled’, *Alliance Française. Bangkok*, <<https://afthailande.org/fr/les-caligrammes-de-guillaume-apollinaire/#/>> [Accessed 13 July 2022].

<sup>139</sup> Marc Décimo, ‘Comment, autour de DADA, construction de la “modernité” et Description – Révolution – Révélation – Subversion de la langue s’articulèrent’, *Dada and Beyond*, pp. 51–60 (p. 53).

<sup>140</sup> Anna Katharina Schaffner, ‘Dissecting the Order of Signs: On the Textual Politics of Dada Poetics’, *Dada and Beyond*, pp. 37–50 (p. 39).

<sup>141</sup> Peter Bürger, in Papanikolas, p. 17.

Découpez l'article  
 Découpez ensuite avec soin chacun des mots qui forment cet article et mettez-le dans un sac.  
 Agitez doucement  
 Sortez ensuite chaque coupure l'une après l'autre dans l'ordre où elles ont quitté le sac.  
 Copiez consciencieusement.  
 Le poème vous ressemblera.  
 Et vous voilà "un écrivain infiniment original et d'une sensibilité charmante, encore qu'incomprise du vulgaire."<sup>142</sup>

The technique described by Tzara seems to coincide with what Byron Gysin and William Burroughs would call cut-up in the Fifties, as will be fully explained in Chapter 5. Tzara explains that poetry must be created by randomly assembling a series of textual fragments that have been cut out by the poet from a newspaper. This technique enables the poet to make connections between words and images that are semantically incompatible and to cut words from their referents, to challenge the logical faculties of readers and to suspend communication.<sup>143</sup> For Dadaists, as Ralph Renwick Jr. observes, 'Denotation, ordered thought and social usefulness were all products of the decadent bourgeoisie and had to be destroyed; the human voice must be reduced to a device producing dissonant sounds.'<sup>144</sup> Challenging the understanding of the reader and shaking meaning away from words was a way to attack the bourgeoisie, who were considered to be responsible for the war.<sup>145</sup> The technique described by Tzara also recalls a technique that was already used by Lautréamont in *Poésies* published in 1870.<sup>146</sup> *Poésies* can be considered the first example of cut-up in history.<sup>147</sup> To build some sections of the collection, Lautréamont rearranged a series of aphorisms borrowed from Pascal, Kant and La Fontaine.<sup>148</sup> However, Lautréamont did not acknowledge this, and for many years all the sentences in the book were attributed to him.

Another important technique introduced by Dadaists to deconstruct meaning was the sound poem. Dadaists are, along with the Futurists, the pioneers of sound poetry, which was developed further in France in the second half of the century with poets like Chopin and Heidsieck. With their sound poems, Dadaists deconstructed meaning even more than through the techniques described by Tzara, as perfectly exemplified by 'Karavane' and 'Ursonate' respectively by German Dadaists Ball

<sup>142</sup> Tristan Tzara, 'Pour un poème Dadaïste', in Raoul Hausmann, *Courrier Dada*, (Paris: Éditions Allia, 2004), p. 60.

<sup>143</sup> Ralph Renwick, 'Dadaism: semantic anarchy', *ETC: A Review of General Semantics*, 15(3), 201–209, (p. 209); Anna Katharina Schaffner, p. 40.

<sup>144</sup> Renwick, p. 205.

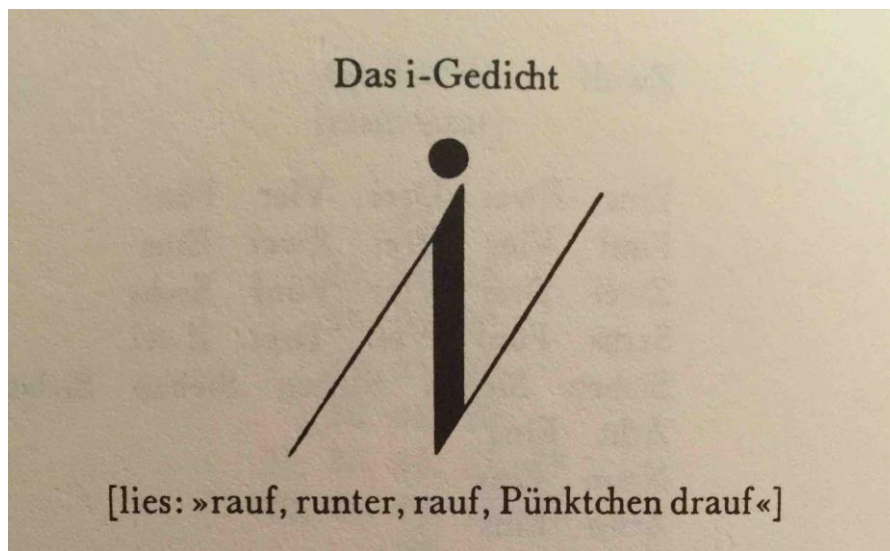
<sup>145</sup> Schaffner, p. 39; Heat, [online].

<sup>146</sup> Isidore Ducasse (Compte de Lautréamont), *Poésies*, (La Bibliothèque électronique du Québec), <<https://beq.ebooksgratuits.com/vents/Lautreamont-poesies.pdf>> [Accessed 8 July 2022].

<sup>147</sup> Roland-François Lack, *Poetics of the Pretext: Reading Lautréamont* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1998).

<sup>148</sup> John Tehranian, *Infringement Nation: Copyright 2.0 and you*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 36.

and Schwitters.<sup>149</sup> 'Karavane' is built from the juxtaposition of words and sentences from existing languages and abstract sound clusters.<sup>150</sup> 'Ursonate' is composed, as Daisy Sainsbury explains, of 'protolinguistic babbling, vocal trills, and imitation of bird song'.<sup>151</sup> In 'i-Gedicht', a sort of visual poem composed only of a letter, Schwitter deconstructed meaning even more than in the 'Ursonate'.<sup>152</sup>



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The rebellious attitude of Dadaist poets, however, was not limited to the deconstruction of language. During their performances, they also often provoked the public. For example, this is what happened during a performance of Ribemont-Dessaignes when he and seven other people read the following text to the public:

#### TO THE PUBLIC

Before going down among you to pull out your decaying teeth, your running ears,  
your tongues full of sores,  
Before breaking your putrid bones,  
Before opening your cholera – infested belly and taking out for use as fertilizer your  
too fatted liver, your ignoble spleen and your diabetic kidneys,  
Before tearing out your ugly sexual organ, incontinent and slimy,  
Before extinguishing your appetite for beauty, ecstasy, sugar, philosophy,  
mathematical and poetic metaphysical pepper and cucumbers,  
Before disinfecting you with vitriol, cleansing you and shellacking you with passion,  
Before all that,

<sup>149</sup> Martina Pfeiler, *Sound of Poetry: American Performance*, (Tübingen, Gunter Narr Verlag, 2003), p. 87.

<sup>150</sup> Schaffner, p. 42.

<sup>151</sup> Daisy Sainsbury, 'Pour une poésie mineure': linguistic experimentation in the work of Dominique Fourcade, Olivier Cadiot and Christophe Tarkos', (unpublished doctoral thesis, Oxford University, 2017), p. 29.

<sup>152</sup> Schaffner, pp. 42-43.

<sup>153</sup> Kurt Schwitters, 'Das i-Gedicht', *Kuno. Kulturnotizen zu Kunst, Musik und Poesie*, <<http://www.editiondaslabor.de/blog/2019/01/08/das-i-gedicht/>> [Accessed 13 July 2022].

We shall take a big antiseptic bath,  
And we warn you  
We are murderers.<sup>154</sup>

This performance is not only worthy of attention for the strong language used, and thus for being an example of the Dadaists' transgressiveness, but also for being an example of simultaneous poetry. Dadaists were the inventors of simultaneous poetry.<sup>155</sup> Simultaneous poetry can be described as the simultaneous reading of the same text by different people – as in the case of Ribemont-Dessaignes' performance, during which he and seven other people read the text he wrote at the same time. Another famous example of Dadaist simultaneous poetry is 'L'amiral cherche une maison à louer' by Tzara.<sup>156</sup> This text is composed of lines written in German, English, and French that were meant to be read at the same time respectively by Tzara, Richard Huelsenbeck, and Marco Janco during their performances.<sup>157</sup>

In 1922, Breton broke with Tzara;<sup>158</sup> he tried to give Dadaism a new orientation but failed and new artistic groups rose from the ashes of Dada Paris. One of these groups was the *Bureau des recherches surréalistes*, better known as the Surrealist Group, founded by Breton in 1924.<sup>159</sup> Breton, Éluard, Aragon, and Pierre Naville, four of the key personalities of early Surrealism, aimed at a 'wholesale social insurgency'.<sup>160</sup> The Surrealists' polemics against society echoed those of the Communist Party; both Surrealists and communists attacked fascist bourgeois conventions, capitalist imperialism, and a certain type of mainstream press.<sup>161</sup> Given the very similar ideology, many Surrealists joined the Communist Party.<sup>162</sup> This was the case, for example, with André Breton, Aragon, and Éluard. The relationship with the Party, however, was far from easy and was often a cause of fights between members of the movement.<sup>163</sup> Disappointed by Stalin's politics, many of the

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<sup>154</sup> Georges Ribemont-Dessaignes, 'Untitled', in *The Dada Painters and Poets: an Anthology*, ed. by Robert Motherwell, (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1981), p. 109.

<sup>155</sup> Ernst Dautel, 'Dada entre Arp et «Mertz»', *Futurisme et surréalisme*, ed by. François Livi, (Lausanne: Éditions L'Age d'homme, 2008), pp. 73-88 (p. 81).

<sup>156</sup> Mirjam Tautz, 'Dada, Mertz, poésie phonétique', *Dada Circuit Total*, (Lausanne: Éditions L'Age d'homme, 2005), pp. 472-485 (p. 475).

<sup>157</sup> Alfred Bodenheimer, 'Dada Judaism: The avant-garde in the in The First World War Zurich', in *Jewish Aspects in Avant-Garde: Between Rebellion and Revelation* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2017), pp. 23-33 (pp. 23-34 and pp. 30-31).

<sup>158</sup> Sarah Davison, *Modernist Literature*, (London : Bloomsbury, 2017), p. 63.

<sup>159</sup> Lena Baude, 'Le Paris des Surréalistes, à la recherches des hasards objectifs et du vent de l'éventuel', *Gallica. Le Blog*, <<https://gallica.bnf.fr/blog/24062021/le-paris-des-surrealistes-la-recherche-des-hasards-objectifs-et-du-vent-de-leventuel?mode=desktop>>, [Accessed 15 July 2022].

<sup>160</sup> Ara H. Merjian, 'Surrealism & Politics', *Art in America*, <<https://www.artnews.com/art-in-america/features/surrealism-global-politics-1234624356/>> [Accessed 15 July 2022].

<sup>161</sup> Ibid., [online].

<sup>162</sup> Robin S. Klaus, 'Surrealism, Communism, and the Pursuit of Revolution', *Black & Gold*, 2 (2016), <<https://openworks.wooster.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1019&context=blackandgold>> [Accessed 15 July 2022]; Robert S. Short, 'The Politics of Surrealism, 1920-36', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 1.2 (1966), 3-25; Alan Rose, *Surrealism and Communism: The Early Years*, (Berne: Peter Lang, 1991).

<sup>163</sup> S. Klaus, [online]; S. Short, pp. 3-25.

Surrealists, like Breton, abandoned the Party.<sup>164</sup> Others, on the contrary, abandoned the movement to remain in the Party. This was the case, for instance, with Aragon who labelled Surrealism ‘contre-révolutionnaire’<sup>165</sup> and became the ‘porte-parole de la cause marxiste’.<sup>166</sup> It must be noticed, however, that Breton did not abandon the political revolutionary cause; after he withdrew his membership of the Communist Party, he embraced Trotskyism.<sup>167</sup>

By working on the linguistic and aesthetic features of poetry, the Surrealists wished to start a revolution of the mind. Influenced by Freudo-Marxist thought, Surrealists conceived of their linguistic and aesthetic work as a means to free the individual’s unconscious, considered to be the reservoir of their true being, from the conditioning of capitalist society.<sup>168</sup> For Surrealists, capitalist society manipulates and controls people’s unconscious to make them behave according to its ethical code. It represses and censors people’s natural instincts and thoughts, blocking the innocent energies at their disposal.<sup>169</sup> To free the unconscious and so free the individual from the influence of society, they designed a series of literary techniques based on psychic automatism, supposedly able to reach and liberate the unconscious from society’s constraints. As André Breton wrote in the first manifesto of the movement, published in 1924, psychic automatism is a method ‘par lequel on se propose d’exprimer soit verbalement, soit par écrit, soit de toute autre manière, le fonctionnement réel de la pensée’.<sup>170</sup>

Automatic writing is one of the best-known literary techniques based on psychic automatism. Automatic writing, Martin Puchner observes, can be described as ‘a method of transcribing something that is beyond the rational reach of thought and action, an attempt to capture the latent in a pure state’.<sup>171</sup> Aragon’s *Le Paysan de Paris*, published in 1926 is considered to be one of the most famous examples of this technique.<sup>172</sup>

Another literary strategy invented by the Surrealists to free the unconscious from society’s constraints was the *cadavre exquis* described, in the *Dictionnaire Abrégé du Surréalisme* as follows: ‘Jeu de papier plié qui consiste à faire composer une phrase ou un dessin par plusieurs personnes sans

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<sup>164</sup> ‘André Breton’, *Universalis Encyclopédie*, < <https://www.universalis.fr/encyclopedie/andre-breton/3-attirance-et-dangers-du-communisme/>> [Accessed 15 July 2022]; Mariolina Bertini, Luca Giachino, Julien Lefebvre, *Échos. Littérature. Histoire. Culture. Image*, 2vols (Milano, Mondadori, 2022), II, pp. 192-193.

<sup>165</sup> Marine-Christine Jamet, Pascale Bachas & others, 2vols, *Plumes. Lettres, arts, cultures* (Novara : Deagostini, 2018), II, p. 174.

<sup>166</sup> Bertini, Giachino, J. Lefebvre, p. 199.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid., p. 193; Timothy Scott Brown, *Sixties Europe*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), pp. 82-83.

<sup>168</sup> For further information about the relationship between the avant-gardes and Freudo-Marxist thought, see: Martin Puchner, *Poetry of the Revolution: Marx, Manifestos, and the Avant-Gardes* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).

<sup>169</sup> John Marks, *Gilles Deleuze: Vitalism and Multiplicity* (London: Pluto Press, 1998), p. 91.

<sup>170</sup> André Breton, ‘Manifeste du surréalisme’, in *Manifestes du surréalisme* (Paris: Folio Gallimard, 1985), p. 36.

<sup>171</sup> Puchner, p. 190.

<sup>172</sup> Louis Aragon, *Le Paysan de Paris* (Paris: Gallimard, 1926).



qu'aucune puisse tenir compte de la collaboration ou des collaborations précédentes.<sup>173</sup> In *Petite Anthologie Poétique du Surréalisme*, Georges Hugnet provides some more details on how to write through this technique :

Vous vous asseyez à cinq autour d'une table. Chacun de vous note en se cachant des autres, sur une feuille, le substantif devant servir de sujet à une phrase. Vous passez cette feuille pliée de manière à dissimuler l'écriture à votre voisin de gauche en même temps que vous recevez de votre voisin de droite la feuille qu'il a préparé de la même manière... Vous appliquez au substantif que vous ignorez un adjectif... Vous procédez ensuite de la même manière pour le verbe, puis pour le substantif devant lui servir de complément direct, etc.<sup>174</sup>

The most famous example of the cadavre exquis that also gave it its name is: 'Le cadavre exquis boira le vin nouveau'.<sup>175</sup>

Very often, in the attempt to liberate their unconscious from the limitations of conventions and social norms, the Surrealists transcribed their dreams in their texts.<sup>176</sup> This is the case, for example, with *Claire de Terre* by Breton which begins with transcriptions of five dreams.<sup>177</sup>

During the Second World War, many Surrealists joined the Resistance. This is the case for example, of Éluard who worked as a radio programmer and for clandestine journals and who collaborated on the publication of the first poetry collections of the work of resistant poets, *L'Honneur des poètes*.<sup>178</sup>

In opposition to Surrealism, Isidor Isou, a Romanian, who moved to Paris in 1945, after the liberation of the city from the Nazis, founded his own movement: *Lettrisme*.<sup>179</sup> In *Dictature Lettriste*, the magazine that he founded in 1946, Isou expresses his scepticism about the political significance of Surrealism, and expressed the need for a new movement capable of truly engaging in a process of social transformation: '[...] la révolution politique surréaliste n'existe pas, car [...] nous ne connaissons aucune révolution véritable (d'ailleurs tous sont devenus communistes)'.<sup>180</sup> In the light of the failure of Marxism and Trotskyism, Isou believed that the Surrealists had not achieved any revolutionary goal.<sup>181</sup> Maurice Lemaître, another exponent of the movement shared the same view.<sup>182</sup>

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<sup>173</sup> Nathalia Brodaskaïa, *Le surréalisme. Génèse d'une révolution* (New York: Parkstone Press International, 2012), p. 36.

<sup>174</sup> George Hugnet, *Petite Anthologie Poétique du Surréalisme* (Paris: Jeanne Bucher, 1934), p. 151.

<sup>175</sup> 'cadavre exquis', *Dictionnaire Larousse*, <[shorturl.at/nDHT8](https://www.larousse.fr/dictionnaires/fr/francais/cadavre-exquis)> [Accessed 15 July 2022].

<sup>176</sup> Bertini, Giachino, J. Lefebvre, p. 194.

<sup>177</sup> André Breton, *Clair de terre* (Paris: Gallimard, 1985).

<sup>178</sup> Bertini, Giachino, J. Lefebvre, p. 199.

<sup>179</sup> Frédéric Acquaviva, *Isidore Isou*, (Neuchâtel: Éditions du Griffon, 2008).

<sup>180</sup> Éric Monsinjon, 'Le lettrisme un nouveau concept de groupe', *Mélusine*, 28 (2006), 59-70 (p. 62).

<sup>181</sup> Monsinjon, p. 62.

<sup>182</sup> Frédéric Acquaviva, 'Introduction au Lettrisme', *Maurice Lemaître*, <<https://www.mauricelemaitre.org/fr/introduction-au-lettrisme/>> [Accessed 15 July 2022].

Following the publication of the *Manifeste Lettriste*, it was clear that the movement was not only limited to literature, but involved all the arts, and all fields of knowledge, and it was inscribed within a precise anti-capitalist and anti-Marxist political programme.<sup>183</sup> Isou aimed at revolutionising society. In *Traité d'économie nucléaire. Le soulèvement de la jeunesse*, Isou sketches his radical project to transform society by involving the youths who, for him, remained external to the capitalist system, as they did not produce nor exchange capital.<sup>184</sup> For Isou, social transformation, as he suggests in *La Créatique ou Novatique*, should pass through the complete renovation of knowledge in all fields:

Si la philosophie, comme la science, est un domaine destiné à nous apporter la vérité, par ses méthodes de réflexion générale, alors tous les auteurs insuffisants de la philosophie, de Platon à Heidegger, en passant par Kant, Hegel ou Marx, seront balayés vers les poubelles de la mémoire, vers les archives dépourvues d'intérêt, sauf pour les amateurs de «bizarreries», de «falsifications» ou d'«erreurs» de l'évolution de la Connaissance ; de même qu'en Astronomie, par exemple, on n'étudie plus L'Almageste de Ptolémée et les volumes des auteurs de courbes décrites par les planètes du système géocentrique, car Copernic représente l'auteur fondamental à partir duquel a commencé, en réalité, la discipline du ciel, de l'univers, auteur fondamental ayant balayé vers les poubelles de la mémoire tous les prédécesseurs, spécialisés dans la branche dont il s'est occupé.

Avec La Créatique ou la Novatique, j'offre une base capitale de savoir et de pouvoir multiplicateur, qui explique le grand nombre de mes apports importants, inédits, dans tous les Arts (la poésie, la musique, la peinture, le roman, le cinéma, le théâtre, la danse, le mime, etc.), dans un grand nombre de Sciences (de la psychothérapie aux mathématiques, en passant par l'économie politique) et de Techniques, et je crois pouvoir me déterminer par cette révélation supérieure comme l'un des plus grands et même, selon certains des lecteurs de ce texte, comme le plus grand auteur de tous les temps.<sup>185</sup>

Isou started his revolution with poetry. The first step of the revolution was for Isou to upset poetry which 'was judged to be exhausted when it was conveyed by words and concepts.'<sup>186</sup> Lettrism, as Isou explains in the manifesto of the movement, aimed at the systematic destruction of words.<sup>187</sup> By doing this, Frédéric Acquaviva, Isou and the Lettrists went further than the Dadaists.<sup>188</sup> Although Schwitters's *i-Gedicht* is composed of only a single letter, for Acquaviva, Dadaism did not systematize the destruction of words as Isou.<sup>189</sup>

#### Destruction des MOTS pour les LETTRES

<sup>183</sup> Ibid, [online].

<sup>184</sup> Greil Marcus, *Lipstick Traces*, (Paris: Éditions Allia, 2000), p. 310.

<sup>185</sup> Isidore Isou, *La Créatique ou Novatique (1941-1976)* (Paris: Al Dante, 2004), front cover.

<sup>186</sup> Acquaviva, 'Introduction au Lettrisme', [online].

<sup>187</sup> Isidore Isou, *Introduction à une nouvelle poésie et à une nouvelle musique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1947), p. 16.

<sup>188</sup> Acquaviva 'Introduction au Lettrisme', [online].

<sup>189</sup> Acquaviva 'Introduction au Lettrisme', [online].



ISIDORE ISOU : Croit en l'élévation possible au-delà des MOTS ;  
 Veut l'épanouissement des transmissions sans leurs pertes ;  
 Offre un verbe égal à un choc.  
 Par la surcharge d'expansion les formes bondissent d'elles-mêmes.  
 ISIDORE Isou : Commence la destruction des mots pour les lettres.  
 ISIDORE Isou : Veut que les lettres captent entre elles toute sollicitation.  
 ISIDORE ISOU : Fait qu'on n'emploie plus les mesures aprioriques, les mots.<sup>190</sup>

By deconstructing words, Isou aimed to deconstruct meaning with the wish of provoking new sensations in the reader that could enable them to see the world differently and, from there, transform it.<sup>191</sup> In order to upset and renew poetry, Lettrists took different paths. One of these paths is represented by the use of linguistic and non-linguistic signs that are not generally used in poetry, as seen in ‘Sonnet infinitésimal’.

# Sonnet infinitésimal

9%5%^^=(0)'12;/8/5/! ,;:(1111)0  
 =&\_/9/?55? -"-"/&+&+9%5%5+=  
 12&12)0 /./'& &!'-"\_/+=)0(:)1111)0  
 ^5 %%%%, 000\_/? &+9%!'(-)0%5%5+=

-)=--=- $\frac{1}{2}$ ; \$! "%%&%%&?&?()()( $\frac{1}{2}$ )\$%&&  
 ? , . : . ? -) (-%%%" " " ) () ( $\frac{1}{2}$ )&%; \$;  
 -)^~%%& \$! \$! \$! . . . ++"+++( )\$%&&  
 & % + = +  $\frac{1}{2}$  " - / ? , ? , \$%&& $\frac{1}{2}$  - / ()&%; \$;

"&^/^&\* &+&\*>^\$'%'% ^x<<! ()x=+=;、  
(-)°(-)°;.:/ "|||||^ ,?,(?)! ?^~..  
(-)°&-()())\$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ ""\$ \$ \$ \$ \$ (\$)z=+=;.

==="^"! ||| 0 (!),!&&& ^^^ (!)?!?"^"  
 +)(+...+) ||| |||,  $\frac{1}{2} \frac{1}{2} \frac{1}{2} \frac{1}{2}$ , / % % % % % % % % % %  
 ~. |||^00 ^A: ||| / / / / / ||| 000? - / % % % % % % % % % %

Dicton:  $\frac{1}{2} " \delta = +5\% / 27.99991 \rightarrow (-) = +$   
Aphorisme:  $"(-) \delta / 8.7672 \times 5 :: \Rightarrow \text{mm}$

In the sonnet, Isou used mathematical notations as if they were letters to challenge the expectations of the reader in the hope of making them perceive poetry differently than how they were used to, and thus to operate on their way of seeing and thinking.

<sup>190</sup> Isou, *Introduction à une nouvelle poésie et à une nouvelle musique*, p. 15.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid., p. 15 ; Acquaviva, 'Introduction au lettrisme', [online].

<sup>192</sup> Isidore Isou, 'Sonnet Infinitésimal', in Jean Weisgerber, *Les avant-gardes littéraires au XXème siècle*, 2 vols (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1984), II, p. 902.

However, the Lettrists not only engaged politically through poetry and culture, but also through more traditional routes. Both Lemaître and Isou, the two most important personalities of the movement, presented their candidature for the French legislature respectively in 1967 and 1993.<sup>193</sup>

After a split with Isou, Guy Debord and Gil Wolman, two personalities of Lettrism, founded a new movement in 1952, the Lettrisme International, which later became in 1957, the Situationiste International.<sup>194</sup> Although Paris, Amsterdam and Copenhagen could be considered as the capitals of the movement, Situationism was also present in Italy, Germany, and the United Kingdom.<sup>195</sup> Contrary to several other Lettrists, Debord and Wolman were devoted to Marx and the Marxist critique of capitalism.<sup>196</sup> Debord and Wolman criticised the role of the media in particular, which they considered to be responsible for the alienation and the consumeristic attitudes of capitalist society.<sup>197</sup> For Debord, post-war capitalist society, transformed life into a ‘conglomeration of hollow “spectacles” that promised, but never achieved, the fulfillment of desire.’<sup>198</sup>

Although, as Bertrand Cochard observes, there is no Situationist poetry in the traditional sense, as there is for instance a Surrealist poetry,<sup>199</sup> this thesis discusses the Situationist movement, in relation to the impact that the *détournement* had in anti-capitalist struggles. The *détournement* is a technique based on semantic hijacking.

In ‘Le détournement comme négation et comme prélude’, an article published in the third issue of the Situationist magazine *Internationale Situationniste*, *détournement* is defined as ‘Le réemploi dans une nouvelle unité d’éléments artistiques préexistants [...]. Les deux lois fondamentales du détournement sont la perte d’importance – allant jusqu’à la déperdition de son sens premier – de chaque élément autonome détourné ; et en même temps, l’organisation d’un autre ensemble signifiant, qui confère à chaque élément sa nouvelle portée’.<sup>200</sup> The *détournement* enables artists and militants to manipulate the meaning of expression, image, or even a whole movie in order to make it convey a different meaning from its original one. This can be done simply by decontextualizing an expression, idea, or image, or by adding something to them. This technique has been largely adopted by anti-capitalist groups, even after the dissipation of the Situationist movement, to attack and mock capitalist

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<sup>193</sup> Acquaviva, ‘Introduction au lettrisme’, [online].

<sup>194</sup> Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells. Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (London: Verso Books, 2012), p. 81; Elliot H. King, ‘Surrealism and Counterculture’, in David Hopkins, *A Companion to Dada and Surrealism* (Malden: Wiley & Sons, 2016), pp. 416-430 (p. 425).

<sup>195</sup> Bishop, p. 81.

<sup>196</sup> King, p. 425.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid., p. 425.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid., p.425.

<sup>199</sup> Bertrand Cochard, ‘La poétisation de l’existence. Sur l’usage du terme « poésie » dans l’œuvre de Guy Debord’, *Fabula-LhT*, 18 (2017), <<http://www.fabula.org/lht/18/cochard.html>> [Accessed 17 July 2022].

<sup>200</sup> ‘Le détournement comme négation et comme prélude’, *Internationale Situationniste*, 3 (1959), p. 10.

ideology. Situationists used the *détournement* especially in their cinematographic productions.<sup>201</sup> The *détournement* of *Naissance d'une nation* by Griffith is a classic example of the technique. Debord and Wolman hijacked the meaning of *Naissance d'une Nation*, which they considered to be a racist movie by adding a 'bande sonore' to it; as they explain:

*Naissance d'une Nation*, de Griffith, est un des films les plus importants de l'histoire du cinéma par la masse des apports nouveaux qu'il représente. D'autre part, c'est un film raciste : il ne mérite donc absolument pas d'être projeté sous sa forme actuelle. [...]. Il vaut bien mieux le détourner dans son ensemble, sans même qu'il soit besoin de toucher au montage, à l'aide d'une bande sonore qui en ferait une puissante dénonciation des horreurs de la guerre impérialiste et des activités du Ku-Klux-Klan qui, comme on le sait, se poursuivent à l'heure actuelle aux États-Unis.<sup>202</sup>

Another artistic group motivated by politics worthy of attention is that connected to *Tel Quel*, a literary magazine founded in 1960 by a group of young writers, amongst whom was Philippe Sollers.<sup>203</sup> Although at the beginning it did not have any political project, from 1967, the magazine attached their literary concerns to the leftist causes of the time, and it started to develop a reflection on the role of the writer, or more generally of the intellectual, in the political discourse.<sup>204</sup> As François Hourmant writes in this regard:

Le seul engagement pris par *Tel Quel* réside dans son refus de l'engagement. Pourtant, en 1967, un virage est amorcé au sein de l'équipe rédactionnelle. À partir de cette date, et jusqu'en 1978, la revue va parcourir l'essentiel du spectre idéologique. Du Parti communiste français à la Chine, de l'Amérique à la dissidence et au CIEL, la parabole telquelienne, riche de revirements, dévoile une propension à répercuter, avec un certain retard néanmoins, les problématiques qui s'inscrivent à l'horizon du paysage politico-intellectuel français. Cette succession de choix soulève en fait une interrogation majeure, celle de l'insertion des intellectuels dans le débat politique. En se définissant comme revue d'avant-garde, les membres de *Tel Quel* justifient leurs choix politiques au nom d'un principe postulant le lien indissoluble entre révolution politique et révolution poétique. Ils livrent la référence idéale qu'ils privilégient lorsqu'ils s'engagent, celle d'un principe esthétique, mêlant désir

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<sup>201</sup> François Bovier, 'Doublage et détournement', *Décadrages*, 23 - 24 (2013), <<https://journals.openedition.org/decadrages/707?lang=en>> [Accessed 25 July 2022].

<sup>202</sup> Guy-Ernest Debord, Gil J. Wolman, 'Mode d'emploi du détournement', in Guy Debord, *Œuvres* (Paris, Gallimard, 2006), pp. 221-229, p. 225.

<sup>203</sup> Danielle Marx-Scouras, *The Cultural Politics of Tel Quel: Literature and the Left in the wake of Engagement*, (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996); Pinto Louis, 'Tel Quel', *Le champ littéraire*, 89 (1991), <[https://www.persee.fr/docAsPDF/arss\\_0335-5322\\_1991\\_num\\_89\\_1\\_2988.pdf](https://www.persee.fr/docAsPDF/arss_0335-5322_1991_num_89_1_2988.pdf)> [Accessed 21 July 2022], 66-77 (p. n/a).

<sup>204</sup> Joan Brandt, 'Julia Kristeva and the revolutionary Politics of Tel Quel', *Revolt, Affect, Collectivity: The Unstable Boundaries of Kristeva's Polis*, ed. by Tina Chanter, Ewa Plonowska Ziarek, (Albany, New York State University Press, 2005), pp. 21-37 (p. 22); Hourmant François, 'Tel quel et ses volte-face politiques (1968-1978)', *Vingtième Siècle*, 51 (1996), 112-128 (pp. 112-115).

de subversion des normes littéraires et politiques, part de jeu et de provocation plus ou moins calculée.<sup>205</sup>

For the authors associated with *Tel Quel*, literary production, literary research and political reflection were indissolubly connected, based on the idea that 'l'écriture, le texte ne sont ni simplement idéologiques ni simplement formels. Ils ne sont pas réductibles à telle ou telle « émanation » subjective (« psychologie de la création » etc.). Leur fonction est de faire apparaître la matérialité des enjeux symboliques d'une phase historique donnée et, notamment, la scène des conflits philosophiques et politiques, selon un mode spécifique, relativement autonome, indirect.'<sup>206</sup> Beyond the editorial line of the magazine, and the same Structuralist and Marxist frame, however, the authors related to *Tel Quel* developed their literary projects more freely than if they were part of an -ism.

Another important magazine for its aesthetico-political impact is *Dock(s)*, founded by Julien Blaine in 1976, who edited it until 1990 when the direction passed to Akenaton.<sup>207</sup> The originality of Blaine's magazine lies in its international nature – the magazine presented texts by poets from all over the world – and in it being a platform of reflection about the political situation around the world.<sup>208</sup> The authors associated with the magazine all shared the desire to resist the injustices and oppression of the system through art.<sup>209</sup> *Dock(s)* promoted a vision of the work of art as inseparable from political activism.<sup>210</sup>

The project of transforming poetry by taking it beyond the book format is reminiscent of the work of other poets such as Bernard Heidsieck, who, like Blaine, proposed a series of manifestos, published between 1960 and 1980, expressing his desire to transform the format of poetry.<sup>211</sup> Bernard Heidsieck is surely connected to sound poetry. By further developing the Futurist and Dadaist sound

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<sup>205</sup> Hourmant, p. 113; As the following extract from *Tel Quel*, n° 36 and 47, witnesses, the political orientation at the basis of the magazine was not hidden : 'Nous avons indiqué ce qu'allaient être les efforts acharnés de la petite bourgeoisie social-démocrate pour s'assurer, à l'intérieur de la domination économique des monopoles, la possession du savoir, du discours, de l'enseignement. Il faut s'attendre, sur ce plan, à une attaque massive visant à produire une véritable hégémonie idéologique, un brouillage pseudo-révolutionnaire dont seule la classe ouvrière fera bien entendu, en définitive, les frais. Mais qu'est-ce que la petite bourgeoisie, sinon ce rêve médiocre d'un fonctionnariat verbal ? cette demi-conscience subjective d'un demi-savoir ? Qu'est-ce que la petite-bourgeoisie sinon ce qui *parle* de révolution afin de *faire* des réformes ? ce qui *parle* de liberté ou de vérité afin d'*assurer* sa domination de classe qui consiste à proposer ses services pour devenir l'agent de change de la bourgeoisie ? (Philippe Sollers, in Louis Pinto, 'Tel Quel', *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, 89(1991), p. n/a.); 'SANS BLAGUE ? À bas la bourgeoisie corrompue ! À bas le révisionnisme pourri ! À bas leur binarisme de super-puissances ! Vive *De la Chine* ! Vive la Chine révolutionnaire ! Vive la pensée-maotsétoung ! Mouvement de Juin 71, contre l'opportunisme, le dogmatisme, l'empirisme, le révisionnisme ; pour la pensée-maotsétoung.' (Philippe Sollers, in Louis Pinto, 'Tel Quel', p. n/a).

<sup>206</sup> 'Tel Quel. Thèses générales', in Louis Pinto, p. n/a.

<sup>207</sup> 'Docks', *Printemps des poètes*, <<https://www.printempsdespoetes.com/Docks>> [Accessed 11 July 2022].

<sup>208</sup> Ibid., [online].

<sup>209</sup> 'Doc(k)s – Morceaux choisis – 1976 1989', *Al Dante*, <<https://www.lespressesdureel.com/ouvrage.php?id=6175>> [Accessed 11 July 2022].

<sup>210</sup> Gaëlle Théval, 'Manifestes en performance : de quelques manifestes de poésie expérimentale', *Itinéraires*, 1(2018), <<https://journals.openedition.org/itinerares/4399?lang=en>> [Accessed 11 July 2022].

<sup>211</sup> Ibid., [online].

poetry experiments, and the acoustic experiments of Lettrist artist Dufrêne<sup>212</sup>, Heidsieck is amongst the most important artists who conceptualised and experimented with sound poetry alongside electronic media in the second half of the twentieth century, highlighting the need for poetry to explore new potentialities and to abandon the book format.

Julien Blaine is also important because he rejected the idea of movement as conceived by the avant-gardes, as he explains: ‘j’étais en rejet total du Lettrisme, qui se construisait en décalque parfait des vieux mouvements comme le surréalisme, avec un maître, des lieutenants, des luttes de pouvoir, internes, stériles...’.<sup>213</sup> The refusal to recognise themselves as part of a group or a movement has been inherited by deconstructionist poets, and in particular by the authors selected for this study, who position themselves in the lineage of the avant-gardist tendencies that have been presented here to give an idea of how literary and political battles have been conducted in the last one hundred years. The idea that emerges from Wourm’s interviews in *Poètes Français du 21ème siècle : Entretiens* is that deconstructionist poets consider themselves to be part of a nebula more than of a real group or movement.<sup>214</sup> Beyond a common aversion towards capitalist society and a desire to combat it through poetry, deconstructionist poets do not share any common project. Each develops their poetico-political project in a personal way. In this regard the answer of Éric Sadin, one of the key personalities in the contemporary panorama, to Wourm’s question about the deconstructionist poets and the presence of a movement is exemplary:

N.W. Pensez-vous qu’il y ait un mouvement littéraire en France, actuellement, dont vous feriez partie ? Sinon, des écritures qui se rejoignent ?

É.S. Je ne pense pas qu’il y ait un mouvement. Je pense qu’il y a des points de convergence mais pas une dimension de groupe. [...] Dans le fourmillement littéraire français contemporain, quelques figures semblent manifester certaines exigences et refus communs. Je pense que c’est plutôt sur une base minimale que les choses doivent être considérées. C’est comme cela que je perçois cette sorte de nébuleuse. Ces exigences sont fondées sur certains principes qui seraient la prise en compte de l’historisation des pratiques, le fait de soumettre le régime littéraire et la langue à des logiques rigoureuses et attentives aux enjeux d’une époque.<sup>215</sup>

Espitallier expresses a similar idea when he answered the same question:

N.W. Pensez-vous qu’il y ait un mouvement littéraire en France actuellement dont vous faites partie ? Sinon, des écritures qui se rejoignent ?

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<sup>212</sup> In 1953, Dufrêne recorded, a series of automatic sounds produced with the throat and breath that he then published under the name of *Les Crirythmes ultra-lettristes* (‘François Dufrêne’, *Dictionnaire Larousse*, <<https://t.ly/gwa5>> [Accessed 13 July 2022]).

<sup>213</sup> Julien Blaine, in Gaëlle Théval, ‘Manifestes en performance : de quelques manifestes de poésie expérimentale’, [online] (para 29 of 48).

<sup>214</sup> Wourm, *Poètes français du 21ème siècle*, p. 2.

<sup>215</sup> Éric Sadin, in Wourm, *Poètes français du 21ème siècle*, p. 49.

J-ME. Il n'y a pas de mouvement constitué. Les mouvements constitués type avant-garde se présentent souvent avec des manifestes, des textes théoriques un peu généraux [...]. Mais je pense, effectivement, qu'on appartient à une sorte de rapport à l'écriture qui voudrait éviter le lyrisme [...] même si mon écriture est très différente de l'écriture d'Olivier Cadiot, d'Anne-James Chaton, de Christophe Fiat, de Nathalie Quintane, de Vannina Maestri, nous avons à peu près les mêmes repères, les mêmes repérages, et peut-être les mêmes généalogies. Je pense qu'on a tous lu Deleuze. Et on a tous lu Deleuze, peut-être, comme la génération avant nous avait lu Heidegger. Donc, je pense, effectivement, que nous avons tous à peu près les mêmes marquages de territoire, et à la fois de déterritorialisation, pour reprendre le terme fameux. Nous sommes tous dans une impureté de la poésie, une impureté générique. [...].<sup>216</sup>

As Espitallier explains, deconstructionist poets share the same influences; Deleuze, but also Guattari, or more generally post-structuralist and deconstructionist poetry, and the same tendency to, to use the Deleuzo-Guattarian term that Espitallier used during his interview, deterritorialise poetry.<sup>217</sup> The act of deterritorialisation of poetry about which Espitallier talks must here be interpreted as an act of deconstruction and redefinition of poetry. For Deleuze and Guattari, deterritorialisation is a mental act that frees the things that exist in society from their identities, roles and positions in order to create the conditions for their re-inscription.<sup>218</sup> As explained in the introduction, deconstructionist poets are post-poet, post-lyric, and explore ever new ways of conceiving poetry with an endless work of aesthetic experimentalism on the model of their predecessors. However, the differences between them and their predecessors are numerous.

First, differently from the avant-gardists, deconstructionist poets do not usually have a manifesto. The publication of manifestos characterised the literary field from the beginning of the nineteenth century on. Even authors like Blaine who rejected the idea of group, still published several manifestos to frame his aesthetico-political goals. This enables them to freely experiment without worrying about the formalization of their texts. This does not mean that deconstructionist poets do not theorise or conceptualise their work – as the numerous interviews where they talk about their production, like those published by Wourm, or essays, like those by Game, Hanna, and Menoud, analysed in Chapter 5, about the aesthetico-political significance of poetry testify – but they do not use the manifesto as a means for their theories or conceptualisations. As Gleize observes: 'l'époque des manifestes est close' and 'la posture manifestaire est devenue anachronique'.<sup>219</sup>

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<sup>216</sup> Jean-Michel Espitallier, in *Poètes français du 21<sup>ème</sup> siècle*, p. 54.

<sup>217</sup> Ibid., p. 54.

<sup>218</sup> Parr, 'Deterritorialisation/Reterritorialisation', pp. 60-72.

<sup>219</sup> Jean Marie Gleize, 'Manifestes, préfaces : sur quelques aspects du prescriptif', *Littérature*, 39 (1980), 12-16 (p. 13).

Second, the political battles led by the deconstructionist poets are different from that of their predecessors, and this is because they also live in a different socio-political context. The Symbolists lived during the Third Republic, and aimed to attack the vulgar taste and utilitarian values of the capitalist bourgeoisie of the time. Dadaism, though influenced by anarchism like the Symbolists, arose as a reaction to the First World War. Surrealists criticised the bourgeois values of capitalism and attacked any form of fascism within a Marxist frame. Many surrealists, as explained, even joined the communist party, and openly took position in political discussion. Surrealists lived in a very particular historical moment that saw the outbreak of the Second World War. Lettrism developed in the post-war period and aimed at revolutionising society by proposing a renewal of all the arts and of all the fields of knowledge. Lettrists were against both the capitalist and Marxist ideologies. The Situationists were inspired by Marx and questioned the alienation caused by the consumerist tendencies of post-war capitalism and the role of the mainstream media of the time. The poets associated with *Tel Quel* all shared the same leftist tendencies and openly supported communism and the communist causes of the Sixties and Seventies. With Blaine and the authors associated with *Dock(s)*, it is hard to trace clear lines, but they all shared an aversion to the alienation and oppression caused by capitalism and the will to revolutionise society. As will emerge from the analysis of Sivan, Maestri, and Espitallier, and the selected texts taken from *Java*, by Boissard, Courtoux, Bertin, Fiat, and Game, twenty-first century deconstructionist poets do not adhere to any party nor aim to completely overthrow the established order. Rather, they criticise capitalist society and its hierarchical vision of the world and build their poetry collections as *livres-rhizomes* by following the logic of multiplicity, connection, and heterogeneity with a view to interfering with the transmission the logic of binary oppositions and hierarchical relations at the basis of the capitalist vision of the world. To do so deconstructionist poets adopted and adapted many of the strategies introduced by the avant-gardes to their needs. This led them to achieve very different aesthetic results. Although deconstructionist poets are indebted to their predecessors, the fact that they adapted their strategies to their own needs and aesthetico-political projects invests them with new meaning and functioning, producing very aesthetically different texts. It is also important to notice that deconstructionist poets often use, within a single book, more than one technique introduced by the poets that came before them, creating a sort of *pastiche*. In order to understand the linguistic and aesthetic significance of deconstructionist poets, it is necessary to compare and contrast their aesthetic-political project with that of the avant-gardes.

From Mallarmé, deconstructionist poets inherited typographical experimentalism. Deconstructionist poems usually have an innovative typographical disposition which is surely indebted to Mallarmé, who has the merit of being amongst the first poets in the history of French

literature to play with the formal characteristics of poetry. However, deconstructionist poets do not flirt with anarchist groups as numerous Symbolists did, nor do they aim to shock the taste of the bourgeoisie, and they also completely abandon the Symbolist idea of poetry as an instrument that would enable them to disclose the ‘sens secret du monde’<sup>220</sup>. Symbolists inherited from Romantic poets ‘la conviction absolue que dans la parole poétique pouvait se dire et conjuguer l’intériorité la plus profonde du Moi et la totalité la plus lointaine de l’univers.’<sup>221</sup>

On the model of Dadaist poets, deconstructionist poets deconstruct meaning by working on language. Like the Dadaists, deconstructionist poets share the idea that by manipulating language, it is possible to create some cognitive effects in the reader and from there to affect the functioning of society. However, there are substantial differences between the techniques used by Dadaists and those used by contemporary poets. Although, as will be shown in the next chapters, all deconstructionist poets use the cut-up, a technique that can recall Tzara’s and Dadaist poems, there are some differences in how they conceive this. If the Dadaist cut-up poem is constructed from the aleatory recombination of a series of fragments of texts cut out from newspapers, the deconstructionists assemble a series of fragments taken from a variety of different sources. This is the case for example of Sivan’s *Le Bazar de l’hôtel de ville*, where the fragments that compose the work have been extracted from a variety of different sources such as philosophy books, catalogues, leaflets, and packages of items.

Dadaists often used different languages to compose their poems, as in the case of Tzara’s sound poem ‘L’amiral cherche une maison à louer’, and composed by mixing French, German, and English; likewise, deconstructionists often mix up different languages in their texts. Almost all the texts selected for this study employ foreign words and expressions.

If deconstructionist poets often do performances, something which once again reminds us of Dadaism, their shows are not as transgressive as that of the Dadaists. Deconstructionist poets do not share the same desire to shock the public as their predecessors.

Similar to the Surrealists, deconstructionist poets conceive their aesthetico-political project as a revolution of the mind. However, the way they conceive this revolution is very different. For the Surrealists, this revolution had to start with the liberation of the unconscious, considered to be the reservoir of the individual’s true being, from the constraints of capitalist society. For deconstructionists, this revolution starts in the mind, because by working on language, they interfere with the transmission of its norms and conventions and circulate a rhizomatic logic that can show readers the world from new perspectives. In addition to that, deconstructionist poets do not adhere to

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<sup>220</sup> Philippe Forest, *Le symbolisme ou naissance de la poésie moderne* (Paris: Pierre Bordas et fils, 1989), p. 18.

<sup>221</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.



any political project or party in a traditional sense, nor do they believe they can completely revolutionise society. The goal of deconstructionist poets is only to create some cognitive effects in readers, though these can potentially affect society as a whole, as readers are part of society, and society's existence relies on an unconscious collective agreement.

This last point also distances deconstructionist poets from the Lettrists. Key personalities of this movement, like Isou and Lemaître, aimed at completely overthrowing the established order, and even put themselves forward for the presidency of the French Republic. However, deconstructionist poets inherited from Lettrists the use of signs belonging to different semiotic regimes for the construction of their texts. As will be explained in Chapter 4, this is perfectly exemplified by Espitallier's poem 'Théorème d'Espitallier' where the poet uses numbers and numerical signs to write his text.

Deconstructionist poets criticise and/ or warn of the effects of alienation. This clearly recalls the Situationists. One of the most important Situationist texts is *La société du spectacle* by Debord which denounces the commodification of life in capitalist society and its alienating effects. As will be seen in the next chapters, almost all the texts selected for this study deal with these themes. In addition, deconstructionist poets make a very similar use of the Situationist *détournement*.<sup>222</sup> Situationists used the *détournement* to turn 'expressions of the capitalist system and its media against itself'.<sup>223</sup> This, for example, is what happens with some of the fragments of which Maestri's texts are composed, which have been taken from leaflets and adverts, but they are used in a way that enables her to attack capitalist society rather than to promote its consumeristic tendencies. However, there is a big difference between deconstructionist poets and the Situationists. As explained above, the Situationists did not generally produce poetry. Deconstructionist poets, on the contrary, mainly produce poetry, even if their conception of poetry is that of an innovative and hybrid text bridging different genres, and they conceive themselves as poets in all regards. On the wave of the authors connected to *Tel Quel* and *Dock(s)*, deconstructionist poets refuse the idea of group or movement, but they differentiate themselves from them through the idea that they usually do not write manifestos to formalise their political and aesthetic projects and are also generally less didactic in their theorisation of poetry and political ideas.

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<sup>222</sup> The technique was firstly introduced by Lettrists, but it became popular only with Situationists.

<sup>223</sup> Thomas C. Holt, in Brian Schrank, *Avant-Gardes Videogames: Playing with Technoculture*, (Cambridge: Mit Press, 2014), p. 121.

It is clear therefore, that although deconstructionist poets use avant-gardist techniques to elaborate their projects and even share similar political objectives, they also maintain a distance from them, employing the techniques introduced by their predecessors in a different way.

## Summary

This chapter presented the ideas about society and rhizomatic poetry that underpin this thesis to provide the information necessary to understand the discourse that will be developed in the following chapters.

The chapter is divided into two main sections. The first section explained the conception of society as a human product that underlies this thesis and traced the history of capitalist society. In this thesis the expression ‘capitalist society’ is used to refer to the western countries, where the capitalist ideology began to delineate itself from the fifteenth century onward, even if it is possible to talk about capitalism and capitalist society only from the nineteenth century, with the Industrial Revolution. The Industrial Revolution represented a turning point in history. The Industrial Revolution did not only transform the way of producing, commercialising, and the role of market but it also transformed the life of millions of people around the world. Capitalist ideology is based on the ethics of work, competition, and the production and accumulation of capital. Although capitalism is a socio-cultural and political Western phenomenon, from the end of the Eighties, capitalist ideology started to spread to non-Western countries, which until then were only financially implicated in the capitalist system, not culturally.

According to Deleuze and Guattari, Western societies, including capitalist society, have traditionally been organised by the application of the arborescent model of thinking, based on the logic of binary oppositions and hierarchical relations. Deleuze and Guattari consider this logic to be the cause of social oppression and inequalities, and propose the rhizome, an alternative model of thinking based on the logic of connection, multiplicity, and heterogeneity. For them this logic can challenge the vision of the world based on the arborescent mode of thinking and free human conditions from the oppression and inequalities that it causes. Directly or indirectly influenced by Deleuze and Guattari, a group of contemporary poets – Jacques Sivan, Vannina Maestri, and Jean-Michel Espitallier – construct their texts as *livres-rhizome*. The idea of the *livre-rhizome* was first elaborated by Deleuze and Guattari in 1976 in *Le Rhizome*. In the booklet that later became the

introduction to *Mille Plateaux*, the two philosophers describe the rhizome book as a book with an underlying rhizomatic logic and which therefore has the potential to challenge the arborescent model of thinking which has traditionally characterised Western societies and is today at the basis of the capitalist system.

In order to build their texts as rhizomatic books, deconstructionist poets, and in particular the authors selected for this study, adopt the techniques introduced by avant-gardists since Mallarmé. I have therefore shown how contemporary poets are, in fact, indebted to their predecessors, although they adapt avant-gardist techniques to their own projects.

# Chapter 2

## Jacques Sivan and the *logosonoscope*. The creation of new worlds

### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter investigates a first example of how rhizomatic poetry can fight capitalism with a focus on Sivan's *logosonoscopes*. As briefly explained in the 'Delimitation of the subject', Sivan coined the term *logosonoscope* to refer to and describe the revolutionary character of his texts. This chapter is divided into two main sections. The first analyses Sivan's conceptualisation of the *logosonoscope* to delineate his poetics and political programme. The second presents the different strategies he adopts to construct his texts as potential starting points for new worlds.

Sivan's production positions itself within a lively debate on the creation of the world and life, which has marked the history of a significant branch of philosophy since ancient times. Within this context, Sivan's poetry positions itself against an idea first held by Christian thinkers, and then exploited by capitalism's supporters, that the world is both the best of all possible worlds and something that does not depend on human beings. To better frame Sivan's position and to understand the power of his poetry, it is necessary to give a quick overview of the philosophical views that have characterised the debate on the creation of the world until today, starting with Leibniz, one of the Western philosophers who has made the most significant contribution to the development of this debate in modern times.

Inspired by Christian teachings, Leibniz writes in the *Theodicy* that the world human beings live in is the best of all possible worlds ('[...] God has chosen the best of all possible worlds'<sup>1</sup>). According to him, the world is a creation of God, who generates it by following a strict process of production (*T*, pp. 189-190). First, God selects and combines in infinite possible ways what the philosopher calls 'monads', defined as the foundational substances that constitute the world (*T*, p. 67

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<sup>1</sup> Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Theodicy: Essay on the Goodness of God, the Freedom of Man and the Origin of Evil* (Peru: Open Court Publishing Company, 1985), p. 228.

and p. 360). Then, after taking into careful consideration all the possible combinations, he identifies the best one and actualises it in what individuals know as their world, their reality (*T*, pp. 189-190). The criteria by which God chooses to actualise one world rather than another, Leibniz explains, are based on the principle of perfection (*T*, p. 332). For Leibniz, ‘perfection’ is not the absence of evil, as is usually claimed by Christian philosophers, but rather a state where good and evil are wisely balanced.<sup>2</sup> This is because, for Leibniz, evil is indispensable for human beings to lead a good life.<sup>3</sup> As he writes: ‘[...] evil has been permitted as a *conditio sine qua non* of good’ (*T*, p. 71), ‘a little evil renders the good more discernible [...]’ (*T*, p. 130).

Before giving consistency to a world, Leibniz argues, God examines all the consequences resulting from the different balances of good and evil in all possible worlds.<sup>4</sup> This precaution enables God to choose the world in which these two forces are in best balance and to actualise the best possible one.<sup>5</sup>

Such a conviction, as Voltaire observes, inevitably generates a fatalistic vision of the world and life.<sup>6</sup> The idea that this is the best possible world and that God creates it suggests that people should both suffer in silence and passively accept the difficulties of life. If this world was truly created by God and is the best possible one, not only would there be no reason to try to change it, but any attempt to do so would be pointless as human beings would not have a say on how it should be.

Although this belief has been sharply criticised throughout history, it has been successfully adopted and adapted by capitalist culture.<sup>7</sup> As observed by numerous thinkers, including Max Weber, capitalism has absorbed both Christian thought and lifestyle. By replacing God with capital, churches with banks, and churchmen with both the figure of the capitalist and of the bureaucrat, whose role is to ensure the smooth functioning and survival of the dominant order, capitalism has established itself as an actual religion.<sup>8</sup>

Unlike clergy who spread the belief that this is the best of all possible worlds based on their assumptions about the greatness of God, capitalists do so by relying on the alleged power of capital.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Charlie Dunbar Broad, *Leibniz: An Introduction*, ed. by Casimir Lewy, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), p. 161.

<sup>3</sup> Martin Lin, ‘Leibniz’s Philosophical Theology’, in *The Bloomsbury Companion to Leibniz*, ed. by Brandon C. Look, (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2011), pp. 192-207 (p. 205).

<sup>4</sup> Dunbar Broad, *Leibniz*, p. 161.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.

<sup>6</sup> Voltaire, *Correspondances*, 16 vols, (Paris, Gallimard, 1993), XIII, p. 534-535 and p. 1993.

<sup>7</sup> Voltaire is one of the first philosophers to criticise this theory. In *Candide, ou l’Optimisme*, published in 1759, Voltaire challenges the Leibnizian idea of the contingent world as the best of all possible worlds. Through the adventure of its main character, Candide, *Candide, ou l’Optimisme* shows that people can always conceive and actualise a better world.

<sup>8</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *Creazione e anarchia: L’opera nell’età della religione capitalista* (Vicenza: Neri Pozzi Editore, 2017), pp. 119-124.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 119-124.

Although the conviction that God created our world has profoundly marked the tradition of Western thought, throughout history people have been able to think and want a different world for themselves, as numerous socio-political transformations testify. However, with the abandonment of the 1968 revolutions and the violent escalation of capitalism at the end of the 1970s, Margaret Thatcher's famous slogan, 'There is no alternative', founded on the back of the Christian philosophical tradition, has become a perpetual mantra resonating in people's minds.<sup>10</sup> As a result of Westernisation, capitalism has started to export this mantra to non-Western countries, traditionally ideologically distant from the idea at its centre, closing off any easy exit route. Due to the expansion of the capitalist ideology worldwide, it is more and more difficult to imagine an alternative socio-political order. Human beings are so imbued with the idea that the capitalist world is the only possible world, they are no longer able to see that it is neither the best nor the only possible world.<sup>11</sup> As Fisher suggests in *Capitalist Realism*, today, it is easier to imagine the end of the world than a different socio-political organisation:

[...] we are inevitably reminded of the phrase attributed to Fredric Jameson and Slavoj Žižek, that it is easier to imagine the end of the world than it is to imagine the end of capitalism. That slogan captures precisely what I mean by 'capitalist realism': the widespread sense that not only is capitalism the only viable political and economic system, but also that it is now impossible even to *imagine* a coherent alternative to it.<sup>12</sup>

As Deleuze notes, capitalism has transformed people from active agents of the world into its passive spectators.<sup>13</sup> People observe the world and the flow of their lives as if they are watching a bad movie:

En revanche, je montre le monde qui fait du cinéma. Nous n'avons plus de raisons de croire au monde parce que c'est le monde qui fait du cinéma. Il fait que ça. Cinéma des hommes politiques, cinéma de la télé, cinéma de cinéma, cinéma de la vie quotidienne, cinéma de la scène de ménage, cinéma de tout ce que vous voulez, cinéma de voitures, cinéma à pied, cinéma à cheval. Enfin, le monde, c'est du cinéma. Et bien alors, c'est du cinéma. Je vous demande, qu'est-ce qui va pouvoir nous rendre quelque raison de croire au monde, à ce monde-ci.<sup>14</sup>

People have forgotten that they belong to the world and that the world belongs to them; they are no longer aware that the way they live and behave shapes the world, and the way the world is structured

<sup>10</sup> Michael A. Lebowitz, *Build it Now: Socialism for the 21<sup>st</sup> century* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2006), p. 43.

<sup>11</sup> Arthur McGovern, *The Bottom Line: Unfortunate Side Effects of Capitalist Culture* (Wilmington: Vernon Press, 2020), p. 59; Mark Fisher, *Capitalist Realism* (Winchester: Zero books, 2008), p. 8.

<sup>12</sup> Fisher, p. 2.

<sup>13</sup> Gilles Deleuze, 'Sur le cinéma : l'image-pensée. Cours Vincennes - St Denis. Cours du 06/11/1984', *Webdeleuze*, (2020) <<https://www.webdeleuze.com/textes/357>> [Accessed 8 September 2020].

<sup>14</sup> Deleuze, 'Sur le cinéma', [online].

determines their behaviour.<sup>15</sup> All this explains the socio-political stagnation that marks the current time, a period characterised by the absence, at an international level, of any effective revolutionary movement able to change the current order of things.

Sivan's rhizomatic poetry positions itself within the debate on the creation of the world and life exactly here, by taking, to use Deleuze's words, a leap of faith into the world. With the Parisian philosopher, the idea of faith acquires an entirely new meaning. Rather than using the term to indicate 'the act of being sure that something is true', he uses it to refer to the act of 'disrupting common sense categories, relations and perceptions, while selecting and recombining images in ways that suggest new modes of thought and life'.<sup>16</sup> This is what Sivan aims to do with his texts. His texts denounce the dysfunctionality of capitalist society and deconstruct the ideas of the subject, language, time and space, with the wish to show the world from new perspectives that can potentially reactivate the reader's awareness and prompt them to see it differently and produce an alternative vision of it.

The next section will analyse his conceptualisation of poetry in greater detail in order to shed light on the political project at its heart.

## **2.2 The *logosonoscope*: Sivan's conceptualisation of rhizomatic poetry**

In the opening page of *similijake*, Sivan defines the book in terms of *logosonoscope*. In the same year, he conceptualised the idea of the *logosonoscope* in *dernier télégramme d'al jack : quotidien culturel conventionné par le ministère de la médecine légale* and offered further details about it in *Machine Manifeste*. In *dernier télégramme*, Sivan is purposely ambiguous and ironic. Irony enables Sivan to break with the formal and utopic character of the aesthetico-political theorisations of some avant-gardist groups, like the Lettrists and Surrealists, who aimed to completely revolutionise the world. Sivan did not aim at completely transforming society, but only at creating little breaches in the system by stimulating the reader to see the world differently. Similarly, ambiguity enabled Sivan to avoid being authoritative and didactic like Lettrists and gives readers a certain freedom in interpreting his

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<sup>15</sup> Gilles Deleuze, 'Contrôle et devenir : Gilles Deleuze / Entretien avec Antonio Negri', interviewed by Antonio Negri, in *Futur Antérieur*, 1990, <<http://lesilencequiparle.unblog.fr/2009/03/07/contrôle-et-devenir-gilles-deleuze-entretien-avec-toni-negri/>> [Accessed 12 March 2018].

<sup>16</sup> Ronald Bogue, 'The Art of the Possible', in *Revue Internationale de Philosophie*, 3.241 (2007), 273-286 (p. 279).

text according to their experiences and backgrounds. *Dernier télégramme* lends itself to different interpretations. Here, it will be interpreted in the light of Ponge's idea of the *logoscope* and *objeu*, and Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the *livre-rhizome* and *littérature mineure*, as they seem to be the three main references that Sivan used to write the text. This hypothesis seems to be confirmed by the fact that Sivan openly states the influence of Deleuze and Guattari on his work, and especially Deleuze, as illustrated during an interview with Wourm, and he includes a whole chapter about the influence of Ponge on his texts in *Machine Manifeste*

In *dernier télégramme*, Sivan describes the *logosonoscope* as 'un dispositif moléculaire' that serves as both 'un outil d'observation' and 'un opérateur'<sup>17</sup> (DT, p. 7). As will be explained in this chapter, the idea of the *logosonoscope* as 'un dispositif moléculaire' recalls the *livre-rhizome* and *littérature mineure*; whereas the ideas of the *logosonoscope* as an instrument of observation and an operator recalls that of the Pongian *logoscope* and *objeu*. For the sake of clarity, this subchapter is structured as two sections. The first section looks at the similarities and differences between the *logosonoscope* and the *logoscope*, and between the *logosonoscope* and the *objeu*. It argues that Sivan's poetic and political project can be conceived as a post-structuralist evolution of Ponge's work. The second section focuses on the relationship between the *logosonoscope* and both the *livre-rhizome* and *littérature mineure*. It shows how the *logosonoscope* can be seen as a poetic version of the rhizomatic book and a specific category of minor literature, highlighting its suitability for resistance to capitalist society.

### 2.2.1. The *logosonoscope* and the Pongian *logoscope* and *objeu*

Before investigating the relationship between the *logosonoscope* and the *logoscope* and between the *logosonoscope* and the *objeu*, it is necessary to explain what the *logoscope* and the *objeu* are. Ponge conceives them within his poetico-political project as two kinds of poetic devices that enable him to engage politically.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Jacques Sivan, *dernier télégramme : quotidien culturel subventionné par le ministère de la médecine légale* (Limoges: dernier télégramme, 2008), p. 7. Henceforth, all references to this volume will occur in the text, preceded by DT.

<sup>18</sup> For Ponge, poetry plays a crucial role in the fight against capitalist society. As he puts: 'Par ailleurs je pense aussi que la véritable révolution, la véritable subversion, la véritable modernité etc., eh bien se place dans l'écriture, dans la littérature. Et qu'il y a beaucoup plus d'éléments subversifs et révolutionnaires dans un texte, sur n'importe quel sujet, sur n'importe quel thème, serait-ce un compotier, ou un herbier ou tout ce qu'on voudra, n'importe quoi, que dans des sermons ou des discours politiques, ou des œuvres prenant ce caractère. Pourquoi ? Parce que nous sommes dans le langage, nous sommes enfermés dans la langue qui est la nôtre, et que rien ne se passe quoi qu'on veuille en dehors de



Ponge coins the *mot-valise* ‘logoscope’ in 1924, in *Les Fables Logiques*, by joining the Greek word *logos* – in French ‘mot’, ‘discours’ – with the French suffix ‘scope’ – from the Greek ‘skopos’, meaning ‘observer’ and ‘analyser’, usually used to form words that indicate instruments apt for the purposes of observation and investigation.<sup>19</sup> Although Ponge only uses this word in the title of the third section of *Les Fables Logiques*, ‘Du Logoscope’, he lets the reader identify the idea of *logoscope* with that of poetry embodied by the three texts of the sections – ‘Souvenir’, ‘Voici qui l’a tue’, and ‘Multicolore’ – and emerging from both ‘Un Employé’ and ‘Un Vieux’, the first and second text of *Les Fables Logiques*, respectively. Together, these five texts offer an idea of poetry as an instrument apt to observe and investigate language in order to understand what is its role and what poets can do with words.<sup>20</sup>

Ponge envisaged the *objeu*, for the first time, in 1942, in *Le parti pris des choses*, fusing the word ‘objet’, meaning ‘object’, with the word ‘jeu’, meaning ‘game’. Ponge conceived the *objeu* as a poetic text which by playfully working on language can provide a different picture of the objects that compose the world than that conveyed by ordinary language, interfering with the way people think and perceive, and from there potentially transform the world. The *objeu* can thus be seen as an operator, something able to operate on the shape of the world. Ponge conceived the *objeu* within his poetico-political programme as aiming at the creation of a new world and man, ‘l’homme de l’objeu’<sup>21</sup>, a non-dogmatic individual, aware of the multitude of different interpretations that can be made of the world and of the things that compose it.<sup>22</sup> As Sarah N. Lawall explains, for Ponge, the ‘man of the *objeu*’, is an individual that has ‘mastered a supple technique of perception and expression that will not let him be content with one fixed appearance of reality’<sup>23</sup>.

With the *objeu*, Ponge aimed to create a sort of ‘dictionnaire sensible’<sup>24</sup>: ‘J’aimerais faire un dictionnaire sensible. C’est tout.’<sup>25</sup> Differently from linguistic dictionaries, the phenomenological dictionary conceived by Ponge would not impose the meaning of words but rather stimulate the

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cette langue, et que c’est à la modification par transmutation des termes, enfin dieu sait quoi, par le travail sur cette langue, que nous pouvons changer les choses, y compris la politique.’ (Francis Ponge, *Les Œuvres Complètes. Pour Un Malherbe*, 2 vols (Paris: Gallimard, 1999), II, p. 1420.

<sup>19</sup> ‘logos’, in *Le Petit Robert*, ed. by Josette Rey-Debove, Alain Rey (Paris: Le Petit Robert, 2013), p. 1476; ‘scope’, *Le Petit Robert*, p. 2329; ‘skopos’, *Le Petit Robert*, p. 2329.

<sup>20</sup> There are two versions of *Les Fables Logiques*. The first one was published in 1924 and the second in 1938. The observations on the work have been based on the second version. ‘Un Employé’ and ‘Un Vieux’ were not present in the first version.

<sup>21</sup> Francis Ponge, in Jean-Marie Gleize, Bernard Veck, *Objet. Francis Ponge. Actes ou textes* (Lille: Presses universitaires de Lille, 2020), p. 22.

<sup>22</sup> Sarah N. Lawall, ‘Ponge and the Poetry of Self-Knowledge’, *Contemporary Literature* 11.1 (1970), 192–216, p. 192–195.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 195.

<sup>24</sup> Francis Ponge, in Alain Milon, ‘Le dictionnaire sensible de Francis Ponge’, *Cahiers Francis Ponge*, 1 (2018), 131–142 (p. 131).

