

***Lignes, an Intellectual Revue:***  
**Twenty-Five Years of Politics, Philosophy, Art and Literature**

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Submitted: September 2014

This dissertation is submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

This dissertation is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration except where specifically indicated in the text.

The dissertation does not exceed the word limit set by the Degree Committee.

Word count: 79,987

## Acknowledgements

Martin Crowley has been an invaluable supervisor, both for his unflagging attention and empathy alongside an uncompromising integrity and critical insight. Sincere thanks also to Michel Surya for his time and indulgence in the project, and Lisa Jeschke for proof-reading the manuscript.

Emma Wilson and Ian James have provided constant and generous support and inspiration and, alongside Martin, form the intellectual heart of a vibrant and engaging French Department at Cambridge of which it has been a pleasure to be member.

This thesis would not have occurred, or in any case not taken the same form, without the previous help and input of Simon Swift, Timothy Mathews and Patrick ffrench. Whilst taking a circuitous route towards this eventual doctorate, these three provided the first academic models to follow.

It is easy to forget the ease provided by an AHRC doctoral award to be able to immerse oneself in such work without financial concerns: it has been a rare and appreciated three years.

Many friends and colleagues at the University of Leeds, University College London and Cambridge have ensured that academia has consistently proved to be more of a pleasure than a pain: to those, then.

Above all, my gratitude to my Mother is constant, for raising me single-handedly alongside two siblings who have since become friends.

**Thesis title** – *Lignes*, an Intellectual Revue: Twenty-Five years of Philosophy, Politics, Art and Literature

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### **Abstract**

The thesis takes the French *revue Lignes* (1987-present) as its object of study to provide a new account of French intellectual culture over the last twenty-five years. Whilst there are now many studies covering the role of such *revues* throughout the twentieth-century, the majority of such monographs extend no further than the mid-1980s: the major novelty of this thesis is extending these accounts up until the present moment. It is largely assumed that a reaction against the Marxist and structuralist theories of the 1960s and 1970s led to embrace of liberalism and an intellectual drift to the right in France from the 1980s onwards: whilst largely supporting this account, the thesis attempts to nuance this narrative of the fate of the intellectual left in the following years by showing the persistence of what can be called a politicised ‘French theory’ in *Lignes*, and a returning left-wing militancy in recent years. In doing so, it will both reveal under-studied aspects of well-known thinkers, such as Jean-Luc Nancy, Jacques Rancière and Alain Badiou, as their thought develops through their participation in a collaborative, periodical publication, and introduce lesser known thinkers who have not received an extended readership in Anglophone spheres. *Lignes* also argues for the continued persistence and relevance of the thought of a previous generation of thinkers, notably Georges Bataille, Maurice Blanchot and Dionys Mascolo, and the thesis concludes by examining the potential role ‘French Theory’ could still have in France. Furthermore, as *revues* provide a unique nexus of intellectual, cultural, social and political concerns, the thesis also provides a unique history of France from the fall of the Berlin Wall to the 2007 financial crisis and the Arab Spring. Much of the thesis is concerned with contextualising intellectual debates within a period characterised by the moralisation of discourses, a return of religion, the global installation of neo-liberalism and the eruption of immigration as a controversial European issue. From a relatively theoretical and politically stable position to the left of the Parti socialiste, *Lignes* therefore provides a privileged vantage point for the mutations in French social and cultural life throughout the period.

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## Introduction

### *Lignes: An Intellectual Revue after the Death of both Intellectuals and Revues*

“Paris is today the capital of European intellectual reaction” (Anderson 1983: 32): such was Perry Anderson’s verdict in 1983, as Mitterrand’s Parti socialiste (PS) consecrated its shift to neo-liberal economics, Max Gallo lamented the silence of the intellectuals, and *Tel Quel* became *L’Infini*, signalling the end of “The Time of Theory” (ffrench 1995). The 1980s were subsequently “les années d’hiver” (Guattari 1986) which furnished the “tombeau de l’intellectuel” (Lyotard 1984). Now deceased, intellectuals became objects of academic study, Jean-François Sirinelli forming his Groupe de recherche sur l’histoire des intellectuels in 1985. Removed from their “pedestal and placed beneath the historian’s magnifying glass” intellectuals were “an historical object best viewed with retrospective vision” (Brewer 1997: 18). Symptomatically *revues*, the intellectuals’ favourite publishing organ, also seemed threatened, organisations such as Ent’revues (1986) and L’Institut mémoires de l’édition contemporaine (1988) being created to preserve their archives and provide financial support. Eulogies for the death of both remained frequent refrains heading into the 1990s.

Subsequently, a familiar narrative became established: just as ‘French Theory’ became prevalent in the Anglophone academy, structuralism was subjected to a concerted backlash in France (Cusset 2003); furthermore, chastened by Solzhenitsyn’s *Gulag Archipelago*, penitent intellectuals abandoned progressive politics for a sober stance as responsible participants in liberal governance. Tony Judt’s “essay on intellectual irresponsibility” is a characteristic account (1992: 11), and is far from inaccurate: however, the ubiquity of this narrative also frequently occludes what happened next. Whilst seminal studies of *Tel Quel*, *Les Temps modernes*, and *Cahiers pour l’analyse* have highlighted the role of *revues* as crucibles of thought and *praxis*,<sup>1</sup> few accounts venture beyond the 1980s. This is understandable as the main cluster of such studies appeared in the mid-1990s: yet since then, thinkers such as Alain Badiou, Jacques Rancière and Jean-Luc Nancy have been extensively discussed,<sup>2</sup> but rarely considered within the wider milieu that *revues* continue to provide. This is the principal scholarly omission that this thesis seeks to address.

*Lignes* therefore becomes an ideal object of study. This trimestral *revue* has appeared since 1987, covering art, literature, philosophy and politics. Despite the hostile intellectual

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<sup>1</sup> See the bibliography for monographs by Boschetti (1988), ffrench (1995), Kauppi (1994), Marx-Scouras (1996) and Patron (2000), and the edited collections by Hallward and Peden (2012) and Forsdick and Stafford (2013).

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, James (2006) and (2012), Hallward (2003), Hewlett (2007) and May (2008).



climate, “*Lignes* résista. Il y eut encore un repaire pour les irréguliers du gai savoir” (Dollé 1996: 55). A glance at their publications and contributors attests to a degree of continuity between *Lignes* and the theoretical moment of the 1960s.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, despite *Lignes* being largely unknown in the Anglophone academy, translations of significant works generated by the *revue* have resonated widely: for example, Badiou’s *The Meaning of Sarkozy* (2008) and *The Communist Hypothesis* (2010b), Félix Guattari’s *The Anti-Oedipus Papers* (2006) and Maurice Blanchot’s *Political Writings 1953-1993* (2010). Examining *Lignes* can then elucidate both the contemporary French intellectual context and its influence on the Anglophone academy.

More broadly, the nexus of political, social, cultural and intellectual concerns contained within the *revue* also provide a unique perspective on the historical period from the 1980s to the present. The globalisation of democratic governance and the dearth of left-wing responses to neo-liberalism profoundly altered political debate, one key issue well documented by *Lignes* being the European-wide consensus that immigration had become a perennial problem, exacerbated by the return of extreme-right parties. *Lignes* maintained a political perspective largely derived from the 1960s and 1970s that remained largely intransigent in the face of such mutations, making it a useful vantage point from which to survey a field increasingly pervaded by returns to Western religious and intellectual heritages, values and morals. More problematically, *Lignes*’ attachment to ‘high’ literature and art could be seen by some as anachronistic in an increasingly diverse and popular cultural sphere. The residual elitism harboured by some neo-Nietzscheans, Situationists, cult literary figures and theorists came to seem dated in a democratised mediatic sphere, and the reactions of intellectuals to such globalised cultural awareness is played out in the pages of *Lignes*.

Whilst no scholarship on *Lignes* exists, this thesis builds upon works covering intellectuals and their *revues* to date. Below is a brief history of their mutual development over the twentieth century to orientate the discussion, followed by methodological considerations and the thesis’ structure.

### **Intellectuals and *Revues* – A Mutual History**

Sirinelli notes that when studying intellectuals, “la définition de l’objet” remains difficult (2009: 136). Are all university professors and writers intellectuals? What

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<sup>3</sup> See <http://www.editions-lignes.com/> [accessed 03 August 2014]

differentiates intellectuals from journalists? Pierre Nora argues that “les critères de la sociologie classique pour définir les intellectuels [...] sont aberrants” (1980: 9). Perhaps, then, “the term refers to a symbolic construct, a subject position within a particular mode of discourse” (Brewer 1997: 18). Whilst the *Lignes*’ issue *Les intellectuels, tentative de définition, par eux-mêmes* (October 1997) proposes many definitions, Alain Brossat’s assertion that the intellectual is “une fonction” rather than an identity is key (1997: 41). By stating that the participation in *revue* culture is the intellectual function privileged in this thesis, the problem seems neatly solved.

*Revue*s, however, are also hard to define. The birth of the twentieth-century intellectual in the Dreyfus affair was made possible “en partie grâce au développement des médias à l’époque, et à la diffusion des journaux publiant lettres ouvertes et premiers manifestes” (Hugueny-Léger 2011: 323). Print media facilitated the emergence of the intellectual, but *revues* differ from newspapers and magazines which are “characterised by greater regularity” (Forsdick and Stafford 2013: 7). For Virilio, their slower publication cycle makes *revues* vehicles for “une interactivité réfléchie” with their historical moment when compared to the mass-media’s reactive nature (1996: 47). Furthermore, in theory “les revues se fondent selon une impulsion désintéressée, et en dehors de toute étude de marché” (Domenach 1986: 25); thus they allow a balance between considered reflection and the “interface avec l’époque” provided by more conventional publications (Deguy 2013a: 296). However, their distinct particularity seems under threat, as competitive market conditions increasingly introduce financial imperatives, and as the “essayism” that defined them has since “achieved mainstream ubiquity”, *revues*’ specificity becomes “increasingly invisible” (Forsdick and Stafford 2013: 8).

Yet if ‘the intellectual’ is a function, what characterises *revues* might also be their functional role in consecrating intellectual movements. Throughout the twentieth century, *revues* were “perhaps uniquely able to assure” intellectual recognition (Kelly 2013: 149): most famous intellectuals have been supported “par une (ou plusieurs) revue” (Rieffel 1993: 16), and Debray emphasises that all intellectual ‘movements’ or ‘isms’ had their own *revue*, from *Esprit*’s ‘personalism’ to the new French history pioneered in *Annales* (1979: 86-7). For Thibaud, when “l’intelligentsia doit réexaminer sa position [...] on voit naître des revues marquantes” (1977: 519). Following a perceived lull, Rieffel saw the *revue* experiencing “une nouvelle jeunesse à la fin des années 80” (1993: 220), and by 1999 they were blooming “comme cent fleurs un peu partout” (Redeker 1999: 217). *Revue*s still play a role in intellectual positioning and rejuvenation; instead of trying to define these chameleonic

cultural actors, perhaps it is more useful to chart their major historical tendencies throughout the twentieth century to better situate *Lignes* heading into the new millennium.

*La Revue blanche* (1889-1903) is frequently cited as the paradigmatic *revue*, and it was principally aesthetically orientated, aiming “d’établir un panorama exhaustif de la littérature du moment” (Peyré 2002: 10). *La Nouvelle revue française* carried on this legacy from 1908, representing “une chapelle sans sectarisme” with a “‘ton’ commun” (Domenach 1986: 24). It was their literary output and participation in disinterested *revues* that granted writers the authority for political interventions. Mixing a “pessimism concerning the world” with an “optimism concerning the writer’s capacity to transcend the world”, they saw themselves as privileged to an “insight” unavailable to others (Boschetti 1988: 100). Literary *revues* were not, then, entirely apolitical, and Émile Zola’s ‘J’accuse’ crystallised “the mobilisation that occurred around the person of Alfred Dreyfus” and the founding figure of the French intellectual (MacDonald 2003: 196). This canonical ‘universal’ or ‘classic intellectual’ “addresses those in power”, seeks “to mould public opinion” and “enlighten” based on their “special competence” as “a universal conscience” that transcends “dogmatic particularism” (Brewer 1997: 16). This model is still paradigmatic: despite subsequent suspicions of transcendental universals, both Pierre Bourdieu and Bernard-Henri Lévy, for example, have since worn “le costume de l’intellectuel universel”, regardless of their claims to the contrary (Noiriel 2006: 192).

It was the artistic avant-gardes of the early twentieth century who developed a more partisan political program, as Surrealist *revues* mutated from *Littérature* (1919-1924) to *La Révolution surréaliste* (1924-1929) and *Le Surréalisme au service de la révolution* (1930-1933). Georges Bataille followed a similar trajectory from *Documents* (1929-1930) to *Contre-Attaque* (1935-1936), and such vanguardism influenced later *revues* such as *Tel Quel*. This emphasis on a “collective adventure” also inspired Sartre in the post-war period, who accordingly abandoned subversive marginality for the “social responsibility” of the universal intellectual (Marx-Scouras 1996: 12). In *Les Temps modernes* (1945-present) he advocated a political engagement of both the writer and his work, yet remained wedded to notions of a universal conscience. Sartre still principally referred to *écrivains* rather than intellectuals (Surya 2004b: 21), drawing authority from the *zolian* figure of the writer as an insightful observer. Sartre thus rejected “une carrière universitaire” (Noiriel 2006: 97): yet the balance between writers and professors was soon to shift.

Furthermore, Sartre’s definition of an “intellectuel engagé” can be seen as a “tautologie” if there is no “intellectuel sans engagement” (Rieffel 1993: 16). Daniel Bensaïd

therefore asks “pourquoi alors ne pas dire simplement militant?” (2010a: 190). Yet in the post-war period militancy meant adherence to the dogmatic Parti communiste français (PCF) and its *revue Lettres françaises* (1941-1972) which stifled intellectual activity (see Surya 2004b: 140-204). As the PCF’s hold on the French left fractured in the 1950s, however, heterodox Marxist *revues* proliferated, such as *Socialisme ou barbarie* (1949-1967) and *Arguments* (1956-62), the home of Heideggerian Marxism (Poster 1975: 209). Militant thought provided a more conceptual than literary intellectual figure. In *Critique* (1946-present) and *Tel Quel* (1960-1982) authority now stemmed from the theoretical constructs derived from texts rather than literature itself, and others were entirely unconcerned with literature: “an exaggeration of the influence of neo-Nietzschean and neo-Heideggerian tendencies” (Hallward 2012: 3) in this period has occluded the importance of more explicitly scientific *revues*, such as the combination of Althusser and Lacan found in *Cahiers pour l’analyse* (1966-69).

Whilst these *revues* created “une ‘upper intelligentsia’ fermée sur elle-même” (Thibaud 1977: 523) the following years saw “le déclin d’une certaine forme de théoricisme” (Rieffel 1993: 622). Furthermore, if between 1960 and 1975 “les revues intellectuelles se définissent encore selon des clivages idéologiques et politiques très marqués” (222), they were vulnerable to shifts of the wider political climate. The mutation in intellectual culture with which this Introduction began will be discussed further in Chapter 1, in which a frustration with high theory and a suspicion of revolutionary vanguardism led to a “crisis of confidence and a process of self-questioning among many intellectuals” (Flood and Hewlett 2000: 2). Nevertheless a definitive shift had taken place towards philosophy and the university as sites of intellectual legitimation, rather than literature.

Characteristic of this move towards knowledgeable *savants* in the mid-1970s was Foucault’s definition of the specific intellectual. Rather than a general presumption of universal knowledge and moral superiority, a specific intellectual used her detailed knowledge of particular subjects for “une politique ancrée dans les problèmes posés par les luttes sociales” (Eribon 2007: 37); the scope of such interventions “tended to be more limited” (Drake 2002: 161), focusing on racism, human rights and immigration. Rather than a global political program, they aimed at “une modification du rapport entre gouvernants et gouvernés” (Eribon 2007: 38). Rather than the “éléments principaux” in political struggles, professors were “échangeurs” facilitating the distribution of information (Noiriel 2006: 231). Instead of *revues*, this intellectual functioned principally through organisations, such as the Groupe d’information sur les prisons and Médecins sans frontières, who published their own

brochures and used the mass-media as a communicational relay. However, Bourdieu's *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* was formed in 1975, and this *revue* would increasingly support social movements in the 1990s.

By contrast, the mediatic intellectual, born in 1977, gained legitimation “not *because* of a corpus of work which underpins their political intervention, but via a *popularisation* of their work” (Drake 2002: 164). The *nouveaux philosophes* are now well known, yet interestingly were another new intellectual configuration which bypassed *revues*. Bernard-Henri Lévy already controlled a monograph collection at Grasset and had many mass-media contacts, Bernard Pivot's television show *Apostrophes* playing a key role (Chaplin 2007) (though Lévy would later create *La Règle du jeu* (1990-present), suggesting he still valued *revues*). The term ‘mediatic intellectual’ is itself problematic, as it often used pejoratively: yet its existence can caution us against seeing intellectuals as those “who are commonly viewed as such by the media” (Kemp 2009: 201) as this approach inadvertently privileges those who court celebrity status.

The tangential relationship between these new intellectual figures and *revues* could suggest that these publications were losing their importance. Yet the most significant new figure of the 1980s was variously called the “committed observer” (Jennings 1997: 75), the democratic intellectual (Mongin 1994), or the responsible intellectual (Goslan 2004). After the dismantling of the Marxist-structuralist left, Raymond Aron became exemplary for his “modesty, moderation, lucidity and moral clarity”, whilst broadly accepting liberal-democratic frameworks (Jennings 1997: 75). Such intellectuals were then “résolument réformiste, privilégiant l'expertise et le commentaire à l'engagement” (Juilliard and Winock 1996a: 388). *Revues* were crucial for the dominance of this new figure, notably Paul Thibaud's *Esprit*, Aron's *Commentaire* (1978-present) and Pierre Nora's *Le Débat* (1980-present), and thus remained a key “means of cultural renewal” (Marx-Scouras 1996: 9).

Through these *revues*' connections to think tanks such the Fondation Saint-Simon (1982-1999), the relationship between journalists, intellectuals, business figures and politicians become closer. Yet as the “favourite position” of a French intellectual is often “that of opposing the stance of their own government” (Goslan 1997: 80), governmental collaboration is sometimes viewed as “une soumission” (Eribon 2007: 68). The emphasis on consensus and participation proffered by *Le Débat* led Gérard Noiriel to label these newly liberal thinkers “les intellectuels de gouvernement” (Noiriel 2006: 120). Jeremy Ahearne describes this designation as “somewhat tendentious” (2010: 25), again often operating as a pejorative label to de-legitimate opponents. However, if not a rigorous category, the term

remains useful as it is a distinction largely held by *Lignes*, and is an indication of where various intellectuals position themselves with regards to the government.

Following Edgar Morin's 'Groupe des dix' which put science in the service of politics (Chamak 1997), *Le Débat* also encouraged the cultivation of a "conscience collective des enjeux et des progrès de la science moderne" (Rieffel 1993: 397). Literary debate became even more of a "rareté" (Mongin 1994: 228), having been replaced by theory and science. The 1990s saw another shift as "les sciences humaines et sociales commencent à occuper une position centrale" (Rieffel 1993: 220), yet after the relative quietism of the 1980s (Goslan 1997: 87) this recourse to statistical expertise was politicised, especially by Bourdieu, his new publishing arm *Raisons d'agir* and *revue Liber* (1989-1998). This newly militant atmosphere produced multiple new *revues* such as *Vacarme* (1997-present), *Contretemps* (2000-present) and *Multitudes* (2000-present), *revues* again participating in rejuvenating intellectual engagement.

Tied to global anti-capitalist struggles, this repoliticisation also created the "intellectuel radical" (Noiriel 2006: 100), as thinkers such as Badiou and Slavoj Žižek straddled the positions of an engaged militant alongside courting media fame. Whilst Noiriel is cynical of what he sees as American posturing, such figures have instituted a greater communicational relay between French ideas and the rest of the world. *Revues* have a tendency to remain "a specifically French, Parisian phenomenon" (ffrench 1995: 44): this radical trans-nationality may challenge such parochialism.

These are some of the key tendencies of intellectual activity over the last century. Notably, *Lignes* engages positively or negatively with all of these traits, reminding us that as tendencies and functions no one person, or *revue*, ever fully incarnates just one such figure. As Noiriel argues, "les grands combats intellectuels ont toujours pris la forme d'un affrontement de pétitions" (2006: 187), *Lignes* publishing many such *zolian* statements. As discussed in Chapter 2, Bataille, Blanchot and Mascolo's resistance to engaged literature is influential for *Lignes*, yet contributors also include militant figures such as Daniel Bensaïd. There are also Foucauldians in the *revue*, Chapter 5 detailing *sans-papiers* activism akin to specific intellectual interventions. Whilst *Lignes'* first series is dominated by neo-Nietzscheans, the second series sees the increased collaboration of former Althusserians such as Badiou and Rancière, producing an interesting confluence of these two currents. Whilst *Lignes* cultivates a sober withdrawal from the sphere of the "télintellectuels" (Surya 2007c: 41), 'radical' figures such as Badiou also create high profile scandals with more 'mediatic' figures such as Alain Finkielkraut. Although Surya laments the fact that few *Lignes*

contributors wanted a more literary format (2010a: 82), *écriture* still remains a privileged activity for some participants. However, the general shift from the literary to the scientific seems to have “favorisé la spécialisation” (Brouillette 2013: 320). Special issues of *revues* were reasonably common in the 1960s to boost sales, Patron noting that special issues of *Critique* sold 4,000 rather than 1,000 (2000: 140). Such focused issues have become increasingly common, issues of *Lignes*’ second series being “maintenant monothématiques” as readers seem more interested in themes rather than the “mouvement d’une revue” (Surya 2007b: 36). Such a shift is perhaps symptomatic of a format that has moved closer to the academy and specialised research to survive within a hostile publishing climate.

### **Approaches to the *revue* form**

Before moving on to *Lignes*, a few notes on methodology. There are two general scholarly approaches to *revues*: one sociological, the other quasi-biographical. Influenced by Pierre Bourdieu, Jean-François Sirinelli pioneered an “adapted structural constructivism” (Kaupii 1994: xviii) based around ‘intellectual sociability’ (Tresbitsch 1992: 12). Such accounts situate intellectuals within “champs des forces et de concurrence”, such as political networks and publishing enterprises (Boschetti 1994: 54). They often involve statistics of sales figures, graphs demonstrating the types of articles published, and charts displaying the relationships between publications and institutions. They also emphasise the cultural capital of intellectuals, based on their social background and education. Half of Anna Boschetti’s account (1988), for example, is devoted to the emergence of Sartre as a consecrated intellectual to then explain how *Les Temps modernes* dominated the field.

However, this approach is more suited to *revues* aiming at cultural “hegemony” (Boschetti 1988: 147): as *Lignes* occupies a more marginal position, the wider *champ des forces* seems less relevant. This thesis wants to explore the link between their intellectual heritage and political engagements, for which the second approach is more suitable. The quasi-biographical method was first used by Francis Mulhern in *The Moment of ‘Scrutiny’*, who describes it as an attempt “to understand the journal in its material specificity: not as a serially published ‘big book’ but as a practice that unfolds in time” (1979: ix). The *revue* is depicted as an entity formed within a historical context that develops over time, either with or against its own era. There are two angles of research: the development of ideas over time, and the *revue*’s cultural rapport with its own historical conditions. Of monographs devoted to *Tel Quel*, Patrick French’s *The Time of Theory* (1995) focuses more on the *revue* as a laboratory

of ideas, whilst Danielle Marx-Scouras (1996) emphasises material, cultural politics. Whilst Chapters 1-3 touch on the intellectual genealogies explored by French, this account tends towards cultural politics and Mulhern's "historical materialism" (1979: ix) in its attempt to situate the *revue* within contemporary debates and events to elucidate the particular stakes involved with the positions subsequently expressed. Furthermore, as no academic work on *Lignes* exists, that it is not widely read outside of France and given that the first series has been out of print for many years, the approach is also largely expository in its attempt to represent the broad range of work contained within the *revue*. Detailed textual analysis or conceptual probing is largely eschewed to give a sympathetic account of the mechanics of the arguments presented in *Lignes* and their interaction with the contemporary period. Such an account is deemed to be the necessary foundation on which further work on this intellectual milieu could be based.

One problem with this approach, however, is the tendency in which "on hypostasie la revue, en considérant cette réalité collective comme un sujet unique, dont on parle comme d'une personne" (Boschetti 1994: 54). *Revue*s produce a dynamic mode of thinking, with many contributors providing a fecund plurality of responses. Despite different degrees of conceptual homogeneity, assuming that a "ligne politique" of a *revue* can be treated "comme un objet autosuffisant, obéissant à une logique immanente" tends to be reductive (54). This thesis attempts to demonstrate the diversity of positions in *Lignes* throughout. The proper name '*Lignes*' will be used in a manner which seems to designate a definite milieu with commonly shared positions, yet such references are meant to indicate a tendency within the *Lignes* milieu, shared by enough contributors to be significant, but without implying a definite position shared by all. '*Lignes*' will be used as a singular noun as the *revue* as object becomes more than the sum of its individual contributors, and the dynamic of thought it produces is unique to it; yet each usage of this noun refers to a loose and shifting grouping of some of the *revue*'s contributors, whose significant individual stances will also be delineated throughout. Similarly, given space constraints only certain key themes have been treated; these have been selected to attempt a representative account of the *revue*, but inevitably such choices were affected by the author's particular interests. Rather than an exhaustive and objective account, then, this thesis is a partial representation in which '*Lignes*' refers more to the author's perception of this *revue* than to the physically existing object.

There are also unfortunate consequences of studying one *revue* in detail, especially given "l'intensité du lien affectif" periodicals can elicit (Domenach 1986: 21). For example, Philippe Forest (1995) has been criticised for being too "proche" to the *Tel Quel* milieu to be



genuinely critical (Hourmant 1996: 122). Whilst attempting to avoid apologetics, the aim is to present, as clearly as possible, the ideas contained within *Lignes*: such a detailed understanding requires a degree of sympathetic reading and explication. Furthermore, when other *revues* are discussed in *Lignes*, they are often foils against which *Lignes* negatively defines itself: as a result, publications such as *Esprit* and *Le Débat* appear in a somewhat caricatured form, defined by their worst aspects. An effort is made to avoid assuming such caricatures, but to give an equally empathetic account of *Lignes*' contemporaries would require reading them equally comprehensively, something not possible within the scope of this study. The reader is therefore advised to view the depiction of other *revues* with a degree of reservation.

Lastly, Jean Starobinski notes that *revues* “ont constamment porté un visage: celui de l'ami qui en avait la charge” (1996: 8). This seems to be especially true of *Lignes*, in which Michel Surya has always been the dominant figure. During the first series, editorial duties were split roughly between Surya, Francis Marmande and Daniel Dobbels, yet Surya's voice remained the most prominent. The larger editorial board of the second series is not “décisionnaire” (Surya 2007b: 30): members suggest themes that the *revue* could tackle, and subsequently often play a large role in constructing such dossiers, but Surya has the final say. Surya is little known in the Anglophone academy, except for his award winning biography of Georges Bataille (1987a, 1992b, 2002b). Yet alongside editing the *revue*, he has authored five fictional works, four volumes of literary criticism, five volumes on political domination, a history of revolutionary post-war French thought, and a collection of essays on Bataille, and has edited and prefaced many re-published works by this canonical author. Surya is a major French intellectual figure long overdue closer Anglophone attention.

Yet as with the *revue*, ‘Michel Surya’ is a tricky object of study. He frequently states that *Lignes* is not the *revue* he would like it to be, but the *revue* that his epoch created in its image (2007c: 12). The minor role of fiction and poetry in the *revue* (Surya 2010a: 82), and the emphasis on communism over anarchism (Surya 2009c: 55), are two examples of Surya ceding his desires to the wider demands of *Lignes*' contributors. Surya stresses that he is not “exactement d'accord” (2010a: 30) with everything that appears in *Lignes*, and so his stance cannot be strictly aligned with the *revue*. Care is taken to disentangle Surya's views from those of the *revue* at large, but given the prominence of his voice there can be no strict division. Meadow Dibble-Dieng argues that editing a journal is “a distinct form of writing, one we must increasingly learn to read” (2013: 224). Other than when referring explicitly to

his monographs, references to ‘Michel Surya’ should be perceived as an attempt to read him as an editor-writer, rather than simply an independent individual.

## Chapter Plan

Alongside some methodological considerations, the above has briefly sketched the history of both intellectuals and *revues* throughout the twentieth century. A more detailed account will be given in Chapter 1 to situate *Lignes* within the intellectual field at the moment of its creation in 1987. The first two chapters also elucidate the *revue*’s intellectual genealogy and rapport with two major historical moments, the 1930s and the 1960s. Chapter 1 examines the political engagements of Georges Bataille and Maurice Blanchot in the face of fascism. Returning to events occurring half a century before the creation of *Lignes* may seem an excessive act of historicisation. However, *Lignes*’ editors Surya, Marmande and Dobbels were key figures in establishing the known narrative of these events, and “confronté à la réécriture de l’Histoire” in the 1980s, the production and defence of this version of history has been one of *Lignes*’ primary tasks (Surya 2004c: 17). Furthermore, many of the *revue*’s contributors develop their own intellectual and political positions through this period, even if the post-war context introduces an element of differentiation from this past period. Bataille’s dual critique of liberal democracy and fascism programmatically outlines *Lignes*’ future political stance, as well as suggesting the Counter-Enlightenment and neo-Nietzschean intellectual heritage shared by many contributors, and an interest in transgressive, avant-garde aesthetics. Chapter 2 covers *Lignes*’ important issues dedicated to Blanchot, Robert Antelme and Dionys Mascolo to elucidate their influence on subsequent structuralist thinkers, and the models of intellectual engagement and cultural politics provided by their activities throughout the 1960s. The genealogy of the concept of friendship, heterodox communisms, debates surrounding new modes of intellectual solidarity and the relative autonomy of art and literature all feed into contemporary contributors’ own thought, and Blanchot’s aborted *Revue internationale* becomes one of the most influential predecessors for Surya’s *revue*. Furthermore, *Lignes*’ rapport to the period of high theory is examined, as its different historical moment and intellectual genealogy tempers their embrace of transgressive aesthetics, despite sharing a literary canon similar to that of *Tel Quel*.

The following two chapters focus more specifically on the first series of *Lignes* (1987-1999). If Surya is reluctant to ascribe specific positions to the *revue*, Chapter 3 investigates several thematic issues from this series to elucidate what could be described as a

loose *ethos* shared by the *Lignes* milieu. *Immoralité* and *irréligion* are part of a counter-Enlightenment trajectory, and the deconstructive insistence on an *impur* and *impropre* ontology is pitted against claims of national, racial or cultural authority. Yet these counter-discursive, negatively orientated values puts *Lignes* in stark opposition to various contemporaneous *revues*, and such a tension develops into more considered and defined positions. Lastly, the opposition of *opacité* to *transparence* in language, art, and especially economics sees the *revue* moving more explicitly towards something of a positive program of analysis. The shift of the *revue*'s political concerns from the rise of the extreme right to neo-liberal economics is tracked more explicitly in Chapter 4. Whilst the return of 'fascism' remains a theme throughout the first series, the capitulation of the Socialist left to business interests and anti-immigration rhetoric takes centre stage. Initially more of a plural space, the *revue* came to occupy a more defined position on the radical left during the social movements (1995 to 1998). *Lignes*' temporally houses alternative policy debates, however it is the activism surrounding immigration and the *sans-papiers* that is principally retained heading into the new millennium.

In moving on to the second series (from 2000 to the present), Chapter 5 continues this account of *Lignes*' political concerns, notably around immigration and the proliferation of *centres de rétention administrative*. Discourses of securitisation and crisis are opposed as *Lignes* responds by searching for new modes of political agency. The formation of a more militant editorial board mines a new intellectual genealogy including Trotskyist figures such as David Rousset, re-energising ideas of a universal politics and a politicisation of human rights. Stronger forms of prescriptive politics are proffered by Jacques Rancière and Alain Badiou, but their total rejection of parliamentary processes also causes division in the *revue*'s milieu, posing the question of the role of the intellectual under liberal democracy. Chapter 6 further probes the problematic relationship between the crises in art and economics, and *Lignes*' accompanying shift in cultural politics. Pier Paolo Pasolini and Guy Debord are re-evaluated for an account of alienation through which the state of contemporary art and its political purchase is placed into the context of the European economic crisis. Forming a counterpoint to Chapter 2, between Anselm Jappe and Jacques Rancière an account of the political role of artists and intellectuals is developed running contrary to the aesthetic liberty and quasi-romantic emphasis on writing of Bataille and Blanchot.

Whilst the majority of the thesis reads *Lignes* sympathetically, the conclusion takes a more critical stance by staging a comparison between Anglophone 'French Theory' and *Lignes* to detect what remains un-thought in the *revue*. Whilst the political and intellectual

stakes of post-colonial theory are assumed by *Lignes*, there is a distinct discordance over issues of cultural identity. The benefits of nuancing their stance on identity politics will be explored via the debates over Parity and PACS, and the accusations of anti-Semitism levelled at Badiou. It will be suggested that a more affirmative stance on minority struggles may help the *revue* extend its lifespan into the future without eradicating the negative tensions, productive to the thought that continues to emerge through *Lignes*.

***Lignages: Political, Intellectual, Literary***

## Chapter 1

### *Lignes* and the 1930s: Fascism, Anti-parliamentarianism and the Political

Within *Lignes*' intellectual heritage, two names predominate: Georges Bataille and Maurice Blanchot. Of the *revue*'s initial editors, Michel Surya and Francis Marmande are two of France's most prominent Bataille experts, and Daniel Dobbels was a personal acquaintance of Blanchot's milieu, including Robert Antelme and Dionys Mascolo. *Lignes* is frequently associated with these figures, who orientate many of the *revue*'s concerns and positioning in the intellectual field. Two periods of their lives are especially important, Surya stating that the 1930s and 1960s were revisited "pour penser *au passé* les questions que *Lignes* me posait au présent" (2007b: 35). This chapter focuses on the pre-war period, and the following covers the 1960s, to indicate the influence this genealogy had on the subsequent composition of *Lignes*.

The 1930s are crucial years for the critical reception of Bataille and Blanchot due to their political engagements. With a "vague d'antiparlementarisme" encompassing both the extreme right and radical left (Bident 1998: 50), Blanchot and Bataille took respective positions on either side. Fifty years later the reception of their actions called into question their intellectual legacy, within which *Lignes* had situated itself. The *revue*'s editors subsequently felt interpolated to defend the historical record, but also to closely scrutinise texts from the period to fully appraise their significance.

To grasp the stakes of these concerns, however, one must first depict the French intellectual climate of the 1980s. The decade spanning 1977 to 1987 witnessed a backlash against Marxist and structuralist thought, the dominance of a more conservative liberalism and a focus on intellectual fascism. It was as the Heidegger affair erupted in 1987 that *Lignes* was born, and the debates surrounding intellectual fascism continue to mark its catalogue: 2014 saw the publication of *La Conférence de Heidelberg*, in which post-structuralists discussed Heidegger's Nazism, and *Lignes* issue 43, *Les Politiques de Maurice Blanchot*, which examines Blanchot's pre-war journalism alongside his 1960s interventions.

This chapter, then, mediates between three temporal points: the 1930s, the 1980s and *Lignes*' first issues, and the present moment. Having delineated the context of the late 1980s, it will return to Blanchot's pre-war journalism to elucidate the significance of *Lignes*' recent Blanchot issue. Having said little during the scurrilous debates of the 1980s, *Lignes* is now more openly critical of Blanchot's former politics. Surya is especially keen to disentangle Blanchot's legacy from Bataille's. Consequently, the chapter returns to the 1930s to

demonstrate that it is Bataille who informs the political and intellectual orientation of many in the *revue*.

### **The 1980s – *Les années d’hiver***

Two related political and publishing phenomena suggest that “1977-1978 constitue (sans doute plus que 1968) une rupture majeure” in French intellectual life that is crucial to understand the moment that *Lignes* would inhabit (Lindgaard and La Porte 2004: 23). The first involves the ‘exposure’ of Soviet labour camps in Solzhenitsyn’s *L’Archipel du Goulag* (1974). This book had a huge impact in France, receiving mass-media attention. Yet figures such as Boris Souvarine before the war, and David Rousset after, had already produced compelling evidence of the gulags’ existence, and following Khrushchev’s 1956 denunciation of Stalinism no one could realistically claim to be unaware. There was also a notable lag in the popularisation of Solzhenitsyn’s book, the media debate accelerating in 1977, three years after its translation. The furore surrounding the book was a crutch for a wider cultural transformation as the frenzied hysteria surrounding ‘totalitarianism’ had roots in domestic politics. The growing popularity of the coalition between the PS and the PCF made Communists entering government in 1978 increasingly likely. *Esprit* saw this as “a battle between themselves and the PCF for the soul of the PS” (Christofferson 2004: 125), holding a “colloque politique” in 1975 to sharpen their anti-totalitarian rhetoric, and from 1977 *Esprit*’s title page carried a “manifesto against totalitarianism” (141), exaggerating the threat to France posed by the PCF. They managed to produce “a near-consensus behind the position that totalitarianism is the inevitable product of revolutionary projects and discourses” (185), discrediting ambitious programs of social change. Prevailing attitudes had definitively shifted, and by 1989 Aron’s *Commentaire* claimed that they “ont gagné, c’est-à-dire contribué à exorciser le marxisme et l’union de la gauche” (Rieffel 1993: 257).

This political phenomenon coincided with a wider shift in publishing culture. There was “une dynamique de concentration dans le monde de l’édition” (Lindgaard and La Porte 2004: 26), and publishers began to privilege short polemical essays, facilitating the rise of the *nouveaux philosophes*. Whilst André Glucksman, Alain Finkielkraut and Bernard-Henri Lévy “offered rather simplistic and extraordinarily pessimistic political philosophies, they were enormously successful” (Christofferson 2004: 156). They represented themselves as political dissidents countering illiberal oppression, drawing “directly from the intense anxiety” (157) produced by totalitarianism. Although they presented themselves as repentant *ex-soixante-*

*huitards*, “many of their positions were actually drawn from the repertoire of the right”, catalysing a “right-wing renewal” (Chaplin 2007: 159).

The dismantling of the progressive left heralded a move towards the more reactive defence of civil liberties and left the stage open for more conservative thinkers. François Furet’s *Penser la Révolution française* (1978) “played a central role” in imposing historians as the most prominent intellectuals of the 1980s, and blurred distinctions between the electoral left and right by attacking the Jacobin revolutionary tradition (Christofferson 2004: 231). Via his connections to editors, journalists and politicians, Furet built an influential network of “intellectuels de gouvernement” (Noiriel 2006: 130), helping to place liberal ideology in a dominant position. By contrast to the polemical 1960s, the emphasis was now placed on consensus by the new *revue Le Débat*, editor Pierre Nora arguing that “il faut détruire” the current crop of French intellectuals to enact “sa révolution démocratique” (1980: 12). Marxists and structuralists were seen as intransigently dogmatic, and so many of the old intellectual guard, such as Pierre Bourdieu, Jacques Derrida and Gilles Deleuze, “n’ont pas d’existence dans *Le Débat*” or *Esprit* (Noiriel 2006: 125). Yet whilst Furet lauded the new “normalisation and relative consensus” (Flood and Hewlett 2000: 4), critics argued that consensus “functions more as a regulatory idea for conservative thought” (Gaillard 1998: 66).

Despite the scare-mongering, however, the elections of 1981 brought Mitterrand and the PS to power. The right-wing vote was divided between Jacques Chirac and Valéry Giscard d’Estaing, the latter’s “domestic credibility” being undermined by the unemployment and inflation caused by the oil crises of 1973 and 1979 (Sowerwine 2009: 362). By contrast, the popularity of the charismatic Mitterrand allowed him to domesticate the “diminished” PCF in a less threatening Common Program, initiating the PS’s “rightward trajectory” (Thompson 2007: 109). Their victory was initially a moment of jubilation. With “classes and workers” removed from the Common Program, intellectuals embraced the second left’s emphasis on social movements (such as feminism, gay rights and immigration issues) (Ross 1991: 170). Nevertheless, the relationship quickly soured: the PS failed to support Poland’s dissident Solidarity movement; and, by 1983, they had embraced the neo-liberal free market orthodoxy sweeping through Europe, legitimating Jean Baudrillard’s description of the PS as “le simulacre d’une alternative” (1985: 77). The PS turned to intellectuals for re-legitimation, who subsequently played “a very important re-orientating role”: however, having abandoned their former radicalism they perpetuated the “‘soft’ liberal revisionism” dominating the political scene (Ross 1991: 70), with the remaining critical voices branded “irresponsible” enemies of the left (Eribon 2007: 73). The PS professionalised itself, severing its ties to



radical social movements, and underwent a “révolution conservatrice”, a drift to the right that was “intellectuell, politique, existentiel même” (19).

These are the reasons for “la passivité, la désorientation” of the 1980s, which Félix Guattari called *les années d’hiver* (1986: 61). An inflated anti-totalitarian discourse drove intellectuals away from Marxism; the *nouveaux philosophes* popularised a simplified, humanist, dissident stance; Furet and *Le Débat* imposed a new liberal, conservative hegemony; and the PS betrayed the social movements and embraced neo-liberalism.

### **The Obsession with French Fascism**

Furthermore, this context was exacerbated by a series of scandals surrounding intellectual complicity with fascism. Victor Farías’ *Heidegger et le nazisme* (1987) should not have created a media event: there was an “academic awareness” of Heidegger’s proximity to the Nazi party (Geroulanos 2007: 26), and Farías’ unsophisticated account was described as “laughable” (38). Its impact was inflated due to its mobilisation in a wider project of intellectual de-legitimation by Luc Ferry and Alain Renault. Although they distanced themselves from the *nouveaux philosophes*, they essentially continued the assault on the previous intellectual generation. With Marxism now an “idéologie morte”, they targeted “les variantes françaises de l’heideggérianisme” (9). Once again, the stakes were political as well as philosophical.

Begun with *La Pensée 68* (1984), the Heidegger affair confirmed Ferry and Renault’s “espoirs” (1988: 9) and they expanded their argument in *Heidegger et les modernes* (1988). As well as belonging to a “cult of paradox” rejecting “clarity” (Geroulanos 2007: 35), Derrida, Foucault, Lacoue-Labarthe and Blanchot were criticised for their “néo-conservatisme” (Ferry and Renault 1988: 229): because Heidegger’s critique of modernity rested on describing a “monde de la technique” (45), Ferry and Renault characterised this position as anti-technological and reactionary. Yet Derrida and Bernard Stiegler found Heidegger useful to rethink *technê* as something “that can be utilised for good or ill” (Bradley 2011: 5), not necessarily a conservative approach. Tellingly, anti-modern here also means “anti-liberal” (Geroulanos 2007: 53), this project participating in *Le Débat*’s construction of a liberal, humanist hegemony as Ferry and Renault ask: what is so “effroyable” about consensus (1985: 288)? As anti-humanist thought posits “l’autonomie du sujet” as “une illusion” (18), it threatens liberal democracy as a minimum of subjective agency is required for “une pensée démocratique” (1988: 42). Subsequently, they argue that “an honestly leftist position had to

now confront its debt to Heidegger and reject him” (Geroulanos 2007: 47), also jettisoning Derrida, Foucault and Nancy.

The Heidegger and de Man affairs resonated with other debates occurring in France and America.<sup>4</sup> Fascism became interesting “because it now was associated with the most legitimised school of thought: Deconstruction” (Lacroix 2002: 59). Against the ascendancy of French Theory, American neo-conservatives launched “une véritable croisade idéologique” (Cusset 2003: 176) for a “retour du nationalisme américain et aux nouvelles avancées du libre-marché” (196). As Lacroix notes, “many of these texts” tended to “overdo” (2002: 62) the relationship between post-structuralism and fascism to discredit the French influence. Richard Wolin, for example, complained that French thought was “storming the ramparts” of the academy (2004: 9), arguing that after Heidegger deconstruction “can hardly seem an entirely innocent affair” (1993: 275). The American “obsession” (Lacroix 2002: 60) with French fascism turned towards other figures, such as Bataille and Blanchot, who participated in extreme political movements and were also central to the “concerns of postmodernism” (Richardson 1992: 27). French scholars were also gravitating towards these issues: following Eugen Weber’s *Action française* (1962), Loubet del Bayle (1969) more firmly inscribed Blanchot within ‘non-conformist’ 1930s milieus. In 1976, the *revue Gramma* was the first to reproduce some of Blanchot’s journalistic texts. Rather than follow Blanchot’s emphasis on “l’effacement” of the author, the editors aimed to “inscrire Blanchot dans l’histoire où il est pris et que, d’une certaine manière, il dérange, il pervertit” (*Gramma* 1976: 4). Yet this was not a hostile gesture, Blanchot encouraging them to undertake the project “dans le plus grand esprit de liberté par rapport à moi” (1976: 5).

This scholarly approach became envenomed in the 1980s. The important process of historical revision was often undertaken by “des personnes qui ne manquaient pas d’autres raisons de ne pas aimer Blanchot”, and so was frequently “malintentionné” (*Lignes* 2014: 5). Whilst Jeffrey Mehlman described his *Legacies of Anti-Semitism* as “exploratory rather than accusatory” (1983: 3), he became embroiled in a debate with Mathieu Bénézet for calling Blanchot anti-Semitic (108). Mehlman’s chapter on Blanchot also implicated “the Foucault-Glucksmann nexus” (18) with fascistic positions: symptomatically, a text ostensibly on the 1930s also targeted post-war French theory. Mehlman’s text was mobilised in French debates, appearing in *Tel Quel* as part of Philippe Sollers’ campaign to overexpose “le passé trouble de Blanchot” for “des fins de meurtre intellectuel” (Halsberghe 2006: 36). Writers

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<sup>4</sup> For the scandal surrounding Paul de Man’s war-time journalism, see McQuillan (2001: 97-112).

connected to *Esprit* also attacked Blanchot's legacy, Tzvetan Todorov labelling Blanchot "le porte-parole d'un certain antisémitisme" (1984: 73). Steven Ungar was less deliberately hostile, critiquing Todorov's charges of guilt "by association" (1995: 144). Yet Ungar admits that his own approach is "convoluted" (100), and was criticised for not dealing with sensitive issues "avec assez de lucidité" (Rabaté 1996: 919). For Rabaté, Ungar risks "un amalgame discutable" (922) between Blanchot's journalism and Vichy, asserting that Blanchot was not a collaborator and therefore Ungar's account perpetuated a "faux scandale".