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 131.

readers to think and perceive differently and become aware of the complexity of the world<sup>26</sup> against the fixed image of the world conveyed by ordinary language. For Ponge, the things that make up the world can be ‘la source d’un grand nombre de sentiments inconnus’<sup>27</sup> that can revolutionise ‘les sentiments de l’homme’<sup>28</sup>, and from there create a new man, the man the *objeu*, and transform the world<sup>29</sup>. As Gérard Farasse and Bernard Veck observe in *Guide d’un petit voyage dans l’œuvre de Francis Ponge*, Ponge’s *objeu* are ‘une littérature de description, qui est en fait une littérature d’action, attachée à refaire le monde dans le langage et l’esprit de l’homme’.<sup>30</sup>

Sivan was influenced by both ideas. As explained at the beginning of this section, in *dernier télégramme d’al jack*, Sivan describes the *logosonoscope* as both ‘un outil d’observation’ and ‘un opérateur’ (DT, p. 7). The idea of poetry as ‘un outil d’observation’ clearly recalls the Pongian *logoscope*. As explained, the *logoscope* can be conceived as an instrument of observation and investigation. Similarly, the idea of the poetry as ‘un opérateur’ recalls that of the *objeu*, since the *objeu* was conceived with the aspiration of transforming the world by showing the objects in it from a different perspective.

Sivan never hid the influence of Ponge on his poetics, but rather emphasized it. Not only did he dedicate a whole chapter to the influence of Ponge on his poetry, but he also derives the name he gives to his texts directly from the word *logoscope*. Sivan fabricated the term *logosonoscope* by adding the latin word ‘sono’,<sup>31</sup> from ‘sonus’,<sup>32</sup> in French ‘son’, to the word *logoscope*. In addition, he also indirectly refers to *Voici qui l’a tué*, one of the poems composing ‘Du Logoscope’, in the subtitle of *dernier télégramme d’al jack*: ‘quotidien culturel subventionné par le ministère de la médecine légale’. Sivan presents *dernier télégramme d’al jack* as a cultural newspaper subsidised by a department of forensics. In ‘Voici qui l’a tué’, Ponge describes the *logoscope* as a medical tool apt to dissect language, depicted as a dead body lying on a medical bed.<sup>33</sup> Ponge uses these medical metaphors to suggest that the *logoscope*, and thus poetry, is an instrument that enables the poet to analyse and understand the potential of language. By echoing the metaphorical description of the *logoscope* proposed by Ponge in *Voici qui l’a tué*, Sivan highlights the centrality of Ponge’s poetics for the elaboration of his own. In particular, in *Machine Manifeste*, Sivan explains that what he

<sup>26</sup> Francis Ponge, in Alain Romestaing, ‘L’objet chez Francis Ponge: du « Parti-Pris des choses » à « l’objeu »’, *Écritures de l’objet*, 1997, <<https://books.openedition.org/pub/4934?lang=fr-text>> [Accessed 4 August 2022] (para 27 of 38).

<sup>27</sup> Francis Ponge, in Gérard Farasse, Bernard Veck, *Guide d’un petit voyage dans l’œuvre de Francis Ponge*, (Villeneuve d’Ascq: Presses universitaires du Septentrion, 2019), p. 65.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 65.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., [online].

<sup>30</sup> Farasse, Veck, p. 66.

<sup>31</sup> ‘sono’, *Le Petit Robert*, p. 2398.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 2398.

<sup>33</sup> Francis Ponge, *Les Œuvres complètes. Le grand recueil. Méthode*, 3 vols (Paris: Gallimard, 1999), II, p. 615.

appreciates of Ponge is ‘sa sensualité lisse et froide. La rigueur de la construction, le parfait appareillage des mots.’<sup>34</sup>

However, there are substantial differences between the Pongian *logoscope* and *objeu*. Although Sivan describes the ‘logosonoscope’ as un ‘outil d’observation’, differently from the Pongian *logoscope* which is conceived as a device enabling the poet to investigate language and explore its possibilities to understand what can be done with words, the *logosonoscope* is an instrument that enables the reader to investigate ‘la société marchande’<sup>35</sup>, that is to say the capitalist system, but also see it from new perspectives. Each *logosonoscope*, as Sivan explains, reveals ‘des réalités insoupçonnées’ (*DT*, p. 4). As will be explained in the third section of this chapter, these ‘réalités insoupçonnées’ are some of the aspects of capitalist society that usually pass unnoticed like, for example, the control that it exercises on its members, its artificiality, and the artificiality of any other social order, and the artificiality of language.

Similarly to Ponge, who, with the *objeu*, aimed to interfere with the way of thinking and perceiving of readers, with his *logosonoscope*, Sivan aimed to create ‘des modes d’appréhension nouveaux’<sup>36</sup>, that is to say new ways of seeing and perceiving the world. However, in order to do so, the two poets followed very different paths.

In his texts, Ponge described ‘Les humbles : le galet, l’ouvrier, la crevette, le tronc d’arbre, et tout le monde inanimé, tout ce qui ne parle pas.’<sup>37</sup> Each of Ponge’s poems focuses on an object that is described from different points of view. Sivan, on the contrary, does not focus on any specific object, but rather talks about capitalist society in general terms.<sup>38</sup> In addition, if with Ponge’s texts, it is possible to identify a main topic, with Sivan’s texts there is no main topic, but numerous narrative threads that intertwine.

Ponge generally made a standard use of language; Sivan, on the contrary, as will be explained in the next section, deconstructs meaning. He creates a series of minor languages from the manipulation of Standard French.

Ponge’s texts have a tidy and compact typographical disposition, whereas Sivan’s texts contain numerous visual elements and are sometimes written using different colours.<sup>39</sup>

## L’huître

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<sup>34</sup> Jacques Sivan, *Machine Manifeste* (Paris: Léo Scheer, 2003), p. 87.

<sup>35</sup> Emmanuèle Jawad, ‘L’écriture moléculaire de Jacques Sivan’, la poésie moléculaire de Jacques Sivan [choix de textes, de 1983 à 2016], ed. by Laurent Cauwet, Vannina Maestri (Marseille: France, 2017), pp. 13-28 (p. 13).

<sup>36</sup> Jacques Sivan, ‘Jacques Sivan/Vannina Maestri’, interviewed by Nathalie Wourm, in *Poètes français du 21ème siècle : Entretiens*, (Leiden: Brill Rodopi, 2017), p. 110.

<sup>37</sup> Francis Ponge, in Farasse, Veck, p. 66.

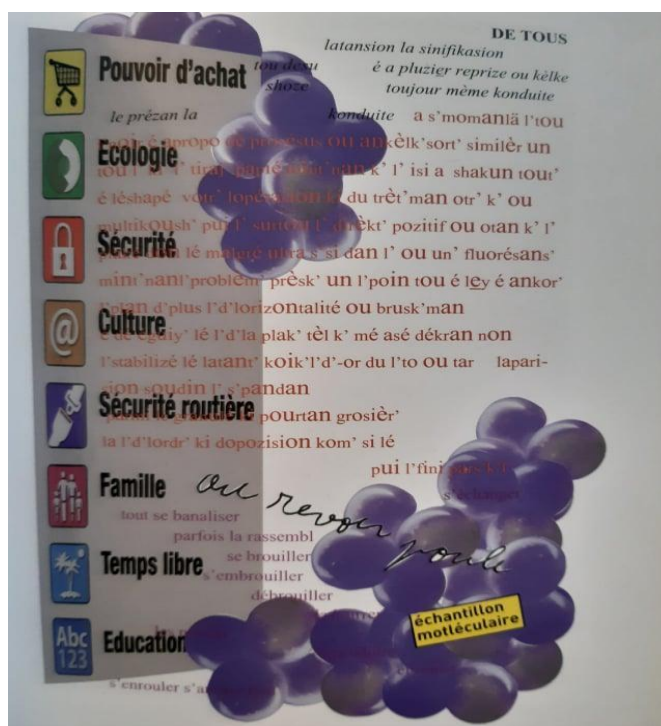
<sup>38</sup> Except for *Des Vies sur Deuil Polaire*, where each poem depicts a specific social category.

<sup>39</sup> This recalls some poems by Augusto De Campos. See Appendix 3.

L'huître, de la grosseur d'un galet moyen, est d'une apparence plus rugueuse, d'une couleur moins unie, brillamment blanchâtre. C'est un monde opiniâtrement clos. Pourtant on peut l'ouvrir : il faut alors la tenir au creux d'un torchon, se servir d'un couteau ébréché et peu franc, s'y reprendre à plusieurs fois. Les doigts curieux s'y coupent, s'y cassent les ongles : c'est un travail grossier. Les coups qu'on lui porte marquent son enveloppe de ronds blancs, d'une sorte de halos.

A l'intérieur l'on trouve tout un monde, à boire et à manger : sous un firmament (à proprement parler) de nacre, les cieux d'en dessus s'affaissent sur les cieux d'en dessous, pour ne plus former qu'une mare, un sachet visqueux et verdâtre, qui flue et reflue à l'odeur et à la vue, frangé d'une dentelle noirâtre sur les bords.

Parfois très rare une formule perle à leur gosier de nacre, d'où l'on trouve aussitôt à s'orner.<sup>40</sup>



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In *Machine Manifeste*, Sivan explains that in order to construct his texts, he opposed a 'fonctionnement volontairement chaotique, et poreux' to Ponge's tidy texts, which resulted in a type of poetry 'plus lâche, sans contour défini ; à la fois plus virtuelle, et ouverte', which can be seen in all regards as its post-structuralist evolution..<sup>42</sup> Although Sivan's discourse on Ponge's influence on his poetry is ambiguous and even sometimes contradictory, the idea that emerges is that he took distance from him because he did not consider his texts to be cognitively effective enough to affect

<sup>40</sup> Francis Ponge, *Le parti pris des choses. Précédé de douze petits écrits. Suivi de Proèmes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1948), p. 43.

<sup>41</sup> Jacques Sivan, Jacques Sivan, *similijake* (Paris: Al Dante, 2008), p. 4. Henceforth, all references to this volume will occur in the text, preceded by *Sj*.

<sup>42</sup> Sivan, *Machine Manifeste*, p. 93.

the reader's perception due to Ponge's use of language and the typographical features of his texts. What Sivan suggests is that Ponge's texts are too anchored to an 'absolu formel' to challenge the expectations of readers and from there stimulate them to think and perceive differently to how they are used to.

In order to make his texts more effective, Sivan suggests that he gave them a rhizomatic functioning. The idea that his texts has a 'fonctionnement volontairement chaotique' is a clear reference to the rhizome book and an attempt to say that his texts function as rhizome. The relationship between the *logosonoscope* and the rhizome will be investigated further in the ext section.

### **2.2.2 The *logosonoscope*: a poetic version of the *livre-rhizome* and a specific category of *littérature mineure***

If the *logosonoscope* is a post-structuralist evolution of Ponge's poetry, it can equally be seen as a poetic version of the *livre-rhizome* and a particular category of *littérature mineure*. As explained in the previous section, in *dernier télégramme*, Sivan describes the *logosonoscope* as a 'dispositif motléculaire' (DT, p. 5). 'Dispositif' can be seen as a synonym for what Deleuze and Guattari call the *livre-rhizome* and can be considered as a type of minor text. As Bernard Vailloux observes, a 'dispositif' is an 'agencement résolument hétérogène d'énoncés'<sup>43</sup>. Throughout their body of work, Deleuze and Guattari describe the rhizome-book as heterogeneous assemblage of signs. The idea that the *logosonoscope* is a 'dispositif' thus indirectly suggests that it is a rhizome, a heterogeneous assemblage of sentences, of signs. The adjective 'motléculaire' indicates both its linguistic and minor nature. In *Mille Plateaux*, Deleuze and Guattari use the term 'molaire' to refer to entities that belong to the State, whereas 'moléculaire' is used, on the contrary, to refer to entities that escape the state's control.<sup>44</sup> Sivan created the word 'moléculaire' by fusing the term 'mot', 'word' in English, with the term 'motléculaire'. The term conveys both the ideas that the *logosonoscope* is a linguistic heterogeneous assemblage and that the language it is made up of is minor. From a Deleuzo-Guattarian perspective, minor languages are not state languages, but rather all the other languages that may be spoken as an alternative to state languages or the languages of minor literature which, Deleuze and

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<sup>43</sup> Bernard Vailloux, in Claire Richard, *Politique de la littérature, politique du lien*, (Paris: Éditions des Archives Contemporaines, 2012), p. 21

<sup>44</sup> Tom Conley, 'Molar', in *The Deleuze Dictionary*, by Adrian Parr, 2nd edn (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), pp. 175-177 (p. 176).

Guattari explain, is composed of a language that disregards the grammar rules of standard languages, which coincide with state languages (*MP*, p. 95-96 and pp. 128-132; *K*; pp. 42-44).

To conceptualise his rhizomatic poetics, in *dernier télégramme*, Sivan paraphrases Deleuze and Guattari's literary criticism. He does so following different paths: he imagines a fictional interview between two characters, called Jacques Sivan and Jake Sivan, talking about the transformative power of the *logosonoscope*; he writes a short story on the political role of the poet; he inserts a short graphic novel that illustrates how the *logosonoscope* affects society; and he includes a series of fictional adverts that promote the role of, what can be considered, minor art in the process of social transformation.

The idea of the *logosonoscope* that emerges from the text is that of an assemblage capable of interfering with the arborescent model of thinking and perceiving of readers in the capitalist system. In *dernier télégramme*, Sivan metaphorically describes the writing process as a mental journey during which a writer meets a people yet to come and visits their potential worlds.<sup>45</sup> The interaction of the poet and the people yet to come, Sivan suggests, generates 'des courts-circuits et autres turbulences [...]' (*DT*, p. 12). This 'court-circuits et autres turbulences' (*DT*, p. 12) can be interpreted as a metaphor for the tracing of a series of lines of flight. Deleuze and Guattari define the line of flight as anything, from an object to an idea, that can change the course of things, affecting the way people think and perceive.<sup>46</sup> The visions and auditions of the writer can trace a series of lines of flight, from the creation of 'effets d'étrangeté' (*DT*, p. 10) that can potentially generate 'des devenirs' (*DT*, p. 10) and 'de l'ouverture' (*DT*, p. 5), that is to say the mental conditions to rethink the world. In order to create these defamiliarizing effects, Sivan manipulates language and rhizomatically connects different blocks of texts and images. This not only enables him to denounce the functioning of capitalist society, but also to circulate a rhizomatic logic that challenges the cognitive habits of the reader potentially pushing them to reflect about the way they organise society, and its norms and conventions.

This idea is also suggested by Sivan's description of his texts during an interview with Wourm. Sivan explains that his texts create 'des effets de sens' which are far from the 'significations linéaires'. The *logosonoscope* deconstructs the linearity of the arborescent model of thinking by circulating a rhizomatic logic that can challenge the reader's expectations, and from there potentially interfere with the way they usually make sense of the world. His objective, as explained above, was to create 'des nouveaux modes d'appréhensions', and he did so by deterritorialising language and the typographical features of his texts. As he explains, in his texts, as well as those, by Maestri, '[...] il y a un travail de

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<sup>45</sup> Sivan's presentation of the writing process is a bit obscure and lends itself to different interpretations. However

<sup>46</sup> Lorraine, 'Lines of flight', pp. 147-148.

déterritorialisation. [...] Il y a un travail de déconstruction [...].<sup>47</sup> Deleuze and Guattari conceive of deterritorialisation as a process through which something is decoded, transformed, opened to a new meaning, a new identity, and role.

In *dernier télégramme*, Sivan presents the linguistic manipulation that he carries out in his texts as a process of linguistic parasitism of major language: 'le renouvellement des langages [...] passe par le parasitage de leurs formes sclérosées' (*DT*, p. 7). The idea of linguistic parasitism echoes the process of the deterritorialisation of language outlined by Deleuze and Guattari in *Kafka*, conceived as a process of linguistic disruption, whereas the idea of the sclerotic forms of language echoes the idea of major language. Deleuze and Guattari identify major languages with the official languages used by states and institutions to spread the dominant vision of the world (*MP*, pp. 95-97). For the two philosophers, before being an instrument of communication, language is an instrument of power that enables human groups to create order through the circulation of norms, conventions, values, and ideas (*MP*, p. 95-96). The idea of sclerotic forms of language echoes the idea of major language. This is because major languages, as Deleuze and Guattari explain, are fixed linguistic systems whose functioning has been rigidly defined to enable them to spread the logic and vision of the world at the basis of the society that has shaped them (*MP*, p. 95-96). Sclerosis is a degenerative disease causing the paralysis of the human body. The idea of paralysis conveyed by sclerosis recalls the fixity of major language. As Sivan suggests, the process of language parasitism allows the *logosonoscope* to activate and de-activate certain linguistic elements to both interfere with the way individuals think and to trigger new cognitive stimuli that make them conceive the world differently (*DT*, p. 7). This is because by manipulating standard languages, it is possible to manipulate the vision of the world that languages convey (*MP*, p. 95 and pp. 126-127). From this perspective, the linguistic parasitism employed by Sivan in his texts can potentially create a series of defamiliarizing effects in the reader that can disrupt the way they usually see and perceive the world.

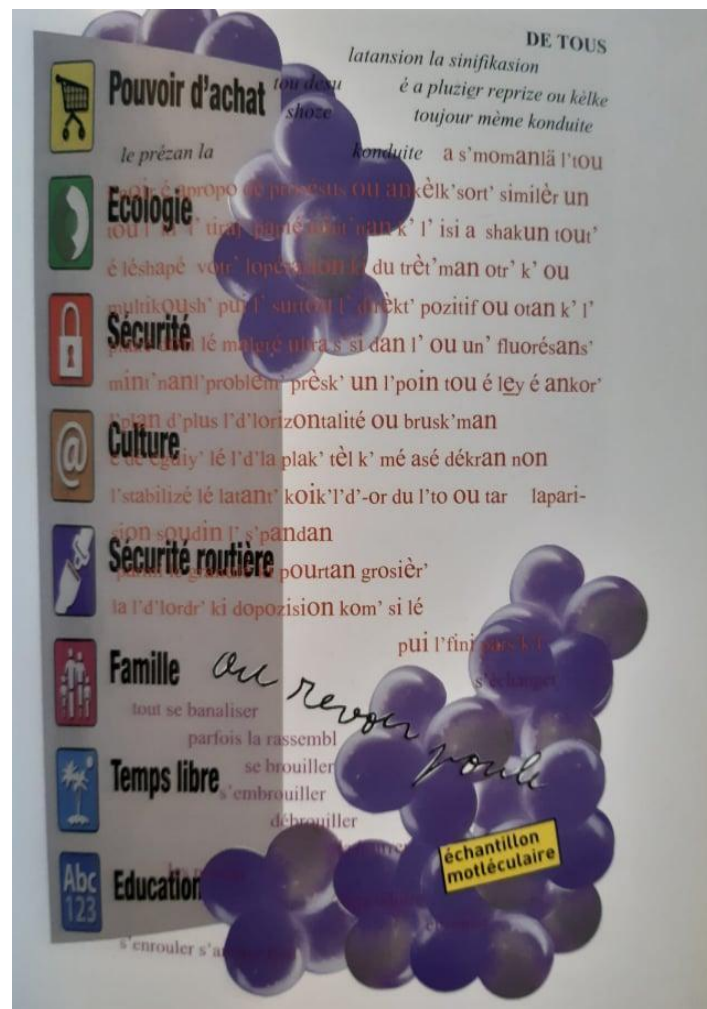
Although in each of his texts Sivan manipulates language by different routes, it is possible to identify some common tendencies in his linguistic work. Sivan generally spells words as he pronounces them, eliminates punctuation, and all elements that refer to a subject, eliminates conjugated verbs and does not use capital letters.

Another path that Sivan follows to challenge linearity and trigger a process of deterritorialisation is by playing with the typographical features of the text. As Sivan explains in the

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<sup>47</sup> Jacques Sivan, interviewed by Nathalie Wourm, in *Poètes français du 21<sup>ème</sup> siècle : Entretiens* (Amsterdam: Brill-Rodopi, 2017), pp. 108-114 (pp.110).

chapter dedicated to Ponge, his texts oppose a chaotic spatiality to Ponge's texts that usually appear compact and tidy on the page<sup>48</sup>



*Sj*, p. 4.

Although the text seems to have a vertical development, there is no linearity. Images and texts overlap, the blocks of texts are printed using different colours, and are in disorder. The different elements on the page do not create a single and linear body, but rather they fragment the narrative thread. This enables Sivan to potentially challenge the readers' expectations and to create a series of defamiliarising effects. Readers are used to read texts with a tidy and linear development and a clear meaning, something which does not happen here. If texts are usually read from the top of the page, in the majority of Sivan's texts this is not necessary, because there is no linear thread to follow. Rhizomatic logic underlies Sivan's texts and the narrative thread is constructed by the reader who is free to connect the different elements on the page as they wish. If with his texts, Ponge wanted to give readers, 'l'impression qu'on s'est déjà posé toutes les questions qu'il se pose, qu'on s'est placé

<sup>48</sup> Sivan, *Machine Manifeste*, p. 79.



de tous les points de vue critiques possibles',<sup>49</sup> Sivan, on the contrary, wants to set the reader free to create their own narrative thread. For Sivan, as he suggests in *similijake* and *dernier télégramme*, the reader must have an active role in the construction of the *logosonoscope*. In *dernier télégramme*, Sivan describes the reader as 'l'agent du logosonoscope' (DT, p. 10). The *logosonoscope* can produce effects only if there is a reader that activates it, who completes its construction by connecting the different elements on the pages to create a narrative thread and interprets. This reading of the idea of the reader as 'l'agent du logosonoscope' (DT, p. 10) seems to be confirmed by the idea that emerges from *similijake*. Sivan explains that *similijake*, which he presents as a *logosonoscope*, 'est télérealisable indéfiniment par tout un chacun' (Sj, p. 6). With the term 'télérealisable', Sivan ironically means 'construct', whereas with 'chacun', he refers to the reader. *Similijake* is presented as a sort of poetic tv show that readers are invited to construct by connecting and disconnecting the different blocks of texts and images of which it is composed to produce ever new narrative threads. The active role of the reader in the construction of the text is emphasised by the way Sivan stresses the importance of the reader's background during the reading act: 'tous les aspects et évènement de votre vie quotidienne alimentent (selon l'évolution des modalités, et dans la mesure du possible [...]) Universal Real TV qui, dans le même temps, vous produit' (Sj, p. 6). Universal Real TV is an expression that Sivan uses throughout the text to refer to the text itself that, as explained above, Sivan presents as a sort of poetic TV show. The active role that Sivan seems to assign to the reader is revelatory of a deconstructionist and post-structuralist approach to literature. The deconstructionist and post-structuralist approach to literature is underpinned by the idea that texts do not have any fixed or objective meaning but that meaning is, on the contrary, constructed by the reader.

The *logosonoscope*'s lack of linearity has a political significance as it might make the reader perceive the text differently from how they are used to perceive texts, and from there the world. As Deleuze and Guattari suggest throughout *Le Rhizome*, the capitalist system prompts thought to organise itself and knowledge linearly (MP, pp. 27-28). By disrupting this linearity, the *logosonoscope* can potentially stimulate readers to see and perceive according to the logic of connection, multiplicity, and heterogeneity, providing the reader with an instrument that can make them think differently and create a little breach in the system.

Given the fact that Sivan's texts have the potential to affect the way readers think and perceive, and from there act on the way they create order, the *logosonoscope* can be seen as the sign of a new world. It can be conceived as the first step towards the creation of a new model of thinking that can potentially lead to the reshaping of the world, to its transformation. The next sections analyse some

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<sup>49</sup> Francis Ponge, in Alain Romestaing, 'L'objet chez Francis Ponge: du « Parti-Pris des choses » à « l'objet »', [online] (para 32 of 38).

of Sivan's poetry collections to explain how Sivan potentially achieves these results. However, before doing this, I will discuss the conception of the poet that Sivan presents in *dernier télégramme*, as it is influenced by Deleuze and Guattari and can therefore offer some further details about the relationship between the *logosonoscope* and Deleuzo-Guattarian philosophy.

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In *dernier télégramme*, with his synthetic and ambiguous style, Sivan also proposes a conception of the poet that is reminiscent of Deleuze and Guattari. Sivan presents the poet as both a 'main oculaire et anonyme' (*DT*, p. 11) and a 'robot logosonoscopique'. The idea of the poet as an anonymous hand echoes the conception of the artist as an impersonal operator, as suggested by Deleuze in *Superpositions*.<sup>50</sup> For Deleuze, as Anne Sauvagnardes explains, the artist is an 'opérateur anonyme qui détecte et rend visibles des forces qui seraient restées insensibles sans le procédé qu'il invente'.<sup>51</sup> The idea of the writer as an anonymous hand recalls this conception. The idea of the hand metaphorically describes the poet as an operator, as someone who, by working on signs, operates on the social body, from the idea that human groups create order through semiotic regimes, which are used to convey their vision of the world and stimulate their members to think accordingly. The adjective 'oculaire' can be interpreted as an allusion to the ability of artists to make something visible which was previously invisible. However, it can also be read as a reference to the conception of the writing process that Deleuze offers in *Critique et Clinique*, where Deleuze describes the writing process as a sort of delirium during which writers have a series of 'visions' and 'auditions' that they then render in their texts through language.<sup>52</sup> The adjective 'oculaire' may refer to the 'visions' that, for Deleuze, writers have during the writing process.

A similar idea is conveyed by the conception of the poet as a 'robot logosonoscopique'. Sivan develops this idea through a fictional interview between two characters, ironically called Jacques Sivan and Jake Sivan. Jake Sivan, who is a writer, presents himself as a 'robot logosonoscopique' capable 'd'entendre, de voir tout autant que celle de produire des images ou du son' (*DT*, p. 4). The idea of the poet as a robot again echoes the Deleuzian conception of the artist as an impersonal operator, but also the idea of the writer as an impersonal operator suggested by Deleuze and Guattari in *Kafka*, where the two philosophers explain that during the writing process, the identity, emotions

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<sup>50</sup> Gilles Deleuze, Carmelo Bene, *Superpositions* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1979), p. 92. Deleuze offers a similar conception in *Kafka*, where he and Guattari analyse the body of work of Franz Kafka.

<sup>51</sup> Anne Sauvagnargues, 'Art Mineur – Art Majeur : Gilles Deleuze', *Espace Temps* (2002), 120-132 (p. 122).

<sup>52</sup> Ronald Bogue, *Deleuze's Wake. Tributes and Tributaries* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2004), p. 76.

and experiences of the writer are dissolved into the text acquiring a universal meaning and becoming a neutral component of the text.<sup>53</sup> In the collective imaginary, robots are impersonal machines which do not have consciousness nor feelings. Sivan metaphorically uses the idea of the robot to suggest the impersonality of the poet, and indirectly explains that in his texts, he does not talk about his personal experiences or feelings. By doing so, he seems to posit himself within the nebula of the post-poets.

As mentioned earlier, post-poets – according to Gleize – are contemporary poets who produce post-poetry, the innovative and experimental poetry that characterises part of the French poetic panorama today.<sup>54</sup> Post-poetry coincides with what Wourm calls deconstructionist poetry, and can be described as a hybrid genre encompassing different genres and characterised by a certain degree of impersonality.<sup>55</sup> Post-poetry distances itself from the lyrical effusion of what is generally considered to be poetry.<sup>56</sup> Like the adjective ‘oculaire’, the adjective ‘logosonoscopique’ seems to allude to the visions and auditions that, according to Deleuze, writers can have during the writing process (CC, p. 9 and pp. 15-16). This interpretation seems to be confirmed by the fact that Jake Sivan claims to be capable of hearing, seeing, and producing images, and sounds.<sup>57</sup>

What is interesting here is the influence that Deleuze and Guattari have exercised on Sivan’s elaboration of his poetics. Deleuze and Guattari’s philosophy is today’s *zeitgeist* and is deeply influential on the conception and production of literature in France.

## 2.3 The *logosonoscope*: the sign of a new world

This section offers a close reading of *Le Bazar de l’Hôtel de Ville, Des vie sur Deuil Polaire, Alias Jacques Bonhomme*, and *om\_anaskial* to present some of the strategies that Sivan uses to construct

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<sup>53</sup> Gregg Lambert, *Who’s afraid of Deleuze and Guattari?*, (London: Continuum, 2006), p. 37; Catarina Pombo Nabais, *Deleuze’s Literary Theory. The Laboratory of his Philosophy*, trans. by Ronald Bogue, (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2020), p. 129.

<sup>54</sup> Gleize, *Sorties*, pp. 38-43.

<sup>55</sup> Wourm, *Poètes français du 21<sup>ème</sup> siècle : Entretien*, pp. 1-9; Jérôme Game, *Poetic Becomings : Studies in Contemporary French Literature*, p. 20; Gleize, *Sorties*, pp. 42-43.

<sup>56</sup> Gleize, pp. 38-43.

<sup>57</sup> It must be noted that Sivan occasionally refers to the poet in terms of *logosonoscope*. Although this complexifies his discourse and opens the text to different interpretations that may even be contradictory, it is possible to read it as an attempt to highlight the impersonality of the writer, and so of himself. This is in the light of Deleuze and Guattari’s influence on his conception of literature and the writer and for which writers, and artists, more generally are impersonal forces and operators. By occasionally referring to the poet in terms of ‘logosonoscope’, Sivan seems to suggest that the poet is a component of the text and not the ‘owner’ of it. This interpretation seems to be confirmed by the fact that Sivan also believes that the reader has an active role in the construction of the *logosonoscope*, and that the meaning of a text depends on how the reader interprets it. (DT, pp. 3-10; Sj, p. 4)

his texts as signs of new worlds from the creation of a series of defamiliarising effects that can alter the cognitive faculties of readers and from there their way of making sense of the world.

### **2.3.1 *Le Bazar de l'Hôtel de Ville***

The first *logosonoscope* that will be analysed is *Le Bazar de l'Hôtel de Ville*, published in 2006, considered by Emmanuèle Jawad to be Sivan's most political text. Behind the kitsch aesthetic of the book, whose bright colours recall shop signs, advertising billboards, catalogues, leaflets and supermarkets, *Le Bazar de l'Hôtel de Ville* is an attack on capitalist society.

Sivan constructs the text from the combination of a series of fragments taken from pre-existing sources such as catalogues, leaflets, packages of items, supermarket maps, and a series of original fragments written under the influence of a series of philosophical texts. Sivan uses these fragments to achieve two goals. On the one hand, he uses them to reveal and denounce the workings of capitalist society. On the other hand, he uses them to show how to transform the world through the recombination of the elements of which it is composed.

The next two subsections investigate the different fragments that make up *Le Bazar de l'Hôtel de Ville* to exemplify how Sivan achieves these two goals. Although the different fragments that make up the body of this *logosonoscope* arise from the page at the same time, for the sake of clarity, this analysis will group them into two different groups according to their nature. The original fragments will be referred to as philosophical fragments, whereas the fragments taken from pre-existing sources will be referred to as non-philosophical fragments. The objective is to better describe their function, and thus the way *Le Bazar de l'Hôtel de Ville* engages in the fight against capitalism. The analysis will begin by examining the philosophical fragments, then it will move on to the non-philosophical fragments.

#### **2.3.1.1 Philosophical assemblage**

The main body of the text is constructed through the juxtaposition of different fragments of texts, different linguistic unities separated by a slash, inspired by different philosophical sources such as *La*

*Révolution Sexuelle*, *La Fonction de L'Orgasme* by Reich, *Surveiller et Punir* and *Histoire de la Sexualité* by Foucault, the two volumes of *Capitalisme et Schizophrénie – L'Anti-Œdipe* and *Mille Plateaux* – by Deleuze and Guattari, and *Post-Scriptum sur les sociétés de contrôle* by Deleuze. Sometimes, Sivan seems to have taken the fragments that compose his texts directly from the sources mentioned above, like in the case of ‘SOCIETE DE KONTROLE’ that has clearly been taken from *Post-Scriptum sur les sociétés de contrôle*, or ‘PUISAN SORGASTIKE’, that has clearly been taken from *La Fonction de l'orgasme* by Reich. Other times, it is not possible to establish whether the fragments have been extracted from the sources mentioned above or are simply inspired by them because they all undergo a process of linguistic manipulation.<sup>58</sup> Sivan works on the morphological and syntactic traits of the selected fragments to derive a new language. In *Le Bazar de l'Hôtel de Ville*, Sivan deterritorialises language by rhizomatically fusing words together, spelling them as he pronounces them and eliminating all conjugated verbs, personal pronouns and grammatical elements that recall the presence of a subject, as the following extract exemplifies:

LE SOUCI LE MINTIIN DOTREPAR LÉ DISKOUR SUR LE  
 DÉPEPLEMAN PROTÈKSION DE LA VIÉ LOUBLI LA KROIYANSE LE  
 DOUTE DÉZORMÉ SISTÈME RÉPRÉSION \ OU LE DÉTOURNEMAN |  
 ÈKSPRÉSION [...] DÉKLIN NATALITÉ AVÈK BRUTALITÉ  
 KARAKTÈRE DÉ KLASSE KONTROLE DÉ NÉSANSE FORSE  
 TRADISIONÈLE LA PANSÉ KOLÈKTIVE\ SÈKSUÈLÉKONOMIE  
 LAJANSEMAN DÉ FÉ LE REGAR DE LA VI LA PÈRSÈ  
 LATMOSHÈRE | MINTENAN LA MIOPI | | TOU PAR ÉPIDÉMI |<sup>59</sup>

Without simplifying the complexity of the process of the deterritorialisation of language followed in this *Le bazar de l' l'Hôtel de Ville*, this table exemplifies some of the paths that Sivan followed to fuse words together and spell them as he pronounces them.

Rhizomatic connection between two or more words	
How words would be written in Standard French	How Sivan writes them by rhizomatically connecting them
Lien sexuel	LIINSÈKSUEL (p. 20)
Origine génitale	JÉNITALORIJINE (p. 20)

<sup>58</sup> Sometimes it is very hard to establish the source as, as in the case of Reich. His concepts and ideas also appear in *L'Anti-Œdipe*, so it is not possible to establish from where Sivan took his ideas.

<sup>59</sup> Jacques Sivan, *Le Bazar de l'Hôtel de Ville* (Paris: Al Dante, 2006), pp. 51-52. Henceforth, all references to this volume will occur in the text, preceded by *LB*, except for the table where it will be only specified the number of the page from where the words quoted have been taken.

				<p>*For this kind of expression, Sivan plays with word order. In French, long adjectives usually come after the noun. Here, Sivan places the adjective before the noun. This linguistic structure recalls those of English and German. It is possible that the expression is a linguistic cast, but it is hard to identify the source. The idea expressed by this expression is so common, that Sivan may have taken from anywhere.</p>
Économie sexuelle				<p>SÈKSUÈLÉCONOMIE (p. 32)</p> <p>*As in the previous case, Sivan plays with word order. He places the adjective before the name. This expression recalls the Sexual Politik movement founded by the Austrian psychoanalyst Wilhelm Reich. At the basis of the movement was the idea that sexuality could be used as an instrument to free human existence from reactionary regimes. The idea that sex can free human beings is also expressed by Sivan in <i>Le Bazar de l'Hôtel de Ville</i>.</p> <p>However, it is not clear if this is really what Sivan is referring to with 'SÈKSUÈLÉCONOMIE', as this expression can also be interpreted as a condensed reference to the idea that, for centuries, in Western countries, and today still in many parts of the world, sexual relationships, or more generally, romantic relationships, have an economic nature. For centuries, people married for economic reasons.</p>
Letters and syllables in Standard French	Phonetic notation in Standard French	Letters or syllables used to replace the original sound in Standard French	Examples	
e, e + consonant, ai	[e]	É	<p>effet → éfé (p. 1)</p> <p>les → lé (p. 2)</p> <p>des → dé (p. 10)</p> <p>et → é (p. 46)</p> <p>liaison → liésion (p. 45)</p>	

e, e + consonant, ê	[ɛ]	È	perspective → pèrspèktive (p. 47) appel → apèl (p. 42) même → mème (p. 4)
x, ct	[ks]	Ks	production → produksion (p. 39) sexuelle → sèksuèle (p. 34)
c, q	[k]	K	avec → avèk (p. 2) création → kréasion (p. 24) stratification → stratifikasion (p. 28)
Ph	[f]	F	métamorphose → métamorfose (p. 40) sphère → sfère (p. 2)
Eau	[o]	O	cadeau → cado (p.18)
ch	[ʃ]	Sh	chaque → shaque (p. 43)
vowel + t + ion, ç, s	[s]	vowel + s+ ion	distribution → distribution (p. 11) façon → fason (p. 19)
s	[z]	Z	névrose → névroze (p. 10) opposition → opozition (p. 24) vision → vizio (p. 31) plaisir → plèzir (p. 20)
consonants at the end of words	silent	Elimination	toujours → toujours (p. 5) rapport → rapor (p. 11)
Double letter words	Elimination of the second consonant		passage → pasaje (p. 94) flottement → floteman (p. 95) données → doné (p.10) lutte → lute (p. 10)
Determinative article followed by word starting with vowel	Elimination of the apostrophe and fusion of the article and the word		l'échelle → lèshèle (p. 5) l'autre → lotre (p. 9)

Sivan uses the philosophical fragments for two reasons. On the one hand, he uses them to reveal the functioning of the capitalist system by referring to particularly capitalist structures or themes (see below). On the other hand, he uses them to deconstruct meaning and create some defamiliarising effects that can potentially lead the reader to perceive the world differently. This act can be compared to what Deleuze and Guattari call the tracing of a series of lines of flight. A line of flight can be

loosely described as any object that makes thought deviate from its habitual cognitive paths and, from there, makes sense of the world differently from how it is used and prompted by the stimuli of the dominant order.<sup>60</sup>

The choice of Reich's, Foucault's, Deleuze's, and Deleuze and Guattari's texts is far from coincidental. The texts Sivan selects for the main body of *Le bazar de l'Hôtel de Ville* enable him to sharply criticise and describe the capitalist world. By choosing to work on a series of philosophical texts that analyse and openly struggle against the dominant western system, Sivan discloses its mechanisms of functioning highlighting the issues that mark it as well as suggesting the need for a social-political change.

The speaking voice of the philosophical fragments describes capitalist society, in Deleuzian terms, as a 'SOCIÉTÉ DE KONTRÔLE' (LB, p. 50); it suggests that capitalist society is a brutal socio-political form which represses the human being's 'FONKSION VITALE' (LB, p. 50) and the 'POUSÉ NATUREËLE' (LB, p. 90). These must be understood, from a Deleuzo-Guattarian perspective, as the human ability to produce new life possibilities from the 'KONSTRUCTION DE MACHINE' (LB, p. 82). For Deleuze and Guattari, anything existing from human beings to social institutions are machines, an aggregate of different components. Sometimes, the two philosophers use the term 'assemblage' rather than that of 'machine'. The construction of machines, and so the production of life possibilities, as the speaking voice suggests, refers to both the process of social production and thus the process through which human groups actualise their society, and the physical production of new human beings and thus sexual encounters. In other words, the 'FONKSION VITAL' (LB, p. 50) and 'POUSÉ NATUREËLE' (LB, p. 90) can be seen in relation to both the human ability to think and to mate. Thinking enables human beings to produce the machines that structure society, whereas mating enables them to reproduce themselves, that is to say, to produce the matter that is usually inscribed as a human being.

As the different fragments show, capitalist society controls the *fonction vitale* and *poussé natureËle* of human beings by imposing a 'SYSTÈME DE PANSÉ' (LB, p. 78). 'système de pansé' is an expression that lends itself to different interpretations. Here, it is interpreted as a metaphor for 'mode of thinking'. Capitalist society controls human beings by imposing on its members a vision of the world, a specific way of thinking and perceiving. This idea seems to be confirmed by the fact that the 'SYSTÈME DE PANSÉ' (LB, p. 78) about which the speaking voice talks would control both the 'KONSIANCE' (LB, p. 75) as well as the 'PÈRSÈPSION SANSORIÈLE' (LB, p. 78) of human beings, which is to say their thoughts and bodies.

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<sup>60</sup> Lorraine, 'Lines of flight', in *The Deleuze Dictionary*, pp. 147-148; Adrian Parr, 'Lines of Flight + Art + Politics', in *The Deleuze Dictionary*, ed. by Adrian Parr, 2nd edn (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), pp. 149-151.



By providing its members with a mode of thinking, throughout its enunciation the impersonal voice of the philosophical assemblage shows how capitalist society deeply penetrates human existence, conditioning the ability of human beings to produce new life possibilities. Capitalist society traps human beings in an irrational vortex which subordinates their entire existence to capital. In capitalist society, the speaking voice explains, ‘TOU ASPÉ DE LA VI KOMISION FINANSIÈRE’ (*LB*, p. 55). In capitalist society, life revolves entirely around finance, around the production and accumulation of capital. Capital is the force that drives the lives of human beings and establishes their relationships, causing – the speaking voice says – a real ‘TRAJÉDI SOSIALE’ (*LB*, p. 79).

However, the epilogue of this tragedy has not yet been written. As the speaking voice reveals, human beings can let themselves be surprised by the world to free their minds and bodies from the conditioning of the established order and reach a new ‘POIN DE DÉPAR’ (*LB*, p. 9) for both the ‘PRODUKSION DUN OTRE OME’ and the ‘KRÉASION DE SUJÉ ÉFÉMÈRE’ (*LB*, p. 76), that is to say new modes of living and existing. The idea of ‘PRODUKSION DUN OTRE OME’ and ‘KRÉASION DE SUJÉ ÉFÉMÈRE’ recalls Deleuze and Guattari’s idea that what human beings are and how they live changes throughout time and depends on how the community they belong to organise itself.<sup>61</sup>

The path to a new starting point for the creation of new modes of living and existing, as the voice of the different philosophical fragments explains, is represented by both the deregulation of sexual life and the exploration of new mental paths. On the one hand, a dysregulated sexual life would free human beings from the constraints of their social role to let them explore their animality and, from there, to reconsider their mode of existence. On the other hand, the exploration of new mental paths would liberate their minds from the psychic system imposed on them by capitalist society and expose them to new stimuli that would make them think anew.

To facilitate the process of the rediscovery of the human body and mind, Sivan creates the conditions for the reader to explore new mental paths via the rhizomatic assemblage of the fragments that make up *Le Bazar de l’Hôtel de Ville* and through the manipulation of their language. The rhizomatic functioning of *Le Bazar de l’Hôtel de Ville* has the potential to violently jolt the body and mind of the reader. This is because the reader is confronted by a text which deviates from linguistic and typographical norms and lacks linearity. This can potentially stimulate its readers to think against the linear and binary logic that they generally apply to make sense of the world and make them reflect upon the cognitive conventions at the basis of the social system.

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<sup>61</sup> *MP*, p. 36 ; *LF*; Benoît Dillet, ‘What Is Called Thinking?: When Deleuze Walks along Heideggerian Paths’, *Deleuze Studies*, 7.2 (2013), 250–74 (p. 251).

### 2.3.1.2 Non-philosophical assemblage

The non-philosophical assemblage constitutes a much more heterogeneous corpus than the philosophical assemblage; this is because of the very different sources used. The non-philosophical assemblage is composed of barcodes taken from the packaging of a series of unidentifiable items, advertising slogans taken from leaflets, billboards and posters, and item descriptions taken from catalogues. These fragments are used to fulfil two different functions. On the one hand, Sivan uses them to prove the arbitrariness of meaning. On the other hand, he uses them to exemplify one of the infinite number of ways that individuals can use them to effectively pave the way for a new socio-political organisation and way of being.

To do so, Sivan adapts the Duchampian ready-made technique to poetry. As the title of the book *Le Bazar de l'Hôtel de Ville* and the dedication at its beginning 'à un certain porte-bouteille' testify, Duchamp and the ready-made technique have a central role in the work (*LB*, p. n/a). 'Le Bazar de l'Hôtel de Ville' is the name of the marketplace where, in 1914, Duchamp bought the bottle rack which later became *Le porte-bouteille*, one of his most important ready-made works and the source of the dedication that appears on the first page of Sivan's book.<sup>62</sup> Sivan chooses to use the ready-made technique because, for him, it is a suitable strategy for challenging the symbolic order of capitalist society and for showing readers how they can start a revolution. Although, for many artists and art critics, such as, for example, André Breton, the ready-made technique enables the transformation of an ordinary object into a work of art – in *Le Dictionnaire abrégé du Surréalisme*, Breton defines it as 'un objet usuel promu à la dignité d'œuvre d'art par le simple choix de l'artiste'.<sup>63</sup> For Sivan, the ready-made is a technique aimed at freeing objects, regardless of their human or non-human nature, away from the role and function attributed to them by society. As Sivan suggests in *Mar/cel 2 temps 1 mouvement*, the ready-made technique enables one to open up all existing objects to new interpretations, and thus to new social roles and functions, which can potentially lead to a social reconstruction of the world.<sup>64</sup>

Starting from the conviction that signs are nothing but material objects, Sivan extracts the non-philosophical fragments from their original contexts to deconstruct their original meaning and open them up to an infinite number of potential new meanings, roles, and functions.

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<sup>62</sup> Marcel Duchamp, in *L'Humour objectif : Roussel, Duchamp 'sur le capot'. L'objectivation du surréalisme*, by Marie J. A. Colombet (Paris: Publication Publibook, 2008), p. 342.

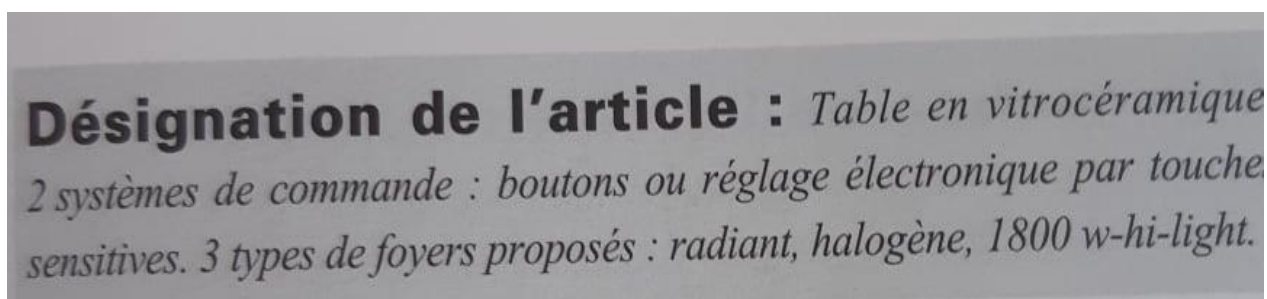
<sup>63</sup> In *Dictionnaire abrégé du surréalisme*, published in 1938, Breton and Éluard define the ready-made as an 'objet usuel promu à la dignité d'œuvre d'art par le simple choix de l'artiste.' (Bibliothèque Nationale de France, L'invention du surréalisme. Des "champs magnétiques" à "Nadja", 1-26 (p. 7) <[shorturl.at/bHRVW](http://shorturl.at/bHRVW)> [Accessed 18 April 2018].

<sup>64</sup> Sivan, *Mar/cel Duchamp 2 temps 1 mouvement* (Dijon: Les presses du réel, 2006), pp. 82-83 and pp. 98-101.

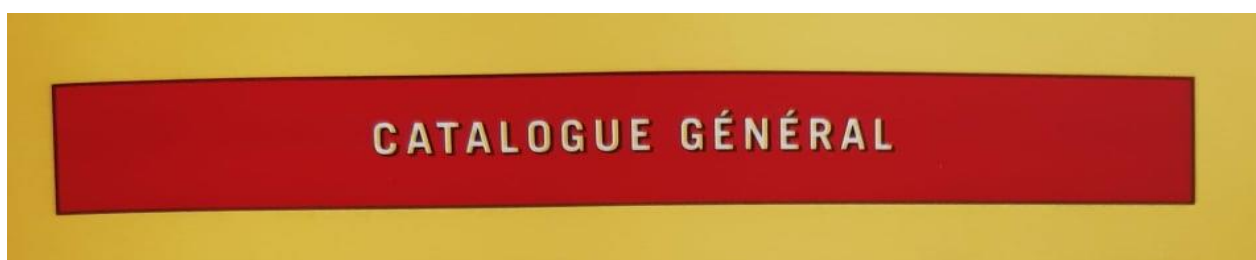
From Sivan's perspective, the ready-made technique enables one to fight the semiotic pollution caused by the capitalist order, which uses semiotic signs to control the minds and bodies of human beings, to create a new mental ecology. Rather than producing new signs that would further overwhelm them, the ready-made technique enables human beings to change the world with minimum effort.<sup>65</sup> The following sections will explore how we can understand Sivan's application of the ready-made technique to the different fragments of the non-philosophical assemblage and how these enable him to reach the goals described above.

### 2.3.1.3 The ready-made technique and the revelation of the social ontology of signs

The first goal that Sivan reaches using the ready-made technique is the revelation of the social nature of signs. In order to do so, Sivan decontextualises linguistic fragments taken from leaflets, posters, billboards, and catalogues and recontextualises them within the main body of the text.



LB, p. 38.



LB, p. n/a.

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid., p. 93.



LB, p. 17.

By decontextualising and rhizomatically recontextualising these fragments within the body of the collection, Sivan neutralises the social power of their words. In their new context, the linguistic signs of the various fragments no longer fulfil the function they had in their original contexts. Rather, they are reduced to nothing; they are transformed into pure graphic objects unable to convey any of the meaning they once carried. As Sivan explains in *Marc/cel. 2 Temps 1 Mouvements* the ready-made technique enables him to transform words into pure material objects.<sup>66</sup> Through the ready-made technique, words become ‘gris’, ‘banals’, ‘poussière de mots devenus transparents parce qu’en partie, ou totalement, vidés de l’énergie qu’ils ont perdue’.<sup>67</sup>

The ready-made cuts the connection between sign, meaning and referent, revealing the arbitrariness of this connection and highlighting that the appearance of a sign and what it signifies do not depend on a true essence of the object but rather on the meaning that the society which has generated it associates with it. By using the ready-made technique, Sivan suggests that words no longer depend on their original cultural environment.<sup>68</sup> Rather, they are freed from any imposition deriving from their original context and opened up to new uses and functions. As argued in the ‘Delimitation of the subject’, signs are used by societies to instruct human beings how to think. Once new uses and functions are activated through the ready-made technique, the non-philosophical fragments interfere with the functioning of society and set the conditions for new worlds and ways of being. Readers are free to give them new meaning and use them in a variety of new ways to produce new social interpretations of the matter of the world. However, if Sivan sets readers free to re-interpret the linguistic signs of the non-philosophical fragments, he makes a completely different use of the a-signifying signs, which are the focus of the next section.

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<sup>66</sup> Sivan, *Mar/cel Duchamp*, p. 101.

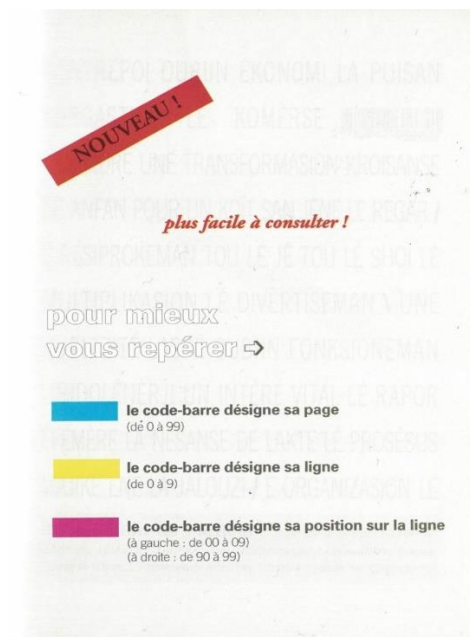
<sup>67</sup> Ibid., p. 101.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., p. 101.

### 2.3.1.4 Exemplifying the deterritorialisation of society through the ready-made technique

Sivan uses a-signifying signs, specifically barcodes, to exemplify how, by using the ready-made technique, readers can deterritorialise the contingent world and inaugurate the creation of a new one. Guattari identifies a-signifying signs with signs whose functioning is ‘whose actual functioning is neither symbolic nor signifying’ and identifies them for example with money, sounds, equations, functions, diagrams of science, music, etc.<sup>69</sup>

With barcodes, Sivan concretely shows how the reader can make a different use of semiotic signs to reshape the world anew. In *Le Bazar de l'Hôtel de Ville*, barcodes are no longer employed to identify items during transactions. Instead, they are used to help readers to orient themselves in the reading of the book – as the opening of the book itself suggests.



LB, p. n/a.

<sup>69</sup> Maurizio Lazzarato, ““Semiotic Pluralism” and the New Government of Signs. Homage to Félix Guattari.”, trans. by Mary O’ Neill, Transversal Texts, <https://transversal.at/transversal/0107/lazzarato/en>, [15 July 2018].



*LB*, p. 8.

The explanation provided at the beginning of the book clarifies how to use barcodes. The number highlighted in blue indicates the number of each page, the number highlighted in yellow indicates the line, and the number highlighted in pink indicates the position (right or left) of the barcode on the page. After de-assigning the economic function from barcodes, Sivan assigns them a completely new function, transforming *Le Bazar de l'Hôtel de Ville* into a site of transformation.

The process of de-assignment and re-assignment of a meaning exemplifies one of the paths that readers can take to start a social transformation. From this perspective, given the fact that the text challenges the meaning of barcodes by investing them with a new meaning and function, it can be seen as the first step of a process of social renovation that readers can potentially choose to push further in their everyday life.

### ***2.3.2 Des Vies sur Deuil Polaire***

The second *logosonoscope* that will be analysed to exemplify how Sivan constructs his texts as signs of new potential worlds is *Des Vies sur Deuil Polaire*. Sivan constructs the text as a series of portraits depicting the life of the inhabitants of a fictional planet called Deuil Polaire.

From the first lines of the book, the reader realises that the portraits of the inhabitants of Deuil Polaire in reality depict human beings, and Deuil Polaire is a metaphor for the capitalist order. Each portrait denounces the process of subjectivation of human beings in capitalist society, reactivating the reader's social awareness. The book forces the reader to reflect on the effect of subjectivation and the normalisation and acceptance of a series of violent and irrational practices and actions that society lead us to accomplish

The analysis of *Des Vies sur Deuil Polaire* is composed of two sections. The first section explains how the collection reveals and denounces the functioning and effects of the process of

subjectivation in capitalist society. The second section examines how the collection provides the reader with a tool for resisting capitalist subjectivation.

### 2.3.2.1 Capitalist subjectivation: how to exist in capitalist society

Before analysing the portraits that make up *Des Vies sur Deuil Polaire*, it is necessary to explain the reader what the process of subjectivation is and what its role is within capitalist society. Human beings, cannot exist outside society. The way human beings exist depends on society and on the way the collectivity they belong to constitutes them (AO). As Guattari observes in *Lignes de fuite : Pour un autre monde de possibles*, there is no such thing as a human essence: ‘L’idée d’un sujet transcendantal irréductible aux processus de contamination et d’assujettissement sémiotique est une pure fiction’ (LF, p. 35). In capitalist society, human beings are constituted and exist as fixed subjects (LF, p. 37-38). This is because, by using a series of semiotic machines, capitalist society equips them with a certain way of thinking, perceiving, remembering, and moving.<sup>70</sup>

[Mais] l’efficacité croissante des systèmes techniques et scientifiques, des méthodes d’assujettissements collectifs mis en place par les sociétés capitalistes – [...] – nous conduit à penser que rien ne pourra être soustrait aux machinations et aux équipements de la collectivité, pas même les composantes les plus intimes, les plus inaccessibles de l’individu : sa perception, son désir et même sa conscience sont en passe de devenir des « Équipements collectifs ». On est ainsi équipé d’une conscience située socialement, sexuellement, racialement, etc. On est équipé de « modèles » de perceptions, de motricité, d’intellection, d’imagination, de mémoire, différents selon chaque « poste » qui nous est attribué et en fonction de l’appartenance de caste, de classe et d’environnement qui nous a été fixée. (LF, pp. 37-38).

By doing so, as the different portraits in *Des Vies sur Deuil Polaire* reveal, capitalist society fixes human beings as social types. Each individual portrayed in the book<sup>71</sup> falls into a specific social category. Each category corresponds to a particular kind of ‘I’, of subjectivity, that society creates to bring order to its structures. By providing human beings with a specific ‘I’, capitalist society literally

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<sup>70</sup> Jonathan Dronsfield, ‘Deleuze and the Image of Thought’, *Philosophy Today*, 56.4 (2012), 404-414 (p. 411).

<sup>71</sup> The 21 portraits that constitute *Des Vies Sur Deuil Polaire* are: ‘terraformateur’, ‘peintre’, ‘enfant’, ‘femme battue’, ‘anaborg’, ‘terroriste’, ‘boucher’, ‘musicienne’, ‘porté-disparu’, ‘mathématicienne’, ‘directeur de réseau’, ‘intellectuelle engagée’, ‘financier’, ‘starlette’, ‘chercheur’, ‘braqueur’, ‘ado addict’, ‘journaliste’, ‘cybergirl’, ‘spationaute’, ‘mercenaire’.

makes sense of the human matter. This has two consequences, as the portraits in the collection illustrate. On the one hand, it standardises human existence. Each portrait in the book can be read as a description of millions of people living around the world. On the other hand, it normalises the irrational, oppressive and violent practices and habits derived from the hierarchical and binary logic that regulates its functioning. The next two sections will focus on these two effects produced by the capitalist process of constructing the subject.

### **2.3.2.2 Capitalist subjectivation and the standardisation of human life in the 21st century**

The standardising effects of capitalist subjectivation can be detected at two levels: at the level of the social category that individuals belong to and at a general level beyond social categorisation. As the portraits of *Des Vies sur Deuil Polaire* show, the prefabricated 'I' that capitalist society arbitrarily provides make each human being exist exactly like any other person that has been attributed the same subjectivity and fall in the same category. This is because the 'I' that society provides the human being functions as a rigid mould that shapes human existence.<sup>72</sup> In the capitalist world, individuals are never completely free to explore new forms of being and existing; their thought is trapped in the rigid mental circuits of the arborescent mental scheme at the basis of the dominant mode of thinking, which always makes them think and behave in the same way (*MP*, pp. 27-28; *QP*, p. 41). Each type of 'I' produced by capitalist society is characterised by a specific set of ideas, values, and behaviours. As the portraits in *Des Vie sur Deuil Polaire* suggest, life within capitalist society is a sequence of stereotypical thoughts and actions, leaving little space for differentiation.

By eliminating all the elements that would individuate specific individuals, Sivan constructs the portraits of *Des Vies sur Deuil Polaire*, in such a way that each can stand for every individual falling into the category described. 'journaliste' and 'le porté-disparu' provide two great examples in this regard. 'journaliste' stands for the millions of young journalists who face the hostility of their parents, who wish they had a more stable job, and writing about the same topics, such as minorities, drugs, and rebellions:

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<sup>72</sup> Marcelo Otero, 'La sociologie de Michel Foucault : une critique de la raison impure', *Sociologie et Sociétés*, 38.2 (2006), 49-72 (p. 55).



son père représentant de commerce et sa mère coiffeuse auraient préféré qu'il ait un emploi stable [...]

l'adrénaline et la peur il les a connues à ses débuts de journaliste [...] il tourne son premier reportage sur une vieille station orbitale occupée par une communauté rom et couvre les débuts du conflit à novolog (...) il retourne à coca-state puis ce sont les massacres en friches du nord puis la révolte à / kharmaspeed et dernièrement l'anéantissement de nitropôl [...].<sup>73</sup>

c'est l'histoire d'un journaliste envoyé à trans'humanadeath pour couvrir la révolution populaire sandiniste [...] (DV, p. 75)

'le porté-disparu' stands for the millions of homeless people, whose lives on the street are more exposed than others to a destiny of drug addictions.

depuis pas mal d'années il s'anéantit dans l'alcool et le crack  
[...]  
il le tutoie aimablement et lui murmure à l'oreille  
[...]  
il lui prépare une injection. (DV, p. 37-38).

The differences between one social category and another rely on the social perspective each has been given. Each social type has a particular way of thinking and behaving, depending on the identity, social role, and position they have been given and occupy within capitalist society. However, these differences are superficial. The logic of thinking at the basis of the different social categories follows the same rules. As Guattari observes:

On équipe de types de perception différents les travailleurs manuels et les bureaucrates, on équipe des modules de désir différents les ménagères et les managers. Mais tous ces éléments de base proviennent de la même sorte d'usinage, des mêmes Équipements collectifs : c'est seulement à partir de leur composition qu'on parviendra à établir une diversité (fonctionnelle et promotionnelle) correspondant aux nécessités de l'organisation sociale capitaliste et au type de division du travail qui lui correspond. (LF, p. 38)

Everyone, regardless of the category they belong to, thinks and behaves according to the logic of binary oppositions and hierarchical relations that characterise the hierarchical, tree-like image of thought<sup>74</sup> and the values of capitalism. This has serious consequences; it further standardises the way of being within the capitalist system.

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<sup>73</sup> For 'le journaliste', see: Jacques Sivan, *Des Vies sur Deuil Polaire* (Paris: Al Dante, 2012), p. 73. Henceforth, all references to this volume will occur in the text preceded by DV.

<sup>74</sup> The image of thought can be conceived as the mental schema that informs thought how to make sense of the world.

### 2.3.2.3 Subjectivation and the normalisation of human behaviour

By making human beings exist as subjects, capitalist society not only standardises their existences, but it also detaches them from the world, guiding them to accomplish a series of actions which go against themselves, other human beings, and the other living creatures populating the planet. In this regard, ‘cybergirl’, ‘financier’, and ‘boucher’ are perfect examples.

#### 2.3.2.3.1 ‘cybergirl’: between self-sabotage and the sabotage of the collective intelligence

‘cybergirl’ reveals how a dysregulated use of the Internet can disconnect the human being from the world by making them experience ‘une forme d’autofiction’ (DV, p. 77) and ‘des réalités fantasmatiques’ (DV, p. 78) that deactivate their ability to live and think creatively. Real-life frustrations lead people to take refuge in the cyber world, also known as virtual reality, with catastrophic social results.<sup>75</sup> Cyber worlds cut the bond between individuals and the world they live in, between their mind and their body; they disintegrate their collective intelligence and their ability to exist in a group.<sup>76</sup> Collective intelligence can loosely be described as the natural ability of human beings to connect their brains and collectively unfold their thought to actualise society, build the world.

As Waralack V. Siricharoen observes, the cyber world functions as a pole of attraction for people with interpersonal and/or psychological issues.<sup>77</sup> Unsatisfied with their lives, more and more people escape everyday life through the Internet.<sup>78</sup> This is because in capitalist society the cyber world is presented as an alternative world where human beings can freely express themselves for what they

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<sup>75</sup> See: Daria J. Kuss, Mark D. Griffiths, *Internet addiction in Psychotherapy* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015) <[https://play.google.com/books/reader?id=tlfVBQAAQBAJ&pg=GBS.PT4.w.5.0.3\\_179&hl=it](https://play.google.com/books/reader?id=tlfVBQAAQBAJ&pg=GBS.PT4.w.5.0.3_179&hl=it)> [Accessed 17 July 2021].

<sup>76</sup> Francesca Bria, Federico Primosig, ‘Introduction: Internet as commons or capture of collective intelligence’, in *Internet as common or capture of collective intelligence. Seminar proceedings*, ed. by Francesca Bria, Federico Primosig, 2nd edn (D-cent: 2015), pp. 3-7 (p. 4); Franco Berardi, ‘Debate between Franco Berardi (aka Bifo) and Maurizio Lazzarato’, in *Internet as common or capture of collective intelligence. Seminar proceedings*, pp. 20-24 (p. 21).

<sup>77</sup> Waralack V. Siricharoen, ‘The Effect of Virtual Reality as a Form of Escapism’, *Conf-irm 2019 Proceedings*, 36, 5 (2019), 1-9 (pp. 5-6).

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4; Joost Van Loon, *Media Technology: Critical Perspectives* (Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2008), p. III.

truly are, regardless of their identity, role, or position in the *real world*.<sup>79</sup> This is also the case for the young woman depicted in ‘cybergirl’. When the cyber girl logs onto the Internet, the narrator explains, she has the impression of flying to a different world: ‘la nuit quand tout est endormi elle a parfois la sensation de voler sur une planète silencieuse et déserte’ (DV, p. 78). The cybergirl in question seems to take refuge in the cyberworld from her discomfort with her body. As she suggests, she does not like her appearance and struggles to conform with the beauty stereotypes of capitalist society: ‘si c’était à me refaire je me concevrais aussi une blonde que j’appellerais greta [...] les cheveux roux ça m’allait atrocement mal [...]’ (DV, pp. 78-79).

However, as Sivan suggests with this text, the cyberworld is not a place where people can be what they really are. Rather, it is a trap disseminated by capitalist society to deeply penetrate and control their minds and bodies. By logging onto the Internet, the cybergirl does not explore an alternative planet but rather the insidious outskirts of the capitalist world. With the cyber world, capitalist society provides human beings with a second ‘I’ that disconnects them from the rest of the world and transforms them into puppets to be more easily manipulated.<sup>80</sup>

Although the cybergirl believes herself to be in connection with others (‘je crois que mes interactions fantasmées me socialisent beaucoup (DV, p. 78)’), the description of her daily routine at work suggests something very different: ‘ses journées sont chronométrées et son bureau précise-t-elle est stérilisé quotidiennement’ (DV p. 79). The idea that she sterilises her office daily betrays a disgust and fear towards human corporeality. Rather than being connected to others, the cybergirl is disconnected from the rest of the community. This point is further reinforced by her lost awareness of being a human being: ‘pendant très longtemps j’étais un cyborg emprisonné dans une sorte de singe’ (DV, p. 78). The young woman described in the text spends so much time in the virtual world that not only does she take it for the real world, but she is no longer even aware of her human nature. All this, as the text implies, has very serious consequences both for her well-being and the well-being of the community she belongs to. Disconnected from others, the cybergirl is unable to think of a better and different world for herself and the rest of the community. Her cyber interactions anaesthetise her thought, preventing her from taking any action against the capitalist system, which is the very cause of her unhappiness and isolation. It is capitalist society that makes her feel frustrated for not fitting its aesthetic standards and leads her to take refuge in the cyber world, where she is provided with a subjectivity that flattens and empties her existence of human contact.

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<sup>79</sup> Richard Coyne, *Technoromanticism: Digital Narrative, Holism, and the Romance of the Real*, 2nd edn (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2001), p. 4.

<sup>80</sup> Maurizio Lazzarato, ‘Interview with Maurizio Lazzarato’, in *Internet as common or capture of collective intelligence*, pp. 25-27 (p. 26).

This text does not criticise the use of the Internet *tout court*. Rather it warns about the dangers that can result from its dysregulated use in the light of the fact that capitalist society uses it as a means to suffocate the creative flow of thought, and thus any potential revolutionary move.

### 2.3.2.3.2 ‘financier’: sabotaging other people

‘financier’ shows how bankers and financiers subordinate their entire existence to capital. The portrait reveals how society strips bankers and financiers of their empathy and compassion towards other human beings in order to drive them to do whatever is necessary to produce capital: ‘je pense toujours à ce que je dois faire pour que l’autre soit mort [...]’, ‘il n’était pas le genre de financier rongé par des remords’ (DV, p. 53-54).

Bankers and financiers, as the portrait suggests, can remorselessly cause financial crisis and put people in precarious financial positions in order to profit from the collapse of the market and their bankruptcy: ‘faire des affaires signifiait pour lui dénicher des sociétés [...] les racheter avec un montage financier fait de dettes [...] les valoriser [...] puis les revendre cinq à sept ans plus tard après une jolie culbute financière [...] si la crise a été pour lui une source de stress elle a été aussi pleine d’opportunités’ (DV, p. 53-54).

As the portrait shows the ‘I’ bankers and financiers are given by capitalist society does not allow them to empathise with or understand others. Bankers and financiers are unable to connect with others and feel part of the community of human beings. Their energy and ability to think are oriented towards the construction and reinforcement of the established order. Capitalist society transforms bankers and financiers into its messengers and servants; it uses them to better control and manipulate people. The precarious financial conditions that financiers and bankers often cause oblige people to accept capitalist society’s conditions, preventing them from freely and creatively living their lives.