Similarly, Bataille had long been suspected of fascist tendencies, Surya commenting that when working on his biography many interviewees assumed that Bataille actually "was a fascist" (Stoekl 1990: 181). Bataille has generally been portrayed as an "irresponsible thinker", "hostile to democracy" and "seduced by fascism" (Besnier 1995: 13). In 1983, Boris Souvarine described Bataille as "fasciné par Hitler" and capable "de prose nazie" (Marmande 2011a: 43). Having repeated such claims, Lindenberg goes on to attack Bataille's post-war *revue Critique* as "un bastion de nietzschéisme et du heideggérianisme français" (1990: 124), and compares structuralism to "nihilisme" (271). Mehlman's *Legacies* concluded by shifting the focus onto Bataille, claiming that post-structuralism "has lived lavishly" on Bataille's "conceptual baggage" (1983: 90). In an intellectual atmosphere already hostile to 'French theory', then, the Heidegger affair added fuel to the fire. *Lignes* was not particularly invested in protecting Heidegger; nevertheless the climate this scandal provoked limited what they felt they could publish regarding Blanchot, and also encouraged a defensive stance with respect to Bataille. Their interventions on behalf of both will be examined in turn.

### **Maurice Blanchot: The Silent Politics of Friendship**

Erupting concurrently with its creation, the Heidegger affair was covered in *Lignes*' second issue. The dossier historicises the debate, reproducing an Éric Weil article from 1947 to show how much was known even then, and Jean-Michel Palmier delineates "les erreurs objectives" contained within Farías' book (1988: 155). *Lignes* is generally wary of Heidegger's thought, unforgiving of his subsequent silence, but supportive of his intellectual heirs, especially Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy. Crucially, Dobbels (1988a) provides a telling editorial *prise de position*. He quotes at length from *Les Intellectuels en question* (first published in 1984) in which Blanchot argues that Heidegger's favourable statements regarding Hitler are "inexplicables et indéfendables" (Blanchot 1996b: 11). At a moment when Blanchot was himself suspected of anti-Semitism, his heavy presence in Dobbels' piece

is a gesture of support, emphasising that Blanchot was interrogating Heidegger's fascist sympathies years before Farías' book. Crucially, *Les Intellectuels* also contains passages marked by Blanchot's own personal trajectory from anti-Semitic milieus in the 1930s to an empathetic concern for Judaism in the 1980s. Blanchot argues that from "l'affaire Dreyfus à Hitler et à Auschwitz, il s'est confirmé que c'est l'antisémitisme (avec le racisme et la xénophobie) qui a révélé le plus fortement l'intellectuel à lui-même" (1996b: 55). This is as close as Blanchot would come to publicly admitting his past, but he suggests that an investigation of such intellectual trajectories is an important ethical duty, alongside "le souci des autres" (55).

Given the hostile climate, however, open discussion of Blanchot's past was difficult. Many biographical details were still unknown, and his friends were reluctant to add to the accusations being levelled at him: given the "bruyante" manner in which Blanchot was "dénoncé", Nancy felt unable to speak freely (2014b: 155). Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe tried to edit an issue of *Cahiers de L'Herne* devoted to Blanchot's politics in 1984, but the project stumbled. Faced with Mehlman's text, Nancy wanted an appropriate response, yet thought that silence would be better than a dossier not "digne de Blanchot" (2011a: 22). A projected *Lignes* issue also stalled as only Nancy, Lacoue-Labarthe and Alain Badiou seemed willing to participate (20).

Rabaté argued that to end the controversy all of Blanchot's writings should be republished, as "Blanchot n'a pas vraiment à rougir de son passé" (1996: 921): yet other than the few texts in *Gramma*, and Christophe Bident's edited volume of Blanchot's literary chronicles for *Le Journal des débats* (Blanchot 2007), little has appeared from this period. Bident (1998) and Hill (1997) subsequently provided detailed yet sympathetic accounts of Blanchot's life, pitted against the more critical Mesnard (1996). Mesnard's presentation of the 1930s differs little from Bident's, and he is critical of Todorov and Mehlman's accounts (1996: 39-41). Yet he assumes that Blanchot was always anti-Semitic, and goes on to suggest that following the Holocaust, as Blanchot "ne peut plus être antisémite" overtly, he channelled his disgust towards substitute objects such as "l'idée de foule, de multitude et d'espace public" (1996: 227). Bident criticised this as "une sur-lecture" (1997: 50) which, starting from a suspicion of Blanchot's anti-Semitism, detects signs of it everywhere. Notably, Mesnard last contributed to *Lignes* in 1995, just before publishing his *Blanchot*: conversely, Bident became a key contributor, publishing eight articles between 1995 and 2001. There is then an allegiance with critics treating Blanchot's – and Bataille's – past

sympathetically.<sup>5</sup> However, questions continued to be raised, Wolin suggesting that there remained “a desire to keep at bay an awareness of unsettling historical complicities, facts, and events” (2004: 190).

What *Lignes* could make available, via Dobbels, were several comprehensive dossiers documenting the post-war activities of Antelme, Mascolo and Blanchot, affirming the latter’s involvement with exemplary acts of left-wing engagement. These three dossiers (discussed in the following chapter) provided a new, laudable portrait of Blanchot to counter the criticisms he was undergoing. Yet other than Roger Laporte’s assertion that it is insufficient to simply state that there is “évidemment aucun rapport entre la pensée de Blanchot et l’antisémitisme” (1990: 18), commentary on Blanchot’s pre-war journalism is absent. *Lignes*’ edition of Blanchot’s *Écrits politiques* (2003) covered only the period from 1958 to 1993 in which, for example, Blanchot made interventions in protest against the Algerian War and enthusiastically participated in May ’68. The omission of his pre-war writings led to suspicions that *Lignes* was deliberately obscuring Blanchot’s past, Ungar claiming that Surya was “presumably unaware” of the issue (1995: xviii). Surya had, in fact, labelled Blanchot an anti-Semite in the 1987 edition of *Georges Bataille*, but removed such references in 1992 as “ce n’était pas le sujet de ce livre” (2014: 14). He explains that “la calomnie” Blanchot was subjected to also meant that *Lignes* felt reduced to silence as they did not want to “tomber d’accord avec les ‘ennemis’ de Blanchot, quand bien même ceux-ci eussent-ils *en cela* eu raison” (13). Mesnard had complained of “un système de défense amicale” (1996: 38) surrounding Blanchot, which Surya therefore admits to participating in. Their silence was eventually broken in 2014, the newest Blanchot issue containing a critique of their previous position as David Uhrig laments the “tendance à ne mentionner depuis lors l’existence de textes politiques de Blanchot publiées dans les années 30 qu’à la condition de les inscrire dans une démarche rétrospective apte à rendre compte de son engagement d’après-guerre” (2014: 127). With Blanchot no longer present, and nearly forty years after the first of his pre-war journalism re-appeared in *Gramma*, the friendly politics of silence undertaken by *Lignes* was over.

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<sup>5</sup> Mesnard argued that Bataille was “probablement séduit” by fascism (1996: 77), whereas Bident defended Bataille from the “vague d’assauts farouches” launched against him (1996: 119); critics often attacked or defended Bataille and Blanchot together, disregarding their political differences.

## Blanchot in the 1930s: *la surenchère journalistique*?

The pre-war political turbulence is easy to underestimate, Besnier noting that whilst today intellectual discourse is “generally unaffected by the vertigo of militancy, in the 1930s it was accompanied by a moving fascination for action” (1990: 170). The Great Depression hit Europe in 1932, weakening governments’ capacity for action and provoking extreme responses. The vacillation of the League of Nations and “the debilitating apathy of parliamentary democracy” in the face of German, Italian and Spanish fascism led many to conclude that “revolt and risk” were the only appropriate responses (170). For Blanchot, rather than the Munich accords it was the unchallenged German re-occupation of the Rhineland in March 1936 which announced Europe’s capitulation; both Bataille’s and his own rhetoric increased in violence throughout this year. By 1938, a gradual acceptance that war was inevitable began a process of retreat and introspection for them both, though precisely when Blanchot renounced extremism is debateable.<sup>6</sup> The following account of Blanchot’s activity is largely based on Bident’s biography (1998). However, whilst Surya praised Bident’s achievement in assembling this narrative, the defence of Blanchot it contains now appears “intenable” (2014: 16).

Born into a wealthy, Catholic and monarchist milieu, Blanchot gravitated towards radical right-wing circles such as Action française when he moved to Paris in his early twenties. From 1931 he was responsible for international affairs at *Les Journal des débats politiques et littéraires*, becoming its editor-in-chief. This daily was the principal organ directed to “l’élite patronale et intellectuelle d’extrême-droite” (Bident 1998: 68). Blanchot’s articles on Nazi Germany were lucid, however, maintaining a “fermeté sans concession” (66-7) against Hitler; at *Le Rempart*, directed by the Jewish nationalist Paul Lévy, Blanchot denounced “les persécutions antisémites” (73-4) perpetuated by Hitler. His political outlook was shaped by his “virulent opposition to the woolly internationalism of the League of Nations” (Hill 1997: 24), Blanchot becoming increasingly exasperated as Hitler remained unchecked.

It was with *Combat* (created in January 1936) that Blanchot’s rhetoric became fervently nationalistic, calling for a revolutionary erasure of the entire political class to save France. Blanchot felt that Blum’s Popular Front were unlikely to be able to fend off Hitler and characterised them as a “bande de dégénérés et de traîtres” (Bident 1998: 81). Whilst

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<sup>6</sup> For more on the radical politics of the 1930s, see Loubet del Bayle (1969), Sternhell (1987), and Verdès-Leroux (1996).

*Combat* claimed restraint, rejecting “l’antisémitisme vulgaire” for an anti-capitalist, “antisémitisme raisonnable” (81), the creation of its propaganda machine *L’Insurgé* in 1937 ramped up the rhetoric, Blanchot being one of the paper’s principal financial backers and editors. Blum was routinely lambasted in anti-Semitic cartoons for which the staff (Blanchot included) were charged for “provocation au meurtre et à la violence” (93). Blanchot’s tone became a uni-dimensional *sur-patriotisme*: in “l’intransigeance maniaque de ses propositions diplomatiques” (98), democracy, communism, fascism, and anti-fascism were all rejected in favour of an increasingly idealised France.

Yet Bident argues that by 1938 Blanchot had distanced himself from his former milieus and was attacked in the anti-Semitic press for his proximity to Lévy, ending “tout risque d’amalgame de ses propres positions avec le fascisme, le nazisme et l’antisémitisme” (101). What had changed? Bident notes a lapse of several months in late 1937 during which Blanchot published nothing, deducing that he was recovering from tuberculosis in Cambolles-Bains. For Bident, this prompted a period of retrospection in which the tensions latent in Blanchot’s writing (not least between *L’Insurgé*’s anti-Semitic rhetoric and his friendships with Emmanuel Levinas and Lévy) became manifest. At an impasse, a period of re-orientation began, Bident claiming that Blanchot “ne signe plus aucun texte à caractère politique pour les milieux d’extrême-droite” (1998: 107).

Crucially, this interpretation has been challenged by David Uhrig’s article, published in 2011 by *H-France Review* and reproduced in *Lignes* (March 2014).<sup>7</sup> Believing what Blanchot himself told Roger Laporte, Bident claims that Blanchot had opposed “la réforme constitutionnelle” which led to the imposition of the Vichy regime (1998: 153). The notion that Blanchot had immediately rejected Vichy was so rife that it even graced the cover of the 1993 edition of *Thomas l’obscur*, which states that Blanchot had refused “catégoriquement de collaborer avec l’occupant” (Mesnard 1996: 46). Yet in articles found by Uhrig, signed by Blanchot in July 1940 in *Aux Écoutes*, not only did Blanchot militate “pour que les pleins pouvoirs soient attribués au maréchal Pétain”, but “il était aussi favorable au coup d’État institutionnel qui a suivi” (Uhrig 2014: 137). This detail is significant: as well as displaying Blanchot continuing his far-right trajectory up until at least 1940, it suggests that Blanchot had not only perhaps misled Laporte, but also friends such as Mascolo, who affirmed that Blanchot’s “silence” was “total” between 1938 and 1940 (Mesnard 1996: 2).

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<sup>7</sup> See <http://www.h-france.net/vol11reviews/vol11no187Uhrig.pdf> [accessed 05 August 2014]

This was, however, the only new detail of significance concerning Blanchot's past revealed in *Lignes* (and this from an already published American article). As Surya notes, many facts had already been established by the "ennemis de Blanchot" (2014: 14): the rest of the issue is concerned with his "amis" re-interpreting these facts (13). One central concern was the existence and extent of Blanchot's connections to anti-Semitism. Hill had argued that "no evidence of any real substance has ever been produced" (1997: 37) to justify ascribing a deep-seated anti-Semitism to Blanchot. Hollier asked how much the vehemence of Blanchot's texts owed "à la surenchère journalistique" (1996: 934). Bident characterises Blanchot's journalism as purveying the "rhétorique imitative" of an "idéologie empruntée" (1998: 112), and argues that Blanchot never explicitly theorised personally held anti-Semitic views (1998: 112). In *Lignes* David Amar contests this, having found one example in which Blanchot had attempted to "théoriser la question juive" (2014: 147), adding that whilst anti-Semitism is not "obsessionnel" (147) in Blanchot, it is present. Nevertheless, there is broad agreement that anti-Semitism was not one of Blanchot's core values.

Yet it is these attenuating details to which *Lignes* took exception. *L'Insurgé* was "une machine de guerre" (Bident 1998: 92) for an anti-Semitic milieu which Blanchot edited and financed. The anti-Semitism in *L'Insurgé* was "essentiel dans sa structure même" (Amar 2014: 145), and given that Blanchot's pieces in this publication are "cohérent[s] avec le reste" (146) of his writing at the time, he fits neatly within such milieus. Furthermore, this was not simply a periodical publication. Against claims that Blanchot's rhetoric lacked a specific political program,<sup>8</sup> Uhrig argues that "un projet réfléchi et cohérent présidait à leur écriture" (2014: 131). Rather than just journalists, those around *L'Insurgé* "sont un véritable groupe politique" (Amar 2014: 149), organising meetings and demonstrations. And as Uhrig demonstrates, Blanchot not just welcomed the rise of Pétain, but had actively "milité" for him to receive "maximal" powers (2014: 137). Furthermore, there was the violence of Blanchot's rhetoric. In July 1936 *Combat* called for "l'assassinat des ministres du Front populaire" (Brémond 2014: 74), and Blanchot actually designated three targets, "Sarraut, Flandin, Mandel" (75); Georges Mandel was eventually killed by a Vichy militia in 1944. Whether Blanchot was actually an anti-Semite, then, takes less precedence than the fact that he produced anti-Semitic texts within an active milieu that were charged with criminal offences for encouraging violent conduct: rather than 'non-conformisme', Brémond subsequently suggests that Blanchot's behaviour was properly fascist (2014: 79).

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<sup>8</sup> Uhrig names Hill, but Mesnard (1996: 22) and Bident (1998: 63) also make this argument.



Furthermore, Uhrig contests Bident's emphasis on the journalistic, rather than intellectual nature of these texts (Bident 1998: 68). Seeing journalism as un-reflexive, Bident argues that "la pensée politique de Blanchot est alors inexistante" (56) at this moment. Symptomatically, editions are produced of Blanchot's post-war *écrits politiques* (such as the *Lignes* edition in 2003), whilst the pre-war writings are considered as "documents" with no "valeur intrinsèque" (Uhrig 2014: 128). Such descriptions attenuate the severity of Blanchot's journalism, and attempt to quarantine these more unsavoury positions from his later works: if the 1930s texts are not the product of Blanchot's thought, the post-war texts remain untainted. Yet this is precisely the position *Lignes* (and Blanchot) saw as inadequate when faced with Heidegger. Dobbels criticised Derrida's attempted to localise Heidegger's fault to a limited period between 1933 and 1934, and endorsed Lacoue-Labarthe's insistence that "l'adhésion de Heidegger ne fut pas seulement formelle, elle fut profonde" (Dobbels 1998a: 198). Blanchot himself argued that the more "on accorde d'importance à la pensée de Heidegger, plus il est nécessaire de chercher à élucider le sens de l'engagement politique de 1933-34" (1996b: 11), and Surya adds that the same criteria apply to Blanchot (2014: 10).

One of the key charges levelled at Heidegger was his silence regarding his fascistic engagement; by contrast, Halsberghe states that, given his reputation for silence, "on est frappé par le souci du politique chez Blanchot" when faced with his critics in the 1980s (2006: 34). Blanchot's preface to Mascolo's *À la recherche d'un communisme de pensée* (1993), *L'Écriture du désastre* (1980), *La Communauté inavouable* (1983) and *Les Intellectuels en question* (1984) all deal with his political past in a more or less cryptic fashion. *Les Intellectuels en question* highlights his concerns regarding Heidegger well in advance of 1987, and *L'Écriture du désastre* also "synthétise en quelque sorte les réticences qu'eut toujours Blanchot envers les articulations principales de la pensée heideggérienne" (Halsberghe 2006: 39). Whilst such a focus implies remorse for his own past, when directly addressing his own actions Blanchot's texts are filled with "atténuations, euphémisations, défaussemements" (Surya 2014: 27). Nancy argues that the *inavouable* truth in Blanchot's *La communauté inavouable* is the "faute politique" of the 1930s (2014a: 125): yet an *aveu* that takes thirty years to be acknowledged is not a straightforward admission of guilt. Uhrig thus complains that Blanchot's "autofictions" have taken precedence over the original 1930s texts (2014: 129). Blanchot was then circumspect regarding his political past: if this was "une faute pour Heidegger, n'en est-ce pas une pour lui?" (Surya 2014: 39). We should remember, however, that *Lignes* also facilitated this silence: the severity of the contributions in 2014 can be seen as a function of the belated arrival of this response.

There are qualitative differences: Blanchot's journalism is less philosophically informed than Heidegger's rapprochement with Nazism. Nevertheless, as with Heidegger concerns remain regarding the continuity between Blanchot's pre-war writings and post-war thought. Mesnard saw a "symétrie" (1996: 252) between Blanchot's 1930s and 1960s political texts, and Surya also analyses the similar rhetorical constructions present in both periods. Whilst the 1960s articles are "admirables" (Surya 2014: 53) and say what needed to be said "exactement et bien" (55), the confluences between the pre- and post-war texts (such as the prevalence of the term *refus*) undermine attempts to completely separate the two. This does not disprove accounts suggesting that through "much self-criticism and scrutiny" Blanchot's thought developed towards a mature practice of writing turned towards an ethical embrace of alterity and community, leaving nationalism and anti-Semitism behind (Hill 1997: 50). It does, however, suggest the persistence of an "extrémisme" (Brémonty 2014: 116) or "passion politique" (Nancy 2011a) which undermines Blanchot's more ethical register in the 1960s. The presence of a continued exceptionalism, in which Blanchot withdrawals from any politically existing situation to claim an aristocratic authority jars with his assertion, cited by Bataille, that "l'expérience est elle-même l'autorité (mais l'autorité s'expie)" (Bataille 1986: 19).

The comparison to Bataille is instructive, Marmande characterising his writings as pervaded by a "refus du pouvoir" which was conceptualised as *sovereignty* and is seen as an intrinsically anti-fascistic position (1985a: 109). Nancy thus describes *souveraineté* as "sa propre négation", but sees Blanchot using it as a "don de parole" (2014a: 47). Hence he re-reads *La Communauté inavouable* as not just as an admission of Blanchot's pre-war anti-Semitism, but his betrayal of this notion of *souveraineté*. In roughly schematic terms, given his analysis of the mythic as a political narrative which founds an exclusive community, Nancy designates the refusal of "identification" and "figuration" a left-wing disposition, which means one gets "une pensée de droite des lors qu'on propose de recourir à une figure, à un symbole ou à un mythe" (126-7). He subsequently describes Blanchot as prey to an "anarchisme de droite" (127): whilst the latter Blanchot attempted to avoid prescriptive political solutions, he also cultivated "une élévation aristocratique" and a disdain for "la société, ses fonctions, son État, ses lois" (127). Nancy is cautious with his own denigration of this attitude, asking "combien de nous sont de fait traversés" by this attitude in a manner "plus ou moins avouée?" (131). Yet this attitude is politically problematic:

Blanchot aura eu deux politiques: l'une démocratique, insoumise au nom d'une loi de justice supérieure aux lois; l'autre aristocratique et anarchique, liée à la communauté secrète d'une passion sans loi et d'un partage de solitudes impartagées (Nancy 2014a: 131).

Nancy notes “la distinction aristocratique” Blanchot drew between “l'écrivain (la figure que Blanchot pense et veut incarner) et les autres intellectuels” (Nancy 2014b: 176). Surya agrees, highlighting that during the 1960s Blanchot underlined the “responsabilité” and “autorité” of the *écrivain* (2014: 52): as we saw in the introduction, basing political authority on literary works was the strategy used by Zola up until Sartre, but was one Blanchot and Bataille were usually seen as eschewing. Surya refers to the “romantisme” (61) of such a position, and questions whether the kind of authority Blanchot calls on in the 1960s is qualitatively different from his 1930s position, in which he claimed to represent an idealised notion of France which no other existing political or cultural form measured up to (53). Consequently, despite the assertion of the expiation of authority, Blanchot's emphasis on the writer is also partly responsible for “le culte” which was formed around him (Nancy 2014a: 157): Blanchot's reserve created a mythic aura surrounding him, intimidating others and granting his words an extraordinary weight. Nancy stresses that this “registre mythique” is not an outright fascist position, but remains “une pensée de droite” and somewhat continuous with his pre-war stance (134).

In summary, whilst in the late 1990s *Lignes* cleaved closer to Bident than Mesnard in defending Blanchot, after his death Surya's position is closer to Mesnard's: Blanchot's silence is seen as a fault in itself, the rhetoric of the 1960s texts is retrospectively troubling, and the 1930s articles themselves are depicted as straightforwardly fascist. The only aspect of Mesnard's account not shared by *Lignes* is the over-reading of anti-Semitism throughout Blanchot's *œuvre*, and details of Blanchot's collaboration in 1940 have since been added by Uhrig.

Lastly, in an important reading of *La Communauté inavouable* Surya takes exception to Blanchot's attempt to “innocenter” Bataille whilst covertly repenting for his own past (2012b: 101). In *Sainteté de Bataille*, Surya returns to this text aiming to disentangle Bataille from Blanchot. The two were close friends from 1940 up until Bataille's death in 1962, Blanchot was one of Bataille's “most attentive readers” (ffrench 2007: 108), and since Camus commented that “*L'Expérience intérieure* est la traduction et le commentaire exact de *Thomas l'obscur*”, many critics have conflated Bataille and Blanchot's thought (119). *La Communauté inavouable* exacerbates this as Blanchot renders “Bataille méconnaissable”

(Girard 2014: 190). Surya emphasises that despite the constant solicitation of Bataille's thought, what is presented is "une pensée de la communauté selon Blanchot" (2012b: 95), not Bataille. Bataille is, Surya argues, being aggressively appropriated by Blanchot for politically expedient reasons.

In an attempt to deflect attention from both of their 1930s politics, Blanchot minimises the violence of Bataille's texts, euphemising everything "de laid, de sale, d'obsessionnel, d'obscène" (Surya 2012b: 100). Moreover, Blanchot ends up radically distorting Bataille's words: in citations supposedly drawn directly from Bataille, Blanchot changes words to convey a more Levinasian register. Terms familiar to readers of the late Blanchot, such as *l'être*, *l'autre*, *autrui*, *le proche*, and *le prochain*, are inserted into texts in which they never appeared. Out of many examples, Surya notes that where Bataille's text reads "s'il voit son semblable mourir" Blanchot replaces *semblable* with *autrui*, changing the import of the quotation (Surya 2012b: 100). As Surya glosses, in Bataille sacrificial death is the violent act that draws a restricted community together, whereas this lexical shift implies that humanity's shared finitude founds a radically non-exclusive community of ethical responsibility. Blanchot had undertaken such lexical shifts in his own work before, re-writing pieces for *L'Entretien infini* with a more Derridean and Levinasian inflection (Bident 1998: 462). This new ethical register is taken as an indication of how far Blanchot had moved away from his previous extreme-right associates. Surya wants to distance Bataille from this, however, as this implicitly suggests that Bataille also had something to be guilty for. Whilst Blanchot's journalism in the 1930s is now presented as proto-fascist and complicit with anti-Semitism, Surya has spent over twenty-five years arguing that Bataille's actions were exemplary. There is, then, a desire in *Lignes* to de-link the works of Bataille and Blanchot, and to appraise them on their own merits: the below returns to the 1930s to examine Bataille's political trajectory.

### **Bataille in the 1930s: Sacred Sociology**

Jacqueline Risset argued that the best way to defend Bataille was with "une documentation très précise et rigoureuse" (1991: 77). The *Lignes'* defence therefore began before its inception: Marmande edited Bataille's *Œuvres complètes* and produced the first doctorate on him (1985a); and Surya wrote the award-winning biography, *La Mort à l'œuvre* (1987a, 1992b). More documentation followed, Surya editing a *Choix de lettres* (Bataille 1997), and collating texts and interviews for *Une Liberté souveraine* (2000). Since the

creation of the *collection Lignes*, they have republished seven volumes of original Bataille texts accompanied with prefaces delineating their historical contexts,<sup>9</sup> alongside the two *Lignes* issues devoted to Bataille (March 2000 and May 2005). Bataille is subsequently one of the most frequent *Lignes* references. How *Lignes*' authors have intervened to shape the now established narrative of Bataille's activities will be delineated. The key text for such an account is Surya's "essential" biography (Lübecker 2011: 119). Yet following its publication "there ensued a major scholarly debate over Bataille's relationship to fascism" (Wolin 2004: 344), which will also be explored to elucidate the significance of Bataille's 1930s texts for *Lignes*' orientation in its contemporary moment.

Bataille followed a similar trajectory to Blanchot through the 1930s, but from the radical left rather than the right. He had already edited *Documents* (1929-1930) as a "machine de guerre" against surrealism (Surya 1992b: 150), yet the tone of his articles subsequently dramatically shifted from "une extravagance heureuse" to "l'angoisse" (Surya 2009e: 65). He met Boris Souvarine in 1931 and participated in his discussion group Le Cercle communiste démocratique, comprising of heterodox Marxists heavily critical of the Soviet Union: Souvarine emphasised that rather than the amount of steel and petrol the USSR produced, one needed to know "les nombres de déportés, d'emprisonnés" (cited in Marmande 2011a: 56). The critique of Socialist states from the left remained important for *Lignes*, especially when defending the legacy of anti-fascism against liberal historians in the 1990s. Bataille subsequently "ne confond jamais le communisme en son principe et le stalinisme" (Surya 2012b: 69), a distinction upheld by Badiou and Bensaïd as *Lignes* rejuvenated the strategic value of communism in the new millennium.

Furthermore, in Souvarine's *revue La Critique sociale* Bataille developed some important essays, firstly *La Notion de dépense* (1933, republished by *Lignes* in 2011). Here, Bataille railed against utility as a guiding concept for rational discussions of human behaviour. For Bataille, outside of the restricted economy of utility are a range of wasteful activities, such as war, religious cults, art and non-reproductive sex. Notably, poetry is "création au moyen de la perte" (Bataille 2011: 15), and it is this sacrificial poetics that influenced not only *Tel Quel*'s textuality in the 1960s, but the intrinsic uselessness of literature championed by *Lignes*. Surya frequently emphasises that after the war "Bataille est le seul à dire que la littérature ne peut ni doit servir" (2000a: 27), this principle crucially influencing his conception of the relationship between art and politics.

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<sup>9</sup> See Bataille (2004, 2006, 2009, 2010, 2011a, 2011b, 2012).

Drawing on sociology, psychoanalysis and Hegel, Bataille posited that there is “*un besoin de perte démesurée* qui existe à l’état endémique dans un groupe social” (Bataille 2011: 22), and the more this need is repressed the more likely society is to erupt. Bataille thus privileged “l’instant et le sacré” over “un monde insupprimable de l’utilité rationnelle” (Marmande 2011b: 14). For Bataille, “servitude” to utilitarian reason “is linked to separation”: henceforth, his thought aimed at bridging the distinctions between “science, art and politics” (ffrench 2007: 19). Whilst neo-Kantians such as Jürgen Habermas see such a blurring of boundaries as anti-modern, Bataille becomes part of *Lignes*’ counter-Enlightenment genealogy which aims at a more holistic approach to thought.

Bataille’s next key essay was *La Structure psychologique du fascisme* (1933, *Lignes* 2009). To understand fascism’s attraction, Bataille explores its “caractère violemment fascinant, hypnotique même” (Surya 2009e: 74): it is this avowed fascination, Bataille’s “barely veiled admiration for the energy and vitality” of fascism when compared to “the decadence and inertia of democracy” that enabled critics to claim that Bataille was himself a fascist (Wolin 2004: 173). Yet Bataille’s disdain for authoritarian leaders is already clear, disapprovingly noting that both fascism and feudal monarchism rely on military and religious power “pour réaliser une oppression totale” (Bataille 2009: 37). He recognised that “l’idée mystique de la race” (51) organised fascist discourses, and that this would have disastrous consequences. Bataille was developing “a new social science as a means of struggle against fascism” (Galletti 1988: 60) which, coupled with his critique of economic rationality, was a dual attempt at “countering the action of the extreme right in France” and “launching a critical attack on democratic liberalism” and “capitalism” (2007: 24). These two aims will also form the negative, critical heart of *Lignes*’ political stance throughout its twenty-five year history.

Furthermore, drawing an analogy with psychoanalysis, Bataille describes unproductive heterogeneity as the unconscious of the social body, overtly constituted by useful homogeneity. If the intrusion of the heterogeneous on the homogenous social field is inevitable, the issue becomes “what form this intervention will take” (Shaviro 1990: 47). If not actively affirmed, latent heterogeneity will manifest itself in a violently reactionary manner (ie. fascism). This is the guiding principle behind Bataille’s political mobilisations: to combat the fascination with fascism, only an active embrace of heterogeneity will suffice, either via a violent revolt (*Contre-Attaque*), or by powerful counter-myths (*Acéphale*, *Le Collège du sociologie*). *Lignes*’ two short republications of these “programmatic” (ffrench 2007: 44) texts already suggest the motivations behind Bataille’s mobilisations and their anti-

fascist orientation. The emphasis on heterogeneity is also key for *Lignes*. As Sylvie Trécherel argues, heterogeneity is mobilised as part of “la recherche de la plus complète liberté possible” (2005: 218), and Bataille thus represents the quasi-libertarian attitude of those in the *revue* suspicious of collective political action and focusing on personal emancipation.

As the political situation deteriorated in 1936 Bataille felt compelled to intervene, and so shed his normal pessimism for “un élan de romantisme révolutionnaire” (Marmande 1985a: 53). Temporally reconciled with André Breton, Bataille created the group Contre-Attaque, which first met in January 1936 (contemporaneous with Blanchot joining *Combat*). As a “Marxiste, ouvriériste” and “internationaliste” collective (Surya 2013: 7), most on the intellectual left could subscribe to Contre-Attaque’s politics: what alienated many was the tone inspired by Bataille. To produce an effective counter-offensive to fascism, Bataille wanted to bring men “à l’exaltation affective et au fanatisme” (9), mobilising the same energies unleashed by Hitler yet directed away from authoritarian politics; Contre-Attaque “was a virile Popular Front, a Popular Front with (to put it crudely but aptly) balls” (Suleiman 1994: 72). This desire for political virility against a limp government has much in common with Blanchot’s journalism: both were anti-democratic and anti-capitalist, mobilising “appels à la violence” to bring about “une révolution morale” (Surya 1992b: 270-1). The key difference is that Contre-Attaque also vehemently anti-nationalistic and placed “au service de l’intérêt universel des hommes” (270). Such an internationalism was central for Blanchot and Mascolo after the war, subsequently being the heart of *Lignes*’ politics. Surya cites Bataille from this period: “Père, Patrie, patron, telle est la trilogie qui sert de base à la vieille société patriarcale et, aujourd’hui, à la chiennerie fasciste” (Surya 2013a: 24). In a text decrying both finance capitalism and French nationalism, Surya symmetrically denounces “Le propre du profit: le patron. Le propre de la terre: la patrie. Le propre du nom: le patrimoine!” (1995: 14). Once again, Bataille provides the negative critical impetus: but to construct a more positive internationalism, *Lignes* relies on other thinkers such as Étienne Balibar.

Marmande stresses that it was during this period that Bataille wrote *Le Bleu du ciel*, arguing that Bataille’s texts should be read “selon leur perspective historique” (1985a: 222). Marmande suggests that the novel replaced a projected analytical work, *Le Fascisme en France*, and consequently is itself a fictionalised account of the seductive power of fascism. Out of context, the novel can seem to present “une succession d’images fortes qui soulignent à tout le moins l’évidente supériorité esthétique du national-socialisme”, for Lindenberg proving Bataille’s fascism (1990: 60). Marmande agrees that the novel is scandalous in celebrating “l’envers refoulé de l’optimisme politique” (1985a: 188). Ginzburg also notes the

novel's "morbid, intimately guilty attraction for the mortuary rites of Nazism" (1990: 143). Yet Hollier argues that both moderate conservatism and the extreme right tend to emphasise moral virtue, purity and cleanliness rather than debauchery, disease and subversion, and so "nothing is less sure" than the suggestion that Bataille's morbid imagery proves his fascistic proclivities (1990: 16). Instead, Marmande reads *Le Bleu du ciel* as presenting "mauvais présages" (1985a: 186) of what *could* happen to Europe, demonstrating both the seductive nature of fascism and the dangers of not resisting. Furthermore, Marmande argues that Bataille's works produce "une satire du monde puritain" allowing one to "entrer dans une région de la vie étrange et inexplorée" (2011b: 190). It was precisely this kind of limit text that would become Bataille's hallmark for his first generation of readers in the 1960s and 1970s. The literature privileged by *Lignes* still tends to be these kinds of limit texts, encouraging a staunch opposition to the moralistic criticisms of more conservative publications such as *Esprit*.

Back in 1936, by April the fragile alliance between Bataille and Breton had been broken and Contre-Attaque dissolved. Its failure shifted Bataille away from public platforms towards more localised, community-based endeavours. Whilst Bataille found its ideology "repugnant", he was also convinced that fascism had found the "real Achilles heel of capitalism by recognising the power of myth and the sacred" (Richardson 1992: 35). Liberal democracy being too weak to resist Hitler, Bataille believed he needed to replace "les mythes suscités par le fascisme [...] par d'autres" (Surya 1992b: 270). His substitute for Contre-Attaque was *Acéphale*, developed alongside André Masson who shared Bataille's critique of utility, but also denigrated Marx for desiring "une société sans mythes" (284). *Acéphale*'s inaugural text, 'La Conjuración sacrée', saw Bataille explicitly draw on (Nietzschean) religious themes for the first time. The *Acéphale*, representing a leaderless society and a godless religion, was "un monstre hybride" devoted "aux libres jeux de sa passion d'être au monde" (287). Compared to the aggression of Contre-Attaque, Bataille's position is more resigned: "Il est en effet trop tard [...] Trop tard pour espérer que change le monde, trop tard pour empêcher qu'il coure à la guerre" (287). This represents somewhat of a retreat, yet the *revue* contained political stakes: for example, demonstrating the mutual incompatibility of Nietzsche with fascism and emphasising his "contempt" for anti-Semitism (Besnier 1990: 176) was accompanied with "un significatif éloge du brassage racial" (Surya 1992b: 290). Asserting that the Nazis were mobilising "un Nietzsche falsifié" accompanied an attempt "de réhabiliter Nietzsche" (Surya 2012b: 75). Subsequently, as Schrift argues, although Nietzsche was "in the air" (1995: 3) in France in the 1930s, it was the "literary and cultural avant-



garde” rather than philosophers who were most affected by his work, and many post-war thinkers came to Nietzsche “through Bataille” (2). *Lignes* devotes one issue to Nietzsche (February 2002), and French neo-Nietzscheans such as Foucault and Nancy play a central role in the *revue*’s thinking. Bataille, Nietzsche, and Sade are the three key thinkers in the aggressively atheist stance of the *revue* early on. Furthermore Mullarkey identifies 1988, the year after *Lignes*’ birth, as a defining year in French thought for the attempt “to make immanence supervene on transcendence” (2006: 1): for Surya, this aim is represented by the displacement of the Acéphale’s head towards its genitals (Surya 2012b: 71).

Alongside the *revue*, Bataille created a secret society to construct this new religion. Little concrete information is known about its actions, but infamously one of their goals was rumoured to be the enactment of a human sacrifice. This macabre side to Acéphale fuelled critical claims that Bataille’s legacy is tainted by barbarous impulses, Sartre calling Bataille a “new mystic” (Besnier 1995: 13). Yet in *Lignes*, participant Michael Koch described “la beauté poignante des rites nocturnes” (2000: 163), and claimed to be unaware of plans to enact a sacrifice. Significantly, the attempt to create a religion signalled the broadening of Bataille’s targets since *Contre-Attaque*: whilst the former was solely orientated against fascism, Acéphale challenged the three “monocéphalités” of fascism, communism and Christianity (Surya 2012b: 68). Bataille no longer considered these three forms of social organisation distinct as all relied on a form of transcendental authority, God being the paradigmatic “principe de toutes les autorités autorisées et réalisées” (69). Logically, then, only another religion would provide an effective counter-myth: Acéphale’s failure, and the disquieting nature of its existence, would lead Bataille to question the principle of authority itself.

From 1937 to 1939 Bataille’s next project, with Roger Caillois and Michel Leiris, was the Collège de sociologie. Again religious in tone, its main presupposition was that the sacred is “ce qui noue une communauté” (Surya 1992b: 323). Marmande detects the influence of Marcel Mauss, a “militant du socialisme” who “n’a jamais séparé sa recherche de l’action politique” (2011b: 63). Rather than a didactic enterprise, this sacred sociology was a contagion to spread, producing “representations susceptible of mobilising the social group” (ffrench 2007: 17). That the Collège was a success can be surmised by the expanded participation of speakers in its second year, including Jean Paulhan, Denis de Rougemont and (almost) Walter Benjamin. Yet the audience was politically mixed, including some major figures from the far right such as Thierry Maulnier and Drieu La Rochelle (Hollier 1990: 7): Lindenberg thus called it a “nouvelle droite” in formation, “à la fois réactionnaire et

germanophile” (1990: 78-9). There were serious questions raised about the ethics of the Collège, Benjamin expressing concerns that their “aestheticisation of the political” was explicitly fascist (Falasca-Zamponi 2011: 9). Yet as Hollier notes, significant as these “reticences and reservations” are, they were also “all expressed inside the Collège” (1990: 19): Bataille was aware of the project’s equivocal nature, calling it an “idéologie de combat” and “une erreur nécessaire” (Marmande 2011b: 34). For Bataille, the gravity of the period required running that risk, but it is this area of Surya’s biography that has perhaps provoked the most debate. Hollier, generally sympathetic, argues that Surya is too sensitive when it comes to Bataille’s ‘equivocal’ relationship to fascism: Surya “goes on the defensive each time he meets (or even anticipates) an accusation”, trying too hard to prove that “nothing was more foreign and even opposed to fascism than the thinking of Bataille” (1990: 4). Yet as Hollier argues, fighting fascism with fascist means “is literally equivocal” (7). Hollier reprimands Surya for downplaying such ambiguity, but largely because he knows that Bataille should not need defending: “it is difficult”, when you read Bataille, to accuse him “of being a fascist” (16).

One way of attenuating the suspicions cast upon Bataille was to isolate him from the other Collège participants. The Collège was “in no way a homogenous enterprise”, and politics would often “sharply divide Bataille and Caillois” (Richardson 1992: 31). Whilst Bataille was distinctly anti-authoritarian, privileging “la négativité sans emploi”, Caillois was more bullish, embracing “la volonté de puissance” (Hollier 1995: 11): Ginzburg refers to Caillois’ “fantasies about an aristocratic community composed of merciless, tyrannical individuals” (1990: 143). Caillois is thus virtually absent from *Lignes*, which focuses strictly on Bataille. The publication by *Lignes* of a previously lost Bataille lecture, *La Sociologie sacrée du monde contemporain* (2004), continues to isolate Bataille’s contributions to the Collège. Whereas Hollier’s edited volume places Bataille and Caillois side by side, here Bataille speaks alone. Whilst Bataille’s rhetoric is undoubtedly that of a preacher, his account of Bolshevism, fascism and Nazism as “trois monarchies nouvelles” (31), relying on xenophobic nationalism and war-mongering to rally popular support, is politically unambiguous. He instead promotes a tragic figure of man, “conscient de l’existence humaine” and incapable of becoming “l’homme fasciste” (Falasca-Zamponi 2004: 12).

The outbreak of war brought the Collège to an end. In retrospect, it is easy to argue the futility of Bataille’s communal endeavours: “La guerre rend tous ces orchestres à leur inanité” (Marmande 2011b: 28). Bataille would later renounce these attempts, recognising that he had been “naïve” (Richardson 1994: 15) to think that a small, elite group could

unleash the powers of myth to counter fascism, and the *Discussion sur le péché* (2010) notably contains “la critique du moment antérieur d’Acéphale et sa répudiation” (Sichère 1999: 55). Documentation provided by *Lignes* both testifies to the political unambiguity of Bataille’s opposition to fascism, and also his later rejection of affective politics. In Nancy’s subsequent reading, Bataille now realised that ‘myth’ or “*collective representation*” tends to elicit a desire for a social totality that can lead towards a community fascistically turned in on itself and hostile to exterior beings (ffrench 2007: 20): subsequently, “all groups with a leader would thus be fascist” (45). Bataille learned that myths do not “take shape through the conscious efforts of an elite group” (Richardson 1992: 40), and his subsequent encounter with Blanchot rescues him from “the residues of a voluntarism or a heroism” that still pervaded his thought (ffrench 2007: 108). As noted, Bataille’s post-war thinking was orientated by a sovereignty considered as “le refus du pouvoir” (Marmande 1985a: 109). Surya stresses that sovereignty is a “central” concept for Bataille, still to secure “sa postérité” (2012b: 98): *Lignes* thus published *La Souveraineté* (2012) as a stand-alone monograph with a view to consecrating it. Such a perspective dominates the first series of *Lignes* but, through figures such as Badiou, notions of heroism, and a political vanguard prescribing political orientations, appear in the *revue*’s second series.

Bataille’s political trajectory throughout the 1930s is largely presented by *Lignes* as impeccable, the compromises he made with potentially fascistic forms being calculated risks in the face of war. Such a defence was necessary in correlation to the importance of Bataille’s thought for the *revue*, as many of the issues *Lignes* will tackle appear here in programmatic form: an interest in the socially heterogeneous, a correlative freedom of speech and a refusal to subject literature to constraints (Chapter 2); a suspicion of overt claims to authority, a Nietzschean, immanent atheism providing a counter-Enlightenment genealogy and a rejection of moralism (Chapter 3); the dual critique of liberalism and fascism, the denunciation of Stalinism from the left for a heterodox attachment to communism, and an internationalist outlook (Chapters 4-6). However, Surya emphasises that *Lignes* is not a “revue bataillienne” (2007c: 45), and whilst for him “Bataille est le nom” through which to think such issues, “d’autres noms pourraient l’être pour d’autres” (2010b: 58). That Bataille and Blanchot were the key thinkers for the *revue*’s original editors makes them very prominent in the first series: the more diverse editorial board in the second series dilutes their presence, but the influence remains. One key thinker influenced by both and present throughout *Lignes*’ history is Jean-Luc Nancy, to which this chapter briefly turns to demonstrate one of the most influential readings of Bataille and the political for *Lignes*.

## Jean-Luc Nancy and the Political

Through Bataille, the dangers of trying to form an organic, immanent community through mythology would prove crucial for the re-consideration of the political Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe undertook at the Centre de recherches philosophiques sur le politique (1980-84). The aim of the Centre was to examine the relationship of philosophy with and on “le politique” (Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy 1981b: 12). They saw this task as important precisely because of the nefarious mobilisations of philosophical thought in recent years, especially Heidegger’s Nazism. Whilst they emphasised that their interest was in *le politique* (the ground of possibility for politics) rather than *la politique* (the real decisions of day to day governance), Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe stress the relevance of the contemporary conjuncture to the project. Democratic regimes were being undermined by “le plus simple désespoir politique (la lassitude)”, and economic determinism reduced “à presque rien le débat” (1981a: 10). Politics was caught in a double bind. Firstly, the totalitarian results of Soviet rule, coupled with the postmodern collapse of grand narratives, disqualified “le grand discours ‘éclairé’, progressiste, de l’eschatologie laïque ou profane” of “le discours révolutionnaire” (1981b: 16). Yet once these teleological narratives were lost, all that remained was “la domination de l’économie politique” (24). Politics was therefore reduced to “banale gestion” (1983: 189), and a form of soft totalitarianism emerged: although “*inapparent*”, a liberal, capitalist ideology of responsible governance, crisis management and consensus gained “sa toute-puissance” (188).

As Ian James argues, this conception of totalitarianism is closer to political “hegemony” (2006: 171) than an authoritarian state, and Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe note the categorical differences between this ‘soft’ totalitarianism and Nazism (1983: 190). Yet they use this controversial term for two reasons. Firstly, drawing on Bataille and the Situationists, and in contrast to *Le Débat*, they criticise the homogeneity of the body politic produced by a “spectacularisation” of politics by the mass-media, creating “des fabrications forcenées de consensus” (191). Secondly, they analyse the emergence of totalitarian regimes as a direct response to the political apathy generated by liberal democracy, as national identity is mobilised to re-energise the populace and foster a sense of belonging. It is this reciprocal dynamic between the crisis of democracy and the rise of totalitarianism which, for Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe, make any attempt to radically separate the two “trop simple” (191). This is also why the 1930s becomes such a crucial reference point for *Lignes*.

This thread is continued in *La Communauté désœuvrée* (1983), as Nancy returns to the Collège de sociologie and the notion of myth as that which binds a social body together. Nancy posits two kinds of communities, those based on myths, and those based on “the non-identity of shared finitude” (James 2006: 198). In Nancy’s reading of Bataille, myth becomes simply “a language or discourse which allows the world of shared finitude to be known and understood in specific ways which would in turn dictate the manner in which we live and interact together within political and communal structures or institutions” (196). For Nancy, all strictly defined political ground is in some way arbitrary, unjustifiable, and exclusionary, tending towards the dangers designated by totalitarianism. Myth attempts to absolutise these contingent grounds, with potentially violent consequences (Heidegger’s adherence to fascism being key). Yet such grounding is also unavoidable, and the basis of all contemporary nation states. What is called for, then, is a constant *praxis* to destabilise dominant myths, a reminder that all community is arbitrarily founded and that, as finite beings, we share an equal right to existence. This reading does not call for a “cessation” of politics, but a “cutting” which then “reforms” figures, highlighting the temporary nature of all political formations (Sparks 1997: xxii). Many in *Lignes*, especially during the first series, are influenced by such a conception of the political.

When he heard that Nancy was returning to think politics via Bataille and Heidegger, Wolin “sounded an alarm” (2004: 164), perpetuating the concern that post-war French thought remained contaminated with fascism. Yet James argues that rather than a worrying neo-fascism, we find in Nancy “a sober renunciation of foundationalist attitudes” (James 2006: 201). As French notes, “Bataille more than anyone else” allows Nancy to think this (2007: 139), yet Nancy relies on Bataille only in a negative moment, subsequently expressing “certain reserves in relation to Bataille” when it comes to positively trying to define communal relations (139). Bataille gave up on forming immanent communities based on affective relations after the 1930s, and it is this renunciation that is key for Nancy. Nancy moves on to rethink ontology through relationality, rather than being: this sober reading attempts to move Bataille beyond his “fundamental humanism” (French 2007: 113), and facilitates the neo- or anti-humanist approaches found in *Lignes*, such as Martin Crowley’s *L’Homme sans* (2009) and the destabilisation of the human/animal boundary in the issue *Humanité Animalité* (February 2009). More politically, the relationship suggested between capitalism and nationalism, democracy and totalitarianism resonates with Balibar’s class-based analysis of racism discussed in Chapter 4, allowing an articulation of Nancy’s thought in a more explicitly Marxist framework within *Lignes*. Via Nancy, then, a host of new

intellectual approaches to Bataille become possible that re-invigorate the legacy of this thinker in the *revue*.

### **A Muted Anti-parliamentarianism**

The Bataille controversy, and *Lignes'* insistence on correcting the historical record, continued well into the 1990s. In a *Lignes'* review of Hollier's colloquium, *Georges Bataille après tout* (1995), Bident notes that over half the papers were about the 1930s, still a hotly contested period. He also criticises Martin Jay's comments on Bataille's equivocal political program (Bident 1996: 200), yet Jay's paper makes just one reference to Bataille's pre-war engagement being "dangereusement approché de celui des fascistes", an arguable point (Jay 1995: 47). A prickliness persists in *Lignes*, then, which only dissipates at the turn of the century. The most polemic defence in the *revue* itself occurs in issues 13 (March 1991) with a long Surya text, and 14 (June 1991) with a discussion between Surya, Dobbels and Marmande. Yet this is not a defence of the historical record, but an attempt "de répondre à la question du sens de cette offensive" (*Lignes'* 1991b: 72). As described above, the context of *Lignes'* creation was the backlash against *la pensée 68*, and the instauration of a more conservative, consensual intellectual climate surrounding *Le Débat*, one that took liberal democracy as a given. The attachment to thinkers such as Bataille on the part of anti-parliamentarians was thus mobilised as a means of de-legitimising such opposition as rooted in the fascist, immoral or irresponsible behaviour of the 1930s.

Oliver Mongin, editor of *Esprit*, subsequently comments that as "vieux disciples de Georges Bataille, les animateurs de *Lignes* n'ont guère de passion pour la démocratie, ses petits consensus et ses hordes de Bouvards et Pécuchets" (1990: 92). The reference to Bataille therefore implies a fascist elitism and disdain for the common majority. Surya notes that *Lignes* does indeed have some reservations towards liberal democracy, but questions "comment ne voit-on pas qu'être antiparlementariste en 1930 n'a pas du tout le même sens que l'être aujourd'hui?" (Dobbels, Marmande, Surya 1991: 92). They do not repeat the vitriolic rhetoric of either Bataille or Blanchot, and a conflation of their position with Bataille's makes little sense in the contemporary period. Yet Surya also notes that the period before the rise of fascism is "hautement énigmatique" (92), and avoiding another resurgence of the extreme right requires vigilance: therefore a sustained reading of the 1930s can be instructive. In general, the anti-parliamentarianism of *Lignes* can be read as largely in line with the questioning of contemporary political structures prompted by Lacoue-Labarthe

and Nancy, as they persistently question the link between a technocratic economism, the democratic deficit and the rise of neo-fascism.

As for being elitist, Marmande's pieces on French *micro-fascisme* do display a certain disdain for bourgeois suburban small-mindedness with a blackly ironic tone, yet also a constant concern with racist rhetoric and violence.<sup>10</sup> On the whole, *Lignes* is not anti-popular and keen to see a return of *le peuple* to the public sphere, and is broadly supportive of strikers, protesters and those in the *banlieues*. *Lignes* proffers an analysis of social exclusion and class struggle as demonstrative of the inadequacies of contemporary financial and governmental frameworks, against an *Esprit* milieu which militated for the dismantling of Marxism in favour of free market capitalism. References to Bataille and fascism by *Esprit* are, then, part of a wider strategy of de-legitimising a *Lignes* position seen as irresponsible from a liberal perspective; as Pawlett has recently argued, Bataille's distancing from fascist violence "is clear and consistent", but "cannot be reconciled with the secular liberal perspective of some of his critics" (2013: 125).

Given the above it seems as if Bataille is the privileged thinker, defended in all circumstances as his intellectual legacy nourishes most of Surya and Marmande's interventions, whilst the relationship to Blanchot's past remained more awkward. Subsequently, one way of stressing Bataille's exemplary stance was to isolate him from his more compromised associates, especially Caillois and Blanchot. It is in this sense that Bataille, rather than Blanchot, is for *Lignes* "le témoin lucide, compromis et peu évitable" of the 1930s (Marmande 1985a: 221). Bataille's mode of witnessing his epoch becomes a model for *Lignes'* response to its own period, which also sees a resurgence of the French extreme right and economic crises.

Furthermore, Nancy's theorisation of the political becomes very influential for *Lignes*. Whilst Bataille was crucial for this, if only in a negative moment, Nancy is clear that his conception "ne devait rien à Blanchot" (2014b: 169). However, he argues that the questions that Blanchot was posing in the 1930s now "viennent à maturité" (158): for Nancy, Blanchot was someone who had "de pressentiments confus" (Nancy 2011a: 30) of the democratic deficit to come, but who did not know how to respond. Today, "la confiance dans la démocratie, elle, s'est trop vite ou trop simplement assurée de son bien-fondé" (Nancy 2014b: 157), and thinking through the 1930s, when democracy was not so self-evident, can

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<sup>10</sup> See for example Marmande (1988a), where he notes that the "pudibonderie" of the "normative" parents in suburban France masks "une jolie proportion" of National Front fascists.

still be instructive. So whilst Blanchot is not a paradigmatic political thinker for Nancy, the way he experienced the paucity of democracy highlights some of today's problems.

Blanchot was and remains, however, an important figure for *Lignes*. The scrutiny his politics have been placed under is, perversely, a testament to this. As Surya argues, his 1960s texts are as “admirables” as those from the 1930s are “haïssables” (2014: 53). The dossiers produced by *Lignes* of the 1960s texts provide a valuable meditation on notions of friendship, community and cultural politics, and the conception of literature held by the *revue* owes as much to Blanchot as it does to Bataille: these are the subjects of the following chapter.



## Chapter 2

### Lignes and the 1960s: Intellectual Friendship, Cultural Politics and Literature

Whilst the 1980s drew attention towards the 1930s, in the 1990s *Lignes* extensively documented intellectual activity culminating in the 1960s. Important dossiers focused on *Maurice Blanchot et 'La Revue internationale'* (September 1990), *Robert Antelme* (January 1994), and *Dionys Mascolo* (March 1998).<sup>11</sup> Alongside being part of the *revue's* effort to rehabilitate Blanchot's political reputation, these three thinkers were "délibérément et quasi programmatiquement" inscribed into *Lignes* (Surya 2007b: 34), and alongside Surya's *La Révolution rêvée* (2004b) they form part of the *revue's* pedagogic desire to restore intellectual currents which have been obscured. Officially unaffiliated to the dominant post-war movements of surrealism, communism and existentialism, working on their fringes Antelme, Blanchot and Mascolo developed unique conceptions of intellectual engagement and cultural politics from the aftermath of the Second World War to May '68. Having unpacked the significance of these exemplary activities for the *revue*, the related literary legacy of this period from *Tel Quel* to *Lignes* will be explored. Alongside Bataille, Blanchot and Mascolo produced divergent accounts of the relatively autonomous relationship between art and politics: the chapter concludes by examining *Lignes's* attempts to reconcile or further these trajectories.

#### **Antelme: Humanity, Solidarity, Friendship**

In 1942 Dionys Mascolo, a Sicilian autodidact inspired by surrealism, was editing Bataille's *L'Expérience intérieure* and Blanchot's *Faux pas* for Gallimard. He also met Marguerite Duras and Robert Antelme and the three joined François Mitterrand's resistance cell in 1943, leading to Antelme's arrest and deportation in 1944 (as described in Antelme's novel *L'Espèce humaine*). Having been rescued from Dachau by Mitterrand and Mascolo after the liberation, whilst journeying home Antelme spoke relentlessly, "comme sous la pression d'une source constante" (Mascolo 1987: 50); his wartime experience would prompt an intellectual endeavour to reconceptualise friendship, community and solidarity.

In the mid-1980s Duras returned to this period in *La Douleur* (1985). This prompted Mascolo's publication of a letter from Antelme dated June 1945 in *Autour d'un effort de*

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<sup>11</sup> Some texts are reproduced in Dobbels (1996), Blanchot (2003) and Mascolo (1993a, 2004).

*mémoire* (1987). Responding in *Lignes*, Dobbels noted how for Antelme the “déshumanisation” (1987: 115) of the camps produced “l’idée d’un communisme ‘libéral’” (1988b: 106), beginning the *revue*’s re-examination of this period. The Antelme collection (January 1994, republished 1996) contained essays written by Antelme, critical responses to *L’Espèce humaine* and testimonies from Antelme’s friends. As well as an aesthetic triumph (Perec 1996), *L’Espèce humaine* is depicted as an intellectual event (Kaplan 1996) and “un livre militant” (Rabant 1996: 121). Significantly for *Lignes*, the book thinks through the political consequences of dehumanisation.

Antelme’s novel claimed that one “peut tuer un homme, mais il ne peut pas le changer en autre chose” (1979: 241). This implied an irreducible humanity intrinsic to all people; that this humanity persists after suffering such degradation as to be unrecognisable suggests that humankind has no proper qualities except this “revendication presque biologique d’appartenance à l’espèce humaine” (11). Humankind “n’est rien d’autre qu’une résistance absolue, inentamable, à l’anéantissement” (Nancy 1996b: 140). Antelme’s book thus defined “une ontologie sans substance ni sujet, une éthique sans morale ni droit” (141). Surya subsequently situates Antelme’s novel within the wider discussions on humanism in the post-war period. Surprisingly, initial responses to the camps were “non seulement homogène[s] mais optimiste[s]” (2004b: 224): humankind would profit from this experience, and existentialists and communists both reclaimed the term ‘humanism’. Yet after Antelme, Mascolo argued there could be no “retour à l’ancien humanisme” (1987: 37), with Martin Crowley describing instead a “humanisme résiduel” only defined by the “résistance à la déshumanisation” (2004: 56). As further discussed in Chapter 3, *Lignes* abandoned exclusive definitions of human nature to emphasise the *impropre* state of being without qualities. This stance is virtually identical to Ferry and Renault’s neo-humanism defined “par le refus d’attribuer à l’homme une essence”: “le propre de l’homme est de ne pas avoir de propre” (1988: 15). Similarly, as Ferry and Renault rejected Heideggerian anti-humanism, in *Lignes* Jean-Pierre Faye concludes that “nous choisirons, face au trou noir heideggerien, la pensée antelmienne” (1988: 193). However, rather than Ferry and Renault’s rejection of *la pensée 68*, *Lignes* constructs an alternative genealogy through this period which preserves much of this intellectual heritage. The differences are starkly political: for Ferry and Renault “le marxisme s’est aujourd’hui effondré” (1988: 34), their ‘new humanism’ legitimating liberal democracy; Antelme, by contrast, was led towards a heterodox Marxism.

*Lignes* subsequently published Crowley’s *Robert Antelme* (2004) which draws out the intellectual heritage of the Antelme dossier. For Mascolo, Antelme’s experience opened up

“nouvelles dispositions de pensée” (1987: 20), inflecting a whole rhetoric of friendship, witnessing and community. The elaboration of *l’amitié* in Antelme’s letters to Mascolo constitutes “une anticipation extraordinaire” of the questions which “toute la génération philosophique à venir” would continue to pose (Crowley 2004: 110):

je ne pense pas l’amitié comme une chose positive, je veux dire comme une valeur, mais bien plus, je veux dire comme un état, une identification, donc une multiplication de la mort, une multiplication de l’interrogation, le lieu miraculeusement le plus neutre d’où percevoir et sentir la constante d’inconnu (Antelme cited in Mascolo 1987: 23).

Antelme thus “mobilised the key notion of unconditional recognition of the other, uses friendship as the name of this recognition, and articulates a model of solidarity or fraternity which is defined not by resemblance but by openness” (Crowley 2003: 52). This (non-) relation to the other was fundamental for the later thinking of Blanchot and Derrida, and is present in their conceptions of a negatively constituted community. Blanchot attests to the importance of Antelme in his thinking: “Chaque fois que la question: Qui est ‘Autrui?’ vient dans notre langage, je pense au livre de Robert Antelme” (1996a: 77). Mascolo also claims that Antelme remained “notre secret conseil, notre inspirateur” throughout their future political commitments (1987: 79). *Lignes* exhumed these documents to restore such subterranean intellectual legacies and, via Dobbels, Antelme’s presence in the *revue*’s early years emphasises their concerns with the legacies of fascism in the present. His conceptualisation of *amitié* also programmatically suggests the *revue*’s constant attempt to articulate the relationship between solitary thought and egalitarian politics, the concerns of the rest of this chapter.

### **La Rue Saint-Benoît**

Rather than merely theoretical, however, Antelme’s experience had “changé la vie” of this group of friends (Mascolo 1987: 25). Around Duras’ apartment at La Rue Saint-Benoît, Antelme’s return “unified them as a group” and altered their collective behaviour (Winston 2001: 124-5), creating a communal space in which “tout projet de vie personnelle y était suspendu” (Mascolo 1987: 69). Furthermore, in 1944 Duras had joined the PCF; Mascolo and Antelme followed after the war. The group became enlarged by communists thinkers such as Edgar Morin, Saint-Benoît coming to house an informal “groupe d’études marxistes” (76).

Yet tensions with the PCF quickly emerged. In May 1947 the group met Elio and Ginetta Vittorini, Mascolo claiming that “notre accord avec eux, sur tout, fut immédiat” (1987: 73). Elio Vittorini had just published his ‘Lettera a Togliatti’, “un manifeste contre l’obscurantisme jdanovien” (78) which defended the relative autonomy of culture from politics. Zhdanov considered all art but socialist realism bourgeois and counter-revolutionary; Vittorini argued that “la culture bourgeoise a produit des valeurs qui la dépassent”, and as such art needed preserving “dans sa totalité” (78). Mascolo and Antelme embraced this perspective, interviewing Vittorini in the Communist *Lettres françaises* and lambasting the PCF for their “inefficace” and “sectaire” approach to literary criticism (Antelme and Mascolo 1998: 26). The relative autonomy of politics and aesthetics would strongly inform Mascolo’s thought, and the *Lignes* reproduction of these early conflicts reveals the origins of his convictions.

Already tense, their relationship with the PCF would be severed due to the existence of Soviet gulags. Distinguishing between a poor man who accepts his lot, and a proletarian who contests it, for Antelme the concentration camps had revealed the world as a generalised proletarian state, the deportee becoming “un prolétaire, de plain-pied avec l’universel” (1996b: 30). As such, for Antelme there was “pas de différence de nature entre le régime ‘normal’ d’exploitation et celui des camps”, the latter being “l’image nette” of capitalist organisation (32). David Rousset’s comparable description of the “administration industrielle de la mort” (Nadeau 1990: 76) would become hugely influential for *Lignes* in its second series. Rousset explicitly called on Antelme to join him in denouncing Russian camps yet, in a text republished by *Lignes*, Antelme initially worried that this would exacerbate cold-war “antisoviétisme” (Antelme 2000: 190). Yet these issues led to Mascolo and Antelme exiting the PCF in 1949, and in 1958 Antelme asserted that communism had been “étouffé, défiguré, ensanglanté dans le crime” (1996a: 38). Antelme and Mascolo thus sought to articulate a new relationship to Marxism outside of the PCF’s orbit.

Marx had fallen into “l’oubli” in PCF discourse (Surya 2004b: 469), creative thought being “hamstrung by the philosophical pretensions of Stalin” (Poster 1975: 39). As intellectuals abandoned the PCF in the mid-1950s, a plethora of heterodox works rejuvenated French theory, with attention drawn to the concept of ‘alienation’ in Marx’s *1844 Manuscripts* and Lukács’ *History and Class Consciousness*.<sup>12</sup> Mascolo’s *Le Communisme* (1953) was a return to Marx via surrealism, Bataille, and Antelme. Yet Antelme had

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<sup>12</sup> See Poster (1975: 36-71) for an account of the belated French translation and reception of these texts.

tempered Mascolo's regard for the surrealists, who emphasised "l'affirmation" rather than "l'interrogation [...] ou le cri de l'impossible" (Mascolo 1987: 24). *L'Espèce humaine* was a thoroughly materialist work in which the "vieux dualisme corps-esprit" was erased, and all "les fameux trésors de l'âme ne sont que fumée devant les mots qui disent la main, le visage, la nudité, le pain" (Dominique 1996: 213). Mascolo's emphasis on *le besoin* in *Le Communisme* stems from here. Yet contact and communication were also human needs: hence Antelme's unceasing compulsion to speak about his experiences on his return. For Antelme, recognition is a primal human need and friendship "désigne cette capacité infinie de reconnaissance" (1996a: 34).

Mascolo therefore calls 'communist' whatever "tend à instaurer la communication" (Mascolo 1953: 26). The theoretical novelty of *Le Communisme* resided in Mascolo's use of the *1844 Manuscripts* to produce a "non-utilitarian interpretation of Marx's concept of need" (Poster 1975: 219): need was a subjective as well as a material ground for politics. As such it "devait plutôt suffire de sortir du silence pour se mettre à parler du communisme" (Mascolo 1953: 41). This is qualified with a 'should' as for Mascolo there are two ways of speaking, one which, impoverished by bourgeois individualism, causes one to "parler pour ne rien dire" (43). Speech is a form of labour, "aliéné comme un autre" and "conditionné par le système social" (Mascolo 1993a: 301). In Mascolo's "antiphilosophical and nonrationalist" approach, alienation can only be overcome by a more authentic communication (Winston 2001: 128). Literature is one way of working on language to this end, Mascolo citing Bataille, Queneau, Leiris and Blanchot as exemplary figures. Art therefore may not have an "immediate tactical value", but "a politically and metaphysically authentic poetics" can disrupt everyday language (Crowley 2006: 146). Although remaining relatively autonomous, this was the potentially political role art could play: such a conception would inform all of the group's later politics, but the importance accorded to literature subsequently varies.

### ***Le Refus anonyme***

*Le Communisme* and the extended Saint-Benoît network provided the foundations for Mascolo's subsequent activities, documented in *Lignes* (March 1998) with the republication of tracts, letters, articles and notes. Joining the anti-colonial movement, in 1955 Mascolo formed the Comité d'action contre la poursuite de la guerre en Afrique du Nord, followed by the Cercle international des intellectuels révolutionnaires. Yet he became frustrated by this group's lack of "un moyen d'expression", Mascolo desiring a monthly *revue* (1998h: 77).

This publication soon came, but not in the form expected. Three issues of *Le 14 juillet* appeared from 1958-59, but over theoretical elaboration it privileged “résistance” to “la tyrannie naissante” prompted by Charles de Gaulle’s return to power (Mascolo and Schuster 1958: 1). *Lignes* republished *Le 14 juillet* in its entirety in 1990 to coincide with the centenary of de Gaulle’s birth. Whilst the creation of the Fifth Republic was contested in 1958, Surya argues that “tous soient aujourd’hui aveuglément gaullistes” (1990: 8). Mitterrand had originally promised to abolish the presidential role, but abandoned this policy once elected; articles in *Lignes* critiqued this “césarisme” and “la personnalisation du pouvoir” (Soulier 1988: 35). Genuine opposition to the Fifth Republic was thin on the ground, however, and heading into the new millennium the tendency was towards strengthening presidential authority, especially under Nicholas Sarkozy. Surya accordingly argues that de Gaulle’s constitution “désigne le schème idéologique des années à venir” (1990: 9). Against those suspicious of their antiparlamentarianism, Marmande states that “l’insoumission et la hantise du pire ne sont pas une erreur” (1990: 10). *Lignes* thus re-activates this contestatory moment to animate a constitutional debate in the present.

1958 was also a significant moment for theorising the role of intellectuals. Continuing his argument with the PCF, Mascolo militated for “a specific responsibility for the revolutionary intellectual” (Crowley 2006: 140). Defections from the dogmatic PCF had produced an inventive but fragmented left. Following a trip to Poland, where Mascolo detected a communal sensibility absent in France, he realised that without collective action “les intellectuels français sont comme *prolétarisés*” (Mascolo 1993a: 121). To combat this “dispersion” (Surya 1998a: 13), he believed he could unite the left with this outright rejection of de Gaulle. He acknowledges that they are in “une situation impossible”, with no chance of success: yet proclaiming “je ne peux pas – je ne pourrai jamais accepter cela” remains a show of determination (Mascolo 2004: 82). Furthermore, this was not simply a nihilist rejection: “*Envers et contre tous*, cela n’est pas la solitude. Cela se dit d’une certaine manière d’être ensemble, à plusieurs. Nous sommes moins seuls que jamais” (83). If the first and last word of this position is “NON” (83), it is an *affirmative* no, one which conceals a hidden *oui* to the solidarity and friendship that could end intellectual dispersion. This was the first attempt to articulate the kind of negative community suggested by Antelme on a wider scale.

Whilst supporting his anti-colonial initiatives, Bataille rejected Mascolo’s politics from this point, blaming his own pessimism but also criticising Mascolo’s negative affirmation without a program as “un bavardage impuissant” (Bataille 1997: 483). Furthermore, whilst feeling close to “le refus inconditionnel”, for Bataille this involved

“l’affirmation de ma souveraineté”, a personal revolt that Bataille refused to mix “dans la boue des compromis” (1997: 482). At heart is the notion of intellectual authority: as discussed in Chapter 1, after the war for Bataille “l’expérience est elle-même l’autorité (mais l’autorité s’expie)” (1986: 19). Bataille was therefore wary of engagement as this both utilised and compromised his personal negativity, and assumed a position of sovereign authority which should be allowed to dissipate.

As previously noted, however, Blanchot was less cautious when mobilising the *écrivain*’s authority in the 1960s, and Bataille’s exit from Mascolo’s political circles was his point of entry. Having read the first issue of *Le 14 juillet*, Blanchot affirmed his total accord with Mascolo. Blanchot’s own ‘Le refus’ gave him an opportunity to critique his former position, self-reflexively commenting that “le sursaut colonialiste est un mouvement de désespoir (comme la poussée nationaliste est à forme de détresse)” (2003: 22). Blanchot’s contributions contained both a disavowal and a development of his pre-war stance. He argues that refusal is difficult as it is rarely obvious what needs rejecting: in the Second World War, the Germans needed to be resisted, but more fundamental was also resisting Pétain.<sup>13</sup> Therefore “il nous faut refuser, non pas seulement le pire, mais un semblant raisonnable” (Blanchot 2003: 11). As we saw in Chapter 1, questions remain over Blanchot’s “extrémisme”, and the absolute vehemence with which he rejected de Gaulle is seen as a remnant of the violent 1930s rhetoric (Brémond 2014: 116). Yet for all this intransigence, there is a qualitative difference in the tone of Blanchot’s post-war writings:

Quand nous refusons, nous refusons par un mouvement sans mépris, sans exaltation, et anonyme, autant qu’il se peut, car le pouvoir de refuser ne s’accomplit pas par nous-mêmes, ni en notre seul nom, mais à partir d’un commencement très pauvre qui appartient d’abord à ceux qui ne peuvent pas parler. (2003: 12)

Here is a rejection not just of nationalism, but of *any* exclusive community, Blanchot later describing *communisme* as “ce qui exclut (et s’exclut de) toute communauté déjà constituée” (1998a: 148). As Crowley glosses, “Uni, solidaire, pas encore ensemble”, any grouping formed by this *refus* is characterised by “le dessaisissement dans lesquels il cherche à se fonder (sans se fonder)” (2004: 113). As well as the debt to Antelme, Crowley subsequently demonstrates how this articulated community, based on the logic of the *sans*, was influential

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<sup>13</sup> Surya notes that this description would be even more “admirable” had Blanchot resisted, rather than welcomed, Pétain (2014: 47).

for Jacques Derrida, whose *Spectres de Marx* (1993) “est inconcevable sans le Blanchot du ‘Refus’” (117), and also for Crowley’s own *Lignes*-published *L’Homme sans* (2009).

Lastly, at the turn of the millennium Surya echoes Mascolo’s attempt to unite the left in the issue *Désir de révolution* (February 2001). Given that such a desire seemed lacking, Surya suggests giving *refus* “le sens le moins précis possible” to act as the “plus petit commun dénominateur” of an agreement (2001: 9). Yet he cites Emmanuel Berl, rather than Blanchot, when calling for a “refus pur et simple opposé par l’esprit au monde qui l’indigne” (9): given the Blanchot controversy, this could have been a strategic decision to avoid dividing, rather than unifying the field. Nevertheless, the call largely failed: Balibar argues that it is easy to refuse bourgeois society, but harder to reject global capitalism (2001: 13); Löwy would prefer “*l’action subversive collective*” to collated yet solitary refusals (2001: 119); and Nancy describes such refusals as “trop pures et trop simples” (2001c: 137). This issue demonstrates the still fractured nature of the intellectual left in 2001, and also the difficulty of sustaining a *refus* that is not formed around a common cause or positive program. Attempting to articulate the kinds of collective negativity theorised by Antelme and Blanchot, Surya attempts to define *Lignes* as an open, plural “espace” rather than a defined political “position” (2007c: 19). However, as the following chapters examine, when debating current events within a public sphere riven with partisan views, to maintain this negative plurality is almost impossible. The tensions expressed towards Surya’s attempt to make *refus* a common denominator therefore presages the “oscillation constante entre *espace* et *position*” throughout the *revue*’s history (1999a: 290), and replays the tensions between Bataille and Mascolo, pitting personal sovereignty against the compromises of material, collective action. Whilst for *Lignes* the 1930s provided a relatively distant decade of contrast and comparison, the relationship to these post-war events is more direct: 1958 appears as a Benjaminian lightning flash illuminating the present, *Le 14 juillet* providing “an image which flashes up at the instant when it can be recognised and is never seen again” (Benjamin 1999: 247); whereas the positions taken up by Bataille, Mascolo and Blanchot produce between them the dynamic tensions which still pervade the *revue*. With *La Revue internationale*, Mascolo and Blanchot would go on to develop the “projet qui a sans doute le plus profondément influencé *Lignes*” (Surya 2007c: 38).



## Plural Speech

In 1960, with Francis Jeanson on trial for aiding the *Front de libération national algérien*, Mascolo again intervened, beginning to draft the ‘Déclaration sur le droit à l’insoumission dans la guerre d’Algérie’. With a “total lack of institutionally sanctioned political discourse in favour of Algerian national independence” (Paul 2010: xii), the intellectual initiative was significant, Bident praising it for asserting the right not to oppress others alongside the right to not be oppressed yourself (1998: 395). Although collaboratively written, Blanchot provided the title, and so the strong emphasis on the *droit* rather than the *devoir* to insubordination. As another attempt to found a community negatively, avoiding obligating signatories to subscribe to a prescriptive program was key. Two major political communities followed: one more literary and Blanchotian surrounding the *Revue internationale*, and Mascolo’s more militant *Comité* during May ’68. The *Lignes* issues of September 1990 and March 1998 made much of the documentation surrounding these initiatives available for the first time.

After the ‘Déclaration’, Blanchot saw its success as relying on a new form “d’être ensemble” predicated on “sa force impersonnelle” (Blanchot 2003: 46). Yet this anonymity was not the joint articulation of a common position, but a move towards producing “plural speech” (Hart 2010: xxiv). As a result, Blanchot believed that the ‘Déclaration’ “ne trouverait son vrai sens que si elle était le commencement de quelque chose” (Bident 1998: 403): alongside Mascolo and Vittorini, from 1960 to 1965, he placed his efforts into creating the radical, new *Revue internationale*. The project was highly ambitious and the *revue* never materialised, except for an Italian issue ‘zero’ appended to *Il Menabo. Lignes* (September 1990) therefore made many of the texts and surrounding documentation available for the first time, demonstrating the theoretical amplifier of the endeavour.

The *revue*’s fundamental conviction was that, with globalisation, no national problem existed that was not also an international concern. Editorial committees were established in France, Germany and Italy for a tri-lingual publication, with contributors also sourced from around the world. Texts would be singularly composed but collectively edited and translated, then presented anonymously so that each contributor “devient responsable d’affirmations dont il n’est pas l’auteur” (Blanchot 2003: 53). Again, however, rather than a common standpoint, the *revue* aimed at “une nouvelle structure, ouverte et pluraliste” (Panicali 1990: 173) that would reveal the spaces “between” different voices, placed together in “a relation of

infinity” (Hart 2010: xxv): within this new international coalition “le poétique opère le politique, le fragment opère la totalité, la communauté opère la solitude” (Bident 1998: 407).

Before examining this kind of writing, it is worth pausing to note the importance of *revues* for Mascolo and Blanchot. Surya stresses that most of Blanchot’s political texts were “écrits dans des revues et pour des revues. Dans le mouvement de pensée que permettent les revues” (‘L’éditeur’ in Blanchot 2003: 8). Mascolo also argues for the specificity of periodical texts, requesting that all pieces for the *Revue internationale* be ones which authors “n’auraient pas songé à écrire si elle n’existait pas” (1990b: 223). When the *revue* stalled and Vittorini suggested they publish a book instead, Mascolo rejected this suggestion as books have “un caractère définitif, fermé, solennel” within which “il ne peut plus s’agir d’un ‘mouvement’” (1990a: 301). For Mascolo, the failure of this *communisme de pensée* was a blow: “Écrire tout seul est nécessaire, inévitable. C’est triste aussi et peut-être frivole” (300).

The movement created by *revues* is similarly important for Surya. Whilst *La Révolution rêvée* is not a history of post-war *revues*, it relies heavily on them as “un réservoir inépuisable” not only because many of such texts are never republished, but also “parce que la pensée y est chaque fois saisie en mouvement et collectivement” (Surya 2004b: 13). Surya analyses texts “dans leurs strictes contemporanéité et réciprocité” (15) in an attempt to trace this movement of thought emerging. Consequently he wants *Lignes* to produce not “la possibilité d’un mouvement nouveau, mais une nouvelle possibilité de mouvement” (2007c: 10), the *revue*’s name implying an attempt “de désigner un geste dans l’espace, un mouvement, un tracé” (10). Echoing Mascolo, Surya notes the tension between writing alone and together:

Je souligne à la fois, et autant que faire se peut, le caractère en effet collectif, ‘collectiviste’ même (osons le mot ici, amusons-nous avec) d’une telle entreprise de pensée, et son caractère irréductiblement singulier, ‘individualiste’ (pour faire pendant à ‘collectiviste’); solitaire même. C’est seuls que nous pensons ensemble: j’en suis convaincu. (2010a: 78)

For Surya, more sceptical regarding genuinely communal composition, it is the tension between the solitary and the collective that produces the movement of thought. Yet he also notes the difficulty of maintaining such motion today, as readers seem less interested in the “mouvement d’une revue” than in particular “thèmes” (2007b: 36). However, his persistence with *Lignes* demonstrates his commitment to the form, and this thesis also hopes to

demonstrate that the study of contemporary *revues* can still imbue published monographs with a greater contextual density and conceptual mobility.

A key tension traversing *La Revue internationale* was the intersection of writing and politics. Surya argues that despite his reputation for withdrawal, “il n’y a pas de mouvement par lequel Maurice Blanchot s’est en effet retiré du monde que n’ait doublé un mouvement inverse, et singulièrement simultanée, qui ne l’y a lié, et de la façon la plus ferme; de la façon la plus *politique*” (‘L’éditeur’ in Blanchot 2003: 7). Rather than retreating from politics between the Second World War and 1958, Surya asserts that Blanchot was developing a relationship to the world which was already political.<sup>14</sup> Literature was not storytelling for Blanchot, but a manner of thinking ethical and ontological issues through writing. For Blanchot (unlike Mascolo), literature is not valuable for its “richer potential for communicativeness”, but more for its ability to challenge any “stable ethical or political foundation” as *contestation* and *questionnement* (Hill 1997: 92). Hill therefore suggests that it was this literary questioning that drew Blanchot away from nationalism and led him to resist exclusionary communal identifications.

There is then an inherent impossibility in combining this ethical openness with a defined politics. Writing to Bataille, Blanchot described a “double mouvement” in response to politics, one “dialectique” which gestures towards decisive action, and another, “essentiellement non dialectique”, which “ne se soucie pas du tout de l’unité et ne tend pas au pouvoir (au possible)” (cited in Bataille 1997: 595-6). Blanchot’s literary writing allows power and identity to dissipate, welcoming alterity. Yet the political impulse drew Blanchot into current events, necessitating precise interventions. These are two divergent vectors with differing discourses: “L’un *nomme* le possible et veut le possible. L’autre *répond* à l’impossible” (596). *La Revue internationale* was Blanchot’s “attempt to find the impossible language that would allow one to refuse and contest certain political events while watchfully preserving the possibility of others” (Paul 2010: xxxii). Blanchot admitted the unresolvable tension between “la responsabilité politique” and “la responsabilité littéraire”, but hoped that the new *revue* could provide “des éléments” of a solution (Blanchot 2003: 56). The form of the *revue* was its most radical gesture. Blanchot wanted it to cover *tout*, to “dire le ‘monde’ et tout ce qui lieu dans le monde” (2003: 58): yet this ‘*tout dire*’ did not mean indiscriminately writing about everything, but extricating the novelty of an event “là où le tout est en jeu”

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<sup>14</sup> The prose style indicates that this introduction is written by Surya, but it is signed ‘L’éditeur’, a strategy used by Surya when the positions espoused may not correlate closely with his own views, but sit comfortably within the intellectual genealogies encompassed by *Lignes*. As noted in the previous chapter, Surya recently has been much more sceptical as to whether Blanchot’s politics pre- and post-war were significantly different.

(52). The central spine of *La Revue internationale* was to be ‘Les Cours des choses’, a series of short, fragmentary texts in which such significant events would be represented. Hill notes that Blanchot’s 1950s literature had been progressing towards “fragmentary rearrangement” (2012: 14), and this political project re-enforced this impulse: because such fragments were not part of a “simple or dialectical unity” but were a manner “to affirm writing as a response to the threat and promise of the future” (26), perhaps they could draw together the two contradictory vectors.

This conception of writing caused its own tensions, as the French texts were received with bafflement and hostility by their international collaborators. Vittorini found them repetitive, Blanchot arguing that such repetition is “le sens même” of infinite contestation (1990b: 269). Furthermore, Vittorini argued that what the French called *écriture* was actually philosophy, a dated “recherche ontologique” which aimed to revalorise Heideggerian metaphysics “sous le nom de littérature” (1990: 274). That Vittorini references Blanchot’s writing specifically seems pertinent: Mascolo and Vittorini previously held comparable positions on aesthetics and politics, and the disaccord here revolves around a Blanchotian conception of literature. Whilst Mascolo was wedded to a revolutionary materialist politics, Blanchot’s communism has been seen as “primarily a *theoretical* one” (Holland 1995: 190). The divide between Mascolo and Blanchot over textuality and materialism deepened in the following years.

Affirming the importance of Blanchot’s meditations on the fragmentary nevertheless, *Lignes* re-published ‘Le Nom de Berlin’, a Blanchot text destined for ‘Les Cours des choses’. Berlin, geographically fragmented after the erection of the Wall, is for Blanchot an exemplary case in which the totality of an object can only be apprehended fragmentarily. This prompts further speculation on the nature of fragmentary writing, which is “une méthode patiente-impatiente, mobile-immobile de recherche” and also “l’affirmation que le sens, l’intégralité du sens ne saurait être immédiatement en nous et en ce que nous écrivons, mais qu’elle est encore à venir” (Blanchot 2000: 132). Writing here is an infinite process: “Toute parole de fragment, toute réflexion fragmentaire exigent cela: une réitération et une pluralité infinies” (132).

Commenting on ‘Berlin’ in *Lignes*, Bident notes that the construction of the Berlin Wall is a concrete manifestation of “la déchirure fondatrice de désir politique” (2000: 145). By contrast, Blanchot’s writing “prend soin de neutraliser la différence polaire, algébrique ou électrique qui consisterait à attribuer un + et un – de chaque côté de la frontière” (143) and instead “ouvre cet espace infini d’interrogation” (146). Blanchot thus provides *Lignes* with a

way of re-considering intellectual engagement which still grants the writer a degree of responsibility, but that refuses commitment and authority and instead “laisse une place que chacun peut venir occuper” (146). As noted, the late 1970s and 1980s saw a rejection of polemical engagements in favour of a responsible and restrained participation within a liberal-democratic framework. Blanchot permits a similar resistance to dogmatism, yet without the acquiescence to consensual debate and contemporary structures: intellectual responsibility here involves an incessant questioning of received discourses and an ethical demand for an impossible justice.

‘Berlin’ also appeared in *Lignes* at a crucial juncture, this issue (October 2000) being the first to include an expanded editorial board after Dobbels’s departure, with Marmande also soon to leave. This new board cemented a more militant stance within the *revue*, contributors more frequently including former Trotskyists and Althusserians, yet it is important to note that this new genealogy does not supplant the one delineated here, but accompanies it: *Lignes* subsequently publishes Blanchot’s *Écrits politiques* (2003), Crowley’s *Robert Antelme* (2004) and *L’Homme sans* (2009), followed by a plethora of Bataille republications, demonstrating the continued importance of this heritage. The clearest example of *Lignes* holding these two genealogies in tension is *Le nouveau désordre international* (October 2003), as it opens with contributions from Nancy and Badiou. Following the American invasion of Iraq, Nancy’s opposition is clear: “Il n’y a pas eu de guerre avec l’Irak, il y a eu une guerre faite à l’Irak, infligée à l’Irak” (2003: 7). Extending his meditations to the Middle East, he adds: “De la Palestine et d’Israël, il n’y a plus un mot à dire. Peut-on même attendre des actes” (8). These declarative statements seem to demand action. However, Nancy proceeds to challenge such certainties, noting that “la dénonciation de l’impérialisme américain” is a reactionary response given the lack of genuine alternatives, and so this “rhétorique pieuse” should also be avoided (8). Philosophy instead “a fort à faire avec des questions remises entièrement en friche, véritablement de fond en comble”, probing the significations of words such as *monde*, *peuple*, *capital*, *pouvoir*, *politique* and *religion* (8). Nancy’s text thus straddles Blanchot’s two vectors, initially seeming to name the possible and call for action before challenging his own discourse in the vein of ‘Berlin’ (which Nancy had translated from Italian in 1983). Badiou, on the other hand, recommends “la concentration de la pensée sur un problème dont la formation peut sembler tout à fait singulière, voire extraordinairement étroite” (2003b: 30). As will be discussed in Chapter 5, Badiou’s method relies on precisely the mathematical simplification and polarisation that Bident contrasted to Blanchot: by clearly designating right and wrong, Badiou articulates a precise sequence of

actions that should result. At the start of a period in *Lignes* in which Badiou, Alain Brossat and Jacques Rancière predominate, the publication of 'Le nom de Berlin' indicates that this other genealogy remains an important intellectual legacy.

### **Theory as Material Force**

Following the failure of *La Revue internationale*, May '68 provided another forum for communal politics. Whilst the Saint-Benoît milieu played a "négligeable" role in the wider events (Bident 1998: 469), they offered their solidarity and embraced the liberated political climate. Within the Sorbonne, Duras, Mascolo, Antelme, Blanchot and company formed Le Comité d'action étudiants-écrivains, which continued to meet daily into July. Tracts composed on the spot and in the subsequent months for the bulletin *Comité* again appeared in *Lignes* close to the thirtieth anniversary of May '68 (March 1998). Once again, the group produced "ni programme, ni plate-forme, ni ligne politique" (Mascolo 1993a: 340). Yet this was the culmination of Mascolo's conception of intellectual activity. In *Le 14 juillet* he had argued that intellectuals needed to participate within a broader social base to have a real influence, as "l'organisation politique du monde est désormais l'œuvre de tous et de chacun" (2003a: 152). Building up towards the 'Déclaration' Mascolo argued that with general levels of education rising, if strategically deployed, the intelligentsia now "détient un pouvoir certain, que le pouvoir politique ne saurait négliger" (169). This proved prescient, as the 'Déclaration' had a considerable public and political impact. Whilst the PCF denigrated intellectual activity as bourgeois, Mascolo referred back to Marx and stated that whilst "la force matérielle ne saurait être renversée que par la force matérielle [...] la théorie elle aussi devient force matérielle lorsqu'elle pénètre les masses" (317). For Mascolo, this is what occurred in May '68.

Rather than through plural speech, Mascolo wanted the intellectual to become anonymous as an organic part of the masses. Whilst before May '68 the intellectual spoke on behalf of the voiceless, here the intellectual collective becomes "un microcosme du peuple où vit [...] l'exigence révolutionnaire impersonnelle" (2003a: 341). Practically, this required genuinely collaborative political statements, Duras describing "l'enfer de cette élaboration collective" in which after hours of painstaking revisions "la peine de l'individu étant purgée, la communauté fonctionne" (in Mascolo 2003a: 326). This was a concerted attempt to break down individualistic, bourgeois subjectivities, prompting participants to become an "étranger à tous et à soi" (338). By early 1969 the 'Comité' was disbanded precisely because individual

conflicts crept back in, Mascolo commenting that it had become “une famille” discussing “du linge sale” (176). For a moment, though, a new form of political organisation was lived. The publication of documents attesting to this communal anti-individualism is part of *Lignes*' response to the denigration of May '68 by politicians, the mass media, and philosophers. Since the 1950s France had been undergoing an “accelerated transition into Fordism” (Ross 1995: 3) and “American-style mass culture” (10), and “all the problems and dissatisfactions” (3) associated with such a process was blamed on the student's revolt. Subsequently, Ferry and Renault chastise *la pensée 68* for valorising “bonheurs privés” (1985: 17), and Gilles Lipovetsky's characteristic *L'Ère du vide* (1989) also argued for “a rejection of May '68 for its ‘individualism’” (Geroulanos 2007: 36). The republication of the ‘Comité’ documents demonstrates that at least some *soixante-huitards* were also opposed to the individualism which Blanchot called “la conception débile du libéralisme ordinaire” (1983: 36). Furthermore, these “culturel” readings of May '68 ignored its political impact (Cusset 2008: 40), Bensaïd reminding *Lignes* readers that the events also produced the largest labour strikes ever seen in France (1998b: 54). *Lignes* is then united in its “aversion pour ces courants réformistes” (Brossat 1998: 22). Denigration of May '68 would however continue at least up until Sarkozy's 2007 presidential campaign, in which the vehement recourse to the “anti-68 theme” suggests these now ancient events still posed a threat to the government (Gordon 2008: 145). In response, *Lignes* published Bensaïd and Krivine's *1968: Fins et suites* (2008), a collection of articles written on successive anniversaries of May '68 which document both the growing conservative backlash against the events, and the contemporary political importance they still retain.

Although further ‘Comité’ documents were published in 1969, this was the end of Blanchot's political participation alongside Antelme and Mascolo. Mascolo's revolutionary materialism was becoming increasingly incompatible with Blanchot's more literary endeavours. In *Sur le sens et l'usage du mot 'gauche'* (1955, *Lignes* 2011), Mascolo argued that there was no electoral ‘left’, the parliamentary left remaining “une certaine manière d'être bourgeois” and reactionary (2011: 12). Mascolo stressed that it is important to know “si l'on est idéaliste, ou matérialiste, et d'en connaître les conséquences” (38-9). If one takes the insatisfaction of human needs seriously, electoral politics will never do enough to satisfy them: only a revolution would suffice. A committed materialist, for Mascolo, is one whose ideas and actions coalesce “en principe” (28), suggesting that literary and intellectual activity are in themselves insufficient. In May '68, in which rather than *le besoin* the emphasis was on sexual or cultural liberation, Mascolo continued to insist that the problem was “un certain

attachement à la démocratie que l'on nomme à juste titre formelle, qui va de pair avec l'exploitation" (1998e: 165). In *Lignes*, noting that those participating in May '68 committees were steeped in a "culture démocratique", Brossat notes that it is one that rejected "démocratie 'formelle'" for a "démocratie socialiste (ouvrière)" (1998: 35). This critique of formal democracy will return in *Lignes'* second series, and at the same time throughout *Lignes* some agree with Brossat that these events suggested that "*toute discussion n'est pas bonne à prendre, toute pratique verbale du pluralisme politique pas nécessairement valable*" (1998: 37). As the Conclusion will discuss, *Lignes* could be seen to consider gender and sexuality issues as secondary considerations in the face of economic exploitation, as Mascolo's suspicion of cultural and sexual liberation here suggests.

Mascolo thus took a clear line against Maoist conceptions of the cultural revolution, arguing that there is no such thing as an "acte cultural *révolutionnaire*"; the revolution will arrive from outside of culture, politically, and retrospectively give culture a new, revolutionary sense (Mascolo 2003a: 337). In addition, Situationist discourses claiming that cultural products were being "récupéré[s] par le système établi" influenced a negation of cultural politics (Blanchot 1998c: 130). Culture could re-enforce rather than challenge the government, and given that public broadcasting was controlled by the state a desertion of the cultural sphere was promoted by Mascolo. With intellectuals devolved into the masses and theory a material force, politics was now communicated via "une parole *clandestine*", "dans l'amitié", "hors le livre" and without even the need for a "revue" (1998g: 141-2). Notably, as the 'Comité' disbanded in 1969, Mascolo retrospectively comments that "des écrivains comme Blanchot, comme Bataille sont nos luxes; d'irremplaçables luxes mais des luxes tout de même du point de vue qui se doit d'être le notre" (1998d: 175). Art retained its autonomy, but Mascolo now emphasised that it had a secondary status: whilst surrealists such as Éluard claimed that "un poème de moi ne peut que servir la liberté" (1998g: 142), for Mascolo this illusory aesthetic liberty was a distraction from material inequality. Instead, during a trip to Cuba in 1967 Mascolo was surprised to see "trois taureaux reproducteurs" and "un canon anti-aérien" appearing in a gallery alongside traditional paintings: rather than absorbing these ready-mades "à l'imaginaire", however, their appearance pierced "l'écrasant ennui" of the art world by bringing the other works into contact with "Réalités" (1993: 295). The Cubans' material needs (milk) and revolutionary might (anti-aircraft guns) imbued art with a concrete, vibrant immediacy that suggested the possibility of "un communisme dans l'art" (294). Material, political reality gave art its new significance, not vice-versa. Mascolo implicitly placed Bataille and Blanchot on the side of an aesthetic idealism as they were not committed



to revolutionary politics, and against Blanchot's 'theoretical' communism he stressed the material.