However, as Sivan implies with the description of this financier, the reason why bankers and financiers are willing to behave immorally is not that they are naturally evil. Rather, it is because they are often led by the need for money that everyone has in capitalist society, where money is necessary to pay for food, shelter, and very often medical assistance. People usually choose a banking and/or finance career for the salary that jobs in this field can guarantee, and therefore for the living standards that they can give. As the text suggests, the financier described chose a career in finance to have better life standards than his dad: ‘petit fils d’immigré il aurait pu comme son père finir à la caisse d’une des boutiques familiales de linge de maison’ (DV, p. 53). The speaking voice highlights that his

parents were immigrants, and his father worked as a cashier, implicitly suggesting that their living standards were average, or slightly lower than average. This is in light of the fact that, in France, as in any other Western country, immigrants who do not have a solid cultural background face difficulties of integration and, in the contemporary capitalist world, the salary of cashiers is too low to guarantee high living standards. If the financier described in the portrait had not wished for a different future for himself than that traced by his family history, his living standards would have been very different.

This text does not justify fraudulent behaviour, rather Sivan denounces the way in which capitalist society puts people in a position where, to simply have a good life, they are often led to accept that they will have to behave immorally.

### **2.3.2.3.3 ‘boucher’: violence against the other living creatures populating the world**

With this very short portrait, Sivan shows how, by creating the ‘I’ of the butcher, society normalises violence against other living creatures inhabiting the planet. Butchers kill animals and handle their inner organs without remorse. As the portrait illustrates, the *boucher*, similar to the man described in ‘financier’, is unable to empathise with others; in particular, he is unable to empathise with other living species: ‘[...] c’est pendant son stage en boucherie qu’il apprend l’art de l’épluchage d’une viande ôter la couenne le gras le cartilage les nerfs [...]’ (DV, p. 30).

Butchers accomplish cruel acts against certain animals, to which capitalist society gives the role and function of both a source of nutrition for human beings and a source of income, consolidating the irrational and evil habit of killing animals. The violence of this act is emphasised by describing what the job of the butcher of the portrait consists of: ‘ôter la couenne le gras le/ cartilage les nerfs’ (DV, p. 30). This description vividly depicts the process through which meat is prepared, something that consumers forget. Meat comes from animals, and though animals are not recognisable in meat dishes, the preparation processes invariably consists in the dismemberment of their bodies. As David Nibert notes in *Animal oppression and capitalism*, this eating habit began 50,000 years ago when human

beings invented weapons and began hunting other animals.<sup>81</sup> Hunting remained the only method for meat foraging until 10,000 years ago, when human beings began to capture and breed animals.<sup>82</sup>

Today, breeding has intensified. This is because, as previously explained, in capitalist society, animals not only represent a source of food but also, and more significantly, a source of income. Capitalist society commodifies animals to transform them into objects that can be bought and sold to feed the market.<sup>83</sup> Today, the oppression of other animal species for food consumption and capital production is the deadliest practice put in place by human beings; as Niberts observes:

The oppression of other animals for food is unquestionably the deadliest practice; globally, more than 65 billion land-based beings are killed for food every year, while the water-base animals killed for food number in the hundreds of billions. The physical and emotional suffering from such horrific treatment experienced by each individual being, multiplied by the millions of individual animals who undergo it, results in a high degree of severe distress and pain every second that defies comprehension.<sup>84</sup>

To enable butchers to use violence against other animal species, capitalist society devalues the life of certain animals according to the hierarchical logic at its basis, and it provides them with a subjectivity that not only makes them perceive the other animal species as hierarchically inferior but also, and more significantly, makes them subordinate the lives of billions of living creatures to the needs of capital. As many scholars, such as Maša Blaznik and Michael Lebwohl, observe, this has serious consequences on the mental health of butchers and society.<sup>85</sup> The proximity to death and the violence butchers are daily obliged to use against non-humans expose them to PITS, perpetration-induced traumatic stress, which causes desensitisation and alienation.<sup>86</sup> The routinised intentional killing of animals, as the following anonymous testimony of a butcher working in an American slaughterhouse taken from *Slaughterhouse: The shocking story of Greed, Neglect, and Inhumane Treatment Inside the U.S Meat Industry* by Gail A. Eisnitz highlights, depersonalises butchers and inhibits their empathy, cutting their connection with reality:

But when you are standing there night after night, digging that knife into these hogs, and they're fighting you, kicking at you, squealing, trying to bite you

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<sup>81</sup> David Nibert, *Animal Oppression and Capitalism: The Oppression of Non-Human Animals as a Source of Food*, 2 vols (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2017), I, p. XI.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., p. XI.

<sup>83</sup> Steven McMullen, 'Is Capitalism to Blame? Animal Lives in the Marketplace', *Journal of Animal Ethics*, 5.2 (2015), 126-134 (p. 126).

<sup>84</sup> Nibert, p. XI.

<sup>85</sup> Maša Blaznik, 'Training Young Killers: How Butchers' Education Might Be Damaging Young People', *Journal of Animal Ethics*, 8.2 (2020), 199- 215 (p. 199); Michael Lebwohl, 'A Call to Action: Psychological Harm in Slaughterhouse Workers', *The Yale Global Health Review*, 25 January 2016, <<https://yaleglobalhealthreview.com/2016/01/25/a-call-to-action-psychological-harm-in-slaughterhouse-workers/>> [Accessed 15 January 2020].

<sup>86</sup> Lebwohl, [online].

doing whatever they can try to get away from you after a while you don't give a shit. You're just putting in your time. And then it gets to a point where you're at a daydream stage. Where you can think about everything else and still do your job. You become emotionally dead.<sup>87</sup>

All this has two serious consequences. On the one hand, the desensitisation and depersonalisation caused by the violence of their job make butchers more prone to aggressiveness outside their workplace.<sup>88</sup> On the other hand, it freezes the natural creative potential of their thought. It prevents them from thinking of a different world and life for themselves and the billions of animals which they subjugate daily, reinforcing the hierarchical logic at the basis of the capitalist order.

With this text, Sivan implicitly stresses the irrationality of the animal industry that affects the life of animals and society as a whole.

#### **2.3.2.4 *Des Vies sur Deuil Polaire*: a tool to resist subjectivation and the capitalist system**

Although all the portraits in *Des Vies sur Deuil Polaire* show that the capitalist 'I' standardises human existence and normalises a series of irrational behaviours, amounting to a dark picture of the effects of subjectivation at the basis of capitalist society, they also provide the reader with a tool to resist. By revealing the effects that our actions and practices have, *Des Vies sur Deuil Polaire* potentially reactivates the reader's social awareness. The different portraits describe the violence and irrationality of certain habits and practices that are normalised and well-integrated in everyday life by society, forcing the reader to reflect upon them.

In addition, it is interesting to analyse the role of the strings of texts that alternate the sentences written in Standard French.

ssssssssss tock sssssss ééééédim'éééééééééérrrrrooooozzzzz d  
 éééééchaaaaarrjmengravvmnt  
 [...]  
 uuuuuuuptuuuuurrrr sssssss ououououduuuuuurrtrrr  
 sssssssss ououououl èèèèèvvvmm cccc croûoûoût cccrrrrrr  
 aaaaaaqm'berj xxxxxplll oozzzzzz plll aaaaq. (DV, p. 53)

<sup>87</sup> Gail. A Eisnitz, *Slaughterhouse: The Shocking Story of Greed, Neglect, and Inhumane Treatment Inside the U.S Meat Industry* (Amherst: Prometheus Books, 2007), p. 75.

<sup>88</sup> Lebwohl, [online].

Although the presence of these strings of text lends itself to different interpretations, here they are read as an attempt to show the natural possibility of thought to escape society's stimuli, and therefore also its rigid subjectivation. The strings of texts that cross the book seem to be an exemplification of the natural flow of thought. As Deleuze and Guattari explain in *Le Rhizome*, thought is unstructured until society shapes it through an image of thought (*MP*, p. 22). The presence of these non-sensical strings of words testify to the natural possibility for thought to escape order and the stimuli of society and to think free from its conditioning, and from there prove the possibility of transforming it, of rethinking it to shape a new world.

### 2.3.3 *Alias Jacques Bonhomme*

The third *logosonoscope* that will be studied in this chapter is *Alias Jacques Bonhomme*. Sivan wrote this book in collaboration with Charles Pennequin, one of the most influential French contemporary anti-capitalist poets. The idea of writing a poetry collection in collaboration with another poet is quite provocative. It undermines the mainstream idea of poetry as the personal expression of the poet's inner world. By writing the book together, Sivan and Pennequin reveal its impersonal and machinic nature, challenging the idea of the poet as an extraordinary being able to express their true essence.

The text can be read as a sort of post-structuralist evolution of the epic and is conceived as an anti-epic collection. Epic has traditionally been used as an instrument to fulfil specific political goals: building the national identity of citizens, circulating the ideology at the basis of the established order, and reinforcing the functioning of the institutions that structure it.<sup>89</sup> *Alias Jacques Bonhomme* does the opposite; it challenges the process of subjectivation by capitalist society, deconstructs its hierarchical logic, and reactivates the reader's social awareness by revealing its dysfunctional mechanisms. As we read on the back cover of the book:

[...] *alias Jacques Bonhomme* est une révolte, une jacquerie contre l'injustice et l'oppression au cours desquelles le/les sujet(s) se disséminent, s'épuisent, se reconstruisent, meurent et revivent – comme dans ces jeux-vidéos où les personnages ne cessent de changer d'apparence selon les aléas d'un combat inlassable. Cette révolte prend la forme d'une atroce et pourrissante pérégrination en milieu hostile, une sorte de tapisserie de Bayeux à n dimensions où toutes les époques, les personnes, les situations et les places

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<sup>89</sup> 'epic' in *Encyclopedia Britannica* [online], <<https://www.britannica.com/art/epic>> [Accessed 28 February 2021].



s'interpénètrent dans une sorte de décomposition générale, un magma compostellan.<sup>90</sup>

*Alias Jacques Bonhomme* describes the peregrination of an army fighting against the capitalist order. During its fight, the institutions and ideological apparatus of the capitalist system are attacked with the aim of reconfiguring them and paving the way for a new socio-political organisation. There are therefore substantial differences between Sivan and Pennequin's text and traditional epic. The plot of epic poems usually develops around a single figure, that of the hero or the heroine invested with the mission of saving the community to which he or she belongs from some evil force that threatens it. Although these characters are equipped with great qualities and accomplish extraordinary actions, they are not the agents of their destiny.<sup>91</sup> The outcome of their mission completely depends on the will of supernatural creatures that can help or obstruct them.<sup>92</sup> However, epic hero(in)es usually enjoy the protection of good forces and succeed in their mission, even when they die. Epic poems generally end with the defeat of the evil force threatening the community of the hero(ine) and the affirmation of peace.

*Alias Jacques Bonhomme* has a very different dynamic. First, the plot does not develop around a single hero or heroine but around an army, a group of individuals that the speaking voices of the book call 'jacques' or 'jacquotité'. As very often happens with Sivan's texts, his name is used as a synonym for 'human being(s)' and 'individual(s)'. This group of individuals does not embody the value of the established order. Rather, they attack it. The mission of the protagonists of *Alias Jacques Bonhomme* is to challenge the capitalist ideology.

Second, unlike in traditional epic where the narrator is external and omniscient, in *Alias Jacques Bonhomme*, it is internal. The voice that narrates the story sometimes belongs to the *jacques* around which the topic develops and sometimes to the fictional leader of the *jacques* described, named 'jacques bonhomme'.<sup>93</sup> 'jacques bonhomme' is a clear reference to the revolts that took place in northern France in 1358 during the *Guerre de Cent ans*. 'Jacques Bonhomme' was the title given by the nobles to the peasants that joined the revolts.

Third, the destiny of *Alias Jacques Bonhomme*'s characters does not depend on the will of supernatural creatures but rather on themselves. The characters populating the collection are the

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<sup>90</sup> Cover, *Alias Jacques Bonhomme*.

<sup>91</sup> Lauri Harvilahti, 'Epos and National Identity: Transformations and Incarnations', *Oral Tradition*, 11.1 (1996), 37-49 (p. 37); 'epic' in *Encyclopedia Britannica* [online].

<sup>92</sup> Mogens Brøndsted, 'The transformation of the concept of fate in literature', *Scripta Instituti Donneriani Aboensis*, (1967), 172-178 (pp. 177-178).

<sup>93</sup> As it is often hard to understand whether it is the army of *jacques* or their leaders who speak, from now on, when it is not possible to clearly identify a speaker, it will be referred to as 'the speaking voice(s)'.

active agents of their destiny. Through their actions, characters can constantly construct and deconstruct their lives and futures, paving the way to ever new worlds and ways of being.

Fourth, *Alias Jacques Bonhomme* is open-ended. If traditional epic ends with the restoration of the initial order, due to its rhizomatic nature – *Alias Jacques Bonhomme* has been rhizomatically constructed from the connection of a main block of text with a series of secondary shorter texts, images, and drawings – it does not have a real beginning nor end. As Deleuze and Guattari write: ‘Un rhizome ne commence et n’aboutit pas, il est toujours au milieu, entre les choses, inter-être, intermezzo.’ (MP, p. 36). *Alias Jacques Bonhomme* is a flux of signs with no subject nor object. It does not have a clear plot nor tell a story in a traditional sense. Its power lies in the activation of an unpredictable process of deterritorialisation that arises from the deconstruction of language, time, and space which can potentially make the reader see the world differently and change the mode of social production, the way human groups organise the world. This will be the focus of the next few sections. After presenting the anti-capitalist mission of the protagonists of the text, it will be explained how *Alias Jacques Bonhomme* effectively interferes with the oppressive functioning of the capitalist world.

### 2.3.3.1 A mission against capitalism

The main block of text that makes up *Alias Jacques Bonhomme* coincides with the enunciation of the *jacques* and their leader, Jacques Bonhomme, around whom and through whom the narration develops. Throughout the book, the two speaking voices are suggested to be an army or the leader of an army fighting against a bank called Goldman Sack, that clearly alludes to the Goldman Sachs Group, and metaphorically stands for the capitalist order.

The Goldman Sachs Group is an American multinational investment and financial service company.<sup>94</sup> It was founded in America in 1869 by a German immigrant, Marcus Goldman.<sup>95</sup> The Goldman Sachs Group is currently one of the biggest banking enterprises in the world.<sup>96</sup> In the last thirty years, it has been the object of numerous controversies, especially for its role in the financial

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<sup>94</sup> Goldman Sachs, ‘Our Firm’, <<https://www.goldmansachs.com/our-firm/>> [Accessed 18 July 2019].

<sup>95</sup> *The Goldman Sachs Group. Insider Group* (Philadelphia: Wefeet, 2009), p. 13.

<sup>96</sup> Goldman Sachs, ‘Our Firm’, [online].

crisis of 2007 – 2008.<sup>97</sup> According to the numerous investigations that have been conducted, the Goldman Sachs Group purposely misled its investors to profit from the collapse of the international market of 2007 – 2008.<sup>98</sup>

Due to the financial nature of contemporary capitalism, Goldman Sack can be seen as a metaphor for the contemporary capitalist system. As explained in Chapter 1, in the 1970s, capitalism changed its configuration, passing from industrial to financial. If until the 1970s, capital was primarily perpetuated through industrial production, since then, capital has mainly been produced through the financial system. With this shift in the mode of capital production, finance came to play a crucial role in the process of life-shaping. In contemporary capitalist society, the financial and banking system dictates the rules of the whole society.

The speaking voice(s) of *Alias Jacques Bonhomme* describe(s) Goldman Sack as ‘un empire invisible [...] sans enseigne sans agence sans visage’<sup>99</sup>, which ‘opère dans le monde entier’ (*AJB*, p. 12) through the circulation of a ‘pensée unique’ (*AJB*, p. 31), that is to say a mode of thinking that makes human beings think of the world according to its logic, values, ideas, and beliefs. Western capitalist societies are all governed by the same capitalist values and vision of the world.<sup>100</sup>

The characters of *Alias Jacques Bonhomme* are invested in a mission to counter the circulation of this *pensée unique* and to free human beings from its conditioning. What is interesting to notice here is that, whilst narrating its characters’ mission, *Alias Jacques Bonhomme* seems to aim at accomplishing the same mission. By manipulating language, time, and space, the collection can potentially hack the way readers think, interfering with the dominant Western capitalist vision of the world. The book denounces the use of language, time and space in capitalist societies, and especially of Western capitalist societies, which are the birthplace of capitalism, reactivating social awareness, but it can also potentially make the reader think and perceive differently through the manipulation of language and the spatio-temporal features of the text.

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<sup>97</sup> Jana Kasperkevic, ‘Goldman Sachs to pay \$5bn for its role in the 2008 financial crisis’, *The Guardian*, 11 April 2016, <<https://www.theguardian.com/business/2016/apr/11/goldman-sachs-2008-financial-crisis-mortgage-backed-securities>> [Accessed 14 June 2018];

<sup>98</sup> See: US Government, *The Financial Crisis Inquiry Report: Final report of the National Commission on the Causes of the Financial and Economic Crisis in the United States* (Washington: Official Government Edition, 2011).

<sup>99</sup> Jacques Sivan, Charles Pennequin, *Alias Jacques Bonhomme* (Paris: Al Dante, 2014), p. 70; Henceforth, all references to this volume will occur in the text preceded by *AJB*.

<sup>100</sup> The dominant ideology in Western countries is based on the ethics of work and consumerism. Although non-Western countries are less ideologically capitalist than Western countries, as explained in the first chapter, they are still economically implicated in the capitalist system, and since the Eighties, as a result of Westernisation, they are even undergoing a process of integrating the capitalist values within their traditional systems.<sup>100</sup> Numerous thinkers around the world from Japanese scholar Turi Nishigaki to American social psychologist Kenneth Keniston or British militant Helen Norberg-Hodge have warned about the consequences of this process, as it may lead to the progressive and gradual elimination of difference in favour of the development of a capitalist-consumerism monoculture. (Norberg-Hodge, [online]; Keniston, [online].)

The next few sections will investigate how *Alias Jacques Bonhomme* does this effectively. First, they will describe how the collection denounces the use of language, time, and space by capitalist society to circulate its model of thinking. Then, they will explain how the text interferes with this circulation.

### **2.3.3.1.1 *Pensée unique* and language**

The speaking voice(s) of *Alias Jacques Bonhomme* suggest(s) that Goldman Sack, and thus capitalist society, uses language to spread its *pensée unique*, suffocating the natural creativity of thought and standardising human existence. As they claim: ‘les paroles empoisonnent la vie/ (...) les paroles tordent la vie/ jusqu’au point où c’est plus respirable/ les paroles font comme un plâtre / et du coup la vie étouffe’ (*AJB*, p. 92). The French word ‘parole’ can be translated as both ‘word’ and ‘speech’, and it seems to be used here as a synecdoche for language. In light of this, it is easy to see that what the speaking voice tries to say is that capitalist society uses language to twist human existence. This idea is also confirmed by the fact that the speaking voice(s) suggest(s) that language is something that moulds life from the inside: ‘les paroles il y a ce truc de pas clair / qui grouille en dedans de la vie’ (*AJB*, p. 92). Societies build and use language to establish their mode of existence and that of the non-human things. As Deleuze and Guattari explain, language does not belong to the field of communication but to that of order and commands (*MP*, p. 96). As they argue throughout ‘Postulat de la linguistique’, language is a medium through which people establish a socio-political order, define their rules of existence, and circulate the commands that must be followed to maintain order.

### **2.3.3.1.2 *Pensée unique* and time and space**

As Jacques Bonhomme explains, time and space ‘remplissent une fonction économique’ (*AJB*, p. 92). Time and space are not neutral. Not only are they socially constructed, but they also play a pivotal role in the process of social reproduction.<sup>101</sup> In the capitalist world, they condition the way human

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<sup>101</sup> David Harvey, ‘Between Space and Time: Reflections on the Geographical Imagination’, *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 80.3 (1990), 418-434 (p. 418).

beings think, subordinating their existence to finance. Capitalist society uses time and space as two means of circulating its logic and trapping human beings into its structure to profit from them and make them produce capital.<sup>102</sup>

As Goudsblom observes, ‘time is a socio-cultural construction which aids people in their effort to collectively orient themselves in the world and coordinate their activity’.<sup>103</sup> In the specific case of capitalist society, time enables people to coordinate human activity, and in particular the production of capital. To this end, capitalist society rationally and hierarchically organises time into clock-time units.<sup>104</sup> Though clock-time is a characteristic of the capitalist world, its origins are much more ancient. Clock-time originated in 14th-century Europe as a form of social time related to pre-capitalist commercial activities.<sup>105</sup> However, it is with the Industrial Revolution and the actualisation of capitalist society, that clock-time assumes a hegemonic role in the organisation and measurement of time in Europe (as well as the rest of the world as a result of Imperialism).<sup>106</sup> Due to its rational structure, clock-time allows society to divide time into quantifiable units, which enables the synchronisation of action at a global scale but also to plan, schedule and quantify labour, and so the production of capital.<sup>107</sup>

In the capitalist system, labour and work acquire a completely different meaning than in previous social formations. They become instruments for reaching the ultimate goal of society: the production of the capital. The temporal infrastructure that clock-time units create generates a system in which time can be bought and sold.<sup>108</sup> Forced by the circumstances dictated by the capitalist order, workers sell their time on the market.<sup>109</sup> Although they remain in possession of it, they share ownership with employers who do everything possible to control and profit from it.<sup>110</sup> This has clear consequences for human beings. As Foucault suggests, the temporal infrastructure of capitalist

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid., p. 418.

<sup>103</sup> Johan Goudsblom, ‘The Worm and the Clock: On the Genesis of a Global Time Regime’, in *Time Matters: Global and Local Time in Asian Societies*, ed. by Willem van Schendel, Henk Schulte Nordholt (Amsterdam: VU University Press, 2001), pp. 19-36 (p. 20).

<sup>104</sup> Peter Osborne, *The Politics of Time: Modernity and Avant-garde* (London: Verso, 1995), p. 34.

<sup>105</sup> Jonathan Martineau, *Time, Capitalism and Alienation: A Socio-Historical Inquiry into the Making of Modern Time* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), p. 107.

<sup>106</sup> Martineau, p. 108.

<sup>107</sup> Osborne, p. 34; Judith Walker, ‘Exploring the Academic Capitalist Time Regime’, in *Academic Capitalism in the Age of Globalization*, by Brendan Cantwell, Ilkka Kaupinnen (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2014), pp. 55-73 (p. 57).

<sup>108</sup> Steven Peter Vallas, *Work* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012), p. 20.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., p. 20.

society captures human beings in a temporal mesh that ensures that their life is subjected to the time of production.<sup>111</sup>

Capitalist society subordinates time to the needs of the capital. Work time is given priority over time for gratification and pleasure, indirectly leading people to prioritise work no matter what.<sup>112</sup> As Weber observes, working long shifts is amongst the greatest moral virtues in the capitalist system.<sup>113</sup> Capitalist society teaches its members that time is money, affecting the way they conceive labour and, more generally, how they live.

In addition, the rational and hierarchical organisation of time in capitalist society prompts human beings to think according to its arborescent model of thinking, preventing them from seeing their oppression. In capitalist society, time fuels the process through which human groups create order; it circulates the logic that regulates it, standardising modes of thinking and the behaviour of individuals.

Something similar happens with space. Societies produce space to meet their own needs.<sup>114</sup> As Foucault observes, the history of space explains and reflects the history of power, that is to say the history of the different social formations thus far actualised:

Il y aurait toute une histoire des espaces qui serait en même temps une histoire des pouvoirs - depuis les grandes stratégies de la géopolitique jusqu'aux petites tactiques de l'habitat, de l'architecture institutionnelle, de la salle de classe ou de l'organisation hospitalière, en passant par les implantations économico-politiques. Il est surprenant de voir combien le problème de l'espace a mis longtemps à apparaître comme problème historico-politique.<sup>115</sup>

As the *jacques* suggest, the way society organises space influences the way human beings assemble, exist as a community, and define their mode of social production: 'c'est la façon dont l'espace est simulé qui définit les types de jeu où nous jacques gens des villes champêtres sans chef nous nous assemblons et disons toujours selon ces règles' (*AJB*, p. 6). In the case of capitalist society, space is used to produce capital. Capital society rationalises and homogenises space in order to orient it

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<sup>111</sup> Michel Foucault, in Chris Philo, 'Doing space and star power: Foucault, exclusion – inclusion and the spatial history of social policy, in *Towards a Spatial Social Policy: Bridging the Gap Between Geography and Social Policy*, ed. by Adam Whitworth, (Bristol: Policy Press, 2019), pp. 41-70 (p. 57).

<sup>112</sup> E.P Thompson, 'Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism', *Past & Present*, 38 (1967), 56-97 (p. 93); Judith Walker, p. 57.

<sup>113</sup> As Weber observes, in capitalist society, working long shifts is amongst the greatest of moral virtues. (Max Weber, in Judith Walker, p. 57).

<sup>114</sup> Andrej Zieleniec, 'Lefebvre's Politics of Space: Planning the Urban as Oeuvre', *Urban Planning*, 3.3 (2018), 5-15 (p. 6).

<sup>115</sup> Michel Foucault, 'L'œil du pouvoir', in *Le Panoptique*, interviewed by Jean-Pierre Barou, Michelle Perrot, in *Le Panoptique*, ed. by Jeremy Benthan (Paris: Belfond, 1977), pp. 9-31 (p. 12).

towards the production of the capital. Through its spatial organisation, capitalist society teaches and guides human beings to make sense of the chaotic matter according to its rules of thinking. To this end, space, especially in Western countries, is organised rationally and according to the linearity of the arborescent logic at their basis. This enables it to prompt human beings to perceive the world from its perspective.

However, although *Alias Jacques Bonhomme* does not deal with this aspect, capitalist society also transforms space into a commodity of commercial exchange.<sup>116</sup> Capitalist society's organisation of space, indeed, enables its division into quantifiable segments that can be commercialised to produce capital. In the capitalist system, space is often considered in all regards as a good; people invest in the land to make a profit. Land is key for the development of the housing industry, which is today one of the most productive sectors in capitalist society.

### **2.3.3.1.3 *Alias Jacques Bonhomme* and the deterritorialisation of language**

To free thought from the conditioning of capitalism and set the conditions for a new and better life, the speaking voice(s) of *Alias Jacques Bonhomme* explain(s) that 'Il faut reprendre les paroles et les tordre' (*AJB*, p. 92), that is to say deterritorialise language. The deterritorialisation of language is a concept introduced by Deleuze and Guattari in *Kafka* to designate a process of linguistic manipulation of standard languages (*K*, pp. 38-50) This, as they clarify, would allow them to 'reprendre la vie', in the sense of retaking possession of construction of the world and setting the ground for the invention of new worlds and modes of existing. Whilst the speaking voice(s) expresse(s) the need to deterritorialise language, *Alias Jacques Bonhomme* actually activates that process in the main body of the text. As the following extract shows, *Alias Jacques Bonhomme* eliminates punctuation and capital letters, and contaminates French with a series of English expressions:

c'est dans ce type de situation que parfois j'ai l'impression d'évoluer dans une sorte de *dark and deep puzzle game* basé sur des manipulations d'espaces et de temporalités multiples en m'agitant ridiculement devant toutes ces microcaméras ou marchant ou courant ou reculant sur tel ou tel de mes sols tactiles lesquels détectent minimisent amplifient accélèrent ou ralentissent la

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<sup>116</sup> Mark Gottdiener, 'A Marx for our time: Henri Lefebvre and the Production of Space', *Sociological Theory*, 11.1 (1993) pp. 129-134 (pp. 130-133).

position de mon corps couvert de capteurs et autres contrôleurs lumineux et interconnectés pouvant me propulser simultanément dans plusieurs dimensions. (*AJB*, p. 77)

This results in the creation of a minor version of Standard French, which does not convey any fixed meaning but evokes a series of unclear images to prompt readers to freely and creatively imagine what has been described. By deterritorialising language, *Alias Jacques Bonhomme* deconstructs meaning; it frees words from the meaning given to them by society, opening them up to new meanings that the reader can produce freely and showing the world from alternative perspectives than that imposed by the dominant order.

#### **2.3.3.1.4 *Alias Jacques Bonhomme* and the deterritorialisation of time and space**

The other strategy that Sivan and Pennequin adopt to interfere with the circulation of capitalist society's *pensée unique* is by playing with the way readers perceive time and space. To this end, they follow two different paths. On the one hand, they build the collection as a rhizomatic assemblage of different blocks of texts, pictures, and drawings which, as the following extracts exemplify, complexify its spatial and temporal structure and fragment its general sense:



SI TOUS LES VIEUX NOBLES  
SE DONNAIENT LA MAIN  
CE SERAIT RIDICULE

OCCUPY GOLDENPALACE

les escrocs de ladite couronne  
doivent périr de mort violente

**MERDE TUEZ LES!**

BIENTOT  
LE NAPALM?

NOBLESSE=SS

si vous voyez un  
**goldenmad** blessé  
ACHEVEZ-LE !!!

TANDIS QUE NOUS AVANÇONS

UN NURGE PASSE

**PAPA  
PUE**



In diele goldenfolie

va-nu-pieds  
de tous pays  
unissez-vous

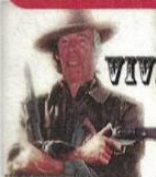
LES JACQUES FONT L'AMOUR  
LES RICHES DES OBSENITÉS

C'EST  
RAGOLO  
LA VIE

1. international  
ACPHRENEYAR



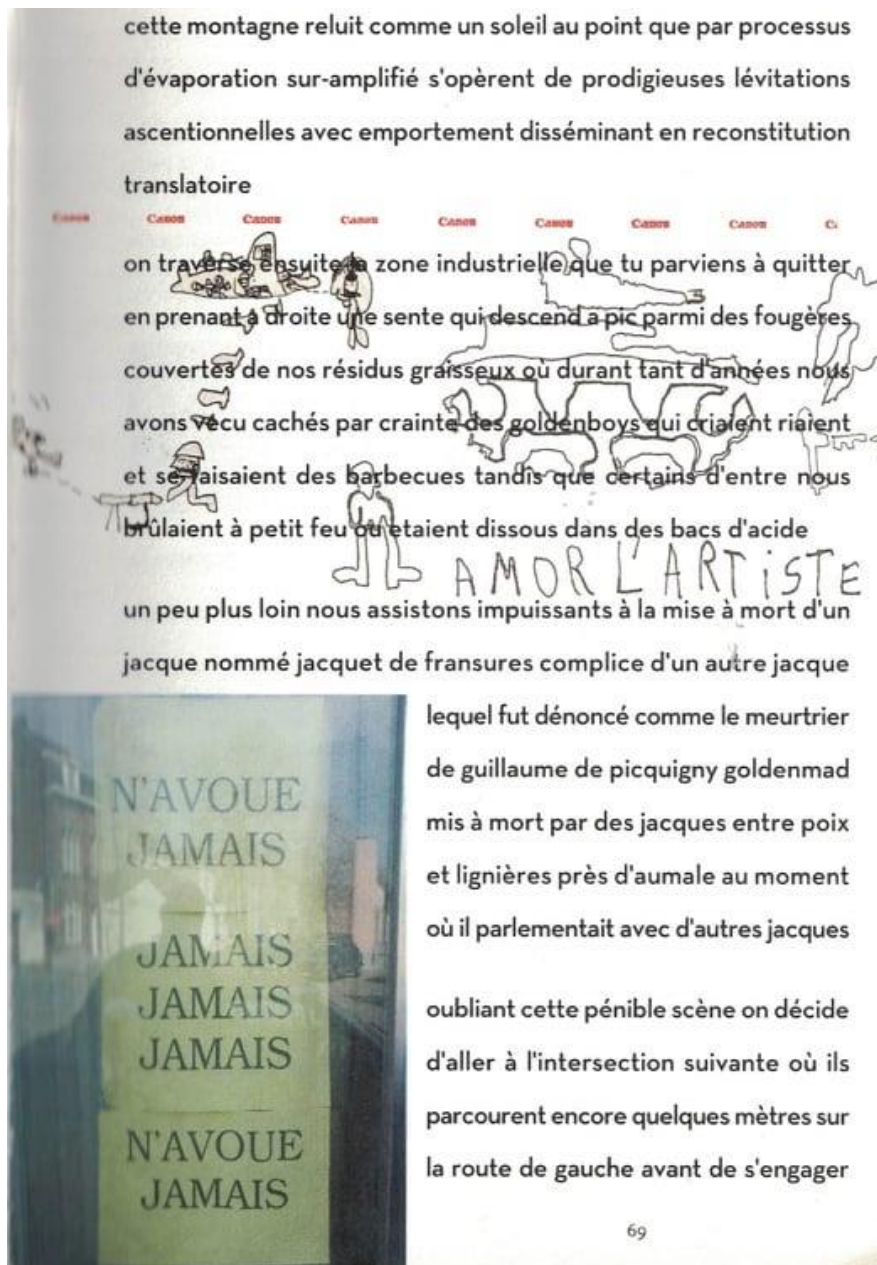
JACQU  
VRIERS &  
JAQUET  
UDIANTS  
NE VOUS  
LAISSEZ  
PAS EN  
CULER!



VIVE L'ENNEMI!

éditions du  
camarade jacquaire

COMITÉ  
D'ACTION  
POUR :  
jacques-  
bonhomme  
l'enragé



AJB, p. 69.

The typographical organisation of *Alias Jacques Bonhomme* undermines the arborescent logic at the basis of the established order by attacking the linear and tidy typographical disposition of the traditional epic. Traditional epic can be seen as a particular type of major literature, which Deleuze and Guattari describe as a literary machine<sup>117</sup> conforming to and reinforcing the dominant code. The spatial organisation of Sivan and Pennequin's collection prompts the reader to perceive time and

<sup>117</sup> 'Machine' is a term that Deleuze and Guattari use to refer to anything existing. In *Mille Plateaux* and *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie*, Deleuze and Guattari use the 'assemblage' as a synonym for 'machine', though the term 'machine' still appears. The two philosophers conceive the machine/assemblage as an aggregate. For them, everything existing is a machine/assemblage, an aggregate of forces and matter that connect according to a specific logic. In *L'Anti-Edipe*, they describe society as a mega-machine/mega-assemblage, a complex arrangement of machines/assemblages.

space differently, potentially making them deviate from the mental paths they use to make sense of the world. As Deleuze suggests in *Pourparlers*, it is precisely art's task to trace new mental paths that enable people to see the world from ever new perspectives: 'Le cerveau est un volume spatio-temporel : il appartient à l'art d'y tracer de nouveaux chemins actuels'.<sup>118</sup> The different font sizes and styles, and the presence of various kinds of signs, constantly stimulate the senses of the reader, producing a series of defamiliarizing effects. The lack of regular typographical patterns has the potential to challenge the reader's expectations, if they are usually confronted with tidy texts with well-defined features.

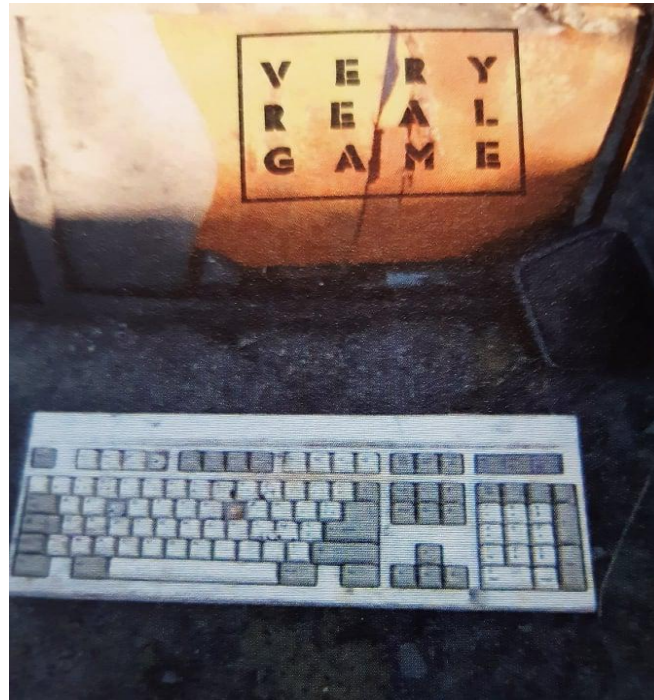
On the other hand, the narration is constructed around spatial and temporal jumps. The speaking voices of *Alias Jacques Bonhomme* do not follow a chronological order; as Jacques Bonhomme explains: 'au fur et à mesure – ma progression s'effectuant selon un écheveau de temporalités souvent contradictoires' (*AJB*, p. 6). The narration constantly jumps from the fourteenth to the twenty-first century. This is also supported by the pictures of objects and artefacts from different epochs that can be found on the pages of the book:



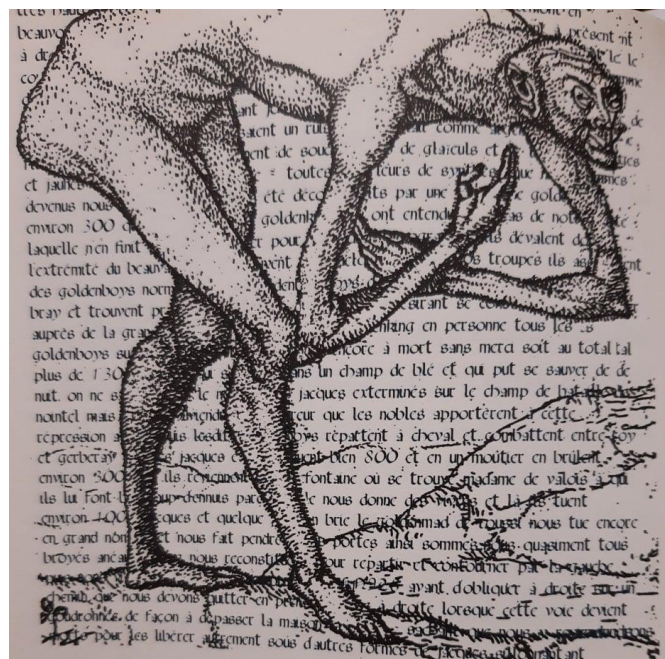
*AJB*, p. 32.

<sup>118</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Pourparlers : 1972-1980* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1993 p. 87.





*AJB*, p. 30.



*AJB*, p. 66.

These chronological jumps deconstruct the idea of time that marks capitalist society, freeing it from the rigid coordinates that society gives it to closely monitor human bodies and minds. In *Alias Jacques Bonhomme*, time is an eternal becoming that enables the reader to free themselves from the temporal conditioning of capitalist society and to reconsider its conceptualisation and organisation.

Similarly, the spatial jumps of the ‘nous’ deconstruct the idea of space underlying the capitalist order. In *Alias Jacques Bonhomme*, the description of space does not follow the linearity that characterises the capitalist world’s spatial organisation. Rather, space is conceived as an open field that can be freely explored in every possible direction against the limitations of the spatial structure of capitalist society. Capitalist society segments and rationally divides space to commodify it and control human beings.

The speaking voice(s) of the collection describe(s) space in such a vague way that the reader loses all of their familiar spatial references. As the following extract shows, although the *jacques* use a series of adverbs of time and expression usually used to talk about space, these seem to be disconnected from their referents as they do not convey any definite idea of space:

après 2 km nous obliquons à gauche avant de continuer par la route traversant un des plateaux pour arriver à droite au virage suivant en compagnie de plusieurs autres venus en armes devant la place [...]. (*AJB*, p. 43)

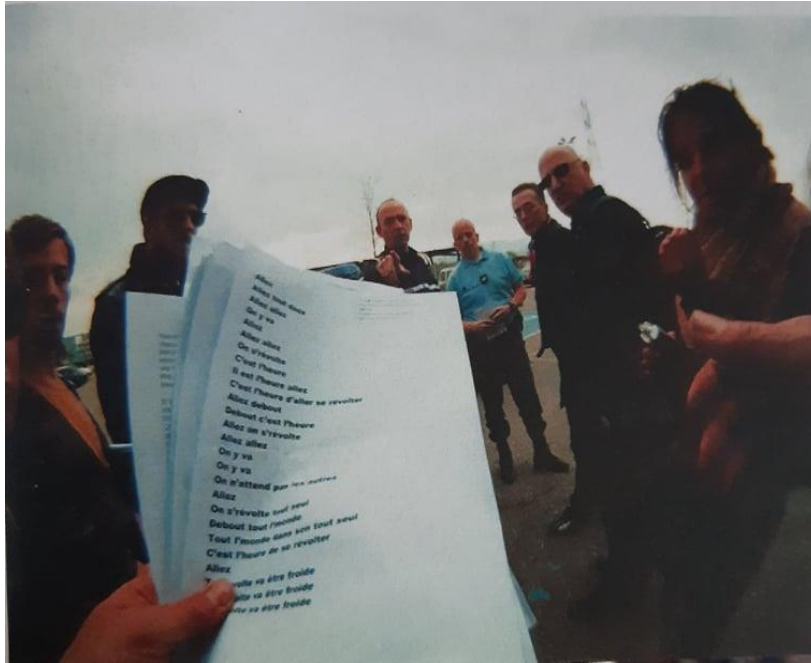
parce que j’ai finalement décidé de prendre à gauche – en contrebas – nous pouvons à peu près tous bénéficier d’un point d’observation nous permettant de passer par une belle voie droite et large bordée par les deux côtés de hauts cyprès alignés à égale distance drus et épais de branches et de feuilles autant qu’ils peuvent l’être selon leur nature (*AJB*, p. 58).

Freed from the structural conditioning of capitalist society, the space described in *Alias Jacques Bonhomme* reveals the artificiality and arbitrariness of its organisation to the reader, potentially reactivating their social awareness and leading them to rethink its organisation and use.

The numerous illustrations representing outdoor gatherings of people that traverse the collection can potentially influence the way the reader can rethink space. These illustrations convey the idea that public space can and should be used to rediscover the sense of community that individuals have lost. The spatial organisation of capitalist societies tends to prevent encounters between different social actors rather than favouring them and reinforcing social bonds and the sense of community. As Patrick Marcolini observes, ‘la forme des villes autorise ou empêche les rencontres entre les individus, canalise leurs déplacements, répartit dans l’espace les professions, les générations, les classes sociales’.<sup>119</sup> In capitalist society, space is used to maintain social order.

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<sup>119</sup> Patrick Marcolini, ‘Les situationnistes et le dépassement de la morale’, *Nouvelle revue d’esthétique*, 2010/2 (n° 6), 91-100 (p. 97).



AJB, p. 43.



AJB, p. 18.

These pictures show that space can connect people to form the basis of the invention of new worlds and ways of beings. The process of social production begins as soon as human beings assemble and unfold their thought to collectively make sense of themselves and what is around them. By connecting people, space can potentially reactivate the creativity of the collective mind. This idea is also at the basis of the numerous resistance movements against capitalist domination that have recently spread throughout the world from New Mexico to Amsterdam.<sup>120</sup> These movements express the idea that the reappropriation of space can not only help people to overcome the alienation caused by capitalist society but also, and more significantly, to change their ways of thinking. As Roberta Feldman and Susan Stall observe, the reappropriation of space is an interactive process of transformation during which individuals, or groups of individuals, change the organisation of space and let themselves be changed by it.<sup>121</sup> This is because, as the speaking voice(s) of *Alias Jacques Bonhomme* explain(s), the organisation of public space conditions the ways people think and perceive (*AJB*, p. 6). By changing the urban/public spatial organisation, of human beings also change themselves and the world they live in.

### 2.3.4 *om\_anaksial*

The fifth *logosonoscope* that will be analysed is *om\_anaksial*. This *logosonoscope* differs from the others so far studied because of its format. *om\_anaksial* is made of two different components: a CD-ROM with a recording of five oral poems – *Koundri*, *Om Anaksial*, *La Dauphinelle*, *Instantanés* and *Émulsions* – designed to be heard, and a short, illustrated booklet with transcripts of the five poems recorded on the CD-ROM designed to be visualised and read.

The recording of the five oral poems can be seen as an example of what can be defined, drawing on the idea of *poésie sonore* and *logosonoscope*, as a ‘logosonoscope sonore’. The first experiments of sound poetry date back to Dadaist and Futurist experiments, before developing further in the

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<sup>120</sup> See: Jose Antonio Lara-Hernandez, Alessandro Melis and Steffen Lehman, ‘Temporary Appropriation of Public Space as an Emergence Assemblage for the Future Urban Landscape: The case of Mexico City’, *Future Cities and Environment*, 5.1 (2019), pp. 1-22; Roberta M. Feldman, Susan Stall, *The Dignity Of Resistance: Women Residents’ Activism in Chicago Public Housing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

<sup>121</sup> Henk de Haan, ‘Social and material appropriation of neighbourhood space: collective space and resistance in a Dutch urban community’, unpublished paper delivered at the international conference ‘Doing, thinking, feeling home: the mental geography and residential environments’ (Delft University of Technology), 15 October 2005, pp. 1-26 (p. 9).



fifties.<sup>122</sup> Sound poetry can be defined as a type of poetry which uses voices and sounds as its material.<sup>123</sup> Sound poetry has been defined in a variety of ways, from a phonetic text to an oral text recorded using sound technologies.<sup>124</sup> However, as Bernard Heidsieck, one of the most influential sound poets, observes, all the definitions of sound poetry so far proposed agree on the fact that sound poetry is a particular kind of text designed to be listened to rather than read.<sup>125</sup>

Sivan constructs this *logosonoscope* in collaboration with Cédric Pigot, who accompanies the reading of his texts with a ‘brouillage continu et imperturbable’,<sup>126</sup> and Adèle Blackbush, who accompanies the transcript of his poems with a series of images taken from the web and edited by working on their light and colour. The acoustic components of ‘om\_anaksial’ is emphasised by the title of the collection. Although the expression ‘om\_anaksial’ is a bit obscure and lend itself to different interpretations, ‘om’ is a clear reference to the Yogic Chant ‘om’. However, differently from Yogic chant which is regular and harmonic, sounds in ‘om\_anaksial’ are irregular, as suggested by the are irregular and disharmonic as suggested by the word ‘anaksial’ that seems to refer to the English word ‘anaxial’ that means irregular or asymmetric – this point will be fully explained in the second-subsection of this section. It must be noted however that the reference to the ‘om’ chant is tongue in cheek. With it, Sivan does not mean that ‘om\_anaksial’ is a Yogic chant – the word ‘om’ does not even appear in any of his poems.

As any other Sivan’s *logosonoscope*, om\_anaksial functions as ‘un outil d’observation’ to reveal and denounce the mechanisms of functioning of the capitalist system and an ‘opérateur’ able to interfere with it (*DT*, p. 7). *om\_anaksial* perfectly achieves these two goals. The next two subsections will show how Sivan and his collaborators use the *logosonoscope* to struggle against capitalist society. More precisely, the first subsection will explain how they use images in the booklet to reveal the urgent need to reshape the world anew and show how to do so effectively. The second subsection will explain how they use the five poems, and the sounds that accompany the oral poems to potentially trigger and fuel a new process of social production.

<sup>122</sup> Eduardo Ledesma, *Radical Poetry. Aesthetics, Politics, Technology, and the Ibero-American Avant-Gardes. 1900-2015* (Albany: Suny Press, 2016), p. 124; Steve McCaffery, ‘Sound poetry: a survey’, *Sound Poetry: A Catalogue for the Eleventh International Sound Poetry Festival. Toronto, Canada. October 14 to 21, 1978*, ed. by Steve McCaffery, bpNichol, (Toronto: Underwhich Editions), pp. 6-18.

<sup>123</sup> cipM. Centre international de poésie Marseille ‘Bernard Heidsieck’, (2019), <[http://cipmarseille.fr/auteur\\_fiche.php?id=162](http://cipmarseille.fr/auteur_fiche.php?id=162)> [Accessed 12 March 2020]; Bernard Heidsieck, ‘Entretien avec Bernard Heidsieck’, interviewed by Vincent Barras, in *Poésies Sonores*, ed. by Vincent Barras, Nicolas Zugrubb (Genève: Éditions Contrechamps, 1992), <<https://books.openedition.org/contrechamps/1301?lang=it>> [ 3 May 2020] (para 4 of 31).

<sup>124</sup> ‘Entretien avec Bernard Heidsieck’, (para 4 of 31).

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., (para 4 of 31).

<sup>126</sup> Bernard Heidsieck, in Jacques Sivan, Cédric Pigot and Adèle Blackbush, *om\_anaksial* (Paris: Al Dante, 2011), p. 59.



### 2.3.4.1 *om\_anaksial*: images

The front cover and first page of *om\_anaksial* illustrates a nebula, used as a metaphor for what Deleuze and Guattari define as chaos and describe as the undistinguished matter which *precedes* order, the actualisation of society (*QP*, p. 201).

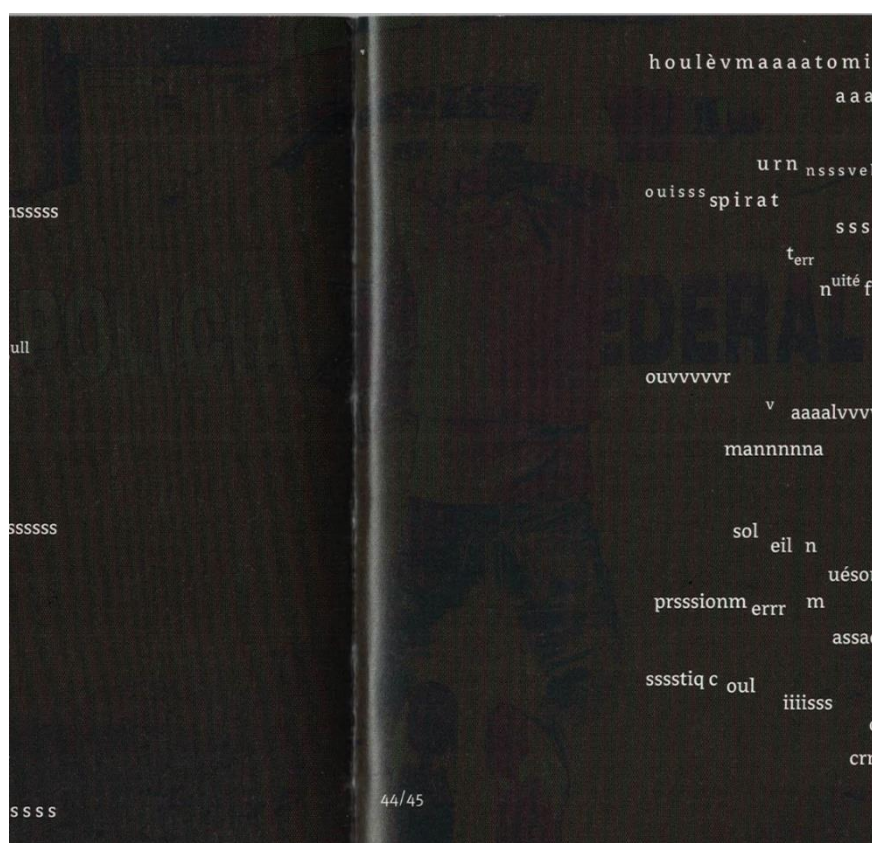


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The idea of introducing the booklet with such an image is far from a coincidence. The choice of this image expresses the urgent need to recreate the chaotic conditions to restart the process of social production. With this image, Sivan and Blackbush highlight the need to overthrow the current established order – the capitalist order – in the hope of paving the way for a less rigid and oppressive socio-political organisation and free human existence from the capitalist conditioning, as suggested by the title. ‘om’ stands for ‘homme’, that is to say man, whereas ‘anaksial’ stands for ‘anaxial’, that means ‘without a form’. The oppression of capitalist society is embodied by the saturated picture of a man with his hands behind his back looking at a wall on which someone has written: ‘Policia Federal’.

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<sup>127</sup> Jacques Sivan, Pigot Cédric, and Blackbush Adèle, *om\_anaksial* (Paris: Al Dante, 2011), p. n/a. Henceforth, all references to this volume will occur in the text, preceded by *OA*.



OA, p. 44-45.

Sivan and Blackbush use the idea of the police as a metaphor for the control and oppression of human beings perpetrated by capitalist society. This is because the police are an integral part of the bureaucratic system that capitalist society has generated to ensure its smooth functioning and survival. As Dilip K. Das and Arvind Verma observe in *Police Mission: Challenges and Responses*, the police are used by the state and the ruling class to secure the survival of the established order.<sup>128</sup> The police ensure that people follow and respect the legal rules elaborated by each State to maintain and safeguard the capitalist order.<sup>129</sup>

To explain how to recreate the chaotic conditions necessary to overthrow the capitalist system, *om\_anaksial* highlights the need to activate the process of deterritorialisation. The passage from one socio-political order to another always derives from the deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation of the structures of a given society (AO, pp. 163-324). The process of deterritorialisation consists of a series of mental actions that undo the connections between the elements that compose a given society;

<sup>128</sup> Dilip K. Das, Arvind Verma, *Police Mission: Challenges and Responses* (Lanham: The Scarecrow Press, 2003), p. 39.

<sup>129</sup> Robert Reiner, *Policing, Popular Culture and Political Economy: Towards a Social Democratic Criminology* (London: Routledge, 2011), p. 39.

it is a deconstructive act which frees the things that make up a given society in order to open them up to new interpretations and connections.<sup>130</sup> The process of deterritorialisation puts an end to a given society and marks the beginning of a new one; this is because by freeing the singularities that make up the assemblages of a given society, the process of deterritorialisation creates the chaotic conditions for their re-inscription.<sup>131</sup> To illustrate the process of deterritorialisation, Blackbush and Sivan use the image of a fire.<sup>132</sup>



OA, p. n/a.

The idea of fire is ambivalent; it contains both the idea of destruction and of life.<sup>133</sup> Fire represents the desire to bring all things to their end, but it is also a symbol of rebirth, life, transformation and creativity.<sup>134</sup> In this sense, fire perfectly embodies the idea of deterritorialisation, which marks both the end of a given society and the beginning of a creative process of re-inscription which can potentially actualise a new socio-political formation, and thus new ways of living and existing. To illustrate the effects of the process of deterritorialisation, *om\_anaksial* uses a series of

<sup>130</sup> Parr, 'Deterritorialisation/Reterritorialisation', in *The Deleuze Dictionary*, pp. 69-72 (p. 70).

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., pp. 69-72.

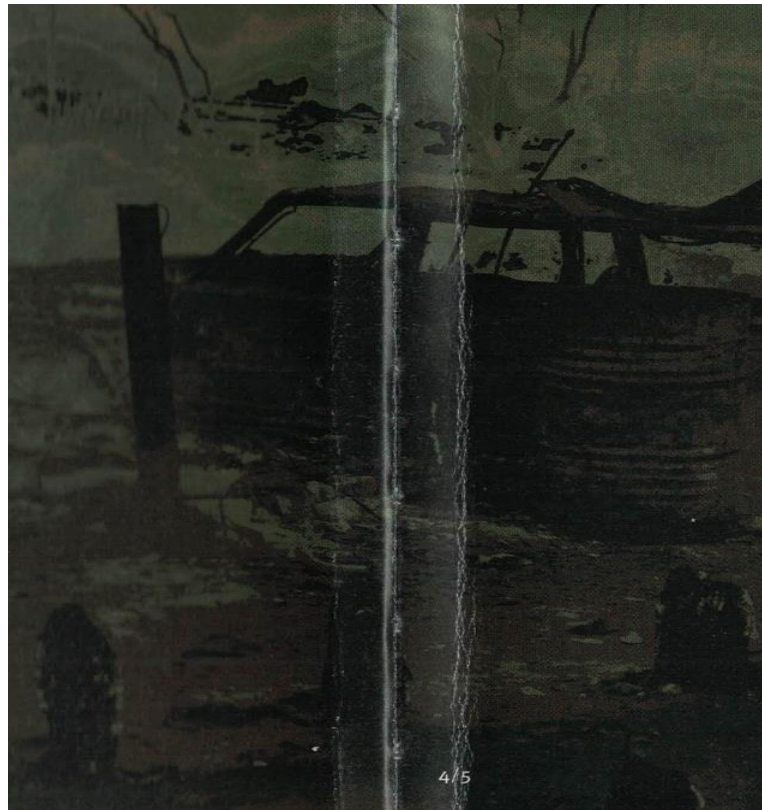
<sup>132</sup> Ibid., pp. 69-72.

<sup>133</sup> Karin Becker, 'La symbolique du feu et de la flamme dans la littérature', *Linguae*, 1 (2016), 9-28 (p. 10); Juan Eduardo Cirlot, *A dictionary of symbols*, trans. by Jake Sage (New York: Philosophical Library, 1971), p. 39 and 65.

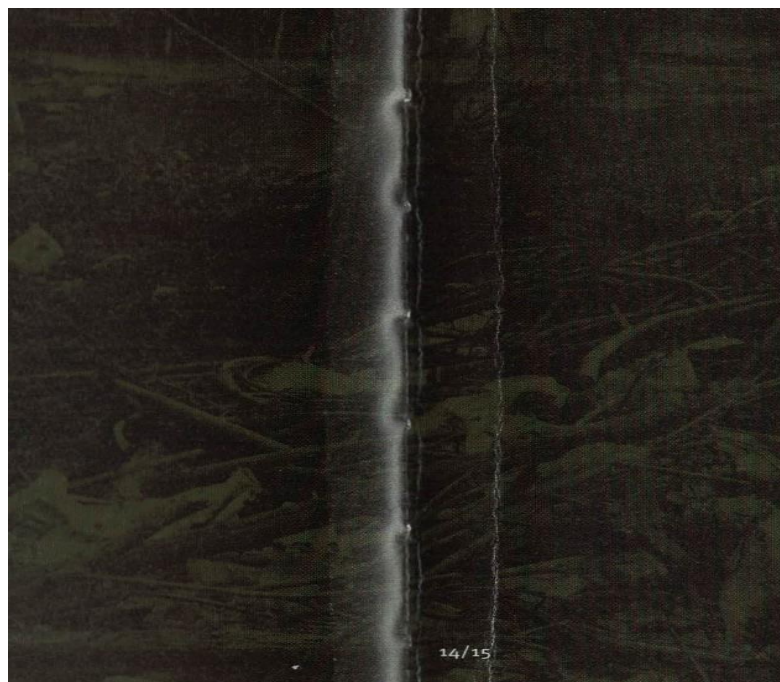
<sup>134</sup> Cirlot, p. 39; Becker, pp. 10-11.



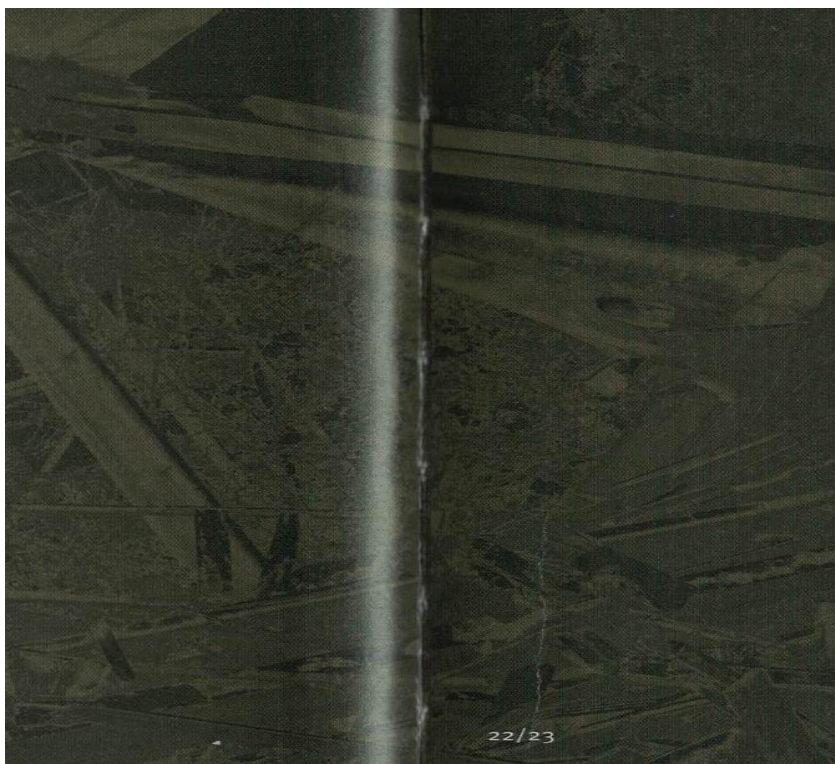
war images. Images of a bombed city are used as a metaphor for the chaotic conditions deriving from the process of deterritorialisation.



*OA*, p. 4-5.



*OA*, p. 14-15.



OA, p. 22-23.

With such images, *om\_anaksial* suggests that the process of deterritorialisation is not only a revolutionary act, but also, and more importantly, the most effective revolutionary act that human beings can accomplish to transform the world. The process of deterritorialisation resets the process of social production and frees the minds of human beings from the ideological conditioning of any given society, leaving them free to explore new mental paths that could make them think and, thus, exist differently. As mentioned above, *om\_anaksial* not only expresses the need to transform the capitalist world, but it also fuels a process of deterritorialisation in the reader's mind that can effectively start a social transformation. The next subsection will show how it does this.

#### **2.3.4.2 *om\_anaksial*: written and oral poems**

The five written and oral poems in *om\_anaksial* can be seen as fuel to activate the process of deterritorialisation which is called for through the images in the booklet of *om\_anaksial*. This is because these poems are reduced to a series of non-sensical linguistic signs and disharmonic and

irregular sounds that evoke new sensations and stimulate their readers and listeners to perceive differently.

In *om\_anaksial*, Sivan reduces language to a pure signifier. However, the degree of manipulation differs from poem to poem. In ‘Koundri’, Sivan eliminates punctuation, conjugated verbs, and sometimes fuse words together or divide them into syllables. Words follow one another but they are not semantically or logically connected and fail to convey any idea or message. The following is an example of this technique: ‘de tro voir ou père non kèlke goute de pa pluto o de o r onbre inté r ier uneregar lande blésure o san le fon’ (OA, p. n/a).

In ‘Om Anaksial’, Sivan follows a very similar path to that of the one in ‘Koundri’. However, in ‘Om\_Anaksial’, he does not fuse words together or divide them into syllables. He introduces mathematical signs like ‘=’ or ‘+’ and writes some words specularly. Sometimes, he writes words in capital letters. Here is an example:

= mine flottante= rapport = kouler = pulsation =  
tro + manke = pèrmutasion  
[...] BASKULEMAN (OA, p. n/A)

Unlike ‘Koundri’, ‘La Dauphinelle’ contains some fragments of texts written in Standard French, as exemplified by the following sentence: ‘château est un mot merveilleux et inquiétant : ogres et princesses habitant dans les châteaux’ (OA, p. n/a). However, it is not possible to fully grasp their meaning because they are inserted within blocks of texts that do not convey any clear idea.

‘Instantanés’ and ‘Émulsions’ have a chaotic typographic disposition that challenges linearity and deconstructs meaning and words are only occasionally recognisable: ‘é lllonggat vvvv riiill/ ciiiizzz ionpérithoinhym/ ouvrv/ concassc o/ quillovvv/ oïdpic contr cr/ ôûte grrrr / anc brûl ondmmm bl/ mbranchhhhm/ carrrrrbon’ encr c/.’ (OA, p. 47).

This orthographic manipulation also results in a manipulation of the sound of words. The fusion or the division of words into new syllabic forms affect the way these are pronounced and therefore are perceived by the reader. In addition, words that are not recognisable introduce new sounds that can create a defamiliarising effect not only to the listener, but also for the reader when they read the texts. These defamiliarising effects are emphasised by continuous rhythmic variations and by the noises that accompany Sivan’s reading of the words. The sequences of signs and sounds that make up *om\_anaksial* create an assemblage of what Deleuze and Guattari call ‘percepts’. For the two philosophers, a percept is a block of impersonal sensations able to shake the human mind and make people conceive of the world in an infinite number of ways against the mental conditioning of the

society to which they belong (*QP*, p. 154 and p. 164). The signs and sounds that structure *om\_anaksial* do not carry any meaning. As Bernard Heidsieck observes in the post-face of the book, in *om\_anaksial* ‘rien ne s’est dit...n’a été dit...n’a pu être compris...saisi...’ (Bernard Heidsieck, in *OA*, p. 60). The aim of these sounds and linguistic signs is not to communicate a message. Rather, it is to make an impact on the reader’s mind and body in order to make them perceive differently and from there push them to form a new sensibility due to their defamiliarizing effects that can serve as a first step for the production of a new vision of the world, potentially sabotaging the functioning of established order and paving the way for a new one. In order for a society to exist, all its members must share the same vision of the world. Whenever, someone starts to see the world differently and to behave against the norm the functioning of society is threatened, and a new process of social production<sup>135</sup> potentially arises. This point seems to explain the title of the book. Although the expression ‘om\_anaksial’ is obscure and lends itself to different interpretation, ‘om’ seems to be a reference to the yogic chant ‘om’. Hinduist and yoga practitioners consider the ‘om’ to be the seed-word that gave birth to the universe, to matter.<sup>136</sup> From a Deleuzo-Guattarian perspective, ‘Om\_anaksial’ functions as the seed-word for a new socio-political organisation, from its potential ability to transform the sensibility of the reader. According to Deleuze and Guattari, art, including literature, can be used in political struggle due to its power to make people think and perceive differently than how they are used to, based on the idea that the world is shaped by human beings through their thought, pulses, and perceptions.<sup>137</sup> However, differently from the yogic om, which is a regular and harmonic chant, the sounds produced by *om\_anaksial* are dissonant, as conveyed by the word *anksial*. ‘Anaksial’ seems to refer to the English word ‘anaxial’ which means ‘asymmetric’<sup>138</sup>, ‘irregular in shape’<sup>139</sup>. In this sense the term ‘anaksial’ in the title of the collection seems to indicate the manipulation of language and sound operated by Sivan to construct the text.

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<sup>135</sup> Social production can be seen as the process through which human groups construct reality, the world.

<sup>136</sup> Saul William, ‘The Future of Language’, *Sound Unbound: Sampling Digital Music and Culture*, ed. by Paul D. Miller (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2010), pp. 21-24 (pp. 21-22).

<sup>137</sup> Deleuze and Guattari suggest this idea throughout *L’Anti-Œdipe*, *Mille Plateaux*, and *Qu’est-ce que la philosophie ?*.

<sup>138</sup> ‘anaxial’, *Merriam Webster Dictionary*, <[shorturl.at/uLMT5](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/anaxial)> [Accessed 28 August 2022].

<sup>139</sup> ‘anaxial’, *Collins Dictionary*, <<https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/anaxial>> [Accessed 28 August 2022];

## Summary

This chapter analysed Sivan's poetry and poetics to explore one of the paths that rhizomatic poetry takes to resist capitalist society. It was explained that Sivan's texts, which he refers to as *logosonoscopes*, can be seen as starting points for creating new worlds and life possibilities. This is because the *logosonoscope* is built as a rhizome able to reveal and denounce the capitalist system's dysfunctional functioning and to activate a deterritorialising movement in the reader's mind that can deconstruct the dominant ideology. Deleuze and Guattari use the term 'rhizome' to refer to both a model of thinking based on the logic of connection, heterogeneity and multiplicity and the assemblage that derives from the adoption of this logic in the process of construction of the world. They conceive the *livre-rhizome* as a book written following the logic of the rhizome. Sivan follows different paths to construct his texts as *livres-rhizome*.

In *Le Bazar de l'Hôtel de Ville*, he rhizomatically assembles fragments taken from different sources (books of philosophy, maps of supermarkets, leaflets, advertisements, packaging) using the cut-up technique and manipulates the Standard French language.

In *Des Vies sur Deuil Polaire*, he alternates blocks of text written in Standard French and strings of text written in a minor version of Standard French.

In *Alias Jacques Bonhomme*. He rhizomatically organises his texts by assembling fragments, pictures and drawings and makes minor use of Standard French.

In *om\_anaksial*, he deterritorialises language to return it to a primitive state. The words that make up the text are barely recognisable, and sentences configure themselves as sequences of non-sensical signs and sounds.

All this enables Sivan to challenge the transmission of the capitalist vision of the world and deconstruct the arborescent model of thinking at the basis of the capitalist order and prompt readers to think differently, potentially setting the conditions for building new alternative worlds.



# **Chapter 3**

## **Vannina Maestri and the ‘land-texte’.**

### **Mapping the world as an insurrectional act against capitalist society**

Écrire n’a rien à voir avec signifier, mais avec arpenter, cartographier, même des contrées à venir. (*MP*, p. 11).

Chapter 3 is dedicated to Maestri’s ‘land-textes’. As explained in the introduction, Maestri refers to her rhizomatic poetry with the term *land-texte*. Like the chapter on Sivan, this chapter is divided into three main sections. The first section contextualises Maestri’s politico-poetic project within the anti-capitalist debate on capitalism. It argues that Maestri’s discourse can be situated within the context of the reflection on capitalist society led by the non-violent branch of the black bloc movement. The second section conceptualises the idea of the ‘land-texte’. It explains how Maestri created this concept by combining Deleuzo-Guattarian philosophy with the theoretical discourse of ‘land art’. The third section analyses some of Maestri’s poetry collections to show how she constructs them as rhizomes and how these engage in the fight against the capitalist order.

### **3.1 Introduction**

Maestri’s poetry production can be framed within the context of the black bloc anti-capitalist struggle. To understand this point, it is necessary to take a step back to explain what the black bloc movement is. In West Germany in the 1980s, an autonomous movement called the ‘Autonomen’ rose from the ashes of the *Autonomia Operaia*, an Italian autonomous movement that emerged in the 1970s in

response to the social, political, and economic crises of the time.<sup>1</sup> The *Autonomia Operaia* unified a variety of different actors, from radical feminists to students, the unemployed, the LGBT community, ecologists and all those disappointed by the Left, sharing the same wish to overthrow the capitalist order.<sup>2</sup> Beyond their different backgrounds, the Italian Autonomists expressed a similar aversion to the hierarchical organisation of the capitalist system, its class distinction and personality cult.<sup>3</sup> Their goal was to create the conditions for the foundation of a more libertarian and egalitarian society.

Despite its effervescence and determination to revolutionise society, the Italian Autonomists were eradicated between March and April 1977, during a sort of civil war between the members of the movement and the police. In Spring 1977, the Italian Autonomists led a series of revolts against the hierarchical university system. The Italian government, with the support of the Communist Party, intervened to suffocate the revolts, thus ending the movement.<sup>4</sup> Many members were arrested, and the group was declared illegal.

However, its ideals survived and were inherited by the new autonomous group that began to emerge at the end of the 1970s in West Germany. This group was known as the *Autonomen*, and it presented itself as an anti-nuclear, pacifist, environmental and feminist movement.<sup>5</sup> The *Autonomen* systematically organised mass demonstrations against West German policies, the international banking system, and multinational corporations.<sup>6</sup> During a clash between the *Autonomen* and the police in Hamburg in 1987, a new kind of rioter made its first appearance.<sup>7</sup> These new rioters were the black bloc, so-called for the colour of the clothes they wore during protests.<sup>8</sup>

Although the black bloc first emerged as an outgrowth of the *Autonomen*, in the Nineties, the black bloc distanced itself from the *Autonomen*, becoming an international and independent movement.<sup>9</sup> Though the black bloc can be defined as an anti-capitalist community that uses direct action to carry out its protests, it is very hard to provide a clear and exhaustive picture of what it really is. As Francis Depuis-Déri observes in 'Penser l'action directe des Black Blocs', the black bloc

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<sup>1</sup> 'Autonomous Movement (Europe)', in *Encyclopedia of Modern Worldwide Extremists and Extremist Groups*, (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2004), ed. Stephen A. Atkins, pp. 32-33 (p. 33); Sergio Bianchi, 'Intervista a Sergio Bianchi', interviewed by Félix Boggio Éwanjé-Épée and others, in *Derive Approdi*, 2014, <<http://deriveapprodi.com>> [Accessed 23 June 2020]; Heather Gautney, *Protest and Organization in the Alternative Globalization Era. NGOs, Social Movements, and Political Parties* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010), p. 127.

<sup>2</sup> Sergio Bologna, *For an analysis of autonomia: An interview with Sergio Bologna*, interviewed by Patrick Cunighame, in *libcom*, 23 July 2020, <<https://libcom.org/library/analysis-of-autonomia-interview-sergio-bologna-patrick-cunighame>> (Accessed 15 June 2020).

<sup>3</sup> Atkins, p. 53.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 33.

<sup>5</sup> Gautney, p. 127.

<sup>6</sup> Atkins, p. 33.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 33; As Atkins observes, this revolt started when the police tried to clear out a squat occupied by the *Autonomen*.

<sup>8</sup> Laura Naegler, *Gentrification and Resistance: Cultural criminology, Control, and the Commodification of Urban Protest in Hamburg* (Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2012), p. 17.

<sup>9</sup> Mark Bray, *Translating Anarchy: The Anarchism Of Occupy Wall Street* (Winchester: zer0 books, 2013), p. 175.

movement is fluid and heterogeneous.<sup>10</sup> It has no manifesto that fixes its programme, no official members or representatives, and no headquarters.<sup>11</sup> Its members do not officially meet before protests; instead, they organise themselves on the Internet, whenever the World Trade Organization or similar organisations schedule an event.<sup>12</sup> Beyond the anti-capitalist ideology that animates its members, black blockers do not always share the same political values or visions of the world. In this regard, Dupuis-Déri writes: '[...] il n'y a pas un profil homogène de participant qui se cache sous la cagoule noire'<sup>13</sup>. Some black bloc members are left-wing anarchists, some are communists, some are anarcho-communists, some are socialists, and some are simply anti-fascists.<sup>14</sup>

Anyone can join the black bloc and its protests. The militants are asked only to wear a black outfit and to support the anti-capitalist ideology. Those in the black bloc have no obligation to join every fight organised. They can freely join and leave the community as they wish. For this reason, as Dupuis-Déri observes, it is more appropriate to discuss black blocs in the plural than in the singular: 'Il n'y a pas un Black Bloc, mais des Black Blocs, chacun se formant à l'occasion d'une manifestation pour se dissoudre avec elle. La taille des Black Blocs varie de quelques dizaines à quelques milliers d'individus'<sup>15</sup>. Although media and public opinion generally associate the direct action of black blocs with violence, this is completely incorrect, as Sylvain Bouloque suggests.<sup>16</sup> Violence is neither the mark of the movement nor the thread that joins black bloc protesters.<sup>17</sup> Not all black blocs use violence in insurrection against the capitalist world.<sup>18</sup> A consistent group of black blocs firmly reject violence in favour of more peaceful forms of civil disobedience.<sup>19</sup>

Maestri's poetry production seems to situate itself within the non-violent faction of the black bloc movement, as *black blocs*, a short poetry collection published in 2009, testifies. *black blocs* can be read as an interpretative key to the political significance of Maestri's poetry. On the one hand, the title of the book functions as a *trait d'union* between the criticism of capitalism that marks all of her texts and the anti-capitalist reflection developed by the non-violent faction of the black bloc community. On the other hand, it indirectly explains the political role of the blocks of text that

<sup>10</sup> Francis Dupuis-Déri, 'Penser l'action directe des Black Blocs', *Politix*, 17.68 (2004), 79-109 (pp. 80 -81)

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., pp. 80-81; Atkins, p. 53.

<sup>12</sup> Atkins, p. 53; Arte, 'Être Black Bloc : Origine et essence d'un mouvement diffus', <<https://www.arte.tv/fr/videos/être-black-bloc/html>> [Accessed 6 June 2020 ] (para 3 of 6) (the webpage is no longer available).

<sup>13</sup> Dupuis-Déri, 'Penser l'action directe des Black Blocs', p. 86.

<sup>14</sup> Matthew Knouff, *An Outsider's Guide to Anti-fa. Politics: Philosophy, Activism and Recent History*, 2 vols (Conscious Cluckery, 2018), II, p. 68.

<sup>15</sup> Dupuis-Déri, 'Penser l'action directe des Black Blocs', p. 79.

<sup>16</sup> 'Être Black Bloc.', [online] (para 2 of 6).

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., (para 2 of 6).

<sup>18</sup> Francis Dupuis-Déri, *Who's afraid of the Black Blocs? Anarchy in action around the world*, trans. by Lazer Lederhendler (Toronto: PM Press, 2013), pp. 75-76.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., pp. 75-76.

structure her collections: these are tools that she uses to fight the capitalist system. Maestri rebels against the capitalist order through language and poetry.

Although, with *black blocs*, Maestri clearly expresses sympathy for the black bloc movement, and in a way, she claims her ‘affiliation’ with it, her writing is free from any kind of ideological conditioning. This corresponds to the nature of the black bloc movement itself. As previously explained, the black bloc movement is rhizomatic. Beyond its will to overthrow the capitalist order, it has no specific political project to actualise or idea of society to impose. The black bloc is not affiliated to any political party, and individuals who join black bloc protests are free to engage in the fight against capitalist society in the way they consider most appropriate. By connecting her poetry to the black bloc movement, Maestri simply highlights her anti-capitalist intentions. Claiming affiliation to the movement does not mean or imply anything but an adhesion to a way of attacking the capitalist system that is free from any conditioning.

With her *land-textes*, Maestri constructs a new space within the black bloc nebula to explore new non-violent strategies of rebellion against capitalist society through poetic experimentation. More precisely, with her *land-textes*, Maestri paves the way for a new kind of black bloc protest based on the writing and reading of poetry. For Maestri, poetry can be regarded as an actual weapon of insurrection against the capitalist order that aims to set the conditions for the actualisation of a new one. The next two sections will deal with Maestri’s conceptualisation of the *land-texte* and examine how she uses the concept to engage in the fight against the capitalist order.

### 3.2 The *land-texte*: a conceptualisation

Although authors are often reticent to talk about their works and ideas about literature, Maestri does so quite often. Maestri explains her ideas about poetry in an essay, *poésie ? détours*, published in 2004, and in several interviews, including ‘Vannina Maestri : montage et minage (Création et politique 5)’ with Emmanuèle Jawad for *diakritik*, ‘Vannina Maestri et Jacques Sivan’ with Nathalie Wourm for her book *Poètes français du 21ème siècle*, and an interview with the author of this thesis, which is transcribed in the appendix.

This section will investigate how Maestri conceives her rhizomatic poetry, which she calls *land-texte*. The purpose is to explain and understand why her poetry can be considered in all regards as an act of resistance and insurrection against capitalist society.

Maestri elaborates on her poetics by combining the political discourse of land art with Deleuze and Guattari's ideas of the rhizome, map and rhizomatic book. The next section will focus on this discussion. First, it will investigate the relationship between *land-texte* and land art. Then, it will explore this in relation to Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the map, rhizome and rhizomatic books.

### 3.2.1 *Land-texte* and land art: differences and similarities

Maestri creates the expression 'land-texte' from 'land art', an expression forged by Gerry Schum on 15 April 1969,<sup>20</sup> during an episode of *Fernsehgalerie*.<sup>21</sup> *Fernsehgalerie* was a German TV show designed as a television exhibition to promote the international art trends of the time.<sup>22</sup> Schum used the term 'land art' as a label for a series of artworks created outdoors using natural materials that had been produced in the USA since the end of the 1960s.<sup>23</sup> It is very hard to define land art. This is because, as Germano Celant, one of the most influential land artists, suggests in a famous quotation, land artists reject any kind of categorisation: 'Les étiquettes sont terribles, les définitions deviennent odieuses au moment même où on les produit'.<sup>24</sup>

Although the most important studies of land art consider it to be a movement, this is not completely correct. Land art is not a movement *stricto sensu*. Given that land art does not have a manifesto fixing its programme and objectives like other historical -isms,<sup>25</sup> it is more appropriate to conceive it, as Ginsburgh and Penders observe, as 'a group of individuals working and finding

<sup>20</sup> Maïté Vissault, 'Ready to shoot: La Fernsehgalerie de Gerry Schum', *Revue d'Art Contemporain*, 69 (2005), 69-72 (p. 69).

<sup>21</sup> Ian White, 'Who is not the Author? Gerry Schum and the Established Order', in *Afterthought: new writing on conceptual art*, ed. by Mike Sperlinger (London: Rachmaninoff's, 2005), pp. 65-83 (pp. 65-69).

<sup>22</sup> Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, 'Land art. Fernsehausstellung I. Gerry Schum', <<https://www.stedelijk.nl/en/collectio n/2486-gerry-schum-land-art.-fernsehausstellung-i>> [Accessed 25 October 2020].

<sup>23</sup> Dorothea Eimert, *Art of the 20th century* (New York: Parkstone Press International, 2016), p. 215.; Margeretha Häggström, 'An Aesthetical and Ethical Perspective on Art-Based Environmental Education and Sustainability from a Phenomenological Viewpoint', in *Ethical Literacies and Education for Sustainability and Development*, ed. by Olof Franck, Christina Osbeck (Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), pp. 85-104 (p. 97); Raphaël Larrère, 'Le land art : une esthétique de la nature', *Raison Publique*, 2.17 (2012), 163-172 (p.164); Observatoire du Land Art, 'Le Land Art est une pure fiction ; voilà pourquoi nous l'observons', <<https://obsart.blogspot.com/>> [Accessed 12 June 2020] (para 3 of 8); Gerry Schum, 'Who is not the Author? Gerry Schum and the established Order', p. 69.

<sup>24</sup> The most important land artists are: Michal Heizer, Gerry Schum, Walter de Maria, Robert Morris, Robert Smithson, Denis Oppenheim, Andy Goldsworthy, Richard Long, Nancy Holt, Germano Celant; for the quote, see: Germano Celant, in *Arte Povera*, Maïten Bouisset (Paris: Editions du Regard, 1994), p. 14.

<sup>25</sup> Ben Tufnell, *Land Art* (London: Tate Publishing, 2006), p. 15; Victor Ginsburgh, A.F. Penders, 'Land Artists and Art Markets', in *A History of Western Art Market. A Sourcebook of Writings on Artists, Dealers, and Markets*, ed. by Titia Hulst (Oakland: University of California Press), pp. 343-345 (p. 342).

inspiration from similar ideas'<sup>26</sup> than as a movement. Land artists experiment autonomously with their codes and techniques. Beyond the same dissatisfaction with the socio-political and cultural environment generated by capitalism and the common use of natural resources to express this dissatisfaction, each land artist developed their own artistico-political project through the practice of their personal strategies.

The reason that land artists choose to use natural resources to create their work is strictly related to their shared criticism of the capitalist world. The work of land artists not only mocks the idea of art as an object able to express and survive eternity that has marked art criticism for centuries, but also challenges its commodification, interfering with capitalist logic.<sup>27</sup> First, being outdoors and created using natural resources, land artworks cannot be moved to be commercialised. Second, they are also destined to disappear. Land artworks are constantly exposed to the erosion of atmospheric agents that will inevitably destroy them with time.<sup>28</sup> Land artworks have a temporary and ephemeral nature that prevents them from being reduced to objects for sale.

Land-artists conceive their work as the sign of their engagement or, to use Éliane Elmaleh's words, 'de leur contestation de « l'ordre établi » et de l'appareil culturel [...]'.<sup>29</sup> Through the creative process, land artists engage in the fight against the capitalist world. As Jean-Paul Brun observes, with their artworks, the land artist 'fouille la terre, déplace des quantités de matériaux, redessine les espaces, réorganise notre vision de la nature, en un mot, il bouleverse notre planète [...]'.<sup>30</sup> By working with natural resources and the land, land artists deconstruct the idea of space imposed by the capitalist order, setting the conditions for new aesthetic experiences that can make the spectator think of the world in a variety of new and unexpected ways.<sup>31</sup> It is for this reason, as James Crump suggests in his documentary *Troublemakers. The Story of Land Art*, released in 2015, land artists have passed into history as either troublemakers or revolutionaries.

Maestri inherits their revolutionary attitude and theoretical discourse. For Maestri, her texts are in all regards land artworks. As she writes: 'Les fragments installés sur la page forment un land-art

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<sup>26</sup> Ginsburgh, Penders, p. 342.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 343.

<sup>28</sup> Mark A. Pegrum, *Challenging Modernity: Dada between Modern and Postmodern* (Berghahn Books, 2000), p. 221; Stevanin, Federica, 'Troublemakers. The Story of Land Art (2015): una storia opinabile', *piano b. Arti e culture visive*, 3.2 (2018), 100-118 (pp. 102-103).

<sup>29</sup> Éliane Elmaleh, 'La terre comme substance ou le Land Art', *Revue française d'études américaines*, 3.93 (2002), 65-77 (p.65).

<sup>30</sup> Jean-Paul Brun, *Nature, art contemporain et société : Le Land Art comme analyseur du social* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2006), p. 15.

<sup>31</sup> Antonia Rigaud, 'Disorienting Geographies: Land Art and the American Myth of Discovery', *Miranda*, 6 (2012), 6-15 (p. 3).

[...] une installation de nos architectures éphémères langagières'.<sup>32</sup> Like land artists who use the conglomerations of natural resources of which their artworks are composed to fight against capitalist society, Maestri does so by using the blocks of text on her pages. For Maestri, the pages of her texts represent what the environment represents for land artists, which is to say a plane of consistency from which to operate on capitalist society. As she explains:

Le land-art à son tour, quand je l'ai découvert, m'a permis de comprendre comment les traces laissées dans la nature correspondaient à celles laissées sur la page. [...]. L'espace naturel est un langage géologique ou artificiel fabriqué par l'homme. C'est un espace politique, historique ou artistique. Nous écrivons notre histoire sur et dans cet espace comme nous écrivons sur cette page [...]. (*M&M*, [online]).

Maestri uses language to manipulate space, just as land artists use natural resources, to operate on capitalist society. The different linguistic fragments that make up the pages of her *land-textes* serve to enable the reader to have new aesthetic experiences and to question the established order (*LT*, p. 37 and p. 39).

To stress the relationship between her poetry and land art, Maestri describes her *land-textes* as an 'O.L.P. (objet littéraire plastique)'.<sup>33</sup> The idea that her *land-textes* are plastic objects reinforces the idea that they are land artworks. This is because land artworks are in all respects plastic objects. An artwork can be defined as plastic if it has been created by moulding a material substance.<sup>34</sup> Land artworks are made up of natural materials, such as rocks, sand, and water, and therefore fall under the definition of plastic objects. Maestri conceives of her texts as an O.L.P. from the idea that language is a material substance. (*M&M* [online]). This idea is surely influenced by Deleuze and Guattari's conception of language as a means to construct the world. By defining the *land-texte* as an O.L.P., Maestri not only reinforces the relation to land art but also stresses the political power of the *land-texte*. As Wourm observes, the acronym O.L.P. is a clear reference to the Palestinian Liberation Organisation whose French acronym is O.L.P., just like 'objet littéraire plastique'.<sup>35</sup> The Palestinian

<sup>32</sup> Maestri, Vannina, 'Vannina Maestri: Montage et Minage', interviewed by Emmanuèle Jawad, in *diacritik*, 21 September 2016, <<https://diacritik.com/2016/09/21/vannina-maestri-montage-et-minage-creation-et-politique-5/>> [Accessed 12 June 2020]. Henceforth, all references to this volume will occur in the text preceded by *M&M*.

<sup>33</sup> Vannina Maestri, 'Journal. Petite notes sur le Land-text', in *poésie ? détours*, ed. Christophe Marchand-Kiss (Paris: Textuel, 2004), 12-39 (p. 31). Henceforth, all references to this volume will occur in the text preceded by *LT*.

<sup>34</sup> 'Plastic Art: Definition & Meaning', in Encyclopedia of Art Education [online] <<http://www.visual-arts-cork.com/definitions/plastic-art.htm>> [Accessed 13 June 2020].

<sup>35</sup> As Wourm explains, this expression is tongue-in-cheek. Maestri does not use the expression to publicly support the Palestinian cause – which is completely absent from her texts – but rather to reinforce the revolutionary potential of her poetry. This is something that Christophe Hanna also does in *Action Poétique*, where he described the act of writing as a 'violent political resistance act against an oppressor', and compared it 'to the assault on bourgeois values in the capitalist world by urban terror groups of the 1970s, such as the Red Army Factions in West Germany and Japan and the Italian Red Brigade (many of whose members were trained by the PLO)' (Nathalie Wourm, 'Anticapitalism and the Poetic Function of Language', p. 122).

Liberation Organisation was founded in 1964 to unify all of the organisations fighting for the liberation of Palestine born after the creation of the State of Israel on the 14 May 1948.<sup>36</sup> Having been under the control of Arab kingdoms and states for centuries, and under British control from 1920 to 1948, Palestinians came under the control of the State of Israel, once again losing their right to self-determination.<sup>37</sup> The P.L.O.'s primary goals were, and still are, to liberate Palestine from Israel's control and create an Independent Palestinian State.<sup>38</sup> In 1974, during the Arab Summit, the P.L.O. was recognised as 'the sole legitimate representative of Palestinian people'.<sup>39</sup> Today, it officially represents the interests of the Palestinian population at the United Nations, at the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, and at the Organisation of the Islamic Conference.<sup>40</sup> By defining her texts using an acronym that recalls the revolutionary Palestinian Liberation Organisation, Maestri implicitly stresses the revolutionary political potentiality of her texts. This will be the focus of the next section on how Maestri's *land-textes* function and how they can affect the functioning of capitalist society. To this end, it will examine the relationship between Maestri's *land-textes*, the rhizome and the *livre-rhizome*.

### 3.2.2 The *land-texte*: a type of rhizomatic poetry

As Maestri often argues, her *land-textes* can be conceived and function as 'une carte' (*LT*, p. 25), which is to say as a rhizome. As Kinchin and Gravett note, for Deleuze and Guattari, the idea of the rhizome and the map overlap.<sup>41</sup> Not only do the two philosophers describe the rhizome in terms of a 'carte' and its functioning in terms of 'cartographie', but they also describe the map as a rhizome (*MP*, p. 20). Deleuze and Guattari conceive of the map as a machine in constant motion that can be assembled and disassembled ceaselessly through the connection of heterogeneous singularities. As they put it, '[la carte] concourt à la connexion de champs. [...] La carte est ouverte, elle est

<sup>36</sup> Colin Chapman, 'The Voice of the Palestinians', *Third Way*, 1983, 26-31 (p. 26).

<sup>37</sup> Ingrid Hjelm and others, *A new critical approach to the history of Palestine* (London: Routledge, 2019).

<sup>38</sup> Al Jazeera English, *P.L.O: History of a revolution. Episode 1*, YouTube, 13 July 2009, <[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aGC\\_hHii1jo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aGC_hHii1jo)> [Accessed 12 March 2021].

<sup>39</sup> Palestinian Liberation Organization, *Permanent Observer Mission of The State of Palestine to the United Nations. New York* (10 August 2021), <<https://palestineun.org/about-palestine/palestine-liberation-organization/>> [Accessed 11 March 2021].

<sup>40</sup> 'Palestinian Liberation Organization', [online].

<sup>41</sup> 'Initial reading of Deleuze and Guattari's works exploring the rhizome immediately suggests overlaps between the rhizomatic thinking and concept of mapping. For example, the versatility and malleability of concepts maps resonates with Deleuze and Guattari's description of the rhizome.' (Ian M. Kinchin, Karen Gravett, 'Concept Mapping in the Age of Deleuze: Fresh Perspectives and New Challenges', *Education Sciences*, 10.3 (2020), 1-13 (p. 2).



connectable dans toutes ses dimensions, démontable, renversable, susceptible de recevoir constamment des modifications' (*MP*, p. 20).

In *The Machinic Unconscious*, Guattari explains that the map can be seen as a field of experimentation to explore new potential worlds, just like the rhizome. It is like a space in which to deconstruct the connections that structure the world to experiment with new connections between the formless singularities in chaos.<sup>42</sup> As Guattari suggests, in collaboration with Deleuze, in *Qu'est-ce que la Philosophie ?*, chaos is a virtuality containing all the possible elements that can be differentiated and assembled to actualise society (*QP*, p. 117 and pp. 200-201). Human beings construct society through a mental process of differentiation and assemblage of chaotic matter that Deleuze and Guattari identify with the process of thinking. The act of thinking consists precisely in the differentiation and assemblage of chaotic matter according to the rules dictated by specific images of thought. An image of thought is the mental scheme that human beings construct at an unconscious collective mental level to define the mode through which human groups create order, and actualise their society.<sup>43</sup> The image of thought instructs human beings how to see and perceive the world according to the rules of the society that has constructed it (*QP*, p. 41). The map serves as an operator to explore ever new possible connections within the chaotic matter: '[la carte] n'est pas un instrument de réflexion mais de mobilisation; elle n'est pas un moyen de reproduire une réalité supposée préexistante, mais un opérateur d'exploration et de découverte créatrice de réalités nouvelles'.<sup>44</sup> For all these reasons, the act of mapping can be conceived, in all respects, as a political action, as an action of resistance against the dominant order.

As Deleuze and Guattari suggest, the map can take an infinite number of shapes and can be constructed whenever and wherever by anyone: 'On peut la dessiner sur un mur, la concevoir comme une œuvre d'art, la construire comme une action politique ou comme médiation' (*MP*, p. 20). For Maestri, the map takes the shape of a rhizomatic poetic machine. As she explains in an interview conducted with the author of this thesis, the *land-texte*, defined in *poésie ? détours* in terms of a map, is a type of rhizomatic poetry.

(DV) L'ensemble de vos textes semble créer un rhizome. Est-ce que c'est intentionnel ?

(VM) Rhizome. Oui c'est une poésie rhizomique. Elle part dans toutes les directions. Elle n'est surtout pas hiérarchique. Déhiérarchisation de la langue,

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<sup>42</sup> Félix Guattari, *The Machinic Unconscious: Essays in Schizoanalysis*, trans. by Taylor Adkins (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e): 2011), p. 172-174.

<sup>43</sup> *QP*, p. 41; Gilles Deleuze, *Différence et Répétition*, 15th edn (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1968), pp. 169-217.

<sup>44</sup> Guillaume Sibertin-Blanc, 'Cartographie et territoires : La spatialité géographique comme analyseur des formes de subjectivité selon Deleuze', *L'Espace Géographique*, 39.3 (2010), 225-238 (p. 228).

des images, des concepts. Mettre à plat, créer des arborescences, des lignes de fuite.<sup>45</sup>

The *land-texte* has a structure similar to that of thought which functions, as Deleuze and Guattari observe, as a rhizome. As Maestri explains, the *land-texte* is ‘loin du linéaire, du dualisme’ (*LT*, p. 23)). The *land-texte* can be described as a heterogeneous assemblage of multiple singularities.<sup>46</sup> As Maestri writes, in the *land-texte*, ‘La relation des situations et les petites singularités s’entremêlent’ (*M&M*, [online]).

Due to their rhizomatic nature, Maestri’s *land-textes* have the potential to affect the socio-political organisation of the capitalist world, configuring themselves as an act of resistance and insurrection against the dominant order. On the one hand, her *land-textes* denounce the functioning and ideology of capitalist society. On the other hand, they create the conditions for the production of a new vision of the world. The blocks of text on the pages of her *land-textes* not only ‘font surgir l’absurdité, la méchanceté, la violence du réel’ (*M&M*, [online]), but they also provide readers with a toolkit that enables them to build an alternative image of thought to that at the basis of the dominant mode of thinking. For Maestri, ‘écrire n’a rien à voir avec signifier, mais avec arpenter et cartographier, même des contrées à venir’ (*MP*, p. 11). Her writing process, as she suggests in interviews with both the author of this thesis and Jawad, consists of a process of ‘minage’ of the dominant discourse through the ‘montage’ of an alternative discourse, constructed from the rhizomatic assemblage of a series of blocks of texts taken from different sources.<sup>47</sup>

Tous mes livres sont une suite de ces fragments composés, mis en forme. De plus en plus éclatés sur la page, intégrant des images ou des schémas, des plans, des cartes, ils essayent de mettre au clair ou de mettre en scène les injonctions diverses qui composent les textes qui nous entourent. Je fais ce montage du chaos de textes dans lequel nous nous mouvons depuis l’enfance, textes lus cent fois et que nous ne voyons plus vraiment, pour tenter de démonter leur hypocrisie, pour miner leur mainmise sur notre esprit, sur notre vie. (*M&M*, [online])

Je réponds à la violence qui est infligée par les injonctions scolaires, politique, publicitaire...par une forme de minage et d’éclatement des modes [...]

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<sup>45</sup> Vannina Maestri ‘Interview with Vannina Maestri’, by Dalila Villella (email correspondence, 31 October 2020).

<sup>46</sup> As Maestri explains, with the *land-texte*, ‘J’essaye de faire tenir ensemble des hétérogènes, mais sans qu’ils cessent d’être hétérogènes’ (*LT*, p. 29).

<sup>47</sup> ‘Je recueille toutes sortes de textes à partir de mes lectures. Les journaux, les romans, les essais, les résumés : tout ce que je lis et découvre autour de moi m’intéresse car tout cela est la cartographie de notre présent, de notre imaginaire. Même les documents administratifs relatifs à mon travail à la bibliothèque me signifient quelque chose (...). J’ai chez moi des piles de petites notes, de fragments à utiliser – du matériau comme un plasticien, qui pour une installation, ramasse des bouts de ficelle ou de plastique.’ (*M&M*, interview).

J'interroge par le montage, la disposition sur la page (le *land-texte*) la fonction relative d'une certaine histoire, d'une pratique culturelle de la langue. [...] J'utilise les textes d'une époque dans un contexte donné. J'utilise des singularités. Je les interroge et je les fais jouer. J'essaie d'atteindre avec le montage d'éléments divers à une certaine vitesse de mouvements d'intensité des références habituelles de la langue. La page est un plan, une carte où je projette des textes-images et ce qui importe c'est ce qui se passe entre. C'est le politique.<sup>48</sup>

As Maestri constructs her texts from the assemblage of a series of fragments taken from different sources, her writing can be seen as a sort of rewriting. As she explains: 'Cette écriture-là est sans cesse de la réécriture ; sans cesse une remise en place d'instant, de fragments déjà écrits – par d'autres ou par soi, peu importe. [...] ce texte [le *land-texte*] fait toujours référence à quelque chose de déjà lu' (*LT*, p. 23 and 39). It is interesting to observe that Maestri makes a different use of the fragments that compose her texts. The fragments taken from political discourses, economy, and advertisements are *détournés*. They are used to vehiculate ideas which are antagonistic or opposite to those that they have in their original context. Rather than using these fragments to circulate the capitalist ideology, its values, and beliefs, Maestri uses these fragments to reveal the violence and ambiguities of the capitalist world. When Maestri does not hack the meaning of the blocks of texts that she uses, it is only because she has extracted them from a series of texts that already express criticism towards capitalist society or the need to break with it. However, it must be observed that Maestri also takes fragments from a series of texts that do not necessarily deal with society, politics, or economics. These fragments acquire a completely new meaning in the *land-textes*. Decontextualised and recontextualized within the *land-texte*, these fragments are used to reveal something about capitalist society.

This technique surely reminds us that of the Situationists. Although the Situationists did not write poetry, they created a series of visual and filmic montages from the combination of fragments taken from different sources – for example, 'films classiques ou de genre, d'actualités, de publicités, d'émissions télévisées ou encore de documentaires pédagogiques'.<sup>49</sup> This enabled them to rework the dominant discourses and use their language as a weapon against the established order. Through montage, the meaning of the fragments extracted from pre-existing sources was *détourné*. The *détournement*, as explained in Chapter One, consists in the resemantisation of an image, term, or expression to make it convey an idea which is opposite to that which it has in their original context. Even after the dissipation of the Situationist movement, the *détournement* has become very popular and has been appropriated by numerous revolutionary movements from punk groups to the

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<sup>48</sup> Vannina Maestri 'Interview with Vannina Maestri', by Dalila Villella (email correspondence, 31 October 2020).

<sup>49</sup> Bovier, [online] (para 2 of 25). For the relationship between Maestri and Situationism, see Appendix 4.

militants associated with Radio Alice, a militant Radio station opened in Italy in the Seventies, which openly engaged in the fight against the capitalist system.<sup>50</sup> Even Deleuze talks about this technique in *Pourparler*, where he expresses the need to use the *détournement* of language in revolutionary practices ('Il faut un détournement de la parole'<sup>51</sup>). Today, this technique is very popular amongst anti-capitalist artists and militants.

Although in the collective imaginary a map is a faithful representation of space that enables one to orient oneself in a given area, the *land-texte* enables the reader to become lost. The *land-texte* seems to be the map of a mental labyrinth that causes the reader to deviate from the mental paths imposed by a capitalist society. As Maestri suggests, the *land-texte* 'serait un texte qui conduirait quelque part : mais on ne sait pas où on est parce qu'on ne joue pas/ ne veut pas jouer le jeu, le rôle demandé.' (*LT*, p. 37). The *land-texte* projects the reader into a chaotic mental space, causing them to lose connection with the contingent world. In this new mental dimension, readers are asked to trace new mental paths that can potentially lead them to forge a new sensitivity that can form the basis of a new world. As Maestri told the author of this thesis, with her *land-textes*, she invites the reader to construct the book themselves: 'Je demande au lecteur de ne pas être passif mais de composer lui aussi les textes' (*M&M*). This is because, by reassembling the fragments of the *land-texte*, the reader frees themselves from the mental schemes imposed on them by a capitalist society and creates the conditions to build new ones that can potentially show them the world from new perspectives (*LT*, p. 15).

As she argues, the *land-texte* is 'Comme un carte géographique [...]. Où le lecteur aurait la capacité infinie de générer une organisation. Car il ne peut accepter le chaos, l'entropie. Il doit créer un monde avec un sujet. [...] Il doit organiser. Il doit se confronter aux paradoxes, aux phénomènes, à un illogisme de l'œuvre' (*LT*, p. 15). Each page of the *land-texte* is like 'un paysage cartographié' (*LT*, p. 39) that serves as a driving force for the reader to construct new mental schemes and, from there, to explore the infinite number of ways of seeing the world. By connecting the different blocks of texts that make up the *land-texte*, the reader creates their own alternative mental scheme, potentially creating a breach in the system. This process, as Maestri observes, has unpredictable results. As she writes, with the *land-texte*, 'On fabrique une crise dont la fin est radicalement unimaginable' (*LT*, p. 21). This suggests that, at the basis of the conceptualisation of the *land-texte*, there is the idea that the

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<sup>50</sup> Valentina Vavassori, 'Radio e Underground press negli anni Settanta: dai Situazionisti a Radio Alice', *OS. Officine della Storia*, <[shorturl.at/DIU03](http://shorturl.at/DIU03)> [Accessed 18 August 2022]; Chris Rojek, *Pop Music, Pop Culture*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011), p. 209; Sadie Plant, *The Most Radical Gesture. The Situationist International in a postmodern age*, (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 131;

<sup>51</sup> Deleuze, *Pourparlers*, p. 238.

world can be transformed, and that poetry can contribute to this transformation by exploiting its potential to make readers think and perceive differently, through a different logic and perspective.

### **3.3 The *land-texte*: an insurrection against the capitalist order**

This section analyses some of Maestri's poetry collections – *débris d'endroits*, *mobiles*, *mobiles 2*, *a Stazzona*, *black blocs*, *il ne faut plus s'énerver*, *envie de rien*, *avez-vous rencontré quelqu'un en descendant de l'escalier ?* – to show how she uses her texts as an insurrection against the capitalist system and provides readers with an instrument that enables them to do the same. Unlike the case of Sivan's *logosonoscopes*, which were analysed individually, Maestri's *land-textes* will be analysed together as a single text. This is because each *land-texte* is not only an independent rhizomatic literary machine but also the component of a larger rhizomatic machine made up of all Maestri's collections. In order to connect her texts rhizomatically, Maestri seems to follow two different paths. On the one hand, as the following extracts illustrate, she constructs her *land-textes* using the same typographical features, creating a sort of aesthetic continuum across her texts.

*en temps réel*

**je suis fière de moi**  
(et ma vie avance)

paroles d'experts

sublime néo-dream-folk  
infinis voyages peuplés

synthés discoïdes fous  
drum kit minimal  
– impeccable

compos saturées mélodiques

**guitares rageuses**

**éviter le trop plein**  
**romantique**

**dépasser le bucolique**

**– indispensable**

– déjà



un casting de rêve

elles ont accepté de tout faire

---

on se dit que au fond

il n'y a plus de valeur travail  
je me donne le droit de me tromper

---

<sup>52</sup> Vannina Maestri, *mobiles 2* (Paris: Al Dante, 2010), p. 81. Henceforth, all references to this volume will occur in the text, preceded by *M2*.

on s'envoie des blancs secs dès l'aube 🎵💡

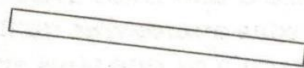
il n'y a pas de différence entre  
composition et décomposition

”””

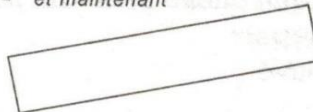
ridge se jette aux pieds de caroline  
brooke a fauté avec éric  
le père de ridge est à la colle avec brooke  
qui accouche de bridget

bridget fera du gringue à ridge  
bridget n'est pas la fille de ridge  
mais d'éric  
donc bridget est la sœur de ridge  
mais ridge est le fils de massimo et non d'éric  
stéphanie dirige la maison de couture familiale

***c'est plus lent que la vie***



et maintenant



sup primer/  
répondre/répondre à tous/  
transfert/  
rediriger/  
sourcedumessage/enregistrersous/  
imprimer/  
déplacer/

copier/

<sup>53</sup> Vannina Maestri, *il ne faut plus s'énervier* (dernier télégramme, 2008), p. n/a. In this page, Maestri selects fragments in order to create an interplay of sounds that make the poetic experience more immersive. For example, this can be seen in the block of text starting with 'ridge' and finishing with 'couture familial' that refers to *Beautiful*, the American American TV Series, which has been broadcast in numerous Western countries since the Eighties. Ridge, Brooke, Bridget, Éric, Stéphanie, and Massimo are the names of some of the characters in this famous soap opera. With this block of text, Maestri summarises the plot of the series. By playing with these names, Maestri creates a series of acoustic echoes and consonances that give a rhythm to the text and make the text a subversive experience.

## SECONDE ETAPE

attendre

être hors

devenir imperceptible  
et ici l'accord discordant

comment est ce vide lumineux

*ce serait une masse / aucune raison*

c'est une image  
pas de lieu

**-ROUGE**

c'est ce qui nous présente notre histoire – qu'elle soit  
présence  
avant d'être signification

dans un mirage d'exagération collective  
affolement de groupe

<sup>54</sup> Vannina Maestri, *mobiles* (Paris: Al Dante, 2005), p. 60. Henceforth, all references to this volume will occur in the text, preceded by *M.*



– cette jeunesse se souvient avec un sourire en coin

*on n'est pas là pour sauver la planète ???!*

deux femmes relisent la dialectique du maître et de l'  
esclave

**sauf que**

le spectateur est alors placé  
dans un entre-deux

*entre possibilité d'être séduit*  
par la forme de l'œuvre

et l'acceptation de l'acte qui  
a généré cette œuvre

une action à l'échelle du paysage  
mettre en danger le paysage  
le paysage est un cadre  
– le lieu détruit et sublimé

j'ai déterminé un cadre précis  
je

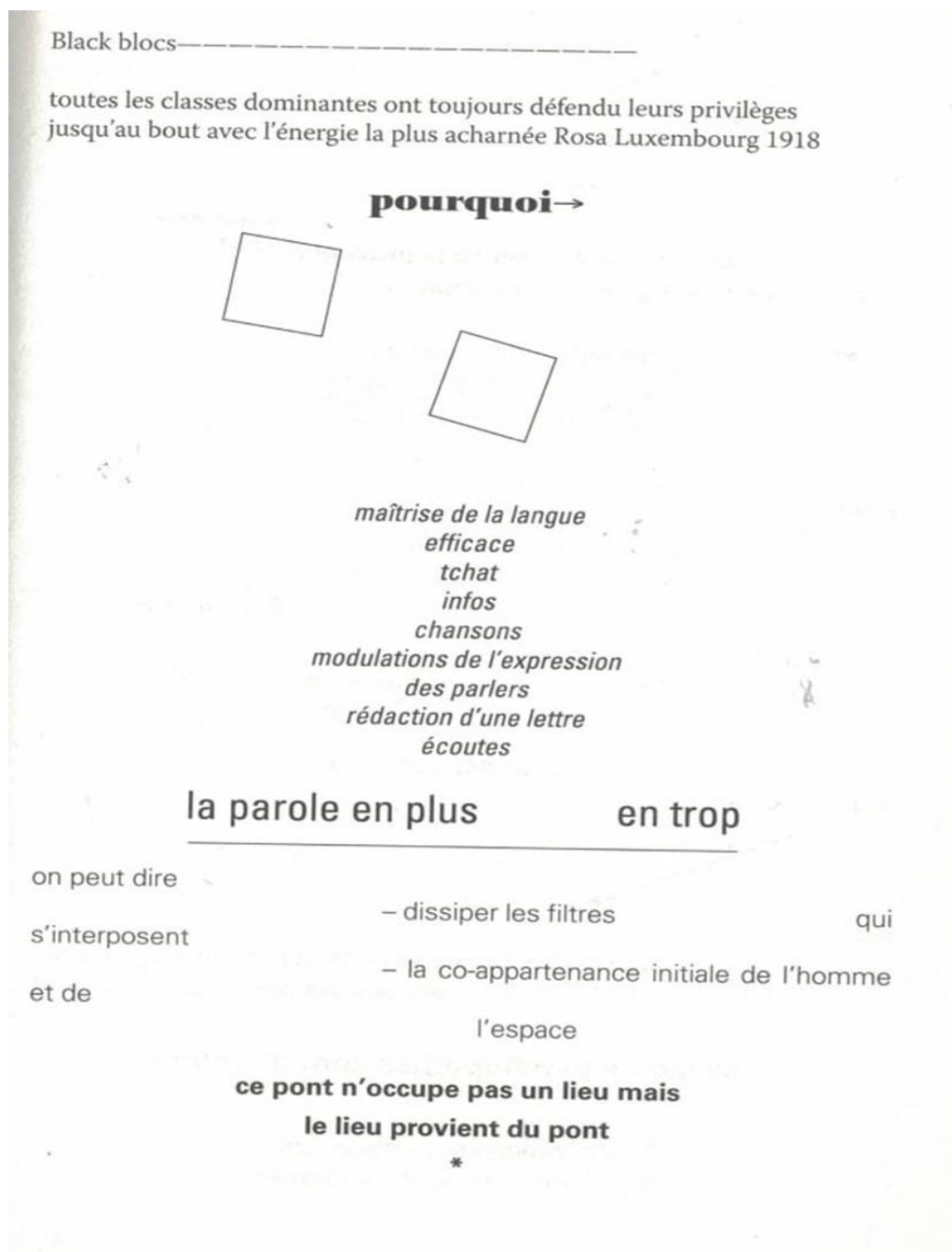
ses romans parlent de la vraie vie avec  
de vraies gens dans des situations où chacun  
peut se reconnaître ou reconnaître un  
membre de son entourage      on se sent bien  
avec les personnages      ils pourraient être des copains

que l'on peut situer dans la rencontre imaginaire  
où il faut d'abord accepter le lien

---

<sup>55</sup> Vannina Maestri, *A Stazzona* (Paris: Al Dante, 2011), p 17. Henceforth, all references to this volume will occur in the text, preceded by AS.

As we can see from the extracts from different *land-textes* above, there are some recurrent aesthetic features, such as the style and font size, the spatial disposition of the different blocks of texts and the presence of geometrical shapes. This aesthetic thread functions as a connective line between her texts, making them exist as a rhizomatic multiplicity. Maestri's homogeneous stylistic choices connect each *land-texte* to the others, making them appear as if they were different components of the same rhizomatic machine. On the other hand, as exemplified in the following extracts, Maestri creates a web of references, allusions, and reciprocal interpenetrations across her texts.



(M2, p. 93)

toutes les classes dominantes ont toujours défendu leurs privilèges  
jusqu'au bout avec l'énergie la plus acharnée Rosa Luxembourg 1918

pourquoi→

*maîtrise de la langue*  
*efficace*  
*tchat*  
*infos*  
*chansons*  
*modulations de l'expression*  
*des parlers*  
*rédaction d'une lettre*  
*écoutes*

la parole en plus                      en trop

on peut dire

- dissiper les filtres                      qui s'interposent
- la co-appartenance initiale de l'homme et de  
l'espace

**ce pont n'occupe pas un lieu mais  
le lieu provient du pont**

maintenir

**la distance au sein de la proximité ???!!**

*faire place à l'étrangeté dans son propre lieu-----♥*

des taches fluos égayaient tout  
les petites touches de hip hop et  
♪ microblousons en nylon

(l'ennemi extérieur n'est rien à côté de celui  
qu'on porte en soi)

Ça aura donc l'aspect du  
papier glacé                      sans ambition autre qu'explorer la surface

**ceci aussi passera**

pas donné à tout le monde  
la substance d'un\_\_\_\_\_

que recèlent tous les mots et tous les êtres hantés  
par une incommunicable angoisse

<sup>56</sup> Vannina Maestri, *black blocs* (Derrière la salle de bains, 2009), p. n/a..

**dieux incarnés**  
**dieux qui pardonnent**

**dieux qui ne pardonnent pas**

ses interventions se circonscrivent  
dans la réversibilité

→

↓

des situation

+

ou

-

durables

qui reposent

sur

l'usage et l'

**interaction**

**dieux qui dévorent**  
**dieux qui massacrent**

je suis in ca pa ble de le di re

**une note**  
**une seule note**  
**est**  
**un**  
**élément de**  
**résistance**

nous voilà  
**dieux de l'obscurité**  
**dieux de la lumière**

ie souis oualdisnéisé

(M2, p. 42)

dieux incarnés  
dieux qui pardonnent

dieux qui ne pardonnent pas  
ses interventions se circonscrivent  
dans la réversibilité

→

des situations  
+  
ou  
-  
durables  
qui reposent  
sur  
l'usage et l'  
interaction

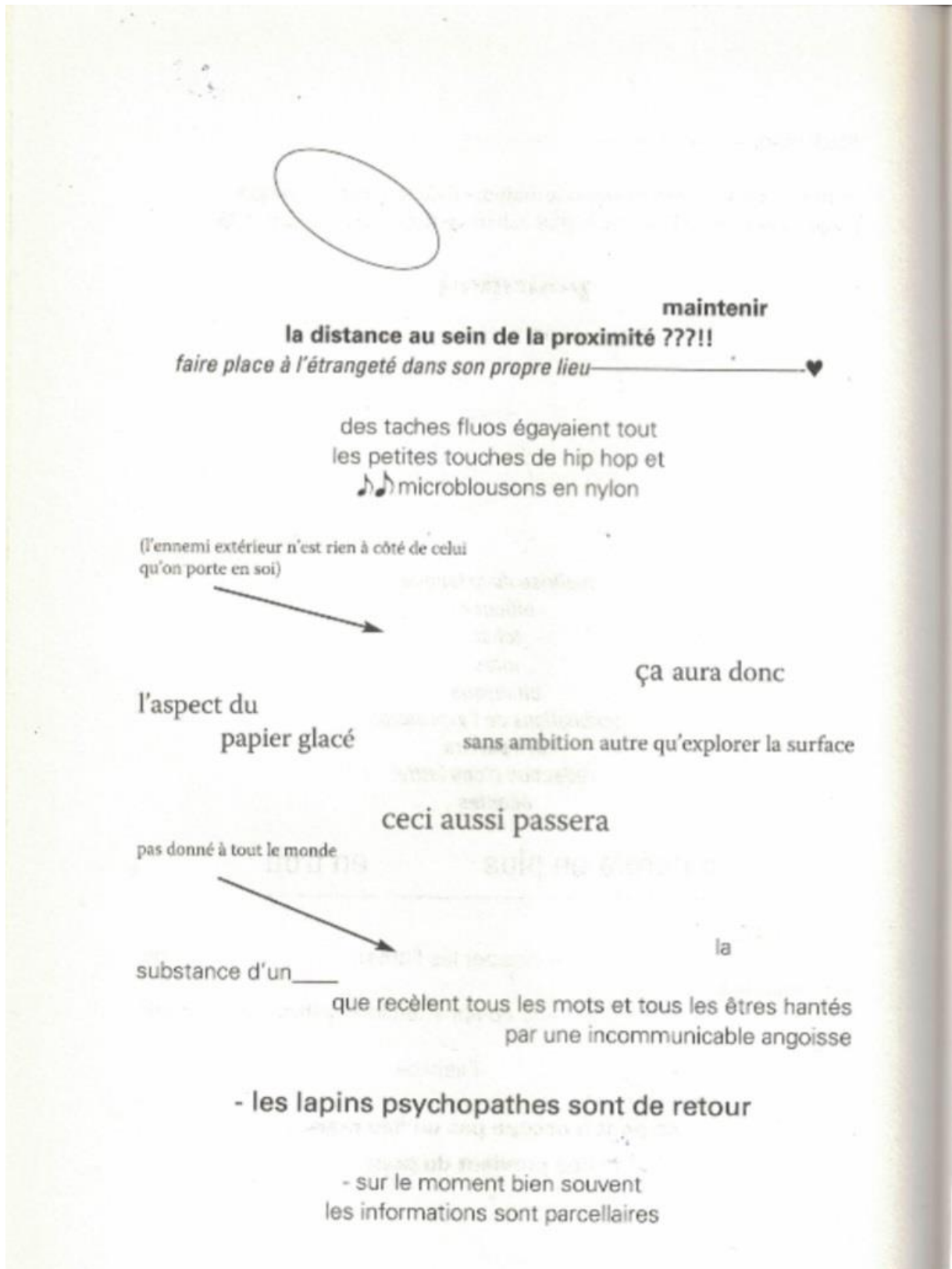
dieux qui dévorent  
dieux qui massacrent

je suis in ca pa ble de le di re

une note  
une seule note  
est  
un  
élément de  
résistance

---

<sup>57</sup> Vannina Maestri, *envie de rien* (publie.net, 2008), p. n/a. Henceforth, all references to this volume will occur in the text, preceded by *EDR*.



(M2, p. 94)

The first fragment is taken from *black blocs*, the second, fourth and fifth from *mobiles 2*, and the third from *envie de rien*. As can be observed, Maestri assembled some of the fragments used in *envie de*

*rien* (2008), and in *black blocs* (2009) to construct *mobiles 2*, only slightly changing their typographical disposition, font, and size, alongside a set of brand-new fragments purposely selected for the collection. All this suggests that these three texts are components of the same rhizomatic machine in a state of constant growth and metamorphosis. The rhizomatic connections across her texts, however, are not limited to that. The title of *mobiles 2* clearly recalls another poetry collection, *mobiles*, published in 2005, five years earlier. Although the two texts are independent, their titles function as a connective line which rhizomatically connects them, at the same time connecting *mobiles* to the other texts connected to *mobiles 2*, namely *black blocs* and *envie de rien*.

This section is organised around two main subsections. The first subsection focuses on how Maestri uses the *land-texte* to reveal and denounce capitalist society and its neo-liberal ideology. The second section examines how Maestri creates new maps to disrupt the functioning of the capitalist order.

### 3.3.1 The *land-texte*: an art of transparency

The process of constructing the *land-texte* can be seen as an art of transparency. By mapping the present world, the *land-texte* makes it transparent. It reveals the engine that regulates it, which is to say the machinic apparatus that gives birth to its structures. As Maestri puts it ‘l'espace carte-texte sert de révélateur’ (*LT*, p. 39). Reading Maestri’s *land-textes* is, to draw on an image from *mobiles 2*, like lifting the lid that capitalist society uses to hide its mechanisms:

voilà  
il  
avait le sentiment  
qu’on avait ôté le couvercle  
de la vie  
pour lui permettre  
d’en voir  
le  
mécanisme (*M2*, p. 61)

The third person pronoun ‘il’ can be interpreted as the reader. The impersonal pronoun ‘on’ can be interpreted as the *land-texte*. The word ‘vie’ can be interpreted as society. This is because it is society that establishes the mode of living of human beings. It is society, as Guattari explains throughout *Lignes de fuite*, that gives human beings a position, a mode of being and existing (*LF*, p. 33).

With this fragment, Maestri seems to suggest that *mobiles 2*, and thus the *land-texte*, can reveal to the reader the mechanisms that regulate the capitalist process of social production, the ongoing process of construction of the capitalist world. In order to produce transparency effects, Maestri uses the fragments that make up her *land-textes*. On the one hand, these fragments disclose the artificiality and arbitrariness of capitalist society and denounce the ambiguity and violence at its basis. On the other hand, they challenge the reader's logic and mode of thinking and perceiving. By rhizomatically assembling different fragments to construct her *land-textes*, Maestri deterritorialises language, time, space, and the poetic 'je', interfering with the functioning of the tree-like image of thought at the basis of capitalist society, and so with capitalist society itself.

The next few sections will show how these fragments achieve these goals. However, before continuing, it is necessary to examine the idea of capitalist society at the basis of Maestri's *land-texte* so to frame better the analysis of her poetry.

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At the basis of Maestri's *land-textes* is the Deleuzian idea that capitalist society is a society of control. As she suggests, capitalist society operates via the total control of the human being, configuring itself as a form of soft totalitarianism: 'total contrôle/ ou/ vers un totalitarisme de contrôle discret et souple (*EDR*, p. 58).<sup>58</sup> The reasons for Maestri's definition of capitalism as a form of soft totalitarianism are twofold.

On the one hand, she conceives it as such because, as the adjective 'discret' suggests, capitalist society controls and oppresses human beings with an apparatus whose effects can easily go unnoticed. As will be explained fully in the next sections, Maestri's *land-texte* supports the idea that capitalist society controls and oppresses human beings through a series of instruments, such as the state, language, family, and the idea that the capitalist world is the logical conclusion of history, which are not straightforwardly perceived as instruments of power.<sup>59</sup> These instruments concur in disciplining the human body and mind, conditioning their way of thinking and existing, without them being aware of it. Capitalist society hides the effects of these instruments beyond the secondary roles that they are given. This enables it to deeply penetrate human existence, controlling and oppressing the natural

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<sup>58</sup> Maestri defines this form of totalitarianism as soft because, as will be explained in the next sections, it is always possible for human beings to escape capitalist imposition and shape a different world. Maestri reiterates this idea in *A Stazzona*, where she writes: 'il n'y a pas de société de contrôle total/ ou alors/ a better tomorrow?' (p. 8).

<sup>59</sup> Although Maestri clearly refers to the Deleuzian idea of capitalist society as a society of control, in his text about control societies, Deleuze focuses more on the role of marketing in the process of social control than on the role of the state, language, and family. However, he talks about the role of state, language, and families in the shaping of order in the two volumes of *Capitalisme et Schizophrénie* in collaboration with Guattari.



creativity of human thought, which, by its own nature, can potentially think up ever new socio-political possibilities.

On the other hand, Maestri defines capitalist society as a form of soft totalitarianism because, as the adjective ‘souple’ suggests, capitalist society is crossed by an infinite number of lines of flight which human beings can follow to deterritorialise it and set the conditions for new worlds. As Maestri suggests, human beings can naturally oppose the oppression and control exercised by the machinic apparatus of capitalist society: ‘d’une part les êtres vivants/ d’autre part les dispositifs’ (*EDR*, p. 58). This is because, although capitalist society controls and oppresses the creativity of their thought, human beings can always trace a line of flight that can help them escape their control and oppression. This is why, through the writing and reading of the *land-textes*, Maestri and her readers can activate a process of deterritorialisation that can potentially overthrow the established order and pave the way for the actualisation of new potential communities.

### **3.3.1.1 The *land-texte*: a denunciation of the functioning and violence of capitalist society**

This section will explain in further detail the role of State apparatus, language, and the family within capitalist society. Maestri uses the fragments that make up her texts to reveal and denounce the functioning and the violence of capitalist society, and, therefore, to reactivate the reader’s social awareness.

#### **3.3.1.1.1 The role of the State in the capitalist process of social production**

As Maestri observes, in the capitalist world, a good man, in the sense of a good citizen, is a man who subordinates his desires to that of the State: ‘Que je vous dise : un homme de valeur se doit avant tout à son pays et non à ces désirs. Le contraire cela m’enrage’.<sup>60</sup> In *L’Anti-Œdipe*, Deleuze and Guattari conceive the State as a machine of anti-production (*AO*, p. 302). In the collective imaginary,

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<sup>60</sup> Maestri, *débris d’endroits*, p. 40.

especially in Western countries, the State apparatus is associated with order and security, yet, on the contrary, it is an instrument used by despotic and capitalist societies to suffocate the creative flow of thought. With the State apparatus, capitalist society makes sure that the deterritorialised flows that characterise it are systematically territorialised, preventing any potential threat to its survival.<sup>61</sup> In order to territorialise these flows, capitalist society uses the State to standardise and normalise the ways people think and behave. As Deleuze and Guattari suggest, the State apparatus castrates people's thought (*AO*, p. 455). It suffocates natural creativity by providing a legal framework, which induces them to discipline themselves, adapting their behaviour and thought to the standards and expectations of capitalist society. In capitalist society, as Maestri explains, it is not possible to have personal projects: 'pas de projet perso' (*M2*, p. 73). It is not possible to think and exist creatively. This is because creativity would threaten its existence; it would lead to the actualisation of new worlds. Through the State apparatus, Maestri suggests, capitalist society invites people to be passive and to subordinate their desires to the needs of capital: 'annulez le projet/ soyez passifs/ passivistes/ la solution est de rester immobile' (*M2*, p. 73).

### 3.3.1.1.2 *Land-texte*: a denunciation of the use of language

Just like Sivan, Maestri often uses the cut-up technique to build her texts. Unlike Sivan, however, Maestri rarely operates on the language of the blocks of texts that she selects, extracts and recontextualises in her poetry collections but instead usually leaves them as they are. This is not because she holds an acritical position towards capitalist society's use of language. On the contrary, she does so to denounce its normalising effects. As already explained, at the basis of Maestri's conceptualisation of the *land-texte*, there is the idea that language is a material substance that human beings use to shape their world. This is not only implied in her theoretical texts, but it is also implicit throughout her *land-textes*. In *envie de rien*, in particular, Maestri is very explicit. As she writes: 'le spectacle du monde n'est jamais donné sans la grammaire qu'il articule' (*EDR*, p. 32). Maestri's texts reveal the socio-political nature of language. This is based on Maestri's awareness that language instructs human beings how to differentiate and assemble chaotic matter. With language, capitalist society fixes and circulates its order and commands, making people conform to them: 'édicter la norme/ fixer les règles/ faire respecter' (*M2*, p. 28). For Maestri, as for Deleuze and Guattari, before

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<sup>61</sup> Bogue, *Deleuze's Way*, p. 87.

being an instrument of communication, language is an instrument of power (*MP*, p, 95-96). Through language, human groups take control of territories and circulate their norms and conventions (*MP*, p. 14, pp. 95-96, pp. 127-128).

That Maestri constructs her texts by assembling a series of fragments written with different linguistic codes and registers, as exemplified in the following fragments, implies that beyond their formal differences, all the existing languages fulfil the same political objectives: to circulate its rules of functioning.<sup>62</sup> As Maestri suggests in *envie de rien*, language penetrates the human mind, assigning individuals a set of fixed ideas ('assignation d'idées fixes' (*EDR*, p. 40)', which makes them think and behave according to the logic at its basis.<sup>63</sup> In this process, repetition, Maestri writes, plays a key role: 'l'usage de la répétition / est le moteur fondamental' (*M2*, p. 21). It is the intrinsic redundancy of language which guarantees that the members of capitalist society learn and interiorise its social order and commands. In *mobiles 2*, Maestri ironically asks whether a sign can be defined as such if it is not repeated: 'un signe qui ne se répète pas n'est pas / un signe ?' (*M2*, p. 18). Social orders and commands can be transmitted only after human beings learn how to recognise and decode signs. This happens after they have been systematically exposed to words and objects and interiorise their arbitrary relationship in the world. As Maestri suggests 'les réitérations de mots attestent leur authenticité' (*M2*, p. 21). Through repetition, signs can fulfil their functions and produce the effects they are designed to produce. They create arbitrary relations and connections amongst the elements of which chaos is composed imposing an order that actually coincides with the structures of society. Due to its ontological redundancy, language, Maestri suggests, traps human beings in an existential cycle that always makes them think and behave in the same way: 'il y a plus/ d'évolution/ c'est la même chose tout le temps' (*EDR*, p. 48). Language standardises human existence, condemning human beings to think of the world in the same way and to repeat the same actions. In the specific case of the capitalist world, as the following extracts exemplify, language leads people to accumulate capital, to buy unnecessary goods and to subordinate their whole life to work.

quel est votre but

les hommes et les entreprises accumulent du capital  
dans le but  
d'en accumuler encore (*M2*, p. 51)

la modalité pour être splendide  
c'est d'avoir une rolex (*M2*, p. 35)

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<sup>62</sup> It is important to add that the reason why Maestri uses French, Italian and English in her *land-textes* is arbitrary and justified by the fact that they are three languages that she knows.

<sup>63</sup> This is why, as Maestri further clarifies in *Mobile*, capitalist society not only exploits human beings financially but also psychologically.

comment résister aux soldes (*M*, p. 76)

les bonus <3 (*EDR*, p. 65)

Through language, capitalist society makes human beings lose control of the world, softly leading them to subordinate their entire existence to the production and accumulation of capital.<sup>64</sup> All this affects the creative flow of human thought, preventing human beings from thinking or behaving differently from the way society expects.

### 3.3.1.1.2.1 Language and social media

As Maestri observes in *mobiles 2*, today capitalist society often relies on social media for the transmission of its order and commands. Social media, she explains, is responsible for the ‘démocratisation de la parole’ (*M2*, p. 17). With that, Maestri does not mean that social media enables human beings to express themselves freely: ‘[...] cette liberté d’expression est illusoire’ (*M2*, p. 80).

Rather, for Maestri, social media is a tool employed by society to standardise the way human beings think and behave.

les réseaux sociaux le sont-ils  
vraiment

autoprofilage  
normalisation  
interactions  
forme de jeu de mot

nouvelle démocratisation  
[...]  
se plier aux conventions (*M2*, p. 17)

Social media language penetrates the human mind much more deeply than the other linguistic codes people use in their everyday interactions. This can be explained by the fact that social media language is syntactically and lexically poorer than any other linguistic code. With their fixed word count, social media platforms have dramatically simplified the syntactical features of language and are

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<sup>64</sup> As Maestri explains in *mobile*, in capitalist society, human beings no longer master the world: ‘vous ne maîtrisez plus rien’. Capitalist society penetrates the human mind so deeply that they are no longer in control of the world and of what happens to them.

impoverishing its vocabulary. Social media language is characterised by abbreviations, acronyms, shortened expressions, lack of punctuation, and emojis,<sup>65</sup> which often fail to fully express the idea that speakers want to express. The syntactical simplicity of social media language has enabled society to transmit its order and commands in a more straightforward way than any other linguistic code. Any sign used by social media language conveys a clear order and command, which directly prompts human beings to respond in the ways required of them. Although many linguists, such as David Crystal, have argued that social media language encourages a creative use of language,<sup>66</sup> as Maestri's text suggests, this is debatable. While it is undeniable that the language used on the Internet has evolved more rapidly than other linguistic codes used during our interactions, the changes are ambiguous. Although all this testifies to the intrinsic creativity of language which changes throughout time and across geographic areas according to the needs of speakers, such changes are not truly creative because they do not carry the germs for new alternative worlds. The changes that occur in social media language do not result from a deviation in the way of thinking but rather from an adaptation of language. Capitalist society constantly needs new statements to incessantly reterritorialise the deterritorialised flow that characterises it. Social media platforms have proved themselves to be the best place to produce such statements. In addition, it can be argued that the language of social media is not truly creative because the changes that rapidly occur are cyclically normalised, becoming an integral part of the social media users' linguistic habits. The lines of flight that these changes trace are quickly aborted due to the systematic repetition of social media users.

In the process of normalisation of the changes occurring in social media language, so-called influencers play a crucial role. When Maestri suggests that social media can make you earn ('faire fructifier son réseau/ faire du chiffre/ se plier aux conventions.' (M2, p. 17)), she is indirectly referring to users who monetise their accounts, known as influencers. Influencers are paid by corporations or institutions to express the needs of capital and to influence people's behaviour and thought. To this end, influencers purposely work on language to prompt their followers to think in the way they are expected to by capitalist society and to accomplish a series of actions, such as to purchase certain items and/or services, that capitalist society requires from them for its survival. From a Deleuzo-Guattarian perspective, 'influencers' can be seen as machines of capitalist reproduction. Capitalist society uses them as instruments to circulate its order and commands through social media language.

Maestri's observations on language and social media do not necessarily imply that social media language, or social media in general, cannot be used to trace the lines of flight needed to deterritorialise this world and open the way to new socio-political organisations. They simply reveal

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<sup>65</sup> Nathan Heid, *The Evolution of Language Used in Social Media* (Grin ☺), 2016), pp. 3-4;

<sup>66</sup> David Crystal, *Internet Linguistics: A Student Guide* (London: Routledge, 2011), pp. 4-7.

to the reader how capitalist society makes use of it. This confutes David Crystal's thesis, according to which people who are critical towards social media language are simply afraid of the technological novelty. In *Internet Linguistic: A student Guide*, the linguist compares people who are critical of social media language to the Church, which, in the 15th century, saw printing as an invention of Satan.<sup>67</sup> Maestri is not afraid of technology but of the political use that capitalist society makes of it.

### 3.3.1.1.3 The role of the family in the capitalist process of social production

Since human beings are exposed to language, and so to the rules of functioning of society, their brains are hacked from the beginning of their lives. As Deleuze writes: 'les enfants sont des prisonniers politiques'.<sup>68</sup> Capitalist society inculcates its values in people's minds from childhood. As Maestri suggests, this happens through parental figures who serve as behavioural models for children: '[...] la valeur que vous inculquez à vos enfant /[...] /votre maman c'est votre modèle' (*INF*, p. n/a). Capitalist society uses maternal and paternal figures as instruments for the circulation of its order and commands. Toddlers model their way of speaking and behaving on that of their parents.<sup>69</sup> As a result, the family can be seen as the first setting where human beings learn how to obey capitalist orders.<sup>70</sup> Since primitive society, Deleuze and Guattari observe, families are social institutions that guarantee the 'reproduction psychologique de masse du système économique' (*AO*, p. 141).

In the capitalist system, the family teaches the individual how to exist and think. It functions as a force of anti-production ('La famille s'introduit dans la production de désir, et va dès le plus jeune âge en opérer un déplacement, un refoulement inouï' (*AO*, p. 143). It represses the creativity of its members' flow of thought, instilling society's values and ideas in their minds (*AO*, p. 64, 110, 145).

Since human beings are exposed to society's *mots d'ordre* from birth, Maestri describes life as a sort of training camp during which society teaches human beings to adapt themselves to its way of thinking and existing:

l'expérience lui avait appris  
à s'adapter  
à la logique

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<sup>67</sup> Crystal, p. 2.

<sup>68</sup> Deleuze, *Pourparlers*, p. 60.