*Lignes* makes a case for the subterranean intellectual legacy of Mascolo, Marmande arguing that Barthes, Deleuze and Lacan, amongst others, would "prolonge[r] sans le savoir les textes, comme ceux de Mascolo, qui ne sont pas dans la ligne, pas dans le ton, pas dans la doctrine" (1998: 48). Winston also argues that after '68 "the main contours of Mascolo's psycholinguistic model of revolutionary intellectual praxis were picked up consciously or not by post-structuralists such as Kristeva" (2001: 150). The proximity of Mascolo's thought to *Tel Quel* will be problematised below; instead, it appears that the legacy of this more militant Mascolo is more easily located in *Lignes*' second series, between Badiou and Bensaïd. Fearing arrest after his major involvement in May '68, Bensaïd ended up hiding in Duras' apartment and met Antelme, Mascolo and Blanchot. Citing him often after *Lignes* exhumed these documents, Mascolo became exemplary for Bensaïd as a militant involved in "l'engagement communiste", the emphasis being on communism as it remained "le mot juste, le plus précis, le plus fidèle en contenu, pour désigner l'enjeu d'une époque" (Bensaïd 2010a: 192). Mascolo's attempt to define a heterodox conception of *Le Communisme* (1953) then returns in *Lignes*' second series, with Badiou's *L'Hypothèse communiste* (2009b) attempting once again to provide this term as a positive political orientation. Therefore whilst the negative constitution of political communities dominates *Lignes*' first series, the second sees the return of more prescriptive gestures.

Over the course of twenty years, La Rue Saint-Benoît milieu left *Lignes* a rich seam of thought to draw from. Yet through the period this heritage was becoming increasingly divided: Mascolo, more militant, saw art as autonomous but also secondary to a strongly engaged, revolutionary politics; whereas Blanchot poses another vector of thought that resists the closure of signification, and by extension political and national communities, placing the emphasis on the ethical demands of writing rather than action. Such a tension not only traverses *Lignes*' entire history, but can also be read as two different tendencies orientating its two series. To fully ascertain the influence of this group on *Lignes*, however, the gap between the 1960s and the 1980s must be traversed via *Tel Quel*.

### **Transgression from *Tel Quel* to *Lignes***

Although rarely mentioned in *Lignes*, when comparing their literary canons *Tel Quel* seems to be one of their closest predecessors. However, the Mascolo dossier signals a

significant divergence: in 1971 Mascolo sent a letter to *La Quinzaine littéraire* complaining of the “exploitation” of Bataille, Breton and Artaud “depuis Mai ’68” in “certain cercles intellectuels”, clearly referring to *Tel Quel* (1998b: 194). Mascolo’s letter was sent at the height of *Tel Quel*’s attempts to mobilise transgressive literary works, such as Bataille’s, into a revolutionary cultural practice. In *Lignes*, however, transgression is seen as a more intimate, personal experience with little social effectivity. There are historical and conceptual reasons for this difference, delineated below. Subsequently, working through these issues in the new millennium, Surya mediates between Bataille, Blanchot and Mascolo to arrive at a nuanced account of the relationship between politics and art in the present.

*Tel Quel*, created in 1960, was inspired by Bataille and Blanchot’s opposition to Sartre, and hence aimed “to disengage literature from politics in the wake of a ‘tempsmodernistic’ cultural hegemony” (Marx-Scouras 1996: 9). Yet Marx-Scouras argues that editor Philippe Sollers’ aim to resurrect “the literary modernity of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries” (17) also entailed a belief that art for art’s sake could also be a “progressive force” (20). A growing interest in Bataille and Antonin Artaud led the *revue* to focus on bodily experience, madness and subversion. Writing and sexuality were seen as forces “which society attempts to canalise and repress” (ffrench 1995: 98). Drawing also on Sade, Kafka, Joyce, Céline, and Pasolini, writing became itself an “experience of limits” (Marx-Scouras 1996: 216) and *Tel Quel*’s project became a reassessment of “culture from the perspective of the limit” (ffrench 1995: 85). Sollers’ most consistent contention throughout the *revue*’s history was that “society is neurotic in its repression of its foundation” (100). *Tel Quel*’s politics shifted depending on the strength of their faith in literature as a tool for “the subversion of ideology” (114) and hence how firmly “the application of a logic of transgression” could be articulated (62). After joining the PCF in the late 1960s, *Tel Quel* adapted their theories towards “counter-ideological strategies” (ffrench 1995: 115). Literature’s negativity and subversive desire were inserted into a “Marxist dialectic” (121), Kristeva’s critical semiotics and the emphasis on textual “productivity” aiding this articulation (Marx-Scouras 1996: 133). Beginning their Maoist phase, *Tel Quel* broke with the PCF in 1971 and embraced “a more culturally orientated, heterogeneous and open Marxism” (117). So whilst in 1968, in a position still close to that of Bataille, Sollers claimed that “the writer could have no social function” (118), by the 1972 Cérisy conference on Bataille and Artaud he asserted that writers had a role to play in enacting “une révolution simultanée sur les plans des arts et de l’action politique” (Halsberge 2006: 13-14).

*Tel Quel* subsequently became “submerged in a terroristic and political vocabulary” (Kauppi 1994: 353). Privately, Mascolo lamented the “insondable misère de ces dogmatismes successifs” (1998a: 200), perhaps being more impatient than most with *Tel Quel* having himself joined the PCF and railed against their yet dogmatic rejection of aesthetic autonomy over twenty-five years previously. The gulf between Mascolo and *Tel Quel* around 1971 is clear; retrospectively, it is also evident that the faith of both in theory or literature as materially revolutionary forces was also misguided. If *Tel Quel*’s failure was due to “an over-estimation of the power of their work on ideology” (Britton 1992: 114), the same applies to Mascolo who in 1970 claimed that the ruling class was ideologically “proche de la défaite” (1998f: 189). The failures of these optimistic vanguards tempers *Lignes*’ own pretensions in this domain, Surya claiming that although the “possibilité de l’avant-garde séduit [...] le temps en était déjà tout à fait passé” (2007c: 11).

Marmande comes to the same conclusion through exploring the historical exhaustion of transgressive aesthetics, especially the lineage of black erotica running from Sade to Bataille privileged by *Lignes*. Literary transgression is described as “inséparable du temps des ‘avant-gardes’” (1999: 10), from surrealism to *Tel Quel*. Yet as capitalism accelerated and increased its ability to assimilate threatening subcultures into cycles of production, transgression became “intégré[e] dans le vaste procès de consommation culturelle”; in “les sociétés les plus riches où se démontre une loi parfaite du spectacle total, la sexualité n’apparaît plus comme la brèche qui ouvre à l’inconnaissable” (16). The problem with *Tel Quel*’s politics of transgression was, then, their “trans-historical” analysis of literature (French 1995: 101): their politics was formed in a certain 1960s moment in which social mores and values were radically changing, *Tel Quel* developing “a synthetic theory related to a fixed historical moment” (104) which was soon passed. Shorn of its revolutionary aspects, literature came to be seen as a way of allowing negativity to be “integrated within the symbolic” order, becoming “in some way curative” rather than “a subversive avant-garde” (201-2). In this sense, the transgressive “political and psychoanalytical encounters” of *Tel Quel* will fail, “while the experience of literature will remain constant” (90). *Lignes* takes this into consideration, as psychoanalysis is largely absent and they resist a strong politicisation of literature. *Lignes* shares with *Tel Quel* a similar appreciation of (mostly) modernist and subversive authors: Proust, Kafka, Musil, Joyce, Borges, Broch, Artaud, Beckett, Celan, Sartre, Genet, Flaubert and, centrally, Blanchot, Bataille and Klossowski (Surya 2012a: 5). Thematically, Girard notes that the experiences they privilege include “enfance, folie, sainteté; ou encore délit, perversion, cruauté”, continuing the focus on limit texts (2012: 64).

However, the point of such limit texts is no longer their socially or psychologically subversive action. Instead, Marmande and Surya frequently quote Bataille's defence of Sade, that one must "tout dire à quelque point qu'en frémissent les hommes" (Marmande 1999: 22): as Marmande glosses, this does not suggest that reading Sade is socially useful, but that it can reveal something of human behaviour from its limits.

Conceptually, Foucault's *Preface à la transgression* (1963, *Lignes* 2012) was a warning against the kind of politics *Tel Quel* tried to effect. Foucault argued that transgression could not be dialectically placed into the service of politics as it relies on both a passing of, but also a re-inscription of, the limit. Marmande endorsed this reading, opening his article on the history of transgression with this Foucauldian definition:

*La transgression (violation, péché, faute, en latin d'église) est le mouvement délibéré par lequel une limite (juridique, morale, religieuse) est affrontée – autrement dit, désignée. Il ne l'efface ni ne l'abolit.* (1999: 6)

Citing Foucault, Marmande also describes transgression as "l'affirmation du partage" (27) as one only transgresses the "limite que l'on porte en soi" (8). This is a reading that will become increasingly present in *Lignes*, noticeably in the issue *Nouvelles lectures de Georges Bataille* (May 2005) and the influence of Nancy. Nancy has argued that in emphasising the transgressive, sacrificial and obscene in Bataille, many commenters have turned such themes into "la comédie, au regard de ce que furent, malgré tout, la retenue et la sobriété de Bataille" (1990c: 57). In this issue, articles by Sardinha, Santone and Capéran, via Nancy and Foucault, argue against the *Tel Quelian* "défi" of conventions to describe Bataille's transgression as "ontologique", portraying a conception of *être* as an excess, locating its borders only in exteriority and in contact with others (Capéran 2005: 88). The subversive aspects of Bataille are not entirely ignored, Lina Franco discussing Bataille's "*pratique scatologique d'écriture*" (2005: 194). But on the whole, if Bataille's life is described as "la recherche de la plus complète liberté possible" (Trécherel 2005: 218), this is a personal rather than collective endeavour, conceptually represented by the shift from social to ontological transgression.

*Lignes* would therefore support Mascolo in seeing *Tel Quel's* mobilisation of Bataille as politically, historically and conceptually flawed. Yet in *Le Polième* (2011), Surya once again works through these issues, this time with reference to Bernard Noël. Crucially, *Le Polième* was published the same year that *Lignes* republished Mascolo's *Le Sens et usage de*

*la mot 'gauche'*: Surya argues that, for Noël, “la politique est révolutionnaire ou qu’elle n’est pas” (16), just as for Mascolo the only left was revolutionary, not governmental. Yet Surya argues that politics is today “démonétisé” (14): from Nancy in the 1980s to *Lignes* in the present, the erosion of politics due to economic management is a recurring concern. Noël subsequently historicises the development of literature and liberalism beyond 1968. Famously, Noël’s novel *La Château de Cène* (1969, 1975) was censored as an *outrage aux bonnes mœurs*: yet he argues that since the 1970s governments have less need to physically repress a docile populace, and outright censorship is no longer necessary as “le pouvoir libéral lui préfère la sensure”, to “confisquer le sens” (Detambel 2007: 31). For Noël, “nous vivons dans un monde bourgeoise, où le vocabulaire de l’indignation est exclusivement moral” (Noël 2011: 22); this recourse to moral discourses will return throughout the thesis, but for Noël it means that “la discussion, l’adversité, la dialectique ont disparu” in the face of technocratic governance and consensus (Malaprade 2003: 12). The critical analysis of liberal discourses, especially in the mass media, is a thread continued by *Lignes* up until the present: issue 42 was entitled *La pensée critique contre l’éditorialisme* (October 2013), and contributors referred to works such as Hazan (2006), Berkman (2013), Canut (2007) and Mauger (2013) in which ideas are portrayed as cynically *decomplexifiés* and uncritically reproduced in the media. Whilst these are more sociological and mediatic accounts, in terms of the trajectory outlined above this attention to language, and the desire to prevent its foreclosure and reduction, is represented in literature by Blanchot, and philosophically by Nancy.

Therefore there are two ways to fight this *sensure*: one “dans la cité” as “un citoyen et un militant” the other “plus souterraine, dans l’écriture poétique” (Detambel 2007: 90). Detambel notes that Noël has done his part as the former, fighting censorship laws and providing aid to the FLN in the 1950s. But culture also has an infra-political role in combatting *sensure*. Noël is heavily influenced by Bataille and Blanchot, and so argues that literature cannot be servile to political constraints. However, Surya argues that Noël’s work is pervaded by a “*bonheur politique*” and an “*intimité communiste*” (2011: 65), a register which infused the political communities of Mascolo and Blanchot in the 1960s but is missing from much contemporary discourse. Writing can contain “une liberté essentielle dont la gauche peut tirer ses principes propre”, but a writer should not concern herself with what these political implications may be (Surya 2014: 46). As such, Surya argues that Noël “n’a jamais rien écrit qui n’ait été engagé” but also “n’a jamais rien écrit qui engageât la littérature” (2011: 29). Surya contrasts Rimbaud with Marx, arguing that for Noël it is “*la vie qu’il*

faudrait *changer*, davantage que du monde qu'il faudrait *transformer*" (2011: 64). Just as transgression is reduced to an ontological rather than social level, the infra-political impact of literature operates on a more intimate level: rather than aesthetic shocks or transgressive gestures it presents at best a form of personal liberty that could become collective. Surya ascribes such a position to Bataille, Blanchot and Mascolo: given the above, schematically we could ascribe the revolutionary politics to Mascolo, the work on language to Blanchot, and the demand for an absolute, personal liberty to Bataille.

### *Le communisme de pensée*

There is one last key distinction to be made between the literary heritages of Bataille and Blanchot in *Lignes*. Defining the *Tel Quel* novel, Ricardou made a distinction between "*l'écriture d'une aventure*", which remained mimetic, and "*l'aventure d'une écriture*", in which the process of writing was itself the experience (1967: 111). One could place Bataille and Blanchot in these two categories: for Bataille, transgression was "thematically" represented, and for Blanchot it was formally expressed through "style" (ffrench 1995: 35). As we have noted, both believed that writing should *tout dire*, but for Bataille this was a Sadean demand to expose the base materiality of humankind, whereas for Blanchot this implied the fragmentary rapport of writing gesturing towards an impossible totality of sense. However, although Blanchot temporarily put his writing at the service of Mascolo's drive for a *communisme de pensée*, as noted Nancy recently accused it of perpetuating an *anarchisme de droite* (2014a): to conclude, it is potentially Surya's more Bataillian sense of the relationship between literature and thought that allows a negotiation between the solitary and the communal.

In the hands of *Tel Quel*, *l'aventure d'une écriture* became another kind of communal endeavour, as intertextual and theoretical rapports between works built up a common body of subversive gestures. Whilst "Theoretical fiction" was *Tel Quel*'s hallmark (ffrench 1995: 68), for Blanchot, too, writing was a space apart, a realm of language approaching the "courant anonyme et impersonnel de l'être" (Blanchot 1949: 334). However in stark contrast to *Tel Quel*, "this a-phenomenal space of exile offers no resistance, no limit that may be transgressed" (Maclachlan 2000: 29). Bernard Noël referred to this as a "*cheminement*" in which the writing has no "but" except this "besoin de cheminer" in language (Winspur 1991: 37). This, then, is the adventure of writing without the theoretical extravagance. In *Lignes*, Bénézet traces this literary trajectory through the 1970s, emphasising the "recherche d'un je

en fiction” (1999: 39), a novel with “une intériorité littéraire” (40), but without “théories” (44) and not “terroriste” (41). Roger Laporte is a significant figure in this genealogy, *Lignes* publishing two of his posthumous texts, *Le Carnet posthume* (2002) and *Lettre à personne* (2006), and a collection of essays devoted to his work (Dominique 2006). Whilst inspired by Sollers, for Laporte writing “n’a été précédé d’aucune théorie” (Laporte 2006: 47). Maclachlan therefore notes that in a period marked “by experimentation and formal extravagance” (2000: 50), Laporte’s writing is instead characterised by “simplicity” (174), and Derrida praised Laporte over those wishing “à s’installer complaisamment dans son auto-télisme ou son auto-thétisme” (2006a: 38). Laporte is therefore a marker through which *Lignes* positions itself against the theoretical and textual mobilisation of transgression for political ends.

However, this kind of sacrificial writing has raised questions. Veinstein argues that the key writers for Laporte (Blanchot, Char, Kafka, Holderlin, Proust, Artaud), all have “engagé leur vie dans un risque fondamental”, that of writing (2006: 58). Laporte referred to his fiction as a *biographie*, but rather than recording his life he aimed to explore “the experience of writing” (Maclachlan 2000: 1): the author ‘Roger Laporte’ would be a double that only existed in literary space. Yet this writing had real life consequences. Sacrificing himself to this task, Laporte had “pratiquement refusé toute vie ‘ordinaire’” in what Lacoue-Labarthe describes as an “automutilation atroce” (2006: 11-13). Given this self-sacrifice, Lacoue-Labarthe highlights the “rémanence d’une thématique chrétienne” running through Laporte’s late writings (2002: 16). Laporte considered his *œuvre* complete after writing *Moriendo* in 1983: yet whilst writing was always described by Laporte as an *épreuve*, his desire to carry on writing after this end is directly compared to the suffering of Christ: “La Passion est perpétuelle” (Laporte 2002: 30). Such mythologised suffering raises the related problems of authority and authenticity. Carolyn Dean has described the transition of the romantic idea of artistic genius into the “metaphorical criminal” or “outlaw” through the surrealist embrace of madness and violence (1992: 206), and with Blanchot and the *Tel Quel* generation it was the writer herself who was subjected to violence, sacrificed for the text itself. Yet a residual romanticism remains: through the sacrifice of the author, the ‘authority’ and ‘authenticity’ remains in the text itself. ‘Real’ writing constitutes approaching the limits of the self, thought and expression, and *Lignes* is therefore dismissive of conventionally narrative, mimetic or genre fiction, and especially hostile to the *autofiction* which became prevalent in France from the 1980s, described as “égographie” (Bénézet and Lacoue-Labarthe 2012: 85). The potential elitism of this posture will be discussed in Chapter 6. Laporte’s

sacrifice only negatively affected his own life: by contrast, as previously discussed, Blanchot has been accused by Nancy of using the authority he accrued from his literary output as a means of intimidation which, given the violence of some of his rhetoric, he labels an “anarchisme de droite” (2014a: 127). The solipsistic and authoritative reserve such sacrificial writing encourages can in extreme cases lead to elitism, self-destruction or aristocratic intimidation.

What, then, of Bataille and the writing of an adventure? With transgression operating on a more intimate register, rather than as a social *praxis*, Surya shifts the emphasis onto the relationship between limit texts and thought. In *L’Imprécation littéraire* he argues that “la philosophie fuit ce que fait honte” (Surya 1999c: 14), and given its remit to *tout dire* it becomes literature’s task to think that which is considered shameful. Accordingly, Philippe Hauser argues that Surya’s *récit Exit* (1988e), which depicts an anonymous sexual encounter taking place in public, is an attempt to present “les rapports de la baise et de la pensée” (2010: 59). Surya’s later novel, *L’Éternel Retour* (2006c), is much more clearly about the materiality of thought: it begins with the narrator declaring “je me mets à la merci de la pensée. Je veux en faire l’expérience” (2006c: 11). Featuring two protagonists discussing Nietzsche, the novel has been described as “un *dialogue philosophique*” (Nichanian 2010: 107), but the conversation is not as clearly structured as this suggests: the two disputants are frequently “ivre” (60), “chaud”, “fébrile” (185) and tired, affective states influencing their thoughts; convictions are fleeting, the narrator rejecting conclusions derived the night before, stating that “rien de tout cela ne soit possible” (76); the ownership of ideas is contingent, the narrator noting that Dagerman frequently spoke “à ma place” and vice-versa (115); and thinking occurs most effectively when attention is captivated, led astray by an “obsessionnel” return to the same ideas (96). The novel is in itself relentless, featuring two long sections of around 100 pages with no paragraph breaks and in dark, dense type: the material burden of sustained thought is passed on to the reader. Whilst, then, a novel about the material processes of thought, this remains a representation of thinking; thinking is materially led astray but not, for Surya, into an impersonal Blanchotian space, as it still passes through a subject. Surya’s materially thinking literature could be reconciled with Philippe Sollers’ elaboration of an *écriture corporelle* in which “the rhythm of pulsions across and through organs” affects the literary syntax and lexicon (ffrench 1995: 95), but once again the writing subject is not sacrificed, disseminated and dispersed across the literary space in quite the same manner.



The *Lignes* issue *Littérature & Pensée* (May 2012) continues to examine this relationship. Again, *la pensée* is described as material, having “une épaisseur, un espace, une durée” (Evrard 2012: 267). This materiality extends beyond the subject, however. Via Bataille, Philippe Hauser describes “la participation mystique” of poetry “où le sujet et l’objet s’identifient [...] s’attirent mutuellement pour mieux transformer, pour accroître ce qu’il faudrait appeler leur densité ontologique” (2012: 20). There is then a certain impersonality of thought, an imposition on the thinking subject from the outside world. Bénézet and Lacoue-Labarthe note that writing relies on “ce qui est *intimé*”, this verb implying both an intimacy to thought but also an external suggestive process which exposes the porous borders of inside and outside (2012 : 80). Surya has hence described his thought as “‘mla’ pensée” (2010e: 64): there is a resistance to claim ownership of thought, ‘mla’ expressing a de-centred self both possessing, and being dispossessed by, thought. Furthermore, for Beck ideas “ne sont jamais individuelles; elles entrent en chacun” (2012: 151). Rather than a solipsistic mental space, thought is located in a material subject yet is always exposed to, and operated on, by exteriority.

Above all, thinking is simply difficult: there is “une résistance générale à la pensée” (Brou 2012: 60). It is in this sense that Brou notes that other external aids, such as books, can help the process: “Elles trafiquent ensemble la pensée” (61). This is a notion Michelle Cohen-Halimi explores, tracing Nietzsche’s conceptualisation of *ressentiment* through his repeated readings of Dostoyevsky’s *Notes from the Underground* (2012: 253). This fictional text fascinated Nietzsche as it seemed to contain a germ of his own thought he had not yet fully expressed: thinking through Dostoyevsky’s novel helped him to elaborate this concept in the *Genealogy of Morals*. Literature was in this sense a prosthesis for thought, justifying Surya’s assertion that he “ne sépare pas entre la littérature et la philosophie” (2010a: 81). Revealingly, then, Surya also notes that *Lignes* constitutes “elle-meme *une pensée*” or, alternatively, it “est une chose qui se pense”, suggesting it is likewise a kind of prosthesis (1999a: 295). This suggests an extension between solitary writing and communal thought, and therefore despite the failure of communal writing with *La Revue internationale*, the return to single-authored texts need not be as *triste* or *frivole* as Mascolo worried. Material, contingent, subjective yet impersonal, such thought is left in textual repositories for others. As Nancy would argue, rather than forming a defined community, a text is “abandonnée sur la limite commune” and “ne fait pas autre chose que d’inscrire la singularité/la communauté [...] comme infiniment singulière/commune” (1990: 182). Rather than the austerity of the literary space, this sober articulation of a literary community suggests that the material

extension of *l'écriture d'une aventure* is more conducive to approaching Mascolo's *communisme de pensée*.

This chapter, then, has revisited key moments in *Lignes'* intellectual genealogy to demonstrate how they orient the *revue* in the present. Antelme's conception of *amitié* was not only important for the future thought of Derrida and Nancy, but directly inflected the kinds of political actions undertaken by Mascolo and Blanchot in the post-war period. As such, Mascolo's *Le Communisme* was a key text in the development of a French heterodox Marxism tackling alienation in the 1950s: Chapter 6 follows this trajectory through Guy Debord to the present day. Subsequently, three models of intellectual activity were discerned: after the war, Bataille remained essentially disengaged, devoting his own personal liberty to the construction of an autonomous body of thought and literature; Blanchot's communism was more theoretical than practical, yet placed an emphasis on the infinite responsibility of thought to respond to the impossible demands of justice and a community to come; and Mascolo became more trenchantly militant, regarding anything less than a revolutionary upheaval as an inadequate response to material deprivation. If Bataille, Blanchot and Antelme tend to set the terms for the first series of *Lignes*, Mascolo's intransigence and rejection of formal democracy would come to the fore in the second series. Moving into the contemporary period, the cultural politics of transgression seem exhausted for *Lignes*, whilst the residual authenticity located in the absolute sacrifice of Blanchotian writing is also seen as a dangerous tendency. Surya attempts to reconcile Bataille, Blanchot and Mascolo somewhat in *Le Polième*, yet the *revue* itself is perhaps the imperfect manifestation of Mascolo's drive towards *un communisme de pensée*. We begin the next chapter by reviewing the previous two to get a sense of the kind of *revue* Surya sees *Lignes* as being in the wake of Bataille, Blanchot, Antelme and Mascolo, before moving on to examine some of their more concrete engagements to date.

***Lignes, the First Series: 1987-1999***

### Chapter 3

#### Impure Atheists, Opaque Intellectuals

Given the intellectual heritage now delineated, what kind of *revue* did *Lignes* become? The twentieth century provided many influential models, such as the para-academic (*Critique*); the politically engaged (*Les Temps modernes*); or the primarily aesthetic (*La Revue blanche*). As literature tends to play a smaller role in contemporary *revues*, and Surya was sceptical regarding the contemporary relevance of avant-garde activity, the “théoricisme” (Rieffel 1993: 622) of *Tel Quel* is eschewed for a more sober analysis of political reality. However, the influence of the *Revue internationale* suggests a less straightforwardly ‘engaged’ stance, Surya defining *Lignes* as an open “espace” rather than a defined “position” (2007c: 19). Given the perceived failures and dangers of revolutionary programs and totalitarianism, political action is conceived of as provisional, uncertain, and conjunctural; as such, the first *Lignes* issue contained “ni tract ni déclaration collective”, and not even an editorial (11). As with Mascolo, Surya wanted a *revue* to foster the movement of thought, rather than to create a defined movement, and so avoiding a strict editorial line was one manner of keeping *Lignes* fluid. Such an open platform also helps foster “le souci [...] de faire entendre la voix des œuvres ‘marginales’ ou ‘mineurs’”; despite the suspicion cast on subversive or transgressive gestures, the *revue* maintained a concern with outsiders (21). Surya therefore emphasises that *Lignes* is not a closed community, yet a *revue* necessarily remains a communal endeavour, mediating between solitary writing and a joint articulation of thought: “C’est seuls que nous pensons ensemble” (2010a: 78). Given the influence of Jean-Luc Nancy’s rethinking of community as *partage* and *espacement*, one could then conceptualise the *revue* as a form of *comparution* (Nancy and Bailly 1991): writers appear next to each other throughout *Lignes*’ pages, touching only at their articles’ borders without fusing into a common voice.

This stress on an “absence de projet” (Surya 2007c: 11) is also a sign of the times. In the late 1970s, Sollers rallied to the *nouveaux philosophes*’ stance of intellectual dissidence, entailing a “rejection of the very idea of a project and of the idea of a collective group called *Tel Quel*” (French 1995: 235). Across Europe, even stridently militant journals such as the *New Left Review* undertook such transformations when faced with the “pessimism” of “the conjuncture of 1989” (Thompson 2007: 158). The “abandonment of a driving political project” led its editor Perry Anderson towards a new “pluralism” without the “presumption of any automatic agreement” (xii). An open format, and a rejection of vanguardism and

dogmatism seems symptomatic of a wider intellectual disorientation in the face of globalised neo-liberalism. This defensive stance became more proactive for some as they detected an exit to the '1989' conjuncture, the social movements of 1995 marking the start of this process for some, and Chapters 4 and 5 will document the more active politicisation of the *revue*.

Surya admits that *Lignes* became “cette position qu'elle ne voulait pas être” (2007c: 20), undergoing what he describes as an “oscillation constante entre *espace* et *position*” (1999a: 290). Such a motion is most obvious politically, but any periodical publication is bound to coagulate into a loose identity with a regular body of contributors. Furthermore, Surya also states that “c'est très vite que n'ont plus désiré venir vers *Lignes* tous ceux qu'effaroucha sa radicalité apparente ou prétendu; je veux dire: c'est très vite que *Lignes* n'eut plus à refuser d'accueillir leurs textes” (2007c: 19). This implies a certain set of criteria applied to texts from the start. The intellectual heritage examined in the previous two chapters positioned the *revue* to an extent; however, one can also detect a tacit *ethos* running through contributions in terms of similar critical approaches or values, these becoming especially clear in thematic issues. Given the desire to avoid a definite identity, many key terms of this *ethos* are negative; the late 1980s were described as “pénitente et puritaine”, “épuratrice et repentie”, and the *revue* was thus orientated “contre” these prevailing tendencies (17). *Lignes* will therefore be depicted as deliberately situating itself as a counter-discursive forum. Their emphasis on *irréligion*, *immoralité*, the *impur* and *impropre* are mobilised in response to this climate, yet the negative aspects of this *ethos* develop into more specific positions as soon as they are placed into contact with other *revues* and contemporary events, such as the Rushdie affair, the *foulard* debate or scandals surrounding paedophilia. To conclude, the more aesthetic binary between opacity and transparency becomes troubled when mobilised as a critique of finance capitalism by Surya, Frédéric Lordon and Frédéric Neyrat, the confluence of this theme then highlighting the movement of thought in *Lignes*, but also a shift beyond the *revue*'s early, counter-discursive strategies to delineate a more positively defined critical position.

### **Impure Enlightenment**

*Irreligion* was *Lignes*' first major thematic issue (June 1989). Surya opens by delimiting the reactionary tendencies of contemporary discourse, including “la retour des valeurs contre la signification, de la morale contre le jeu, des familles contre la séduction, [...] da la Nation contre le nomadisme, du sens contre l'art, de l'utile contre la dépense”

(1989a: 9). This “profond travail a commencé” (8) about ten years previously, the time of the *nouveaux philosophes* whom *Lignes* is then positioned against. For Surya, “le retour du religieux” (9) underpins all the rest as in the 1980s many intellectuals asserted “that institutional religion could play a greater role in the public sphere” (Behrent 2004: 341). Surya specifically discussed publications by Alain Finkielkraut (1987) and Michel Henry (1987), in which “le sentiment de la crise” was exaggerated to demand a restoration of the “valeurs perdues” (1988c: 206) of Christianity, a nostalgic return to before Nietzsche announced “la mort de Dieu” (207).

Yet as well as the moral concerns discussed below, Surya is concerned by the intellectual regression of such positions, asking: “De quoi la pensée s’effraie-t-elle?” (1988c: 203). Whilst Finkielkraut’s book received widespread media coverage, Surya laments the silence surrounding Jean-Luc Nancy’s *L’Oubli de la philosophie* (1986). Finkielkraut’s former doctoral supervisor commented on his student’s “mépris” for modernity (Schérer 1988: 128), whilst Nancy defended the gains of post-humanist thought against the *nouveaux philosophes*, noting that innovative thought is frequently met with a reactionary return to “l’homme, le sujet, la communication, la rationalité” (Nancy 1986: 24). Nancy affirms that deconstruction is now integral to philosophy “et non une variation capricieuse ni une crise malade” (58). Rather than a religious phenomenon, for Nancy the death of God signifies the impossibility of transparently guaranteed meaning, authoritative origins and defined identities.

Given this emphasis on the philosophical gains of Nietzsche and Derrida, one surprising indication of Surya’s desire to make *Lignes* an open forum is the early dossier on Jürgen Habermas, his thought being described as one of “les plus considérables que déploie la philosophie contemporaine” (*Lignes*’ 1989b: 8). Since 1980, Habermas had been describing Bataille, Foucault and Derrida as neo-Nietzschean “young conservatives” in an argument taken up Ferry, Renaut, and Wolin to discredit ‘French Theory’ (Wolin 1989: xxii). In *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* Habermas denounced Bataille’s “admiration” for fascism (1987: 218), his “militant communism” (227), and his advocacy of an aesthetic sovereignty of “groundless or ‘pure’ leadership” (220), all representations of Bataille resisted by *Lignes*. Following their Habermas issue, Joël Roman of *Esprit* characterised *Lignes* as partisans of a new “dogmatisme rationaliste” replacing “la doxa post-moderne et différentialiste des années précédentes”, an unlikely characterisation of the *revue* (1989: 152). Habermas’ work centres on communicative rationality and presupposes that, with effort, language can be made to be transparent enough to produce universal norms and practices.

Many in *Lignes* would oppose such a conception, Zagdanski arguing that this would produce “un enfer limpide de pureté” (1990: 153). Politically, Habermas was thus suspicious of “normative claims that are not susceptible to democratic consensus” (Bowie 2001: 126), yet it was the over-emphasis on democratic consensus which *Lignes* was orientating itself against. Étienne Balibar would argue that the only universal politics he subscribed to would be “une universalité insurrectionnelle” (1995: 21), in which the only universal claim is that of the eruptive, emergent voices of those previously ignored to demand social recognition: this emphasis on *dissensus* continued in *Lignes*’ second series with Badiou and Rancière.

Most significantly, however, Habermas characterised neo-Nietzscheans as anti-Enlightenment thinkers. Nietzsche is an important predecessor for *Lignes*, Nancy and Surya co-editing *Un Autre Nietzsche* (February 2002); yet Schérer’s denunciation of Finkielkraut’s contempt for modernity is key given that Habermas also criticised French neo-Nietzscheans as anti-modern themselves. From Max Weber, Habermas inherited a conception of modernity as “la différenciation des sphères de valeurs” (Hunyadi 1989: 13): the cognitive (science), aesthetics (art), and the juridico-moral (social norms) were now autonomous, and anything that threatened “the distinction between pure reason, practical reason and aesthetic judgement” that Habermas derived from Kant was seen as anti-modern (Norris 1990: 65). By relativising values and emphasising the aesthetic and material dimensions of communication, Habermas sees neo-Nietzschean thought as an assault on the Enlightenment legacy. Yet in *Lignes*, an excerpt from Nietzsche’s *Antichrist* argues that Christianity needed to “rendre malade” its believers to ensure their faith in a fiction (1989: 154); the implication being that religion distorts rationality, and so the death of God increases man’s rational powers by ushering in a secular modernity. Nietzsche therefore suggests an alternative Enlightenment legacy instead of one turning its back on rationality completely.

Rather than seeing Nietzsche as an attack on “Kantian conceptions of reason and the rational subject” (McCarty 1991: 2) and exaggerating “deconstruction as a species of latter-day Nietzschean irrationalism” (Norris 1990: 49), in *Lignes* Nancy places Nietzsche and Bataille within a Kantian genealogy, arguing that the *Critique of Pure Reason* began to “détacher la pensée du savoir ou de la connaissance” (2000: 100). Objective knowledge becomes impossible as all thought is mediated by a materially situated subject, as suggested in the previous chapter by Surya and the issue *Littérature & Pensée*. Likewise Nancy emphasises the inextricable link between “l’ordre sensible” and “l’ordre intelligible” (2001b: 13). Nancy’s Descartes would argue that “il n’y a pas ‘ego’ en général, mais seulement la fois, l’occurrence et l’occasion d’un ton: tension, vibration, modulation, couleur, cri ou

chant” (1992: 26). Rather than rationally extractable pure meaning, communication “ne transporte pas des significations: elle met en contact des ouvertures de sens” (2000: 103). Alongside Nancy’s *Le Sens du monde* (1993c), Bernard Noël was also undertaking a similar investigation into the materiality of sense throughout the 1980s, Marc Floriot (1988) positively reviewing Noël’s *Journal du regard* (1988) and *Onze romans de l’œil* (1987) for *Lignes*. Another minor figure in the *Lignes* canon is Vladimir Jankélévitch, to whom issue 28 is devoted following his death (May 1996) and who preferred *la parole subtile* to strictly conceptual, precise language:

La parole précise est exclusive, isole et individualise, rompt la solidarité des choses entre elles, suspend le devenir pour fixer des essences. La parole subtile concentre dans un sens global une énergie de significations particulières ou possibles, qui se diffusent lentement par imprégnation et ‘savouration’ sans que l’on puisse assigner un terme à cette diffusion (Imbert-Vier 1996: 69).

The emphasis on the materiality of both sense and the thinking subject, the tact and tactile nature of thought, is therefore situated by *Lignes* within a Kantian modernity, rather than undermining it.

Surya was also keen to promote other minor figures, asking Jean-Noël Vuarnet to revisit his *Le Discours impur* (1973) in *Lignes*, and republishing his *Le Philosophe-artiste* (2004) and some fictional texts (2005). Vuarnet produced exactly the kinds of aesthetic textual relativism vilified by Habermas. He argues that the nineteenth century produced a new image of thought, but rather than deriving it from “la trinité Marx-Nietzsche-Freud” as might be expected, he describes “l’émergence d’une opacité qu’il faut nommer [...] l’écriture” (1973: 238). His promotion of an aesthetic-critical approach, “mi-littérature mi-critique” (7) is seen precisely as an attempt to combat “l’aliénation d’un langage utilisé comme monnaie d’échange” (54), this tendency to characterise Enlightenment thought simply as instrumental reason being one of Habermas’ major complaints. Vuarnet also deliberately aims to collapse “la distinction des essences formelles” (15). He therefore verges towards Habermas’ dangerous postmodernism in which “all genre distinctions are submerged in one comprehensive, all-embracing context of texts” (Habermas 2006: 17). Vuarnet heads in this direction, arguing that there is no “vrai” meaning in James Joyce, and if you read the entire world in this manner there is “pas de sens vrai du monde” (1973: 49-50). Habermas railed at Derrida for precisely this reason, as a levelling of genre distinctions makes rational argumentation and meaningful communication impossible. Yet as Derrida responded, he had not really reduced “logic to rhetoric” or “the concept to metaphor” or absolved genre



distinctions (2006: 41), just destabilised their boundaries. Habermas' reading of Kant is one in which texts cannot contain "both literary value" and "philosophic cogency" (Norris 1990: 65); critics such as Vuarnet were attempting a writerly idiom in which both intermingled, Surya again arguing that literature and philosophy were not distinct disciplines.

*Lignes* thus presents an atheist tradition that is not irrational; it is therefore at odds with Habermas' characterisation of their intellectual genealogy. Despite an early sympathy, then, it quickly became apparent that their intellectual itineraries were largely divergent. Recently, Michel Onfray's *Traité d'athéologie* argues that against the "présentables", "politiquement correctes", and still essentially Christian high Enlightenment thinkers (Rousseau, Voltaire, Kant), there is an "aile gauche", "un pôle de radicalité oublié" that vigorously contested the existence of God (2005: 31). These thinkers are the "avers sombre" of the Enlightenment (43), being materialist philosophers, ideologues of the French Revolution and those constructing "une morale post-chrétienne" (57). Such thinkers tread similar ground to the "vitalist, relativist, organic and historicist strains" of Isaiah Berlin's 'Counter-Enlightenment', rather than the instrumental rationality the Enlightenment is often reduced to (McMahon 2003: 92). *Lignes* can similarly be seen as constructing a Counter-Enlightenment genealogy, Louis Sala-Molins embracing "l'irréligion totale" of Feuerbach to liberate humankind's affective capacities and potential becomings (1989: 63). Furthermore, alongside his emphasis on writers, Jean-Noël Vuarnet notes that Saint-Simon, Montesquieu, Marivaux and Fontenelle were all "virtuellement athées, quasi ou para-libertins" and "socialement inventifs et contestataires", linking blasphemous subversion to politically progressive thought (1989: 90). In *Le Philosophe-artiste*, Vuarnet depicts a new lineage, from Giordano Bruno through Sade, Kierkegaard and Nietzsche to Klossowski and Heidegger for whom philosophy is not "la pensée idéaliste" (2004: 10) but "une sorte d'opérateur ou de régulateur d'intensités" (1995: 119). Re-reading Kant and placing themselves within an alternative Enlightenment trajectory, *Lignes* maintains a focus on the aesthetic and material qualities of thought, but rejects the suggestion that this is merely irrationalism; it allows that pragmatic communication and consensus are possible, but not in themselves desirable political or philosophical goals.

Given this discordance, why the early praise of Habermas? The *revue* states that at the time many people "ne connaissent pas encore Jürgen Habermas", so this could be seen as part of their vocation of making minor voices heard ('*Lignes*' 1989b: 8). Yet the introduction also mentions the contemporary German context, in which the extreme right was growing in influence alongside the revisionist historical accounts that would provoke the *Historikerstreit*

debate (spanning roughly 1986 to 1989). Habermas publicly intervened against Michael Stürmer, Andreas Hillgruber and Ernst Nolte, for whom “history must take on the affirmative function of reinforcing national consensus” and therefore seemed liable to “revive neo-nationalist dogmas” (Wolin 1989: xix-xx). In the most extreme form of their argument, the Nazi responsibility for the Holocaust was attenuated by explaining it as a reaction to the Soviet threat: “In this context of horror the destruction of the Jews appears as only the regrettable result of a nevertheless understandable reaction” to the perceived “threat of annihilation” (Habermas 1989: 222). Revisionism and the European extreme right were major concerns for *Lignes* in its first years (discussed further in Chapter 4), and so Habermas would have been seen as a key German ally. It is perhaps this, rather than his philosophic program, that led to the early Habermas dossier.

Articles criticising Derrida for his “apologétique” response to the de Man and Heidegger affairs also appeared at this time (Rochlitz 1990: 140). However, after 1990 Habermas was never again mentioned in a positive light, and Derrida was vigorously defended towards the decade’s end. In 1998, *Le Débat* published a dossier entitled ‘Que faire du Collège internationale de philosophie?’. The Collège, set up by Derrida, François Châtelet, Jean-Pierre Faye and Dominique Lecourt, is attacked for being an opaque and nepotistic institution and a misuse of “fonds publics” (Canto-Sperber 1998: 133). Yet the principal motivation for their hostility is the kinds of philosophy privileged by the Collège. It was created in the 1980s as an independent institution to “donner la priorité aux thèmes, problèmes, expériences qui ne trouvent pas encore une place légitime ou suffisante dans d’autres institutions” (Châtelet et al 1998: 2), yet deconstruction was seen to predominate. *Le Débat*, and principally Alain Renaut, again used this as an opportunity to attack ‘French Theory’, which “les amateurs de produits français, loin de l’Hexagone, aiment trouver en venant à Paris” but which, Renaut argues, has no real philosophic value (1998: 144). *Lignes* responded with a dossier in defence (October 1998), with contributions from Collège members such as Derrida, Françoise Proust and Michel Deguy placing them squarely within its broader intellectual genealogy. As Bourdieu had argued, for *Lignes* the de-legitimation of *la pensée 68* was “aussi dangereux que la démolition de la chose publique” (Bourdieu 1992: 43). In defence of their own partisan stance, Proust reminds readers that *Le Débat* was in itself “une institution particulièrement puissante”, geared towards the destruction of *la pensée 68* (Proust 1992: 107). In the face of this assault, *Lignes* consolidated its position in defence, and was much more wary of publishing critical articles of privileged thinkers as a result.

Habermas was then seen as an ally against historical revisionism, but his inclusion is also a sign of the early attempt to keep *Lignes* an intellectually open *espace*. Yet with *Esprit* characterising them as communicational rationalists, and *Le Débat* continuing the assault on *la pensée 68*, the *revue* becomes more staunchly defensive of this latter heritage. Furthermore, as discussed in the following chapter, the positions of French thinkers close to Habermas, such as Pierre-André Taguieff, become increasingly incompatible with the developing stance of the *revue*, further distancing them from this school. The *revue* therefore constructs a Counter-Enlightenment genealogy, providing a focus on the aesthetic and material nature to thought: Bataille clearly plays a central part in this legacy for Surya and Marmande, yet this lineage provides a broader array of references for other collaborators. Intellectually, this genealogy emphasises the progressive nature of secular thought: below, the counter-discursive nature of the *revue*'s cultural embrace of *irréligion* is explored.

### **Aggressive *Irréligion*?**

Marmande notes that whilst preparing the *Irréligion* dossier, some respondents questioned their tone, detecting “le triomphe de la certitude” (1989a: 38). The texts were sometimes aggressive, Jean Schuster describing the Abrahamic religions as the “trois cancers de la planète” (1989: 64). A long excerpt from Sade’s ‘Français, encore un effort si vous voulez être républicains’ is quoted on the links between Christianity and political domination. For Franck Lepage, the fact that *laïcité* was “totalement absente” from the bicentennial of the French Revolution was galling evidence of the insidious influence religion still exerted in France (1989: 124). In the title of the issue the choice of *irréligion* rather than *laïcité* or atheism is revealing: Marmande argues that *irréligion* “n’a d’autre possibilité d’expression que la provocation ou l’absence”: it does not form a “Chapelle” but is a contestatory, negative force *sans* community (1989a: 42). It is also characterised by irreverence and provocation: many of the texts re-published by *Lignes*, such as Alfred Jarry’s ‘La passion considérée comme une course de côte’, heavily satirise religious piety. The emphasis, then, is not on the establishment of an atheist position, but a corrosive negativity to counter manifestations of religious power. In Richard Terdiman’s account, this makes the counter-discursive nature of *Lignes*’ positioning here evident: a counter-discourse “materialises the counter-term which any dominant usage seeks to suppress”, and its main characteristic is “a corrosive irony of the here-and-now” (1985: 76). Rather than define their own position, then, the emphasis on terms such as *irreligion* could be seen as “driven by a negative passion, to displace and annihilate a

dominant description of the world” (12), in this case Surya’s frustration with the intellectual return to religious morality.

However, there is a less combative atheism in *Lignes*. Geroulanos describes a whole raft of non-humanist atheist thought that developed in France, a central current running from Kojève to Bataille and Blanchot, all of whom “used it to criticise both traditional atheism and its Catholic critics” (2010: 251), and which led to the anti-humanist thought criticised by Ferry and Renault. Jean-Christophe Bailly is subsequently enthusiastic about the remnants of Christianity: “La religion renversée, c’est d’abord une masse de sens offerte” (1989: 43). Once the authority of religion is diminished, its positive contributions to aesthetics and philosophy can be shared by non-believers. Nancy’s later deconstruction of Christianity extends this stance. Christianity produced a new “mode of being in the world” (Nancy 2012: 3): with monotheistic Gods being characterised principally by their absence, “monotheism therefore boils down to a form of atheism” (Alexandrova et al 2012: 24), producing the kind of Western subjectivity which has now been globalised and henceforth cannot be ignored. Therefore whilst Onfray promotes a similar “*déconstruction du christianisme*”, he relies on demystifying religion to prove its irrelevance (2005: 88), whereas Nancy’s project assumes that Christianity cannot be simply bypassed as it now structures planetary existence. Most of this work occurs outside of *Lignes*; however it signals that the early aggression towards Christianity was not universally shared in the *revue*.