<sup>69</sup> Ian Buchanan, *Deleuze and Guattari's 'Anti-Edipus': A reader's guide* (London: Continuum, 2008), p. 66-67.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 66-67.

démente  
du  
monde (M2, p. 24)

### 3.3.1.1.4 The *land-texte*: the fictionality of capitalist society

In her *land-textes*, as the following extract from *A Stazzona* shows, Maestri denounces the fact that capitalist ideology, which she refers to as bourgeois ideology,<sup>71</sup> promotes an essentialist conception of itself and of the things that constitute it to hide that ‘on est dans l’opérationnel’ (M2, p. 9). As Maestri explains: ‘l’idéologie bourgeoise fonctionne / en montrant comme réel / ce qu’elle produit comme fiction’.<sup>72</sup> Capitalist society conceives itself and all the living and non-living things that constitute it as real, in the sense that they would objectively exist per se, regardless of the process of social production, the process through which human groups actualise their society. Echoing Deleuze and Guattari’s idea of society as the product of social production, Maestri suggests that society is pure fiction. It is the arbitrary and artificial product of imagination, and so of thought, due to the noological nature of imagination:

le monde est construit par l'imagination  
des participants  
des utilisateurs  
des actionnaires  
des réseaux sociaux. (M2, p. 80).

With the numerous fragments referring to imagination, dreams, and the act of dreaming, Maestri conveys the idea that the process of social production is like a collective dream driven by the imagination:

Rêve général (M2, p. 27)

Choisissez / rêvez (M, p. 73)<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Throughout his texts, Marx used the expression ‘bourgeois society’ to refer to the ‘capitalist society’ (see: Karl Marx, *Capital*, 2vols (London: Penguin Classics, 2004)). In *A Stazzona*, Maestri seems to draw upon Marx in this respect.

<sup>72</sup> Vannina Maestri, *A Stazzona*, p. 9.

<sup>73</sup> This fragment seems to have been taken from an advertisement or a leaflet promoting a service or product. Very often advertisements use terms like ‘choosing’ and ‘choose’ to give the false impression that consumers freely choose the products and services that they buy. Often, advertisements also use the term ‘dream’ to highlight that the product or service that they promote can make the consumer reach an ideal state. Here, Maestri seems to use the two terms in a very different way. The term ‘dream’ seems to be used to stress that what we consider as the world is a mental production of

Given the noological nature of society, as Maestri argues throughout her *land-textes*, ‘le monde n’est pas aussi ordonné qu’il pourrait sembler’ (*M*, p. 112); its order is pure invention. The shape of the world is arbitrarily moulded by human beings to make sense of themselves and the other singularities in chaos. From a Deleuzo-Guattarian perspective, chaos can be seen as the undistinguished matter that virtually precedes the process of social production, consisting of the differentiation and assemblage of the elements of that matter.

Since the world is pure invention, capitalist society is not the only possible world, nor the best one. Contrary to mainstream social narratives that make people believe that ‘le néo-libéralisme/ constitue la conclusion logique de l’histoire’ (*M2*, p. 36), for Maestri this is not true, it ‘un mensonge’ (*M2*, p. 36). Capitalist society is only one of an infinite number of possible socio-political orders that human beings could actualise, and it is destined, like every socio-political order, to end. This is due to the natural creativity of thought and the potentiality of imagination, which can interpret and actualise the chaotic matter in an infinite number of ways. The world can be changed, it can be reconstructed, if only human groups truly and deeply wish it. In *Mobile*, Maestri emphasizes this idea with a picture taken by Italian photographer Giacomo Savozzi during the Firenze Social Forum.



(*M*, p. 136)

The picture represents a banner outside the window of a house. The banner says ‘Scendo...Cambio il mondo...E torno!!!’, in English, ‘I come down, I change the world, and come back!!!’. The idea clearly suggests that the world is not fixed but can be changed. *Mobile 2* suggests that today’s Western world circulates the same idea, by simply translating the slogan of the banner: ‘je/ descends/ je change/ le/ monde/ et/ je reviens’ (*M*, p. 37).

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the human mind, whereas the term ‘choisissez’ to indicate that since the world is a production of the human mind, human beings can choose to change it.



The idea that capitalist society is the end of history has not only been promoted by the dominant class, which sells the idea of capitalist society as the coronation of history, but also by some thinkers who are not supportive of the capitalist order. This is the case, for example, with Francis Fukuyama who, in 1989, published an essay entitled ‘The End of History’, in which he argues that capitalist society is the end of history. This idea, Fukuyama observes, is not new in the philosophical debate, as numerous intellectuals, such as Marx and Kojève, had discussed it before him.<sup>74</sup> Fukuyama’s main thesis is that the end of the Cold War not only ended the post-war period but also, and more importantly, humankind’s ideological evolution. As he explains:

What we may be witnessing is not just the end of the Cold War, or the passing of a particular period of post-war history, but the end of history as such: that is, the end point of mankind’s ideological evolution and universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government.

[...]

This does not by any means imply the end of internal conflict per se. [...] Conflicts between states still in history, and between those states and those at the end of history, would still be possible.

[...]

The end of history will be a very sad time. The struggle for recognition, the willingness to risk one’s life for a purely abstract goal, the worldwide ideological struggle that called forth daring, courage, imagination, and idealism will be replaced by economic calculation, the endless solving of technical problems, environmental concerns, and the satisfaction of sophisticated consumer demands.

In the post-historical period, there will be neither art nor philosophy, just the perpetual caretaking of the museum of human history.

I can feel in myself, and see in others around me, a powerful nostalgia for the time when history existed.<sup>75</sup>

Fukuyama conceives the end of history as the arrest of human creativity, trapping the human being in a never-ending repetition of capitalist logic, which makes them exist and perceive the world always in the same way. Although he talks about the end of history with profound sadness, he considers it unavoidable and passively accepts it without any resistance. Even if Fukuyama does not support capitalism, his position produces the same effects as the dominant class. It circulates the idea that capitalist society is the logical conclusion of history, preventing people from taking any action that can potentially threaten its survival. This feeds on a sentiment of hopelessness and discouragement. If capitalist society is the end of history, then it is useless to resist or fight. The only thing that people can do is passively accept the course of the event.

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<sup>74</sup> Francis Fukuyama, ‘The End of history?’, *The National Interest* (1989), 1-18 (pp. 2-3).

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1 and pp. 17-18.

The power of Maestri's *land-textes* erupts here. With her *land-textes*, Maestri attacks this complacency and passivity towards capitalist society. Maestri's *land-textes* aim to provoke thought in order to rewind the mental circuits of their readers and help them to rethink the world. As Maestri's *land-textes* often reiterate, nothing is real, and everything is possible: 'rien n'est vrai tout est possible' (EDR, p. 51). Human beings can incessantly produce ever new worlds by liberating their thought from capitalist mental conditioning.

### 3.3.1.1.5 The *land-texte*: an invitation to change the world

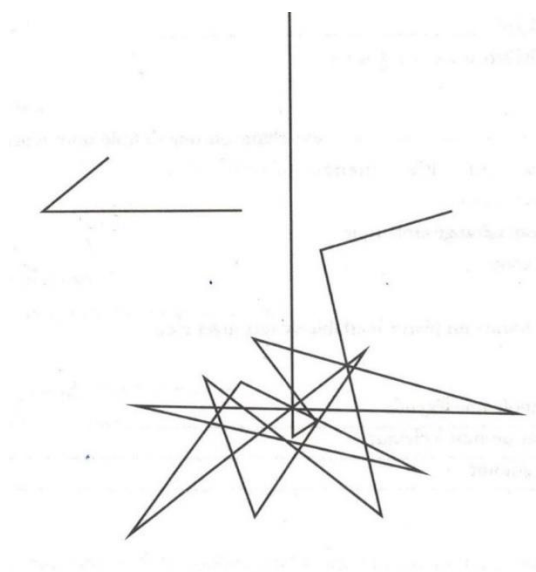
In order to reinforce the idea that everything is fictional and human beings can change the world, Maestri's *land-textes* not only state this but also demonstrate how it can be done. In *envie de rien*, Maestri writes: 'il faut faire de la théorie le crime parfait' (EDR, p. 16). Maestri uses the term 'théorie' to mean 'thought', whereas 'crime' is used to mean 'revolution'. With this short block of text, Maestri expresses the emergence of revolution in the world and of bringing it about by changing the way each of us, as human beings, think. The fact that she uses the metaphor of the crime to refer to the revolution is particularly significant. It is significant because it highlights that, in capitalist society, any action that goes against its functioning is considered a crime. As explained, the capitalist world presents itself as the best and only possible world. For this reason, it conceives any action that goes against it as a threat to the collectivity, even if these actions could improve the collectivity's living standards. The idea that 'la théorie', and thus thought, can execute the perfect crime suggests that the only effective action that human beings can take to revolutionise the world is to change their mode of thinking. As she explains in *mobiles 2*, in order to create a new situation, in the sense of a new socio-political order ('tu dois créer une situation nouvelle' (M2, p. 55)), it is necessary to change the way of thinking: 'il faut donc changer notre façon de penser' (M2, 62).<sup>76</sup> To do so, Maestri explains, human beings need to invent new rules of thinking: 'Les règles sont à réinventer' (M2, p. 35). Maestri uses a metaphor to explain how human beings can invent these new rules, comparing the invention of new rules of social production to the preparation of a cake:

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<sup>76</sup> The idea of creating a new situation recalls the International Situationniste. One of the main Situationist imperatives was that of creating new situations, 'that is to say the construction of momentary ambiances of life and their transformation into a superior passional quality' (Guy Debord, in James Trier, *Guy Debord, the Situationist International, and the Revolutionary Spirit* (Leiden: Brill-Sense, 2019), p. 86.) Situationists believed that this could be done, as Sam Cooper explains, 'through the material intervention in the urban life' (Sam Cooper, *The Situationist International. Modernism, Surrealism, and the Avant-Gardes* (London: Routledge, 2017), p. 64). Although Maestri uses the idea of creating a new situation differently, the use of this expression may reveal a certain influence and knowledge of the Situationist project.

en y mettant du vôtre  
je suis persuadée que vous parviendrez  
à concocter une meilleure tarte au citron  
meringuée (*M2*, p. 16)

When baking a special cake, people deviate from the phases of preparation imposed by the recipe, adding their personal touch. Likewise, to invent new rules of thinking, people must deviate from the mental paths imposed by capitalist society and add their own personal touch to the process of social production, that is to say in the process of construction of the world. By doing so, Maestri clarifies, human beings can reappropriate social production, and thus the world: ‘*touche personnelle/ appropriation des bases/puis/ transformation*’ (*M2*, p. 32). Human beings can build a series of lines of flight able to interfere with the way of thinking in capitalist systems paving the way to new alternative worlds. To reinforce this point, as the following extract illustrates, Maestri draws a series of black lines on the pages of her *land-textes*. These lines graphically seem to embody the idea of the line of flight and its disjunctive power.



*M*, p. 27.

These black lines exemplify the rhizomatic synaptic connections that human beings can make to deviate from the linear mental paths imposed by capitalist society and to challenge its vision and organisation of the world. The rhizomatic logic that connects the blocks of text prompts the reader to think according to the logic of connection, multiplicity and heterogeneity, helping them to resist and revolt against the capitalist order, which is based on the logic of binary opposition and hierarchical relations. As Maestri suggests, to deterritorialise the contingent world, and thus to reconfigure it, human beings can take an infinite number of routes; it is up to each to find the route which best suits

their needs ‘CRÉER TA PROPRE STRATÉGIE/ mais il existe des milliers et des milliers de variantes/ pour jouer’ (M2, p. 55).

Maestri’s land-textes do not impose any specific idea of society. Rather, they shock the reader’s thought to enable them to see the world from different perspectives. The following section will explain how Maestri’s *land-textes* shock the reader’s thought by tracing a series of lines of flight that provide them with an instrument to resist and revolt against the control and oppression of capitalist society.

### 3.3.2 *Land-textes*: the beginning of a revolution

As Maestri often suggests, her poetry is a discontinuous narration that undermines the idea of literature as an image of the world at the basis of capitalist society, as expressed by what can be called, from a Deleuzo-Guattarian perspective, major literature:

un simple récit dont on sautera des passages

à son gré

ça creuse les questions de la représentation-----<sup>77</sup>

une forme de balbutiement

miner le discours (M2, p. 18)

Maestri’s poetry is minor. Deleuze and Guattari identify minor literature as the *livre-rhizome*, which they describe as a kind of text which, far from reproducing the shape and functioning of the world, deterritorialise it. Maestri’s discontinuous narration has the potential to deterritorialise the world. It can challenge the way of thinking based on the logic of binary oppositions and hierarchical relations at the basis of capitalist society and its essentialism by circulating a rhizomatic logic. In order to deconstruct her narration and interfere with the functioning of the capitalist world, Maestri works on the spatial structure of poetry and the idea of the poetic ‘je’. This will be the focus of the next two subsections. The first subsection will explain how Maestri manipulates the spatial structure of poetry

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<sup>77</sup> Maestri, *A Stazzona*, p. 9.

and the effects that she produces. The second will explain how she challenges the idea of the poetic subject and, from there, the process of subjectivation at the basis of capitalist society.

### **3.3.2.1 *Land-textes*: deterritorialising time and space**

One strategy that Maestri adopts to deterritorialise capitalist society and thus to revolt against it is the deconstruction of the spatio-temporal architecture of poetry. In order to do so, Maestri constructs the spatial structure of her *land-textes* as a smooth space. Before examining how she does this, it is necessary to take a step back to explain the idea of smooth space. The idea of smooth space comes from Deleuze and Guattari, who, in *Mille Plateaux*, distinguish between what they call smooth space and striated space.

Striated space is generated by the State apparatus. The State apparatus can be understood as the social institutions which embody power and authority produced by despotic and capitalist societies to regulate their process of social production, their way of organising the world (AO, pp. 234-236 and pp. 299-301). Striated space is homogeneous, linear, and rationally structured. As Deleuze and Guattari write:

[...] un tel espace strié est nécessairement délimité, fermé sur un côté au moins [...] le strié, c'est ce qui entrecroise des fixes et des variables, ce qui ordonne et fait succéder des formes distinctes [...] dans l'espace strié, les lignes, les trajets, ont tendance à être subordonnés aux points [...] les points sont subordonnés au trajet. [...] C'est la subordination de l'habitat au parcours, la conformation de l'espace du dedans à l'espace du dehors [...]. Dans l'espace strié on ferme une surface, et on la « répartit » suivant des intervalles déterminés, d'après des coupures assignées [...]. (MP, pp. 593-600).

Deleuze and Guattari compare striated space to an embroidery. As the structure of the embroidery is subordinated to a central motif, which homogenises its pattern, the structure of striated space is subordinated to the logic of the society that generates it (MP, pp. 594-595). Striated space can be conceived as a site of appropriation and immobilisation; its rigid structure territorialises thought, consolidating identities and social practices. Society uses striated space to control and prompt human beings to think and behave according to its rules through the predictable and regular outcomes that derive from its linear and rational organisation.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Elizabeth Grosz, 'Deleuze Theory and Space', *Log*, 1 (2003), 77-86 (p. 78).

Smooth space, on the contrary, can be understood as the space of the war machine. The war machine is a particular kind of collective assemblage, exterior to the State, able to deterritorialise all the other assemblages of the established order due to its different nature and origin.<sup>79</sup> The war machine does not arise from the image of thought at the basis of the established order, nor does it function according to its logic. Instead, it arises and functions according to the rhizomatic flow of the brain. The war machine effectively functions and configures itself as a rhizome. The war machine produces smooth space. Smooth space can be understood as a space that creates a series of rhizomatic connections amongst the singularities that make up society to shake its foundation and recreate the chaotic conditions to restart the process of social production. As Deleuze and Guattari write:

Le lisse, c'est la variation continue, c'est le développement continu de la forme [...] C'est un espace construit par opération locales avec changements de directions. [...] l'espace lisse est directionnel, non pas dimensionnel ou métrique. L'espace lisse est occupé par des événements ou haecceités, beaucoup plus que par des choses formées et perçues (*MP*, pp. 597-598).

Smooth space is in constant variation; it is a site of experimentation, where it is possible to draw a series of lines of flight that can destratify the assemblages of the established order to release a deterritorialising power.<sup>80</sup>

In order to transform the surface of her poetic maps/rhizomes into a smooth space, or, in Maestri's words, 'une surface lisse', Maestri deconstructs time and space. As exemplified in the following extracts, she does so by rhizomatically assembling blocks of texts to build her discourse through a series of squares, speech bubbles, lines, ellipses, and arrows.

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<sup>79</sup> See the 12th plateau of *Mille Plateaux*: 'Traité de nomadologie : la machine de guerre', pp. 434-527.

<sup>80</sup> François Dosse, 'Vers une géophilosophie : Les apports de Foucault et de Deleuze-Guattari pour penser avec l'espace', *Géographie et culture*, 100 (2016), <<http://journals.openedition.org/gc/4641>> [Accessed 22 of June] (para 35 of 36).

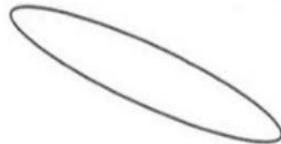
## guitares rageuses

éviter le trop plein  
romantique

dépasser le bucolique

- indispensable

- déjà



un casting de rêve

elles ont accepté de tout faire

---

on se dit que au fond

il n'y a plus de valeur travail

je me donne le droit de me tromper

M2, p. 81.

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# BIENVENUE DANS LE MONDE RÉEL

*princesse*

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nel sogno mi sembrava di stare sognando un sogno  
fatto tantissimi anni fa

eccolo lì



**ce décor était  
un cadre possible  
de n'importe  
quel  
récit**

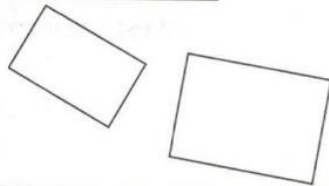
**le strict ajustement des moyens et des fins**

- ce qui est, est
- le principe de la répétition revenir au même
- le logiciel du sourire dans l'entreprise
- de 0 à 100% sourire

► *vérifier si l'employé est content*

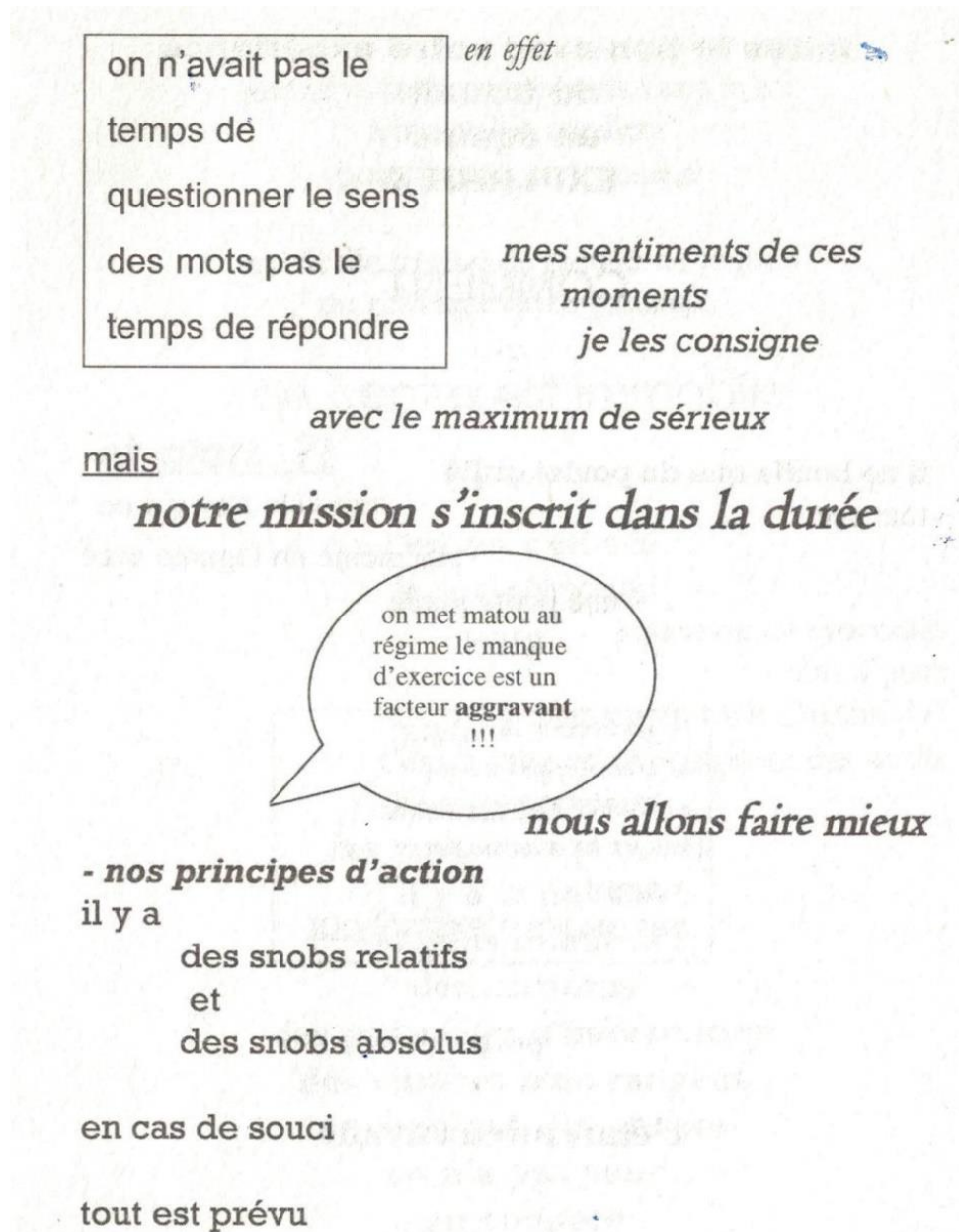
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ces espaces sont en attente



(M2, p. 43)





By doing this, Maestri constructs a heterogeneous space that can potentially trigger a deterritorialising movement in the reader's mind. The chaotic typographical disposition and the different fonts and sizes of the blocks of texts that structure the pages of the *land-textes* affect the reader's perception of time and space. The font and size variations of the different blocks of texts on the pages of the *land-textes*, as well as the presence of geometrical figures, contract and dilate both the spatial and temporal structure of poetry, giving birth to a poetic map/rhizome that requires the reader to develop an alternative reading strategy to decrypt texts to those they are used to. As Wourm observes, 'Maestri

<sup>81</sup> Maestri, *il ne faut plus s'énervier*, p. n/a.

invites readers to move away from the imposed structures they are used to'.<sup>82</sup> With the different blocks of texts and geometrical figures on the pages of her *land-textes*, Maestri creates a mobile space that enables the reader to produce new temporal and spatio-linguistic experiences and, from there, to deterritorialise the capitalist world.<sup>83</sup> As already explained in this thesis, capitalist society uses time and space to control and discipline the bodies and minds of human beings. By deconstructing time and space, the smooth spatiality of Maestri's *land-textes* frees the reader's body and mind of capitalist society's temporal and spatial conditioning. It provides them with an instrument to explore new ways of thinking time and space and, from there, to reorganise the world. Although printed on pages or fixed on the screen of the reader's device, as in the case of *envie de rien*, Maestri's *land-textes* are in constant motion.<sup>84</sup> As Maestri explains in both 'Journal : Petites notes sur le land-text' and in *mobiles*, and suggests with the titles of both *mobiles* and *mobiles 2*, the elements on the page of her *land-textes* are mobile. This is because, by disrupting the linearity of the narration which characterises the *livre-racine* and *livre-radicelle*, Maestri does not impose a reading order on the fragments of the *land-texte*. The reader can apprehend them differently any time they open the book. Due to the rhizomatic nature of the *land-textes*, the reader needs to mentally move the elements on their pages to make sense of them, creating new connections that can potentially make them see the world from new perspectives (*LT*, p. 37). As Maestri explains, the incipit of her first collection, *débris d'endroits*, 'à feuilleter', invites the reader to reorganise the blocks of texts of the collection in question with other collections that she would later publish to build a new model of thought.<sup>85</sup> The *land-textes* invite readers to reassemble the elements on their pages in new and unexpected ways to build alternative images of thought which could lead to the actualisation of new alternative worlds. All this transforms the act of reading. As Maestri writes, with her *land-textes*, 'La « fastidieuse lecture » n'existe plus [...]. Le lecteur sort de la lecture' (*LT*, pp. 35-39). On account of their rhizomatic, the *land-textes* force the reader to approach texts differently to the *livre-racine* and *livre-radicelle*. If with these two kinds of texts, reading is a passive act of absorption of the ideas expressed on their pages, with Maestri's *land-texte*, the reading act becomes 'une promenade libre'<sup>86</sup>, a mental journey across a smooth space that enables the reader to construct a new image of thought, capable of restarting the process of social production. The smooth mobile spatiality of the *land-texte* can thus be conceived as a transit point between the contingent and new potential worlds that can be actualised

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<sup>82</sup> Nathalie Wourm, 'Architects and Poets: Vannina Maestri, Nathalie Quintane, Jean-Michel Espitalier', *L'Esprit créateur*, 58.3 (2018), 103-113 (p. 122).

<sup>83</sup> Maestri, *A Stazzona*, p. 10; *LT*, p. 37.

<sup>84</sup> As she suggests in 'Journal : Petites notes sur le land-text', the *land-texte* is movement in itself: 'Il s'agit de mouvement lui-même' (p. 39).

<sup>85</sup> Vannina Maestri, *débris d'endroits*, (Atelier de l'Agneau, 1999), p. 14.

<sup>86</sup> Maestri, *A Stazzona*, p. 20.

if its readers follow the logic they have used to make sense of the fragments on the pages in their everyday lives.

### 3.3.2.2 Deconstruction of the subject

In order to reinforce the deterritorialising lines traced by her *land-textes* by deconstructing time and space, Maestri also deconstructs the idea of the subject. In capitalist society, the subject is believed to be the expression of an alleged essence that differentiates each living and non-living thing that inhabits the world and determines their identity, role, and position in the world (*LF*, pp. 33-38). This idea derives from the essentialist conception of the world at its basis. According to essentialist thought, the world is divided into discrete and distinct entities. Each entity is the expression of an underlying reality that establishes what it is and how it functions.<sup>87</sup> Post-structuralist authors provide an alternative explanation of the subject. They conceive it as the result of the process of social production. As Guattari explains in *Lignes de fuite. Pour un autre monde de possibles*, the identities and functions of the living and non-living things inhabiting the world depend on the way society socially inscribes them (*LF*, pp. 33-35). In line with the post-structuralist tradition, Maestri challenges the essentialist idea of the subject, and does so by deconstructing the poetic 'je'. The poetic 'je' has traditionally been considered by literary critics and the general public to be the expression of an extraordinary human being able to see beyond appearances and thus capable of apprehending the hidden essence of the things inhabiting the world and, ultimately, of the world as a whole. In order to deconstruct the poetic 'je', in her *land-textes*, Maestri eclipses her subjectivity, depersonalising her narration. As Game observes, Maestri is not 'l'auteur exclusif ou entier de ses phrases, mais plutôt leur opérateur'<sup>88</sup>. By assembling blocks of texts taken from different sources, Maestri hides her subjectivity to become a simple operator. For Game, Maestri is an operator in that she is present in the text as an impersonal force that reworks the dominant discourses by deconstructing the texts from which she extracts the fragments to compose her own texts and recombining them according to a non-linear logic that can challenge the reader's arborescent cognitive schema. The fact that Maestri is not

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<sup>87</sup> Deborah A. Prentice, Dale T. Miller, 'Psychological Essentialism of Human Categories', *Current directions in Psychological Science*, 16.4 (2007), 202-206 (pp. 202-203); Ramaswami Mahalingam, 'Essentialism, Power, and the Representation of Social Categories', *Human Development*, 50.6 (2007), 300-319 (p. 302).

<sup>88</sup> Jérôme Game, 'D'un sujet constructiviste chez Vannina Maestri', in *Sens et présence du sujet poétique : La poésie de la France et du monde Francophone depuis 1980*, ed. Michael Brophy and Mary Gallagher (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2006), pp. 127-142 (p. 131).

the author of the sentences that compose her works is reminiscent of *Poésie* by Lautréamont. Lautréamont constructed his text as a collage made up of both a series of original sentences that he purposely wrote for the text and a series of aphorisms taken from other authors.<sup>89</sup> *Poésie* is considered to be the first cut-up experiment in the history of French literature.

The absence of a poetic 'je' in Maestri's texts can potentially force the reader to reflect on the concept of subjectivity and the essentialist vision of it promoted by Western societies and potentially reactivating their social awareness of the process of subjectivation at the very basis of the construction of the capitalist order.

## Summary

This chapter analysed selected works by Maestri, *débris d'endroits* (1999), *mobiles* (2005), *envie de rien* (2008), *il ne faut plus s'énervier* (2008), *black blocs* (2009), *mobiles 2* (2010), *A Stazzona* (2011), to explore a second example of rhizomatic poetry.

Maestri refers to her texts in terms of 'land-textes' and conceives them as weapons to resist capitalist society. Maestri elaborates the idea of *land-texte* by combining the anti-capitalist ideology of the black bloc movement and land art to Deleuzo-Guattarian ideas of the map, rhizome and rhizomatic book. With her land-textes, Maestri forges new instruments that join the non-violent faction of the black bloc movement and to attack the capitalist system through the means of language and poetry. Starting from the idea that language is a material substance used by human beings to construct the structures of society, and so the world, Maestri conceives her texts as literary versions of land art. Gerry Schum coined the term land artworks in 1969 to describe a series of outdoor artworks created at the end of the Sixties using material and natural resources, such as sand, rocks, and water. The objective of land artists is to manipulate the land to create new impressions in the viewer and to show the world from perspectives that challenge capitalist society's vision of the world. Motivated by the same wish to show the world from new perspectives as land artists, and influenced by Deleuze and Guattari, Maestri constructs her *land-textes* as rhizomes or maps. As explained, for Deleuze and Guattari, the idea of rhizome and map overlap. They are both heterogeneous machines/assemblages constructed by assembling disparate substances.

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<sup>89</sup> Sainsbury, "Pour une poésie mineure": linguistic experimentation in the work of Dominique Fourcade, Olivier Cadiot and Christophe Tarkos', p. 38.

Maestri's *land-textes* fulfil three main goals. They denounce the oppression and control exercised by capitalist society through instruments such as the State, language, the family, and the idea that capitalist society is the logical conclusion of history. Capitalist society uses the State, language, and the family to teach human beings how to think and behave. Meanwhile, the idea of capitalist society as the logical conclusion of history discourages them from taking any action that can disrupt the capitalist process of social production and therefore the survival of the capitalist system.

Maestri's *land-textes* reveal the artificiality of society and the possibility of producing different socio-political orders, proving that the capitalist order is not the best nor the only possible order. Maestri's *land-textes* mock the idea that the capitalist world is the logical conclusion of history and express the emergence to change the way of thinking to actually change the world.

Maestri's *land-textes* can inaugurate a revolutionary process to transform society. They trace a series of lines of flight through the deconstruction of time, space, and the subject. Maestri organises her texts by rhizomatically assembling fragments of texts from different sources, arrows, and ellipses. This enables her to create a mobile space that readers can move in their mind to prompt them to think in new and unexpected ways and so experiment with ever new mental paths that can make them see the world from new perspectives. Something similar happens with the deconstruction of the subject. Maestri depersonalises her narration, attacking the mainstream idea of literature as the expression of a poet's inner world. This enables her to challenge capitalist society's essentialist ideology to interfere with the process of subjectivation. By deconstructing the poetic 'je', Maestri's *land-textes* disclose the subject's social nature, making the reader reconsider their mode of being. All this makes the *land-textes* suitable instruments to sabotage the capitalist process of social production and set the conditions to reconfigure society and to establish new modes of living and being. By writing and reading Maestri's *land-textes*, Maestri and her readers start a revolution that can potentially overthrow the established order and set the conditions to actualise new worlds.

# Chapter 4

## Jean-Michel Espitallier. Poetry as an enterprise of health

The fourth chapter is dedicated to Jean-Michel Espitallier and his rhizomatic poetry. Starting from the idea that capitalist society can be seen as a disease that affects the world, this chapter shows how Espitallier's poetry can be conceived of and used as an instrument to describe, diagnose, and treat what might be called the 'capitalist disease'.

This chapter is structured as two sections. The first section explains Espitallier's poetics and his idea of poetry as an enterprise of health, a remedy to cure the capitalist disease. The second section focuses on selected texts (*Z5 and Tourner en rond : De l'art d'aborder les ronds-points*, *De la Célébrité : Théorie et Pratique*, *En guerre, Army*, *Gasoil : Prises de guerre*, *Le Théorème d'Espitallier : Poésie*) to show how his poetry can be used to effectively describe, diagnose and cure the capitalist disease, that is to say the social disease that affects the contemporary world.

### 4.1 Espitallier's poetry: an enterprise of health

In *Critique et Clinique*, Deleuze describes society as a disease affecting human beings and the world. The actualisation of society, he explains, interrupts the spontaneous production of thought causing a pathological mental state – a sort of neurosis – that prevents the human being from thinking creatively: 'La névrose, la psychose ne sont pas des passages de vie, mais des états dans lesquels on tombe quand le processus est interrompu, empêché, colmaté. La maladie n'est pas processus mais arrêt du processus [...]' (CC, pp. 13-14).

This is because the image of thought that human beings construct in coordination with one another to actualise a shared idea of society traps their thought in rigid mental circuits that make them perceive the world always in the same way, profoundly affecting the natural creativity of their thought (*QP*, p. 202). For Deleuze, this inability to perceive the world in new ways is a disease that affects human beings in every sense.

Since human beings are the cause of society – the process of social production begins in the human mind – they are also the cause of the disease that affects them. As Deleuze observes in *Critique et Clinique*, the world, in the sense of society, is a set of symptoms whose illness precisely coincides with the human being: ‘Le monde est l’ensemble des symptômes dont la maladie se confond avec l’homme’ (*CC*, p. 14). As human beings need to socially produce in order to exist and to make the other things around them exist, and are naturally led to do so, the actualisation of society is inescapable, and the interruption of the creative flow of thought that it causes is unavoidable (*CC*, p. 14). However, as the image of thought that regulates the process of social production, that is to say the process through which human groups create order, is arbitrarily constructed, human beings can produce another image that could give their thought as much freedom as possible to creatively unfold itself and therefore limit the interruption of its flow. As Deleuze and Guattari suggest in the two volumes of *Capitalisme et Schizophrénie*, the images of thought that have been constructed and used by communities of human beings to actualise their societies, especially since Ancient Greece, have not permitted thought much freedom to creatively unfold itself, causing much human suffering (*MP*, p. 22 and pp. 27-28). These images of thought have not only generated oppressive socio-political formations but have, more importantly, suffocated the spontaneous flow of people’s thought, preventing them from imagining different and better worlds.

For Deleuze, literature plays its role precisely here. In *Critique et Clinique*, Deleuze conceives of literature as an enterprise of health, as a remedy to cure the interruption of the creative flow of thought caused by the actualisation of society, thanks to its deterritorialising potential. As he writes:

La littérature apparaît [alors] comme une entreprise de santé : non pas que l’écrivain ait forcément une grande santé (il y aurait ici la même ambiguïté que dans l’athlétisme), mais il jouit d’une irrésistible petite santé qui vient de ce qu’il a vu et entendu des choses trop grandes pour lui, trop fortes pour lui, irrespirables, dont le passage l’épuise, en lui donnant pourtant des devenirs qu’une grosse santé dominante rendrait impossibles. (*CC*, p. 14)

Literature, Deleuze suggests, can free human thought from the conditioning of the image of thought at the basis of the dominant process of social production and create the conditions for the construction of a new image of thought that can enable human beings to create ever new worlds and life

possibilities (CC, p. 11 and p. 14). In *Critique et Clinique*, he describes the writing process as a delirium, a mental journey, during which an author can see and hear a people yet to come and materialise it on the page of the book in a deterritorialising movement, a line of flight able to challenge the way readers think of the world and, therefore, socially produce (CC, p. 11 and pp. 14-15). Although the term delirium is used widely to refer to a hallucinated mental state symptomatic of psychiatric conditions,<sup>1</sup> Deleuze uses it to refer to a chaotic mental state that enables one to recover from the malaise caused by the actualisation of society (CC, p. 15).

La littérature est délire, mais le délire n'est pas affaire du père-mère : il n'y a pas de délire qui ne passe pas par les peuples, les races et les tribus, et ne hante l'histoire universelle. Tout délire est historico-mondial, « déplacement de races et de continents ». La littérature est délire, et à ce titre joue son destin entre deux pôles du délire. Le délire est une maladie, la maladie par excellence, chaque fois qu'il érige une race prétendue pure et dominante. Mais il est la mesure de la santé quand il invoque cette race bâtarde opprimée qui ne cesse de s'agiter sous les dominations, de résister à tout ce qui écrase et emprisonne, et de se dessiner en creux dans la littérature comme processus. [...] But ultime de la littérature, dégager dans le délire cette création d'une santé, ou cette invention d'un peuple, c'est-à-dire une possibilité de vie. (CC, p. 15)

For Deleuze, delirium is the mental state that enables one to free life from the constraints of the established order and to set the conditions for a new one; it is the mental state that enables human beings to deterritorialise the contingent world and restart the process of social production. (CC, p. 15).

Espitallier's poetry fits this definition of literature as an enterprise of health provided by Deleuze in *Critique et Clinique*. As he confirmed to the author of this thesis in an interview conducted via email, from a Deleuzian perspective, his poetry can be seen as an enterprise of health aimed at diagnosing and curing what might be called the 'capitalist disease', defined as the social disease resulting from the actualisation of capitalist society:

DV : Est-ce que vous considérez votre poésie comme une 'entreprise de santé', pour employer une expression de Deleuze ? Il me semble qu'on peut employer vos textes pour diagnostiquer et traiter ce qu'on pourrait appeler 'la maladie capitaliste'...

J.M.E : Oui au sens où mon écriture est écriture du constat, du diagnostic, en effet, objectiviste, si l'on veut (des photographies sans auteur), mais sans la sécheresse de la poésie objectiviste. Surchauffer, souligner, exagérer les phénomènes sociaux, politiques, communicationnels générés par les sociétés

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<sup>1</sup> Royal College of Psychiatrists, 'Delirium', <<https://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/mental-health/problems-disorders/delirium>> [Accessed 13th April 2021].



ultralibérales, notamment le capitalisme médiatique, de surveillance, de discours. Les dénuder, les éclairer au projecteur, sans zone d'ombre, sans donner de mode d'emploi. Mettre en mots ce qui n'a pas de nom, tel est d'ailleurs la fonction du poète. Il faut d'abord nommer les maladies si l'on veut tenter de les guérir. Changer le monde c'est d'abord transformer son imaginaire, et la langue qui le dit et comment le monde se dit lui-même (critique des médias, des boucles médiatiques – des « ritournelles » –, du vide de l'information). Travailler sur cette rhétorique de la boucle, de la logique, du paradoxe, du syllogisme qui est langue du surplace névrotique, du toujours moins-de-sens par ce trop-plein de sens (par exemple mon texte « Nous sommes l'axe du bien » dans *En guerre*, repris dans *Salle des machines*).<sup>2</sup>

Espitallier's texts suggest that capitalist society causes a pathological mental state that leads human beings to accomplish, in the name of capital, a series of violent and irrational actions against themselves and the other living and non-living things inhabiting the planet. In the name of capital, people justify their subordination to the élite in power, wars, human and animal exploitation, and environmental pollution and destruction. Capitalist society empties human beings of their ability to empathise with others, stripping them of their sense of being part of a community, and freezes their thought. It prevents their thought from following its natural rhizomatic flow, condemning them to incessantly follow the same mental paths imposed by the hierarchical, tree-like image of thought at the basis of the established order with serious consequences on their living standards and those of the other creatures on Earth. The hierarchical, tree-like image of thought organises the chaotic matter in a form that causes oppression and subordination (*MP*, p. 25). However, as Espitallier suggests in the fragment above, poetry can treat the capitalist disease – thanks to its deterritorialising power.<sup>3</sup> As he explains in 'Politique du poétique', an essay in which he discusses the political implications of his poetry, poetry is a matter of deterritorialisation.<sup>4</sup> Poetry can create the conditions for constructing the new by deterritorialising the ideological apparatus of the capitalist order. Espitallier conceives writing as a machinic process ('l'écriture, c'est de la mécanique, c'est du mécano'<sup>5</sup>) and his texts as actual minor machines able to damage any socio-political order – and in particular the capitalist order.<sup>6</sup> His poetry shares with that of Sivan and Maestri the Deleuzo-Guattarian machinic vision of the world as a mega-machine made of other smaller machines, and of poetry as one of the machines that structure the world that can potentially interfere with the way the other machines assemble through the

<sup>2</sup> Michel Espitallier, 'Interview with Jean-Michel Espitallier', by Dalila Villella (email correspondence, 13 November 2020).

<sup>3</sup> Jean-Michel Espitallier, 'Politique du poétique', in *Études françaises*, 1.44 (2018), 111-117 (p. 116).

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 116.

<sup>5</sup> Espitallier, Jean-Michel, 'Jean-Michel Espitallier et « la fascination infinie pour le langage ». (Le grand entretien)', interviewed by Jean-Philippe Caziers, in *diacritik*, 17 September 2018, <<https://diacritik.com/2018/09/17/jean-michel-espitallier-et-la-fascination-pour-linfini-du-langage-le-grand-entretien/>> [Accessed 3 August 2020].

<sup>6</sup> Espitallier, 'Jean-Michel Espitallier et « la fascination infinie pour le langage »', [online]; Jean-Michel Espitallier, in Nathalie Wourm, *Poètes français du 21ème siècle*, p. 64; Jean-Michel Espitallier 'Politique du poétique', p. 114.

circulation of an alternative logic to that at its basis. From this perspective, Espitallier's texts can be seen as rhizomatic machines, as Espitallier himself suggests by comparing them to Jean Tinguely's machines, which are rhizomatic kinaesthetic sculptures and installations. Here are some examples.



Figure 1. Jean Tinguely, 'Cyclograveur', in Janna Schoenberger, 'Jean Tinguely's Cyclograveur: The Ludic Anti-Machine of Bewogen Beweging', *Sequitur. We follow art*, 2.2 (2016), <<https://www.bu.edu/sequitur/files/2016/04/Sequitur-22-Schoenberger1.pdf>> [accessed 5 August 2020].



Figure 2. Jean Tinguely, 'Retable de l'abondance occidentale et du mercantilisme totalitaire', *Museums CH*, <<https://www.museums.ch/org/fr/Espace-Jean-Tinguely---Niki-de-Saint-Phalle>> [Accessed 5 August 2020].

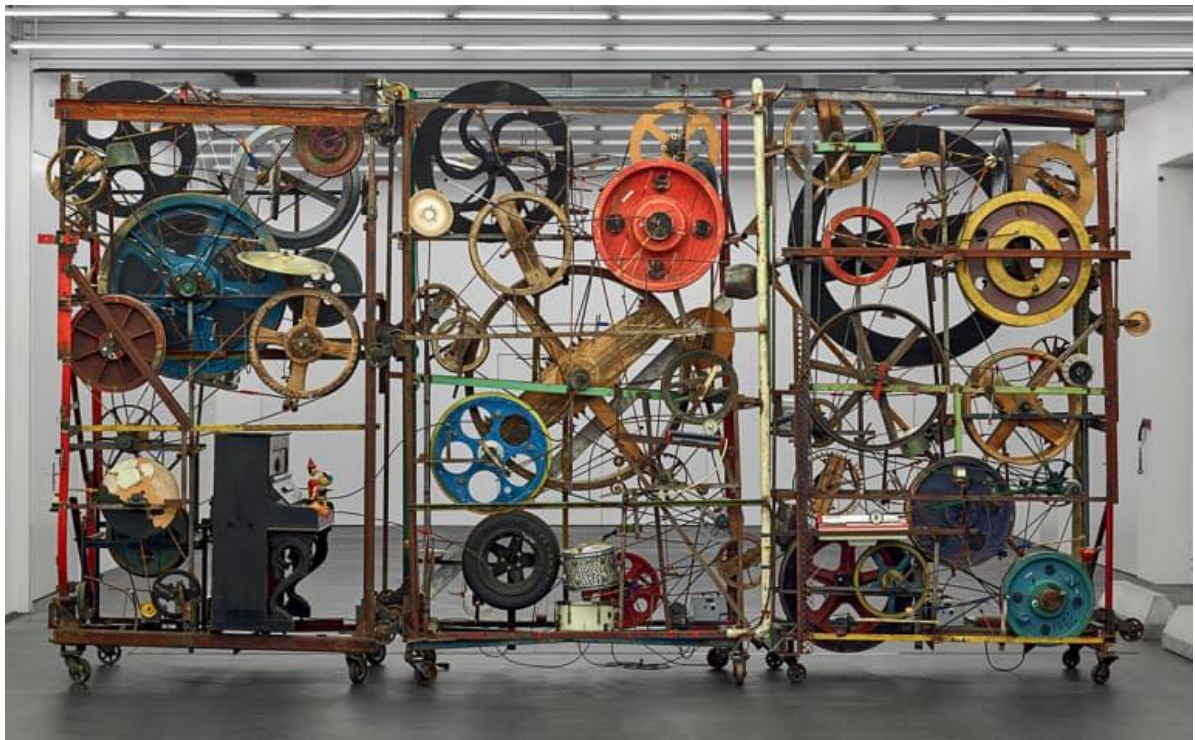


Figure 3. Jean Tinguely, 'Méta-Harmonie II', Schaulager, <<https://tinguely.schaulager.org/fr>> [Accessed 5 August 2020].

Tinguely was a Swiss artist, born in Fribourg in 1925 and who died in Bern in 1991.<sup>7</sup> Tinguely is famous for being one of the authors of the *Manifeste du Nouveau Réalisme*, written in 1960. The *Manifeste du Nouveau Réalisme* formalised the project of a series of artists<sup>8</sup> who wished to act on the shape of reality in order to transform it, through a method, described by Pierre Restany, one of the signatories of the manifesto, as a 'recyclage poétique du réel urbain, industriel, publicitaire'.<sup>9</sup> Tinguely has passed into history for the explosive and anti-conformist character of his artwork, which can be described as a series of rhizomatic machines, built through the assembly of ordinary objects and, from the 1980s, even animal bones and skulls.<sup>10</sup> Tinguely's artistic production begins with the idea that art is a manifest, total and complete revolt against society.<sup>11</sup> All the sketches, kinaesthetic sculptures, and installations he produced during his long career show both a strong fascination for,

<sup>7</sup> Jean Tinguely Museum, 'Un engagement culturel de roche, Biographie. Jean Tinguely', <<https://www.tinguely.ch/fr/tinguely/biographie-jean-tinguely.html>> [Accessed 5 August 2020] (para 4 and 43 of 43) (this webpage is no longer available).

<sup>8</sup> Amongst the other signatories are Yves Klein, Arman, François Dufrêne, Raymond Hains, Martial Raysse, Pierre Restany, Daniel Spoerri, Jean Tinguely, Jacques de la Villeglé, César, Mimmo Rotella, Niki de Saint Phalle and Gérard Deschamps.

<sup>9</sup> Pierre Restany, *60/90. Trente ans de Nouveau Réalisme* (Paris: La Différence, 1990), p. 76.

<sup>10</sup> 'Jean Tinguely: Mechanics of Chance', *BBys Magazine*, 3 of December 2018, <<https://www.barnebys.com/blog/jean-tinguely-and-the-anti-machine>>. [Accessed 12 August 2019].

<sup>11</sup> Jean Tinguely, in Pontus Hulten, *Jean Tinguely: A Magic Stronger than Death* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1987), p. 350.



and a strong aversion towards capitalism. As Joff P. N. Broadley argues, Tinguely shares the same interest for the capitalist system as Marx and Deleuze and Guattari.<sup>12</sup> Like these three famous anti-capitalist thinkers, Tinguely was interested in exploring the ontological malfunction that regulates the capitalist order. Tinguely's artworks embody a sharp criticism of the capitalist order and ideology, and they do so not only through their titles, as in the case, for example, of 'Retable de l'abondance occidentale et du mercantilisme totalitaire', but also, and more importantly, through how they work. Unlike Leonardo da Vinci's machines, Tinguely's machines malfunction.<sup>13</sup> They are 'imperfect, degraded, noisy, uncontrollable'<sup>14</sup>; they do not have a fixed structure. They are anti-machines. The logic that regulates them is not the linear and mathematical logic used in the technical field everywhere in the world since the invention of numbers. Rather, it is rhizomatic logic. Tinguely's machine has a rhizomatic functioning that can be judged as illogical if compared to the logic animating all the other machines that surround us. It is precisely in this rhizomatic and 'illogical' functioning that the political power of Tinguely's machines' lies. Their (mal)functioning serves, in fact, as a symbolic act against capitalist society. As Janna Schoenberger explains, the 'illogical' functioning of Tinguely's anti-machines can be interpreted as a ludic criticism of the rapid industrialisation and modernisation of society.<sup>15</sup> On the one hand, Tinguely's machine mocks the cult of the machine, or more generally of technology, of capitalist society. On the other hand, it activates a deterritorialising movement in the viewer's mind. Its rhizomatic functioning reactivates the natural flow of thought of its spectator against the mental imposition of the society to which they belong. As Frank Popper explains, Tinguely sees his machines as the incarnation of human intelligence.<sup>16</sup> Their rhizomatic functioning recreates the spontaneous flow of the human brain, which, as Deleuze and Guattari argue, is, and functions as, a rhizome (*MP*, p. 24). The rhizomatic logic at the heart of Tinguely's machines can prompt spectators to see the world from new perspectives and to form new ideas that potentially reset their mental paths.

Espitallier inherits the humour and rhizomatic logic of Tinguely's anti-machines, employing them as medical instruments to treat the capitalist disease. The humour that traverses the pages of Espitallier's poetry enables him to reveal the irrationality and violence at the basis of the capitalist system and to take a distance from it. The rhizomatic logic that regulates his texts, by contrast, enables

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<sup>12</sup> Joff P.N. Bradley, 'The delirious abstract machine of Jean Tinguely', in *Ecosophical Aesthetics: Arts, Ethics and Ecology with Guattari*, ed. by Patricia MacCormack and Colin Gardner (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2018), pp. 193-214.

<sup>13</sup> 'Jean Tinguely Mechanics of Chance', [online].

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, [online].

<sup>15</sup> Joanna Schoenberger, 'Jean Tinguely's Cyclograveur: The Ludic Anti-Machine of Bewogen Beweging', *Sequitur. We follow art*, 2.2 (2016), <<https://www.bu.edu/sequitur/files/2016/04/Sequitur-22-Schoenberger1.pdf>> [Accessed 4 August 2020].

<sup>16</sup> Frank Popper, *Art-Action and Participation* (New York: New York University Press, 1975), p. 216.

them to activate a deterritorialising movement that can affect the reader's way of thinking, and thus of socially producing, effectively providing them with a cure to the capitalist disease. To activate this deterritorialising movement, Espitallier follows two main paths. On the one hand, he deterritorialises poetry; his work deconstructs the classical ideal of poetry as a genre written in verse, aiming at harmony, order, and clarity by contaminating it with the features of other artistic and non-artistic genres. This, as Espitallier suggests, allows him to upset the hierarchical pyramid of genres ('résister aux vieilles lunes de la pureté générique de l'âge classique et à la hiérarchisation des arts'<sup>17</sup>), which from a Deleuzian perspective can be seen as a symptom of the capitalist disease, and more generally of all the social diseases caused by the hierarchical, tree-like image of thought. On the other hand, he deterritorialises language. As he explains, writing poetry 'c'est inoculer dans la langue une contre-langue résistante au droit canon qui met l'objet-poème dans une situation de tension et de crise qu'il doit résoudre au moment même où il la provoque, ce que Gilles Deleuze nomme 'des goulots d'étranglements'''.<sup>18</sup> Deterritorialising language enables Espitallier to interfere with the transmission of the order and commands of society and to circulate new ones. It is important to say, however, that Espitallier's poetry not only treats the capitalist disease but also diagnoses it. As will be made clear in the following sections, Espitallier's poetry also reveals the dysfunctional mechanisms that regulate the capitalist world. As Espitallier explains, his poetry is 'une écriture du constat, du diagnostic [...] Surchauffer, souligner, exagérer les phénomènes sociaux, politiques, communicationnels générés par les sociétés ultralibérales, notamment le capitalisme médiatique, de surveillance, de discours. Les dénuder, les éclairer au projecteur, sans zone d'ombre [...] Mettre en mots ce qui n'a pas de nom, tel est d'ailleurs la fonction du poète. Il faut d'abord nommer les maladies si l'on veut tenter de les guérir.'<sup>19</sup> By working on language and revealing the dysfunctional functioning of the capitalist system, poetry can jolt the reader to think in ever new and unexpected ways.

During an interview for *Les Imposteurs – Littérature, poésie, théâtre, polar, mauvais genre*, however, Espitallier clarifies that the effects of poetry are only palliative.

I - Pensez-vous comme Schopenhauer que l'art est un palliatif qui nous fait oublier un temps nos douleurs, ou qu'au contraire il est un puissant stimulant, un « facilitateur de vie » comme l'affirme Nietzsche ?

JME -Sans doute un peu les deux, et finalement, le maître et l'élève se rejoignent ici parce que le palliatif, la consolation sont des facilitateurs de vie

<sup>17</sup> Espitallier, *Caisse à outils*, p. 46.

<sup>18</sup> Espitallier, 'Politique du poétique', p. 114.

<sup>19</sup> Jean-Michel Espitallier, 'Interview with Jean-Michel Espitallier', by Dalila Villella (email correspondence, 13 November 2020).

si l'on considère la vie comme un organe qui résiste et, comme tel, doit toujours être réparé.<sup>20</sup>

Although poetry can cure the world by making thought deviate from the mental schemes imposed by the established order and letting it explore new ways of seeing the world, potentially paving the way for the actualisation of new worlds, it cannot prevent the flow of thought from being interrupted by the actualisation of societies, which is the actual cause of the social disease. Human thought will always be trapped in an image of thought due to the impossibility of living outside society.

## 4.2 Poetry as a tool to analyse, diagnose and treat capitalist disease

This section examines selected works by Espitallier, more precisely *Gasoil : Prises de guerre*, *De la célébrité*, *Army*, *Le Théorème d'Espitallier*, *Z5*, *Tourner en rond : De l'art d'aborder des ronds-points*, and *En guerre*. In light of the fact that Espitallier's texts can be seen as an enterprise of health, his texts will be read as a series of medical texts that analyse, diagnose and treat the capitalist disease. The section has been divided into two parts. The first part delineates an aetiology of the social disease in general terms and a genealogy and general description of the capitalist disease. To this end, it will focus on *Z5* and *Tourner en Rond*. This section enables the presentation of the idea of the process of social production and society at the basis of Espitallier's poetics and poetry collections. The second part explains how *De la Célébrité*, *Army*, *En guerre*, *Gasoil* and *Le Théorème d'Espitallier* can be used as tools to diagnose the capitalist disease and as remedies to cure it.

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<sup>20</sup> Jean Michel Espitallier, 'Entretien avec Jean-Michel Espitallier', interviewed by Guillaume Richez, in *Les Imposteurs – Littérature, poésie, théâtre, polar, mauvais genre*, Nov.Dec. 2018, <<https://chroniquesdesimposteurs.wordpress.com/2018/12/05/la-premiere-annee-de-jean-michel-espitallier/>> [Accessed 5 of August 2020].

## 4.2.1 Towards a genealogy of the social disease and an aetiology and general description of the capitalist disease

### 4.2.1.1 Z5

In 2011, in collaboration with architect Christophe Gulizzi and photographer Lisa Ricciotti, Jean-Michel Espitallier published *Z5*, an illustrated poetry book. The name of this poetry collection comes from the name of the huge sports centre, *Z5*, also known as the ‘Zidane complex’, opened by the football star Zinedine Zidane in Aix-en-Provence.<sup>21</sup> The book combines *L’invention de la course à pied (et autres trucs)*, a text written by Espitallier, published in 2013, Gulizzi’s reflection on the architectural structure he and his team designed for Zidane, and Ricciotti’s images of this structure. As Wourm observes in ‘Architects and Poets: Vannina Maestri, Nathalie Quintane, Jean-Michel Espitallier, and the Poetry of Buildings’, in *Z5*, Espitallier ‘offers a fictional chronology of the events that have led to the final creation of a stadium named after Zidane’.<sup>22</sup> In his text, Espitallier humorously reviews the different stages that have marked the development of running up to the invention of football and the subsequent construction of sports sites up to the invention of stadiums. *Z5* lends itself to different interpretations, but here it will be read as an aetiology of the disease of society and an allegorical genealogy of the capitalist disease.

#### 4.2.1.1.1 Towards genealogy of the social disease

Le fait est qu’un beau jour, un type, au fond des âges, « quand le temps n’avait pas encore de barbe » (Lichtenberg), un type donc se met à courir pour rien. [...] Mais voilà qu’il n’est bientôt plus seul. Trois puis quatre puis cinq puis un peu plus encore se retrouvent à courir ensemble [...]. (*Z5*, p. n/a).

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<sup>21</sup> As Gulizzi explains, *Z5* is constituted by a football pitch, a gym, two swimming pools, a hammam, a sauna, a restaurant, an Adidas Store, a medical consulting room and administrative offices: ‘l’activité s’organise autour d’un bâtiment de 3000m<sup>2</sup> shon, comprenant : En RDC, hall d’accueil, boutique Adidas, espace de restauration et espace de convivialité. Au R-1 les vestiaires. Un 1er étage de 1000m<sup>2</sup> dédiés au fitness et à la thalasso avec deux piscines, hammam, sauna.

Enfin au dernier étage, direction administrative et médecine sportive. En périphérie de la zone industrielle des Milles, à Aix-en-Provence, le site est un champ d’asperges, entre la maison d’arrêt de Luynes et le cimetière américain. Nous sommes dans un site protégé (château de Lenfant XVIII siècles) soumis aux prescriptions d’un ABF, avec alignement et gabarit obligatoires. La parcelle dessine la limite construite de la ville’. (Gulizzi, in *Z5*, p. n/a).

<sup>22</sup> Nathalie Wourm, ‘Architects and poets: Vannina Maestri, Nathalie Quintane, Jean-Michel Espitallier, and the poetry of buildings’, p. 103.

[...], le voilà qui active son dispositif muscles + os + viscères qu'il a reçu à la naissance, y installe des petits ressorts fabriqués dans sa tête, comme s'il avait fait ça toute sa vie, et projette le tout ailleurs [...]. (Z5, p. n/a).<sup>23</sup>

These two fragments metaphorically describe the first steps taken by human beings to activate the process of social production. The image of a person, soon joined by others, beginning to run without reason when time was 'not yet bearded', which is to say before its actual invention around 30000 years ago, as described in the first fragment, metaphorically illustrates the beginning of the process of actualisation of society. It metaphorically depicts the first group of *homo sapiens sapiens* that gathered to collectively organise the matter of chaos to make sense of themselves and the singularities around them. This process, as the second fragment suggests, is a machinic process originating in their mind. Espitallier describes the first individual who began the process of construction of the world as a machine bringing everything around them to life by projecting 'des petits ressorts fabriqués dans sa tête' on the formless chaotic matter around them (Z5, p. n/a). These 'petits ressorts' can be seen as the image of thought. The image of thought is the model of thinking that human beings collectively and unconsciously construct to instruct themselves how to see themselves and the living and non-living things inhabiting the world. The image of thought contains all the rules that human beings need to follow to differentiate and assemble the chaotic matter and to actualise their world.<sup>24</sup>

As the first fragment suggests, the idea that the first human being who started running, and so to socially produce, did so without any specific reason, suggests that there is no specific goal for human beings to achieve through the process of social production. Beyond protection from chaos and the passage from the state of non-existence to the state of existence of the entities in chaos, the process of social production does not have any specific goal to fulfil. Z5 shares the Deleuzo-Guattarian idea of society as a shelter that human beings create to protect themselves from the danger of chaos, which is to say from non-existence (QP, pp. 200-201). If the goal of running, as described in the fragment, is running itself, the goal of social production is the production of society itself, which is to say the

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<sup>23</sup> Although from the extracts selected, one may believe that Z5 has been written in Standard French, this is not true. As it emerges from the reading of the whole text, the language used by Espitallier in the book is minor. In Z5, Espitallier deeply manipulates language by playing with its semantic features. Although sentences seem to be grammatically correct, they often do not make sense, and even when they are, they are combined illogically; the enunciation of the text is decentred, non-linear and ambiguous. On the website of Al Dante, the publisher of Z5, defines *L'Invention de la course à pied (et autres trucs)* – which is composed of the same text that Espitallier used to compose Z5, but does not include Ricciotti's pictures or Gulizzi's reflection – as a text 'loufoque', highlighting its semantic absurdity and lack of a definite meaning. ('Jean-Michel Espitallier. *L'Invention de la course à pied (et autres trucs)*', in Al Dante, <<https://www.lespressesdureel.com/ouvrage.php?id=6204&menu=4>> [Accessed 22 August 2022]). As observed by Noam Chomsky, connecting words according to the syntactic rules is not enough to produce grammatically correct sentences and therefore to make a Standard use of language. (Bruce M. Hood, *Supersenso*, (Milano: Il saggiatore, 2009), p. 30).

<sup>24</sup> Deleuze, *Pourparlers*, p. 202.



differentiation and assemblage of the bodies in chaos to make them pass from the state of non-existence to the state of existence.

As Espitallier observes, just as the benefits of exercise involve a passage through pain, as they require great mental and physical effort, the benefits of society, that is to say the passage from non-existence to existence, also passes through pain: ‘se faire du mal pour se faire du bien’ (Z5, p. n/a). The process of social production always entails a certain level of suffering due to the fact that, in order to socially produce, the collectivity of human beings must impose on their thought an image that, by giving it shape, interrupts its creative flow, causing what can be defined a ‘social disease’. However, as Espitallier suggests, the pain caused by running, and so by the process of social production, should not prevent human beings from having fun: ‘Se faire du mal pour se faire du bien ne doit pas interdire, en effet, de s’amuser [...]’ (Z5, p. n/a). Fun here can be interpreted as the act of tracing new lines of flight that free thought from the conditioning of society and release its creative power to produce ever new worlds and life possibilities. Although to socially produce, human beings impose an image on their thought, they can still construct and deconstruct this to build ever new images of thought and new worlds. Due to its noological nature, the process of social production can be changed arbitrarily by the collectivity of human beings who have activated it. Human beings can always look for ever new modes of assembling and differentiating the chaotic matter by forging the tools to actualise ever new ways of living and existing. This suggests that the world and human beings are destined to perpetually become sick because of the actualisation of society and recover thanks to the infinite lines of flight they can trace and are surrounded by.<sup>25</sup> Lines of flight can, in fact, stimulate thought to see the world from different perspectives to that imposed by the established order and, from there, to form a new sensitivity that can function as basis for the construction of a new image of thought, of a new logic that can interfere with the way the world is organised and set the conditions to shape it anew.

#### **4.2.1.1.2 Towards a genealogy of the capitalist disease**

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<sup>25</sup> For Deleuze and Guattari, a line of flight can be anything, from an object to an idea, that can create a breach in the system and activate a process of deterritorialisation. For the two philosophers, deterritorialisation is a process through something is transformed, it is open to new interpretations, identities, and functions (Parr, ‘Deterritorialisation / Reterritorialisation’, pp. 69-72; Hauptmann, Radman, p. 46).

As seen in the previous section, the process of social production begins in the mind of human beings and depends on the image of thought that human beings construct and adopt as a collectivity. Echoing Deleuze and Guattari, Espitallier explains that the origins of the image of thought at the basis of capitalist society, and thus the cause of the capitalist disease, dates to Ancient Greece:

Et bientôt, dans la très antique Grèce, puisque manifestement l'affaire se poursuit par là-bas, on assiste à une espèce de généralisation de la course [...]. Frénétique. [...] Cordes, haies, gymnopédies, muscu, sortes de danses, acrobaties diverses, corps tordus, parties de jambes en l'air [...] Subitement on se croirait aux jeux olympiques [...]. Rues transformées en champs de course et labours hérissés de javelots. (Z5, p. n/a)

In *Le Rhizome*, Deleuze and Guattari argue that the arborescent image of thought, which regulates the socio-political games of Western societies and is the basis of international socio-political mechanisms today, originated in ancient times (MP, pp. 27-28). The 'affaire' to which Espitallier's fragment refers can be seen as the process of actualisation of social systems based on the hierarchical, tree-like image of thought which, as Deleuze and Guattari explain, originated in ancient times. The reference to the Olympic games reinforces this interpretation. The Olympic games, in fact, originated in Ancient Greece. With that, Espitallier suggests that the capitalist disease has a very long history and results from the adaptation of the hierarchical, tree-like image of thought to the needs of the capital. To explain this point, Espitallier traces a genealogy of social formations through the history of sports sites. Each sports site described explains the functioning of the societies so far actualised. It is imperative, here, to say that Espitallier's discourse does not have any historical validity. It is a metaphorical discourse aimed at revealing the arbitrariness and artificiality of any socio-political organisation, including of capitalist society. As Deleuze and Guattari observe throughout *L'Anti-Œdipe*, the passage from one society to another always results from an ideological shift in the collective way of thinking. Societies change because of the deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation of the structures of which it is constructed. To explain the ideological shifts that have marked the passage from a Western society, Espitallier reviews the transformations in the uses that Western societies have made of sports sites up to the creation of the 'Zidane complex', that can be seen as the expression of the capitalist ideological apparatus.

Espitallier begins his metaphorical discourse on the uses and development of sports sites with the circular field for runners, inclusive of an area for spectators, first built in Ancient Greece:

Mais revenons à l'Antique Grèce. Un beau jour, quelqu'un parmi les agités du muscle (à moins que l'idée ne soit venue d'en haut, archéo-préfecture ou proto-ministère de la Jeunesse et des Sports), quelqu'un, donc, se gratte le menton et

juge que, finalement, il serait peut-être fort à propos de réfléchir à un petit coin tranquille où agiter ses muscles sans gêner la circulation. [...]

Au fond de chaque carrière, on trace un chemin circulaire [...], ça pourrait ressembler à un anneau. Avec ça, on peut courir pendant des heures sans trop s'éloigner de la maison. [...], vu que, avec le temps, toute cette comédie des coureurs pour rien finit par transpirer, les gens du voisinage ou les copains croisés aux thermes prennent l'habitude de venir voir courir les coureurs pour rien. Cantonnés bien sagement à l'extérieur des anneaux. Il n'est pas question, en effet, de traverser les pistes alors que les époumonés viennent de boucler leur septième tour. (Z5, p. n/a)

These circular fields describe the socio-political forms that characterised Ancient Greece: democracy, oligarchy, and monarchy. As is known, these three political forms involve only a small number of people in the decision-making of the community.<sup>26</sup> In Ancient Greece, sports sites were composed of two separate areas: the field to run and the tribune for watching the runners. The rigid demarcation between field and tribune symbolised the distance between the élite in power and the mass. Runners can be seen as the élite in power, and spectators as the mass of citizens. Just as Greek spectators passively watched the runners, the mass of citizens passively 'watch(ed)' those in power making decisions for all. The distance between the élite and the mass was due to the hierarchical, tree-like image of thought at the basis of Ancient Greek society. This image of thought functions, in fact, according to the logic of binary and hierarchical opposition, which generates social oppression, exclusion and inequality. Although the text simplifies the Ancient Greek class system, it is still revelatory of the main class opposition of the time and its oppressive function.

Across the centuries, with the evolution of sports, as Espitalier humorously suggests, the Greek sites once designed for runners have evolved into stadiums:

Mais un génie civil a une idée. Il faudrait (dit-il) aménager des plans inclinés autour des pistes. Et pourquoi donc (lui répond-on) ? Afin que les derniers arrivés (dit-il) puissent grimper pour continuer de voir d'en haut le spectacle, les dispensant ainsi de passer l'après-midi à regarder bouger la nuque de ceux qui devant eux regardent bouger la nuque de ceux qui devant eux regardent bouger la nuque de ceux qui devant eux regardent bouger la nuque de ceux qui devant eux regardent bouger la nuque de ceux qui devant eux regardent bouger la nuque de ceux qui devant eux regardent passer les coureurs pour rien. [...]

Ainsi fut inventé le stade. Et le spectacle qui va avec. (Z5, p. n/a).

The invention of stadiums symbolises the invention of the modern State. As the fragment suggests, the emergence of the modern State has not contributed to a significant increase in the number of people involved in the decision-making process of the community. Rather, on the contrary, it has

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<sup>26</sup> See: Zachary Anderson, *Ancient Greece: From Tyranny to Democracy* (New York: Cavendish Square, 2016).

amplified the distance between the élite in power and the mass of citizens. The invention of the State has complexified the socio-political organisation of society, reinforcing its hierarchical structure. As the fragment suggests, the fact that, in stadiums, people watch the head of the people watching the head of the people watching the head of the people watching sports competitions is revelatory of the subordination and oppression to which the mass of citizens were subjected to in modern States. Throughout time the hierarchical, tree-like image of thought created even more inequality, exclusion, and oppression than when it was first built and adopted in ancient times. If in ancient times the main class opposition was between the mass and the elite in power, in modern times, with the invention of the State and the creation of the bureaucratic apparatus, the system of subordination and oppression has been complexified, creating more tensions between people and worsening the social disease. With time, Espitallier suggests, stadiums began to be employed for uses that go well beyond sports competitions (Z5, p. n/a). Stadiums, as Z5 testify, by being used as a venue for meetings, shopping malls, medical clinics, and wellness centres, fulfil different purposes. This, as Espitallier suggests, is revelatory of the actualisation of capitalist society. It is, in fact, the exploitative logic of capitalist society that leads human beings to use stadiums for different purposes. This is due to its natural tendency of maximising capital production. Using stadiums to fulfil different functions, capitalist society reduces the cost of maintenance and maximises the capital production that derives from them.<sup>27</sup>

However, some of the uses that capitalist society makes of stadiums can threaten its survival. This happens, for example, when stadiums are used as rock'n'roll concert venues because of the transformative potential of rock'n'roll music. As Deleuze and Guattari observe in the introduction of *Mille Plateaux*: 'La musique n'a pas cessé de faire passer ses lignes de fuite, comme autant de « multiplicités à transformation », même en renversant ses propres codes qui la structurent ou

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<sup>27</sup> The idea that Z5 is an expression of capitalist society is also reinforced by Gulizzi, who writes: 'Je leur présente ma vision du rôle de l'architecture, porteuse d'émotions, de plaisirs, de civilité. (...) C'est un projet emblématique, un travail sur l'inconscient, fondé sur des valeurs affectives et identitaires fortes, un projet vitrine porteur d'un sens collectif. / Le projet porte une double responsabilité, celle de l'ancrage dans le territoire et celle de l'écriture architecturale d'un programme aussi exceptionnel afin de matérialiser l'aura de Zinedine Zidane' (Z5, p. n/a).

There are three different points in Gulizzi's discourse that reinforce the idea of Z5 (the stadium) as an expression of capitalist society.

First, the idea that Z5 (the stadium) is a project based on strong identity values suggests that it reflects and reinforces the values at the heart of the established order, the capitalist order. (Z5, p. n/a).

Second, the idea that Z5 materialises Zidane's aura is symptomatic of the capitalist disease. The idea that Zidane has a special aura is related to the ideology at the basis of celebrity culture, which, as will be explained in the next section, is an ontologically capitalist phenomenon. Celebrity culture is based on the star-making process, which consists in the creation of an aura of uniqueness around some individuals to fascinate the mass and influence the way they think and behave.

Third, Gulizzi's idea that the architect can be seen as a medium of civilisation suggests that being designed by an architect, any building expresses the 'spirit', in the sense of the ideology, of the society its architect belongs to. In this sense, being built by Gulizzi, who belongs to capitalist society, and bases his project on the values of the established order, Z5 expresses the ideology of capitalist society.

l'arbrifiant ; ce pourquoi la forme musicale, jusque dans ses ruptures et proliférations, est comparable à de la mauvaise herbe, un rhizome' (*MP*, p. 19). With its continuous rhythmic variations and combinations of different sounds, music can disrupt the way people perceive, potentially opening them up to the becoming and setting the conditions for the creation of a new sensibility that can serve as a seed to transform the world. As explained in Chapter One, at the basis of this thesis there is the idea that the world is constructed by human beings through a cognitive effort in relation to how they perceive themselves and the other things around them. As Julian Johnson explains, music has the capacity to affect us:

Not only does music offer the possibility of transcending daily life; it offers, in many forms as there are musics, a reshaping of those categories. It does not obliterate them in some narcotic emptiness but reworks them and thus offers us new models of experience. And this has a real power, because as we participate in this process of enactment, we experience new ways for ourselves. When we leave the musical work and return to daily life, we have tasted a different way of being, a different perception of the world.

Potentially, this leaves us marked by the experience. It subsequently produces an altered perception of the world.

[...] This will not necessarily change our actions, but it can certainly change our perception of the world and thus attitudes and so even, in time, our actions as well.<sup>28</sup>

However, as Johnson explains, not all kinds of music affect how people perceive in the same way. As he puts it, 'Some musics may come close to reproducing the pattern of limits in the everyday life, while others may depart radically from it.'<sup>29</sup> A similar idea is expressed by Simon Reynolds and Joy Press who observe that some kinds of music are more rhizomatic than others: 'Deleuze and Guattari claim that 'musical form, right down to its ruptures and proliferations, is comparable to a weed, a rhizome'; that thought, when truly freed, is not linear and methodical, but promiscuous, proceeding by intuitive leaps and bounds, associations, metaphors, and metonymy. But some kinds of music are more rhizomatic than others'.<sup>30</sup> For Reynolds and Press, some kinds of music reinforce some of the cognitive paths that thought is usually prompted in everyday life. This happens especially with tracks that have a clear linear development – a beginning, a middle, and end – and have a harmonic structure that somehow recreates an idea of order. Whereas others would break with linearity and the concept of harmony and order more. Neither Johnson nor Reynolds and Press provide examples of these kinds of music. However, Reynolds and Press suggests that experimental music,

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<sup>28</sup> Julian Johnson, *Who Needs Classical Music? Cultural Choice and Musical Values*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), <shorturl.at/aKMO7> [Accessed 15 July 2022].

<sup>29</sup> Ibid. [online].

<sup>30</sup> Simon Reynolds, Joy Press, *The Sex Revolts: Gender, Rebellion and Rock'n'roll* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), p. 199.

like the work of John Cage, jazz improvisation, and psychedelic rock are more rhizomatic than other musical expressions.<sup>31</sup> Rock'n'roll music is generally highly experimental and therefore it has the potential to deeply affect listeners, influencing their ways of perceiving.

The transformative potential of rock'n'roll music, however, is not limited to this. Rock'n'roll music originated in the 1950s as both a connective line between white and black cultures and an instrument to question the hierarchical social organisation of the time and promote a new approach to sexuality.<sup>32</sup> Although, until the end of the 1960s, rock'n'roll culture was demonised by the mainstream media for the revolutionary tendencies that it carried, things changed from the 1970s onwards. Capitalist society began to normalise some of the effects of rock'n'roll culture to profit from the success it had with the youth.<sup>33</sup> However, despite the partial normalisation of rock'n'roll culture, it is still generally considered to be an instrument to challenge the established order and to circulate new potential modes of perceiving.

With Z5, Espitallier explains the origin of the process of social production and the genesis of capitalist society. In this sense, it could be read as an aetiology of the 'social disease' and a genealogy of the 'capitalist disease'. Espitallier suggests that the social disease originates in people's minds and therefore that the process of social production has a noological nature. As society is the prerequisite for human beings to exist, it signifies, as Z5 highlights, that the social disease is inescapable. However, as the collection suggests, society is crossed by a series of lines of flight, such as those traced by rock'n'roll music, that can enable people to challenge the mode of thinking of society and create the conditions for new modes of thinking that have the potential to reconfigure the world. The capitalist system, as Espitallier metaphorically explains by tracing the history of sports sites, has its roots in ancient times, when the hierarchical, tree-like image of thought was first used, and emerged from a transformation of the institutions and ideological apparatus of the ancient and modern worlds. From this perspective, it can be concluded that capitalist society is a disease that does not really have a definitive cure, but can be treated with the lines of flight it is crossed by to allow human thought to unfold itself in the most creative possible way, and that capitalist society is a disease caused by the hierarchical, tree-like image of thought that has been regulating the process of social production since ancient times and traps human thought into rigid mental paths.

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<sup>31</sup> Reynolds, Press, p. 199.

<sup>32</sup> Jeff Wallenfeldt, *The Birth of Rock & Roll: Music in the 1950s Through the 1960s* (New York: Britannica Encyclopaedia Publishing, 2013), p. XII.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. XII; Michael T. Bertrand, *Race, Rock and Elvis* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000), p. 88.

#### 4.2.1.2 *Tourner en rond : De l'art d'aborder les ronds-points. Capitalist society as a 'disease of control'*

Starting from the idea that the street system is a social construct that expresses the discourses, in the sense of the vision of the world, of the society that has built them, in *Tourner en rond : De l'art d'aborder les ronds-points*, Espitallier uses roundabouts as a metaphor to describe the capitalist system, and so the capitalist disease. As he explains in an interview for the Librairie Mollat, *Tourner en Rond* began with the intention to interrogate an object about which apparently there is not much to say to show that, contrary to what one may think, this activity can be revelatory of the functioning of the contemporary world. Roundabouts, Espitallier explains, can describe the frenetic functioning of the capitalist world:

[...] ce que je sais c'est qu'en revanche, c'est que je voulais interroger un objet dont en général on n'a pas grande chose à dire et c'est justement ça ce qui m'a intéressé. C'était de faire parler, de prendre mot, savoir ce qu'un rond-point, qui est d'une grande banalité, pouvait révéler de notre contemporain [...]. Le rond-point, c'est un objet qui dit bien justement, du fantasme capitaliste du flux ininterrompu.<sup>34</sup>

Although the idea of developing a poetry collection around such an ordinary object might be reminiscent of Ponge, who often writes about banal objects, there are substantial differences between the two authors. Ponge writes about ordinary objects with the conviction of revealing their complexity and harmony<sup>35</sup>, whereas Espitallier writes about roundabouts with the conviction of revealing some of the mechanisms that regulate contemporary capitalist society, conceived as a disease of control. At the basis of *Tourner en rond* is the idea that roundabouts were invented by contemporary capitalist society to control and regulate traffic and to reproduce its functioning at a smaller scale. The presence of roundabouts on the street, Espitallier explains, is revelatory of the passage from what Foucault calls the *société disciplinaire*, coinciding with early capitalist society, to what Deleuze calls the *société de contrôle*, which coincides with the contemporary. Indeed, Foucault identifies disciplinary societies with 18th- and nineteenth-century capitalism, whereas Deleuze identifies control society with the contingent society, that is to say with late capitalism.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Jean-Michel Espitallier, 'Jean-Michel Espitallier : *Tourner en rond : De l'art d'aborder les ronds-points*', uploaded by Librairie Mollat, YouTube, 13 May 2026, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XI8Uc9WwgKk>> [Accessed 5 August 2020].

<sup>35</sup> Francis Ponge, in Romestaing, [online] (para 32 of 41).

<sup>36</sup> See: Deleuze, 'Post-scriptum sur les sociétés de contrôle'; Deleuze, *Pourparlers*, pp. 240-247; Michel Foucault, *Surveiller et punir* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975).

Dans leur autoritarisme assumé, le feu rouge ou le stop sont des reliquats de la société disciplinaire. Leur remplacement par le rond-point traduit le passage historique de l'ancienne société disciplinaire à la nouvelle société de contrôle. L'autorité n'a pas changé, elle s'est polie – et même policée. Contrôle et autocontrôle régissent désormais la circulation automobile. (TR, p. 52)

In *Post-scriptum sur les sociétés de contrôle*, Deleuze observes that, to instruct human beings on how to think and behave, disciplinary society relied on the organisation of vast spaces of enclosure, which Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri describe as 'un réseau ramifié de dispositifs ou d'appareils qui produisent et régissent coutumes, habitudes et pratiques productives'<sup>37</sup>. Common examples of enclosure are schools, prisons, hospitals, and factories. Throughout the day and throughout their lives, individuals traverse different sites of enclosure, each with its own laws, which prompt them to think and behave according to the ideas, values, and beliefs at the basis of society. Enclosures, Deleuze argues, served disciplinary societies as castings for people's subjectivity, which is to say to assign them an identity, role, and position within its structure and to ensure that they stuck to its rules.

Red lights and stop signs, Espitallier suggests, belong to the complex network of devices that disciplinary societies invented and used to discipline people when on the street. Due to their nature, their functioning reflects that of disciplinary society, though for short periods, disciplinary societies confine drivers to the portion of space that their presence creates. This clearly reproduces the functioning of disciplinary societies that organise themselves around well-defined spatial enclaves at a small scale. Although contemporary capitalist society still uses red lights and stop signs, these have mostly been replaced by roundabouts. With their continuous flow of traffic, throughout *Tourner en rond*, Espitallier shows how roundabouts express the spirit of contemporary capitalist society; they metaphorise the never-ending circulation of capital.

[...], le rond-point a horreur des ruptures. Il fluidifie l'écoulement, huile le mouvement et métaphorise le fantasme capitaliste du flux ininterrompu.<sup>38</sup>

Le rond-point quant à lui transgresse l'interdit. Il le rend insupportable, inadmissible, scandaleux, métaphorise la frénésie cinétique du capitalisme, du flux ininterrompu, tendu, fantasme d'une circulation qui ne rencontrerait jamais d'obstacle et s'autorégulerait en fonction de l'intérêt général. (TR, p. 50).

The reason why traffic is today regulated by red lights and stop signs, and also roundabouts, resides in the fact that control society has maintained most of the devices used by disciplinary society to teach

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<sup>37</sup> Michael Hardt, Antonio Negri, 'La production biopolitique', in *Nouveau Millénaire, Défis Libertaires*, <<http://libertaire.free.fr/Biopolitique12.html>> [Accessed 12 September 2021].

<sup>38</sup> Jean-Michel Espitallier, *Tourner en rond : De l'art d'aborder les ronds-points* (Paris: Puf, 2016), p. 35. Henceforth, all the references to this volume will occur in the text preceded by TR.



its members how to think and behave. This is because, as Espitallier suggests, by claiming that ‘l’autorité n’a pas changé’ (TR, p. 51), both disciplinary and control societies have developed around the same socius, that is to say capital. Both disciplinary and control societies are capitalist. As explained at the beginning of the section, the first coincides with early capitalism and the second with contemporary capitalism. All their rules are dictated by capital. It can even be argued, as Deleuze suggests, that the control society arises from the implementation of the surveillance system of disciplinary society.<sup>39</sup>

In addition to red lights and stop signs, both disciplinary and control society control their members through a series of devices that scare them into behaving. Espitallier describes these surveillance systems of cameras and speed cameras installed across the road network to monitor drivers (TR, p. 53) as ‘gendarmes couchés’ (TR, p. 61). ‘Le « gendarme couché »’, Espitallier writes, ‘n’est une instance d’interdiction mais de punition. Et plus exactement une menace de punition qui, d’elle-même, conduit l’automobiliste à installer dans son libre arbitre une instance d’interdiction’ (TR, p. 61). Cameras and speed cameras prompt human beings to stick to the rules for fear of being seen doing something wrong and subsequently being punished. These devices stand for what Foucault calls the ‘panopticon’, conceived as a control device that can take different shapes to enable security guards to monitor as many people as possible at the same time without them knowing if they are being observed.<sup>40</sup> Foucault elaborates on this idea on Jeremy Bentham, who first conceptualised the panopticon in 1791 to describe a type of prison whose architecture and organisation of space would allow security guards to watch over prisoners without them being aware of it. This system of control, in fact, underpins the idea that the possibility of being observed makes people conform to the rules. The panopticon, Foucault suggests throughout *Surveiller et Punir*, was adopted and adapted by disciplinary societies to control its members and make sure they aligned with social expectations:

La machine à voir était une sorte de chambre noire où épier les individus ; elle devient un édifice transparent où l’exercice du pouvoir est contrôlable par la société entière.

Le schéma panoptique, sans s’effacer ni perdre aucune de ses propriétés, est destiné à se diffuser dans le corps social ; il a pour vocation d’y devenir une fonction généralisée. La ville pestiférée donnait un modèle disciplinaire exceptionnel : parfait mais absolument violent ; à la maladie qui apportait la mort, le pouvoir opposait sa perpétuelle menace de mort ; la vie y était réduite à son expression la plus simple ; c’était contre le pouvoir de la mort l’exercice minutieux du droit de glaive. Le Panopticon au contraire à un rôle d’amplification ; s’il aménage le pouvoir, s’il veut le rendre plus économique

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<sup>39</sup> Raiford Guins, *Technology and the Culture of Control* (Minneapolis: The University Minnesota Press, 2009), p. 4.

<sup>40</sup> As Foucault writes: ‘Ce panoptique, subtilement arrangé pour qu’un surveillant puisse observer, d’un coup d’œil, tant d’individus différents, permet aussi à tout le monde de venir surveiller le moindre surveillant’. (*Surveiller et punir*, p. 242).

et plus efficace, ce n'est pas pour le pouvoir même, ni pour le salut immédiat d'une société menacée : il s'agit de rendre plus fortes les forces sociales [...].<sup>41</sup>

In addition, however, control society has put in place a system of self-control. To penetrate the human mind even more deeply, Espitallier explains, control society has enforced the surveillance system of disciplinary society by introducing new devices that prompt individuals to discipline and control themselves. Rear-view mirrors, he suggests, are devices that control society has introduced to enable people to self-regulate:<sup>42</sup> 'À l'instar d'une caméra de surveillance, le rétroviseur complète la vision panoramique que l'on a depuis l'habitacle et permet de voir sans être vu. Sans trop être vu voyant.' (TR, p. 52). Rear-view mirrors enable drivers to see behind them and to adapt their manoeuvres according to the flow of traffic. Contrary to red lights and stop signs that command street users to stop, rear-view-mirrors do not issue any orders. They only provide drivers with the widest rear-view coverage possible. It is then entirely up to them to adopt the correct posture and to respect the street rules. As Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri notice, in control society, 'les mécanismes de maîtrise se font toujours plus "démocratiques", toujours plus immanents au champ social, diffusés dans le cerveau et le corps des citoyens'.<sup>43</sup> Control society transforms the human being into the eye that watches them. This prevents them from seeing that they are constantly being controlled. Devices as rear-view mirrors make drivers gently internalise the rules without them being aware. By using such devices that indirectly act on the human mind, control society gives its members the impression of being free to think and behave. As Espitallier puts it:

Il est une forme de démocratie directe régulée par une série de prescriptions immédiatement intégrées par les usagers qui en appliquent la rigueur avec cette subtile impression de faire agir leur libre-arbitre. Un espace de liberté mais de liberté très surveillée par cette illusion de liberté. (TR, p. 41)

All this suggests that contemporary capitalist society is a disease of control that progresses because the control that human beings exercise over their thought disables their faculty to think creatively. Its members are constantly monitored by others and themselves in order to self-discipline and therefore think and behave according to the rules at the basis of society. This amplifies the negative effects on human thought. Not only is thought instructed by the collectivity on how to think and behave through the rigid mental paths of the hierarchical, tree-like image of thought, but the control

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<sup>41</sup> Foucault, *Surveiller et punir*, p. 242.

<sup>42</sup> Rear-view-mirrors were invented in 1921, towards the end of the disciplinary society, which scholars usually date to after the Second World War when capitalism started to become financial.

<sup>43</sup> Hardt, Negri, 'La production biopolitique', [online].

that they exercise over themselves suffocates the creative flow of their thought even more, causing a social disease with very serious symptoms.

#### **4.2.1.3 The capitalist disease and human responsibility**

As Espitallier suggests in Z5, society is a social product. Human beings construct society to make sense of themselves and what surrounds them. However, as he explains in *Tourner en rond*, once they construct it, society begins to rule over them.

Le rond-point n'ayant d'autre fonction que son utilité, n'ayant d'autre utilité que la fonction qui le justifie, c'est en l'empruntant qu'on l'active. L'activer le fait exister (s'il n'avait pas de fonction, on le supprimerait). La raison d'être du rond-point est sa fonction. Comme le sont toutes les choses qui, a priori, n'ont d'autre fonction que celle qu'on leur a attribuée. Ce sont les usagers qui le fondent. Ils en constituent les éléments mécaniques et, plus précisément, le carburant.

Mais le rond-point à son tour invente son usager. Lequel dans sa fonction d'activation devient un élément constitutif du rond-point. Une pièce mécanique de la machine rond-point. (TR, p. 36)

If we replace the word 'rond-point' with 'société', the fragment above perfectly describes how society functions and the process of social production. Like roundabouts, society is constructed by its users, which is to say by human beings. The way society functions, and its goals, depend, just like for roundabouts, on the meaning that its users associate with it. Human beings are the cause of society; they shape it and establish its rules of functioning. However, although they are responsible for the actualisation of society, society ends up being responsible for the way each human being thinks, behaves, and exists. This is because society inevitably causes a disease; capitalist society traps the creative flow of its member's thought in the image it gives them, leaving them little room to deviate and to imagine new worlds and life possibilities.

Poetry, however, as Espitallier suggests in numerous interviews, such as in the one led by the author of this thesis, proves itself to be the perfect instrument to cure the world. Poetry can transform the way people think, potentially creating a breach in the system that can serve as a starting point for its transformation. This is what is going to be explored in the next few sections.

## 4.2.2 For a symptomatology and treatment of capitalist disease

This section examines selected works by Espitallier – *Gasoil : Prises de guerre, De la célébrité, Army, Le Théorème d’Espitallier, Z5, Tourner en rond : De l’art d’aborder des ronds-points*, and *En guerre* – to show how celebrity culture, war and the myth of scientific objectivity can be seen as symptoms of the capitalist disease and how poetry can be used to treat it.

### 4.2.2.1 Celebrity culture as a symptom of the capitalist disease

#### 4.2.2.1.1 Introduction

This section discusses celebrity culture as a symptom of the capitalist disease through the analysis of Espitallier’s text *De la Célébrité* published in 2012. Before focusing on Espitallier’s book, however, it is necessary to introduce and contextualise the concept of celebrity culture. This will enable to better frame the discourse developed by Espitallier in *De la Célébrité* and the analysis of the text that this section will make.

In *Celebrity: Capitalism and the Making of Fame*, Milly Williamson explains that every epoch has its own form of fame. Celebrity is the form of fame developed within contemporary capitalism; its emergence is inseparable from the socio-political changes – technological development, the rise of the bourgeoisie, the commodification of culture, the democratisation of the State – that led to the actualisation of the capitalist order.<sup>44</sup> The way of being famous varies throughout time and across geographic areas. This is because the way fame is constructed and used depends on the socio-political context in which it is formed.<sup>45</sup> As Williamson explains:

Different periods of history in different parts of the globe possess ways of being well known and publicly renowned, which are shaped by the structure of public life as it is created by the particular social, political, and economic conditions that prevail. Fame is not an unchanging human condition, attached inevitably to ‘Great Men’ and the occasional ‘Great Woman’. Instead, fame is part of the historical process, and as such, it helps to illuminate the balance of power in any society between different social forces and values. Perception of fame and its social meanings change in times of social transformation often highlighting the transition between epochs.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Milly Williamson, *Celebrity: Capitalism and the Making of Fame* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2016), p. 11.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>46</sup> Williamson, p. 11.

At the centre of the process of the construction of fame, there is an essentialist conception of the human subject as the expression of the innate characteristics of the individual. This inevitably leads the communities that hold this conception to praise and celebrate certain individuals for their supposedly innate qualities that make them superior to the other members. Throughout history, fame has been constructed around such individuals. However, the qualities that make people famous, and so the social categories and functions of the people becoming famous, change from epoch to epoch. For instance, in ancient times, fame was strictly bound to the figure of the emperor and his divine qualities. In *The Frenzy of Renown: Fame and Its History*, Leo Braudy argues that, in Western societies, fame began with Alexander the Great who used it to reinforce his image as the ‘conqueror of the world’<sup>47</sup>. Alexander the Great claimed divine descentance and purposely constructed his popularity around his supernatural origins to strengthen and justify his power inside and beyond the borders of his empire.<sup>48</sup> With the help of commissioned artists, Alexander the Great circulated legends of his divine nature, military abilities, and achievements, and produced coins with his profile, becoming known everywhere inside and outside his empire.<sup>49</sup>

For centuries, Western emperors followed Alexander’s model, presenting themselves as heroic god-like figures to reinforce their political power. However, with Octavian Caesar, things changed.<sup>50</sup> Octavian Caesar constructed his fame around the prestige of Rome rather than around his divine descendancy.<sup>51</sup> Although he accepted the title of ‘Augustus’ from the senate, in English ‘the venerable’, he refused to be honoured as a deity.<sup>52</sup> As Williamson observes, this represented a turning point in the history of fame:

Augustus did not emulate the heroes of the past, but instead developed a new form of fame which stressed civil duty and loyalty to Rome as the basis for public prominence. In this context Augustus presents himself as an imperial symbol, his importance tied to the destiny of Rome and its empire rather than to the gods. This marks one of the earliest shifts in the meaning of fame – from god-heroes to imperial-heroes, from grandiose display to an emphasis on civic duty.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Lee Barron, *Social Theory in Popular Culture* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013), p. 47.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p. 47.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., p. 47; As Williamson notes, before Alexander the Great, the Egyptian Pharaoh Ramses II did something similar. Ramses II, indeed, used to present himself as the greatest Egyptian pharaoh of all time. (p. 12)

<sup>50</sup> Williamson, pp. 12-13.

<sup>51</sup> Williamson, p. 13.

<sup>52</sup> Henry Fairfield Burton, ‘The Worship of the Roman Emperors’, *The Biblical World*, 40.2 (1912), 80-91 (pp. 82-83); M. P. Charlesworth, ‘The Refusal of Divine Honours: An Augustan Formula’, *Papers of the British School at Rome*, 15 (1939), 1-10 (p. 2); Williamson, p. 12; However, to indirectly strengthen his control in the provinces, Octavian Augustus allowed the erection of temples in his honour on the condition that he would have been celebrated as an imperial symbol in conjunction with Dea Roma.

<sup>53</sup> Williamson, p. 12.

In modern times, fame was associated with the Christian martyr and then, after the Crusades, to the national hero.<sup>54</sup> These two figures were both used by modern societies to circulate their values and maintain the order of things. Both the Christian martyr and the national hero embodied the behavioural model of the time. The Christian martyr was a heroic warrior sacrificing themselves to the Christian cause, whereas the national hero was a person ready to die for the survival of the nation.<sup>55</sup>

Today, fame has an entirely different meaning and social function. In the past, people became famous for their supposedly supernatural nature or having accomplished something great for the community they belonged to according to the scale of values of their times. In the contemporary capitalist world, people become famous for being famous. As Daniel J. Boorstin explains, ‘the celebrity is a person known for his well-knownness’<sup>56</sup>. Celebrity culture is strictly bound to the visibility that the mass media, whose advent was only made possible by capitalist society’s technological development, can give to anyone.<sup>57</sup> In capitalist society, it is no longer necessary to have achieved something worthy of attention to become famous; it is sufficient to be in the spotlight. It is for this reason, as Espitallier observes in *De la Célébrité*, that famous people today lack genius and talent:

Ils n’ont ni talent ni génie et généralement pas beaucoup de conversation. Ils n’ont qu’eux-mêmes, et leur présence interchangeable ne fait que signifier qu’ils pourraient aussi bien n’être pas là.

Ils n’ont ni talent ni génie et généralement pas beaucoup de conversation.<sup>58</sup>

Although Espitallier’s claim that famous people today lack genius and talent may sound a little exaggerated, and could have been more nuanced, it fulfils its intention: to challenge the idea, promoted by celebrity culture, that famous people are famous because they are special and superior to non-famous people and to highlight that what matters in the construction of fame is visibility. Today, people become famous because they are in the spotlight thanks to a media that circulates and reproduces their images, videos, and voices. Due to its connection to media and technology, whose

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., pp. 12-13.

<sup>55</sup> Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Life* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005), pp. 42-44.

<sup>56</sup> Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America*, 3rd edn (New York: Vintage Books: 1961), p. 57.

<sup>57</sup> Alexandra Samuel, ‘With Social Media, Everyone’s A Celebrity’, *JStor Daily*, 16 July 2019, <<https://daily.jstor.org/with-social-media-everyones-a-celebrity/>> [Accessed 10 April 2021] (para 6 of 16); Adrian D. Wesołowski, ‘Beyond celebrity history: towards the consolidation of fame studies’, *Celebrity Studies*, 11.2 (2020), 189-204 (p. 189); Bhabani Shankar Nayak, ‘Celebrity culture, Propaganda and Capitalism’, *Counter Current*, 22 July 2020, <<https://countercurrents.org/2020/07/celebrity-culture-propaganda-and-capitalism>> [Accessed 26 August 2020].

<sup>58</sup> Jean-Michel Espitallier, *De la célébrité : Théorie et pratique* (Paris: Éditions 10/18, 2012), p. 14; Henceforth, all references to this volume will occur in the text preceded by *DLC*.

development is strictly bound to capitalist society, celebrity culture is an ontologically capitalist phenomenon, and its presence is revelatory of the actualisation of the capitalist system. Celebrity culture can thus be considered as a symptom of the capitalist disease.

In *De la célébrité*, Espitallier analyses celebrity culture. The book can therefore be read as an analysis of one of the symptoms of the capitalist disease and a possible cure, due to the numerous lines of flight that traverse it which can affect the reader's mind. This section is structured into three main subsections. The first subsection will explain the idea of celebrity culture at the basis of *De la célébrité*. The aim is to clarify the process of the construction of fame in the capitalist world and its social function. The second subsection will examine the consequences of celebrity culture on the health of the world. The third subsection will talk about the remedies offered by *De la célébrité* to treat this disease.

#### **4.2.2.1.2 *De la célébrité*: an analysis of Espitallier's conception of celebrity culture as a symptom of capitalist society**

Throughout *De la célébrité*, Espitallier describes celebrity culture and the process through which fame is constructed in capitalist society, implying that this can be conceived as a symptom of the capitalist disease. Contrary to what, very often, happened in pre-capitalist societies, fame is not produced by the person who aspires to notoriety, but by others. As Espitallier observes: '[...] c'est le public qui instaure la célébrité (*DLC*, p. 32), and also 'C'est parce que je suis reconnu, que je suis connu. C'est parce que je suis connu que m'on me reconnaît' (*DLC*, p. 32). The celebrity's fame is created by the public; without the public, celebrities would not even exist.

Le spectateur fonde le spectacle. Le spectacle fonde le spectateur. Le spectateur se nourrit du spectacle. Le spectacle se nourrit du spectateur. Sans spectateur point de spectacle. Sans spectacle point de spectateur. Mais le spectateur est supérieur au spectacle en ce sens que le spectacle sans spectateur ne peut advenir, alors que, par la seule vertu de son regard, le spectateur rend spectaculaire ce qu'il regarde, admire, applaudit. Dit autrement c'est le regard du spectateur qui fonde le spectacle. (*DLC*, p. 34)

However, there is a common feature between the construction of fame today and in the past. Celebrities are conceived and venerated as deities, as extraordinary creatures bypassing the limits of

the human species. As Espitallier suggests, celebrity culture configures itself as a polytheistic religion, where celebrities play the role of gods and goddesses. Unlike traditional religions, however, with celebrity culture, sacral figures vary from person to person: 'Mon panthéon de célébrités, strictement hiérarchisé, sera contesté par mon voisin, et vice versa. Untel est à mes yeux célèbre mais ne l'est pas du tout aux yeux de mon voisin' (*DLC*, p. 96). Ordinary people create their pantheon of idols to be venerated through autonomous choice, without an authority imposing specific fixed figures on them, as happens with traditional religions (*DLC*, p. 96). The media has a crucial role in the making of fame, as Espitallier explains, it is a magic wand that can transform the ordinary into the extra-ordinary:

Le pouvoir de fascination qu'exercent les médias consiste pour une bonne part à transformer n'importe quelle personne ou situation ordinaire en sujet extraordinaire. Reproduit, puis dupliqué, rendu inaccessible, unique, l'ordinaire mis en spectacle acquiert alors une valeur d'exceptionnalité dont, bien sûr, nous nous sentons exclus. [...]  
Ce pouvoir des médias atteint un degré supérieur de magie grâce à l'habile manipulation d'image censées ne pas être montrées, lesquelles images proposent pourtant, le plus souvent, de nous montrer ce qui, d'ordinaire, est encore plus ordinaire (donc extra-ordinaire, si l'on veut) : photos pirates, reportages censurés, etc., jouant un magnétisme que suscite l'interdit, le clandestin, le dissimulé (effet trou de serrure). Et la rareté. Comme par enchantement, l'écran affiche ce qui aurait dû rester caché derrière l'écran. Une révélation. Même dénué du moindre intérêt, le mystère crée la distance et la distance crée la valeur. (*DLC*, pp. 28-29).

Media creates a special aura around stars that makes them appear extraordinary, mysterious, and inaccessible. Due to the fact that the advent of media is an ontological capitalist phenomenon, the role of media in the construction of fame in capitalist society highlights its capitalist nature, distancing it from the form of fame of the past. This distance is further emphasised by the economic reasons at the basis of celebrity culture. In the capitalist world, celebrities' identities are constructed as objects for sale. As explained in the introduction of this chapter, celebrity culture is a capitalist form of fame that commodifies it to fulfil its primary goal: the production of capital. Celebrities are commodified and used to produce capital. As Espitallier ironically suggests by quoting Elisabeth Taylor, who claimed to be her own merchandise ('« Je suis ma propre industrie, je suis ma propre marchandise. »' (*DLC*, p. 84)), fame is today used to monetise the image of certain individuals and produce new capital. This is also suggested by the idea that celebrities are useless: 'Leur seul intérêt est d'être sans intérêt. Leur seule utilité est de se montrer inutiles' (*DLC*, p. 14). Like the millions of commodities around us, celebrities exist only to produce new capital and to feed on the capitalist system.



With the diversification of the media and the advent of the Internet, the process of the construction of fame has become simpler and simpler. This simplicity has resulted in a dramatic increase in the number of celebrities and an expansion of the fields where celebrities can be found (*DLC*, pp. 120-123). As Espitallier notices, the mass media has created the conditions for the utopia of fifteen minutes of fame, which Andy Warhol first talked about in 1968.

Les quinze minutes de célébrité ne sont plus une utopie. La facilité d'accès aux médias en même temps que la diversification et la proximité des sources (radios et télévisions locales, bouquet numérique, Internet), la généralisation et l'accessibilité des moyens techniques de reproduction (son, texte, images, etc.) réduisent chaque jour davantage la distance qui jusque-là nous séparait des lieux de diffusion et des ateliers de fabrication des idoles. Il y a toujours des stars, mais elles sont innombrables, formatées, éphémères. (*DLC*, p. 148).

The mass media, and in particular the Internet, has democratised star-making, potentially giving anyone the chance to become famous regardless of their merits. Today there are celebrities in every field, from gastronomy to academia, sports, and politics (*DLC*, p. 121). This is because, as mentioned above, capitalist society uses celebrities to produce capital. By simplifying the process of the construction of fame, many people become famous and capitalist society increases its revenue.

#### **4.2.2.1.3 Consequences of celebrity culture**

Contrary to what one may think, celebrity culture is not neutral but affects the way people think. In *De la célébrité*, Espitallier discusses some of the consequences of celebrity culture on the health of the world, raising awareness of the effects of celebrity culture on the way people think and highlighting its role in spreading the so-called capitalist disease. Just like the previous form of fame, celebrity culture fulfils political goals. Capitalist society uses it to circulate its values and ideas.

First, celebrity culture causes a sense of inferiority in ordinary people that reinforces the hierarchical logic and essentialist conception of the subject at the basis of the dominant mode of thinking. As Espitallier explains, the financial disparities between ordinary people and stars make the former feel small in comparison to the latter and discredits their work: 'L'argent étant devenu l'étalon de tout, la fortune des vedettes nous renvoie à notre petitesse, il y a disproportion, et ce pouvoir magique de la fortune des stars qui délivre sa part de rêve en même temps nous aliène ; il suggère que le travail ne vaut rien, d'où il découle que ceux qui travaillent ne valent rien' (*DLC*, p. 85). The fact

that celebrities make their living selling their images generates the conviction that ordinary people have less value than the stars because they work long hours to earn money and yet are still unable to reach the same level of wealth. Ordinary people perceive themselves as a mass of 'hommes sans qualités' (*DLC*, p. 54) entitled to less respect, acceptance and love than the stars. Capitalist society instils the idea that rich people deserve more respect, acceptance, and appreciation than ordinary people because they produce more capital and therefore maintain the capitalist system, which is presented as the best possible system. For this reason, as Espitallier suggests, when ordinary people dream of becoming famous, it is a desire to feel special, loved, recognised, and respected like the stars:

Comment interpréter ce désir de devenir célèbre ? Vœu secret d'immortalité, d'honneur rendu (être *célébré*), besoin d'amour et de reconnaissance, réparation par la lumière d'obscures cicatrices, désir de s'extirper de l'anonymat, de la standardisation et du troupeau des « hommes sans qualité » (*DLC*, p. 54)

Ordinary people's sense of inferiority, resulting from celebrity culture, prevents them from seeing that celebrities do not possess any extraordinary innate qualities that make them better than ordinary people and that they are not more entitled to respect, recognition, and love. All this inevitably reinforces the hierarchical vision of the world and the essentialist conception of the subject at the basis of capitalist society.

Second, celebrity culture strengthens the surveillance apparatus. As explained in the previous subsection, the media creates a special aura around stars that produces a distance between them and the mass of ordinary people. As Espitallier observes, to reduce the distance between them and the stars, and to feel less inferior, ordinary people obsessively display their wealth on the street and on social media, reinforcing capitalist society's control over them (*DLC*, p. 55). As he writes:

Désormais, tout le monde s'imagine ou se rêve sur un plateau de télévision ou de cinéma. Tout le monde se voudrait regardé-filmé par tout le monde. Storytelling généralisé. Chacun « se fait des films ». On tourne surtout le samedi après-midi dans les centres commerciaux et les rues piétonnes, si bien que tout se croyant filmé par tout le monde (ma vie est un clip), la ville devient un immense faux plateau de télévision, une parodie de défilé de mode. Du faux faux, en quelque sorte. La généralisation de la prise de vue (appareils numériques, téléphones, portables) contribue à donner l'illusion d'un show généralisé alors qu'elle ne fait que favoriser la mise en place d'une autosurveillance généralisée, d'une traçabilité policière et d'une société panoptique. (*DLC*, p. 85)

Rather than exploiting the potentiality of the media to trace a series of lines of flight that can make them explore new ways of being a community, human beings use it to control themselves, reinforcing the habits established by the capitalist order.

Third, celebrity culture has narcotic effects on human thought (*DLC*, p. 55). Capitalist society uses celebrity culture to divert people's attention from socio-political problems. Celebrity culture hides socio-political problems behind the personal drama of stars who are continually talking about their lives and personal issues on social media. This idea echoes that expressed by Guy Debord in *La société du spectacle*, where he explains that show business is like 'une guerre de l'opium'<sup>59</sup>. As Steven Best and Douglas Kellner explain,

For Debord, the spectacle is a tool of pacification and depoliticization; it is a "permanent opium war" that stupefies social subjects and distracts them from the most urgent task of real life...The spectacle spreads its narcotics mainly through culture mechanisms of leisure and consumption, services and entertainment, as ruled by the dictates of advertising and a commercialized media culture.<sup>60</sup>

Debord elaborated on Marx's claim that religion is the opiate of the masses and thus has a narcotic effect on people.<sup>61</sup> For Marx, religion could cure the suffering of workers caused by their exploitation from the circulation of the idea that they would be rewarded in the afterlife.<sup>62</sup> As Eric Bain-Selbo suggests, Marx considered religion to be a political instrument used by the dominant classes to safeguard their wealth and status quo.<sup>63</sup> For Marx, religion instils the idea that in the afterlife people are rewarded for their suffering, somehow convincing them to accept the difficulties of life.<sup>64</sup> As Bain Selbo writes: 'Marx argues that religion is an ideological tool that legitimates and defends the interests of the dominant, wealthy classes in the population. It does so in part by placating the poor and exploited classes. Faced with an arduous and seemingly unjust life in this world, the poor and exploited at least can look forward to a more perfect existence in the afterlife. To reach that afterlife, however, one must peacefully and quietly persevere through life's tribulations – respecting the life, liberty, and (especially) private property of others.'<sup>65</sup> Similarly, celebrity culture has a

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<sup>59</sup> Guy Debord, *La société du spectacle / La società dello spettacolo* (Calomelano Editrice Virtuale, 2009), p. 23 <[https://ebooks.calomelano.it/011\\_societ%C3%A0\\_dello\\_spettacolo.pdf](https://ebooks.calomelano.it/011_societ%C3%A0_dello_spettacolo.pdf)> [Accessed 13 My 2018].

<sup>60</sup> Steven Best and Douglas Kellner, in James Trier, *Guy Debord. The Situationist International, and the Revolutionary Spirit* (Leiden: Brill-Rodopi, 2019), p. 23.

<sup>61</sup> Kevin J. Christiano, William H. Swatos Jr., Peter Kivisto, *Sociology of Religion. Contemporary Developments*, (Walnut Creek: Alta Mira Press, 2002), p. 5.

<sup>62</sup> Eric Bain-Selbo, 'Sports as the opiates of the Masses', Philosophy & Religion Faculty Publication, <[https://digitalcommons.wku.edu/phil\\_rel\\_fac\\_pub/1/](https://digitalcommons.wku.edu/phil_rel_fac_pub/1/)>, [Accessed 25 August 2022]

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., [online].

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., [online].

<sup>65</sup> Bain-Selbo, [online].

political function. It distracts people to prevent them from seeing social issues and taking action to change the order of things.

Fourth, the democratisation of fame as determined by the media has increased the number of star-politicians. This is, Espitallier suggests, a historical catastrophe (*DLC*, p. 121). People do not set out on a political career because they have strong ideals and want to improve the world but to become famous and earn money from selling their image. What matters today in politics is not your ideas about the world but rather how entertaining you are. In this regard, Espitallier mentions Nicolas Sarkozy and Arnold Schwarzenegger. Sarkozy, Espitallier explains, built his whole political career on the codes of show business, while Schwarzenegger exploited his movie star past:

[Pourtant] l'effet Fouquet's + vacances en yacht de Nicolas Sarkozy au lendemain de son élection, renforcé par son divorce quelques mois plus tard puis son mariage avec Carla Bruni, a incontestablement fait riper le politique sur le terrain des people. Parce que Nicolas Sarkozy a inauguré son exercice du pouvoir en s'appropriant les codes du show-business. « Président bling-bling », titrait *Libération* à l'automne 2007. [...]

L'effet Sarkozy opère un renversement historique-catastrophique en ce sens que, désormais, ce n'est plus la politique qui a tendance à alimenter les potins mais les potins qui ont tendance à nourrir la politique. (*DLC*, p. 121)

Arnold Schwarzenegger a conquis le pouvoir en jouant des rôles ultra-violents dans des films d'ultra-violence. Devenu gouverneur de Californie grâce au pouvoir ultra-violent des images de ses films d'ultra-violence, Schwarzy refusa de gracier les condamnés à mort accusés d'avoir commis des actes d'ultra-violence banalisés par les images qui avaient permis à Schwarzy d'accéder au pouvoir politique, lequel pouvoir politique lui permit d'envoyer d'ultra-violents Terminators dans d'ultra-violentes chambres à gaz. (*DLC*, p. 123)

Although Schwarzenegger appeared in many violent movies, which normalised violence, during his mandate as California governor, several people were sentenced to death for committing the same violent acts that he normalised in his movies.

#### **4.2.2.1.4 Remedies for celebrity culture**

With *De la Célébrité*, Espitallier not only reveals the dysfunctional mechanisms that celebrity culture triggers in society but provides a remedy. In the book, Espitallier activates a deterritorialising movement that deconstructs the image of thought of capitalist society and resets the conditions to

shape the world anew. To this end, Espitallier follows three different paths: he constructs the book as a rhizome, he deconstructs the poetic 'je', and he uses humour.

Espitallier constructs *De la Célébrité* by deterritorialising the formal features of poetry. As the following fragments exemplify, Espitallier mixes up the features of poetry with the features of essays, magazines, and leaflets.



*DLC*, p. 154-155.



**GRAND ASTRE,  
QUE SERAIT  
TON BONHEUR  
SI TU N'AVAIS  
PAS CEUX  
QUE TU  
ÉCLAIRES ?**

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***Friedrich Nietzsche***

*DLC*, p. 38.

This enables him to undermine the hierarchical logic that has characterised the organisation of the world since ancient times and is the basis of the capitalist system, as well as its tendency to rigidly categorise the matter that constitutes it. By contaminating the features of poetry with those of other genres, Espitallier upsets the hierarchy, which has for centuries considered poetry as the finest art and

makes it escape any rigid definition. *De la Célébrité* configures itself as a rhizome, a machine in constant transformation unfit to respond to the classical definitions of poetry. All this configures the book as a sort of line of flight that can immediately act on the reader's mind to challenge the hierarchical and essentialist vision of the world at the basis of celebrity culture, or more generally at the basis of the capitalist world. The de-hierarchising and de-defining logic regulating the book prompts the reader to inaugurate new mental paths to make sense of it. These mental paths can potentially interfere with the way readers create order in the capitalist system and help them to recover from the capitalist disease.

By deconstructing the poetic 'je', Espitallier achieves very similar results. As the fragments so far show, Espitallier eliminates all elements from his discourse that reminds one the reader of him. This enables him to challenge the idea of poetry as the expression of the poet's inner world that is traditionally proposed by lyricists and by critics who hold a conception of poetry as a lyrical genre, tracing a line of flight that can potentially deconstruct the reader's essentialist capitalist vision of the world. Neo-lyricism conceives of the poet as an extraordinary creature able to express their true essence through poetry and of poetry as the embodiment of the poet's true essence.<sup>66</sup> Influenced by Deleuze and Guattari, Espitallier's texts, on the contrary, express the idea of the poet as an impersonal force that can either reproduce the logic at the basis of the established order or forge a new potential world. The impersonality that Espitallier reaches for in his texts prevents the reader from associating the enunciation with him, directly interfering with the connection between the poet and their text promoted by capitalist society, and it presents artists and artworks from a new anti-essentialist perspective that challenges this vision of the world. All this can potentially set the conditions to rethink how to make sense of the world and recover from the capitalist disease.

The last strategy that Espitallier uses to deconstruct the capitalist image of thought is humour. The humour that crosses the pages of the book shows the arbitrariness of social practices and provides an instrument to make one reject and rethink them. As Simon Critchley observes in *De l'humour*, humour is a political weapon, it is 'une des conditions nécessaires à l'adoption d'une position critique'<sup>67</sup> towards the social order. Humour prompts human beings to reflect on their modes of living and to challenge them. It shows, the arbitrariness of social practices and provides an instrument capable of making one reject and rethink them.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Jean-Michel Maulpoix, *Pour un lyrisme critique*, pp. 24-25; *S*, p. 39; Jean-Michel Espitallier, *Caisse à outils*, p. 86.

<sup>67</sup> Simon Critchley, *De l'Humour* (Paris: Kimé, 2004), p. 47.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

### 4.2.2.2 *Army and En guerre*

This section is organised into two sections. The first section analyses *Army* and *En guerre* to show how war can be seen as a symptom of the capitalist disease and to understand their relationship. The second section examines the ways that poetry can help the world to recover from this disease.

#### 4.2.2.2.1 *Army and En guerre: scanning the world to diagnose the capitalist disease*

War can be seen as a symptom of the capitalist disease. This is because, contrary to what one may think, wars do not threaten the survival of capitalist society.<sup>69</sup> Rather, they strengthen it. Wars determine the power of countries in the market, delineating the geo-political assets which regulate the functioning of the capitalist world.<sup>70</sup> For this reason, as Espitallier suggests, in ‘Menace. Mieux faut prévenir...’, one of the poems in *En guerre*, as wars are necessary for the survival of the capitalist system, countries around the world invest millions of dollars in armies, even when the masses are starving.

In the capitalist world, countries are always ready to engage in military conflict due to the constant threat of war. Although Western countries have quite peaceful relationships between them, their relationships with the Eastern bloc are often in conflict. The two blocs constantly threaten each other with war.

Espitallier’s texts mock global governments for their belligerent tendencies and for doing anything in their power to create strong armies to deploy in case of emergency. To this end, he lists different weapons, animals, imaginary creatures, military groups of the past and present, as testified by this fragment.

Nous avons amassé des arbalétriers, des condottieri, des dragons, des commandos, nous avons amassé des centurions, des pandours, nous avons amassé des carlistes, des voltigeurs, des béret verts, des archers, nous avons

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<sup>69</sup> See: Jacques Fontanel, Jean-Paul Hebert, Ivan Samson, ‘The Birth of Political Economy or the Economy in the Heart of Politics: Mercantilism.’, *Defence and Peace Economics*, 19.5 (2008), 331-338 (p. 334 and p. 338); for the idea that war as an instrument to expand economic and territorial power, see: Robert Rollinat, ‘Le capitalisme, les crises, la guerre (II)’, *À l’encontre. La brèche*, 23 May 2020, <<http://alencontre.org/economie/le-capitalisme-les-crisis-la-guerre-ii.html>> [Accessed 24 July 2020].

<sup>70</sup> Fontanel, Hebert, Samson, p. 336.



amassé des skinheads, des apaches, des marsouins, nous pouvons compter sur les armagnacs, sur les forces spéciales, sur les cipayes, sur les evzones, nous comptons sur les SAS, sur les camisards, sur la police militaire [...].<sup>71</sup>

Espitallier's use of the list form is powerful; it creates a strong emotional effect on the reader. Listing different military groups of the past and present, such as for example 'la police militaire' and 'les camisards', as well as fearful fictional creatures such as 'les dragons', and animals that we do not recognise as violent, like 'les marsouins' strongly stresses the effort of governments to prepare and strengthen their armies even if there is no threat, revealing the irrationality of this practice. The idea that governments, seen as the tools used by capitalist society to maintain order, create a sense of threat and instability to justify their military expenses is also explored in 'Justification. L'axe du bien', another poem published in *En guerre*. As Espitallier observes, governments present war as a necessity to safeguard the social order from the evil forces that supposedly threaten it. Espitallier constructs the poem by assembling a series of fragments taken from George W. Bush's speech delivered on the 29th of January 2002 to justify his war programme against Al-Qaeda and any other country harbouring weapons of mass destruction.<sup>72</sup> Espitallier ironically describes Western countries as the 'axe du bien', and all the countries with a different social tradition as 'l'axe du mal'.<sup>73</sup> The expression 'axis of evil' was coined and used by Bush, during the speech above, to refer to Iraq, Iran and North Korea.<sup>74</sup> With this expression, the former American President accused the three countries of threatening the world by developing nuclear, chemical and biological weapons.<sup>75</sup>

Bush's speech was sharply criticised by all political factions, not only in the United States, but everywhere in the world. This is for four main reasons. First, when Bush delivered his speech, he did not know that Iran and North Korea were designing nuclear weapons. He accused them with no actual proof.<sup>76</sup> Secondly, none of these three countries had threatened or attacked the United States.<sup>77</sup> Thirdly, the three countries not only did not share the same socio-political programme but had even fought each other throughout the 1980s. As David Corn observes, 'an axis is an alliance of nations that coordinate their foreign and military policies'.<sup>78</sup> North Korea, Iran and Iraq do not fit this definition in any way. Fourth, Iranian forces had secretly cooperated with American intelligence to

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<sup>71</sup> Jean-Michel Espitallier, 'L'axe du bien', in 'En guerre', *Salle des machines : Poésie* (Paris: Flammarion, 2015), p. 133.

<sup>72</sup> Douglas Kellner, *From 9/11 to Terror War: The dangers of Bush legacy* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), p. 207.

<sup>73</sup> Espitallier, 'L'axe du bien', pp. 131-132.

<sup>74</sup> Patrick J. Buchanan, *Day of Reckoning: How Hubris, Ideology, and Greed Are Tearing America Apart* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2007), p. 37.

<sup>75</sup> Glen Segell, *Axis of Evil and Rogue States: The Bush Administration 2000-2004* (London: Glen Segell, 2005), p. 5.

<sup>76</sup> Patrick J. Buchanan, 37.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., p. 37.

<sup>78</sup> David Corn, *The lies of George W. Bush: Mastering the Politics of Deception* (New York: New York Three Rivers Press, 2003), p. 203.

fight Al-Qaeda.<sup>79</sup> Therefore, accusing Iran of being a threat to the world after its military forces had helped American intelligence to fight Al-Qaeda sounded very inappropriate. Bush chose this expression to achieve specific goals: to make people in the United States, and more generally, in the Western world, feel insecure in order to justify the war expenses accumulated by his government.

Espitallier uses the idea of the ‘axis of evil’ and ‘axis of good’, which he derives from the former, to mock the fact that capitalist society presents itself as the ‘good’ and any other non-capitalist socio-political formation as ‘evil’.

Nous sommes l'axe du bien. Nous faisons le bien et portons le bien au mal qui fait mal au bien. Nous sommes l'axe du bien. Nous sommes l'axe du bien en lutte contre le mal. Contre l'axe du mal. L'axe du mal fait le mal fait le mal où se trouve le bien. Nous sommes l'axe du bien en lutte contre le mal. L'axe du mal fait le mal au bien qui lutte contre le mal. Nous sommes les forces du bien pour le bien des forces du bien qui luttent afin de rétablir le bien de l'axe du mal.<sup>80</sup>

Although wars cause death and destruction and are undoubtedly something bad for humanity, capitalist society presents them as something good, as something necessary for its survival and the progression of humanity. Capitalist society circulates the idea that it is the best socio-political organisation and the only one able to make humanity progress and prosper.<sup>81</sup>

The idea that the capitalist order is the best possible and that war is necessary to safeguard it causes a mental blindness that prevents people from thinking rationally. In particular, as Espitallier suggests in ‘Make war not war’, another poem in *En guerre*, this mental blindness has two consequences. On the one hand, it prevents human beings from seeing and making sense of the warnings about the horrors of war in the form of the memorials and artworks that surrounds them (‘Pellicules, indices, petits récits. / Toujours là et toujours absente./ les films de René Vautier, la gare de l’Est, la *Jeanne-d’Arc* d’Heller, [...] une peinture de Zeno Diemer représentant deux zeppelins accrochés par des projecteurs sur les côtes anglaises en 1915 [...], les premiers témoignages du génocide des Khmers rouges, [...] les cris d’une femme, à la radio, après un attentat de l’OAS, la guerre du Liban à la télévision [...]).<sup>82</sup> On the other hand, as he also suggests in *Army*, it leads some people to sacrifice their lives to defending and imposing the capitalist order on countries that do not have a capitalist tradition and are not willing to adopt it.<sup>83</sup> *Army* is, in fact, the narrative of an

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<sup>79</sup> Corn, p. 203.

<sup>80</sup> Espitallier, ‘L’axe du bien’, p. 131.

<sup>81</sup> Lebowitz, *Build it Now*, p. 43; Fisher, p. 16.

<sup>82</sup> Jean-Michel Espitallier, ‘Make war not war’, in ‘En guerre’, *Salle des machines : Poésie* (Paris: Flammarion, 2015), p. 126.

<sup>83</sup> Jean-Michel Espitallier, *Army* (Paris: Al Dante, 2009), p. 32.

American soldier fighting for the colours of the first technological and financial power, which is to say America, which in the text stands as a metaphor for the capitalist order.<sup>84</sup>

As the following fragment reveals, the idea of the capitalist system as the best possible social organisation leads people to violate other people's rights, including their right to live, with harmful consequences on the whole social body.

Nous avons battu à mort un homme d'une quarantaine d'années parce qu'il était suspecté d'avoir ouvert sa maison à un groupe de snipers qui nous a mobilisés une partie de la matinée. Nous l'avons assaïonné à coups de pieds et de crosse pendant au moins dix minutes en l'insultant. Il n'a pas parlé. Il ne sait rien, n'était pas là quand les snipers, qui ont mystérieusement disparu, ont investi sa terrasse. Nous avons fini par le prendre en poids et volume et l'avons jeté dans la cour en contrebas. Sa femme nous regardait, terrorisée, en serrant sa petite fille dans ses bras. Nous lui avons posé la même question que nous avions posée au mari. Elle sanglotait et restait muette. Pour tenter de la faire parler, l'un de nos gars a donné une paire de gifles à la gamine, qui s'est mise à crier de plus belle.<sup>85</sup>

Capitalist society shapes a world full of horrors, where some people's lives are valued less than others. All this affects the psycho-physical well-being of society. War and violence desensitise or traumatise people, affecting their ability to think and live creatively and so conceive new and better worlds. However, poetry can help the world recover from the pain that war and violence inflict upon human thought. This will be the focus of the next section.

#### **4.2.2.2 *Army* and *En guerre*: a cure for war**

With *Army* and *En guerre*, Espitallier not only diagnoses the belligerent tendencies of capitalist disease and examines the relationship between war and capitalist system but also provides readers with a cure for the mental blindness that it causes. As in *De la Célébrité*, this cure consists in tracing a series of lines of flight able to deterritorialise the capitalist ideological apparatus, which is the actual cause of the militaristic tendencies of the contemporary world. Espitallier traces these lines of flight along very different paths in the two collections.

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<sup>84</sup> As the narrator explains: 'Je me bats pour les couleurs de la première puissance technologique et financière du monde' (*Ar*, p. 32).

<sup>85</sup> Espitallier, *Army*, p. 20.

In *Army*, Espitallier deterritorialises the capitalist ideological apparatus by turning two of the weapons used by capitalist society against it: standard language and the linear logic at the basis of the arborescent model of thinking. Contrary to what one may think, the major use of language and the adoption of the linear logic underlying the functioning of the capitalist order made by Espitallier do not reinforce its mode of functioning. Rather, they challenge it. This is because, as the following extracts show, the clarity of the text puts the reader directly in front of the materially and psychologically devastating effects that war has on human beings:

Dans la précipitation nous avons abattu une vieille femme et son mari que des gars avaient fait allonger sur le sol, mains sur la tête, juste avant que nous pénétrions dans la pièce.

Nous avons découvert une très jeune fille, terrorisée, blottie sous un canapé et nous l'avons sortie de là en la tirant par les cheveux avant de lui ligoter les poignets derrière le dos, de lui enfiler une cagoule sur la tête et de la charger sur un véhicule léger avec d'autres suspects ramassés dans le coin. [...]

La télé marchait encore et j'ai lâché une rafale dans l'écran.<sup>86</sup>

L'un d'eux a réussi à prendre la fuite mais nous l'avons serré dans une petite cour, il a jeté son arme, a levé les bras en criant et nous avons vidé nos chargeurs sur lui. Son corps sautait sous l'impact des balles qui faisaient gicler des gerbes de sang.<sup>87</sup>

Deux soldats ont été tués jeudi par l'explosion d'un engin explosif improvisé au passage de leur patrouille dans le sud de la ville, [...].<sup>88</sup>

In the first and second fragments, the speaking voice describes the violence he has committed. In the third fragment, he talks about the death of his friends. His violence and lack of empathy shocks the reader; it leads them to reflect on the role and effects of war on human beings, potentially making them change their way of thinking about the world and, from there, to start a molecular revolution. Espitallier's use of language in *Army* can be described with what Christophe Hanna conceives as a meta-usage of language, a linguistic strategy allowing the deconstruction of the dominant discourses without manipulating language. In *Nos dispositifs poétiques*, Hanna distinguishes between two possible ways poets can make use of language to release the revolutionary potential of poetry. The first use of language consists in the subversion of grammatical rules and enables the poet to resist the circulation of society's order and commands. The second, by contrast, consists in a normative use of language that enables poets to reveal and demystify the functioning of the capitalist system. As he writes:

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<sup>86</sup> Espitallier, *Army*, p. 14.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., pp. 20-21.

Il ne me semble pas très abusif de réduire l'éventail des attitudes critiques couramment adoptées à deux grands genres :

Position A : celles du rejet ou de la « résistance ». L'attitude poétique-critique consiste alors à réclamer ou à se réserver un usage autre, différant radicalement et continuellement des langages de pouvoir ; [...]

Position B : celles qui consistent à saisir des formes même des langages dominants pour en faire la matière première de l'écriture critique. Cette matière peut servir alors :

- d'objet d'analyse : les jeux de langage sont alors considérés comme un réservoir d'implicites idéologiques, et la poésie se pense comme reconstitution d'expérience langagière démystifiantes ;
- de matériau susceptible, moyennant certaines opérations pratiques, de déclencher une exploration cognitive d'un type neuf, occasion d'un renouvellement des formes de nos savoirs ou plutôt, de nos croyances.

Résumons ainsi : la position A, résistante, engage la pratique poétique dans l'élaboration d'un contre-usage, la position B, dans ce qui serait un méta-usage fondé sur l'activation, par redistribution des formes de certains usages ambiant, d'une dimension méta-critique ou « révélatrice ».<sup>89</sup>

Espitallier's use of language in *Army* fits comfortably with Hanna's description of the second use of language.

In *En guerre*, Espitallier takes two very different paths to attack the model of thinking at the basis of capitalist countries. Firstly, he deterritorialises the capitalist ideological apparatus by making use of black humour. Black humour enables him to reveal the ambiguities and irrationality at the basis of the belligerent tendencies of capitalist society and to provide the reader with a tool for treating the world from the mental blindness that it causes.

This is particularly evident in 'Opération « Bad Gag ». Comédie médicale' and 'Donald Rumsfeld est un artiste contemporain'. In the first poem, Espitallier mocks the American army for its capture and treatment of Saddam Hussein during the Baghdad mission. Although Western countries present themselves as bearers of peace, it is far from the truth. As the two fragments show, by imitating Western media rhetoric, Espitallier reveals and mocks the verbal violence and aggressive physical tendencies of Western countries, especially the United States.

Recherché par les polices du monde entier, Sadman, le destructeur massif [...]  
Bien. Si on l'attrape, c'est le peloton d'exécution, après un peu de justice  
légale, quand même, peloton d'exécuteurs ou injecteurs létaux, c'est comme  
vous voudrez, dans un endroit tenu secret, pur endroit de la mort avec quartier  
de la mort, couloir de la mort, salles idem. On imaginera, là-bas seulement en  
imagination – parce qu'on nous montrera que l'on ne peut rien voir -, de quoi

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<sup>89</sup> Christophe Hanna, *Nos dispositifs poétiques* (Mercuès: Questions théoriques: 2010), pp. 52-53.

faire passer la justice chimique, et comment : chaises à gaz, chambres toxiques, tables de dissections sur lesquelles seraient posées toutes sortes de choses.

[...] On l'attend là, bien sûr, pour lui régler son compte. C'est plutôt pour son bien. Et pour le nôtre. Et pour le bien du bien. Mais voilà, il ne vient pas. Jeu de cache-cache. C'est agaçant. On le menace. Au nom du bien. Il ne vient pas. Sur le terrain, c'est une autre paire de manches. Art de la guerre et choses militaires. [...] 44<sup>e</sup> aéroportée, 541<sup>e</sup> bataillon de maintenance du III<sup>e</sup> corps de soutien et de commandement [...] warrior.com [...] support our boys [...] Usarmy.com [...].<sup>90</sup>

Les amis de ses ennemis ont parlé. [...] Alors, en plein suspense, cette nouvelle : « Ladies and Gentlemen, we got him (Mesdames et Messieurs, nous le tenons). »

À Takaoka, cette nouvelle : « Ladies and Gentlemen, we got him. »

À Fort-Madison, cette nouvelle : « Ladies and Gentlemen, we got him. »

À Aileron, cette nouvelle : « Ladies and Gentlemen, we got him. »

[...] « Caught like a rat. » Sorti du trou. Il n'a pas fière allure. Un destructeur massif tout flagada. [...] L'Américain, de tradition, n'a pas de chance avec les barbes. Karl Marx barbu, Hô Chi Minh barbu (enfin, barbichu), Fidel Castro barbu, Ayatollah Khomeiny barbu, Oussama Ben Laden barbu. Avec les moustaches non plus d'ailleurs : Joseph Staline : moustache, Adolf Hitler : moustache, [...], même de Gaulle à un moment laissait courir sous son nez une fine traînée pileuse très Automobile Club, très chic en somme.<sup>91</sup>

Saddam Hussein is compared to a rat, and war is described as an art. All this suggests that, without defending or justifying Saddam Hussein's conduct, Western capitalist countries are no less violent than the Middle Eastern dictatorships they depict as the only source of evil in the world. Exactly like their Eastern enemies, Western countries defend their idea of good with unimaginable brutality and cruelty. In addition, their idea of good, that is to say of a world dominated by capitalism, is as debatable as that of a world dominated by the Islamic religion promoted by their enemies, due to the repression and subordination that both inflict. From a Deleuzo-Guattarian perspective, it can be argued that they are similar. Both capitalist countries and Islamic countries use the tree-like image of thought. The difference between them is in their socius; the socius of capitalist society is capital, whereas that of Islamic societies is God. However, it must be stressed that capitalism is now an international socio-political organisation. The capitalist process of social production includes all countries in the world, including Islamic countries. In Islamic countries, however, there seem to be two parallel processes of social-organisation: one developing around God as a socius and regulating social relations within national borders; the other developing around capital and regulating social relationships outside national borders. Islamic countries have a role in the capitalist system and contribute to its survival. They are necessary to capitalism to keep the tensions between countries or

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<sup>90</sup> Jean-Michel Espitalier, 'Opération « Bad Gag ». Opération médicale', in 'En guerre', pp. 136-137.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., pp. 139-140.

blocs of countries high and to constantly define the financial games and geo-political assets at an international level.

In the second poem, 'Donald Rumsfeld est un artiste contemporain', and partially in 'Mission Bad Gag', Espitallier mocks the spectacularisation of the violence committed by the American army during the Afghanistan and Iraq wars. In the first poem, Espitallier indirectly and ironically criticises the way the Western media have presented the picture taken by Nubar Alexanian of an American soldier taking an Iraqi prisoner on a leash as an artistic performance rather than fiercely denouncing the American army for disrespecting the Geneva Conventions.<sup>92</sup>



Figure 4. Nubar Alexanian, 'Untitled', in Richard Hall, 'US soldier who abused at Abu Ghraib refuses to apologise for her actions', *The Independent*, <<http://t.ly/Gvxa>> [accessed January 2019].

To this end, he ironically presents Donald Rumsfeld, who was the American Secretary of Defence from 2001 to 2006,<sup>93</sup> as a contemporary artist, the director of an artistic performance, and describes the picture in question through the description of a series of art performances representing very similar scenes.

« M. Donald Rumsfeld, vous faites un superbe travail. »

George W. Bush

<sup>92</sup> *Les conventions de Genève du 12 août 1949* (Genève: Comité Internationale de la Croix Rouge); However, the poem also denounces the conditions of young prostitutes in Bangkok and Manila comparing them to Auschwitz's prisoners.

<sup>93</sup> Rumsfeld played a crucial role in the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan. He is particularly famous for promoting the need to attack Iraq and for spreading fake news about the country, such as about Iraq designing weapons of mass destruction. The missions he led were a real failure. Not only did he take poor decisions, but he tried to cover up inconvenient facts, such as American soldiers using torture regardless of the interdiction established by Geneva convention. (See: Andrew Cockburn, *Rumsfeld: His Rise, Fall, and Catastrophic Legacy* (New York: Scribner, 2007); Rowan Scarborough, *Rumsfeld's war: The Untold Story of America's Anti-Terrorist Commander* (DC Washington: Regnery Publishing, 2003).