Furthermore, the *irréligion* issue appeared in June 1989, and the predominantly hostile tone would soften after the *foulard* debate that erupted later that year. The term *laïcité* had been primarily mobilised in opposition to Catholicism, yet in the post-war period all that remained was “a still smouldering conflict over public subsidies for private schools, more than 90 per cent of them Catholic” (Baubérot 2009: 190). Once Mitterrand’s government gave up their plans to abolish private schools in 1984, the word *laïcité* almost became superfluous. However, after the *foulard* debate the term became exclusively identified “with issues relating to Islam” (191), and for *Lignes* such a use is stigmatising. They largely avoided the *foulard* debate, though Marmande argued that those hiding racist views behind a superficial adherence to *laïcité* merely demonstrated their “*moralité bouffonne*” (1989a: 44). Those campaigning in favour of banning the *foulard* from schools (such as Régis Debray) stopped appearing in the *revue*, and the aggressive atheism became tempered. Compared to the historically dominant Catholicism, Islam remains a marginal voice in France and so *Lignes* is more likely to defend it. This again differentiates them from Onfray, who discusses “*le goût musulman du sang*” (2007: 239) and argues that the passages justifying violence in

the Qur'an outweigh those promoting tolerance, making Islam a closed and archaic religion. By contrast, in *Lignes* Yadh Ben Achour argues that the emphasis on jihad is "une certaine lecture possible du texte" amongst others (1995: 160). He contextualises the rise of fundamentalism as dependant on many factors, "économiques, culturels, internationaux, psychiques" (173), and argues that when these change, "le texte changera" (173). Such interpretations resist essentialising Islam as a barbaric religion, a politically conciliatory decision made by the *revue*.

Criticism of Islam comes when defending free speech, as generally *Lignes* vigorously contests censorship. Yet a softening tone is perceptible even in these cases. In a petition defending Salman Rushdie after Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini's *fatwa* demanding his death for publishing *The Satanic Verses* (1988), *Lignes'* condemnation is unequivocal: "Le fanatisme est une menace constante pour la vie de l'esprit" (*Lignes'* 1989a: 135). Yet Bident later specifies that the real issue is not Islam itself, but the proximity between "l'autorité spirituelle et pouvoir politique" in Iran (1995: 99). There is a different tone in defence of Taslima Nasreen, the Bangladeshi author in exile following the publication of her novel *Lajja* (1994) in which Muslim assaults on Hindu women were denounced. Marmande praises Nasreen's "simple déclaration d'athéisme" and "la modestie de son expression" (1995: 191). Nasreen stresses that personal faith is not the problem:

Je ne livre aucune bataille contre les croyants. Mais ceux qui se servent de la religion pour s'emparer du pouvoir, ceux qui l'utilisent pour anéantir la société, ceux qui y fondent une inégalité entre les hommes et les femmes [...] oui, je suis en guerre contre ceux-là (1995: 192).

Rather than religious faith, most responses here criticise religious institutions which oppress women or serve to maintain financial and political inequality. Instead of denouncing radical Islam, Monique Chemillier-Gendreau argues that it is more important to alter contemporary geopolitics by hastening Palestinian liberation and nourishing Algerian democracy, these being "quelques exemples de la manière de construire un espace international commun" which could prevent societies moving towards "l'impasse de l'intégrisme" (1995: 205). By the new millennium, Fethi Benslama practically apologises for defending Robert Redeker, who had described Muslims as "une foule hystérisée flirtant avec la barbarie" (Redeker 2006), the *Temps modernes* contributor subsequently receiving death threats and going into hiding. Benslama asserted Redeker's right to free speech, yet was more critical of "la

médiocrité triviale” of Redeker’s article which set out to “ruine[r] ce lien essentiel de liberté-dignité-altérité” (2006: 245-6).

Whilst concerned with the potentially illiberal aspects of fundamentalism, *Lignes*’ *irréligion* became therefore rarely a total intolerance, instead usually critiquing religion when politically, morally or aesthetically repressive, and showing a growing empathy towards Muslims as a stigmatised minority in France. On the one hand, this demonstrates that if counter-discourses are “parasitic upon its antagonist” (Terdiman 1985: 68), then they also have to take account of the ‘dominant’ discourse as “a complex and shifting formation” (57). For Surya, the most nefarious effect of a return to religion was the accompanying rise in moralistic critical discourses: *irréligion* in *Lignes* would therefore soon be paired with immorality. However, when the dominant discourse also shifted to one seen as stigmatising Muslim minorities, *Lignes* adapted its response: the critiques of moralism would continue, but the approach to religion was strategically softened to accommodate solidarity with minority communities in France.

### **Interlude – An Alternative Cultural Politics**

Before moving on to discuss immorality, however, the Rushdie and Nasreen affairs raise the question of a cultural politics different from that depicted in Chapter 2. Via Bataille, Surya again argues for literature’s “souveraineté”, (1994a: 226), meaning that literature should not be subjected to moral constraints. Therefore those who defend the ‘innocence’ of writers miss the point: “Plaider leur innocence, c’est consentir malgré soi à la possibilité de leur culpabilité” (226). Sovereign, literature cannot be guilty or innocent; however, it also should not be political. If *The Satanic Verses* has become “un enjeu nommément politique”, Rushdie becomes the name of “la liberté qu’a la littérature” solely because this liberty is being challenged (Surya 1994b: 7). The qualities of Rushdie’s writing, and his other novels, are rarely considered: it is the scandal caused by *The Satanic Verses* that is of interest.

This is confirmed by their reaction to *Lajja*, which no *Lignes* contributors appear to have read; more so than Rushdie, Nasreen herself was “the text produced and deployed” in the debate (Ghosh 2000: 40). Furthermore, as Deen notes, *Lajja* is “a work of documentary fiction” (2006: 91) that integrates newspaper articles and political tracts into the text, was hastily written and was extended from 70 to 200 pages by the publisher, not the author (94). Rather than the kinds of *écriture* privileged by *Lignes*, *Lajja* belongs within “the tradition of the pamphleteer”, Amitav Ghosh calling it a “polemiction” (Deen 2006: 92). *Lignes*

subsequently publishes similar, if less polemic, texts: Mahmoud Traoré's tale of his clandestine immigration from Dakar to Séville, *Dem ak Xabaar* (2012), was narrated to and transcribed by a journalist, Bruno Le Dantec, making it essentially another 'journalistic fiction'. Whilst Le Dantec claims that other testimonies of these events are "peu crédibles lorsqu'ils flirtent avec la fiction" (Traoré and Le Dantec 2012: 9), he unproblematically assumes that Traoré's is "une narration purement factuelle" (14). These texts are framed as a different kind of cultural production to *écriture*, one that can therefore be more explicitly political. As Terdiman notes, counter-discourses "are never sovereign", and so mobilising texts in this kind of cultural struggle is immediately restrictive of this writerly liberty (1985: 18).

*The Satanic Verses* certainly made an impact, as "no novel had ever before become the centrepiece of an international incident" (Pipes 2004: 77). Yet Pipes notes that as the novel did not contain "the most blasphemous thoughts expressed by a Muslim in recent years" (17), the ferocious reaction the novel produced was not entirely predictable. It was months after the book's publication before Khomeini pronounced the *fatwa*, only after a largely anti-American flashpoint in Islamabad brought the novel to his attention, this being one of the many "arbitrary" (17) events needed to fuel a global scandal. In Nasreen's case, public outrage was "engineered" (Deen 2006: 96) as "the BJP in India used her book to stir up trouble" (95). *Lajja* has since been decried for its "lack of balance", and in solely blaming Muslim's for the violence in Bangladesh it became a "propaganda tool" for Hindu extremists "to vindicate their actions" (92). This seems to demonstrate Jacques Rancière's argument in *Lignes*, further discussed in Chapter 6: art itself is not political, but is politicised (or not) depending on its retrospective reception and mobilisation (2006b: 159). The impact an individual work has on its own merit is uncertain: good fortune, or an astute media campaign, tend to be needed to bring a text into mainstream public discourse. In this conception of cultural politics, *revues* and publishers have a key role in framing how texts are received, or deliberately publishing works that will feed into contemporary debates.

There is in *Lignes*, then, a utilisation of cultural products in political debates: as the next chapter discusses, with La Nouvelle Droite starting to mobilise theory and history as part of a Gramscian struggle for cultural hegemony, *Lignes* again responds with counter-discourses. Crucially, such a strategy relies on a relatively liberal, discursive public sphere: although contrary to Habermas, rather than tending towards the establishment of norms and consensus, Surya would prefer a public sphere of absolute liberty, a conflictual space of renegade expression. As Terdiman notes, drawing on Bataille, such an "individualist

insurrection” is in fact “an anti-bourgeois style of bourgeois individualism” (1985: 70), and so relies on many of the same structural supports as a Habermasian public sphere. Surya admits this tension, arguing that the “liberté supplémentaire (extra-ordinaire et subversive)” they desire, especially from art and literature, only makes sense if “la liberté ‘ordinaire’” is guaranteed (2007c: 21). *Lignes* as a revue has itself struggled to maintain editorial autonomy. Under Librairie Séguier (1987-1999), Éditions Hazan (1992-1999) and Léo Scheer (2000-2006), the *revue* was fortunately granted “la plus totale liberté éditoriale” by indulgent, independent patrons (Surya 2006a: 5). Yet come 2007 and the break with Scheer (who wanted to pursue more commercial interests), independent editors willing to take the *revue* on were thin on the ground, so the decision was made to self-publish through Nouvelles Éditions Lignes. Yet they rely on public support: *Lignes* has always had financial aid from the Centre national du livre, and after 2007 additional help came from the Conseil régional d’Ile de France, without which the *revue* would not survive. That the French State values cultural production is therefore necessary for public platforms such as *Lignes* to exist. The above makes clear that there are at least two major strands to the positioning and productions of *Lignes*: the *revue* makes counter-discursive, non-sovereign interventions to highlight the necessity of ordinary liberties to facilitate the supplementary aesthetic and philosophical activities the *revue* would prefer to undertake.

## **Immorality**

The return of religion was accompanied by heightened moral tensions. Two years into Mitterrand’s presidency many felt that “un certain ‘ordre moral’ a été ébranlé” (Roy 1983: 1597). Abortion laws were relaxed, sex education was introduced to schools, homosexuality was legalised, and laws to combat sexism were drafted. Roy congratulates “les législateurs” for having “précédé l’opinion publique” (1580), but also predicts the backlash from those who blamed the government for the degradation of moral values. Surya lamented the new moralisation of public discourse that followed, including the justification of the Gulf War on moral, rather than political grounds. His main focus, however, is on moral critiques of literature, especially from *Esprit*, including Tzvetan Todorov for whom “seule une intelligence vertueuse est porteuse de libertés” (Surya 1991: 115). In desiring a unity of the good and the beautiful, for Todorov the moral behaviour of an author impinges on the work, both of which should be virtuous: hence he attacks Orwell not for his politics, but his infidelities (115). Todorov has been described as “a moralist who is impatient with, though



not himself entirely free of, moralising” (Rabinbach 2009: 115); in this section, whether *Lignes* itself proffers an amoral stance, or an adhesion to an inversed immoralism, is examined.

*Esprit*'s critical moralising is analysed in *Lignes* by Georges Didi-Huberman with reference to three dossiers entitled ‘Quels critères d’appréciation esthétique aujourd’hui?’.<sup>15</sup> Whilst the dossiers are varied and contain some arguments consonant with *Lignes*' interests,<sup>16</sup> the general framing of the debate by Jean Molino and Jean-Philippe Domecq is Didi-Huberman's main target. They suggest that contemporary art is in a state of crisis, as “n’importe quoi” can count as a work (Molino 1991: 72) and aesthetic theory is a “farce intellectuelle” invented to avoid talking about actual *œuvres* (Domecq 1991: 109). Duchamp is attacked for promoting derivative anti-art, Warhol for commercial cynicism, and Jean Baudrillard for aesthetically uninformed cultural commentary.

Didi-Huberman's response tackles the rhetorical strategies and logical inconsistencies of the *Esprit* position, emphasising that this is “un débat moral et *moraliste*” rather than aesthetic, only ostensibly defending mimetic art (1994: 30). As they attack the bodily materiality of some works, but also the insipid abstraction of others, and lament both the rampant effects of a capitalist art market and nefarious Socialist influences, Didi-Huberman labels this “une pensée *contradictoire*, incohérente” (41). He describes the “constante *tonalité affective*” (28) which reveals the *ressentiment* motivating these texts; there is frequent recourse to excremental language to denigrate displeasing works, with Duchamp being referred to as “l’homme de l’urinoir” (34). Mobilising *Esprit*'s other *bête noire*, totalitarianism, modern art is tied to Communism to discredit both: modern art is Communist, Communism is dead, and so modern art is too. A whole raft of modern and contemporary art is placed under the rubric of Socialism, despite most of it having “*aucun rapport*” to Stalinism (36). Via reductive labelling, disparate *œuvres* stretching from Baudelaire and Picasso through Duchamp, Dubuffet and Warhol to Yves Klein and Christian Boltanski are grouped together to then disparage: Domecq attacks “l’art contemporain pris comme un tout, comme une classe ou race d’objets à maudire” (55). Didi-Huberman compares their discourse to racism, seeing a similar “*ton* fondamentale” based on hatred, intolerance and denigration (42). So what Mesnard describes as “une nostalgie académiste pour les valeurs sûres et pour une ‘esthétique’ classique” (1992b: 166), Didi-Huberman reads as a thinly disguised moral disgust of aesthetic modernity.

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<sup>15</sup> See *Esprit* volumes 173, 179, 185 (July-August 1991, February 1992, October 1992).

<sup>16</sup> See Le Bot (1991), Kessler (1992) and Mouraux and Sagot-Duvauroux (1992).

Yves Michaud has since noted the “perspicacité” of this analysis, yet also argues that Huberman places himself “sur le terrain du jugement moral pour les condamner”, essentially constructing an inverse moralism (1997: 23-4). Alongside the *Lignes* embrace of a transgressive heritage (Sade, Nietzsche, Bataille), this suggests an immoralism rather than an amorality. Against a Nietzschean transvaluation of values in which the low replaces the high, via his *bas matérialisme* Surya argues that Bataille privileged “un mouvement d’abaissement”, dragging everything down to the level of material existence (2004a: 64). However, in praising Genet, Dostoyevsky and Bataille for “représentations non-idéalisantes” (81), a minimal process of idealisation still seems to be at work. Surya describes this is a continual process; rather than a simple re-idealisation, it is an infinite movement of de-idealisation. Like *irréligion*, then, such an immorality functions as counter-discursively provocative, defined negatively against social values. Such a reactive stance, however, becomes problematic in this period of shifting social mores. A key example in this respect are the rapidly changing attitudes regarding paedophilia, which demonstrate *Lignes* taking a more cautious, responsible approach.

One of Surya’s principle antagonists in this period is *Esprit* editor Olivier Mongin. In 1989, Mongin’s ‘L’art de la pudeur’ commented on Claude Alexandre and Pierre Bourgeade’s *L’ordre des ténèbres*, a collection of black and white photographs of sadomasochistic activity. Mongin compares it to works by Bataille, Genet and Noël as artists who assault the public sphere with a blatant disregard for others’ sensibilities, using overt displays of deviant sexuality as “un instrument d’intimidation” (1989: 31): for Mongin, *pudeur* is “une vertu publique” (38). Yet Mongin’s article also touches on another sensitive issue, as he describes intellectuals attempting to justify paedophilia by “se prenant pour le pédagogue qui réinvente l’éducation pour mieux sauver l’enfance et la liberté des mœurs” (1989: 36). Mongin is tacitly referring to both a recent René Schérer article in *Lignes*, and this author’s involvement in *l’affaire du Coral* of 1982.

These articles appeared towards the end of a transitory phase in discourses surrounding paedophilia. In the wake of the 1960s sexual revolution, throughout the 1970s “on voit se déployer une plaidoirie en faveur de la pédophilie”; yet by 1990, public opinion had shifted towards “la condamnation sans appel de cette pratique” (Ambroise-Rendu 2003: 32). Whilst often overlooked today, after 1968 there were strong ties between gay liberation and pro-paedophilia activists. Magazines such as *Gai pied soir* linked a rising queer culture to “la défense de la liberté sexuelle” but also “la contestation d’une éducation répressive qui brime les désirs et les pulsions des enfants” (37). Even more mainstream publications

investigated such themes, *Libération* carrying adverts for the “Front de libération des pédophiles” (38), and *Le Monde* favourably reviewing Guy Hocquenghem and René Schérer’s *Co-ire* (1976), praising them for “ne cachant pas que le corps des enfants – sexué, désirant, désirable, ludique – les intéresse” (cited in Ambroise-Rendu 2003: 38). Schérer himself had been “pris d’amour-passion” for his student Hocquenghem in 1962, and began to reconsider the boundaries of pedagogical relationships (Schérer and Lagasnerie 2007: 148); Hocquenghem also described “youth as a particularly oppressed sexual group” in *Le Désir homosexuel* (1972), contesting the idea that “intergenerational sex” necessarily involves “abuse” (Paternotte 2014: 124). Subsequently, when in 1977 Hocquenghem and Schérer campaigned for “a full decriminalisation of homosexuality and the lowering of the age of consent” to twelve years of age, they received support from Foucault, Sartre, de Beauvoir, Derrida, Deleuze and Guattari (Paternotte 2014: 127).

The Coral affair broke out several years later. An experimental *lieu de vie* (psychological institutions inspired by Lacan and Guattari as compassionate alternatives to asylums), Le Coral was accused in Autumn 1982 “d’entretenir un réseau pédophile européen” (Antoine 2010: 105). These accusations are now “generally acknowledged” as an attempt “to discredit the Socialist government” (Marshall 1996: 67). Culture Minister Jack Lang was accused despite having “never set foot” in Le Coral, and whilst Schérer had visited “for professional reasons” he was subsequently “accused of ‘excitation de mineurs à la débauche’”, all charges being eventually dropped (67). Given this transitory moment in public discourses of paedophilia and the falsity of many of the accusations, the Coral affair “ne contribue guère à clarifier les choses” (Ambroise-Rendu 2003: 39). Although activists in the 1970s claimed to be speaking on behalf of sexually repressed infants, children’s opinions were rarely solicited; by the 1990s, attention had shifted to the victims of abuse. Mireille Dumas’ 1995 television program *Bas les masques* was a watershed, as alongside the statistical evidence of thousands of cases of child abuse, “pour la première fois, on y entend et on y voit les victimes”: “une mutation fondamentale dans l’histoire des mœurs” had taken place (39-40).

Mongin’s attitude also visibly changes. Just after the Coral affair his ire is directed towards the mass media, who should not “se substituer à la justice” (Mongin and Fatela 1983: 190). Whilst not arguing in favour of relationships with minors, Mayol follows this piece in *Esprit* by stating that twelve year old adolescents are in a state “de maturation érotique d’une intensité qu’ils n’ont pas connue”, detecting “hypocrisie” in the accusations being levelled at Le Coral (1983: 193-5). Crucially, Mongin argues against too facile a conglomeration of

homosexuality with paedophilia, stressing that they are very different phenomena (Mongin and Fatela 1983: 190). However, as we have seen, by 1989 he is much more critical of Schérer, and compares sadomasochistic communities to paedophile rings as “micro-sociétés totalitaires” (34). Just as there is a “non-réciprocité de la relation enfant-adulte” with paedophilia, sexual relationships based on violence are also part of a master-slave dialectic which, for Mongin, makes them equally contemptible.

However, there is also a discreet shift in what *Lignes* is prepared to print. In 1988, Schérer argues that the hysterical overuse of the term ‘paedophile’ in the moralistic mass media means that the question as to whether the exclusion of children from sexuality is ethically or “moralement fondée” now cannot even be asked (1988: 137). Following the “lynchage médiatique” and “ostracisme” Schérer was subjected to after Coral (Foerster 2007: 37), *Lignes* displays its ethic of hospitality towards marginalised writers and works. Yet notably whilst Schérer has not revised his former position on lowering the age of consent, arguing that “notre seul tort est d’avoir mal jugé de la force des oppositions” (Schérer and Lagasnerie 2007: 173), this argument itself does not appear in *Lignes*. Solidarity is thus shown to an author whose freedom of self-expression is being challenged, yet his most controversial argument is not made in the *revue*. The issue of paedophilia only returns once more to *Lignes* in 2003. Stéphane Nadaud, a practising child psychologist, comments on the ‘Pédo-Philie’ chapter of the infamous *Trois Milliards de pervers* issue of *Recherches* (1973). This issue was immediately banned on publication, Guattari being prosecuted for outraging public decency largely because of this chapter. The issue was recently re-produced online, yet with the controversial chapter omitted. Nadaud states that “ils ont raison” to do so, describing the chapter as “particulièrement abject dans l’apologie qui est faite du ‘pédagogico-pédérastique’” (2003: 92-94). *Lignes’* support for Schérer was clear, and he continued to contribute to the *revue* on other subjects. Yet the lack of space given to the age of consent in 1989, the subsequent silence, and then denunciation of the ‘pédagogico-pédérastique’ stance in 2003, displays something of a participation with, rather than resistance to, social mores.

This also raises questions of a *revue’s* responsibility. Jeremy Ahearne argues that when intellectuals get involved with public policy, they pass from a “pre-responsibilised intellectual attitude” to one in which they take greater responsibility for their political positions (2010: 81); one could argue that editing a *revue* imparts a similar responsabilisation. Whilst *Lignes’* provocative immoralism recommends a critical practice free of moral criteria and supports freedom of expression, the *revue* sometimes shies away from controversial incitement. We can see a similar structure in the *revue’s* stance regarding illegal behaviour.

For example, in the introduction to *Violence en politique* (May 2009) Surya states that whilst questioning whether violent actions in resistance to the French State are legitimate, the *revue* “ne cherche pas en soi à les encourager” (2009f: 8). This does not mean that they never condone illegality, and they openly encouraged the harbouring of illegal immigrants as a form of solidarity and civil disobedience (see Cordelier 2008: 67). There is a difference, then, between encouraging acts of violence and non-violent illegality, implying an unstated code of editorial responsibility. Likewise, immorality seems to be openly advocated in aesthetic production and cultural commentary; other actions are generally left to the responsible discretion of individuals.

This responsibility is partly the responsibility of the editor: Nadaud’s example of *Recherches* demonstrates that *revues* can still be subjected to harm and censor for their editorial decisions, and given the precarious financial existence of *Lignes*, and their reliance on public funds, Surya must have the future of his publishing enterprises in mind. Yet more generally, this responsibility concerns the consequences of thought: as Benslama notes, even Bataille’s hypermorality, demanding an absolute liberty for literature, did not promote the “relativisme d’un imaginaire éthéré” (1994: 35). Regarding Blanchot, Surya notes that the journalistic texts from the 1930s made it clear that during this period Blanchot had “tenu la pensée pour inconséquente; pour parfaitement assujettissable aux circonstances et à l’opinion” (2014: 9). By contrast, this suggests that for *Lignes* the probing of norms and consensus from the limits is not, then, a blind and repetitive nihilistic relativism: it is a responsible counter-discursive stance that, due to the absence of norms and authoritative positions it assumes, takes the consequences of free speech and thought more, not less seriously.

### ***Impur/Impropre***

As argued above, then, Surya depicts the return to religious and moral values as a reactionary response to what Nancy describes as the real significance of the death of God, the deconstruction of signification, authority, identities and origins. In Chapter 2, the depiction of humankind as fundamentally without proper qualities was shown to be central to Antelme’s political solidarity, and Derrida undertook such a questioning via the history of Western metaphysics instead. As Nancy argued, this was the properly progressive aspect of philosophical modernity. In *L’Oubli de la philosophie* Nancy tackles the malaise of thinkers such as Finkielkraut when faced with this erosion of French humanist thought and values:

Toutes les problématiques modernes de la différence attirent les protestations des penseurs du retour, qui y voient une destruction ou une frustration d'identité, et de la possibilité d'identifier quoi que ce soit. Le retour se propose toujours comme un retour à l'un. C'est méconnaître que la différence ne s'oppose pas à l'identité: elle la rend possible, et en inscrivant cette possibilité un cœur de l'identité elle l'expose à ceci, que son sens ne peut pas lui être identique (1986: 98-9).

Prefiguring his *Être singulier pluriel* (1996a), Nancy concludes that “nous sommes le pluriel qui ne multiplie pas un singulier” (1986: 101). Identity is composite, with an open, fluid mobility that does not reduce the individual subject to an undifferentiated morass, but acknowledges complexity, porous borders and shared origins. *Impur*, because multiple; *impropre*, because shared. Rushdie was similarly embraced for promoting an “éthique de l'impureté” to “lutter contre tout type de sclérose identitaire” (Bident 1995: 107-8), such an ethic being consecrated in the issue *L'impur/L'impropre* (February 1995). However, the deconstruction of identity categories means slightly different things for different thinkers: in *Lignes*, the strategies it suggests to Nancy, Benslama and Surya will be examined.

Nancy sees this relation identity, or “rapport ontologique”, as an *éclat*, a dissolution between interiority and exteriority that nevertheless preserves the borders of the singular subject (1995: 296). As opposed to this first, constitutive violence, violence “proprement dit” is “ce qui naît de ne pas supporter cet éclat et cet éclatement dans l'origine” (297). Yet in *Lignes* articles from this period, Nancy argues that over the course of the twentieth century discourses of authenticity began to dissipate, and rather than the subject and “sa propriété, son authenticité, sa pureté” people are beginning to recognise “une étrangeté qui lui est plus intime que tout être-soi ou que tout être-à-soi” (1998: 45). A dossier consecrated to the poet Edmond Jabès is symptomatic given his self-description as “l'étrange-je”, his “répugnance viscérale à tout enracinement” and his aesthetic ontology of “non-appartenance” (Stamelman 1992: 102-4). Instead of identity, Nancy emphasises presence, “l'immense coexistence des choses et des gens” and their sharing of space (Nancy 1998: 50). Between subjects there are “autant de points entre lesquels un sens errant s'espace, se partage et s'étoile. C'est une joie brève et presque sèche, sans extase et sans gloire, mais aussi dure et vive qu'un éclat d'existence” (52). Aesthetically, Nancy notes that contemporary art is less interested in creating new forms or ruptures in knowledge, but playing with materials and surfaces, being so many attempts “à faire co-existence” (50) sensible. In a positive vein, Nancy is quietly optimistic that beyond an obsession with identity a global “coprésence” (51) is in the process of being articulated, a progressive gesture.

Fethi Benslama produces a more psychoanalytic account, being both a professional analyst and a professor at Paris VII. A French speaking Tunisian, he created *Manifeste des libertés* as “un espace laïque de pensée critique de l’islam” (2006: 251). He shares Nancy’s deconstruction of origins, arguing that Western modernity rests on acknowledging that texts inaugurate their own legitimacy, an all-encompassing textuality undermining all claims to authority and exposing “*la fiction de l’origine commune pulvérisée*” (1994: 21). The scandal created by *The Satanic Verses* was a clash “entre la modalité textuelle européenne et les montages anciens du texte en islam” (17), and Benslama sympathetically notes that the terroristic “regard européen” exposed Islam to the West’s “impitoyable extermination” of religious authority (17). Yet the novel also espoused “une morale de la libération et de la justice” (50), encouraging people to take control over both the grand narratives of history and the story of their own lives. This is important for Benslama, who argues that globalisation has led to a generalised sentiment “d’être dépossédé de sa propriété (sa langue, sa culture sa religion, etc.), et plus encore la perte de la possibilité de saisir l’image propre de soi-même” (1995: 35). Whilst he notes the potential for discourses of the *propre* and national purity to lead to sectarian violence (citing Nazi Germany, Rwanda and post-Soviet Eastern-Europe as examples), he argues that identity itself cannot be completely jettisoned as for many *une vie dépropriée* is simply not liveable. Much of his professional activity as a psychoanalyst involves discussing “la chute des signifiants du Père” as young immigrants relocate to France and attempt to fit into a new national culture: he aims to help them with this disorientation and to create new poles of signification and attachment for themselves (1994: 67). Benslama calls *transappropriation* this negotiation between multiple national and cultural identities, not a choice between the *propre* and *impropre* but “leur rapport dialectique, partiellement leur intégration, partiellement leur complémentarité, partiellement leur accouplement (impur)” (1995: 55). Whilst Nancy emphasises post-identitarian spacing,<sup>17</sup> Benslama’s psychoanalytic approach is therefore attentive to the subjective desire for identification.

Surya maps this discourse more explicitly onto the contemporary French context, the rise of the Front National (FN) propagating discourses of national purity and the *propre*. He makes this a political cleavage: “Les droites pensent (c’est ce qui les fait être de droite) que nous appartenons à notre origine, que nous nous identifions à elle”, whereas for the left “nous appartenons au mouvement qui nous en fait faire l’abandon” (1998b: 10). This politicisation

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<sup>17</sup> In a text from 1990, Nancy specifically argues against privileging trans-appropriation, seeing it as remaining within Bataille’s Western “pensée sacrificielle” which “ne cesse de réapproprier, de trans-approprier” some sort of access to being (1990c: 90). Existence “ne peut être rapporté à la trans-appropriation d’une essence” (102). Instead: “L’existant arrive, il a lieu, et cela n’est qu’un être-jeté au monde” (102).

of the *impropre* divides the population into an ‘us’ and ‘them’, producing a communal identification Nancy would be wary of even if, here, the left is characterised as wanting to lose this very identity.<sup>18</sup> Yet given that a political community without some kind of communal identification seems impossible, Surya’s more strident mobilisation of Nancy’s thought could be read as a strategic movement towards such a community, well aware of its own residual impossibility. This could also be read as a response to *Lignes*’ own oscillation between being a space and position(s). As we have seen, terms such as immorality and *irréligion* could be viewed less as positions than counter-discursive conceptual operators designating a corrosive process oriented against other values. Yet any supposed ‘purity’ of such a negatively defined a-positionality is always compromised and contaminated by contact with the real world, often entailing more specific responsible, political or mediated responses. If some sort of position is going to become the property of the *revue*, however, such operators may function to form a minimal, rather than maximal form of positioning.

These three responses then reveal different discursive strategies revolving around *l’impropre*. Nancy pursues the properly progressive, sovereign path of contemporary philosophy, attempting to position subjectivity after the deconstruction of identity via a relational ontology and physical spacing. Benslama, however, is wary of the complete absence of subjective identification, producing a responsible, practical stance to his professional responsibilities whilst still wishing to dismantle strongly particularist communities. Surya’s discourse is the most evidently counter-discursive, responding to prevalence calls for a return to the traditional properties of Western democracies with strategic embrace of the *impropre* which, however, seems to indicate its own residual impossibility.

These texts are also contemporaneous with the *revue*’s shift of attention to financial capital. It is indicative, then, that Surya argues that it is those who suffer the most from the privation of capital who cling to the *propre*: “Le propre du profit: le patron. Le propre de la terre: la patrie. Le propre du nom: le patrimoine!” (1995: 14). As Surya goes on to argue, in the financial sector transparency is mobilised to undertake the “moralisation de la domination” (1999b: 15). If, as Terdiman argues, the dominant discourse is that which simply goes without saying, transparency becomes “one of its conditions of existence” (1985: 57). Challenging moralising discourses regarding transparency would seem to get to the heart of *Lignes*’ counter-discursive strategy. Opacity would therefore also suggest itself as the

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<sup>18</sup> Though as discussed in the previous chapter, Nancy (2014a) designated left-wing thought as the dispersal of identification and figuration whereas *une pensée de droite* had recourse to communal myths and narratives.



relevant oppositional term, especially given *Lignes*' insistence on the material and affective density of signification, rather than conceptual transparency. Yet as Surya's account is developed inside and outside of *Lignes* by Frédéric Lordon and Frédéric Neyrat, this reliance on opacity becomes complicated, and instead a more mobile strategic positioning, relying on 'exposure', seems preferable.

### *Le capital, la transparence et les affaires*

Pitting opacity against transparency occurred frequently in *Lignes*' first series. In programmatic fashion, Stéphane Zagdanski's 'L'enfer limpide' sets the stage for many of the coming debates: he pits a literature of "impureté" against rational communication (1990: 161); worries that increased surveillance will only aid "l'expulsion des étrangers" (161); notes that man is "ontologiquement impur" (170); and embraces the British legal recourse to *Habeas Corpus* for taking law "par-delà l'intelligence à la sensualité de l'homme" (169). Crucially, however, just as Boris Groys stated that *glasnost* was deployed in Soviet campaigns against "la corruption et l'indiscipline" (1987: 36), Zagdanski notes that for liberalism "la transparence serait une garantie foncière de démocratie" (Zagdanski 1990: 153). However, opacity could not always be privileged: the *revue* documented Sonia Combe's attempts to make the Vichy archives more publicly accessible, in dossiers explicitly entitled 'Archives en France: Transparence et opacité', in which transparency is clearly the preferred term.<sup>19</sup>

Surya subsequently states that the focus on transparency prompted a "réévaluation et une réorientation de la 'politique' de *Lignes*" from around 1996, before which Surya argues that *Lignes* was too preoccupied with the FN to take stock of how finance capitalism had hamstrung the progressive left (2007c: 32). Issues such as *La Gauche gâchée* (February 1989), *Capitulation?* (December 1989), and *Logiques du capital* (January 1993) suggest that this re-orientation was prepared for earlier on. Yet the late 1990s certainly saw an intensification of this focus, Surya's editorials in this period culminating in *Le capital, la transparence et les affaires* (1999b). As the PS became embroiled in a series of compromising corruption scandals, increased transparency became the watchword to restore public faith in the political and business establishment.<sup>20</sup> There was an attempt to contain

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<sup>19</sup> See Combe (1994, 1996, 2001).

<sup>20</sup> See Bendjebbour (2013) for accounts of scandals such as the twenty million Euros that went missing from the Carrefour du développement in 1984, the illegitimate PS funding uncovered in 1990's *affaire Urba*, *l'affaire Elf*

these scandals with a “whitewash” law in 1990 in which “all infractions committed before June 15 1989” regarding “campaign financing” or “political parties” would be amnestied (Celestin and DalMolin 2007: 374): yet the scandals kept on coming, *l’affaire Cahuzac* of 2013 being the latest to afflict the PS.

For Surya, the mobilisation of transparency is “la plus grande opération de justification idéologique jamais entreprise” by domination (1999b: 8). By appearing to be policing itself, weeding out the few bad apples illegally manipulating liberal capitalism to their own advantage, the system itself becomes unimpeachable, transparency helping “à innocenter le pouvoir” (15). The few ministers and CEOs found guilty in the *affaires* are “le prix” that capital “est prêt à payer” to appear moral, and to maintain its hegemony (16). By shifting the debate onto the “moral” terrain of demonstrably good behaviour, the *political* debate is elided (15): capital itself is rarely critiqued, the focus instead being on compliance and regulation, a policing operation the financial institutions claim that they will themselves undertake. The financial markets are subsequently portrayed as essential to the smooth functioning of contemporary nation states, and therefore often conflated with the concept of democracy itself. When people talk about democracy, they often actually mean capitalism: for Surya this means that “c’est au nom de la démocratie qu’on liquidera la démocratie” (27).

However, a technical knowledge of the intricate functioning of international finance capitalism was largely absent from early issues of *Lignes*, and they began to search for contributors to fill this gap. Frédéric Lordon, an economist for *Le Monde diplomatique* and also loosely associated with *Les Économistes atterrés*,<sup>21</sup> took up Surya’s critique of transparency in the years that followed, eventually contributing to *Lignes* in 2012. Lordon corroborates Surya’s perspective from an economist’s viewpoint, and demonstrates how the *revue* integrates new thinkers into their *milieu* to develop its own thought. As Lordon notes, following the Asian financial crisis which began in Thailand in 1997 yet threatened the global economy, Lionel Jospin created the Conseil d’analyse économique to bring together economists and policy makers to shape future responses to market instability. Olivier Davanne’s report, *Instabilité du système financier international*, recommended greater western surveillance of the developing countries, blaming the opacity of foreign markets, “notamment asiatiques”, for the crisis (Lordon 2001: 7). Whilst noting that the serious crises of the twenty-first century would most likely erupt from within Western markets, Davanne

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in which politicians were found to have too close a relationship to the Petrol industry for their own financial gain, alongside *le scandale des écoutes*, the ‘Rainbow Warrior’ assassination and the distribution of HIV-contaminated blood.

<sup>21</sup> See <http://www.atterres.org/> [accessed 02 August 2014]

advised that “une meilleure supervision bancaire et une transparence plus grande” should be enough to mitigate the damage (1998: 9). Progressive measures, such as the institution of a Tobin tax, were roundly rejected. Lordon demonstrates that by 1999, the call for greater transparency “fait l’unanimité” (2001: 7) in international financial circles – and yet such calls have yielded few results. Whilst Enron and Worldcom were, as Surya predicted, weeded out as bad apples, general financial structures remained unchanged, and a larger, global financial crisis struck in 2007. Sarkozy’s response: “l’incroyable appel à la ‘transparence’” (Lordon: 2007).

Surya’s critique operated on two levels. Firstly, transparency legitimated the status-quo, which led Europe towards crisis. Secondly, he notes that the discourse of transparency was also misleading: “La domination est anonyme” (1999b: 28) and rarely transparent, its practices instead relatively invisible to most and only exposed in moments of crisis. Lordon goes further, arguing that opacity is an intrinsic aspect of financial capitalism. During the 1950s and 1960s, some degree of transparency was possible as Keynesian economic policies produced relative security and predictable outcomes. Yet the subsequent deregulation of financial markets since the mid-1970s produced a “tournant herméneutique” (Lordon 1997: 12) – now, the success of economic policies relied more on the prevailing “*tonal*” atmosphere and “la croyance” of the markets rather than the tangible effects of such policies (2001: 9). If the markets believe a policy will fail, capital flees and the policy fails. Greater transparency sometimes can have disastrous consequences: Lordon notes that the publishing of profit warnings can have disproportionately negative results, some firms in the Autumn of 2000 losing between 10 and 20% of their value simply because they would not recoup the profits the market expected of them (Lordon 2001: 11). The drive to transparency is also seen as disingenuous because, if the system were completely transparent, there would be no possibility of activities such as spread betting: as Lordon notes, “plus d’opacité, plus de dérivatif” (2007), and so more wealth for the markets. So whilst institutions were superficially supporting greater transparency, this is dismissed as a lure allowing them to propose a ‘solution’ “qui ne coûtera rien et qui ne dérangera personne” (2001: 7). In the financial sphere, then, strategies opposing the discourse of transparency with a counter-discourse of opacity make little sense, the inaccessibility of much financial information being the motor for much of this wealth creation in the first place.

Yet for Surya the demands for greater transparency spread beyond the economic sector, infiltrating everyday life. Structural unemployment since the 1970s is seen as exacerbated by the neo-liberal privatisation of public services and the stripping back of the

welfare state, austerity measures rendering proportions of the global workforce superfluous. Work and any alternative to work seemed to be disappearing: the political problem was then how “d’occuper ceux qu’il ne lui est plus nécessaire d’employer” (1999b: 96). Therefore this new regime of transparency also necessitates “la plus grande opération de police jamais engagée par lui” (43), as the movement of bodies needs to be increasingly regulated and securitised. The population is therefore encouraged to follow capital’s moral example of “l’*ostension*” (38) and render themselves transparent to domination – which can then easily select those who do and do not belong to the socially productive order. Two trends are identified in 1996 that have only accelerated since: the rise of reality television, social media and digital video technology through which subjects voluntarily render their lives entirely visible; and the securitisation of migrant and suspect populations, with increasingly illiberal detention policies and retention centres proliferating in Europe (see Chapter 5 for more). For Surya, these two trends coalesce into an intensifying web of social domination, in the Foucauldian vein of the “Panopticon” (60).

For Foucault, the more something is discussed the more it can be policed. Surya sees a desire for the social body to not only expose itself, but to *be* this exposure without remainder. Dobbel’s refers readers to Nancy’s *Corpus*, in which the violence done by capital to bodies is not just material, but signficatory: “Capital veut dire: corps marchandé, transporté, déplacé, replacé, remplacé”, but “capital veut dire aussi: système de sur-signification des corps” (Nancy 1992: 96). Contributors to *Lignes* therefore concretely note how social and corporeal bodies are over-coded into bodies of knowledge with an exaggerated focus on visibility: Jean-Louis Brigant critiques “l’arithmétique politique ou de la mathématique sociale” as opinion polls attempt to objectivise the electorate (1988: 117); for Curnier, attempts to force immigrants to ‘integrate’ into French society is an attempt “de désintégrer leur opacité”, rendering them visible and controllable (1993: 29); and Jean-Jacques Delfour focuses on “la généralisation de la vidéosurveillance” in which CCTV produces an emphasis on “délits voyants, visibles en particulier dans l’espace public”, reducing crime to what is visible as such and so privileging street crime over white collar crime which is harder to visualise (1996: 161).

Socially, if not economically, opacity therefore seems to become a privileged site of resistance. Surya notes that *De la domination* was written “dans la proximité de la pensée de Jean-Paul Curnier” (1999b: 9), and therefore also to Jean Baudrillard with whom Curnier claims “une longue amitié” and “complicité” (2010: 7). Yet rather than his focus on *simulacra*, Baudrillard is noted for his passion for “l’apparition et la disparition” (Leonelli

2010: 34), privileging intimacy, secrecy, and the intangible nature of social bodies: Olivier Jacquemond highlights Baudrillard's maxim "pour vivre heureux, vivons cachés" (2010: 83). *Crise et critique de la sociologie* (November 1999) pits Baudrillard against more empirical sociological accounts: sociology tries to render intimate and intangible social rapports transparent and definable, and as a result does violence to this opaque social fabric. Opacity is then figured as a site of resistance to the invasive powers of classification and social normalisation mobilised by domination.

However, others in *Lignes*, such as Daniel Bensaïd, despair of such recourse to hiding from power, and blame political disenchantment on "les versions les plus désespérées" of domination theory such as Surya's (2011: 87). Surya defines 'domination' as "le pouvoir *sans la politique*", as economic interests become the hegemonic mode of governance with help from the mass-media, police and judiciary, and financial needs replace the political will of the people (2009b: 18). Such theories of domination generally derive from the Frankfurt school for whom the extension of commercial logic into the cultural and bio-political spheres means that no social or private space of life is free from rationalisation. As noted above, Habermas rejects his predecessors' conception of political domination as it exaggerates the predominance of instrumental rationality, which is just one form of modern reason. Yet some Marxists also critique this cultural derivation, as it shifts "the focus from capitalist exploitation to the 'domination' built into the machine system of all industrial societies" (Agger 1992: 32), substituting "cultural for economic radicalism" as aesthetic shocks and cultural politics replace labour movements and the long march through the institutions (132). They also purvey a "vague" account in which power is everywhere and so hard to challenge, producing "a lack of specificity about both the concept of domination and possible emancipatory routes left open to us" (33). This is exacerbated as such accounts often assume that the rapid expansion of the mass-media has deepened the "false consciousness" of people living under late capitalism, and so domination "pervades the very interior of human personality and cannot be easily expunged through rational critique" (131). Surya would agree with this pessimistic view, arguing that "il n'existe pas d'extériorité où fuir la domination qui a su faire que le désir de tous soit d'y demeurer" (1999b: 60). For Bensaïd, such accounts of the overwhelming presence of domination are too totalising, and the desire for opacity they elicit is depoliticising as it suggests withdrawal, rather than engagement. Alongside the insufficiencies of privileging opacity in the financial sphere, socially, too, it appears a problematic strategy.

To conclude, published by *Lignes* five years later, Frédéric Neyrat's *Suréxposés* suggests a movement beyond the binary between transparency and opacity, producing a sharpened account of contemporary domination which also suggests a broader shift in *Lignes*' counter-discursive positioning. Writing in 2004, so after the 2001 attacks on the World Trade Centre exacerbated the "sécuritisation à outrance" of Europe's borders (2004: 205), Neyrat agrees that the increased policing and regulation of populations is unprecedented in the contemporary era. There is a blurring of boundaries between discourses of immigration and terrorism, and a "preventative" (251) identification of dangerous groups to be monitored or apprehended, even before any sort of infraction has been committed. Yet as he notes, this means that only certain population groups are placed under this increased level of surveillance rather than others. This is not "la surveillance bio-politique totale", but an attempt to monitor "des flux de circulation" (251). Some are therefore designated as safely within the national, social sphere, and others are designated as threats to be monitored, or "jetables" to be removed (256). Quoting Didier Bigo, instead of a totalising, Foucauldian "pan optique", Neyrat describes this state of affairs as a "ban optique", in which certain groups are more exposed to surveillance than others (252). Such a designation helps to specify the new forms of governmental control that led to the explosion of *centres de rétention administrative* on French soil, as discussed further in Chapter 5, as well as new strategies to combat this.

The term 'exposure', drawn from Nancy, is a useful mediating term between transparency and opacity which measures not just degrees of visibility, but also *exposure to* certain elements, perhaps usefully reconnecting representational and cultural discourses back to concrete political struggles. For Nancy, being is always being-with, and from this simple model of ontological inter-relationality we can expand towards an analysis of an increasingly imbricated global context, as political, economic and environmental causes on one side of the globe have profound effects on the other. Yet for Neyrat, this exposure to one another has become a "*surexposition*" (2004: 209): globalisation, having reached the limits of the actually existing globe, is becoming an increasingly intensified phenomenon, a colonisation of ever more intimate spaces which is "l'effet du reflux du monde sur le monde" (20). For Neyrat, such an intensification has led to the creation of a generalised "*tort bio-politique mondiale*" in which there is not just a "précarisation généralisée des conditions de vie", but a "précarisation de la vie elle-même" due to the variety of exacerbated risks different population groups are exposed to under neo-liberal globalisation (209).

However, Neyrat goes on to argue that there is a danger with this notion of exposition, especially with the focus on potential environmental collapse. Such discourses tend to create a sense of urgency that aims to unite us all in fighting a common problem, and thus eradicates class distinctions and other internal tensions: “l’urgence écologique” becomes “le paravent de l’exclusion économique” (211). So although Neyrat argues that we are all inevitably exposed, these levels of exposure are differentiated: “le tort mondial concerne chaque un, différenciellement, qualitativement et quantitativement – mais sans exception” (214). From Neyrat’s account, one can derive a position of a broad-based social solidarity as we are all vulnerable, but also a differentiated political position which attempts to respond to various, interrelated questions of exposure: who is visibly, legally, environmentally, financially, mortally, or economically exposed, to what are they exposed, and should they be exposed to these risks? Such a differential nuancing also poses questions of domination or political agency: who has the capacity to act, where and how, and on the behalf of what other disenfranchised actors? Surya’s account of totalising domination is then tempered by Neyrat’s account of differing levels of enforced transparency, just as Lordon’s economic insights prompts his entry into the *Lignes* fold after the financial crisis. Whilst Lordon troubled the binary between opacity and transparency, by introducing exposure as a key term Neyrat mediates between the two, providing a tighter and more focused analysis of global politics which also allows for progressive agencies rather than withdrawal.