[...]

Ce matin, à la une des journaux, il y a un type en houppelande, cagoulé, les bras écartés, avec des bouts de fils de fer au bout des doigts, calme, comme sur le point d'esquisser un pas de danse. Il est juché sur une caisse qui est peut-être une caisse de la General Fruit, et ce type dans sa houppelande et sa cagoule en pointe fait penser à un brave gars de l'Arkansas. À part que la houppelande est en feutrine et que le type, c'est Joseph Beuys dans une reprise très légèrement remaniée de sa performance en 1974 : *I like America and America likes me*.

Ce matin, à la une des journaux, on voit un certain nombre de cagoules, pas mal de types avec des cagoules et je me dis que l'on est en train de rejouer l'installation de Gary Simmons intitulée *Klansboard*.

Ce matin, à la une des journaux du matin, il y a un type tenu en laisse par une petite brunette qui est presque encore une enfant et c'est sûrement Valie Export, l'artiste autrichienne qui a promené un homme en laisse dans les rues de Vienne il y a quelque temps.

Ce matin, les grands quotidiens du matin publient en une les photos des derniers préparatifs de la « dogy » performance de Oleg Kulik, enfermé nu dans une cellule, marchant à quatre pattes et montrant les dents.<sup>94</sup>

Something similar happens in 'Opération « Bad Gag ». Comédie médicale'. As the following fragments show, Espitallier mocks the spectacularisation of the capture of Saddam Hussein by describing it as if it were a movie and comparing him to an evil movie character:

Sadman, le destructeur massif mis en scène par les meilleurs cerveaux d'Hollywood et de l'American Pentagone, sorte de super Bourreau de Béthune chimiconucléaire (qu'on se rappelle : l'Ange blanc, Chéri Bibi, Bad Mask, Flesh Gordon, Lino Ventura, Cybernic Machine [...]).<sup>95</sup>

On le montre à la globale télévision, en prime time, matin, midi ou soir selon le fuseau horaire. La guerre comme vous ne l'avez jamais vécue. L'Américain, de tradition, est un reproducteur. « We got him » (Il est fini). Le marbre de ses palais posé sur les charniers. Tout le monde à la fête. Pas lui. On rase. Au second plan les faux blancs des villes américaines. Moteur ! Ouvrez la bouche. Quadrillage blanc dur. Ouvrez la bouche. Il avait des rêves de grandeur. Flash. Ouvrez la bouche. « Caught like a rat. » Moteur ! Rentrez tout en entier dans le portrait robot du destructeur massif mis en scène par les meilleurs cerveaux d'Hollywood et de l'American Pentagone [...].<sup>96</sup>

All this enables readers to become aware of the brutality of the capitalist world and how war and violence are represented in the media, potentially making them challenge the functioning of the capitalist order and to attempt to cure the world.

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<sup>94</sup> Jean-Michel Espitallier, 'Donald Rumsfeld est un artiste contemporain', in 'En guerre', pp. 145-146.

<sup>95</sup> Espitallier, 'Opération « Bad Gag ». Opération médicale', pp. 136.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., pp. 141-142.



On the other hand, Espitallier deterritorialises the capitalist ideological apparatus by building the collection as a *livre-rhizome*. *En guerre* is made up of very different poems. The rhizomatic logic that Espitallier follows to construct the collection fragments meaning, setting the conditions for the reader to rethink the world and to treat the capitalist disease. The rhizomatic logic at the basis of the collection and the fragmentation of meaning that it causes, in fact, oblige the reader to produce their own meaning to inaugurate new mental connections that potentially enable them to see the world differently.

#### **4.2.2.3 *Gasoil : Prises de Guerre* and *Le Théorème d’Espitallier : Poésie***

This subsection will analyse *Gasoil : Prises de guerre* and *Le Théorème d’Espitallier* to examine the role and conception of science in today’s society, to denounce the consequences of the use capitalist society has made of science, to suggest that this is symptomatic of the capitalist disease, and to offer the reader a cure.

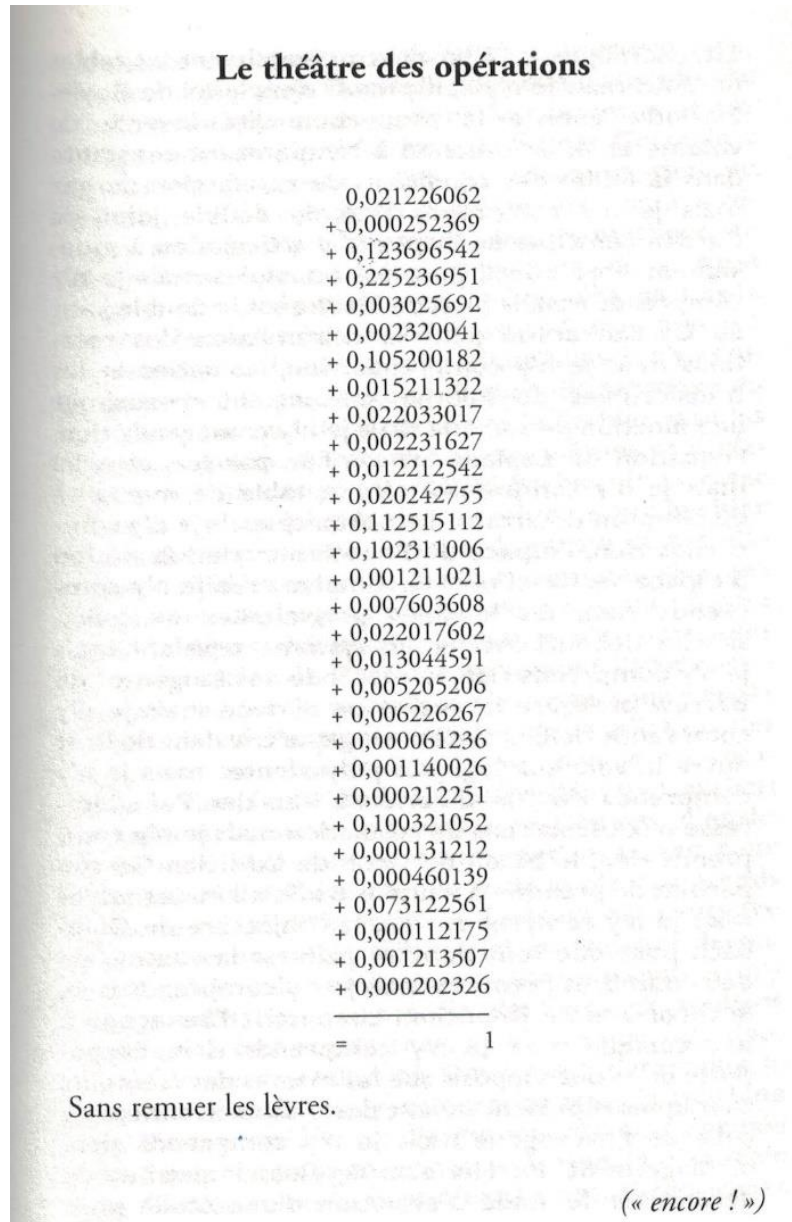
##### **4.2.2.3.1 *Le Théorème d’Espitallier*: The artificiality and arbitrariness of scientific disciplines**

Espitallier constructs *Le Théorème d’Espitallier* through the alternation of an interview between himself and a fictional character and a series of poems that interrupt the flow of the fictional interview. With *Le Théorème d’Espitallier*, Espitallier reveals the arbitrariness and artificiality of mathematics, and more generally of science, to mock the myth of objectivity in science that betrays a certain essentialism. Mainstream narrative considers science to be a means to objectively explain the things that compose the world, and more generally the universe, and mathematics as the linguistic code that scientific disciplines use to explain the phenomena that make up our world. As John M. Ziman observes in *Reliable Knowledge. An exploration of the Grounds for Belief in Science*, ‘the primary foundation for belief in science is the widespread impression that it is objective’.<sup>97</sup> At the basis of the

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<sup>97</sup> John M. Ziman, *Reliable Knowledge. An exploration of the Grounds for Belief in Science*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 107.

mainstream narrative is the idea that the things and phenomena that compose the world can be objectively described as they exist per sé, regardless of the meaning attributed to them by human groups. Espitallier reveals the arbitrariness of science and mathematics through a series of poems all entitled *Le théâtre des opérations*, which are composed of numbers rather than letters.



<sup>98</sup> Espitallier, *Le Théorème d'Espitallier : Poésie* (Paris: Flammarion, 2013), p. 67.

## Le théâtre des opérations

66966356556655485523  
25563900892513659228  
54793652154895630233  
20262789655452232221  
55698036320230289596  
48785239654102365895  
02306698542308962530  
14230055223659587485  
36952159583652158698  
78562256345295984875  
62233212547494566612  
32396584839652369200  
21258597367789625251  
52395136543769015356

-66966356556655485523  
25563900892513659228  
54793652154895630233  
20262789655452232221  
55698036320230289596  
48785239654102365895  
02306698542308962530  
14230055223659587485  
36952159583652158698  
78562256345295984875  
62233212547494566612  
32396584839652369200  
21258597367789625251  
52395136543769015356

= 0

Ils posent les totaux.

These poems express the idea that numbers are conventional signs invented by human beings to make sense of the world and are the minimum unit of the language of mathematics. In *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie ?*, Deleuze and Guattari argue that science is a mode of thinking about the world (*QP*, pp. 117-134). The two philosophers identify three modes of thinking: art, philosophy and science. (*QP*, p. 202) Each can be described as a particular way through which human beings confront chaos

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<sup>99</sup> Jean-Michel Espitalier, 'Le théâtre des opérations', in *Le Théorème d'Espitalier*, p. 86.

and make sense of it to actualise their world. As they explain, art, science and philosophy are three ways of extracting ‘l’ombre du « peuple à venir »’ (*QP*, p. 219) from chaos. As Deleuze and Guattari argue throughout *Qu’est-ce que la philosophie ?*, these three modes of thinking function very differently from each other (*QP*, p. 217). Art and philosophy orient thought and create difference. Science actualises and interprets the physical world:

*La science descend de la virtualité chaotique aux états de choses et corps qui l’actualisent. (QP, pp. 155-156)*

La science n’opère aucune unification du Référent, mais toutes sortes de bifurcations sur un plan de référence qui ne préexiste pas à ses détours ou à son tracé. C’est comme si la bifurcation allait chercher dans l’infini chaos du virtuel de nouvelles formes à actualiser, en opérant une sorte de potentialisation de la matière [...]. (*QP*, p. 123-124)

Les actes de référence sont des mouvements finis de la pensée par lesquels la science constitue ou modifie des états de choses et des corps. On peut dire aussi que l’homme historique opère de telles modifications, mais dans des conditions qui sont celles du vécu [...]. (*QP*, p. 138)

As witnessed by the invention of different mathematical notations and calculation systems, science can actualise and describe the physical world in an infinite number of ways.<sup>100</sup> This is because of the rhizomatic functioning of the brain, which enables thought to make sense of the formless chaotic matter in an infinite number of ways (*MP*, p. 24). As the poems of *Le théâtre des opérations* suggest, readers can solve the mathematical operations and agree with Espitallier on their results because they accept, as part of the community of mathematics users, the value of numbers. Numbers do not exist per se. They were not found somewhere in the world by human beings. Rather, they were invented;<sup>101</sup> the use people make of them, the way they appear, and the value they carry depend on the way they have been inscribed/coded. The relationship between numeric signs and numeric values is arbitrary; numeric signs and values are arbitrarily associated, just as linguistic signifiers are arbitrarily associated with the signified. The same happens with their rules of usage. As with grammatical rules, the use of numbers has arbitrarily been established by the community of users. To reinforce the idea of the arbitrariness of maths, and more generally of science, Espitallier writes a group of untitled poems that list the names of a series of scientists and mathematicians followed by the names of their theories and theorems.

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<sup>100</sup> See: Florian Cajori, *A history of Mathematical Notations*, 2 vols (New York: Dover Publication, 1993), I, pp. 1-70.

<sup>101</sup> See: Ekkehard Kopp, *Making up Numbers: A History of Invention in Mathematics* (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2020).

corps des nombres algébriques et inventent les idéaux mais je n'y comprends rien, le cercle d'Euler, les angles d'Euler, la droite d'Euler ont à voir avec la mécanique mais je n'y comprends rien, le raisonnement de Dedekind repose sur la théorie des ensembles mais je n'y comprends rien, les règles de Viète permettent l'extraction des racines mais je n'y comprends rien, la logistique spéculaire de Viète utilise les lettres mais je n'y comprends rien, la conjecture de Fermat est devenue théorème de Fermat mais je n'y comprends rien, le principe de Fermat est un principe de moindre action et mécanique mais je n'y comprends rien, l'expérience de Morley prouve qu'il n'existe pas d'espace absolu mais je n'y comprends rien (...).<sup>102</sup>

This list highlights the fact that the different theories and theorems mentioned have all been elaborated by a human being. They are a human invention, a human construction. Scientists and mathematicians are what Deleuze and Guattari call the 'observateur partiel' (*QP*, p. 129) which they define as a sort of impersonal eye able to partially observe and interpret the objects on their plane of reference. As they put it:

Pour comprendre ce que sont les observateurs partiels qui sont essaimés dans toutes les sciences et tous les systèmes de référence, il faut éviter de leur donner le rôle d'une limite de la connaissance, ou d'une subjectivité de l'énonciation. [...] Mais la perspective attache un observateur partiel comme un œil au sommet d'un cône, et dès lors saisit des contours sans saisir les reliefs ou la qualité de la surface qui renvoient à une autre position d'observateur. En règle générale, l'observateur n'est ni insuffisant ni subjectif [...]. Bref, le rôle d'un observateur partiel est de *percevoir* et d'*éprouver*, bien que ces perceptions et affections ne soient pas celles d'un homme, au sens couramment admis, mais appartiennent aux choses qu'il étudie. (*QP*, pp. 130-131)

These groups of poems suggest that science does not see physical phenomena for what they truly are. Rather, they interpret them.<sup>103</sup> The reason Espitallier reveals the artificiality and arbitrariness of mathematics, and more generally science, is to warn the reader of capitalist society's blind enthusiasm for both. Capitalist society values and celebrates mathematics, and science more generally, as the instruments that make technical and technological development possible. Capitalist society circulates the idea that human history is a march towards progress, and that this progress coincides with technical and technological advancements, which can only be made possible by the so-called hard sciences.<sup>104</sup> Technical and technological advancements, however, as Espitallier observes, have not always improved the living conditions of humanity. Rather, they have often

<sup>102</sup> Jean-Michel Espitallier, 'untitled', in *Le Théorème d'Espitallier*, p. 46.

<sup>103</sup> As the fragment suggests, this interpretation is often incomprehensible to people who do not know much about numbers and their applications in different scientific fields.

<sup>104</sup> Ricardo.J. Gómez, 'What Is This Thing Called Philosophy Of Technology?', in *History and Philosophy of Science and Technology*, ed. by Pablo Lorenzano, Hans-Jörg Rheinberger, Eduardo Ortiz and Carlos Delfino Galles (Oxford: Eolss Publishers, 2010), pp. 47-81 (p. 62).

threatened the life cycle of the living and non-living things inhabiting the world.<sup>105</sup> As he suggests throughout *Gasoil* and explains in an interview for *Geste*, the technological developments achieved by capitalist society have often been applied to the industrial or military fields with serious consequences for the health of the world.<sup>106</sup> Factories pollute the world and threaten the survival of animals and non-animals alike. Wars materially devastate the world and affect the psychological well-being of social actors.

The use of scientific disciplines is today subordinated to the needs of capital and is symptomatic of the capitalist disease that afflicts the world. By revealing their arbitrariness, *Le Théorème d'Espitallier* creates the conditions for readers to re-address their use and to see their social nature in order to begin challenging the myth of objectivity and the idea that science can make humanity progress and prosper.

#### **4.2.2.3.2 *Gasoil* : Prises de guerre: science and the destruction of the world.**

As Espitallier explains, *Gasoil* is constructed using the cut-up technique.<sup>107</sup> To put together the collection, he deconstructed and rhizomatically assembled a series of blocks of texts taken from a seminar about oil and the Mediterranean Sea written in the eighteenth century, a scientific treaty published in 1902, the script of *Shoa*, a book by Raoul Hilberg, on the persecution of European Jews, and *Les Bourreaux volontaires de Hitler. Les allemands ordinaires et l'Holocauste*, a book by Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, which investigates the role of ordinary people in the Holocaust. With this collection, Espitallier denounces the devastating effects that the unregulated use of science in the industrial field has on the world and stresses the responsibility of human beings to the planet. Espitallier structures his discourse as five sections. Each focuses on one of the consequences of the use of science by capitalist society on the plant and animal kingdoms.

The first section, 'Tout le monde sait', is a very sharp criticism of the fact that, in the capitalist system, people do not do anything to protect themselves or the rest of the world from the effects of

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<sup>105</sup> Jean Michel Espitallier, 'Une raffinerie la nuit est un objet de poésie : Entretien avec Jean-Michel Espitallier' interviewed by Jean-François Puff et Sylvain Prudhomme, in *Geste*, pp. 63-69, <<https://www.revue-geste.fr/articles/geste2/GESTE%2002%20-%20Assembler%20-%20Entretien%20Espitallier.pdf>> [Accessed 17 July 2020].

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., [online]; Espitallier also conveys this idea throughout *Gasoil*.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., [online].

the cult of science, even if they are aware of its impact. Human beings do little to actively prevent pollution and the destruction of the planet. Even if they all know that, as a society, they produce and use toxic substances that threaten their existence and that of the other living and non-living things, they often behave as if there was no danger. To explain this point, Espitallier lists a series of toxic substances followed with a short description, suggesting that even if everyone is aware of their impact on the environment, they ignore it.

Tout le monde sait  
que le  
chlorure de zinc  
tant à l'état sec qu'en  
dissolution  
même très étendue, se comporte, oui se comporte  
c'est cela  
dans beaucoup  
de cas  
de la même manière  
de la même manière que  
IIIIIIIIIIII'  
acide  
sulfurique.  
Tout le monde sait cela.  
(Mais encore...)  
Tout le monde sait que l'odeur des  
huiles d'oliVes  
est  
toute particulière ;  
que celle des  
huiles d'œillettes,  
d'amandes douces et amères  
de noisettes,  
de noix,  
de ricin  
est  
nulle;<sup>108</sup>

The second section, 'Rebondissement à personnages', is made of fourteen poems that describe the effects of some of the machines and substances that pollute the world. One of the sharpest poems of the section is 'Monsieur Davidson attaque Turin'. In 'Monsieur Davidson attaque Turin', Espitallier describes a fictional factory owner called Monsieur Davidson, who releases toxic substances from his factories all around the world, as a soldier attacking cities, regions, and States. The text clearly expresses the idea that factories produce the same devastating material effects on the world as wars; by releasing toxic substances, factories destroy extended geographic areas.

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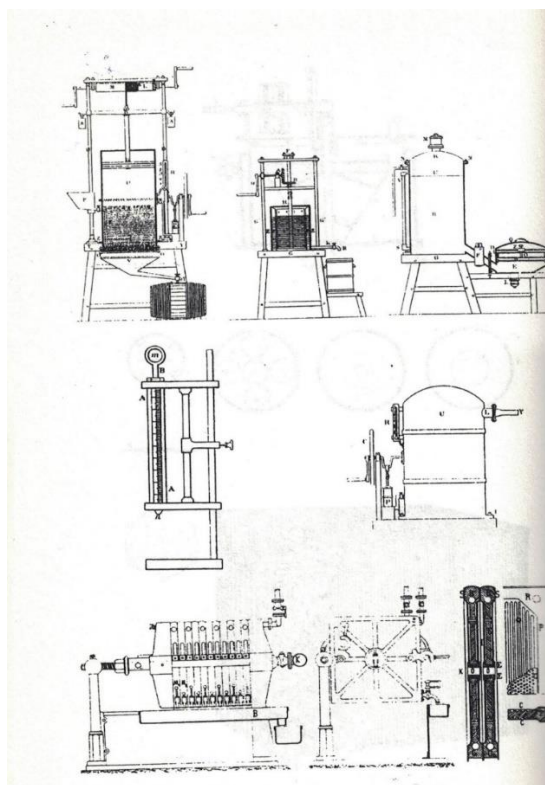
<sup>108</sup> Jean-Michel Espitallier, *Gasoil : Prises de guerre* (Paris: Flammarion, 2010), pp. 17-18. Henceforth, all references to this volume will occur in the text preceded by *GPG*.

Monsieur Davidson attaque Turin

et il envahit la Tunisie.

Il attaque la Gambie, il attaque l'Andalousie, Monsieur Davidson, et il inonde le département du Nord, il prend l'Épire, attaque la Calabre, il attaque la Catalogne, déverse des tonnes de produit sur Naples, attaque les ateliers, il attaque la Corse, attaque Édimbourg, il additionne Gênes à Bari [...]. (*GPG*, p. 67).

The third section, 'Appareil' reveals and denounces the fact that human beings are responsible for the destruction of the Earth. This section is composed of a series of drawings that testify to human efforts to create machines that devastate the planet, threatening their existence and that of living and non-living things.



*GPG*, p. 82.

The fourth section, 'Peintures', is composed of twelve poems that, as exemplified in the following extracts, describe the consequences of pollution on human beings.<sup>109</sup>

Villes funestes où fondent les matières  
Il est évident qu'il serait plus salubre d'extraire du lard ; on débarrasserait  
ainsi d'un grand inconvénient les habitants de beaucoup de villes où l'on fait

<sup>109</sup> In this section, there are also some poems that mock the solemnity of the scientific style by describing a series of objects, phenomena, or experimental procedures in a very unclear way.



fondre les matières [...] on les brûlerait entièrement et on n'empesterait plus les villes et les environs. (*GPG*, p. 89)

Silence, vol, mobilité

Tous les vases exposés au contact de l'air se recouvrent silencieusement d'une mince couche organique, résultant de la condensation à leur surface des produits de la respiration silencieuse de l'homme, des animaux et d'une foule d'impuretés provenant de la combustion, des matières minérales, végétales ou animales qui voltigent silencieusement dans l'air. (*GPG*, p. 91)

Dans les eaux boueuses du fleuve

Tissu, charbon, tourbe et schiste carbonisés, argile, carbonate de soude, coton, mousse, sable fin, plâtre, eau, sensation de vitesse, acide sulfurique, eau, alcali et vapeur d'eau, acide sulfurique, alcali et charbon, sel marin, chaux et vapeur d'eau, acide sulfurique, potasse, vapeur d'eau, noir animal, chlorure de chaux, soude, chaux et chlorure de chaux, acide sulfurique et air, éther, tanin et alcool, peroxyde et manganèse et sel marin, chien, acide sulfurique et courant électrique [...]. (*GPG*, p. 97)

The first and second extracts denounce the presence of fatbergs and toxic dust that contaminate water and air threatening people's health. The third denounces the presence of chemical substances, dead bodies of animals and fabrics in rivers with dangerous consequences for the environment and aquatic fauna. This section enables Espitallier to mock the idea of science as a tool that enables progress and prosperity.

The fifth and final section, 'VRAC (non point fugue mais fuite)', denounces the polluting effects of oils, which have dictated the main geo-political assets of the world in modern times and have contributed to the emergence of capitalist society. The section presents itself as a long list of the names of oils ending with a comparison between their effects and those of war.

c'est l'huile de colza, d'amandes, de citrouille, c'est l'huile de phoque, l'huile de tef cendré, c'est l'huile de palme, c'est l'huile de tabac, c'est l'huile de corossol, huile de vaseline, c'est l'huile de couenne, huile de sardines, de tourteaux d'olives, de lis, huile de dourah, [...], c'est l'huile d'acajou, de benzène, d'argémone, de cheval, c'est l'huile à graissage, [...], d'anthracite, huile de lard, [...], de polyol [...] c'est la guerre. (*GPG*, pp. 103-108).

The linguistic density of the list symbolises the suffocating feeling that oils cause. Although oils are among the most polluting substances ever invented, they are among the most common substances that human beings produce and use. There are different kinds of oils, and many of them, especially

those used for cosmetic purposes, which are the most popular, hide their destructive environmental effects behind their pleasant smell, consistency, and alleged benefits to health.<sup>110</sup>

All four sections can be read as a symptomatology of the mental blindness which capitalist society causes. Although human beings know the impact of toxic substances, they still ignore it. They continue to produce and release them into the environment, bringing themselves and the living and non-living things that inhabit the world closer to their end, day after day. With these texts, Espitallier does not urge society to abandon technology. Rather, he aims at warning the reader of the dangers arising from the application of science that we make in the industrial field. Capitalist society makes people believe that a different use of science is impossible. This is because, as authors such as Daniel Tanturo explain, with a different application of science in the industrial field, capitalism would end.<sup>111</sup> A more ecological application of science would limit the unregulated production of capital, challenging the functioning of the capitalist system. Capitalism and ecology, he explains, are antithetic.<sup>112</sup> Capitalism is not and cannot be green.<sup>113</sup> By revealing the issues caused by the cult of science, Espitallier activates the reader's social awareness and potentially sets the conditions for them to rethink its role.

#### 4.2.2.3.3 Remedies for the cult of science

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<sup>110</sup> The title of the poem seems revelatory of the political potential of the poem. Although its meaning is not very clear and can therefore lend itself to different interpretations, in light of the content of the poem, it can be read as an attempt to suggest that the poem can activate the reader's ecological awareness. The word 'vrac' has different meanings. One of these is 'sans ordre' ('Vrac', *Centre National de Ressources Textuelles et Lexicales*, <[shorturl.at/vAV34](http://shorturl.at/vAV34)> [Accessed 28 August 2022]). The lack of order conveyed by this term can metaphorically refer to the text, which has a rhizomatic functioning; it is a long list lacking logical connections. Espitallier explains that 'vrac' is not a 'point de fugue mais fuite'. The term 'fugue' indicates the 'action de partir momentanément quelque part', whereas the term 'fuite' the 'comportement par lequel un individu s'éloigne d'un stimulus ou d'une situation actuellement nocifs (échappement), ou dont l'individu à précédemment appris la nocivité (évitement)'. ('fugue', in *Dictionnaire Larousse*, <[shorturl.at/ilu38](http://shorturl.at/ilu38)> [Accessed 12 August 2022] ; 'fuite', in *Dictionnaire Larousse*, <<https://www.larousse.fr/dictionnaires/francais/fuite/35506>> [Accessed 12 August 2022]. Vrac (non point de fugue mais fuite)' is about oils and its destructive effects on the environment. The idea that the poem is a point of 'fuite' indirectly suggests that the poem can reveal something about which the reader may not have been previously aware of and lead them to change their attitude, in particular relating to the effects of oils on the environment. The title of the poem may therefore indirectly suggest that the poem can activate the reader's ecological awareness and prompt them change their way of thinking about and their use of oils.

<sup>111</sup> Daniel Tanturo, 'L'impossible capitalisme vert', interviewed by *Débat*, January 2019, pp. 162, <[http://www.denknetz.ch/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Tanuro\\_impossible\\_capitalisme\\_vert.pdf](http://www.denknetz.ch/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Tanuro_impossible_capitalisme_vert.pdf)> [Accessed 14 July 2020].

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., p. 162.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., pp. 162-163.

To offer a contrast to the effects of the capitalist society's use of science, Espitallier not only reveals its social nature and denounces the responsibilities of human beings, showing science under a new light that can reactivate the social awareness of readers, but he also challenges the arborescent model of thinking at the basis of the capitalist system. To this end, Espitallier takes two main paths. First, he builds both *Le Théorème d'Espitallier* and *Gasoil* as two rhizomatic texts. This enables him to circulate a rhizomatic logic that can show readers the world from anti-binary logic. Second, he deterritorialises language. In *Gasoil*, Espitallier makes the first use of language described by Hanna in *Nos dispositifs poétiques*. As the following extract shows, Espitallier manipulates the semantics and syntax of Standard French.

Il ne faut pas  
Voilà pas trop  
Attacher trop  
Trop d'importance pas cela  
Il ne faut pas trop d'importance et pas cela  
Désagréable  
Trop cela (*GPG*, p. 20)

This enables Espitallier to deconstruct meaning and linearity, challenging his readers' cognitive habits and potentially forcing them to think about how they usually make sense of texts, and of the world more generally. The lack of a well-defined meaning has the potential to, to use Schaffner's explanation of the deconstruction of language by Dadaist poets who, like Espitallier, worked on language to produce cognitive effects on readers, 'shock them out of their complacency and accepted cognitive frameworks and aspire to make them reflect anew upon convention and tradition and social agreement on all levels.'<sup>114</sup> The lack of linearity disorients the reader and can make them reflect upon this disorientation, their cognitive framework and its relationship to the process of meaning-making.

In *Le Théorème d'Espitallier*, in contrast, as the following fragment suggests, Espitallier manipulates language by taking the rational logic at the basis of scientific disciplines at its extreme.

363 moutons qui sautent, 364 moutons qui sautent, 365 moutons qui sautent,  
366 moutons qui sautent, 367 moutons qui sautent, 368 moutons qui sautent,  
369 moutons qui sautent, 370 moutons qui sautent, 371 moutons qui sautent,  
372 moutons qui sautent, 373 moutons qui sautent, 374 moutons qui sautent.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Schaffner, pp. 39.

<sup>115</sup> Espitallier, 'untitled', in *Le théorème d'Espitallier*, p. 65.

The 'approche hyperlogique'<sup>116</sup> at the basis of the text challenges meaning; it enables Espitallier to create a text 'totalement irrationnel' capable of revealing the limits of logic and reason and indirectly warning of the effects of the pre-conceived mainstream idea in Western societies that what is rational is also meaningful. As proved by the extract, what is rational is not necessarily meaningful. This can potentially interfere with the way readers think and perceive logic, reason, and scientific disciplines, making them reflect on their role and on the effects that they produce.

## Summary

This chapter examined selected texts by Jean-Michel Espitallier as a third example of twenty-first century rhizomatic poetry. Considered from a Deleuzian perspective, Espitallier's texts can be seen to be an enterprise of health against the capitalist disease. Espitallier's poetry is underpinned, in fact, by Deleuze's idea of society as a disease that affects human beings and the world by crystallising thought and of literature as a remedy to cure it. As Deleuze suggests in *Critique et Clinique*, the actualisation of society arrests the creative flow of thought, making it think of chaotic matter always in the same way. This is because the image of thought that human beings shape to unfold their thought collectively and to define the way order must be created traps their thought in rigid mental pathways that condemn it to unfold itself always in the same way according to the logic at its basis. For Deleuze, the inability of thought to unfold itself creatively is an actual disease that can be treated with literature. As he explains in *Critique et Clinique*, literature can prompt thought to make new connections between singularities in chaos, freeing it from the ideological impositions of society and therefore treating the disease of society that infects thought and the world. Espitallier's poetry does precisely this. It triggers a process of deterritorialisation that can lead the reader to think according to the logic of multiplicity, heterogeneity and connection against the mental impositions of the capitalist system. This provides the reader with a tool to diagnose and treat the capitalist disease.

Throughout the analysis, it was observed that each poetry collection has its own characteristics and diagnoses and cures the capitalist disease differently. *Z5* traces an aetiology of the social disease and a genealogy of the capitalist disease. It shows that society is a social construct that originates in

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<sup>116</sup> Espitallier, 'Jean-Michel Espitallier et « la fascination infinie pour le langage »' [online].

the human mind, proving to the reader that human beings are responsible for the functioning of society and its survival and that, by changing their mode of thinking, they can treat the disease and change the world. *Tourner en rond* provides the reader with a general description of the capitalist disease presented as a disease of control that progresses through the devices of control shaped by human beings in late capitalism and highlights the possibility for human beings to treat this disease by changing their mode of thinking, just like Z5. *De la célébrité*, *Army*, *En guerre*, *Gasoil*, and *Le Théorème d'Espitallier* examine celebrity culture, war, and the myth of science at the basis of the capitalist order as symptoms of the capitalist disease, and they trace a series of lines of flight to free the reader's thought from the constraints of capitalism. In order to trace these lines of flight, Espitallier follows different paths: he pushes to its extreme the rational logic at the basis of the hierarchical, tree-like image of thought that regulates the capitalist socio-political organisation to sabotage it from inside, he gives his texts a rhizomatic functioning to circulate an alternative logic to that of capitalist society, he plays with language to interfere with the transmission of capitalist system's order and commands, and he uses humour to create distance between readers and the way they think.

# Chapter 5

## *Java*

This chapter is on *Java*, the literary magazine founded by Sivan and Espitallier in 1989 and directed in collaboration with Maestri until 2006. Over 17 years of editorial activity, Espitallier, Maestri and Sivan issued 28 volumes and published more than 60 authors.

This chapter fulfils two goals: it fills a gap in the knowledge about the editorial experience of these three authors, and it expands the discourse on contemporary rhizomatic poetry and its revolutionary character by looking at the work of some of the poets that they published. With *Java*, Espitallier, Maestri and Sivan constructed an experimental site that proposed new modes of writing, reading and thinking about poetry, and of literature more generally. As Espitallier and Maestri suggest:

Notre conception de la revue c'était : proposer des textes qui ouvrent les portes et les fenêtres. De nouvelles écritures, de nouvelles relectures. Pour que le mot poésie soit à nouveau proche de Dada, de Raymond Roussel, des objectivistes...et des propositions de petites machines poétiques actuelles. C'était un laboratoire pour tous les écrivains qui ont participé à cette aventure.<sup>1</sup>

Je crois que *Java* a donné des outils à la génération suivante, une façon de repenser la poésie, la littérature et ses heureux débordements (poésie sonore, performance, etc.).<sup>2</sup>

With *Java*, Espitallier, Maestri and Sivan challenged the tradition of literary magazines. Historically, literary magazines were created by specific artistic schools or groups to develop their shared literary projects and institutionalise their existence. Espitallier, Maestri and Sivan did not identify themselves as part of a school or group, nor did the authors they published. The editorial board of *Java* and the authors published did not share a literary project. Each had their own, which they developed through personal stylistic strategies. Espitallier, Maestri, and Sivan gave the authors they published the chance to use the magazine to explore their own artistic path and to open up the texts of the past to new readings through their decontextualisation and disconnection from dominant interpretations.

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<sup>1</sup> Vannina Maestri, 'Interview with Vannina Maestri', by Dalila Villella (email correspondence, 31 October 2020).

<sup>2</sup> Jean-Michel Espitallier, 'Interview with Jean-Michel Espitallier', by Dalila Villella (email correspondence, 13 November 2020).

This enabled Espitallier, Maestri, and Sivan to put together a less dogmatic magazine than their predecessors, which is to say avant-gardists. In this regard, Espitallier writes:

Nous avons [aussi] ouvert un espace moins dogmatique que les revues de nos aînées, en jouant davantage sur des effets de légèreté, de surface. Avec cette notion d'inachevé de work in progress (la revue comme récit en devenir, de petites machines désirantes en confrontation, osmose, porosité, parfois collision, les uns avec les autres.)<sup>3</sup>

Each volume was the assemblage of a series of heterogeneous literary machines belonging to different fields. *Java* bridges different genres, epochs, and national traditions, deconstructing any kind of classification. Although the magazine was free from the rigid conditioning of any school or group, it had precise political goals: to fight capitalist society. As Espitallier suggests in an interview for *Gestes*, the fact that each volume was constructed as a heterogeneous machine was not accidental. Rather, it had a precise aesthetico-political objective.<sup>4</sup> By putting together each volume of *Java* through the combination of heterogeneous texts, Espitallier, Maestri and Sivan shaped an 'objet rhizomatique'<sup>5</sup>, an instrument able to interfere with the functioning of the capitalist system without imposing nor circulating any specific idea of society or way of thinking. *Java*'s rhizomatic nature creates the chaotic conditions necessary for the reader to deconstruct the image of thought at the basis of capitalist society and interfere with the process through which it is shaped. Each volume of *Java* can be seen as an independent rhizomatic machine and as the component of a bigger machine, *Java*, conceived as the totality of the different volumes issued with this title.

Although each volume has its own cover, structure, and themes, it is possible to identify some common connective threads between them. *Java*'s authors all share the same deconstructionist tendencies, the same conception of language as a material substance, and the same idea of poetry as a device able to operate on the real. This is because, as Maestri observes, the poets gravitating around *Java* were directly or indirectly influenced by Deleuze.<sup>6</sup> With regards to those authors who were active before the Deleuzo-Guattarian philosophical apparatus was elaborated, it is easy to observe that they all had the same pre-deconstructionist tendencies and shared, with Deleuze, some of his influences. One example is Carlo Emilio Gadda, to whom the editorial board dedicated a whole volume. Carlo Emilio Gadda's poetics of *groviglio* was inspired by Leibniz, also a reference for Deleuze, who even wrote a book about him, *Le Pli. Leibniz et le Baroque*.

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<sup>3</sup> Jean-Michel Espitallier, 'Interview with Jean-Michel Espitallier'.

<sup>4</sup> 'Ce qui nous intéressait dans la revue, c'était justement d'inviter ou d'importer dans une revue, qui a priori était une revue de poésie, des formes, des vocabulaires esthétiques et des genres contigus ou connexes. Ça, c'était déjà un parti pris esthétique.' (Jean-Michel Espitallier, in 'Une raffinerie la nuit est un objet de poésie', p. 68)).

<sup>5</sup> Jean-Michel Espitallier, 'Interview with Jean-Michel Espitallier'.

<sup>6</sup> 'Je crois qu'on parlait tous de Deleuze.' (Vannina Maestri, in Nathalie Wourm, *Poètes Français du 21<sup>ème</sup> siècle*, p. 108.

To introduce *Java* and explain its political potential, this chapter is divided into four parts. The first part analyses some of the theoretical reflections on poetry developed in the magazine. The purpose is to explain the idea of poetry as a machine able to act on the shape and functioning of the world as embodied in the magazine and to talk about the poetics of two French contemporary poets, Christophe Hanna and Jérôme Game.

The second part seeks to expand the discourse on rhizomatic poetry beyond French borders and to highlight the connections between literatures and authors across different countries by analysing the section dedicated to Swiss poet Lorenzo Menoud published in 2005-2006 in *Java* n° 27-28.

The third part analyses two dossiers published in 1995 in *Java* n° 13. The first focuses on the cut-up technique, one of the most popular techniques used by contemporary French and foreign authors to construct their texts. The second focuses on Olivier Cadiot, one of the most important personalities in the contemporary French literary panorama, considered to be the master of the cut-up technique. The aim of this part is to clarify the political potential of the cut-up technique, which can be used as a political instrument to deconstruct meaning, and, therefore, produce the chaotic conditions to rethink the world.

The fourth and last part of this chapter examines some of the texts and literary strategies presented in the anthologised sections of *Java*: ‘Attention travaux !’ and ‘Textes’. It focuses in particular on the ‘Attention travaux !’ section of volume n° 23-24, dedicated to Sylvain Courtoux, Philippe Boissard and Jérôme Bertin, and on two texts respectively by Jérôme Game and Christophe Fiat, published in the ‘Textes’ section of volume n° 27-28 and n° 21-22.

The ‘Attention travaux !’ and ‘Textes’ sections both functioned as experimental sites for emerging French and foreign poets to fully or partially publish their unpublished or recently published works. The goal of this part is to further develop the discourse on twenty-first-century French rhizomatic poetry and its potential to challenge the logic that regulates the functioning of the capitalist world.

## **5.1 *Java* and the theoretical reflection on poetry**

This section is about two of the theoretical texts proposed in *Java*, ‘Poésie Pensante’ by Jérôme Game, published in volume n° 21-22 (2001) and ‘Notions de « textes »’ by Christophe Hanna, published in volume n° 27-28 (2005–2006).



Both texts highlight the political potential of poetry as a machine able to act on the world and change its shape.

### 5.1.1 Jérôme Game: ‘Poésie pensante’

Jérôme Game is one of the most influential contemporary poets in France. Author of more than 26 artworks, he has experimented with different genres: written poetry, sound poetry, video poetry, novels, essays and plays.<sup>7</sup>

In ‘Poésie Pensante’, Game reflects on the relationship between poetry and thought and discusses the effects that poetry can have on the functioning of society. In his essay, Game distinguishes between two kinds of poetry that can be called ‘non-thinking poetry’ and ‘thinking poetry’ based on the effects that poetry can produce on thought. As Game suggests, non-thinking poetry has a very long tradition and has taken different shapes across the centuries, such as lyricism, literalism and textualism: ‘Cette poésie prend tantôt la forme d’un certain lyrisme, tantôt celle d’un certain littéralisme, tantôt celle d’une certaine “blancheur” ou d’un certain textualisme ou de ce que l’on voudra. [...] cette poésie perpétue l’écrasante majorité de la poésie depuis l’apparition du poétique, depuis l’injonction d’Aristote à qui elle s’est soumise [...]’.<sup>8</sup> Game defines non-thinking poetry as ‘une impuissance faite texte’ (*GPP*, p. 25). Non-thinking poetry does not think the new. Rather, it imitates the world by circulating ideas that have already been thought, that is to say ideas at the basis of society, reinforcing its functioning. As Game puts it, non-thinking poetry ‘mime, elle ne pense pas ; au mieux, elle *communique* de la pensée déjà pensée, faisant alors œuvre d’utilité publique, comprendre : dans l’intérêt public de quelques-uns : ceux dont “la pensée” *doit* être perpétuée, et qui, pour se faire, est parvenue à s’officialiser en “nature”, en évidence, en im-pensé /im-re-pensable/ problématisable’ (*GPP*, p. 26). Since its first elaboration, which can be traced back to the ancient world, non-thinking poetry has traditionally been used as an instrument to maintain the order of society and strengthen its ideological apparatus. Non-thinking poetry can be identified, from a Deleuzo-Guattarian perspective, with major literature and the root-book. As Game observes, non-thinking poetry denies the role of thought in its construction to hide its political implications. It presents itself as something originating from the subject: ‘Ces textes ne pensent pas en ce qu’ils

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<sup>7</sup> Jérôme Game, ‘Jérôme Game’, <<http://www.jeromegame.com/>> [Accessed 19 September 2020].

<sup>8</sup> Jérôme Game, ‘Poésie Pensante’, *Java*, 21-22 (2001), 24-39 (pp. 25-26). Henceforth, all references to this volume will occur in the text preceded by *GPP*.

ignorent le complexe qui les constitue au profit d’une “intégrité” et d’“une spontanéité” – fût-ce de leur propre “négativité” ou “matérialité” – revenant à une assomption de la subjectivité de leur “source” : le naïf “moi” parlant et ses épigones : le “ça” personnifié, fétichisé, essentialisé, et finalement, re-subjectivisé’ (*GPP*, p. 25). In non-thinking poetry, the subjectivity of the author is used by society to reproduce and circulate its modes of thinking; it is used as a medium through which society creates an apparatus to reinforce its image of thought. ‘Dans ces conditions, il ne saurait y avoir de la pensée comme création, mais seulement des copies représentant l’idée *via* une subjectivité conçue comme courroie de transmission de cet absolu, et se déployant par successions dans une temporalité chronologique – c’est-à-dire s’assurant “étape” après “étape” que le bon choix, que la bonne copie, sont faits [...]’ (*GPP*, p. 27-28).

Thinking poetry, which can be conceived in terms of minor poetry and rhizomatic poetry as discussed in the introduction and Chapter 1, is scandalous, risky and subversive (*GPP*, p. 26). As Game puts it: ‘Pour elle [poésie non-pensante], logiquement, la poésie pensante est un scandale, un risque, une subversion compromettant la stabilité de la “nature” des choses, transgressant soudain la classification suprême séparant la *forme* du *fond* : à toi le contenu, à moi le contenant, à toi le sujet, à moi la façon, et tout “ça” (sic) sera mélangé (?) en œuvre [...]’ (*GPP*, p. 26). Thinking poetry subverts the state of affairs. It has the potential to create the chaotic conditions to rethink the world through the deconstruction of standard languages. By deconstructing standard languages, thinking poetry unmasks the mystification of the dominant order and activates a deterritorialising movement that opens up the way to new combinations of the matter of the world (*GPP*, p. 28-32). Thinking poetry free words from the meanings given to them by society, affecting the circulation of its order and commands and freeing the reader’s mind from its conditioning. For its immanent revolutionary character, as Game suggests, thinking poetry can be used as a political instrument to engage in the fight against capitalist society. Thinking poetry enables us to ‘fissurer, percer, défaire les gigantesques machines idéologiques de répression constitutive du molaire’ (*GPP*, p. 36). Like minor and rhizomatic poetry, thinking poetry joins together with the other machines that structure society, interfering with their functioning and setting the conditions for their reconfiguration. Thinking poetry can be easily identified with the texts analysed in this thesis, as they all aim to subvert the order of things.

Game’s essay equips its readers with an alternative interpretative key to read poetry based on how thought unfolds itself. In poetry, as in the case of non-thinking poetry, thought can reproduce the logic at the basis of society, reinforcing its functioning and modes of thinking, or, as in the case of thinking poetry, it can challenge the logic at the basis of society, activating a deterritorialising movement capable of overthrowing the established order. ‘Poésie pensante’ proves itself to be a

suitable instrument to make sense of the poems in *Java*, which have a highly deterritorialising potential and can, therefore, be considered as examples of thinking poetry. The essay highlights how the political potential of poetry lies in the way thought unfolds itself, directly connecting poetry to society. Influenced by Deleuze and Guattari's literary criticism, with 'Poésie pensante', Game further develops a theoretical reflection on the nature of poetry that aims to re-evaluate poetry against the aestheticising conceptions that, for centuries, have reduced it to a verbal object unable to make any difference to the socio-political organisation of the world.

### 5.1.2 Christophe Hanna: 'Notions de « textes »'

In 'Notions de « textes »', Hanna proposes an alternative model of conceiving poetic texts, or literary texts more generally, based on their immanent political potential. By taking into account the evolution of the notion of text, which changes throughout time in relation to the aesthetic and political context, Hanna classifies poetic texts into three categories, 'type 1', 'type 2' and 'type 3'.<sup>9</sup> Each type, as Hanna explains, represents a specific way of perceiving, reading and writing a literary text: '« Les trois types concernent la même réalité matérielle! » Pourrait bien dire un matérialiste : le même genre de traces. Oui, mais ils ne concernent pas du tout la même substance : disons que les trois types peuvent être trois manières différentes de percevoir (et de lire) une même chose, et encore trois manières de transformer les actes d'écriture' (*NT*, pp. 218-219).

Hanna identifies type 1 texts with classical texts. As he explains: 'Le type 1 est à coup sûr le type dominant, cela pour plusieurs raisons : il est relativement le plus ancien, le plus fréquent et le plus institué: il renvoie à un usage premier, intuitif de la réalité-texte.' (*NT*, p. 218) Type 1 texts are the more ancient, dominant and institutionalised; they include all texts which imitate the world. Type 1 texts configure themselves as 'une unité articulée close', a static combination of signs which convey a precise meaning: 'Un texte du type 1 est un écrit au sens sémiologique du terme: c'est avant tout une combinaison statique de signes (ou la forme) fixe une signification [...]' (*NT*, p. 219). Type 1 texts have the same linear development as the hierarchical, tree-like image of thought which has regulated the functioning of Western society since ancient times and is at the basis of the capitalist system today. This type of text expresses both the idea that literature must be made up of a language

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<sup>9</sup> Christophe Hanna, 'Notion de « textes »', *Java*, 27-28 (2005-2006), 217-221 (p. 218). Henceforth, all references to this volume will occur in the text preceded by *NT*.

that makes communication amongst individuals possible and that it must be constructed as a coherent system responding to specific structural rules:

La forme du texte-1 est solidaire de deux idéologies :

- celle de La Langue : l'idée qu'il existe une Langue dans laquelle on s'entend bien, que l'auteur du texte maîtrise et sur laquelle on peut s'accorder à l'usage (1a). Cette langue est la première substance du texte-1 ;
- celle (quand il s'agit d'art) de La Littérature comme système et comme essence : ce qui confère une lisibilité artistique au texte-1 c'est la relation, plus ou moins directe et observable, qui l'affecte à un genre littéraire typique (1-b). Cette relation gouverne ce à quoi le lecteur-1 est sensible dans le texte-1, ce qui va en déterminer sa lecture. (NT, p. 219)

These two ideas have a specific political goal: to equip type 1 texts with a territorialising power able to reinforce society's structure. Just like the *littérature majeure* and *livre-racine*, type 1 texts use their language and structure to express and spread the logic at the basis of society. Their language circulates the order and commands of society. Their structure prompts readers to think according to the linear development of the hierarchical, tree-like image of thought that has regulated the functioning of society since ancient times and is at the basis of international socio-political organisation today.

In order to camouflage their political implications, type 1 texts present the subject as their source and the unifying force that homogenises them in all of their parts, reinforcing the essentialist conception of literature as the expression of the author's inner world (NT, p. 219).

Hanna identifies type 2 texts with modern literature and the experimental texts of the 1960s and 1970s (NT, pp. 218-219). As he explains, type 2 texts configure themselves as 'un travail jamais fini', which offers 'une vision dynamique du texte', from the tension created by the subject, which releases both a territorialising and a deterritorialising power (NT, p. 219). Although, as in type 1 texts, the subject is presented as their source, reinforcing the essentialist ideology at the basis of Western societies since ancient times, it does not unify nor homogenise the enunciation as in type 1 texts. Rather, it fragments it. In type 2 texts, in addition to serving as the source of the text, the subject also serves as the manipulative force able to interfere with the circulation of some of the order and commands of society through the deterritorialisation of language. As Hanna observes: 'La pratique du texte-2 apparaît, par rapport à l'idéologie scolaire de La Langue, plutôt transgressive' (NT, p. 219). Type 2 texts deterritorialise language, deconstructing the meaning associated with words by society. The language of type 2 texts does not convey any fixed vision of the world. Rather, it provokes thought to produce ever new meanings for words that can somehow challenge the functioning of society. For both its territorialising and deterritorialising potential, type 2 texts can be seen as what Deleuze and Guattari call the *livre-radicelle*, which they describe as a machine that shows the traits of both the *livre-racine* and the *livre-rhizome*.

The third and last type of text that Hanna describes is type 3, which he identifies with what Jean-Marie Gleize calls *post-poésie* (NT, p. 218). Type 3 texts bridge different artistic genres, configuring themselves as rhizomes, heterogeneous assemblages of different materials:

Un texte-3 est bricolé dans l'attente d'effets résultant d'une interaction ténue entre les différents types de langages (verbaux, mais aussi picturaux, sonores) et le contexte d'implantation : champ littéraire artistique ou non, champs médiatiques, espaces urbains. Raison pourquoi la plupart des textes-3 actuels ressemblent à des dispositifs constitués de matériaux hétérogènes [...]. (NT, p. 220).

Type 3 texts result from the manipulation of different semiotic signs with the aim of challenging our modes of thinking and to open the way to new ones. As Hanna suggests, type 3 texts function as viruses hacking our brains:

Un texte-3 n'est pas confectionné artisanalement par son auteur, il n'est pas non plus le débat d'un sujet dans la langue, il serait plutôt le fruit d'une manipulation selon un protocole objectivable [...] à vertu révélatrice : un texte-3 est une sorte de bug cognitivement profitable : un arrêt du fonctionnement qui serait encore un arrêt sur le fonctionnement. (NT, p. 220)

Type 3 texts deterritorialise the reader's image of thought. They produce the chaotic mental conditions necessary for readers to produce new ways of imagining and experiencing the world. Type 3 texts do not produce meaning nor convey precise messages; rather, they offer readers the possibility of sensing the world in new and unexpected ways to activate new synaptic connections that can make them think of the world differently: '[...] un texte-3 offre plutôt l'expérience d'une sensation (cognitive-révélatrice) que celle d'un sens. [...] les dispositifs textuels de type 3 font sensationnellement affleurer à notre conscience certaines lois locales régulant la constitution et le mouvement de nos représentations' (NT, p. 221). For this reason, as Hanna suggests, reading type 3 texts is not an interpretative process; it is a cognitive process of constructing new mental schemes that can potentially affect the way readers perceive the world (NT, pp. 220-221). Like Game, Hanna provides an alternative key to understanding and reading texts according to the political potential of their aesthetic features and use of the subject. Although Hanna identifies type 2 texts with modern literature and experimental texts of the Sixties and Seventies and type 3 texts with *post-poésie*, he does not refer to any specific book or author.

## 5.2 Foreign authors

This section explores the theoretical reflection of Lorenzo Menoud and some of his poems to provide with an example of a section dedicated to foreign authors. As briefly mentioned in the introduction of this chapter, *Java* was not only open to French contemporary authors but also to foreign ones. Lorenzo Menoud is one of them.

### 5.2.1 Lorenzo Menoud: ‘Parole sui muri’

Lorenzo Menoud is a Swiss contemporary poet, artist, and philosopher, born in 1961 in Genève.<sup>10</sup> He is famous for his poetic experiments that place poetry outside the borders with which it has been relegated for centuries. His name is connected to both digital poetry, that is to say a type of poetry using the potentiality of new media, and what he calls the ‘poésie rue’, conceived as a type of poetry that leaves the book behind to appropriate public space.<sup>11</sup> In ‘Parole sui muri’, published in *Java* n° 27-28, Menoud discusses the need for poetry to leave the book. As the title of the essay suggests, Menoud’s poetics are influenced by the Fiumalbo experiment. ‘Parole sui muri’ was the name of the Second International meeting on poetry organised in Fiumalbo by a collective of international artists that transformed the little village of Fiumalbo, situated in Emilia Romagna, into a site of artistic experimentation. Artists from every discipline gathered in Fiumalbo from all over the world with the aim of revolutionising the world through art by transforming public spaces into artistic laboratories to collectively rethink the world and the social relations that governed it. Among the famous personalities related to the Fiumalbo experiments were Julien Blaine, Jean-François Bory, Nanni Balestrini, Bernard Heidsieck, Seichi Nakiini, and Ladislav Novak.<sup>12</sup>

Although the Fiumalbo experiment failed, as Menoud suggests throughout his essays, it can still teach contemporary poetry that another world is possible, and that poetry can contribute to its

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<sup>10</sup> Viceversa Littérature, ‘Lorenzo Menoud’, <<https://www.viceversalitterature.ch/author/13187>> [Accessed 12 May 2021].

<sup>11</sup> Isabelle Rüf, ‘« Poésie rue » vs pollution visuelle’, *Le temps*, 21 March 2003, <<https://www.letemps.ch/culture/poesie-rue-vs-pollution-visuelle>> [Accessed 12 May 2021].

<sup>12</sup> Massimo Arduini, *La Poesia Visiva. La pratica visuale del linguaggio* (Roma: Accademia di Belle Arti di Roma, 2013), <<http://www.paoloalbani.it/ArduiniPoesiaVisiva2017.pdf>> [Accessed 15 June 2021], p. 13.

creation. Menoud, however, is less optimistic than the Fiumalbo artists. As he explains, the post-modern disillusion and the internationalisation of the capitalist system gives little hope for a rapid and radical transformation of the world: 'En effet, pour dire les choses très rapidement, nous ne sommes pas aujourd'hui dans un époque d'utopie et de « grands récits ». Selon moi, la révolution de 68, son échec partiel, la désillusion postmoderne et la mondialisation capitaliste généralisée ne laissent que peu d'espoir à une transformation radicale'<sup>13</sup>. For Menoud, poetry cannot aim to completely overthrow the established order, as the artists linked to the Fiumalbo experiment believed, but it can still sabotage its functioning. In particular, he believes that the *poésie élargie* can resist and combat the established order through a series of strategies, which he identifies in 'l'humour, le détournement ou le sprayage' (*PsM*, p. 233), that produce a series of symbolic effects that make its readers slightly change their way of thinking, and therefore slowly transform the way they organise the world. For Menoud, *poésie élargie* is more suitable than the traditional form of poetry published in book format because it can reach a greater number of readers, including those who do not usually read poetry. In order to show what the *poésie élargie* is and how it functions, Menoud presented his project of *poésie rue* on the street of Genève in 2003. Aware of the political potential of advertisements, which incite people to consume and influence their mode of being,<sup>14</sup> Menoud hung 150 poster-poems on street panels usually reserved for advertisements to sabotage the process of marketing manipulation. By challenging the 'lieux politiques habituels de l'art', *poésie rue* brings the deterritorialising potential of poetry to the streets to affect the way people think. It creates an alternative space of reflection to realise, as Menoud explains, the utopia of a different world: 'La poésie élargie donne [ainsi] une forme concrète et partielle à l'utopie, réalisant une *allotopie*, selon le mot de Roberto Martinez – à savoir un « autre lieu » [...].'<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Lorenzo Menoud, 'Parole sui Muri', *Java*, 27-28 (2005-2006), 227-235 (p. 232).

<sup>14</sup> 'Ma proposition partait du constat suivant : les villes baratinent, couvertes qu'elles sont de textes publicitaires, d'incitations à la consommation, préconisant ainsi un seul mode d'être et d'échange entre les gens.' (*PsM*, p. 234).

<sup>15</sup> Menoud, 'Parole sui Muri', p. 233.



Figure 5. Lorenzo Menoud, 'La poésie rue', Confédération suisse : posters, 2003, <[https://nb-posters.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?search\\_scope=MyInstitution&vid=41SNL\\_53\\_INST:posters](https://nb-posters.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?search_scope=MyInstitution&vid=41SNL_53_INST:posters)> [Accessed 10 May 2021].

Influenced by concrete poetry's material conception of language,<sup>16</sup> conceptual art's emphasis on meta-reflection,<sup>17</sup> and contextual art's idea of art as an instrument to construct the world<sup>18</sup>, Menoud constructed his poster-poems as short meta-poems that, working on the materiality of language and reflecting on their political potential, release a revolutionary power. As he suggests, his poster-poems operate as 'petites structures-machines'<sup>19</sup> that invite people to play with the signs of which they are made up of, stimulating them to think creatively:

Je les ai conçues comme de petites structures-machines, travaillant à plusieurs

<sup>16</sup> Concrete poetry flourished between 1952 and 1953 as a continuation of the experience of the Italian Futurists, Russian constructivists, Dadaists, and Bauhaus artists, thanks to the impulse of the Brazilian group Noigandres and the Swiss artist Eugene Gomwiger (Menoud, 'Parole sui Muri', p. 227). Concrete poets inaugurated a new way of writing based on the idea that language is a material substance that can be moulded in different ways to explore ever new aesthetic paths for poetry. Concrete poetry challenges the traditional aesthetic features of the genre and the idea that poetry expresses the poet's inner world (Menoud, 'Parole sui Muri', p. 227-228). By working on the materiality of language, concrete poetry activates a deterritorialising power that can interfere with the circulation of the order and commands of society. As Menoud suggests in his essay, poésie élargie should follow concrete poetry's treatment of language to release the same revolutionary political potential and trace a series of lines of flight to overthrow the established order.

<sup>17</sup> Conceptual art is an art of reflection; conceptual artists accompany their artistic production with an interrogation of the state and the idea of art. Their theoretical reflections aim at undermining the too idealistic character of modern art, which conceives the work of art as an autonomous object detached from the rest of the socio-political organisation of the world: 'Les artistes conceptuels reprochent à la modernité son idéalisme esthétique, à savoir son intérêt central pour la sensation et l'émotion qu'on retrouve dans la recherche de la peinture pure, par exemple, comme son formalisme qui considère l'objet d'art en tant que produit iconique, autonome de toutes autres sphères d'activités' (Menoud, 'Parole sui Muri', p. 228). By reflecting on itself, contemporary poetry can, like conceptual art, amplify its political significance.

<sup>18</sup> Contextual art can teach contemporary poetry the need to configure itself as an instrument to challenge the established order. Contextual art, in fact, developed in the Seventies as a response to the socio-political issues generated by capitalist society.

<sup>19</sup> Menoud, 'Parole sui Muri', p. 235.



niveaux et œuvrant dans différentes directions :

Texte en rime, d'ordre alphabétique (L, P, R), lisible en acrostiche, tout à la fois allusion autoréférentielle à la rue et à la poésie qui s'y fait (LA POÉSIE est dans la RUE, elle commence et finit « la »), affirmation de la poéticité potentielle de la ville (LA RUE est POÉSIE), invitation au passant à occuper cet espace pour y écrire sa propre poésie (LÀ, POÉSIE-RUE) voire à y détourner la mienne (LA POESIE RUSE ; LA POESIE BUE/DUE/EUE/HUE/LUE/MUE/NUE/PUR/QUE/SUE/TUE/VUE ; etc.), et réitération d'une certaine révolte propre à la poésie notamment contre la publicité qu'elle aura provisoirement et partiellement remplacée (LA POESIE, comme l'âne et le cheval, RUE).<sup>20</sup>

What is key in Menoud's text is the emergence of a poetry that penetrates public spaces to reach as many people as possible. To release its revolutionary potential and set the conditions for change, poetry needs to invade the streets, where it can prompt more people to think in new and unexpected ways than through books, which are only read by a limited *niche*.

With the publication of this text by Menoud, the editorial board indirectly expressed the importance of international collaboration and creating a network to circulate poetry and its potential deterritorialising power. Menoud's essay highlights the theoretical proximity of contemporary artists around the world, who seem to hold the same anti-capitalist political preoccupations and share the same idea of poetry as a means to transform the world.

### 5.3 The cut-up technique and Olivier Cadiot

Volume n° 13 dedicates a whole dossier to both the cut-up technique based on the free re-arrangement of words and fragments of texts taken from different sources, and Olivier Cadiot, considered a master of the technique. The reason for dedicating a whole dossier to the cut-up lies in the fact that the cut-up is one of the techniques most commonly used by contemporary authors to deconstruct meaning, and from there to engage in the fight against the capitalist order. After its success in the 1950s and 1960s, the cut-up was rediscovered at the end of the 1980s by Olivier Cadiot who published *L'Art Poetic* in 1988, a poetry collection entirely constructed of cut-up, inaugurating a new poetic phase. This part is in two sections. By drawing on the essays published in the dossier on the cut-up, the first section explains this technique and its evolution. The second section explores Cadiot's poetics and his use of the cut-up in *L'Art Poetic* to exemplify some of the aesthetico-political results that he

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<sup>20</sup> Menoud, 'Parole sui Muri', pp. 234-235.

achieved through the technique.

### 5.3.1. The cut-up technique: history

In 'Le cut-up', the second text of the dossier dedicated to the technique, Heidsieck explains that the cut-up was invented in 1959 by chance by Brion Gysin<sup>1</sup>:

C'est en 1959, on le sait, que Brion Gysin invente, par hasard, le *cut-up*, dans sa chambre, n° 25, du Beach Hôtel, ce plus-que-modeste-hôtel, devenu mémorable, de la rue Gît-Le-Cœur, à Paris. (...) Montrant peu de temps après à William Burroughs, qui occupait la chambre n° 15 du même hôtel, les résultats de sa trouvaille, celui-ci, au lieu d'en rire, et les examinant avec une extrême attention, et après un long silence, lui dit, très sérieux : « Brion, tu tiens là un très grand truc ! ». <sup>21</sup>

Gysin invented the cut-up whilst he was working on a collage. After cutting out a series of words and fragments of texts taken from newspapers on his desk, he began to freely associate them to create new texts. The cut-up can, in fact, be described as the free association of words and strings of words taken from different sources to create new texts. As Gysin explains:

Alors que j'étais en train de travailler à un collage, j'ai, avec ma lame Stanley, dit-il, cisailé une pile de journaux situés sous mon dessin [...]. J'ai pris mes languettes de mots coupés, les ai associées différemment et j'ai ri comme un fou. [...] Les choses sont donc simples : avec un cutter, cisailiez les pages de n'importe quel livre ou imprimé, dans la longueur, par exemple, mélangez les colonnes, faites-les se rejoindre par hasard et lisez le nouveau message reconstitué. Oui, faites-le vous-même. Selon le procédé de votre choix. Utilisez vos propres mots, ou de tout autre, vivant ou mort. <sup>22</sup>

Unlike the scriptural techniques of the Oulipo or Raymond Roussel, the cut-up does not follow any fixed rule.<sup>23</sup> It can be carried out, as Serge Féray explains, in a variety of different ways: 'Ses formes sont multiples : découpage, bien sûr, mais aussi fold-in, écriture en colonnes, mélange de mots et d'images, et, à l'intérieur même du cut-up, choix de découper un seul texte, ou de parasiter avec les mots d'un autre écrivain'.<sup>24</sup> Gysin's experiments with this technique were motivated by an

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<sup>21</sup> Bernard Heidsieck, 'Le cut-up', *Java*, 13 (1995), 81-87 (pp. 81-82).

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 81.

<sup>23</sup> Serge Féray, 'Le grand cut-up de l'an 2000', *Java*, 13 (1995), p. 88.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 88.

awareness that literature was 50 years late compared to the visual arts and that literary techniques needed to be updated based on their model: '[...] je me suis immédiatement remémoré ce que j'avais dit à William Burroughs quelques six mois auparavant, sur le besoin d'adapter à l'écriture les techniques de la peinture. [...] L'écriture a cinquante ans de retard sur la peinture'.<sup>25</sup> Although Gysin invented the technique, it was William Burroughs, enthusiastic for his friend's invention, who popularised it with his successful literary experiments.

Poets mostly use the cut-up to fulfil two specific goals: freeing words from the meaning given to them by society and, in Deleuze and Guattari's words, showing that language is a collective assemblage of enunciation. As Gysin suggests, through the cut-up, 'Vous vous apercevrez rapidement que les mots n'appartiennent à personne. Les mots ont leur vitalité propre et vous pouvez, vous ou n'importe qui, les dynamiter dans l'action. Les poètes sont là pour libérer les mots. »<sup>26</sup>. Language has a social nature; what people say is not as much their personal expression as it is the expression of society. Language is arbitrarily and collectively shaped by its speaker to circulate the order and commands of their community (*MP*, pp. 96-97). The cut-up technique enables authors to interfere with the circulation of these commands. By freely associating words or fragments of texts from different sources, the cut-up technique deconstructs meaning; it frees words from the meaning associated with them by society to express its vision of the world and to prompt its members to think and behave according to its rules. Contemporary poetry uses the cut-up technique precisely for its revolutionary political character. However, contemporary poets have updated their conception and use of cut-up, distancing themselves from their predecessors. They have abandoned the idea, held by both Gysin and Burroughs, that the cut-up enables poets to reveal the hidden meaning of words. As Heidsieck observes, although Gysin and Burroughs use the cut-up to interfere with the functioning of society, they also use it as an instrument to reveal the hidden meaning of words.<sup>27</sup> For Burroughs and Gysin, words have an intrinsic meaning that society hides with the meaning it gives to them.<sup>28</sup> For contemporary poets, on the contrary, words do not have any other meaning than that given to them by society. They use the cut-up to deconstruct the meaning of words and to set the conditions for readers to produce new potential meanings to construct the world anew. To use Deleuze and Guattari's terms, contemporary poets often deterritorialise the language of the fragments that make up their texts. By deterritorialising language, contemporary poets completely deconstruct meaning. They take language into a sort of primitive state that projects readers into a chaotic mental state that

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<sup>25</sup> Gysin, p. 81.

<sup>26</sup> Gysin, p. 81.

<sup>27</sup> Bernard Heidsieck, 'Le cut-up', *Java*, 13 (1995), p. 82.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 82.

can potentially make them think of the world in new and unexpected ways. With their conception of language, contemporary authors free their poetics from the residues of the essentialist ideology that characterises Western societies' modes of thinking that were still present in the conception of language of their predecessors' texts, particularly in those by Gysin and Burrough. This enables them to be more radical than their predecessors. The idea held by authors of the 1950s and 1960s that language has an intrinsic meaning regardless of society reduced the revolutionary character of their texts. It reinforced the essentialist ideology of capitalist society. These texts can release a deterritorialising power only if isolated from the poetics of their authors, which betrays the essentialist vision of capitalist society.