Terdiman suggests there is a “relative sterility” inherent in the “bipolar structure” of straightforward counter-discourses (1985: 27). This chapter has demonstrated how *Lignes* attempted to provide an intellectually open and diverse platform whilst strategically identifying itself negatively against some dominant discourses to attempt a minimum of theoretical coherence, or an *ethos* without a dogmatic editorial line. As we have seen, however, engagement with current topical, social and moral issues inevitably necessitates the development of a more defined position and a shifting response to changes within the dominant discourse. There was initially a desire to house significant philosophers otherwise largely at odds with the *revue*’s intellectual heritage, such as Habermas, but the theoretical and political tensions led *Lignes* towards a more defensive, coherent body of thinkers. Furthermore, counter-discourses remain parasitic on the dominant, and are therefore not sovereign. After initially thematically privileging negative terms, such as *irreligion*, *l’impur*, *l’impropre* and *immoralité*, from the mid-1990s and as part of the shift of the *revue*’s attention to finance capital, *Lignes* abandons such terms to focus more specifically on concrete issues such as political violence, crises and immigration. This coincides with the

political line of the *revue* becoming more pro-active and militant. Rather than relying on counter-discourses, the *revue* begins to emphasise the development of its own critical stance: what it may lose in openness, it subsequently gains with a tightened, yet mobile and expanding conceptual apparatus.



## Chapter 4

### Immigration and *angélisme*

The tendency in *Lignes* to move from counter-discursive strategies to a more positive and defined position in the mid-1990s, delineated in the previous Chapter, is most clear politically, especially when concerning immigration. Pivotaly, Alec Hargreaves demonstrates that during this period immigration was “the only policy issue where a majority considered the left and the right to be divided by major differences” (2007: 176). This cleavage appears most clearly with the emergence of the FN, and reactively contesting nationalism, neo-racist discourses and Holocaust denial are early concerns for *Lignes*. However, extended periods of governmental cohabitation in the 1990s make the difference between the PS and the *Rassemblement pour la République* (RPR) seem “more apparent than real” (176). *Lignes* became increasingly critical of the parliamentary left, especially during the wave of social movements between 1995 and 1998. The intellectual left itself splits, with previously contestatory voices then labelling opposition to the government as irresponsible *angélisme*. The trajectories of Pierre-André Taguieff, Régis Debray and Sami Naïr, initially close to *Lignes* before rallying to more conservative stances, are symptomatic of this trend. *Lignes* was more staunchly situated on the radical left as a result. Via Étienne Balibar and Daniel Bensaïd they call for a new internationalism, rather than Debray’s *National-républicain* stance, to articulate the intrinsically related debates of social welfare and immigration. Their thought provides a crutch to positively define *Lignes*’ political position, otherwise characterised negatively. Significantly, whilst national public policy debates are temporarily housed by the *revue*, it is the new activism surrounding the *sans papiers* that becomes central to this internationalist perspective.

#### **Pierre-André Taguieff and Neo-racism**

Alongside the Heidegger affair, Claude Lanzmann’s *Shoah* and the Klaus Barbie trial brought the legacy of fascism to the fore in 1987. Barbie, known as the ‘Butcher of Lyon’ for torturing prisoners of war and deporting French Jews to concentration camps, lost his diplomatic immunity following the fall of the Bolivian military dictatorship in 1983, and was extradited to France to stand trial for war crimes. His lawyer, Jacques Vergès, attempted to relativise Barbie’s offenses by comparing them to French colonial activities in Algeria, an argument being mobilised by the Nouvelle droite to attenuate Vichy collaboration.

Christopher Flood affirms “the centrality of historical revisionism” to the extreme right (2005: 222), the FN’s Jean-Marie Le Pen calling the Holocaust merely a historical “detail” (Kaplan 1992: 77). Revisionism became part of a Gramscian New Right strategy, supplementing political action with a “meta-political struggle to achieve ideological dominance in the cultural sphere” and over “historical interpretations” (Flood 2005: 226); to this end the FN created a theoretical journal, *Identité*, and publishing houses such as Éditions Nationales. *Lignes* became alarmed as their arguments seemed to enter mainstream discourses: a *Le Monde* article described Vichy as “une constellation de ‘bons sentiments’” rather than “un système d’idées rigoureusement enchaînées” with racism and fascism (Surya 1992d: 55). Subsequently, against the “offensive théorique des droites” (Jacob 1992: 117), *Lignes* assumed a counter-discursive role in the cultural struggle, beginning to closely analyse right-wing discourses.

Pierre-André Taguieff was initially central to this, having developed a “path-breaking analysis” of neo-racism (Silverman 1999: 40). His *La Force du préjugé* (1988b) described two types of racism: heterophobia, a fear of biological difference; and heterophilic neo-racism, which abandons discourses of racial purity in favour of “cultural difference and cultural essentialism” (Silverman 1999: 44). Whilst Taguieff’s emphasis on the mutual exclusivity of heterophobic and heterophilic racisms has been seen as too “rigid” (public heterophilia often masking private heterophobia) (Lloyd 1998: 11), many appreciated the “substantial value of his analytical work” (Flood 2005: 366): in *Lignes* even Louis Sala-Molins, later a vociferous critic, admitted to relying on his work (1991: 151). For Taguieff “le racismisme ne peut passer au politique que par la médiation d’une mobilisation nationaliste” as enacted by the FN (1988a: 35). But as overt racism had become socially unacceptable, Le Pen relied on “l’euphémisation” (51), discussing ‘culture’ and ‘national identity’ rather than ‘race’. *Lignes* detects such a shift across Europe, and Taguieff and his milieu were largely responsible for the issues *Les extrême-droites en France et en Europe* (October 1988) and *L’extrême-droite allemande* (September 1989). The Italian Nuovo Destra party co-opted anti-racist discourses, claiming that “le véritable totalitarisme, c’est le libéralisme” (Ferraresi 1988: 176); and the German Neue Rechte avoided “un engagement partisan” and aimed for respectability by allying themselves with anti-nuclear and ecological movements (Schönekas 1988: 137).

Yet *Lignes*’ relationship with Taguieff became philosophically and ideologically strained. Taguieff stressed that philosophies emphasising the recognition of the Other and the right to difference could be “instrumentalisés par des acteurs individuels ou collectifs

racistes” (1990: 36). Claude Lévi-Strauss’ UNESCO lecture, ‘Race et Culture’, is frequently cited as an example of structuralist thought tending towards neo-racism (see Balibar and Wallerstein 1988: 34). Lévi-Strauss argued that as race cannot be biologically determined, it becomes “une fonction parmi d’autres de la culture” (1983: 36), a trait acquired through our social milieu. Yet globalisation threatens to eradicate “ces vieux particularismes”, Lévi-Strauss stating that he desired freedom without compromising this cultural “diversité” (47). Furthermore, as tolerance requires both “une égalité relative” and “une distance physique suffisante” (44), Lévi-Strauss suggests that racism is not created by “idées fausses” (43) but is an understandable response to the dilution of national heritages. He concludes that without a drastic change, globalisation can only continue to accumulate “des tensions telles que les haines raciales” (47). Balibar notes that the thesis that the mixing of cultures leads to “la mort intellectuelle de l’humanité” is indeed serviceable for the kinds of “*racisme différentialiste*” Taguieff had identified (Balibar and Wallerstein 1988: 33-4).

Taguieff favoured juridical philosophy and communication theory, and the dossiers on Jürgen Habermas and Chaim Perelman (September 1989) demonstrate his early influence on *Lignes*. Yet this emphasis on pragmatism and universal norms situates him within a more conventional Republican and Enlightenment genealogy, rather than *Lignes*’ preferred alternative genealogies as previous outlined. Therefore for Taguieff post-structuralism also seemed to promote a weak cultural relativism which enabled heterophilic racism and provided no tools for combat: “le déconstruction met en pièces les conceptualités douteuses, mais n’en laisse pas moins les choses en l’état”, leaving “les esprits démunis” (1990: 51). So in *Penser le racisme* (December 1990), whilst Taguieff attacks the “xénophilie” present especially in Levinas, Alain David’s introduction explicitly praises Levinas and Nancy “dont les œuvres rendent pensables la réflexion qu’on a tenté de déployer ici” (1990: 14). Whilst Lévi-Strauss demonstrably occupied a counter-intuitive position, thinkers such as Levinas would reject the argument that their philosophies encouraged cultural separation rather than a welcoming of the Other, and a deconstruction of identity categories is largely embraced by *Lignes*. Such a deconstructive approach also tends to critique Enlightenment rationalism, and the elision of racial and sexual difference in metaphysics is described as “un blanchissage généralisé” (David 1990: 11): the *être* of universal humanisms is often a white, European man. Therefore whilst Taguieff’s analysis of neo-racist discourses is valued, his philosophical references suggest a latent tension with many in *Lignes*.

Consequently, Taguieff attacks Sala-Molins, whose *Le Code Noir* explores the “génocide utilitariste” of French colonialism (Sala-Molins 1988: 16). The *Code Noir*,

operational from 1685 to slavery's abolition, decrees how slaves should be treated on plantations and formalises their lack of rights, article 44 even denying their humanity, stating: "Déclarons les esclaves être meubles" (Sala-Molins 1987: 178). Sala-Molins broadens his critique, however: in the face of neo-humanist revalorisations of Enlightenment thought (such as Todorov 1998), Sala-Molins attacks the "je m'en-foutisme" at the root of Rousseau and Montesquieu's attitude to Africa (1987: 251). This was controversial, and historians advised Sala-Molins against republishing the *Code Noir* in case it tarnished the French Republic: Taguieff agrees, accusing Sala-Molins of encouraging "anti-occidentalisme" and "racisme anti-Blanc" (1991: 39). Yet Surya calls Sala-Molins' work "nécessaire" for proceeding in "une façon qui a le sens de ce qu'essaie de penser *Lignes* de l'histoire" (1988b: 10). Subsequent *Lignes* publications continue the deconstruction of colonialist Western values, including Lacoue-Labarthe (2012), Sala-Molins (2014), and a translation of Susan Buck-Morss (2006) which builds on Sala-Molins' critique to rescue "the idea of universal human history from the uses to which white domination has put it" (Buck-Morss 2009: 74). *Lignes* therefore straddles neo-humanist and anti-humanist thinkers when broadly compatible with a deconstructive approach to Western philosophic and colonial history. Taguieff's more traditional Republican universalism, on the other hand, quickly becomes incompatible with the *revue*.

### **National-Republicanism**

Max Silverman has since argued that Taguieff's faith in a "universalist republicanism appears more and more anachronistic today and hardly constitutes a realistic way forward for anti-racism" (1999: 62). Almost concurrently, in *Lignes* Pierre Tévanian was critiquing a new "idéologie national-républicaine" which defended "des idées de droite tout en se réclamant de la gauche", Taguieff being a member (1999: 102). Tracing the development of National Republicanism from its origins in 1989 suggests why the recourse to Republican values became problematic for *Lignes* – though as we shall discuss in the Conclusion, a residual Republicanism sometimes remains.

As an advisor to Mitterrand, Régis Debray was interviewed in several early *Lignes* issues. Since his *Critique de la raison politique* (1981), Debray had been theorising Republicanism as a civil religion, "une pédagogie" of civilised values (Debray and Finkielkraut 1989: 68). Franck Lepage saw the Republic as a stalwart against American democracy and neo-liberalism, also arguing that "il est possible de refuser le droit de vote aux

immigrés” and remain on the French left (1989: 120). This is in stark opposition to Balibar, who emphasised “la citoyenneté” over “la nationalité” (1988: 12), a “transnational citizenship” in which anyone active in a designated area also has the right to political participation (Hewlett 2007: 121). Balibar’s position would soon become that of most *Lignes*’ contributors, yet in this early period the *revue* was content to contain more nationalist and stridently Republican positions.

This plurality soured with the mobilisation of *laïcité* in the *foulard* affair as discussed in the previous chapter. Debray’s ‘Profs, ne capitulons pas’ (Debray et al 1989) signalled his “extremely hard line” stance on Islamic headscarves (Reader 1995: 49),<sup>22</sup> and is retrospectively seen by *Lignes* as symptomatic of how, whilst not all public discourses were as far right as the FN, “beaucoup *se lepénisent*” (Tévanian and Tissot 1999c: 12). In the following debates over Republican values, terms such as *identité* and *préférence nationale* are seen as masking “une problématique raciste”, Sowerwine confirming that these words were “becoming code for white racism” (2009: 379). The National Republican movement led by Debray was born in this anti-*foulard* petition but later crystallised with the creation of the Fondation Marc Bloch in 1998, and is characterised by their opposition to both the EU and America, and a nostalgia for the third Republic. The movement took an authoritarian turn, stating that there is a “lien évident entre l’immigration et une délinquance vécue comme insupportable” (Tévanian 1999: 110). The appeal ‘Républicains n’ayons pas peur’ is seen by *Lignes* as characteristic, as an increase in rapes is noted as occurring in areas “où l’immigration irrégulière est la plus répandue (pauvreté et chômage obligent)”, for the authors necessitating a firmer police presence amongst immigrant communities (Debray et al 1998): whereas *Lignes* stresses unemployment and poverty as “les vrais déterminants” leading to a rise in crime, the parenthetical placement of these qualifications implies a direct link between immigration and rape which for Tévanian is “raciste” (1999: 109). For *Lignes*, Republicanism becomes unwelcomely attached to notions of French cultural superiority and an authoritarian repression, or exclusion, of social groups with different values. *Lignes* was sensitive to this tendency early on: Debray virtually vanishes from the *revue* following his anti-*foulard* stance in 1989; Lepage continues to contribute, but from 1990 his emphasis notably shifts from immigration and Republicanism to a critique of the PS’s dismantling of civil society; Taguieff continued to contribute to the *revue* only until 1993.

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<sup>22</sup> The article accused the government of capitulating by allowing schools to negotiate with parents over whether students could wear headscarves.

During the year leading up to the publication of *Sur la Nouvelle droite* (1994), Taguieff was taken to task for “showing insufficient hostility towards the New Right, especially to Alain de Benoist”, as well as demonstrating an “excessive slippage from theoretical argument to castigation of the inadequacies of his fellow antiracists” (Flood 2005: 359, 366). In the ‘Appel à la vigilance’ launched in *Le Monde* (13 July 1993), written by Roger-Pol Droit and signed by 40 intellectuals including Bourdieu, Derrida and Jacques Revel, Taguieff was criticised as someone who, by entering into a dialogue with the far right, had become seduced by their arguments and was complicit in their “tactique de brouillage idéologique systématique” (Droit 1993: 9). In response, claiming scientific objectivity as an “expert” (1994: 339), Taguieff argues that “les adversaires d’Alain Benoist n’ont pas été à la hauteur de la tâche” (355): Taguieff sees his analysis as better placed to understand the rise of the Nouvelle droite, sympathises with the argument that French national identity was under threat, and argues that allowing non-French citizens to vote and lifting controls on immigration would lead to an increase of racism. He also denounces activist organisations such as the Ligue internationale contre le racisme et l’antisémitisme (LICRA) for their lack of “efficacité sociologique”, whereas in *Lignes* former LICRA representative Alain David supports “la pertinence” of its activities (David 1999: 149). So by *Sur la Nouvelle droite* Taguieff’s placement on the political spectrum seems ambiguous, showing more sympathy and understanding to de Benoist than the anti-racist left. Taguieff’s later association with the *national-républicaine* stance of Debray and Finkielkraut made things more clear, Surya emphasising that “il s’est depuis établi sur des positions aussi éloignées que possible des nôtres (néo-conservatrices, ainsi qu’il dit lui-même)” (2007c: 45). Despite his criticisms of Levi-Strauss, he himself moved closer to recommending cultural separation with a tacit emphasis on the superiority of French Republican values over those of migrant communities; Balibar’s analysis gives us some sense as to how this occurred.

### **Étienne Balibar – *Race, nation, classe***

As Taguieff’s importance in the *revue* fades, Balibar becomes increasingly important, both for his *Lignes* articles and his books, *Race, nation, classe* (with Immanuel Wallerstein, 1988) and *Les frontières de la démocratie* (1992b) being frequently referenced by *Lignes* contributors. Between Althusser and Derrida, Balibar undertakes a “post-marxiste”, deconstructive “philosophie conjoncturelle” responding to materially situated moments. (Balibar 1997a: 21). Hewlett thus describes him as lacking “a unified system or worldview”

(2007: 118), yet seen as precise interventions within “le ‘marxisme occidental’” the specificity of his thought and its coherent overarching political claims become clearer (Balibar and Wallerstein 1988: 1).

Balibar agreed with Taguieff that the development of “un antiracisme effectif” was crucial, but for Balibar this was the necessary “condition” for reconstructing an “idéologie de classe” from which to launch a politically progressive, materialist struggle (Balibar and Wallerstein 1988: 23). In contrast to Taguieff, then, Balibar insists on the “nécessité absolue de commencer l’analyse par les déterminations *de classe* du racisme anti-immigrés” (1992b: 11). He subsequently distinguishes between the general “‘xénophobie’ ou ‘intolérance’” which dictate personal responses to difference, and “le *nationalisme* et le *racisme* omniprésents dans le monde moderne” which are institutionally ingrained in nation states, especially in the wake of imperialism (Balibar and Wallerstein 1988: 14).

Balibar suggests that the only “real universal” is “the global market” (1999: 40); yet rather than seeing the economy as a homogeneous force that dictates social relations, he stresses the independence of, and interrelationship between, “*unités sociales*” and this “*unité économique*” (Balibar and Wallerstein 1988: 14). For Balibar, “ideology is very much part of the base and is no less determined by economics than economics is determined by ideology” (Hewlett 2007: 129). The economic impacts the social principally through the division of labour: yet rather than seeing this division as the atomisation of production processes, for Balibar it is the de-territorialising effect of capital and its ability to erode social cohesion, turning increasingly smaller groups against each other. The organisation of “les sociétés humaines en ‘collectivités’ relativement stables” is destroyed by the universal drive of capital; or rather, capital is “ce qui les *détruirait*” if reactive formations (such as nation states) had not responded to preserve social cohesion (Balibar and Wallerstein 1988: 16). Economic and social history is not then a linear progression in which pre-commodity communities uniformly develop into a market society, but a history of the “*réactions* du complexe des rapports sociaux ‘non économiques’ qui forment le ciment d’une collectivité historique d’individus à la déstructuration dont les menace l’expansion de la forme valeur” (8). One such reaction was the creation of the “fictive ethnicity” (Reid 2008: 71) and institutional nationalism that converts individual xenophobic tendencies into a latent, state-sanctioned racism that produces the “conflits internes” of the current period over immigration (Balibar and Wallerstein 1988: 21). Whilst Balibar therefore argues that Taguieff is right to identify a culturally racist discourse, for Balibar this is merely a new rhetorical instantiation of the latent racism intrinsic to nation states.

Subsequently, whilst Taguieff argues for a strengthening of Republican values to combat racism, Balibar sees this as part of the problem: as noted, previously France had seen itself as having “une mission universelle d’éducation du genre humain” (Balibar and Wallerstein 1988: 37), and colonial racism has thus been “ancré dans des structures matérielles [...] de longue durée” as part of France’s “identité nationale” (291). A focus on the progressive qualities of French Republicanism re-instates a cultural-racial hierarchy, as the integration of non-Western immigrants into French society is seen “comme un progrès, une émancipation” from their implicitly more barbaric heritage (Balibar and Wallerstein 1988: 38). This position implies that it is “other societies, not the ‘natural homes’ of democracy, that are the true fomenters of prejudice and inter-cultural hatred” (Lentin 2008: 489). By seeing neo-racism as primarily cultural, there is a temptation to analyse it as “un simple ‘préjugé’” or “un archaïsme” which can be countered by the ‘civilising’ effects of Western liberal education (Balibar and Wallerstein 1988: 18), facilitating shifts such as Taguieff’s from criticising cultural relativism to embracing National-Republicanism. By differentiating personal xenophobia from institutional and nationalist racism, Balibar’s class-based analysis tends towards internationalism rather than a stronger emphasis on national frameworks, and a politics “qui favorise, et développe, les formes de mobilisation autonomes des immigrés”, and helps to preserve “leurs traditions communautaires maintenues envers et contre tout” (Balibar 1992b: 31).

This Marxist counterpoint to Taguieff’s culturalist approach, articulated through his early *Lignes* articles (1988, 1992a), is praised by Surya as a “vrai travail” for attempting “à intégrer et *penser*” current events (1992c: 192), was used in Nancy’s research group on the Geophilosophy of Europe (Guénoun 1993) and informs the *revue*’s general preference for a transnational citizenship (Nair 1997a). Taguieff was useful in the counter-discursive challenge to new extreme right strategies, yet philosophically *la pensée 68* and the deconstruction of identity categories was seen as more effective at undermining the latent nationalism and racism of Republican and Enlightenment thinkers. In addition, the heterodox Marxism of former Althusserians such as Balibar would continue to provide the *revue* with a more theoretically advanced framework within which to gradually develop a more positive position.



## ***Négationnisme* and Censorship**

Before further delineating the development of *Lignes*' political stance, Taguieff's empathetic exchanges with the La Nouvelle droite raise methodological questions: does dialogue legitimate extreme political movements, or is an open, critical discussion the democratic solution? For *Lignes*, since Laurent Fabius argued that Le Pen "apporte de mauvaises réponses à des bonnes questions" in 1985 (cited in Surya 1988d: 10), political discourse shifted towards a consensus surrounding the need to tighten immigration policy, as mainstream parties all agreed with Le Pen that migrants were a genuine social problem. *Lignes* considered the concession of this ground to the extreme right an error. They do not, however, call for an outright ban of the FN, and at most warn against sharing a platform with them and participating in open debate. This is a strategic, relatively flexible position. By making considered decisions as to who they publish, a *revue* legitimates certain positions in the cultural-political sphere: Taguieff and Debray were consequently no longer welcome when they produced discourses *Lignes* considered politically damaging. Despite the relatively open stance early on, as an editor Surya clearly felt responsible for the positions expressed in the *revue* and, whilst still not agreeing with all contributors, took a more restricted line as to what he was willing to publish.

However, there is one case in which *Lignes* exceptionally demands outright censorship, Holocaust denial pitting *Lignes* (and most of the French intelligentsia) against Noam Chomsky. In 1979 Chomsky had been asked by Serge Thion to sign a petition defending the revisionist historian Robert Faurisson's right to free speech, which Chomsky did on principle, knowing little about Faurisson's work (later describing him as "a sort of relatively apolitical liberal") (Hitchens 1985: 124). Thion then took "rather promiscuous advantage" (121) of a statement from Chomsky defending freedom of speech in all circumstances, placing it as the preface to Faurisson's *Mémoire en défense* (1980) in which Faurisson defended his claims that the Holocaust was not racially motivated. Scandalising the intellectual community by providing a 'preface' to a work of Holocaust denial, Chomsky's work became "*de facto* untranslatable into French" throughout most of the 1980s and 1990s (Bricmont 2010: 293).

In stark contrast to their usual stance of absolute discursive liberty (previously defending Rushdie, Nasreen and Redeker's freedom of expression), *Lignes* argued in favour of censoring Holocaust denial. Accordingly, whilst Chomsky blamed a widespread illiberal tendency in French intellectual culture for their support of censorship, this does not seem to

apply to *Lignes*. Bricmont argues that the French defended “freedom of expression [...] in an incoherent fashion”, and by wishing to criminalise discourses they found unpalatable they confused “law” with “morality” (2010: 294). In *Lignes*, Vidal-Naquet’s interview with Surya and Dobbels can be seen to operate more on a moral register of disgust, describing Holocaust denial as “une perversion intellectuelle” (1988: 93) which gave him “envie de vomir” (89); his position also seems “clumsy” as he subsequently opposed the Gaysot law which actually illegalised Holocaust denial (Bricmont 2010: 303). However, when the debate is reignited in *Le Monde* (1 September 1998) as Chomsky argues that the stakes are the same with Rushdie as for Faurisson, *Lignes* took a much firmer position. For Alain Brossat, genocide is different from a “massacre traditionnel” as the aim is not to kill a specific populace, but to erase all remnants of this group from the social fabric (1999: 32). Revisionist accounts of genocide are therefore “en quelque sorte programmé d’avance par les préparateurs mêmes” in their desire to perpetrate a “crime sans traces” (35). This makes revisionism more than a freedom of speech issue, and the stakes political rather than moral. Following Henry Rousso, *Lignes* uses the term *négationnisme* to emphasise that this is not a mere re-interpretation of facts, but an action that forms part of the genocidal program, making revisionist historians “complices de cette abjection” (Surya 1987b: 133). The extent to which this objectively justifies censorship remains debateable, especially as this stance is also part of *Lignes*’ ideological struggle against the extreme right. *Lignes* can nevertheless be seen as having a fundamentally coherent and amoral position, generally criticising the repression of discourses except in cases of genocide denial, free of the more general illiberalism Chomsky associated with the French.

Marc Nichanian makes the same argument regarding the genocide of Armenians carried out in Turkey under the cover of the First World War: in response to revisionists such as Bernard Lewis, Nichanian notes “la machine génocidaire est, dans son essence, une machine dénégatrice” concerned with the future of the historical “archive” (1995: 85). Nichanian’s text highlights a shift in the *revue* as Auschwitz becomes “*paradigmatique*” (Traverso 1995: 20) rather than a “unique et inédit” event (Hauser 1997: 152), and a broader, more global perspective is taken towards political violence. Alain Brossat is the key figure in this regard, as he taught a yearly course on Massacres de masse et génocides at the University of Evry, and was a member of Terra, an interdisciplinary network studying migratory populations with regards to ethnic origin: his *L’Épreuve du désastre* (1996a) will be discussed in the next chapter. *Les noms d’Auschwitz et d’Hiroshima, Arménie, Rushdie, Violence et torture* (October 1995) is therefore an important issue, including several

conference papers focusing on Latin America; elsewhere articles on Srebrenica and Sri Lanka (Brossat 1996b) and Rwanda (Malanda 1994) further this internationalist perspective.

Rather than as unique tragedies, this broader framework attempts to theorise genocidal practises simultaneously alongside economic hardship. Both victims of genocides and the economically useless become “simples corps” (Brossat 1996b: 20) to be managed or disposed of, allowing for “la co-présence schizophrénique du tout-démocratie et d’un nouvel ordre de la terreur” (27). Totalitarianism and liberal democracies are both seen as dehumanising, excluding and eradicating surplus population groups in different manners. Furthermore, to France’s colonial past “sont liés les problèmes politiques les plus brûlants et les plus actuels” (Hauser 1997: 152), and as such the struggle of the *sans-papiers* is seen as “une démarche authentiquement politique” (168). Whilst Europe exported the idea of human equality based on universal rights and needs, it is now the West’s excluded figures that best represent this universality. As such rights are gradually eroded in Europe, especially for migrant populations, Balibar proffers instead “une universalité insurrectionnelle” (1995: 21) which denounces “la forme négative de l’universalité européenne telle qu’elle fut mise en œuvre par la politique des Nations” (Hauser 1997: 170). This perspective orientates much of *Lignes*’ internationalist perspective, further explored in this chapter and the following. A backwards looking, commemorative and Euro-centric emphasis on the Second World War is expanded to accommodate global population movements and their violent repression, with an eye towards contemporary excluded figures and their political struggles. Whilst fascism and neo-liberalism are not equated, the relationship between nationalism and class designated by Balibar means the two cannot be simply separated. The first series of *Lignes* subsequently became invested in defending the anti-fascist legacy of the 1930s and combining this stance with more local debates, such as the recognition of the *sans-papiers* as active citizens who deserve equal rights.

### **The Heritage of Anti-fascism**

With the FN, however, the legacy of fascism continues to haunt the *revue*. Fabius’ validation of Le Pen’s ‘good questions’ contributed to the “politicisation of immigration” in the 1980s (Hargreaves 2007: 165). In 1981 Mitterrand had supported “le droit à la différence”, yet later modified his stance to the need for greater “insertion”, then “integration” of immigrants into French society (183). In the late 1980s, Charles Pasqua inaugurated a discussion over whether immigrants should continue to become citizens at 18

years of age automatically, without requesting citizenship. The bill was initially unsuccessful, but the debate “was seen as an historic rupture with traditional French practice, which based nationality on legal status and not on ethnicity” (Sowerwine 2009: 381). *Lignes* became concerned with what they saw as the growing fascist tonality of discourses surrounding immigration, asking whether the proposed changes to the Code de la nationalité were “implicite-ment liée à de nouvelles redéfinitions raciales?” (*Lignes* 1988a: 6). The term ‘immigrant’ itself newly implied prejudicial racial connotations: as Rancière comments, where one used to talk of ‘immigrant labour’ the second word was now dropped, and so “l’immigré d’aujourd’hui, c’est d’abord un ouvrier qui a perdu son second nom” (1995: 161).

Support for the FN continued to grow, however, to the point at which their first *député* to the national assembly was elected in Dreux in 1989. Prime Minister Michel Rocard panicked in response and “altered his previously humane tone on immigration” (Sowerwine 2009: 388), infamously declaring that France “ne peut accueillir toute la misère du monde” (cited in Naïr 1994a: 32). For Guattari and Donnard, this merely perpetuated “une véritable précarisation du statut moral et imaginaire des étrangers vivant en France” (1988: 16), which they call *neo-fasciste*. Marmande’s darkly satirical chronicles of *micro-fascisme* subsequently chart the changing attitudes to immigrants and minorities, such as the prevailing “délire anti-arabe” heard in Parisian taxis (1988b: 106). A 1991 report by La Commission nationale consultative de droits de l’homme confirmed Marmande’s suspicions, noting that whilst physical racial violence had not increased, “there had been a significant increase in acts of ‘symbolic’ racial violence” (Silverman 1999: 55). An increase in the prejudicial use of language, a sensible rise in hostility towards minorities, an emphasis on national identity and a toughening of the immigration laws combined to make *Lignes* concerned about a return of fascism.

These concerns were clearly articulated in *Vers le fascisme?* (March 1992). In his introduction, Surya acknowledges that fascism is a loaded word, carrying “le risque d’accréditer à notre tour l’idée que l’extrême-droite était restée la même” since the 1930s (1992a: 9). Hence, he explains, the proliferation in *Lignes* of other terms, such as *nationalisme*, *national-populisme*, *racisme*, *antisémitisme*, *révisionnisme* and *négationnisme* which help to sharpen their analyses. The word fascism is utilised “en guise de questionnement dramatisé”: yet given that a growing minority were sympathetic to neo-fascist parties, Surya also questions what it would take for Europe to become “majoritairement” fascist (9). The comparison to the 1930s, and to the rest of contemporary Europe, is therefore seen as a useful gauge. Some, however, saw their recourse to discourses

of fascism as excessive: Olivier Mongin attacked *Lignes* for its “retour de l’histoire” rather than focusing on the progressive spread of democracy in the present, and its supposed tendency to collapse the “différence entre l’Est et l’Ouest” of Europe, Mongin arguing that “le mal est localisé” to the East (1990: 93).

Yet contemporary scholars asserted that the comparison to the 1930s was instructive. Rosemarie Scullion argues that “indigenous and wide-spread anti-foreign sentiment” rose in 1990s France (1995: 45), and for many of the same reasons as in the 1930s, including an ailing economy, growing unemployment and concerns over “societal cohesion” (35). Both periods experienced extended periods of governmental cohabitation between the left and right, leading to a virtual consensus on the undesirability of increased immigration. The 1990s even saw the resurgence of “family reunification” measures (39) which carried sinister resemblances to Vichy era legislation. For *Lignes* then, the return to 1930s was a useful guide to the present whilst taking account of the distinct historical differences, emphasising that the preservation of documents by the likes of Bataille and Blanchot helps “à penser l’anachronie” (Dobbels, Marmande and Surya 1991: 94).

Furthermore, the collapse of the USSR and the violent ethnic civil wars that resulted, coupled with the rise of Berlusconi in Italy, confirmed for *Lignes* that neo-fascism was indeed a problem for both Eastern and Western Europe. Marmande subsequently notes that whilst even friendly commentators saw *Vers le fascisme?* as an exaggeration of the problem, Berlusconi’s victory in Italy demonstrates that fascist attitudes are also “ici” in Western Europe (1994: 5). Jacqueline Risset, constantly monitoring Italian politics for *Lignes*, notes that following Berlusconi’s election there was an increase in homophobic assaults and a public resurgence of fascist symbols. However, *Lignes* remained attentive to geographical specificities, the two issues *Europe centrale: nations, nationalités, nationalismes* (June 1990) and *Yougoslavie: penser dans la crise* (September 1993) taking a look at individual countries in depth, inviting intellectuals from within these national contexts to provide an informed perspective. These issues demonstrate a clear “dérèglement spécifiquement balkanique” of political theory in Eastern Europe: organised opposition was decimated by the USSR, and dissidence provided no positive programs for after Communism’s collapse, leaving a generalised ideological disorientation which facilitated the rise of populist, nationalist and ethno-centric parties (Raulet 1993: 12). Yet there were also key similarities, both East and West seeing a rise in discourses of national identity, historical revisionism, racism and anti-Semitism. One strategy common to East and West was the manipulation of the mass-media, Berlusconi’s Fininvest allowing “l’amalgame entre spectaculaire intégré [...] et régression

totalitaire” (Risset 1994: 17), Slobodan Milosevic also using television for “l’efficacité de la manipulation du peuple” (Djuric 1993: 19). Eastern and Western European nationalisms were then placed on a continuum, rather than seen as two isolated phenomena. Whilst the anti-totalitarian logic propagated by Mongin’s *Esprit* left many intellectuals “deeply divided” in the face of Eastern-Europe nationalist resurgences (Christofferson 2004: 272), *Lignes*’ more conjunctural approach resulted in a greater coherence and comprehensiveness.

Deeper ideological divides drove Mongin to mock Surya’s fear of “la barbarie nationaliste” (Mongin 1990: 93). Mongin argues that *Lignes*’ anti-fascist rhetoric is a comfortable polemic strategy: “La comédie de l’anticommunisme terminée, on peut revêtir à nouveau les oripeaux du combattant antifasciste: la peste est à nos portes. Et qui ne se sent plus à l’aise dans cette posture!” (93). Taguieff also attacked the “dogmatisme triomphant” of anti-fascism (1994: 381), especially when it was not accompanied by an equally robust anti-Communism (363). As this suggests, *Esprit*’s staunch anti-Communism mutated in the post-Cold War era towards a defence of globalised liberal democracy.

As previously discussed, the French discourse on totalitarianism was launched in the 1970s to de-legitimize the PCF. Once this campaign against Marxism was seen as successful, around 1990 *Esprit* and *Commentaire* shifted their attention to the legacy of anti-fascism. Furet’s *Le Passé d’une illusion* (1995) blames the glorification of anti-fascist resistance narratives for legitimating Stalinism and prompting intellectual blindness to the gulags. Such critiques of anti-fascism also tend to argue that too much has been said about Nazism’s crimes, and not enough about those of Communism. Anglo-American historians have described this as “not only inaccurate, but bizarre”, especially in the French context where “the crimes of Communism have been widely and often wildly publicised by its enemies from the beginning, while before 1980 very little was said about the Holocaust” (Aronon 2003: 238). Stéphane Courtois’ controversial introduction to *Le Livre noir du communisme* (1997) manipulated statistics to “demonstrate that Communist regimes have victimised approximately 100 million people in contrast to the approximately 25 million victims of the Nazis”, implying that Communism is the greater threat (Aronon 2003: 236). Dean argues that, for many French thinkers, fascism represented “a particular historical moment of suffering” (2006: 64): now this moment is passed, it posed no further threat. Communism, conceptually tied to the French revolution by thinkers such as Furet, remains a “menace as long as there are men and women committed to a particular univocal truth and a levelling and retributive justice” (59). In this reading, Communism has a utopian ideological motivation which remains potent, still threatening in the 1990s as international Socialists called for a

deregulation of migration; Nazism was a historical aberration which liberal democracy is capable of staving off: anti-fascism is anachronistic, anti-Communism a political necessity. In *Lignes* Enzo Traverso emphasises that, after the fall of the USSR, previously anti-Communist thinkers waged “une vaste campagne de dénigrement de toute la tradition antifasciste” in Italy, Germany and France (1998: 119).

Correlative to the denigration of anti-fascism was “le triomphe du consumérisme libéraliste” propagated by liberal historians (Surya 1989b: 54). In Francis Fukuyama’s re-reading of the twentieth century, most famously in *The End of History* (1992), the battle was between the democratic West and the Communist East, minimising the rise of fascism and omitting the fact “que ce n’est pas l’Est que la Seconde Guerre mondiale a défait” but Western European nationalism (Surya 1989b: 65). Surya notes that this is not a politically neutral reading: Fukuyama was on the payroll of the US State Department, and his argument that a mutually affirmative “libéralisme économique *et* politique” had peacefully brought about the end of history was part of America’s aim to impose a New World Order (58). That Fukuyama’s articles were translated in *Commentaire* is noted by both Surya and Traverso as evidence of the anti-Communist position mutating into a celebration of global liberalism.

*Lignes* do not uncritically accept the entire anti-fascist legacy, Traverso undertaking “son historisation critique” (1998: 120). He admits that in some quarters there was “une admiration acritique” of the Soviet Union, and anti-fascists often under-estimated the extent of anti-Semitism as the ideological hard-core of Nazism (131). However, Communists were also not immune to criticism: Balibar was expelled from the PCF in 1981 for criticising their “nationalisme” which can degenerate into “le pire des chauvinismes” when linked to patriotic discourses linked, for example, to the French resistance (Balibar 1992b: 24). *Lignes* in this period is characterised more by anti-nationalism and a suspicion of liberalism than pro-Communism.

Traverso concludes that democracy does not function without a vigilance towards authoritarianism, racism, anti-Semitism, populism and nationalism. As Balibar would argue, these are tendencies that can be accentuated, rather than combatted, by the de-structuring effects of neo-liberal capitalism. Therefore when referring to *Lignes* and lamenting that “l’intellectuel démocrate n’est pas encore né en France où l’esprit critique se complaît à assassiner quotidiennement la démocratie” (1990: 100), Mongin attacks them for not supporting a specifically liberal, contemporary form of democracy rather than the more general idea of popular, democratic sovereignty *Lignes* generally espouses. Yet Mongin would later admit that the anti-totalitarian discourse, launched primarily by *Esprit*, “a fourni

[...] une vision trop heureuse, trop confiante de la démocratie” (1994: 98). Instead, *Lignes* continues the program of “countering the action of the extreme right in France” and “launching a critical attack on democratic liberalism and upon capitalism” as undertaken by Bataille in the 1930s (French 2007: 24), re-activating anti-fascist discourses in the process. As such, their concern for immigration issues turns their attention progressively towards the economy and the *sans papiers*, shifting from a critique of the nationalist right to the paucity of the Socialist’s political program.

### **Turning on the Electoral Left**

The early focus on right-wing ideologies organically moved towards a critique of the electoral left leading up to the social movements of 1995 to 1998. Initially, responses to the existing French Republic were diverse: whilst some editorials argued that so “considérable est l’altération du modèle politique qu’il n’y a plus personne pour le défendre sans ridicule” (*Lignes*’ 1988b: 3), Debray and Lepage eulogised the French Republican tradition as one simply in need of rejuvenation. Dobbels still enthusiastically supported Mitterrand and was “scandalisé” (Pfister 1989: 14) by Thierry Pfister’s polemical *Lettre ouvert à la génération Mitterrand qui marche à côté de ses pompes* (1988). Dobbels thought that the hostility to Mitterrand was misplaced as the President had “le désir d’en freiner l’accentuation” of the drift of the PS to the right (in Debray 1988: 102). France’s subsequent co-operation with America in the Gulf War marks a significant change. Intellectual opposition to the war was fairly marginal, “the French public gave massive support to Mitterrand’s policy” and the “few outrageous articles” that appeared opposing the war, largely in *L’Autre journal*, created “nothing more than a small fuss” (Bishop 1995: 27). For *Lignes*, though, the Gulf War “a opéré une coupure” that was “irréversible” (*Lignes*’ 1991a: 9). Henceforth, it was no longer enough to critique the electoral left “pour être encore de gauche”, and instead this now obliged one “de faire l’effort d’imaginer comment être de gauche autrement” (9). Subsequently it seems that the editorial board as a whole, Dobbels included, has withdrawn its support from Mitterrand.

Criticism of the technocratisation of government had been growing for some time. In *Lignes*, Gérard Soulier refers to *La Fin du politique* (1975), in which Pierre Birnbaum sees conflict as being erased by the professionalisation of modes of governance by specialists alongside the growing apathy of the general population, a situation with a tendency “à rendre illusoire l’exercice d’un suffrage universel” (1975: 258). Echoing Mascolo’s *refus* of



Gaullism, for Soulier the French situation couples this technocratisation with an authoritarian Presidential role, producing a “césarisme” rather than democracy (1988: 35). As Didier Eribon (2007) and Rémi Lefebvre and Frédéric Sawicki (2006) have since described, following its ascent into power the PS cut its ties with the activists who played a considerable role in its election, professionalising itself through a reliance on graduates from Sciences Po and the École normale d’administration. The PS is described as a society “fermée, bloquée, dominée par une oligarchie très attachée à son pouvoir et aux profits qu’elle en tire” and “peu ouverte sur son environnement social” (Lefebvre and Sawicki 2006: 245). In *Lignes*, Lepage’s articles from the 1990s demonstrate this dismantling of the militant left in action, as social workers “qui savent le lent travail d’accès à des formes de participation” lost funding from long term projects and money was re-directed to individually organised cultural programs in which citizens were encouraged to express themselves apolitically, rather than socially organise (1993: 49). Eribon likewise argues that this kind of direct funding actually leads to “le type de dépolitisation qu’elle prétend combattre” as “les individus individualisés soulèveront la plupart du temps des problèmes ‘immédiats’ – rarement élaborés collectivement” (2007: 64). For Lepage the subsequent “délégitimation” of activist associations “a été organisée méthodiquement”, and a powerful motor for social change was lost (1994: 58). This dismantling of civil society is placed in a contextual framework in which the gap between rich and poor rapidly grew, the CAC40 (the French stock exchange) becoming a household name as the importance of the financial service industry increased (Lepage 1994: 57). For Lepage, on the eve of the social protests the only remaining question was “comment être nuisibles aux dominants?” (1994: 63). The emergence of these new social movements suggests that it was not only *Lignes* who were becoming increasingly frustrated with the PS, and the electoral sphere in general.

Before examining *Lignes*’ subsequent position on the left, the emergence of the new social movements will be outlined. Chirac’s installation of Alain Juppé as Prime Minister in 1995 signalled the RPR’s definitive break from Gaullism; that both major left and right parties in France now openly embraced neo-liberalism furthered the sentiment of the narrowness of available electoral options. In October, Juppé announced reductions in healthcare benefits “which bore hardest on the retired and unemployed”, prompting huge resentment as 80% of the French population opposed the plans (Sowerwine 2009: 403). Yet it was Juppé’s decision to cut the pension provision to railway workers which prompted the biggest strike waves in France since May ’68, many seeing these cuts as presaging the future desiccation of the welfare system: Juppé was forced to retire the proposed reforms.

Yet the next year saw further disruption, this time over changes to the Code de la nationalité. In 1993, cohabiting with a seriously ill President Mitterrand, RPR Prime Minister Balladur was free to toughen immigration policy. The Pasqua laws, proposed in June and passed in November, “cut family reunion, restricted acquisition of citizenship, increased arbitrary police power, and made it virtually impossible for refugees to enter France on humanitarian grounds” (Sowerwine 2009: 397). A key contested feature was “the abolition of automatically renewable ten-year residency permits” which were replaced by conditional one year permits, meaning that some, previously long-term immigrants “became irregular by default” and leading “to instances of statelessness in some cases” (McNevein 2011: 103-4). The bill thus created new *sans-papiers*, immigrants who had entered France legally, but due to new legislation could not be officially regularised, occupying a non-place between legality and illegality. After growing frustration and unrest, in March 1996 hundreds of *sans-papiers* occupied St Ambroise church and the aggressive police attempts to forcibly remove them produced violent scenes which scandalised the public. After two hunger strikes intensified their protest the *sans-papiers* cases were reviewed, but only 48 out of 315 were regularised (Waters 2003: 90). Following the occupation of further churches, Juppé seemed unsure of what to do: after initially suggesting a new anti-racist law, he instead allowed Jean-Louis Debré to institute new legislation which made it illegal for French citizens to shelter *sans-papiers* in their homes and compelled them to announce their presence to the authorities, a highly unpopular law which, for Bensaïd, resembled “mot pour mot à l’ordonnance du 10 décembre 1941” on the illegality of sheltering Jews (1997a: 12).

Chirac called snap legislative elections in April 1997 to re-assert his authority, but as the FN ate into the right-wing vote, gaining nearly 20%, Lionel Jospin’s plural left won a clear majority. Yet instead of prompting a softened stance, the Interior Ministry was given to the popular Jean-Pierre Chevènement “so that the party would swallow harsh measures” on immigration (Sowerwine 2009: 407). In September, Chevènement “issued an administrative memorandum that was supposed to facilitate the change of status of all the *sans-papiers* living in France”, yet the proposals were “criticised for reproducing some of the legal dead ends that had created the *sans-papiers* in the first place”: by 1999, only 50% of the 140,000 new applications for regularisation were successful, leaving a huge number remaining in an administrative black hole and ensuring that intellectual and activist opposition continued (Raissiguier 2010: 27).

The last major protests in this cycle were what Bourdieu termed the “social miracle” of a return of activism by the unemployed (cited in Waters 2003: 104). Although they had

played only a minor role in the 1995 movements, organisations such as Agir ensemble contre le chômage (AC!) had been arranging a growing number of marches against unemployment and social exclusion since 1994. In March 1997 AC! organised a march to Amsterdam involving 50,000 people, and the winter of 1997 to 1998 saw a host of occupations, demonstrations and symbolic protests across France. Rejecting the term *exclus*, these protests began to take place under the banner of the *sans*, allowing them to express a greater solidarity with other deprived groups (most obviously the *sans-papiers*). In response to the occupations, the PS “unreservedly condemned the actions [...] as illegal and unrepresentative”, and Jospin issued “an order to evacuate all public buildings” (Waters 2003: 109). Protests continued, however, and by July 1998 a new bill had been passed which would attempt to curtail social exclusion. By the end of this cycle of protests, then, a new form of solidarity movements linked economic, social and immigration issues as a unified concern, an approach *Lignes* consciously adopted.

### ***Lignes* and the New Social Movements**

The social movements are widely credited for a rejuvenation of the French left and “une revalorisation du rôle des intellectuels” (Mathieu 2011: 80). Yet whilst intellectual support was forthcoming early on, frustration at continued disruption and pressure from the re-elected PS in 1997 prompted an intellectual re-alignment that further fragmented a radical left from the ‘second left’. Sarah Waters lists *Mouvements* (founded 1998), *Multitudes* (2000), *ContreTemps* (2000), *Chimères* (1987), *Vacarme* (1997) and *Lignes* as *revues* which “increasingly acted as a ‘political avant-garde’ constructing new analytical categories and a framework for leftist opposition” either during or just after the new social movements (2012a: 94); Lilian Mathieu, in a similar list, includes *Savoir/agir* (2007) but not *Lignes* (2011: 84). This suggests some ambiguity regarding *Lignes*’ positioning: Surya has noted his “aversion naturelle” to communal political endeavours, and his *revue* was not initially an obvious source of support for social movements (2007c: 18). Early articles by Antonio Negri argued that “il sembla évident que les mouvements sociaux étaient entrés dans une phase culturelle et politique nouvelle” (1989a: 86), and his emphasis on new attempts to “construire l’événement” (1989b: 98) presaged the increased importance of Badiou and Rancière in *Lignes*’ second series (*Lignes* would also republish Negri and Guattari’s *Les Nouveaux espaces de liberté* in 2010). Yet Hardt and Negri’s optimistic faith in the rise of constituent power through the *Multitude* (2004) is generally critically received by *Lignes* (see Renault

2002, Hallward 2006, Bensaïd 2007a); furthermore, there is a general scepticism towards the efficacy of protest and theories of the event throughout *Lignes*' early years. Drawing on the Situationists, Marmande (1991) and Mesnard (1992a) argue that spectacular protests will be subsumed and pacified by the political-media apparatus, and so Jean-Christophe Bailly wonders if opposition should remain "dans une réserve obscure" (1993: 22).

From 1996, *Lignes* increasingly focusing on the mechanisms of international capital, the social movements played a more central role. The introduction to *La Rupture sociale* (October 1996) welcomes the fact that the on-going movements were dividing and radicalising the left: "Ce dossier a voulu faire l'hypothèse d'une telle rupture. Pour s'en féliciter, d'abord" (*Lignes*' 1996: 6). Marmande is openly enthusiastic, pleased that "on sort de quatorze ans d'hypnose mitterrandienne" (1996b: 18). For him, the middle class origins of the movements demonstrated a profound shift in public sympathies, as users of public services allied with strikers (17). In a celebration of anti-establishment behaviour, seeing as the electoral left (which Marmande calls "la droite de gauche") was opposed to these movements, "on ne peut que se déclarer solidaire, engagé, heureux" (13). The social movements are now generally embraced as a new forum for political action, situating *Lignes* to the left of this *droite de gauche*.

As Marmande suggested, the movements had widespread support, a survey in 1997 suggesting that 92% of the French public were "highly favourable to the notion of solidarity with people in need" (123). A series of high profile books such as Viviane Forrester's *La Horreur économique* popularised and made accessible arguments against neo-liberalism, galvanising resistance by "naming the enemy" and making the capitalist system as it stood seem less self-evident (Waters 2012a: 89). However, in these more polemic accounts there is often "an essentialist vision of globalisation" (90), portraying it as the nefarious spread of an Anglo-Saxon liberal cultural and economic model to be resisted: Emmanuel Todd mixed "a trenchant leftist critique of neo-liberalism with a traditionally right-wing preoccupation with themes of cultural identity, nation and national borders" (109). Republicanism was thus pitted against Democracy, another instance of this emphasis on French particularity bringing a latent nationalism into debates.

Yet whilst the regional presses tended to be empathetic towards local struggles, the national mass media, closer to Parisian governmental circles, were by and large "puissants instruments de délégitimation des mouvements sociaux" (Mathieu 2011: 93). *Libération*, *Le Monde*, and *La Nouvel Observateur* generally defended Juppé's economic reforms and saw the social protests as irresponsible (Wajnsztein 1997: 49). Given the growing social unrest, it

is perhaps no surprise to find that in the 1990s it was sociologists who were the intellectual figures “approached more often” by the media to comment on current events, a shift from the prominence of historians in the 1980s (Jeanpierre and Mosbah-Natanson 2009: 179). Yet although sociology in this period is most commonly associated with the radical Pierre Bourdieu (the prime example of a ‘specific intellectual’ supporting the social movements), Alain Touraine was the central figure in the centre-left debate: between 1995 and 2002, five out of twenty of the most commonly featured academics in *Le Monde* were from Touraine’s Centre d’analyse et d’intervention sociologique.<sup>23</sup> Most of these thinkers were “publicly associated with the ‘modernising’ or ‘deuxième gauche’ position” (Milner 1997: 505), represented by *Esprit* and *La Nouvelle Observateur*, who underscored the need for the French State to curtail welfare expenditure to meet the needs of the twenty-first century.

Despite his initial interest in labour movements, Touraine came to the conclusion that they were no longer the means towards a more egalitarian society. He argued that new struggles should be “about the defence of personal liberty, security and dignity”, and so rather than economics or politics only those with a “moral dimension” counted as real social movements (132). This places Touraine in an interesting minority in French intellectual circles, as he takes care to distinguish between “the defence and promotion of cultural identity from what in France is called communautarisme” (Baubérot 2009: 195). Touraine henceforth sees cultural alienation “as more important than economic exploitation” and no longer recognises the value of movements defending social welfare, benefits and employment (Lloyd 1998: 19). Therefore in his edited collection, *Le Grand refus*, Touraine argued that the 1995 social movements “n’apporte aucune solution à une société dont l’économie est déjà internationalisée” (1996: 8). The subsequent essays in the collection frequently complain of “un retour au terrorisme intellectuel” on the part of those defending the protesters (Wieviorka 1996: 273), such intellectuals neglecting their “éthique de la responsabilité” (Dubet 1996: 139).

*Lignes* does not particularly welcome the new influence of sociologists. Bell has described how the social sciences began to see a new role for themselves as instrumentalised “in the service of a new technocracy” (2000: 115), and the *revue*’s hostility to this is articulated in *Crise et critique de la sociologie?* (November 1999) which laments the “objectif purement pragmatique” of a discipline condemned to follow “la pente douce d’un technocratisme à vocation thérapeutique” (Jeudy 1999: 8). Balibar also attacks this

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<sup>23</sup> The five being Michel Wieviorka, Marie-Victoire Louis, Fhrad Khosrokhavar, Yvon Le Bot, and Touraine himself (Jeanpierre and Mosbah-Natanson 2009: 180)

“sociologisme académique” for an “essentialisme” that tends “à réifier les groupes sociaux” beyond class distinctions, giving the impression that class based antagonisms have been resolved (Balibar 1992b: 193). There are a few kind words for Bourdieu in *Lignes*, Françoise Proust praising “la cohérence et la persévérance” of his political engagements (1997: 109), and *Lignes* also harboured some of the “jeunes chercheurs en sciences sociales proches de Bourdieu” who “opposent leur compétence au discours dominant”, Sophie Wahnich notably appearing regularly at this time (Cusset 2006: 197). But on the whole the *revue* distances itself from the official institutional and academic sociological endeavour, preferring its militant usage to create movements of rupture and conflict.

Furthermore despite Touraine’s detection of “une attitude stérile de refus systématique” (Mathieu 2011: 86), genuine alternatives were developed: the alter-globalisation movement Attac, emanating from *Le Monde diplomatique*, redefined itself as an “association d’éducation populaire” to broaden support and understanding, and “conférences d’économistes antilibéraux” proliferated in which EU treaties and policies were “minutieusement étudiés et discutés” (85). This period of effervescence creates a rarity in *Lignes* as the *revue* subsequently housed social and economic policy debates. A key article is the transcription of Luc Carton’s third Séminaire de recherche sur l’éducation populaire. Carton attempted to empower the population by questioning “le lexique social, masque idéologique anodin mais puissant” (Lepage 1996: 95) which asserted that austerity was the only option. Carton tackled several policy areas in which a “crise de financement” is ostensibly assumed to be the problem, but which he analysed differently (Carton 1996: 80): in schools, the problem was not a lack of money but a generalised over-qualification of the populace; transport had been run as a private enterprise but should be a public service; and a European-wide Tobin tax on financial transactions was proposed (this being the main campaign of Attac). Drawing on Carton, Lepage criticised the discursive manner in which “la ‘crise’ s’est installée avec la complicité des médias comme mode intellectuel permanent de justification des choix sociaux, culturels et économiques” (1996: 91), a major theme of *Lignes’* second series. Rather than orientating policy around an unsustainable economic growth, Lepage calls for “une véritable pensée de la *décroissance*” as the future depends on “l’arrêt de l’expansion productive et profitable” (94).

It is worth noting here that in *Lignes’* second series, Attac’s *altermondialisme*, Tobin taxes and theories of *décroissance* are lambasted by some, such as Anselm Jappe, for merely providing a potential palliative for the current liberal order (see Chapter 6). Rather than Marmande’s open enthusiasm, Surya remained somewhat sceptical: once the movements

expanded their interests from the simple protection of “les services publics” (1996b: 11) he became more supportive, but still saw the protests as “une forme vide” which only served to emphasise the lack of political debate in general (1999b: 84). In general the *revue* tends to avoid detailed policy debates, seeing this as less of an intellectual, and more of a consensual governmental function: yet given the denigration of the movement’s political potential by much of the media and intelligentsia, the *revue* decided to house this ferment. The key for *Lignes* is the emergence of what the *revue Vacarme* would name a “politique non gouvernementale” (Cusset 2006: 189); the importance for *Lignes* was not so much the content of policies being discussed, but that they were being discussed by public individuals, creating new forms of engagement and attempting to restore public sovereignty in contrast to technocratic administration.

*Lignes* would therefore remain much more firmly attached to the forms of social activism and non-governmental agency that emerged from the movements. Christophe Aguiton described how the new movements, such as AC! and ‘Tous ensemble’, are more “combatives” in taking the protests out into the streets, circumventing traditional trade unions who were more comfortable when negotiating with the government (1996: 69). The extension of their membership to include the unemployed, as well as workers, was key “d’élargir le front et de ne pas laisser le gouvernement effriter la popularité du mouvement en jouant sur les oppositions salariés/usagers ou secteur public/chômeurs” (67), re-knitting the social solidarities eroded by what Balibar theorised as the division of labour. Elsewhere, the activist potential of ordinary citizens is privileged. Lepage praises collective Adret’s *Résister*, a book born from the December 1995 movements which reproduces interviews with 22 ordinary people who have, in their professional capacity, practically resisted the encroachment of neo-liberalism. For Lepage, against a media discourse which emphasises “la complexité” of international economic issues “pour maintenir la perplexité”, this text clarifies the issue by demonstrating concrete modes of resistance anyone can undertake (1997: 67). Sophie Wahnich retrospectively appraises and quotes extensively from various petitions, articles and slogans produced by the movements, concluding approvingly that “la parole populaire existe, elle est forte” (1999: 174). The emphasis here, then, is the political action people can take in everyday life in contrast to replace the growing electoral apathy.

Yet the government’s response to the movements disappointed, Daniel Bensaïd’s *Lionel, qu’as-tu fait de notre victoire?* (1998a) being echoed by Wahnich in *Lignes*, who complained that “Jospin refuse la politique dictée par la rue” (1999: 183). A general frustration with political parties becomes strident, and the future participation of Alain

Badiou with *Lignes* is prefigured by the appearance of Sylvain Lazarus, Badiou's colleague in their Organisation Politique. Lazarus sees the social movements as the end of the historical sequence of "consensus" represented by cohabitation and *Le Débat*, and the start of a sequence of prescription, a form of extra-parliamentary militant politics further discussed in Chapter 5 (1997: 172). Others, however, such as Sami Nair, do not want a complete rupture with the present system, but a new party which would be both "parti et mouvement citoyen(ne)", a "jonction de la radicalité sociale et de la norme impérative du droit des gens" (1997a: 27). A split in *Lignes* between those who want to work within or reject the parliamentary sphere therefore begins to emerge. Interestingly, the two most staunchly Marxist thinkers, Balibar and Bensaïd, both stress the importance of the electoral sphere: despite his growing disenchantment with Europe, Balibar still argues that the best way to re-found the EU is with a genuinely cross-European party (2012: 57); and Bensaïd will reform the Ligue communiste révolutionnaire (LCR) into the Nouveau Parti Anticapitaliste (NPA) in 2009 to attempt to translate support for social activism into electoral gains. More 'theoretical' and less activist thinkers such as Badiou and Rancière by contrast propose a radical politics of eruptive events. Both tendencies, however, attest to *Lignes'* increasingly firm position within radical left milieus and confirming their distance from the PS and the 'second', modernising left of *Esprit*. Notably, much of the theoretical work behind their stance derives again from those associated with *la pensée 68*, even if this involves a shift from the neo-Nietzscheans to former Althusserians (though thinkers such as Derrida, Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy equally supported the social movements).

The struggles of the *sans-papiers* split the field much more trenchantly. Whilst the major newspapers opposed the Debré laws aiming to coerce citizens to give up clandestine immigrants, Tévanian and Tissot note a disparity between different sections of *Le Monde* and *Libération*: in the 'Société' pages they "relataient les conséquences graves de la législation" and expressed outrage at the situation of the *sans-papiers*; yet in the political and editorial sections the government's policy is, when not supported, criticised for not being tough enough, attacking its "inefficacité" in the face of the "problème de l'immigration" (1998c: 7). *Le Monde's* 'Horizon – Débats' invited intellectuals to debate immigration policy, but as the most frequent contributors were Alain Finkielkraut and Régis Debray there is a tendency towards their 'National Republican' position in favour of controlling immigration and against regularising the *sans-papiers* (Jeanpierre and Mosbah-Natanson 2009). So whilst some socially concerned journalists reflected the population's growing concern with the plight of



the socially excluded, the overt political stance of the mainstream media generally supported the governmental line.

Daniel Bensaïd is the key figure in *Lignes*' absolute position in favour of regularising the *sans-papiers*. Head of the LCR and the Trotskyist left who, during the 1990s, "purposefully set out to invest in emergent struggles" and "provided a culture of militancy and a political leadership" (Waters 2003: 5), Bensaïd created the *revue ContreTemps* to forge links between activists and intellectuals. For Bensaïd, from Pasqua to Chevènement both the right and left have produced "législation xénophobe et discriminatoire" (1997a: 12). Whilst such legislation is meant to promote greater social integration, Bensaïd argues that it fractures social cohesion, creating new *sans-papiers*, separating families with forced expulsions, and stigmatising immigrants by designating them as the "vrai problème" (13). Bensaïd links the struggles of the *sans-papiers* to the wider social movements, displacing the debate from one pitting the French nation against immigrants to one "entre possédés [...] et possédants" (16), combining economic, social and immigration issues.

Bensaïd also defends militant action from charges that their "mobilisation lyrique" in favour of the *sans-papiers* is an excessively emotive appeal in favour of irresponsible policies: for Bensaïd, "heureusement" there are "des moments et des circonstances où l'émotion et la raison battent à l'unisson" (1997a: 14). Against *Le Monde*, which tended to deplore the consequences of social exclusion but defended government policies, *Lignes* explicitly blames such policies for the rise in excluded citizens. Pierre Tévanian and Sylvie Tissot dismantle the discourse of intellectual *angélisme* both in *Lignes* articles and their *Dictionnaire de la lepénisation des esprits* (1998c), essentially continuing Taguieff's discourse analysis of the FN but extending its range of targets to include the mainstream media. *Angélisme* implied that intellectuals opposing the government relied solely on "bon sentiments" rather than knowledge, and was guided by an "éthique des principes" rather than an "éthique de la responsabilité" (Tévanian and Tissot 1998b: 167-170). Yet the appeal to statistics in the argument against regularising the *sans-papiers* is undermined: Tissot notes that in 1996 both Italy and Spain regularised 100,000 to 200,000 immigrants, that the USA do this regularly without public uproar, and in France this would represent only 0.3% of the population, figures that hardly seem to justify claims that this would constitute an insurmountable financial and demographic burden. They also historicise this discourse: in 1973, even right-wing newspapers such as *Le Figaro* and *Nation* argued that there was no immigration problem "et que le nombre de résidents étrangers était stable", whereas in 1998 even left-wing papers such as *L'Humanité* or *Libération* would not support such an argument

despite a relatively similar statistical situation (1998c: 7). Such a historicisation could support *Lignes'* stance that attempts to recuperate votes back from the FN have led to “une étonnante continuité entre les gouvernements de droite et de gauche” (7) on the undesirability of immigrants. The aim of *Lignes* in such accounts is double: to de-legitimize the arguments of the ‘necessary’ and ‘responsible’ nature of the government’s immigration policy, and to emphasise the desolidarising effects of this logic.

So *Lignes* echoes and embraces popular support for the social movements, especially in their more radical aspects. As the modernising second left began to rally behind the newly elected PS in 1997, *Lignes* remained within the radical left and countered the mainstream discourses of the national newspapers and *revues* such as *Esprit*. Predictably eschewing the left-wing nationalism of figures such as Emmanuel Todd, they instead favoured non-parliamentary political action as disappointment with the PS response grew. Thinkers more orientated to social policy solutions, such as Luc Carton and Christophe Aguiton, would only pass through *Lignes*, which remained less consistently wedded to these kinds of discussions than activist *revues* such as *Vacarme*. The more intransigent figures such as Sophie Wahnich would remain, however, and activism supporting the more overtly political *sans-papiers'* struggle would predominate in the second series as they were seen as emblematic of an eruptive universality and active citizenship. Crucially, the solidarity surrounding the *sans*, and the linking of immigration, unemployment and economic precariousness would provide *Lignes* with their focus in the new millennium, as they reconceptualise those socially excluded as the *vaincus* of neo-liberal capitalism.

### **Responsibilisation or Intellectual Suicide?**

To clarify *Lignes'* rapport to governmental participation and alternative policies, Sami Naïr is a useful example. By 1999, he was amongst the intellectual figures “tout récemment converti” to National Republicanism (Tévanian 1999: 102). Naïr had been present in *Lignes* since June 1991, was a strong campaigner against the tightening of immigration laws, and saw the PS as no longer fit for service, declaring that real political change would need its “mort” (1997a: 27). He was also wary of intellectual co-operation with the government, claiming that when intellectuals do so, “on nous domestiquait” (1993: 33), losing their critical integrity: instead, Naïr preferred to engage “par résistance” (1997b: 101).

Yet concurrently with this last *Lignes* article, Naïr printed a renunciation of this stance in *Le Monde* (13 October 1997), becoming an immigration advisor to the government and

later being elected to the European Parliament. Naïr calls a new petition for the regularisation of *sans-papiers* in *Libération* (signed by Balibar, Derrida, Lacoue-Labarthe and others) “irresponsable”, Surya responding that “nous en étions pour notre part restés à l’amiable ‘irresponsable’ que Sami Naïr avait été jusque-là” (in Tévanian and Tissot 1998a: 157). Given his strong stance against the Pasqua laws (his *Lettre à Charles Pasqua* (1994b) was one of the most critical of the time) and the similar problems with Chevènement’s ‘improved’ version of Pasqua’s legislation, Naïr’s transformation into a government spokesperson seems “inexplicable” (159). *Lignes* printed a defence by Naïr in which he claimed that his convictions “n’ont pas changé” and that the Chevènement laws were a progressive step forward (1998: 166). Yet he largely relied on moral arguments which he had previously avoided, stating that illegal immigration could promote polygamy, and that the Debré laws banning the sheltering of *clandestines* was a necessary measure to stop criminals keeping sex slaves in their homes.

This raises questions surrounding the collaboration of intellectuals with the government. Jeremy Ahearne notes that left-wing intellectuals “have tended to define themselves in opposition to the State and to the processes of public policy” (2010: 12), and describes cases of those, such as Philippe Meirieu, for whom “collaboration sent his standing among his peers into freefall”: collaboration can become intellectual suicide (22). As we have seen, Noirel pejoratively labels such participants “les intellectuels de gouvernement” (2006: 121); Surya tends to agree, his *Portrait de l’intellectuel en animal de compagnie* (2000c) arguing, as Naïr had, that collaboration is a form of domestication. Many in *Lignes* would agree with Benslama, who states that the role of intellectuals is to “perturber *la donnée* pour provoquer la redistribution, le nouveau partage”, and again this kind of disruption tends to arise from outside of the parliamentary sphere, explaining *Lignes*’s hesitance to get too deeply involved in policy debates (1997b: 33). Yet Ahearne argues that the definition of an *intellectuel de gouvernement* is “somewhat tendentious” and is often just used as a term of denigration for an ideological opponent (2010: 25). Collaboration is not necessarily capitulation, and as previously noted Ahearne compares a “pre-responsibilised intellectual attitude” which is purely critical and proposes no alternatives, to a post-responsibilised position with concrete solutions once an intellectual’s position can actually impact real peoples’ lives (81).

In the case of Naïr, given the virtual reversal of his political positions, this shift from outright hostility to governmental collaboration, and the chastising of his former allies, is difficult not to see as more of a capitulation than responsabilisation. Furthermore, for Surya, it

is precisely this discourse of ‘responsibilisation’ that is the problem: when *la pensée* and *l’écriture* are submitted to useful ends, practical reason and pragmatic action, it becomes servile thought which is fundamentally of a different order. This does not mean that *Lignes* abandons practical reason, Luc Carton maintaining a critical, outsider position *along with* proposing policy alternatives: yet this tends towards a kind of practical activism that *Lignes* is often only tangentially and conjuncturally associated with. Even in its more militant phase, discussed in the next chapter, the emphasis is more on creating active political agency than defining policies and goals, the exemplary figures remaining the *sans papiers*.

What Naïr most clearly demonstrates is that, alongside what Hargreaves has called a movement towards “substantive agreement” between the electoral left and right throughout the 1990s (2007: 177), there was a comparable intellectual shift towards consensus in the same period. With Debray in 1989, Taguieff around 1994, and Naïr in 1998, we see intellectual figures more or less close to *Lignes* become estranged from the *revue* due to their hardening stance on immigration. As Naïr admitted, this was part of an explicit strategy by Chevènement to “dépolitiser ce débat” (1998: 159). Yet for *Lignes*, this consensus cedes far too much ground to the extreme-right, and is based on a manipulation of the public debate which falsifies the economic argument against regularising the *sans-papiers*, assuming that immigration is itself a threat to the social fabric of France. After their early emphasis on extreme-right discourses and the legacy of fascism, guided by Taguieff, Balibar’s more Marxist elaboration of neo-racism as part of wider social and class conflicts in the face of capitalism shifted their attention to the relationship between the electoral left and the global spread of neo-liberalism in the post-Cold War context. *Lignes* takes a more oppositional stance and moves towards the radical left, more closely associating itself with activist, Trotskyist milieus as well as those looking for solutions outside of the party-political framework. This broader re-alignment will be confirmed in the second series as the editorial board is radically reshuffled, and the *revue* becomes more firmly entrenched in the radical left and very much distanced from the PS.

***Lignes, the Second Series: 2000-2014***

## Chapter 5

### Rebuilding Camps, Reconstructing Agency

If *Lignes* saw the 1980s' emphasis on consensus as depoliticising, in the new millennium debate seemed suppressed by the implementation of *La Crise comme méthode de gouvernement* (October 2009). Crisis was now seen as the paradigmatic form of contemporary governance, legitimating unpopular measures by proffering catastrophe as the only alternative. Whilst discussing many contemporary crises, from Bird Flu to the environment, the key concerns for the *revue* continued to be systemic economic problems, immigration and the securitisation which resulted. This chapter explores *Lignes*' response to discourses of crisis, notably their attempts to re-locate political agency. To accompany the new series and an expanded editorial board, a new intellectual genealogy is constructed via David Rousset and Hannah Arendt to repoliticise human rights. Probing the link between rights, citizenship and nationality was particularly relevant in a period characterised by legalised states of exception and the increasing use of retention centres. In theorising such exceptionality, whilst Giorgio Agamben tends to normalise the use of exceptional measures, Michel Foucault is preferred as he allows for forms of micro-political agency. If the discussion of policy alternatives generated by the social movements remains muted, *sans-papiers* activism remains an exemplary form of such micro-politics for *Lignes*, especially as they concretely manifest Jacques Rancière's eruptive conception of dissensual politics. Lastly, Alain Badiou provides the strongest theory of a political Subject, provoking a debate over the strategic value of the word 'communism' and the efficacy of extra-parliamentary political practices in the face of continued disenchantment with the PS.

### **Securitisation**

Despite dissatisfying the demands of the social movements (Bensaïd 1998a), Lionel Jospin's presidency (1997-2002) saw the economy recover and unemployment fall. His presence in the second round of the 2002 presidential election was assumed, so many used the first round for a protest vote. Jean-Marie Le Pen shocked France by leapfrogging Jospin, and the FN went on to receive nearly 20% of the second round votes. In Jacques Chirac's subsequent cabinet, "the appointment that mattered was Nicholas Sarkozy as Minister of the Interior", whose tough stance on immigration and crime was designed to recoup FN votes (Sowerwine 2009: 419). Sarkozy exploited racial and religious tensions, re-igniting the

*foulard* debate and provoking disenfranchised French youth with “anti-Muslim rhetoric” and references to the socially excluded as “racaille” (426). Following the *banlieue* riots in 2005, *Lignes* dismissed the idea that this was nihilistic violence, Surya arguing that the rioters were expressing, “à leur façon, la seule qu’on leur laissât, qu’elles voulaient n’être pas moins françaises que les autres” (2006d: 6). Yet Rada Iveković noted that the “autorités ethnicisent elles-mêmes le conflit” (2006: 72) and many intellectuals joined the politicians in this, Alain Finkielkraut declaring that the problems were caused by “blacks or Arabs, with a Muslim identity” (Sowerwine 2009: 427). For *Lignes*, public discourse had been producing “une droitisation accélérée” since the 1980s that was “délibérément orchestrée par la classe dirigeante, intellectuels et journalistes inclus” (Margantin 2006: 54). Rather than immigration, *Lignes* argued that the problem was the “désolidarisation” of society through chronic structural unemployment (Vollaire 2004: 51). Far from accidental, this is depicted as a cornerstone of neo-liberal ideology, in which “la précarité, c’est la vie” (Dupeux 2008: 77). With a pool of desperate workers, employers can offer lower wages and temporary contracts without providing future security, and so “le chômage précarise le travail, qui, en retour, précarise le chômage” (71).

Yet instead of providing support, contemporary European states tended to “désigner les économiquement faibles comme dangers publics” (Vollaire 2004: 51), benefit scroungers or *racaille* prone to violence. After the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre in 2001, it became commonplace to argue that greater security guaranteed “liberal freedom”, and was in fact “the condition for its existence” (Lemke 2011: 47). In the political sciences since the 1990s, ‘securitisation’ has described “a process whereby urgent ‘security issues’ or ‘threats’ are identified or ‘constructed’ in order to mobilise opinion and constitute legitimacy and authority for the means of dealing with that ‘threat’” (Neal 2009: 335): the issue is successfully securitised “if the relevant audience accepts this claim and thus grants to the actor a right to violate rules that otherwise would bind” (Wæver 2000: 251). Lemke argues that this is essentially a depoliticising strategy, as securitisation “takes reality as the norm” and improvises quick-fix solutions whilst failing to address any long-term socio-economic and political problems (2011: 47).

In France, immigration became a securitised issue. *Lignes* lamented the “mobilisation croissante de l’opinion publique contre les migrants” in Europe since the 1990s which was used to justify restrictive immigration policies, violent expulsions and illegal retentions (dal Lago and Mezzadra 2004: 70). Since the government made peace with the Catholic community from the late 1970s, Muslims were instead characterised by “misogynie,

homophobie, antisémitisme, fanatisme”, essentially “tous les maux anciennement assignés au christianisme” (Dakhli 2008: 165). Furthermore, in the context of the American ‘War on Terror’, nation states could utilise discursive strategies in which “les *ennemis de l’État* deviennent les *ennemis de la liberté*” (Mucchielli 2003: 125). For *Lignes*, this terminological shift made overtly racist and exclusionary policies publically acceptable, allowing states to enact populist anti-immigration policies under the rubric of national security: immigrants could now be arrested solely for their “dangerosité”, a term Mucchielli sees as “judiciairement scandaleuse” (2002: 167).

Yet Sarkozy’s approval rating soared and he began to actively search for immigrants to expel, realising that “with each deportation he gained more votes on the right than he lost on the left” (Sowerwine 2009: 430-1). He succeeded, taking 6.5% from the FN’s electorate in his 2007 presidential victory. In power, he created Le ministère de l’Immigration, de l’Intégration, de l’Identité nationale et du Développement solidaire, and set yearly expulsion targets to formalise the pressure to find new minorities to exclude. In *Lignes*, Éric Fassin notes the mobility of stigmatising discourses, targeting different groups when politically expedient: government figures such as Hervé Morin did little to dispel this perception, reading out the “texte d’un ami musulman” which congratulated the *roms* for becoming the new “boucs émissaires” responsible for “tous les maux de la France” (Fassin 2011: 115). In Grenoble in 2010 Sarkozy had notably associated *roms* with “délinquance et immigration, échec scolaire et démission parentale, itinérance et illégalité” (Canut and Hobé 2011: 12). Again, with this strategy “il s’agit de justifier les inégalités socio-économiques et juridiques construites sur les différences ethnicisées”, providing the ground work for the mass-expulsions of *roms* (Cossée 2011: 173). Subsequently, Sowerwine argues that though the FN vote had been reduced in 2007, this was only because “its rhetorical positions are now part of the discourse of the state” (2009: 434). Yet in the 2012 elections Marine Le Pen and a resurgent FN scored 17.9%, their highest result in a presidential first round to date. As *Lignes* had argued since the 1980s, the attempt to canalise the FN vote by providing softer versions of their own policies seemed only to strengthen its electoral base in the long-term.

With the difference between the electoral left and the right now seeming “more apparent than real” (Hargreaves 2007: 176), what other options remained? Traditional trade union action had been weakening for years, and Dollé argued that with the privatisation of urban centres there was now “aucun espace public” for political congregation, peaceful protests becoming increasingly securitised and managed by the authorities (2007: 157). Yet more violent approaches seemed equally futile. Hauser laments that the triptych from the



“beaux jours”, *crise-violence-révolution*, was no longer operational (2009: 13). Brossat argued that the over-criminalisation and moralisation of violence meant that any disorderly conduct was publicly seen “avec les yeux de la police” and so disqualified as illegitimate (2009a: 15). The spectacular arrests of the *Tiqqun* milieu in Tarnac, November 2008, showed the state’s ability to neutralise perceived threats by inscribing them within discourses of terrorism, even if no crime had been committed.<sup>24</sup> In response, *Lignes* sought to re-invigorate political agency in the new millennium. As the editorial board was recomposed, a return to David Rousset highlights the change in trajectory to come in the new series.

### **David Rousset – The Universalisation of the Concentrationary**

The second issue of the *nouvelle série* (May 2000) was dedicated to David Rousset, a figure “now largely forgotten” (Moyn 2005: 52). When he is mentioned, researchers tend to focus on *L’Univers concentrationnaire* (1946) and *Les jours de notre mort* (1947), accounts of his time spent in Nazi concentration camps. Critics such as Griselda Pollock and Max Silverman acknowledge the influence of his analysis on Hannah Arendt, as he linked the camps to colonial and capitalist enterprises, yet his subsequent political activities are rarely examined (Pollock and Silverman 2011). Significantly, Rousset praised Boris Souvarine for “exhumant des documents oubliés qui rétablissent l’authentique visage du mouvement ouvrier et le caractère véritable de la tradition intellectuelle révolutionnaire” (2000c: 200): by documenting Rousset’s own “irréprochable” trajectory, *Lignes* consciously inherits this tradition (Surya 2007c: 39).

A former Trotskyist, Rousset became increasingly critical of the USSR and appealed to ex-deportees to join him in exposing Russian concentration camps (Rousset 2000a), forming the Commission internationale contre le régime concentrationnaire (CICRC) in 1950. Annette Wiewiorka argues that Rousset’s commission was only moderately successful as “ses analyses ne pénétrèrent pas la conscience commune” (1997: 10). Yet the documents assembled in *Lignes*, largely drawn from the CICRC’s *revue Saturne*, demonstrates that they undertook politically effective interventions throughout the 1950s, including the suppression of Russian camps, improvements in conditions in Tunisia, and promises extracted from the Spanish government that they would soon close Macronissos, Rousset thus claiming that they had saved “milliers” from detention (2000d: 173). Although he subsequently rallied to de

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<sup>24</sup> See Brossat (2009b) as well as the ‘Comité invisible’ (2007) for the text that sparked the Tarnac affair.

Gaulle after Algerian decolonisation, Rousset returned to his Trotskyist roots later in life. His last two major works, *La Société éclatée* (1973) and *Sur la Guerre* (1987), adapted a Marxist historical approach to demonstrate how concentration camps came to exist, noting that “la décomposition des classes et leur transformation en masse constitue le terreau social du totalitarisme” (Bensaïd 2000: 123). Rousset’s ‘Le sens de notre combat’ noted a general indifference regarding the structure of the global economy, few questioning whether liberal democracy was best suited to provide equality. With developing nations under pressure to follow Western models, Rousset argues that it is difficult to convince others of the virtues of liberalism “si l’on n’a pas sans ambiguïté dénoncé et pourchassé les déviations anti-démocratiques en Occident” (2000b: 226). Bensaïd praises Rousset’s materialist interpretation of history, noting it “devrait servir de fil à plomb méthodologique pour penser des tragédies comme celles des Balkans” (2000: 121). Explicitly pitting Rousset against the new philosophers (Glucksmann) and conservative historians (Furet), Bensaïd reclaims the value of a Marxist approach to history, suggestive of the analysis of contemporary politics to come throughout *Lignes*’ second series.

This issue on Rousset is symptomatic of a broader shift in trajectory for *Lignes*. Whilst Antelme was a key figure in the first series, Rousset’s experience of the camps was more overtly political. Antelme’s camp experience involved “indifference and disharmony” as much as “friendship and care”, leading to an “eroded solidarity” (Crowley 2003: 71). Whilst Lyotard argued that as “un résistant” even Antelme’s position was already caught up in the “ambigüe” position of having to “négocier avec la terreur nazie”, (1988: 53), Rousset’s stance was even more partisan as he recruited for Trotskyist cells inside Buchenwald, relying on the “conventional solidarity” and “heroic resistance” Antelme found troubling and troubled (Crowley 2003: 68-9). Rousset’s presence in *Lignes* signals the increased participation of current or ex-Trotskyists (Brossat, Bensaïd) alongside figures from the ex-Althusserian intellectual left (Badiou, Rancière). These are the key names amongst those attempting to reconstruct theories of political agency in the *revue*.

Therefore whilst Lyotard warns against comparing the Holocaust to “les crimes de Staline” (1988: 52) as this erodes its singularity, as previously noted *Lignes* resists sacralising this one event. Rousset attempted to universalise his experience, Todorov (in his only appearance in *Lignes*) calling this “la meilleure forme de mémoire: celle qui permet d’agir pour le bien dans le présent” (2000: 71). Significantly, although after the Second World War thinkers tried to derive some universal political truths from the Holocaust, from the 1970s the emphasis shifted towards the particularisation of memory. This was in some ways desirable:

most of the French testimonies of the 1940s were produced by intellectual and political prisoners, such as Rousset and Antelme, and as such “the public memory of the war in France was largely a written memory of Resistance to the occupying German forces” (Pollock and Silverman 2011: 21). The genocidal specificity of the Jewish extermination and Vichy collaboration were therefore under-represented. The Eichmann trial in 1961 was “a crucial moment in defining the Jewish victim [...] as the central victim of Nazi brutality” (Silverman 2013: 16), and in the 1966 ‘Treblinka affair’ the distinction between concentration and extermination camps was first drawn (Moyn 2005: 2). Subsequently, whilst Alain Resnais’ *Nuit et brouillard* (1955) had been criticised for not emphasising the specificity of Jewish extermination, Marcel Ophüls’ *Le Chagrin et la pitié* (1969) and Claude Lanzmann’s *Shoah* (1985) were key moments in consolidating public awareness – yet also begat what Silverman has called “the present memory wars” (2013: 17). The emphasis on racial and religious specificity was echoed by other groups targeted by genocidal regimes, and so this otherwise welcome historical correction “also heralded a particularisation and ethnicisation of memory” which is “premised on the rejection of the grand universal narratives of old” (17).

This new politics of memory was “premised predominantly on the ethno-cultural identity of the group” and so was “often accompanied by a competition for recognition and victim status” rather than solidarity with all humankind (Silverman 2013: 17). As Pieter Lagrou notes, sympathising “with victims, rather than perpetrators, is the most elementary of humanitarian reflexes” (2002: 282), yet as it is insensitive to argue with victims it can also enforce consensus. Instances of crimes against humanity are also often represented as dramatic and singular events, “isolating them from their context” and depoliticising the historical conjuncture leading up to the event (284). Lagrou concludes that there is a “persuasive, but false” opposition between remembering and forgetting: “The phantom of forgetting is ultimately an unlikely threat in societies obsessed with the past [...] that have a dearth of projects and utopias” (287). So discourses of victimhood can force a particularistic consensus and renounce the possibility of universally progressive politics.

*Lignes* echoes this scepticism towards discourses of victimhood. In a key issue, *Vainqueurs/Vaincus* (Issue 8, May 2002), Surya argues that this old binary has been replaced with that of “coupable/victime”: that “on ne parle – presque – plus jamais de *vaincus*” signals for Surya a depoliticisation of global conflict (2002c: 5). Alongside physical violence, Surya emphasises the plight of those economically vanquished. Those suffering from famine, for example, are often portrayed as victims of a humanitarian crisis rather than “les victimes du *trop de marché*” (6). Global capital is thus described by Surya as a form of structural violence

which leaves many politically defeated. In this vein, responding to the attacks on the World Trade Centre, Rancière argues that seeing the United States simply as victims of terrorism can “éliminer toute réflexion politique sur les pratiques des états occidentaux” which could provoke such attacks (2002: 46). Rephrasing events in terms of conflicts restores the antagonisms that discourses of victimhood neutralise, and allows the potential formation of a political subject to emerge.

Therefore although perhaps historically one could argue that Rousset’s analysis is “partiellement obsolète” in its account of the Holocaust (Wieviorka 1997: 10), *Lignes* asserts that it remains politically useful to restore a universal response to genocide. A key figure in this shift is Alain Brossat, who has had a hand in “la plupart des numéros depuis 2000” (Surya 2007c: 44), and helped to organise the *colloque* on Rousset which made up the bulk of that issue. Crucially, in 1996 he published *L’Épreuve du désastre* in which he returned to Arendt and Foucault to delineate universal, rather than particular ways to approach twentieth-century catastrophes.

One of Brossat’s key concerns is the “élément stratégique” of discourses of victimhood (Brossat 1996a: 16). Controversially, he argues that memorialising discourses focusing on the Jewish specificity of the Holocaust tend to treat the “camps palestiniens” as “en dehors du sujet”, whereas Brossat wishes to maintain the link (20). Brossat argues that an exclusive focus on the Holocaust continues to legitimate the domestic policies of Israel which, he argues, violate international law. Silverman calls Brossat’s position “fairly extreme” (2013: 20); for Carolyn Dean the fact that Brossat calls Jewish memory “an ideology of genocide” is a position so extreme it can only stem from a deep-seated anti-Semitism (2006: 71-73). Brossat’s stance is severe, and when read within Dean’s wider presentation of discourses of ‘exorbitant’ Jewish memory one can see why his “rhetorical hammering” seems excessive (69). Yet all of the examples from Brossat that Dean cites are explicitly tied to a critique of Israel’s policies concerning the Palestinians, and so are related to a specific political antagonism. Médecins sans frontières (MSF) argued in their 2002 report *Chroniques Palestiniennes* that “le discours victimaire – victimes du terrorisme palestinien ou de la colonisation israélienne selon les camps – occupe une place centrale dans les propagandes guerrières” (Fassin 2004: 85): this lends credence to Brossat’s argument, as a reasonably balanced report also criticises Israel for extracting political capital from discourses of victimhood. Yet notably Brossat criticises only Israel for this, not the Palestinians, and so he is also explicitly taking sides in this conflict.

However, like Rousset, Brossat's focus in the book is much wider than just the Holocaust, analysing a wide array of genocidal practices as suggested in the previous chapter. In France, Brossat blames the cynical mobilisations of totalitarian discourse on "la houlette des 'nouveaux philosophes'" rather than the general Jewish population (1996a: 122), and he belongs to a universalist radical left which vehemently critiques any form of *communautarisme*, including feminism and gay rights activism (see the Conclusion for more). Brossat does not, then, simply target Jewish memory, and his basic argument is similar to Silverman or Lagrou's above; his political stance makes his rhetoric more polemic, yet that his arguments remain consistent both in the case of Israel and when faced with other genocides suggests that one cannot so quickly reduce his position to being the result of a latent anti-Semitism: even Claude Lanzmann, critical of Brossat's "antisionisme rabique", notes that he is "insoupçonnable d'antisémitisme" (1998: 225).

In a moment in which securitisation discourses were seen as suppressing political debate, *Lignes* therefore looked to discursive strategies that could refocus conflict. Challenging the growing recourse to the status of the victim, the *vainqueurs/vaincus* binary both restored a polemic polarity and allowed the *revue* to articulate issues of economic precariousness alongside more evidently geo-political issues such as genocide, statelessness and immigration. More broadly, Rousset's universal politics can be seen as a more Marxist version of Bataille's twin aims to combat liberal democracy and fascism. Whilst the *revue* welcomes a more militant trajectory in its second series, then, its general political outlook remains roughly comparable. The particularly sensitive nature of the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians continued to elicit polemic responses, and the Conclusion addresses this issue further. The attention of the *revue* then turned back towards more domestic affairs, and the rising use of retention centres in Europe.

### **Exceptional Legality: Rebuilding Camps**

*Lignes'* insistence on a universally orientated political present over memorialising discourses is re-enforced by the reappearance of camps, with continuities and discrepancies, in the contemporary period. *Les Étrangers indésirables* (May 2008) highlights the rising utilisation of Centres de rétention administrative (CRAs) in France, holding spaces for migrants which, technically not part of the national territory, become non-places characterised by "l'absence de droits de la personne" (Brossat 2008: 6). CRAs have rarely been discussed in the mass-media, having been "longtemps cachés et mal connus" (Enjolras

2010: 219), and so this *Lignes* issue is a paradigmatic example of a *revue*'s ability to raise awareness of obscured debates whilst placing them in a detailed contextual and theoretical framework.

In 1974, a disused warehouse in Arenc, Marseille, was found to be housing an illegal detention centre clandestinely run by the French State. A campaign successfully closed what was widely seen as a 'camp', yet this paradoxically inspired the development of legal frameworks to legitimise detention centres: Giscard was unable to implement the legislation, but Mitterrand passed it in 1981 and *centres* opened in 1983 (Richard and Fischer 2008: 586). To quell opposition, the PS emphasised that these facilities would "be respectful of 'civil liberties'" and so represented "progress for deportees' rights" (587). This marked the end of the Socialists' liberal approach to immigration, and cemented the governmental logic that the "successful integration" of legal immigrants required "the repression and deportation of the undocumented ones" – henceforth, "the legitimacy of border control [...] was taken for granted" (587). Lexical shifts were enacted to make such processes appear more acceptable. In 2001 the word *rétenion* rather than *détention* was adopted, and in 2004 the EU undertook "une décision politique explicite" to avoid using the word "camps" (Valluy 2010: 181). There has also been an international increase in the use of the term *déplacé* instead of *refugié* (globally, there are now 13 million 'refugees' and 50 million 'displaced persons'): states have no legal obligation to shelter displaced persons, facilitating their removal from the territory (Vollaire 2008: 42).

The French state traded increased legality and better conditions for tighter immigration controls and securitisation measures. In 2005 they introduced "a more detailed list of the minimal facilities required of all *centres de retenion*", but also made them "more openly repressive" by authorising the retention of families "and making it harder for confined asylum seekers to formulate their claims from a centre" (Richard and Fischer 2008: 590). Consequently, "independent monitoring and transparency" seemed to guarantee that rights were being respected, but also enabled "the whole deportation process to become massive and thoroughly repressive", the number of camps increasing exponentially (591). The participation of independent agencies helped to normalise such procedures. The organisation Cimade was formed as a protest group demanding Arenc's closure, but from 1983 they were consulted on the construction of legal centres and became "part of their enforcement" (588); as governmental aids, Cimade "accepted the principle of border control" and the "deportation of illegal migrants", blunting their contestatory function (588). Cimade do provide important legal services for migrants and critically monitor conditions, *Lignes* highlighting their

explosive report in 2006 in which they described the “*transformation de ces lieux en camps*”, a bold and shocking comparison (Brossat 2008: 5). As one of few agencies allowed inside CRAs, they are an important source of information and a check on governmental powers. Yet their participation gives these obscure centres the appearance of transparency and ethical probity: describing a ‘risk society’, Ulrich Beck argues that, by establishing “a system of rules” for dealing with “risks and securities”, harm is supposedly minimised, and any nefarious effects that result are considered a socially acceptable risk (Beck 1992: 99). On an organisational level, the governmental co-option of Cimade mirrors Sami Nair’s shifting position after becoming a government spokesperson and ‘responsibilised intellectual’. By contrast, *Lignes* contests the notion that the existence of such camps is justifiable.

Governments also attempt to circumvent the legal frameworks they were compelled to install. Globally, there has been an increased use of “*ad hoc* detention practices, ‘long tunnels’ and remote locations”, spatially separating detainees “from the services that guarantee their rights” (Martin and Mitchelson 2009: 466). In France, small, temporary and mobile *locaux de rétention* have developed alongside CRAs, raising many of the same problems as Arenc in the 1970s: as “there is no official list of these places” it is difficult “for a deportee’s family, friends or legal counsel to assist him” and frequently “the detainee has no access to a phone, nor [...] lawyers or medical help as is mandatory by law” (Richard and Fischer 2008: 592). As Vollaire argues in *Lignes*, as these “cachés” centres often go unreported there is a relationship between the ostentatious “libéralisation” of detention practices and “leur opacification”, replaying the slippery dynamic between transparency and opacity noted in financial capitalism (2008: 43-5). As well encouraging non-EU nations to securitise their borders, organisations such as Frontex became another key concern. As *Lignes* argue, Frontex have exceeded their mandate as information providers and now undertake policing operations outside of the EU: in one example, a Senegalese man planning to enter Europe clandestinely was arrested by Frontex in Senegal whilst “encore citoyen de son État”, eroding both Senegal’s national sovereignty and criminalising this individual before any illegal activity was committed (Sossi 2008: 135). Frontex is symptomatic of an increasing “agencification” at an EU level: agencies are “efficient” as they allow “technocratic decision-making in relative remoteness”, often free from the constraints of parliamentary debate or democratic approval (Riekmann 2008: 22). Human rights have been “perceived to be underrepresented in the agency’s mandate”, and to date “NGOs experience difficulties in scrutinising Frontex’s actions” (31). On such grounds, the efficacy of humanitarian intervention seems limited without broader political pressures being brought to

bear. Against an administrative allocation of human rights, perceived as ineffectual or simply abused by the authorities, this chapter later discusses Rancière's theory of the performative assumption of rights by political actors. First, however, the shifting legal boundaries produced by securitisation is analysed by *Lignes*. "D'exceptionnel, le placement d'étrangers en situation irrégulière en CRA [...] devient routinier" (Brossat 2008: 5): they are a paradigmatic use of what Agamben theorises as legalised states of exception.