With this dossier, the editorial board of *Java* demonstrates the position of contemporary authors towards the historical avant-gardes. Although the avant-garde undoubtedly represented a starting point for the elaboration of their poetics and they share the use of some techniques, as in the case of the cut-up, contemporary authors distance themselves from previous literary experiments for the essentialist ideology that they betray.

Avant-gardist texts configure themselves more as what Deleuze and Guattari call *livres-radicelle*, a literary machine that only partially challenges the established order, than what they call *livres-rhizome*, conceived as a literary machine able to revolutionise the established order (*MP*, pp. 12-13). If avant-gardist texts successfully challenge some aspects of the capitalist system, they reinforce some others due to their underlying essentialism.

### 5.3.2 Olivier Cadiot

In the same volume that Espitallier, Maestri and Sivan dedicate a section to the cut-up, they also dedicate a dossier to Olivier Cadiot, whom Maestri describes as 'le génie de l'œuvre mineure'<sup>29</sup>. Born in Paris in 1956, Olivier Cadiot is one of the most prolific and eclectic artists in the French panorama. Poet, novelist, musician, dramatist, and translator, he has published more than thirteen literary books and three albums.

In 1995, in collaboration with Pierre Alferi, he founded and directed the *Revue de littérature Générale*, where he published 'La mécanique lyrique', a radical text aimed at conceptualising the

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<sup>29</sup> Vannina Maestri, 'Note sur O.C', *Java*, 13 (1995), 24-25 (p. 24).

deconstructionist tendencies of poetry that had emerged since the end of the 1980s. In 'La mécanique lyrique', the two authors elaborated the famous idea of OVNI, 'objet verbal non-identifié', to explain the heterogeneous and hybrid character of twenty-first-century rhizomatic poetry. Cadiot and Alferi described OVNI as a heterogeneous literary machine sitting at the intersection of different genres.<sup>30</sup> OVNI uses its hybrid aesthetic features to release a deterritorialising power able to undermine the logic at the basis of society.<sup>31</sup> Cadiot himself constructs his texts as a series of OVNI, which configure themselves as rhizomes. Influenced by Deleuze and Guattari, and in particular by Deleuze,<sup>32</sup> Cadiot conceives his texts as a series of machines that engage in the fight against the capitalist order. The cut-up is one of the main techniques that Cadiot uses with this aim. The cut-up enables him to deterritorialise language and to 'rework dominant discourses, making them minor'.<sup>33</sup> In 1988, Cadiot published *L'Art Poetic*, inaugurating a new phase for this technique. The collection exemplifies his use of the technique and the aesthetic-political results that he achieves. Cadiot constructed *L'Art Poetic* through the extraction and rhizomatic combination of a series of fragments taken from different sources, including textbooks, dictionaries and classical literary texts:

Qui vont et viennent : époque du présent ;  
 Qui allaient et venaient : époque du passé ;  
 Il ne passera pas : époque du futur.

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L'Océan était vide et la plage déserte (Musset)<sup>35</sup>

Serait-il trop tard que je revienne chez vous ? (Proust)<sup>36</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Pierre Alferi, Olivier Cadiot, 'La Mécanique Lyrique', *Revue de Littérature Générale*, 1(1995), 3-22 (pp. 5-6).

<sup>31</sup> Pierre Alferi, Olivier Cadiot, 'La Mécanique Lyrique', p. 3-22.

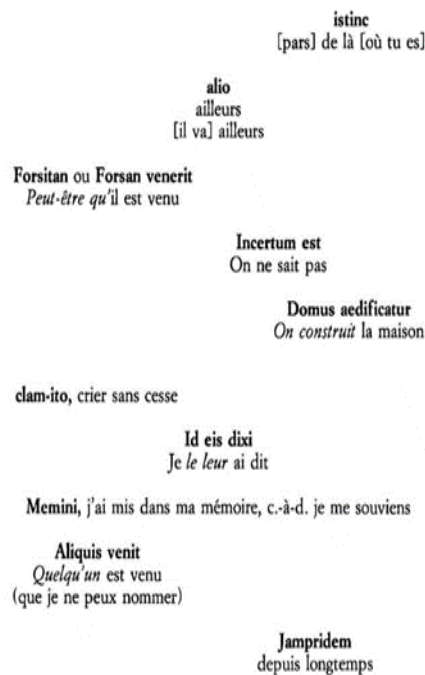
<sup>32</sup> During an interview conducted by Nathalie Wourm for her book, *Poètes du 21ème siècle*, Cadiot explains that Deleuze has particularly affected his production: 'Le Deleuze des années 1980 m'a donné de l'énergie. Il a été comme un coach pour moi.' (p. 34).

<sup>33</sup> Daisy Sainsbury, 'Language and Statelessness in the Poetry of Olivier Cadiot', *Modern Language Open*, 1.12 (2009), 1-13 (p. 6).

<sup>34</sup> Olivier Cadiot, *L'Art Poetic* (Paris: P.O.L Éditeur, 1988), p. 21.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p. 28.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 95.



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All these fragments can be seen, as Cadiot himself suggests in a letter exchange with Sivan published in *Java*, as ‘petits bout de langue morte’<sup>38</sup>. The process of extraction and rhizomatic recombination neutralises their meaning, transforming them into pure materiality. Decontextualised and rhizomatically reassembled, the fragments that make up *L’Art Poetic* appear as a meaningless sequence of signs. However, contrary to what one may think, as Cadiot himself explains to Sivan, this does not mean that they cannot produce any effects on the reader. As he observes, the fragments that make up *L’Art Poetic* are ‘de l’énergie pure’<sup>39</sup> able to affect the way the reader thinks. Their power lies in their lack of meaning, which obliges the reader to search incessantly for it, leading them to produce new percepts and affects that can potentially make them construct the world anew. As

<sup>37</sup> Cadiot, *L’Art Poetic*, p. 81.

<sup>38</sup> Olivier Cadiot, in ‘Correspondance, Olivier Cadiot’, p. 61.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 61.

Christian Artaud suggests in ‘Un dialogue (allégorie)’, the second text of the dossier dedicated to Cadiot, in Cadiot’s *L’Art Poetic*, what one would consider as a meaningless graphic sign is in reality an element carrying a creative power able to produce a variety of effects: ‘Eh là, hop ! ce qu’on croyait langue morte est métamorphosée en réserve aux virtualités insoupçonnées’.<sup>40</sup> *L’Art Poetic* transforms the act of reading into a dynamic process of assemblage of the fragments on the page which are connected through the logic of connection, multiplicity, and heterogeneity.<sup>41</sup> This logic can prompt readers to think in new ways. The meaningless fragments that make up the book have the potential stimulate them to make new associations between mental images and ideas and show the world from a different perspective compared with that on which the established order is based.

## 5.4 ‘Attention travaux !’ and ‘Textes’

### 5.4.1 Jérôme Game: ‘\_le skiroom est mon son royaume le\_’

This chapter began with an exploration of Game’s essay ‘Poésie pensante’. This section talks about one of his thinking poems, ‘\_le skiroom est un peu son mon royaume le\_’, published in *Java* n° 27-28, recently relaunched as a video poem in collaboration with Nebahat Avcioglu. The poem exemplifies Game’s style and his strategy of political engagement. Influenced by Deleuzo-Guattarian thought, Game conceives his texts as a series of rhizomatic machines that oppose the violence and aberration of reality, and thus of the capitalist system. For him, writing is a matter of construction and deconstruction.<sup>42</sup> It is a process through which to invent a new style, conceived, from a Deleuzian perspective,<sup>43</sup> as the act of destabilising a given social system and opening up the way to new life possibilities.<sup>44</sup> To invent a new style, Game makes a minor use of language. He makes language stutter, to use Deleuze’s words. As Deleuze explains, ‘Le style, c’est arriver à bégayer dans sa propre langue’.<sup>45</sup> Deleuze does not use ‘stuttering’ to refer to the speech disorder that disrupts the normal

<sup>40</sup> Christian Artaud, ‘Un dialogue (allégorie)’, *Java*, 13 (1995), 26-32 (p. 28).

<sup>41</sup> Daisy Sainsbury, p. 6.

<sup>42</sup> Game, Jérôme, ‘Poé/tri 7 - Poétique du dérushage. Entretien avec Jérôme Game’, interviewed by Frank Smith, in *Nonfiction. Le quotidien des livres et des idées*, 2014, <[https://www.nonfiction.fr/article-7037-poetri\\_7\\_poesie\\_du\\_derushage\\_entretien\\_avec\\_jerome\\_game.htm](https://www.nonfiction.fr/article-7037-poetri_7_poesie_du_derushage_entretien_avec_jerome_game.htm)> [Accessed 27 September 2020].

<sup>43</sup> For Deleuze, inventing a style consists in creating a series of assemblages that can trigger new modes of existence. (Deleuze, *Pourparlers*, p. 138)

<sup>44</sup> Jérôme Game, ‘Conversation avec Jérôme Game’, interviewed by Stéphane Pihet and Michaël Batalla, in *De quoi Parlons/nous. Conversation entre quelques-uns à propos de tout ce dont il est question pour vous*, 3 (2005), 1-4 (1).

<sup>45</sup> Gilles Deleuze, ‘Un prodigieux bégaiement sur le style !’, in *Nouveau Millénaire, Défis Libertaire*, <<http://1libertaire.free.fr/Deleuze05.html>> [Accessed 25 September 2020].

fluency and flow of speech,<sup>46</sup> but the process through which to make a minor use of language in order to resist and deviate from the oppressive functioning of the established order. Making language stutter affects the transmission of the social order and commands carried by language, interfering with the functioning of society. For this reason, as Game suggests, making language stutter is a strategy for working on and transforming the world.<sup>47</sup> To make language stutter, as ‘\_skiroom\_’ exemplifies, Game disrupts the rules of grammar. He sabotages the syntax and morphology of the French language by omitting punctuation and decomposing words.

tentative incongrue cependant  
 rofond sentiment d’abscons relayant les des preuves de purs effets entre  
 eux jusqu’à ce que leur trame se mousse dans la d’écume en : folie mélan-  
 colique angoissienne détacheme de  
 matériali  
 récaire si  
 contingen  
 te in  
 conti  
 nen  
 te,  
 soit<sup>48</sup>

As he explains in an interview published in *De quoi Parlons/Nous*, the language he uses is rhizomatic.<sup>49</sup> It is a heterogeneous assemblage of different linguistic signs freed from any kind of meaning. Game does not tell any story with his language. Instead, he produces effects that open up the way to new existential horizons. As he explains, in his linguistic work, ‘Il y a ce désir de faire que la langue soit cette expérience d’un devenir, le registre d’un devenir, l’occasion d’un devenir vraiment ouvert’.<sup>50</sup> Game’s language evokes a new sensibility. It is a factory that produces new affects and percepts that can change the shape of the world and the way people live. Game deconstructs Standard French through linguistic manipulation, while, at the same time, constructing a new plan to create new assemblages and invent new modes of thinking. His linguistic work responds to the emergence of inventing the new, as he says: ‘[...] une surface très profonde. Un truc qui ait l’air complètement décomposé, désyntaxifié, déstructuré mais qui précisément produise, compose un nouveau plan. Un autre plan où ça tient, où un nouveau corps se crée’<sup>51</sup>.

<sup>46</sup> NHS, ‘Stammering’, < <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stammering/> > [Accessed 13 October 2020].

<sup>47</sup> Game, ‘Conversation avec Jérôme Game’, p. 1.

<sup>48</sup> Jérôme Game, ‘\_le skiroom est mon son royaume le’, *Java*, 27-28 (2005-2006), 49-53 (p. 50).

<sup>49</sup> Game, ‘Conversation avec Jérôme Game’, p. 2.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>51</sup> Game, ‘Conversation avec Jérôme Game’, p. 4.



## 5.4.2 Philippe Boissard, Sylvain Courtoux, Jérôme Bertin: *hyperlittéralité* and rhizomatic poetry

This sub-chapter examines the ‘Attention travaux !’ section of volume n° 23-24. The section is entirely dedicated to three young contemporary poets, Philippe Boissard, Sylvain Courtoux, and Jérôme Bertin. For their aesthetic similarities and shared revolutionary intentions, the four texts of *Java* n° 23-24 that compose ‘Attention Travaux !’ function as four components of a single rhizomatic literary machine, coinciding with the section of *Java* where they are collected, reflecting on the political potential of twenty-first-century poetry, especially of the generation of French poets born in the Seventies, and exemplifying some of their poetico-political strategies.

The idea of contemporary poetry that emerges in this section, and especially from Courtoux’s text which serves as a sort of theoretical meta-reflection on contemporary poetry, is that of a rhizomatic machine able to challenge the binary logic that regulates the capitalist order and, from there, create the chaotic conditions to rethink the world. As Courtoux explains:

NOTRE BUT EST LE CHAOS TOTAL (© Burroughs) LE RISQUE EST LA  
MATIÈRE MEME DU TEXTE = MATRICE A TISSER DU RHIZOME  
LITTERAL POUR CONTRER LES MACHINES SYSTEMIQUES  
BINAIRES DU POUVOIR CONTRE LES GUEUX DE LA LITTERATURE  
MODERNE POUR RENVERSER LA LOGIQUE DES DISCOURS  
DOMINANTS CONTRE LES GUEUX DE LA LITTERATURE  
MODERNE POUR CONTRER TOUTE COMPROMISSION POETIQUE  
CONTRE LE GUEUX DE LA LITTERATURE MODERNE POUR  
RENVERSER LE MONDE TEL QUE NOUS LES DONNENT LES  
IDIOLECTES MEDIATIKES ET SOCIOPOLITIQUES [...] <THE  
FOURTH WORLD WAR HAS BEGUN>.<sup>52</sup>

Unlike modern literature which, with its fascicular shape, reinforces the linear logic at the basis of the dominant order, contemporary poetry takes the shape of a rhizome, effectively interfering with the functioning of the capitalist world.

In his untitled poem, Boissard presents and conceptualises a technique that can be used to build texts as rhizomes (‘matrice à tisser du rhizome’<sup>53</sup>), that is to say *hyperlittéralité*. As Boissard explains, *hyperlittéralité* is a strategy of linguistic manipulation (‘contamina(k)tion linguistique’<sup>54</sup>) that allows the circulation of a ‘logique non rationnelle’ that can deconstruct the image of thought at the basis of society. *Hyperlittéralité* enables poets to work on the syntax and morphology of language to produce

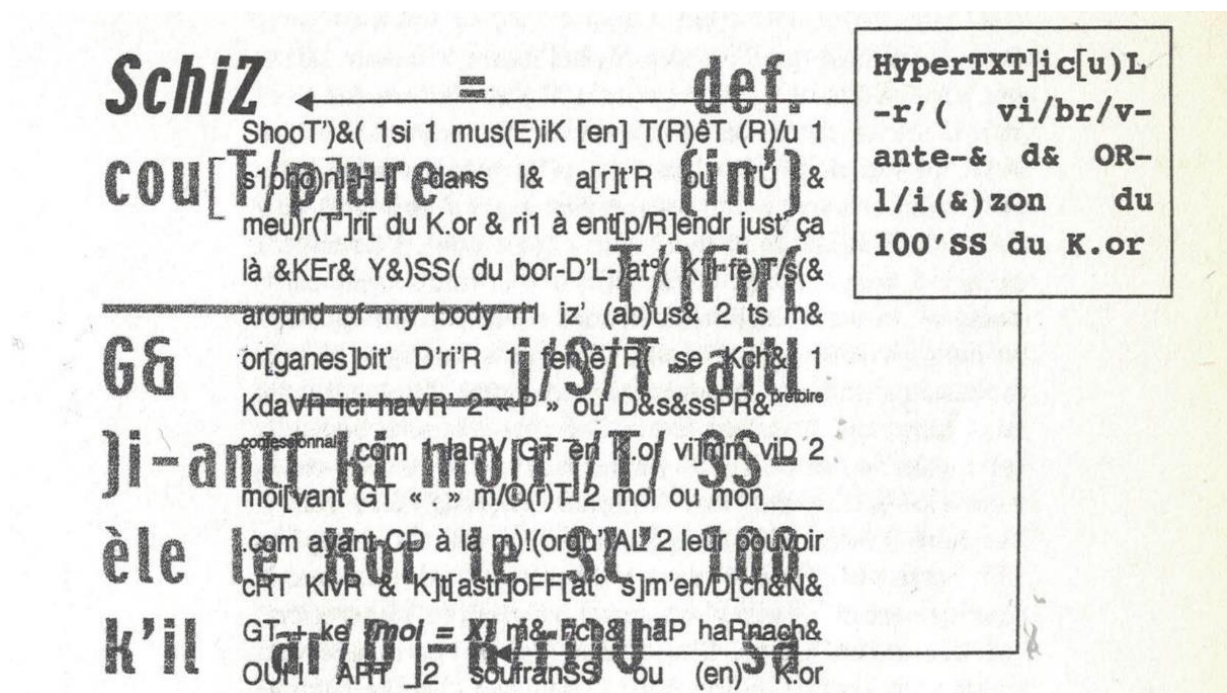
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<sup>52</sup> Sylvain Courtoux, ‘Action-Writing\_4 [Prak6 mix]’, *Java*, 23-24 (2002), 223-224 (p. 222).

<sup>53</sup> Courtoux, ‘Action-Writing\_4 [Prak6 mix]’, p. 223.

<sup>54</sup> Philippe Boissard, ‘Untitled’, *Java*, 23-24 (2002), p. 222.

a semantic ambiguity able to challenge the capitalist mode of thought: ‘résistance / polysémie / équivocité & relief syntagmatique / [...] / ambiguïté diamét-rale des consciences / éthique & transgression’.<sup>55</sup> As he explains in *libr-critique*, the texts published in the ‘Attention travaux !’ section of *Java* n° 23-24 can be seen as some of the results that can be achieved through *hyperlittéralité*. As the following extracts taken from different texts in the section show, *hyperlittéralité* consists in the elimination or unusual use of punctuation and manipulation of the morphology and semantics of words.<sup>56</sup>



57

dérappages contrôlés (nous dresserons des listes noires pour tous les poètes inutiles) \_ex-traction des virus n/b/c R nE la pro i.e par rafales **the depopulation bomb** l'con Sen'suS'/R' la lu(eur) ratures s/r lutte & créatures ch'/g'(éclat') tes os te(s) tE' l'con(tr')ass t la v/cr oi x/e d'la D'faite'! \_vo i.e X pa(r) K(os) sortir (d)E le/a r' mez(z) voce) vo (u)s/N mis mi (A) n(e)ant' ir l'og./TR le silence\_get (hold) up brai(se)d/(o)N E {THE DAMAGE'S DONE} (au'(vain)coeur) **la force de haïr/la promptitude Q sacr'(ori)fiss** d'ch(i e) N't erO ris t /Kic(k) u P ric K/h S c land' r a/e "z"er V ner'v KÔ v/k if **les révolutions ne s'annoncent jamais jamais ne s'amassent dans la langue ni dans les formes de pensée de ceux contre qui elles se font** «on voudrait bien une révolution mais à la con(cé)dition qu'elle soit aux mesures de la qualité marchande globale» disent-ils →révolutionner d'abord le désir devenu vecteur d'asservissement universel dit-

58

<sup>55</sup> Boisnard, 'Untitled', p. 222.

<sup>56</sup> Philippe Boisnard, 'À propos de l'hyperlittéralité poétique' (2008), <<https://www.t-pas-net.com/libr-critique/recherche-a-propos-de-hyperlitteralite-poetique/>> [Accessed 15 May 2021] (this page is no longer available).

<sup>57</sup> Boisnard, 'Untitled', p. 222.

<sup>58</sup> Courtoux, 'Action-Writing\_4 [Prak6 mix]', p. 223.

fronde, élastique qu' l' encule affronte fourre, l' amour tout d'  
**ma man ch ' /au d (') ds l' t r / f o u / X. y r, e nt' ses fes s es /**  
**m / n i, che ' / r ch ' / ienn' ! l' (h) os, t il ' / l à comm' une li, o**  
**N (') ! du l' / r ci (') - / g it d' dans pa p (l) a fon, d e / a nt (s) les**  
**ch / v ienn' et von', roug' sa (n) gs lear n e / d ouil let l (') e g**  
**(l / i) S (') B a (n) t' là s' don' leur c, (u) l oue'. l' é react ° l**  
sanguine, armée, bouge s' mamelle, ô bout ridé rouges, par l'  
bouches, bouts bout bûches brunes mouches brulent, d' z  
amours passées, par d' vant, derrière s' mangue l' sent  
mousse, qu' muselle la pousse, brune rousse, la plaisir éclot  
sous joug, qu' l' éclate, doux l' écarte découd, **bourr ' /**  
**(s) eau / ô, do, mi s / n', p' pa b, rim' en Q en X, - en P,**  
**repe (u) S ('), l' re, pos' la 1ère bomb ' / (h) ard (') ell', dans l'**  
**de, dans (') la qu ill (') / fol l (') bar → r, Ô (u) ti t / l ' frapp' en**

59

The three authors have written their texts as sequences of words that can stand for two or more words as in the case of 'so,l(o)eil' in Bertin's poem, that can stand for 'sol', 'l'œil', and 'soleil', or '(lu)eur', in Courtoux's text, that can stand for the past participle of the verb *lire* and 'lueur'. This enables them to free words from the meaning associated with them by society ('des mots sur la page / impossibilité de l'ancrage'<sup>60</sup> and to use them as tools to stimulate their readers in new and unexpected ways. The linguistic manipulation of Courtoux, Boisnard, and Bertin opens their texts to a multitude of different interpretations, interfering with the circulation of society's rules of thought. The texts published in the 'Attention travaux !' section of *Java* n° 23-24 interfere with this process. Courtoux, Bertin and Boisnard construct their texts as what Stéphane René calls, referring to *Action Writing 4 [Prak6 mix]*, as 'une machine de guerre syntaxique'. The linguistic signs of which they are made up circulate new inputs like a virus that can make readers think against capitalist conditioning and create the mental chaotic conditions to potentially rethink the world. As Courtoux explains, the writing process can be seen in all regards as a militant act, an act that can revolutionise the world: 'la révolution est l'expérience et la fabrication d'un texte'.<sup>61</sup> Through language, poetry spreads new modes of thought as viruses that hack the reader's image of thought of readers paving the way for the construction of a new thought that can lead to the reorganisation of the world. As Deleuze explains in *Pourparler*, writing can free thought, which he refers to in terms of life, from social conditioning and enables one to trace a series of lines of flight that can show the world from different perspectives: 'On écrit toujours pour donner la vie, pour libérer la vie là où elle est emprisonnée, pour tracer des lignes de fuite'.<sup>62</sup> In other words, writing enables the reproduction of the chaotic conditions necessary

<sup>59</sup> Jérôme Bertin, la machienne, *Java*, 23-24 (2002), 226-227 (p. 226).

<sup>60</sup> Boisnard, 'Untitled', p. 222.

<sup>61</sup> Courtoux, 'Action-Writing 4 [Prak6 mix]', p. 223.

<sup>62</sup> Deleuze, *Pourparlers*, p. 192.

to reconfigure the world and establish new modes of thought.

### 5.4.3 Christophe Fiat: *Björk ou une aventure extraordinaire de björk gudmundsdottir*

The last text that will be examined in this chapter is *Björk ou une aventure extraordinaire de björk gudmundsdottir* by Christophe Fiat.

Born in 1966 in Besançon, Christophe Fiat is one of the most productive French authors today. His career began in 2000 with the publication of the poetry collection *Sexie ou le système de la mode* and the essay *Texte ou supplice, essai sur Georges Bataille*. To date he has published 34 artworks, including written poetry, sound poetry, novels, plays and essays. His work is characterised by a strong interest in the real and a high political coefficient. Fiat conceives his texts as little deterritorialising machines able to sabotage the order of things through the circulation of new linguistic stimuli that can make readers think in new ways.

In 2002, Fiat published *La ritournelle. Une anti-théorie*, a study of the revolutionary potential of poetry. This text is not only key to understanding *Björk* and Fiat's poetics but also, and more significantly, the deconstructive tendencies and anti-capitalist project of twenty-first-century French poetry.

Influenced by Deleuze and Guattari's notion of the *ritournelle*, Fiat elaborates what can be labelled a poetics of the refrain. Deleuze and Guattari define the *ritournelle* as 'un prisme, un cristal d'espace-temps' that acts on 'ce qui l'entoure, son ou lumière, pour en tirer des vibrations variées, des décompositions, projections et transformations' (MP, p. 430). The refrain is a force able to territorialise or deterritorialise a given assemblage or, to simply put, to fix the connections between the different elements of which it is composed, or to disconnect them creating the conditions for its reconfiguration. In poetry, Fiat explains, the *ritournelle* not only manifests itself as a refrain but more significantly, as a writing strategy that gives language a rhythm that can excite the reader's body, that is to say a rhythm that makes the reader perceive the world in new and unexpected ways: 'La ritournelle n'est pas seulement une comptine, un refrain, une chanson qui allège la langue de son discours, la ritournelle, est un processus d'écriture qui donne à la langue un rythme, une résonance

qui excite le corps'.<sup>63</sup> More precisely, Fiat observes, the *ritournelle* is a linguistic strategy that enables the production of what Cadiot and Alferi call the OVNI/OLNI and can be identified with twenty-first-century rhizomatic poetry: 'La ritournelle de Deleuze et Guattari est cet objet anti-capitaliste. Parce que la ritournelle est cet objet qui échappe au capitalisme par la langue, nous le désignerons comme « OLNI ». OLNI, Objet Littéraire Non Identifié. OLNI, c'est ainsi qu'Alferi et Cadiot désignaient en 1995, dans le premier numéro de *La Revue de Littérature Générale* « les morceaux de bravoure » de la littérature'.<sup>64</sup> The *ritournelle*, as Fiat suggests, consists in a minor use of language to undermine the capitalist order and to set the conditions for 'un autre ordre à venir'.<sup>65</sup> As Deleuze and Guattari explain in *Mille Plateaux*, languages can be major or minor in relation to use that speakers make of them (*MP*, p. 130 and p.131). They are major when speakers conform to the grammar rules and conventions officially established and recognised by the community (*MP*, p. 133-134). They are minor when speakers disregard these grammar rules and conventions (*MP*, p. 130). Major languages are fixed and stable.<sup>66</sup> Minor languages are in constant variation (*MP*, p. 128). Major languages coincide with official languages and can be seen in all regards as instruments through which the established order circulates its rules of functioning.<sup>67</sup> Minor languages can be seen as the instruments through which to sabotage the established order from the circulation of alternative linguistic stimuli that can make speakers think and behave differently to how they are expected to by the established order. Major languages continuously reinforce the structures of the established order. Minor languages pave the way to new alternative orders. The *ritournelle* transforms language into an assemblage exterior to the state apparatus, that is to say into a minor linguistic assemblage that does not correspond to the logic at the basis of the established order but deviates from it to create and circulate an alternative logic:

La ritournelle est une machine de guerre parce qu'en permettant à la langue de fonctionner elle fait de la langue quelque chose d'irréductible à l'appareil d'État, quelque chose d'extérieur à la souveraineté de l'État et quelque chose de préalable au droit de l'État. Langue étrangère, langue anarchique, langue non transgressive mais qui invente sa propre juridiction. (*LR*, p. 97)

The linguistic signs manipulated through the *ritournelle* trace a line of flight or, to use Fiat's vocabulary, 'ligne anarchique' able to trigger new visions and impressions in the reader's brain. As Deleuze and Guattari explain, a line of flight can be whatever enables one to break the connections

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<sup>63</sup> Christophe Fiat, *La ritournelle* (Paris: Éditions Léo Scheer, 2002), p. 65.

<sup>64</sup> Fiat, *La ritournelle*, p. 15.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., p. 71.

<sup>66</sup> 'Linguistics', in *Encyclopedia of Postmodernism*, ed. Victor E. Taylor, Charles E. Winquist (Routledge: London, 2001), p. 224.

<sup>67</sup> *K*, p. 37 and p. 43; *MP*, p. 14 and p. 131.

that keep an assemblage together. In poetry, a line of flight can be any sign or sequence of signs that affect the way people generally make connections between the singularities that compose chaos to shape the world. As Fiat explains:

La révolution par la ritournelle, à condition que cette échappée de la langue et du corps suive une ligne anarchique dure que la pharmacodynamique conduit. Dans le contexte de la pharmacodynamique, les mots et les phrases fonctionnent sur nous comme des virus ou des antidotes, des toxiques. Ils ne touchent plus le corps au niveau de la pensée mais l'atteignent au niveau du cerveau. [...] Les mots qui nomment et les phrases qui énumèrent déclenchent dans le cerveau des visions et des impressions inédites en modifiant chimiquement sa substance. [...] Le lecteur se trouve ainsi modifié dans son métabolisme individuel.<sup>68</sup>

All this is perfectly exemplified by *Björk*, Fiat's poem published in 2001 in *Java* n° 21-22. As the following extracts show, *Björk* is constructed through the assemblage of a series of sentences that are repeated throughout the text and get longer each time they are repeated.

björk dit que l'avenir est un combat imprévisible contre la mort et contre l'ennui et contre le pouvoir

björk dit que l'avenir est un combat imprévisible contre la mort et contre l'ennui et contre le pouvoir et contre le démon  
björk dit que l'avenir est un combat imprévisible contre la mort et contre l'ennui et contre le pouvoir et contre le démon parce que l'avenir est une espèce de lutte imprévisible pour la vie contre cette pute de mort qui est toujours aux aguets

björk dit que la mort est partout  
[...]  
björk dit que la plus grande crainte de björk ce n'est pas la mort et le pouvoir et le démon mais que la grande crainte de björk c'est l'ennui qui est un ennui qui est lié à l'avenir qui est combat imprévisible contre l'ennui.<sup>69</sup>

The repetitions that traverse Fiat's texts can potentially trace a series of lines of flight that can directly act on the reader's way of thinking. They break the connection between words and their referents, transforming them into a series of a-signifying inputs that stimulate readers to perceive the world differently from how they are used to and so produce new visions of the world that undermine those at the basis of the capitalist world, and ultimately capitalism itself.

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<sup>68</sup> Fiat, *La ritournelle*, p. 108.

<sup>69</sup> Christophe Fiat, 'Björk ou une aventure extraordinaire de björk gudmundsdottir', *Java*, 21-22 (2001), pp. 199-122 (121).

## Summary

This chapter analysed selected sections of *Java*, the magazine founded and directed by Sivan, Maestri and Espitallier, to talk about their editorial careers and to expand the discourse on twenty-first-century rhizomatic poetry to other contemporary French and foreign authors. As emerged from the analysis, the authors that Sivan, Maestri and Espitallier published were all directly or indirectly influenced by Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy and conceived and constructed their poetic texts as *livres-rhizome* able to affect their reader's way of thinking – even when, as in the case of Hanna and Menoud, they do not explicitly use the Deleuzo-Guattarian vocabulary to develop their poetics. To do so, the different poets published in *Java* deterritorialised language. They deconstructed Standard French to create a series of minor languages able to interfere with the circulation of the capitalist order and commands carried by Standard French. This is because at the basis of contemporary poetry, there is the idea that language is a tool apt to construct the world. In addition, as testified by volume n° 13 of *Java*, entirely dedicated to the cut-up, contemporary poets often use the cut-up technique. The cut-up enables poets to deconstruct the discourses of capitalist society. The cut-up free words and strings of words from their meaning, obliging the reader to produce new meaning that can potentially reshape the world. The results are, however, heterogeneous. For its political potential and explicit anti-capitalist objectives, *Java* played a crucial role in the development of anti-capitalist and rhizomatic poetry in France, often configuring itself, as the section dedicated to Menoud testifies, as a *trait d'union* for contemporary poets around the world.

# Conclusion

Directly or indirectly influenced by post-structuralist philosophy, particularly by that of Deleuze and Guattari, a large group of contemporary French poets are constructing their poetry collections as rhizomes to interfere with the way capitalist society construct the world.

This thesis examined selected works by Jacques Sivan, Vannina Maestri, and Jean-Michel Espitallier, three of the most influential French anti-capitalist poets influenced by Deleuze and Guattari, and some sections excerpts of *Java*, the literary magazine founded by these three authors, to explain what rhizomatic poetry is and what its role is in the struggles against capitalist society.

This thesis was organised into five chapters. The first chapter defined the idea of capitalist society and the rhizomatic book at the basis of this study to provide the background information to understand the discourse that it develops. It was explained that this thesis underpins the Deleuzo-Guattarian idea of capitalist society as a society resulting from the capitalist process of social production regulated by the hierarchical, tree-like image of thought based on the logic of binary oppositions and hierarchical relations that has characterised the organization of Western countries since ancient times. The process of social production was conceived, from a Deleuzo-Guattarian perspective, as the differentiation and assemblage of chaos and described as the act of thinking. By drawing on Deleuze and Guattari, chaos was defined as the virtuality containing all the particles that can be differentiated and assembled during the process of social production, that is to say, the matter that lies in a state of non-existence and virtually<sup>1</sup> *precedes* the creation of order. It was explained that social production starts as soon as human beings unfold their thoughts collectively to make sense of themselves and of the matter around them and build an image of thought. The image of thought is precisely the mental scheme that human beings build as a collectivity to instruct their thought how to think collectively and therefore how to socially produce.

It was explained that the logic that regulates the hierarchical, tree-like image of thought leads human beings to assemble chaotic matter in binary pairs hierarchically, and that, in the specific case of the capitalist system, binary pairs are built around capital, which is considered as its supreme value. Due to the logic regulating the capitalist process of social production, it was concluded that capitalist society has a hierarchical organisation and is a source of oppression and inequality. It was observed that, being directly or indirectly influenced by Deleuze and Guattari's idea of society and literary criticism, a consistent group of contemporary French authors are engaging in the fight against

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<sup>1</sup> The author of this thesis has used the term 'virtually' to highlight the fact that, as explained in Chapter One, chaos can not be empirically experienced by human beings.



capitalist society by building their poetry collections as actual *livres-rhizome*. Deleuze and Guattari elaborated on the idea of *livre-rhizome* in 1976 and defined it as a particular type of book circulating the rhizome. The two philosophers describe the rhizome as the image of thought based on the logic of multiplicity, connection and heterogeneity able to challenge any process of social production based on the hierarchical, tree-like image of thought and the assemblage that derive from this image of thought. The poetry collections written by following the rhizome were called rhizomatic poetry and were described as heterogeneous literary assemblages amongst different signs. It was argued that as a result of their underlying rhizomatic logic, rhizomatic poetry can take different shapes and engage in the struggles against the capitalist order in a variety of different ways. For this reason, Chapters 2, 3 and 4 were entirely dedicated to Sivan, Maestri and Espitallier in order to provide three examples of rhizomatic poetry.

Chapter 2, 'Jacques Sivan and the *logosonoscope*. The creation of new worlds', focused on Jacques Sivan's poetry which he refers to as *logosonoscopes*. It was explained that Sivan elaborates on the idea of the *logosonoscope* by joining the Deleuzo-Guattarian ideas of *livre-rhizome* and *littérature mineure* to the Pongian ideas of *logoscope* and *objeu*. Deleuze and Guattari conceive the *livre-rhizome* as a book able to circulate rhizomatic logic and the *littérature mineure* as a type of literature that is underpinned by rhizomatic logic. Ponge conceives the *logoscope* as an instrument that enables the poet to investigate the potentiality of language, whereas the *objeu* is an instrument that enables the poet to work on language and show the world from different perspectives than those imposed by society.

Sivan constructs his *logosonoscopes* as rhizomatic texts able to reveal and denounce the dysfunctional mechanisms of the established order and create a series of defamiliarizing effects on readers through the deconstruction of language and the typographical features of poetry. The language and typographical features of Sivan's texts can potentially force the reader to reflect on the issues of capitalist society and see the world from the logic of multiplicity, connection, and heterogeneity against the binary and hierarchical logic which forms the basis of the capitalist system. Starting from the idea that the world is a human construction shaped by their mind, it was argued that since Sivan's texts have the potential to show the world from a different perspective than those imposed by the dominant order then they can be conceived as starting points for the construction of new worlds.

Chapter 3 focused on Vannina Maestri's rhizomatic poetic texts, the so-called 'land-textes'. Maestri elaborated the idea of 'land-texte' by intertwining the anti-capitalist ideology behind the black bloc movement and land art to the Deleuzo-Guattarian ideas of *livre-rhizome* and *carte*. As explained in Chapter 3, the idea of the *rhizome* and *carte* overlap each other. Deleuze and Guattari use these two concepts to describe heterogeneous assemblages. Maestri conceives her texts as

rhizomes or maps – she uses both terms to talk about her texts – that she constructs through the rhizomatic combination of a series of fragments that she takes from different sources such as newspapers, receipts, advertisements, social media – and arrows. By doing so, Maestri reveals the ambiguities of the capitalist ideology and deconstructs its discourses. Although she makes a normative use of standard languages, mainly French, English, and Italian, Maestri still manages to activate a deterritorialising movement. Through her rhizomatic assemblages, Maestri manages to deconstruct the poetic subject and time and space and traces a series of lines of flight that function as alternative mental paths that instruct readers to think in new ways. For this reason, it was argued that the writing and reading of the *land-texte* can be conceived in all effects as an act of insurrection against the capitalist order.

Chapter 4 analysed some of Espitallier's poetry collections. It was argued that his poetry can be seen as a diagnostic tool and a cure for what can be considered as the capitalist disease. Espitallier's texts underlie, in fact, the Deleuzian idea of society as a disease that causes mental blindness and prevents people from thinking creatively. This is because of the image that human beings give their thought to produce socially traps their thought in its rigid channels, making it differentiate and assemble chaotic matter always in the same way. *Z5* and *Tourner en Rond* were used to trace a genealogy of the capitalist disease and explain its characteristics – modes of manifestation and spreading. It was explained that the capitalist disease manifests itself as a form of control that human beings operate on themselves through a vast machinic apparatus of control. *De la Célébrité, en guerre, army, Le Théorème d'Espitallier*, and *Gasoil : Prises de guerre* were used instead to analyse some of the symptoms such as celebrity culture, the idea that hard sciences can disclose the true essence of the world, and wars. In these collections, Espitallier traces a series of lines of flight by using irony, deterritorialising language, and transmitting the rhizomatic logic that can act on the way readers think, freeing their thought from the capitalist conditioning.

Chapter 5 examined some texts from Java n° 12, 21-22 and 27-28 to talk about the editorial activity of Sivan, Maestri and Espitallier and expand the discourse on rhizomatic poetry developed in the main body of the thesis. To this end, the chapter presented texts from some French contemporary poets – Jérôme Game, Olivier Cadiot, Philippe Boissard, Sylvain Courtoux, Jérôme Bertin, and Christophe Fiat – and a foreign contemporary poet – Lorenzo Menoud. Texts by Game were used to explain the *poésie pensante*, a type of poetry that forces readers to think in new ways thanks to its aesthetic features and stuttering language. Texts about the cut-up and excerpts from *L'Art Poétique* by Cadiot were used to explain the political potential of the cut-up technique that is today the most popular literary strategies amongst deconstructionist poets. Texts by Boissard, Courtoux and Bertin were used to introduce the concept of *hyperlittéralité*, a strategy of linguistic deterritorialisation

aimed at constructing poetry collections as rhizomes to subvert capitalist rules. Texts by Lorenzo Menoud were used to provide an example of foreign poetry – *Java* not only promoted French contemporary poets but also foreign ones – and discuss the limitations of poetry. For Menoud, poetry has been failing to create tangible political effects because its revolutionary potential does not reach enough readers. Poetry, Menoud suggests, must leave the book to occupy public spaces such as streets. The text by Christophe Fiat was used to exemplify a last example of rhizomatic poetry. Influenced by Deleuze and Guattari's idea of the *ritournelle*, Fiat constructs his texts from the repetition of the same sentences, a strategy that enables him to deconstruct meaning and create the chaotic conditions to reset the process of social production. As emerged from the analysis led in Chapter 5, during their editorial activity, Sivan, Maestri and Espitallier promoted anti-capitalist poetry through the publication of a series of texts by a group of authors who, just like them, are directly or indirectly influenced by Deleuze and Guattari. These authors share the same concerns about capitalist society, and express the need for attacking it by making a minor use of language, deconstructing capitalist discourses through the cut-up, spreading the rhizomatic logic through a chaotic typographical disposition, and crossing the borders between genres.

What emerges from the chapters that structure this thesis is that contemporary poetry proves itself to be a suitable instrument to engage in the struggles against capitalist society due to its semiotic nature. The way the signs that constitute a poem are assembled can effectively affect the way readers think and from there start a revolution of the mind that can lead to the overthrow of capitalist society and produce the conditions for its reconfiguration and the establishment of new modes of living and existing. For this reason, strategies of writing and reading in twenty-first-century French rhizomatic poetry can be considered suitable for anti-capitalist activism. Twenty-first-century French rhizomatic poetry can enable writers and readers to see the world from different perspectives. This can help society to reset the process of social production that, as Deleuze and Guattari observe, coincides with the act of thinking, that consists in the differentiation and assemblage of the elements that compose chaos to give them a social role and position and to make them exist. The reason lies in the fact that writers and readers are members of society, and as Deleuze and Guattari observe, if a member of society starts to see the world differently, its functioning can potentially be disrupted and an alternative process of social production that can shape an alternative world can begin.

This thesis configures itself as the starting point for exploring the anti-capitalist poetry and poetics of other contemporary French and foreign poets. This study alone could not cover the poetic production of all the twenty-first-century deconstructionist French poets or foreign authors related to *Java*. It only covered the poetic production of a limited group of authors. However, it exemplified the anti-capitalist tendencies and aesthetic preoccupations of a large group of contemporary French poets.

# Appendices

## Appendix 1

### Interview with Vannina Maestri

**(DV) Dans ‘Petites notes sur le *land-texte*’, vous parlez de votre poésie en termes de *land-texte*. Vous dites que le *land-texte* fonctionne comme une carte, un concept élaboré par Deleuze et Guattari. En quelle mesure l’œuvre de Deleuze et Guattari influence votre poésie ?**

(VM) Deleuze-Guattari. En fait surtout Deleuze. Avec Jacques j’ai fait des études de philo à Nice. En 1976 (c’est noté sur le livre que je viens de retrouver dans ma bibliothèque !) j’ai lu « Proust et les signes » et j’avais souligné cette phrase : « L’unité de tous les mondes < de la Recherche > est qu’ils forment des systèmes de signes émis par des personnes, des objets, des matières... » A partir de mes lectures et relectures de Proust puis Deleuze (« Mille plateaux » : les lignes qui se conjuguent avec d’autres pour produire un monde) et peut-être à partir de Matisse et ses papiers découpés que je découvre aussi à Nice, il m’a semblé nécessaire de découper et coller le réel qui m’entoure. Les matériaux divers, les débris. Raconter des histoires, réfléchir à, en direct, en montage plastique, proposer sur la page ces instantanés.

**(DV) J’ai l’impression que, d’une part, le *land-texte* agit comme révélateur. Il montre les ambiguïtés et la violence de la société capitaliste. D’autre part, il dessine une série de lignes de fuite capables de déterritorialiser l’image de la pensée arborescente au cœur de la société capitaliste. Quelle est la portée politique de vos œuvres ? Quel est le rapport entre *land-texte* et société capitaliste ?**

(VM) Politique. L’œuvre d’art comme œuvre de résistance, comme machine de guerre. On invente de nouveaux espace-temps. Toujours du Deleuze. On nous fait croire que la société est structurée, qu’elle a un ordre et un sens. Alors qu’il s’agit de formations de pouvoir. Je réponds à la violence qui nous est infligée par les injonctions scolaires, politiques, publicitaires... par une forme de minage et

d'éclatement des modes. Et surtout essayer d'être lucide et rendre le lecteur opérant. Je demande au lecteur de ne pas être passif mais de composer lui aussi les textes. « Débris d'endroits » commence par « à feuilleter ».

**(DV) L'ensemble de vos textes semble créer un rhizome. Est-ce que c'est intentionnel ?**

(VM) Rhizome. Oui c'est une poésie rhizomique. Elle part dans toutes les directions. Elle n'est surtout pas hiérarchique. Déhiérarchisation de la langue, des images, des concepts. Mettre à plat, créer des arborescences, des lignes de fuite.

**(DV) Comment se traduit cette portée politique dans vos textes ? Il me semble que le potentiel politique de votre poésie passe surtout à travers la langue que vous traitez comme une substance plastique...**

(VM) Politique suite. J'interroge par le montage, la disposition sur la page (le *land-texte*) la fonction relative d'une certaine histoire, d'une pratique culturelle de la langue. Ce que Barthes appelle le côté bourgeois de l'auteur. J'utilise les textes d'une époque dans un contexte donné. J'utilise des singularités. Je les interroge et je les fais jouer. J'essaie d'atteindre avec le montage d'éléments divers à une certaine vitesse de mouvements d'intensités des références habituelles de la langue. La page est un plan, une carte où je projette des textes-images et ce qui importe c'est ce qui se passe entre. C'est le politique.

**(DV) Vous avez fondé *Java* avec Jean-Michel Espitalier et Jacques Sivan. Quelle est la portée politique de *Java* ? *Java* semble pouvoir produire des effets encore aujourd'hui, grâce surtout à sa nature rhizomatique...**

(VM) *Java* rhizomatique. Je l'espère. Notre conception de la revue c'était : proposer des textes qui ouvrent les portes et les fenêtres. De nouvelles écritures, de nouvelles relectures. Pour que le mot poésie soit à nouveau proche de Dada, de Raymond Roussel, des objectivistes...et des propositions de petites machines poétiques actuelles. C'était un laboratoire pour tous les écrivains qui ont participé à cette aventure.

J'aimerais ajouter que le cinéma est important pour moi (Godard surtout) à cause du montage. Quelque part Deleuze parle pour Bresson d'un espace cinématographique composé d'une série de petits morceaux dont la connexion n'est pas prédéterminée. Faire de l'espace (et pour le cinéma du temps) avec des petits morceaux déconnectés. Pour moi le montage c'est dupliquer, organiser, sauvegarder, archiver, pirater, piller : acquérir de nouveaux savoirs, copier-coller. Sculpter ou peindre avec les textes.

**(DV) Est-ce qu'on peut lire *black blocs* comme un trait d'union avec le mouvement black bloc, et donc considérer votre poésie comme une stratégie anti-violente pour s'engager avec la branche anti-violente du mouvement black bloc, qui comme votre poésie a une nature plutôt rhizomatique ?**

(VM) Concernant les black blocks je me suis amusée avec ce terme un peu comme j'aurais pu le faire avec la série Black mirroring. Ceci dit je suis en effet non-violente bien sûr.

## Appendix 2

### Interview with Jean-Michel Espitallier

**(DV) Est-ce que vous considérez votre poésie comme une 'entreprise de santé', pour employer une expression de Deleuze ? Vos textes semblent diagnostiquer et traiter ce qu'on pourrait appeler 'la maladie capitaliste'...**

(JME) Oui au sens où mon écriture est écriture du constat, du diagnostic, en effet, objectiviste, si l'on veut (des photographies sans auteur), mais sans la sécheresse de la poésie objectiviste. Surchauffer, souligner, exagérer les phénomènes sociaux, politiques, communicationnels générés par les sociétés ultralibérales, notamment le capitalisme médiatique, de surveillance, de discours. Les dénuder, les éclairer au projecteur, sans zone d'ombre, sans donner de mode d'emploi. Mettre en mots ce qui n'a pas de nom, tel est d'ailleurs la fonction du poète. Il faut d'abord nommer les maladies si l'on veut tenter de les guérir. Changer le monde c'est d'abord transformer son imaginaire, et la langue qui le dit et comment le monde se dit lui-même (critique des médias, des boucles médiatiques – des

« ritournelles –, du vide de l'information). Travailler sur cette rhétorique de la boucle, de la logique, du paradoxe, du syllogisme qui est langue du surplace névrotique, du toujours moins-de-sens par ce trop-plein de sens (par exemple mon texte « Nous sommes l'axe du bien » dans *En guerre*, repris dans *Salle des machines*).

**(DV) Dans *Poètes français du 21ème siècle : Entretiens*, vous avez affirmé ‘qu’être poète signifie être minoritaire et être de gauche’. Qu’est-ce que signifie pour vous être minoritaire ?**

(JME) Je reprends ça de Deleuze, justement qui dit qu’être de gauche c’est être minoritaire. Dans les années 1970, on disait qu’être apolitique c’était être de droite, comme s’il y avait une sorte de normalité molle à être de droite (conservateur, parce que conserver c’est justement accepter ce qui est déjà là, s’accommoder), un endormissement de la conscience. Deleuze ajoute que la majorité c’est personne, la minorité c’est tout le monde. Être minoritaire c’est forcément exercer une énergie sur la majorité, être de trop, et ce de-trop peut être un facteur de résistance. Être de-trop, c’est aussi en un sens être de-moins, se faire manque à la communauté, déserteur, répondre « absent » à l’appel majoritaire. La minorité c’est le résistant, donc l’ennemi. Guérillero, saboteur invisible. C’est le grain de sable, le grain de sel, la fausse route dans la gorge.

**(DV) Vos textes semblent avoir un fonctionnement rhizomatique. Est-ce que Deleuze et Guattari vous ont influencé ? En quelle mesure ? Est-ce que l’idée de livre-rhizome influence votre idée d’écriture ?**

(JME) Toute ma génération a été baignée dans la pensée de Deleuze et Guattari. A mes yeux cette pensée accompagne la fin de la transcendance attribuée à la poésie. La fin des lectures heideggériennes de la poésie. La liquidation du legs surréaliste et de la poésie de la Résistance, qui deviennent objet de patrimoine sans réelle influence sur la poésie contemporaine. Cette époque, le tournant des années 80, ce fut pour moi la redécouverte de Francis Ponge en même temps que l’abandon de René Char. Et aussi l’injection de la pop culture dans l’espace littéraire, pop culture qui crée des effets de surface très deleuziens. La surface Warhol, par exemple. La surface punk. La surface frivolité, désinvolture, dandysme. La légèreté comme armes contre l’esprit de sérieux – cette maladie injonctive qui crée une factice hiérarchie et se place au sommet (la violence du sérieux

comme idéal). Et aussi une certaine insolence (par la légèreté) contre le bon goût qui, comme le rappelle Pierre Bourdieu, fait toujours « régner une sorte de terreur ».

**(DV) Le fonctionnement de vos textes rappelle aussi le fonctionnement des machines ou mieux des anti-machines de Jean Tinguely...**

(JME) Ah oui, Tinguely est très important dans mon imaginaire, dans mon geste de fabrication. Anti-machine, vous avez raison, machine célibataire, organisations tentaculaires qui tournent à vide, ne produisent qu'elles-mêmes, du mouvement dans des rotations affolées, vides. Des machines qui, dans leur complexité, contrairement à n'importe quelle machine, ne produisent rien. Seulement leur propre complexité. La jouissance de leur complexité, de leurs secrets. Ce sont des machines grammaticales, des courroies d'entraînement syntaxiques, des logiques du mouvement, des logiques du sens, et j'ai beaucoup appris de Wittgenstein sur ces fonctionnements hyper-logiques qui peuvent paradoxalement produire de l'irrationnel (le jeune philosophe demandant un jour à Bertrand Russell de lui démontrer avec la logique qu'il n'y a pas de rhinocéros dans la pièce où ils se trouvent !).

**(DV) Quelle est votre vision du monde capitaliste ? Comment est-ce que votre poésie peut interférer avec son fonctionnement ? Quelle est la portée politique de votre poésie ?**

(JME) Le choix d'écrire de la poésie, de s'y engager, de consacrer sa vie à « ça » est en soi un geste politique. Subvertir les discours, les mettre à nu est une façon d'interférer. Comme faisait remarquer William Burroughs, il suffit de quelques infimes déplacements dans la société, dans la façon de penser, de vivre, d'habiter le monde pour créer des failles. Des lézardes (par exemple diffuser des bruits d'émeutes dans les rues – relire sa « révolution électronique »). Un peu comme la théorie guévariste des focos. Enlevez un seul petit boulon à une énorme machine, elle ne tarde pas à dysfonctionner.

**(DV) La langue de vos textes, l'ironie qui traverse leurs pages et la logique qui règle leur fonctionnement semblent avoir un pouvoir déterritorialisant...**

(JME) C'est le rire de Baudelaire, le rire de Nietzsche. En bon nietzschéen, Deleuze faisait remarquer que le monde nous veut triste et qu'il faut répliquer par la légèreté, le rire. J'irai plus loin en disant aussi qu'il faut répliquer par le papillonnage, et même d'une certaine façon, le je-m'en-foutisme. Le



gratuit. C'est-à-dire au fond, être libertaire. Pour décaler un peu le propos, Jean Giono donnait cette définition de la jeunesse : « La jeunesse c'est la passion pour l'inutile. » Être libre, libertaire, c'est la passion pour l'inutile ! Le jeu (de langue), les effets comiques, sont effectivement dans l'attache, sans lieu, sans territoire (contrairement à l'humour), vaporisation et mitraillage.

**(DV) Quel est, selon vous, le rôle politique de la poésie aujourd'hui ?**

(JME) Poser un espace, un faisceau d'ateliers, c'est non seulement affirmer des objets poétiques en devenir qui comme tel se mettent toujours en travers des langues dominantes, des discours dominants, de l'imaginaire, c'est aussi transformer ce qui dit le monde, et donc s'inscrire autrement dans la Cité.

**(DV) Quelle a été, selon vous, la portée politique de *Java* ? Comment est-ce qu'on peut le lire aujourd'hui ?**

(JME) Je crois que *Java* a donné des outils à la génération suivante, une façon de repenser la poésie, la littérature et ses heureux débordements (poésie sonore, performance, etc.). Et aussi de repenser l'espace de la revue comme objet ouvert, nomade, non-programmatique figé. Nous avons favorisé cette réflexion d'une transversalité artistique (avant que ce mot ne devienne la coquetterie imbécile de l'institution et des faiseurs). Nous avons aussi ouvert un espace moins dogmatique que les revues de nos aînées, en jouant davantage sur des effets de légèreté, de surface. Avec cette notion d'inachevé, de work in progress (la revue comme récit en devenir), de montage, de bric-à-brac. Mise en marche d'ateliers, de petites machines désirantes en confrontation, osmose, porosité, parfois collision les unes avec les autres. Pas de dogme, pas d'organisation a priori, pas de hiérarchie. Un objet rhizomatique. Un objet libertaire.

## **Appendix 3**

**Jacques Sivan and Augusto de Campos**

The use that Sivan makes of different colours recalls some of Augusto de Campos' poems. De Campos is one of the key figures of the Noigrandes Group, a movement that developed in Brasil in the Fifties.



De Campos and the Noigandres Group are often associated with the idea of *verbivocivisual*, an expression borrowed from Joyce who coined the term in *Finnigan's Wake* to stress the multisensory nature of media and to highlight the fact that in poetry there is the simultaneous existence of different dimensions – semantic, acoustic, and visual.<sup>2</sup> Although Sivan never mentions de Campos and the Noigrandes Group amongst his influences, the fact that he invented a series of phonetic languages and used visual elements to create his texts may recall the experimentalism of the Noigandres group, as he implicitly suggests the importance of the acoustic and visual aspects of poetry.

## Appendix 4

### The relationship between Vannina Maestri's *land-textes* and Situationism

The idea of the *land-texte* as a labyrinth recalls the maps that Situationists created as part of their project of psychogeography. Psychogeography is a term coined by Guy Debord, one of the key

<sup>2</sup> Charles A. Perrone, 'Versatile Vanguard Vectors', <[https://poesiaconcreta.com.br/texto\\_view.php?id=11](https://poesiaconcreta.com.br/texto_view.php?id=11)>, [Accessed 14 August 2022].

personalities of Situationism in 1955.<sup>3</sup> With this expression, the famous theorist referred to a series of experiments carried out by Situationists to investigate how the urban space made people feel and behave. As Debord puts it in 'Introduction à une critique de la géographie urbaine', published in the sixth issues of *Les Lèvres Nues* in 1955:

La psychogéographie se proposerait l'étude des lois exactes, et des effets précis du milieu géographique, consciemment aménagé ou non, agissant directement sur le comportement affectif des individus. L'adjectif psychogéographique, conservant un assez plaisant vague, peut donc s'appliquer aux données établies par ce genre d'investigation, aux résultats de leur influence sur les sentiments humains, et même plus généralement à toute situation ou toute conduite qui paraissent relever du même esprit de découverte.<sup>4</sup>

Psychogeography cannot be understood without framing it within the Situationist concerns with urbanism. From its foundation, Situationism showed a strong interest and sensibility for architecture, and more generally the city, through a systematic critique and analysis of the functional planning of capitalist society and even the elaboration of an urban utopia.<sup>5</sup> Situationists were interested in understanding how space conditions human existence and even to find the tools to free it from this conditioning. As Debord explains in *La société du spectacle*, one of his major works, 'L'urbanisme est cette prise de possession de l'environnement naturel et humain par le capitalisme qui, se développant logiquement en domination absolue, peut et doit maintenant refaire la totalité de l'espace comme son propre décor.'<sup>6</sup> For Situationists, urbanism is a mode of domination of capitalist society. As Marc Vachon observes, the Situationists perceived urbanism as a 'source of alienation that limits individual action, social interaction, and that suppresses imagination and playfulness.'<sup>7</sup> and looked for strategies to counteract its effects. Psychogeography must be framed within this project. As explained above, psychogeography is the study of the effects of the environment on human behaviour. The Situationists carried out such study through the *dérive*, and the construction of psychogeographic maps.

The Situationists described the *dérive* as 'une technique du passage hâtif à travers des ambiances variées.'<sup>8</sup> The *dérive* is a particular type of wandering without a destination around an

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<sup>3</sup> Tate Museum, 'Psychogeography', <<https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/p/psychogeography>> [Accessed 13 August 2022].

<sup>4</sup> Guy Debord, in Véronique Fabbri, 'La ville dans les films de Guy Debord', *Appareil*, (2007), <<https://journals.openedition.org/appareil/459>> [Accessed 11 September 2022] (para 57 of 71).

<sup>5</sup> Marc Vachon, 'From flâneur to arpenteur', *Prairie Perspectives: Geographical Essays*, 7 (2004), 44-56 (p. 48).

<sup>6</sup> Guy Debord, *La société du spectacle* (Paris: Éditions Champs Libres, 1971), p. 168.

<sup>7</sup> Vachon, p. 49.

<sup>8</sup> Guy Debord, 'La théorie de la dérive', *La revue des ressources*, <<https://www.larevuedesressources.org/theorie-de-la-dérive.038.html>> [Accessed 13 August 2022].

<sup>8</sup> Debord, 'La théorie de la dérive', [online].

area, that can be a little neighbourhoods, or a whole city, for a time span that can vary from a couple of hours to several weeks<sup>9</sup>, alone or with other *dériveurs*, in order to discover the emotional effects that the urban space can produce on people and to playfully create new itineraries that challenge the routes imposed by everyday life.<sup>10</sup> As Debord explains :

Le concept de dérive est indissolublement lié à la reconnaissance d'effets de nature psychogéographique, et à l'affirmation d'un comportement ludique-constructif, ce qui l'oppose en tous points aux notions classiques de voyage et de promenade. Une ou plusieurs personnes se livrant à la dérive renoncent, pour une durée plus ou moins longue, aux raisons de se déplacer et d'agir qu'elles se connaissent généralement, aux relations, aux travaux et aux loisirs qui leur sont propres, pour se laisser aller aux sollicitations du terrain et des rencontres qui y correspondent.<sup>11</sup>

The ultimate objective of the Situationist wandering was an act of 'insoumission aux sollicitations habituelles'<sup>12</sup>. As Ralph Rumney, a British Situationist observes, society 'nous impose où il faut aller, par où il faut marcher. Et la dérive, c'est le contraire. [...] On découvre des parcours inapparents dans les villes, dans les cités, dans les rues'<sup>13</sup>. Through the *dérive*, Situationists sought to transgress the spatial organisation of capitalist society and to transform life and the city. They considered the city to be a playground that citizens could appropriate to experience it differently, and from there to liberate themselves and space from the functional planning of capitalist society, considered to be the very cause of the alienation of human experience.<sup>14</sup>

Situationists often objectified the experience of the *dérive* in a series of psychogeographical maps. As Nathalie Caritoux explains, the *dérive* 'peut être transcrite sur des

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<sup>9</sup> 'Cette durée moyenne de la dérive n'a qu'une valeur statistique. D'abord, elle se présente assez rarement dans toute sa pureté, les intéressés évitant difficilement, au début ou à la fin de cette journée, d'en distraire une ou deux heures pour les employer à des occupations banales ; en fin de journée, la fatigue contribue beaucoup à cet abandon. Mais surtout la dérive se déroule souvent en quelques heures délibérément fixées, ou même fortuitement pendant d'assez brefs instants, ou au contraire pendant plusieurs jours sans interruption. Malgré les arrêts imposés par la nécessité de dormir, certaines dérives d'une intensité suffisante se sont prolongées trois ou quatre jours, voire même d'avantage. Il est vrai que dans le cas d'une intensification de dérives pendant une assez longue période, il est presque impossible de déterminer avec quelque précision le moment où l'état d'esprit propre à une dérive donnée fait place à un autre. Une succession de dérives a été poursuivie sans interruption notable jusqu'aux environs de deux mois, ce qui ne va pas sans amener de nouvelles conditions objectives de comportement qui entraînent la disparition de bon nombre des anciennes.' Guy Debord, 'La théorie de la dérive', [online].

<sup>10</sup> The *dérive* can be seen as a sort of revisitation of the Baudelairian flânerie. As he Marc Vachon writes: 'The nineteenth-century flâneur perceived the transformation of the city through urban wanderings. The practice of urban wandering was adopted and adapted by several cultural avant-garde movements of the twentieth century (Dadaism, surrealism, situationism). Thus, each avant-garde movement and its cultural producers observed, through haphazard urban wanderings, the transformation of the modern metropolis.' (Vachon, p. 44).

<sup>11</sup> Debord, 'La théorie de la dérive', [online].

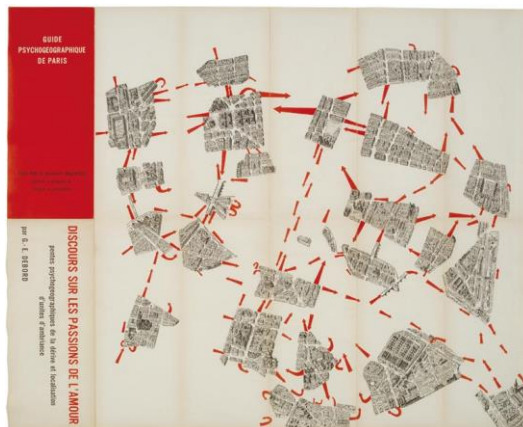
<sup>12</sup> Libero Andreotti, *Le grand jeu à venir : textes situationnistes sur la ville* (Paris: Éditions de la Villette, 2007), p. 83.

<sup>13</sup> Ralph Rumney, in Galaad Wilgos, 'Guy Debord, réac ou révolutionnaire?', *Le comptoir*, 23 March 2015, <[https://comptoir.org/2015/03/23/guy-debord-reac-ou-revolutionnaire/#\\_edn9](https://comptoir.org/2015/03/23/guy-debord-reac-ou-revolutionnaire/#_edn9)> [Accessed 13 August 2022].

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., [online] [Accessed 13 August 2022]; Marc Vachon, pp. 48-49; Simon Sadler, in Phil Smith, *Walking's New Movements* (Aixminster: Triarchy Press, 2015), p. 44.

cartes dont l'ambition est de rendre compte des états d'esprit et des états des lieux (des états d'esprits des lieux ?) par lesquels est passé l'individu errant.'<sup>15</sup> Given the role played by subjectivity and the personal perception of the *dériveur* in the construction of the psychogeographical map, psychogeographical maps cannot be considered to be a descriptive representation of space nor an instrument to orient people.<sup>16</sup> The psychogeographic map is an artistic representation of the city aimed both at revealing the 'forces réelles qui organisent l'espace humanisé'<sup>17</sup> and inviting people to drift. The psychogeographical map invites its addressees to experiment with the routes traced on the maps and to explore new routes to transform the city into a laboratory. As Caritoux writes, 'Le rôle du tracé est d'inciter à une réitération de la pratique de la dérive et à une réinscription des modifications constatées dans les états d'esprits des lieux.'<sup>18</sup>

Amongst the most famous psychogeographic maps, there is 'Le guide psychogéographique de Paris. Discours sur les passions de l'amour réalisé' originally constructed by Debord in 1957 for the First Exhibition of Psychogeography at the Taptoe Gallery in Brussels, when he still belonged to the Lettrist Movement.<sup>19</sup> However, after he refused to participate in the exhibition, the map was published by the International Movement for an Imaginist Bauhaus, and then reproduced in 1958 in Jorn's book, *Pour La Forme*, published by the newborn Situationist movement.<sup>20</sup>



Guy Debord, *Guide psychogéographique de Paris. Discours sur les passions de l'amour*, 1957, <[shorturl.at/rBRUX](https://shorturl.at/rBRUX)> [Accessed 21 August 2022].

<sup>15</sup> Nathalie Caritoux, 'Le psycho-géographe et l'archi-citadin : nature et usage de l'image urbaine', *Nouvelles Psychogéographie*, ed. by Nathalie Caritoux, Florent Villard, (Sesto San Giovanni: Éditions Mimésis, 2017), pp. 48-59 (p. 56).

<sup>16</sup> Caritoux, p. 56.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 56.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 57.

<sup>19</sup> Gilles Rion, 'Guy Debord, 'Guide psychogéographique de Paris. Discours sur les passions de l'amour, 1957'', *Frac. Centre-Val De Loire*, <[shorturl.at/rBRUX](https://shorturl.at/rBRUX)> [Accessed 21 August 2022].

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., [online].

Although Maestri never mentions the Situationists amongst her influences, her idea of the text as a map can recall one of the maps created by the Situationists. However, there are substantial differences in their artistic projects. Although Maestri and the Situationists share a similar aversion to capitalist society, the interest in urbanism, and the investigation of the effects that the different milieux of the city can create seem to be absent from Maestri's discourse. Also, from an artistic point of view, the conceptions of the map offered by Maestri and the Situationist differ deeply. Maestri's maps are rhizomatic texts aimed at revealing the dysfunctioning and absurdity of the established order and circulating an alternative logic, whereas the Situationist maps are visual artistic artworks investigating the relationship between the emotions of a drifter and the different milieux of a city. Although this does not exclude the fact that psychogeography may have influenced Maestri, it cannot be ignored that Maestri did not conceive the *land-textes* within the theoretical frame of Situationism but rather within a Deleuzo-Guattarian theoretical perspective, as proved not only by Maestri openly talking about the influence of Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy, and especially Deleuze's, on her texts, but also by the numerous references to *Mille Plateaux* and Deleuze throughout 'Petites Notes sur Le Land-texte', where she presents her poetics. Even when Maestri uses a series of words that recall geography and urbanism (e.g., 'carte', 'traversée', 'promenade', 'territoire') to describe the functioning and potentiality of her texts, Maestri seems to echo the Deleuzo-Guattarian philosophy more than the Situationist project. If it is undeniable, that Maestri used the *détournement*, which is an artistic and political technique first introduced by the Situationists, to construct her text, as explained above, it is also the case that Deleuze, who she presents as one of the most important references for the elaboration of her project, talked about this and considered it to be a suitable strategy to resist and attack the established order, and it is today part of the zeitgeist of anti-capitalist aesthetico-political practices. With this, the author of this thesis does not want to deny the possibility of the potential influence of Situationism on Maestri. Maestri may have purposely chosen words and concepts that recall both Situationism and the work of Deleuze and Guattari to create a certain ambiguity that could open her poetics to different interpretations. However, establishing the potential influence of Situationism on Maestri goes beyond the scope of this thesis. This reflection may nonetheless be the starting point for future investigations on the influence and relationship between Maestri and Situationism.

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