Antelme, Blanchot and Mascolo's *refus* still tacitly assumed that the democratic population could effect change, and that the intellectual retained a symbolic weight. For Brossat, via Rousset, contemporary regimes can evacuate popular sovereignty and democratic legitimacy with the extensive use of exceptional measures. Brossat names this tendency "le *démocide*, le meurtre du peuple politique" (2000b: 25), and in such circumstances intellectual refusal alone seems increasingly impotent. Conversely, exploring this paradigm shift Giorgio Agamben became an "intellectual star" with *Homo Sacer* (1998), and his radicalisation of Schmitt and Foucault in *State of Exception* (2005) resonated with many scholars (Lemke 2011: 53). *Lignes* was quick to examine this later work following its Italian publication and French translation in 2002, and whilst its value was underscored, between Brossat, Maria Muhle and Jacques Mucchielli *Lignes* anticipated the critiques of Anglophone scholars such as Dillion (2008) and Nealon (2008) who find the late Foucault a more flexible thinker. For *Lignes*, it is Foucault who helps them situate the emergence of retention centres within a framework of neo-liberal globalisation, and also provides a more active sense of agency in response.

As Agamben noted, exceptional measures are normally instituted during "periods of political crisis", but increasingly they have become "the dominant paradigm of government" (Agamben 2005: 1-2). If "terminology is the properly poetic moment of thought", by highlighting the 'State of Exception' as a paradigmatic term he precisely named a contemporary global phenomena (4). Such explicit naming is doubly useful when exceptional measures become normalised. For example, in their *Lignes* monograph, Harvey and Volat show how sections of the USA PATRIOT Act, an exceptional raft of measures which contravene the U.S. Constitution's 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> amendments, had become "permanentes" or indefinitely extended (2006: 25-6): although they argue that such normalisations mean that the term 'exception' "peut perdre son sens" (119), as Mucchielli argues when exceptional measures become the rule, such poetic or "hyperbolique" figurations can help focus resistance on the encroachment of illiberal practises into daily life (2003: 19).



Agamben's major achievement was to bring the banalisation of securitisation sharply into focus.

Yet *Lignes* found Agamben's approach too totalising. Whilst Brossat cautions against seeing CRAs as identical to concentration camps, Agamben focuses on the "continuités" (Brossat 2008: 18). Agamben explicitly took Foucault to task for the absence of the Holocaust or totalitarianism in his work, noting that he "never dwelt" on these "exemplary places of modern biopolitics" (1998: 4). Brossat agrees that Foucault's analyses tend to stop "au bord de la catastrophe", demonstrating instead the governmental mechanisms that tend towards totalitarian measures (1996a: 162). Yet this does not make Foucault's thought incapable of accounting for such extremes. As Nealon clarifies, a focus on Nazi camps would be "an 'expensive' site of analysis for Foucault" as it could give the impression that power is "inherently totalising", an "abomination pure and simple" (2008: 100). Whilst power can be this, the later Foucault on biopolitics, rather than mid-career works such as *Surveiller et punir* (1975), generally emphasised the productive, positive aspects of power relations *as well as* the negative: this Foucault is seen as "a thinker of subjectivity, rather than as a thinker of power" (Nealon 2008: 1). Avoiding the Holocaust as representative of exceptional measures could then be seen as a strategic decision: Foucault is less interested in "ontologising" than "material practices", and as such a representation of biopolitics in which resistance remains possible was more attractive to him (Dillon 2008: 167).

By contrast, Agamben mined the Roman figuration of *homo sacer* as both the excluded nomad and the source of sovereign power to argue that the state of exception is foundational, implicit in all democracies and the tendential extremity of all power. In *Lignes*, Muhle notes that making this archaic example "l'origine transcendantale" (2002: 182) of all juridical law means that Agamben sees only one "seule structure se répétant dans tous les moments d'exception" (185). For Foucault there are "deux régimes de droit, souverain et biopolitique", of which only sovereign law draws its power from the exception: other *dispositifs* are available to nation states (Brossat 2008: 19). Towards the end of his life Foucault also began taking economics into account, which for Muhle has "un rôle indéniable dans les processus d'exclusion" (2002: 185). Biopolitics tends towards "le mouvement d'intégration totale de la société", attempting to bring all citizens under the umbrella of the welfare state; yet economic constraints on the nation limit the number of individuals that can be sustained by this system, and so there is "une volonté affirmée de rejeter hors du système" those deemed not worthy of protection – generally its most recent migrant populations (Mucchielli 2002: 165). This is where the use of retention centres comes in. As nation states

are increasingly incapable of controlling the movement of capital, they resort to taking a bigger hand in “la circulation des personnes” instead (Rancière 2011: 120). Against Agamben, then, Brossat argues that we are not still in Rousset’s “âge des camps” because CRAs are not driven by a “thanatopolitique”: instead, they are “points de stockage”, part of an economic logic demanding the “‘circulation’ des corps” (Brossat 2008: 5, 17, 19). This allows *Lignes* to integrate a Foucauldian analysis of CRA’s into an international economic framework whilst aligning it with Balibar’s class-based depiction of contemporary racism and the division of labour.

So against Agamben’s sacralisation of sovereign power, for *Lignes* it is Foucault who also allows resistance.<sup>25</sup> For Brossat, Foucault liberated revolutionary hopes both from an idealised proletariat, and also from the aim of capturing the nation state, allowing for extra-parliamentary forms of politics. Foucault saw new, micro-political struggles becoming possible with the appearance of new actors such as the “sans-papiers, demandeurs d’asile, chômeurs de longue durée” and “jeunes des cités et des banlieues” (Brossat 2005b: 222). Rather than “un front de lutte unique”, this results in micro-battles, Foucault’s participation in the Groupe d’information sur les prisons (GIP) being a key example (222). In this sense, Foucault appears to have had a belated legacy: much activism since the 1995 social movements, and intellectual theories of extra-parliamentary agency developed from the late 1980s onwards, seem to be indebted to Foucault. For many on the left, *Lignes* included, it was the activism of the *sans-papiers* that best represented this kind of micro-political struggle.

### **Jacques Rancière and the *sans-papiers***

Following Foucault, are stronger theorisations of political agency possible? Jacques Rancière and Alain Badiou played a significant role in *Lignes*’ second series, and their extra-parliamentary political approaches were positively appraised in a *Lignes* dossier (February 2006). As Hewlett notes, their theories are “particularly effective” as “a critique of the professionalisation, cynicism, elitism and depoliticisation” of Western parliamentary democracies (2007: 112). Both of their mature philosophies were formed during the PS’s conversion to neo-liberalism in the 1980s, disenchanting their attitude towards the nation

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<sup>25</sup> Mediating between Foucault and Agamben is Judith Butler, who thinks bare life alongside Agamben but, seeing sovereign power as performative rather than originary, she “refuses any naturalisation of power” and so also allows for the “multiple sites for resistance” found in Foucault (Loizidou 2008: 149).

state. Subsequently, “without activism” there is no “political event” for either of them (115). Yet “each of their systems is a way of enabling politics to take place, or detecting it and encouraging it where it does” (143), which makes them suited to *Lignes*’ re-conceptualisation of political agency. This section examines Rancière’s dissensual politics with regards to the *sans-papiers*, before moving on to Badiou’s theory of the Subject and *L’Hypothèse communiste* (2009b).

For Rancière, “politics is fundamentally about contesting political exclusion by enacting equality” (Schaap 2011: 23). Seeing “la démocratie formelle” as a regulatory, rather than emancipatory regime (Panapoulos 2006: 185), outside of the parliamentary process politics occurs when “those voices which hitherto cannot be heard suddenly make themselves heard” (James 2012: 123). This conception of politics “fits nicely” with Balibar’s theorisation of an active citizenship, and so was clearly appealing to *Lignes* (Mezzadra 2011: 135-6). Furthermore, in *Lignes* Rancière argues that that the figure of “la victime absolue” has led to the moralisation of humanitarian action (2002: 44). Alongside Brossat, Rancière therefore returns to Arendt to see if discourses of human rights can be repoliticised.

In the 1950s, Arendt also refused “mémorative et commémorative” discourses of concentration camps, asserting that they remained a perennial problem (Brossat 1996a: 59). Having been detained in France as an “étranger indésirable” (84), Arendt emphasised how much human rights depended on national citizenship to be secured. In *The Origins of Totalitarianism* she argued that it is refugees, those most fundamentally in need of protection, who are denied human rights as they have no recognisable citizenship through which to demand them. Therefore “the presumably sacred and inalienable rights of man are shown to be entirely alienable” (Balfour and Cadava 2004: 280-1). Human rights “do not precede political ones”, and discourses of victimisation will not restore rights to those deprived of them (281).

However, Rancière demonstrates that “une subjectivation politique effective” is not “incompatible avec le discours des droits de l’homme”: it is merely “le conservatisme de ce modèle victimaire” which needs surpassing (Crowley 2009: 164-6). Whilst Agamben essentialised the gap between sovereign power and those subjected to biopolitical control, Rancière sees this gap as precisely “the opening of an interval for political subjectivisation” (2004c: 304). Radicalising Arendt, human rights become “the rights of those who make something of that inscription, who decide not only to ‘use’ their rights but also to build such and such a case for the verification of the power of the inscription” (303). Subjects denied rights can create a *dissensus* in the public sphere by acting as if they had the rights granted to

normal citizens. As Panapoulos summarised in *Lignes*, human rights need to be seen “en termes de prescription, et non pas de norme” (Panapoulos 2006: 181).

In terms of humanitarian aid, if “those who suffer inhuman repression are unable to enact” their human rights, others can “inherit” them and “enact them in their place”, often without the participation of those actors they are purporting to represent (Rancière 2004c: 308). By designating some groups as vulnerable victims, and others as threats to be securitised, nation states can resort to human rights discourses to act without a democratic mandate. When nation states fail to protect certain groups, humanitarian organisations have increasingly stepped in, yet their appearance also signals “l’irréparable disparition des sujets et espaces politiques dans les sites catastrophiques” (Brossat 1996a: 107). By seeing those without rights as victims to be protected, consensus becomes “the attempt to get rid of politics by ousting the surplus subjects and replacing them with real partners, social groups, identity groups, and so on” (Rancière 2004c: 306). As we saw above, although one of the key groups fighting for the conditions of migrants, Cimade also tacitly accepted the consensus that migration was a problem, eroding migrants’ rights to claim citizenship on French soil. In paradigmatic terms for *Lignes*, Rancière calls “consensus” the transformation of “la politique en police” (2002: 41). A corollary of the rejection of the status of ‘victim’, then, is a resistance of “la soumission passive à l’assistance humanitaire” (Agier 2004: 122). For thinkers in Arendt’s wake, such as Brossat and Rancière, there is a need for political actors to emerge in situations normally managed via ‘apolitical’ humanitarian intervention. Mucchielli calls refugees the “vaincus de l’histoire” (2002: 156), and it is the treatment of displaced and migrant communities in France that prompts the most urgent need to form political actors in the new millennium. In *Lignes*, Dollé argues that the “plus significative” emergence of such forms of agency resides in “la lutte de sans-papiers” (2006: 199).

If “politics only exists as the subjectification of a part with ‘no part’”, it is difficult not to read Rancière’s theory “through the lens of the *sans-papiers* struggles” as they are “the most obvious candidates to occupy the role” (Mezzadra 2011: 135). Immigrants in France are regularly examined by scholars as an exemplary case of going from being “passive victims” to “new, conscious social agents, capable of fighting for their own rights” (Longhi 2013: ix). During the 1995 to 1998 wave of social movements, rather than referring to themselves as illegal immigrants or *clandestins*, the term *sans-papiers* was consciously adopted as “a new identity that carries an assertion of legitimate presence hamstrung only by bureaucratic and procedural formality” (McNevin 2011: 104). Instead of hiding from the authorities, they chose to assert their presence, stating: “we are the *sans-papiers* of Saint-Bernard and we have

business in this building” (Schaap 2011: 34). In 2009 they created the Ministère de la régularisation de tous les sans-papiers, a symbolic move demanding mutual recognition from government ministers. French *sans-papiers* also participated in an open letter in which they affirmed themselves as positive social “protagonists” rather than “victims” (McNevin 2011: 112-3). Crucially, they also began contesting discourses of integration. In the Republican framework, the onus is on the immigrant to learn French and to assume traditional customs (Geisser and Soum 2012: 53). Increasingly, however, demonstrations organised by *sans-papiers* were “marked by a distinct cultural presence that includes foreign-language placards, music, dress, and performance” insisting on “both cultural difference *and* belonging” (McNevin 2011: 107). They pushed “the symbolic parameters” of French society, demanding not just the right to become assimilated, but to dynamically affect the social fabric of France (107). As Rancière argues in *Lignes*, it is normally up to the State “de décider qui appartient ou n’appartient pas à la classe de ceux qui ont le droit d’être ici”, essentially giving themselves “le pouvoir, en bref, de conférer et de supprimer des identités” (Rancière 2011: 122). The *sans-papiers* attempted to assume the ability to define which identities could belong to the national *demos*. For Rancière, as for Badiou, to *dire le monde* “n’est pas le décrire, mais le prescrire”, and these protests are an example of instantiating a new division of the sensible, rather than asking for it (Panapoulos 2006: 169).

This is the stance taken in the *appel* in *Lignes*, ‘Nous ne sommes pas des modèles d’intégration’. The state had offered a €3000 prize for an individual “ayant accompli un parcours personnel d’intégration” via an exemplary participation in French civic, cultural, economic or sporting life (Bouali et al 2008: 209). The signatories, including intellectuals, a Renault executive and the French rapper Saïdou Dias, refused the notion of exemplary integration:

Nous, issu-e-s de l’immigration postcoloniale, des quartiers dits “sensibles”, descendant-e-s d’esclaves, refusons que soient instrumentalisés nos parcours personnels, nos réussites scolaires, sociales ou professionnelles [...] en vue de mieux stigmatiser ceux des nôtres qui ont pris d’autres chemins relevant moins de ‘la bonne intégration’ (209).

Against instituting a norm of the ‘good immigrant’, they affirm solidarity with those who live differently – notably with both those who choose, or choose not, to wear a *foulard*. As well as regularisations, more radically this *appel* claims the right to subversive behaviour accorded to “n’importe quel citoyen ordinaire” (211). Under a regime statistically under pressure to expel

migrants, any acting-out of minorities could be used as a pretext for expulsion. By demanding the rights of non-normative behaviour granted to traditional French citizens, they are asserting their claim to equal citizenship in exemplary fashion.

This emphasis on the voiceless themselves becoming active agents undermines the traditional role of the intellectual, Rancière noting that “il n’y a pas plus de lien naturel entre la condition de savant et la cause de la liberté” (1997a: 120). A “tautologie inégalitaire” replaces a “tautologie égalitaire” when intellectuals attempt to tell other people what is in their best interest (118). Activists such as Olivier Le Cour Grandmaison, another member of the *Lignes* editorial board, have therefore attempted to play a more supportive, rather than prescriptive role. He published the collection *Douce France* in collaboration with the organisation Le Réseau éducation sans frontières (RESF).<sup>26</sup> As well as publicly revealing state practices such as the expulsion of minors, the RESF also aim to “faire de l’action directe: occupation de l’espace public, présence dans les médias, la rue” (2009: 9). Part of their work involves setting up support committees for each teenager threatened with expulsion, constructing dossiers of information, being a supportive presence in tribunals and physically intervening at airports to prevent expulsion. The largely supportive nature of the network refrains from enacting human rights on behalf of others, but encourages them to become political actors for themselves. Pierre Cordelier, another RESF activist, suggests that *Lignes* readers shelter children faced with expulsion with petitions such as ‘Nous les prenons sous notre protection’ (Cordelier 2008: 165). Article L622-1, passed in 2005, made it illegal for anyone to provide direct or indirect aid to someone entering, staying or going through France illegally: as Longhi argues, “even solidarity has become a real crime” (2013: 56). Cordelier encourages people to inform the government that they have housed “un enfant et sa famille sans titre de séjour pour leur permettre de rester en France” (Cordelier 2008: 167). In such instances, the activist stands up for their own right to practices of civil disobedience in the face of legal restrictions they find repressive, whilst providing an opportunity for *sans-papiers* to legally contest their own participation in the Republic.

However, the *sans-papiers* soon “bumped up against” the “power of global capitalism”, an obstacle that they “have not been entirely successful in challenging” (Ticktin 2011: 44). Subsequently, if for Rancière the *sans-papiers* represent “exemplary political action” (Schaap 2011: 39), and “irregular migrants” have become “central to the construction and transformation of citizenship” (Mezzadra 2011: 122), does this failure have ramifications

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<sup>26</sup> See <http://www.educationsansfrontieres.org/> [accessed 02 August 2014]

for Rancière's theory? McNevin notes that whilst many of the *sans-papiers* initiatives have had positive results (regularisations), "their activism works to contest citizenship in only the most elementary way" (2011: 115). Successful regularisations provoked the Sarkozy administration, and in response he introduced "even more restrictive measures" for those entering the country (Longhi 2003: 68). Alongside trade unions such as the Confédération générale du travail (CGT), by shifting the debate on the terrain of labour and demonstrating the *sans-papiers*' "market value", regularisations occurred for workers "in industries with specified labour shortages" yet this therefore legitimated the neo-liberal consensus that immigration is otherwise an unacceptable socio-economic burden (McNevin 2011: 111): thus the citizenship they acquired remains "an essentially *commercial* citizenship" (Mezzadra 2011: 128). Mezzadra emphasises that there "is no capitalism without migration" (125), and the existence of "clandestine" employment in the "informal economy [...] is in many aspects emblematic of the present phase of globalisation" (131). As Ticktin recounts, workers such as 'Ahmad' have claimed that it is "so much easier to find work on the black market" and that, once they "have papers", finding work becomes impossible (2011: 43). Therefore as *Lignes* emphasises the economic nature of CRAs, Mezzadra argues that contemporary regimes do not solely desire the "*exclusion*" of migrants, but instead seek to "*exploit* the elements of excess": by maintaining migrants in a state of illegality, states can undertake "a process of *differential inclusion*" (2011: 131), regularising an economically acceptable amount of exceptional workers to maintain a cheaper reserve army of illegal labour.

The *sans papiers*, then, have often been a privileged example for intellectuals and scholars, *Lignes* included, partly because of the radical challenge they pose to citizenship as above, but also because they seemed to promise a form of effective action. However, the "exclusive focus on the struggles of irregular migrants" has been accused of ignoring the problems of "'regular' migrants" (Mezzadra 2011: 124): therefore, if politics is "la production d'un *peuple* qui est différent du peuple qui est vu, dit, compté par l'État" (Rancière 1997b: 43), the amelioration of the lives of those counted by the state needs to find some other outlet, presumably within the policing operation of parliamentary democracy. This perhaps signals the limit to Rancière's conception of eruptive politics, in which hitherto unaccounted for groups demand recognition; often, such groups can be integrated without fundamentally changing the structure of this order, preventing profound political change. Nation states are operating within an internationalised neo-liberal framework in which immigration is widely agreed to be an economic burden. As many of the above examples suggest, local activist successes often merely displace the problem: an amelioration of the

conditions in CRAs encouraged the state to increase the unmonitored use of mobile *locaux de rétention*, and to pressure extra-European states to tighten border controls; and the regularisation of *sans papiers* led to tougher entry requirements for other migrants and re-enforced the *précarisation* of cheap labour desired by contemporary firms. The micro-political struggles of activists and intellectuals have undoubtedly aided a minority of people to become political actors and take more active control over their immediate surroundings and livelihood. Yet Crowley argues that it is “urgent de dénoncer la *production* de la *déchéance* comme technique de domination” (2009: 159), which is a wider task than such actions can undertake in isolation.

Intellectual activity has traditionally attempted to bridge this gap. Rancière does also argue that “un discours théorique est toujours en même temps une forme esthétique, une reconfiguration sensible des données sur lesquelles il argumente” (2006b: 164); there is a balance to be struck, then, between not speaking for others and potentially useful cultural interventions in which dominant political narratives are displaced. More broadly, Emmanuel Renault describes twin intellectual activities as being the critique of specific neo-liberal structures alongside presenting the conditions of daily life of those who suffer from the system (2008: 119), which *Lignes* undertakes in various ways: for example, by analysing the “absence” of “habitable” locations due to the privatisation of public space (Dollé 2009: 84), or interviewing factory workers to understand the pressures of precarious employment (Klingberg 2004: 113). They can also combat stigmatisation, deflating ‘common sense’ arguments of the kind that there is simply no room for greater immigration: Mucchielli notes that immigrants make up just 3.4% of the EU population, which hardly conveys the exaggerated socio-economic burden they are often made out to be (2002: 161). *Lignes* also records and distributes useful information: the issue on CRAs cites Article L.511-4 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Children which states that “l’étranger mineur ne peut pas faire l’objet d’une mesure de reconduite à la frontière”, before providing examples where children have been kept, and died, in French camps (Le Cour Grandmaison 2008: 28). Such information can be utilised by political actors in their own practices of resistance. *Lignes*, in its second series especially, invites specialists in a field, or those actively engaged in political or social movements, to contribute their interventions, shifting towards a specific intellectual model (for example inviting Vicky Skoumbi, editor of the Greek revue *αληθεια*, to edit the issue on Greece under neo-liberalism, October 2012, and the Algerian Seloua Luste Boulbina for *Le Monde Arabe*, October 2011). Rousset again is perhaps the paradigmatic figure, arguing in his letter to former deportees that they are “de professionnels, des spécialistes” of



the concentrationary universe, and so should put this specific knowledge to work (2000a: 159). As with Rousset's publication *Saturne*, *revues* can at least act as a minor source of alternative information, and attempt to orientate micro-political struggles towards more global agendas.

The obvious limitation of such an idealistic conception of *revues* is, of course, their limited readership, frequently less than a thousand subscribers, most of whom often share the political outlook of the publication. Furthermore, Ticktin notes that the *sans-papiers* did articulate their struggle "at the level of the global political economy" and are attentive to North-South relations and "new forms of imperialism" (2011: 45-6): the problem was not their theory, but developing forms of activism that can challenge the global neoliberal structure. To conclude, the chapter examines Alain Badiou, a thinker who sees philosophy as having an active, prescriptive political role, and who by gaining a large, mass-media audience stepped out of the more restricted milieu of *revues* to mobilise *L'Idée du communisme* (Badiou and Žižek: 2010).

### **Alain Badiou – Political Subjects and Political Organisations**

Alain Badiou re-affirms "that philosophy's task is not just to interpret the world but also to change it" (James 2012: 156), and as a result produces a theory of the Subject as a powerful site of agency. Positioning his work against philosophies of "finitude" and the "cultural-political ethics of difference or of the other" (148), in *L'Éthique*, Badiou identifies "l'homme" with "sa pensée affirmative" and "la capacité positive au Bien" (2003c: 38). This is a deliberate shift away from the humanitarian aim to protect others onto a focus on the possibilities and capabilities of all people. Such capabilities are best represented when individuals compose a Subject. Following an Event, an absolute novelty which "breaks fundamentally with the prevailing routine" (Hallward 2003: 107), a new Truth enters the world which suggests "impersonal, rigorous, and universal" implications that need implementing by a Subject (143). A Subject, then, is not simply "an ordinary individual" (142), but the composition of elements "that respond or 'connect' positively" to the Event (141). Events happen within the four "generic procedures" of truth, science, art, love and politics (181). However, this chapter focuses on politics as subsequently one way of reading Badiou is as a philosophic account of activism, how people become "subjectivement des militants" (Badiou 2011c: 22). For *Lignes*, this poses two key questions: firstly, in a period dominated by the Sarkozy presidency, neo-liberalism and securitisation, what can be

achieved in the absence of an Event; and secondly, what role should the nation state play in politics? As two of the *revue*'s key thinkers, Badiou's debates with Bensaïd are revealing, with both producing several monographs for *Lignes* in this period.<sup>27</sup>

Bensaïd was clearly influenced by Badiou in the 1990s, arguing in *Le Pari mélancolique* that it is "l'événement politique, l'invention scientifique, la création artistique, la rencontre amoureuse" that "font surgir des figures inédits du possible", referencing Badiou's generic regimes of truth (1997b: 295). In a period of political disenchantment, theories allowing for the sudden resurgence of revolutionary activity seemed attractive to Bensaïd, but he became more sceptical around the turn of the millennium. He came to criticise Badiou's "celebration mystique" of the Event as miraculous, and argued that relying on such ruptures foreclosed the possibility of proactive political strategising beforehand (2001: 221). Laclau agrees, calling "religious conversion" the paradigmatic form of Subject formation in Badiou (2004: 132). For Laclau this conversion is too wholesale, as "social agents share, at the level of a situation, values, ideas, beliefs etc." that predate an Event and predispose their (non-)participation in the Event (135). Without these modifications, Hewlett argues that Badiou's theory of the Event "leaves the political analyst in a passive, rather ineffectual position" (2007: 58).

Responding to Bensaïd, Badiou notes that soon after the publication of *L'Être et l'Événement* (1988) thinkers such as Deleuze, Nancy and Lyotard had "rapidement fait remarquer" the insufficiencies of his "purement ontologique" account (2006a: 381). Hallward notices that, by 2003, Badiou was already describing how "the Subject 'appears' over time, over the course of a more articulated process" rather than a miraculous *ex nihilo* appearance (Hallward 2003: 145). This manifests itself philosophically in *Logiques des mondes*, in which the "nouveau principal" is a move beyond "l'opposition rigide entre situation et événement" (Badiou 2006b: 381). Whilst this modification of his theory of the Event occurs in the middle of a dense philosophical *œuvre*, *Lignes* allowed Badiou the opportunity to filter his altered theory through contemporary political affairs in a more accessible format. From 2002 onwards, Badiou's contributions to *Lignes* demonstrated a precise role for the intellectual in the absence of events, his articles developing into the *Circonstances* book series (an emulation of Sartre's *Situations*, and therefore also a return to the figure of the engaged intellectual).

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<sup>27</sup> See Badiou (2003a, 2004, 2005, 2007, 2009b, 2011b, 2012), Badiou and Finkielkraut (2010), Badiou and Žižek (2010, 2011), Bensaïd (2005, 2007b, 2008c, 2011) and Bensaïd and Krivine (2008)

*Le Réveil de l'histoire* therefore argues that an Event “n'émerge pas de rien” and that there are “des indices pré-événementiels” that can be traced (Badiou 2011b: 97). Once detected, if subjected to processes of “intensification, contraction et localisation” an Event can be forced, this being the work of “l'activisme militant” (98). As an example, Badiou draws on the uprisings in Egypt, Tunisia, Libya and Syria in 2011 known as the Arab Spring. Despite “la frappante nouveauté” of these uprisings, they are not yet an Event: the Egyptian and Tunisian rebels succeeded in turning immediate revolts, “plus nihiliste que politique”, into a “pré-politique” popular uprising (55), and this justifies talk of a *réveil de l'histoire* as these movements “ouvrent une séquence” that is distinctly novel (61); however, these uprisings remain “essentiellement négative” without “l'élément affirmative de l'Idée” to guide the process towards the radical novelty of an Event (63).

This emphasis on programmatic orientation is Badiou's form of political strategising. Crucially, his first two articles for *Lignes* both open with a section entitled ‘Méthode’ (2002a, 2002b), clearly setting out the intellectual's role. When faced with current events, such as the attacks on the World Trade Centre, philosophy is not concerned with “l'affect” of the situation, “mais du nom” (2002b: 10). A name “détermine un sujet” (11) (in this case those rallying to the US); secondly, it “supporte les prédicats”, such as “le terrorisme sera ‘islamiste’” (11); and lastly, it “détermine la séquence en cours tout entière”, as the War on Terror replaced the previous Cold War sequence (11). Badiou subsequently notes that philosophy should not generally accept “les nominations dominantes”: these are usually “sous le contrôle des puissances établies et leur propagande” and so represent particular rather than universal interests (11).

What follows is an attempt to ‘force’ the situation, not by “modifying the state of the situation so much as the language of the situation” (Legrand 2008: 2187). Like a mathematician trying to isolate different aspects of a problem step by step, Badiou's axiomatic thought is orientated towards simplification and binary oppositions, “the need to ‘split’ any given situation into two” (James 2012: 15).<sup>28</sup> As well as resisting the dominant names provided by the state, philosophy has to “reconstituer rationnellement la réserve d'infinité affirmative que tout projet libérateur exige” (Badiou 2002b: 34). One method is the designation of new names: rather than the vague emphasis on the “exclus anonymes” (33), the name *sans-papiers* helped to foster a new political subject. The next step is the declaration of “orientations politiques tout à fait précises et rigoureuses” (2002a: 24). These

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<sup>28</sup> This polarising, axiomatic approach being the contrary to Blanchot's hermeneutic, infinite questioning, as discussed in Chapter 2.

'prescriptions' are "ciblées et spécifiques" statements that not only demand a maximal sense of justice, but attempt to institute it (Hallward 2006: 208). Between 1995 and 2007, Badiou's 'Organisation Politique' (OP) mobilised the axiom "Tous ceux qui sont ici sont d'ici" to attempt to directly institute the kinds of active citizenship desired by Balibar (Panapoulos 2006: 181-2). Badiou has then a distinct methodology for intellectual activity: sequences are precisely named, subjects located, axioms developed and prescriptions derived that will give the necessary clarity for a directed agency to develop.

Some of the OP's activities seem to share the weaknesses of Rancière dissensual agency: despite their strident anti-parliamentarianism, many of the concrete manifestations of their theories rely on convincing the state to ratify, or not, their desired goals. Since the dissolution of the OP in 2007, through *Lignes* Badiou has been attempting a broader, international intervention by re-investing in the word *communisme*. As Bensaïd argues, *socialisme, anarchisme* and *révolution* "sont tous mots blessés", but the most bloodied word was *communisme* (Bensaïd, Kouvélakis and Sitel 2009: 11). Without such an orientation Badiou argues that "on présente la politique d'émancipation de façon purement négative" (Badiou 2011c: 11). As discussed in Chapter 2, Blanchot attempted to articulate a community around a constitutive negativity, for example via the logic of the *sans*. Yet Badiou argues that "tout cela ne suffit pas" (12), and so from the publication by *Lignes* of *De quoi Sarkozy est-il le nom?* he continually affirms that "le communisme est la bonne hypothèse" (Badiou 2007: 130). Given its tarnished reputation, however, Badiou aimed to divorce the word communism from the history of really existing Socialism. As Surya notes, Badiou emphasises communism as an *Hypothèse* or *Idée* representing the desire for "émancipation" (Surya 2009c: 54): Surya himself would prefer the term "anarchie", but concedes that this term has "jamais mobilisé les mêmes ambitions" (Surya 2009c: 55). In this sense, *communisme* "ne nomme pas un but final ou une idéale société" but names "la vocation universelle contenue dans une étape localisée de la politique d'émancipation" (Badiou 2011c: 11). As "une hypothèse stratégique régulatrice" (Bensaïd 2009: 16), it could provide the political orientation missing from such pseudo-Events as the Arab Spring and the *banlieue* riots. Despite the strategic differences between Badiou and Bensaïd, this level of agreement testifies to the timeliness of Badiou's agenda: compared to the muted responses to *Désir de révolution?* (February 2001), just six years later the prevailing mood had shifted towards a much stronger embrace of radical politics in *Lignes*.

More broadly, Badiou's mobilisation of *communisme* "tomb[e] bien" with both intellectuals and the public (Callinicos 2009: 28). *De quoi Sarkozy est-il le nom?* sold 60,000

copies, thirty times more than *Lignes* expected, creating the “phénomène Badiou” in the French media (Garuet 2009: 149). Badiou followed this success with the more programmatic *L’Hypothèse communiste* (2009b) and the three conferences on *L’Idée du communisme* co-organised with Slavoj Žižek and held in London (2009), Berlin (2010) and New York (2011). Badiou’s success was accompanied by a publishing boom in books on Marxism after the financial crisis (Guénoun 2010: 49), and this “opened the way for a reactivation of the strong link between radical philosophy and politics” (Žižek and Douzinas 2010: ix). By 2011 Badiou could, therefore, claim a measure of success for his endeavour, as “le mot ‘communisme’ retrouve sa place et son aura dans les débats philosophiques qui touchent au problème de l’émancipation” (2011a: 7). Badiou was using *Lignes*, and the subsequent media attention, to re-launch the affirmative Idea he felt was lacking in global political struggles, this being the most ambitious example of his intellectual strategy to tackle neo-liberalism in an internationally articulated manner.

With Badiou’s enhanced fame came an “encroaching and seemingly pernicious backlash” (Barker 2012: 79). Some *Lignes* contributors were hostile to his increasing presence: for Bensussan, Badiou merely demonstrated “l’idiotisme de la gauche radicale” (2007: 122); the Bataille scholar Bernard Sichère moved closer to Bernard-Henri Lévy and *La Règle du jeu*, denouncing his personal experiences of Badiou’s militancy (2010); Mehdi Belhaj-Kacem also turned against the authoritarian and dominating persona of “Père Ubadiou” (2011: 421); Marc Goldschmit accused Badiou of anti-Semitism following the publication of *Circonstances 3* (2005), and Amselle denounced his depiction of Israel as an “État colonial” (2007: 178);<sup>29</sup> and Nancy, although far from hostile to Badiou and participating in *L’Idée du communisme*, also seemed somewhat uncomfortable with the *revue*’s more militant orientation, resigning from the editorial board in 2007 and only publishing one article (in memory of Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe) between October 2003 and May 2009. Yet the most fecund debate for *Lignes* was “la controverse qui a récemment opposé Daniel Bensaïd à Alain Badiou” on the subject of the history of Communism and its strategic future (Surya 2009c: 55).

Bensaïd took issue with Badiou’s depiction of the history of communism as exclusively “stalinienne” (Surya 2009c: 55), characterised by a bureaucratic “Parti-État” that turned into “une forme inédite d’État autoritaire, voire terroriste” (Badiou 2007: 144). For Badiou, this meant that returns to twentieth-century models of Communist militancy were not

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<sup>29</sup> See the Conclusion for more on this important issue.

only undesirable, but “impraticables” (150): crucially, this ruled out the role of the Party as a political vanguard. Therefore whilst Badiou is often lambasted for “his defence of bloodletting, or terror” (Wolin 2010: 162), he now argues that any new communism has to be “non violen[t]” (Badiou 2011c : 20). Furthermore, as contemporary nation states are ruled by capitalist democracies, in *Lignes* Badiou rejects the idea that “le vote soit l’expression de la liberté des opinions” and stresses the essential “*conservatisme* du vote” (2002a: 14). As States are realistically controlled by a minority of oligarchs and vested bourgeois interests, the ballot box will only ever guarantee that everything “*va continuer comme avant*” (2002a: 15). Railing against formal democracy in the wake of Sartre and Mascolo, Badiou asserts: “Voter, c’est abdiquer” (30). Therefore for Badiou any new communist sequence will have to be “*totalelement étrangèr[e] au mécanisme existant du pouvoir d’État*” (2011c: 20): he rejects “trotskystes” such as Bensaïd who argue in favour of a “*Parti rénové et démocratisé*” (2007: 152). Notably, in *L’Être et l’événement* (1988) Badiou constructed a mathematical ontology in which the state of a situation (implying also the political nation state) is a categorically conservative force incapable of bringing about genuine change: developing his philosophy alongside an “impassioned reaction to the rapid move to the right on the part of the traditional parties of the left” (Hewlett 2007: 103), Badiou ontologised his frustration with parliamentary politics. In his stubborn resistance to consider electoral politics as a viable battleground, Bensaïd saw in Badiou “*les signes d’un désenchantement misanthropique*” (2008a: 350), and his theory of the Subject as in danger of lapsing into “*un pur volontarisme politique*” which overstated the political impact individuals could have without wider structural support (Bensaïd 2001: 238): Badiou clearly represents the return of the “*illusion héroïque*” to *Lignes*, one earlier figures such as Antelme and Blanchot attempted to erase from political rhetoric (238).

As a long-time figurehead of the LCR, Bensaïd firmly believed in political parties. He argued that “*réforme et révolution ont chacune leur temporalité propre*” (Bensaïd 2001: 203), and at present parliamentary democracy was the inescapable horizon of contemporary politics in France: “*Sans partis, pas de politique*” (2008a: 354). Rather than extra-parliamentary groups, such as Badiou’s OP, for Bensaïd only a political party can provide a framework for ensuring a political duration for ephemeral events, and conjugating individual trajectories within a broader, collective and effective apparatus. Subsequently, Bensaïd’s conversion of the LCR into the Nouveau parti anticapitaliste (NPA) in 2009 was an attempt to translate the growth of social movements into electoral gains. In *Lignes*, against parliamentary pessimism he argues for “*l’efficacité*” of a party of militants in nourishing “*les principes de la vie*

démocratique” (2008b: 100). Furthermore, whilst Badiou is often criticised for his abandonment of “la critique marxiste de l’économie politique” (Callinicos 2009: 29) and his lack of concern for social welfare issues, alongside Olivier Besancenot within the NPA Bensaïd had to develop concrete policy proposals. They aimed to “anticiper les besoins sociaux et environnementaux en les planifiant démocratiquement” (Besancenot and Bensaïd 2009: 24), proposing the nationalisation of the automobile industry, significantly raising the minimum wage, providing a roof for all citizens, heavily taxing petrol and relaxing intellectual property laws. Although *Lignes* did not participate in such policy debates directly, interviewing Bensaïd at the launch of his new electoral platform was an opening towards this sphere, maintaining a tangential link to this form of collective agency.

Bensaïd was not around to guide the NPA into their first electoral campaign, however, passing away in January 2010: *Lignes* issue 32 (May 2010) was dedicated to his thought, Surya calling him “un ami de *Lignes*” (2010g: 5), Badiou “*un compagnon lointain*” (2010a: 21). However, the divide between Badiou and Bensaïd on the value of the parliamentary sphere continued to split *Lignes*. Leading up to the 2007 election, *Lignes* collaborator Alain Jugnon published *Avril-22: Ceux qui préfèrent ne pas*, a collection of texts arguing against the very process of voting, with Badiou, Surya, Belhaj-Kacem, Sichère and Brossat participating. Jugnon’s article “Voter, pourquoi? c’est la question. Voter: pour qui? ce n’est pas la question” (2007: 7) directly fed into the *Lignes*’ inquests *Non pas: Voter pour qui mais: pourquoi voter?* (February 2012) and the follow up *Ce qu’il reste de la politique* (May 2013). In both issues, responses for and against democratic participation are split roughly fifty-fifty, even if many of those who do vote do so to “éviter le pire” (Sarkozy or the FN) rather than through an attachment to a progressive program of social reforms (Athané 2012b: 16).

Without Bensaïd, and harmed by the departure of the charismatic Besancenot, the NPA only received 1.15% in the first round of the Presidential elections in 2012, a dramatic reduction from the LCR’s 4.1% in 2007. Yet there was reasonable success for the Front de Gauche (formed from splinters of the PS and NPA), Jean-Luc Mélenchon taking fourth place with 11.1%. Hewlett suggests that this signals a return of “*le peuple or les classes populaires*” to French politics, and that “the politics of liberalism [...] have worn very thin” (Hewlett 2012: 418-9). However, Marine Le Pen’s FN was the real winner of marginal votes with 17.9%, and *Lignes*’ concern with the fascisation of French politics from the first series remains (issue 45 in October 2014 is scheduled to be *Les Nouvelles droites extrêmes*, the first to be dedicated to such concerns since 1992). Sarkozy was immensely unpopular with *Lignes*,

becoming the first President to have an issue devoted to him, the satirical *Dictionnaire critique du "Sarkozysme"* (October 2010). Yet a year into Hollande's presidency *Lignes* argued that not much had changed, the most frustrating being the continuation of "la politique de stigmatisation et d'exclusion des Roms" (Amselle 2013: 9): given the attention paid to the *sans-papiers* and immigration issues, this failure is privileged over Hollande's introduction of a 75% top rate of taxation and the legalisation of gay marriage. For Surya, this level of policy continuation undermines the notion of "l'alternance", and he questions what it would take for "un véritable 'changement'" (2013c: 5-6). This demonstrates that the disenchantment with the PS, originating from the 1980s, has not abated, and instead has led to a constant questioning within the intellectual left as to what kind of political agency is really provided from the electoral process.

In his introduction to *Décomposition recomposition politiques* (May 2008), Surya argues that this drive to locate new forms of agency is an attempt "pour aller contre le procès en pessimisme qu'on fait volontiers à *Lignes*" (2008: 5). As this chapter has argued, in their various ways Rousset and his Trotskyist inheritors such as Bensaïd, alongside Foucault and ex-Althusserians such as Rancière and Badiou, all develop political positions designed to emphasise the capabilities of ordinary people and their ability to make informed, effective and progressive interventions. The *sans-papiers* struggle was seen as one "of strategic importance at the contemporary conjuncture" (Mezzadra 2011: 137), both as a form of politics which conformed to Rancière's theories, and also one with a certain amount of success. Yet it could be argued that this kind of action has yet to address the "substance" of the problems of global capitalism; furthermore, critics have argued that seeing politics solely in terms of a "rupture" or "event" fails to address long-term welfare issues and structural inequality (137): governments offset regularisations by tightening immigration controls, and ostensibly liberalised retention centres whilst making the whole detention process more opaque. Bensaïd was one of the few thinkers in *Lignes* to address broader social welfare concerns from a practical, rather than theoretical or critical perspective, whereas the micro-political or dissensual forms of intellectual activism tended to have much more of a localised impact.

As a result, a form of stronger agency with a more focused political orientation was sought between Badiou and Bensaïd. Yet rather than the negatively constituted community of Blanchot, Badiou is here much closer to Mascolo's attempts to give the word communism a positive, affirmative sense to orientate action: Badiou makes this link explicit by referring to "le sens et les usages du mot 'Communisme'" (2011a), a clear parallel to Mascolo's *Sur le*



*sens et l'usage de mot 'gauche'* (2011), republished by *Lignes* the same year. Whilst Badiou's intervention was received with enthusiasm from some quarters, the 2012 election results also suggested a repolarisation of the electorate. The question remains as to whether this is a sign that the world is experiencing "les prémices d'un nouveau cycle" of political action (Besancenot 2009: 21), or whether this is a temporary phenomenon brought on by exasperation with the financial crisis. From this focus on agency, then, the following chapter investigates *Lignes'* response to the debilitating effects of the financial crisis, and the correlative impact the trials and tribulations of neo-liberalism have had on the aesthetic domain.

## Chapter 6

### Spectacular Domination – Art and Neoliberalism in Crisis

In a moment of (relative) political calm between the American invasion of Iraq in 2003 and the 2005 *banlieue* riots, *Lignes* dedicated several issues to re-reading important moments in their intellectual and cultural heritage. After *Theodor W. Adorno & Walter Benjamin* (May 2003), following publications traversed a legacy of black erotica from *Penser Sade* (May 2004), through *Nouvelles lectures de Georges Bataille* (May 2005), to *Pier Paolo Pasolini* (October 2005). Alongside more political concerns, the collection *Anarchies* (February 2005) also pondered the liberating potential of art and music, from Dada to rave culture. These issues form a counterpoint to the more militant orientation of the *revue* delineated in the previous chapter, often focusing on personal liberty rather than collective emancipation, yet they also raise questions of the autonomy of literature, especially in the face of neo-liberalism, and as a result build on the differing conception of cultural politics suggested in Chapter 3. Subsequently, whilst Chapters 1 and 2 largely depicted the interplay between aesthetics and politics between 1930 and the end of the 1960s, this chapter covers the period from 1968 to the contemporary moment. The *Pasolini* issue and Anselm Jappe's *Guy Debord* will be the starting points of a re-evaluation of the relationship between discourses of the crisis in contemporary art since the 1980s, the globalisation of neoliberalism and the financial crisis of 2007. At stake is the problematisation of what Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello call the "critique artistique" (1999: 266), and the possible articulation within *Lignes'* second series of a move towards a renewed "critique sociale" (257).

#### **Pasolini and the Exhaustion of the Artistic Critique**

In *Lignes*, Michael Hirsch notes that in the absence of a genuinely emancipatory program, for Adorno the best alternative was to "créer la plus grande distance possible entre les êtres singuliers et l'ordre existant" (2003: 98). Likewise, if Bataille's work is characterised by "la recherche de la plus complète liberté possible" (Trécherel 2005: 218), this is a personal, not collective liberty. Chapter 2 delineated *Lignes'* mobilisation of transgression as more ontological than social, Surya arguing that art intimately affects individual life (Rimbaud), rather than encouraging social transformation (Marx). Re-evaluating the historical avant-garde, then, Dada is privileged over Surrealism for its aim to

“dépasser la politique révolutionnaire” and promote “la liberté individuelle” (Margantin 2005: 154).

Chapter 2 suggested historical and theoretical reasons for this position. The acceleration of capitalism’s cultural production means that, for some, 1968 retrospectively marks the point at which avant-garde transgression became exhausted and social subversion was recuperated into the “promotion of alternative ‘life-styles’” (Bernstein 1991: 20). In *Lignes*, Rogozinski suggests that Bataille’s privileging of heterogeneity “n’avaient de sens que dans une phase primitive de la société spectaculaire, encore corsetée par des interdits hérités du passé” (2007: 137). As Jappe develops, in the post-war period the bourgeoisie more clearly stood for fixed values such as “religion”, “la famille”, “le nationalisme” and “une morale sexuelle oppressive et hypocrite” (Jappe 2007: 276-7). Subsequently, “tout le culte de la ‘transgression’” consisted in placing art subversively on the opposite side of these binaries (Boltanski and Chiapello 1999: 277). Yet as a result of the liberation implied by 1968, such polarities are now less evident: with regards to sexuality, in an era of “la fabrication industrielle du porno”, a Bataillan black erotica appears less transgressive (Rogozinski 2007: 137). Boltanski and Chiapello define two generic critiques of capitalism: the social critique, “qui dénonce la misère et l’exploitation”, and the artistic critique, “qui développe des exigences de libération et d’authenticité” (424). Herbert Marcuse’s *One Dimensional Man*, for example, denounced capitalism for providing “la *standardisation* et de la *massification*” (529), influencing the artistic critique mobilised during May ’68. Yet by recuperating the discourses of authenticity, creativity and anti-normativity used to critique it, capitalism diversified its production and undertook the “marchandisation de *biens demeurés jusque-là hors de la sphère marchande*” such as art, culture and sexuality (534).

In *Lignes*, Baudrillard expanded upon the theoretical consequences of the imbrication ‘desire’ and ‘revolution’ as both terms were subsequently “désamorçés, neutralisés, exterminés l’un l’autre par leur confusion sous le signe de la libération” (2001: 15). Since the 1980s both terms have circulated in “doses homéopathiques”, satisfying individual demands for personal gratification whilst no longer threatening the broader structures of global capitalism (16). This is in effect an account of the failure of the “accelerationism” (Noys 2010: 5) promoted in Deleuze and Guattari’s *Anti-Œdipe* (1972), Lyotard’s *Économie libidinale* (1974), and Baudrillard’s own *L’Échange symbolique et la mort* (1976). Combining the avant-garde embrace of transgression with the seemingly promising deregulation of societal norms alongside capitalist flows after 1968, these theoretical accounts claimed that a new, communal emancipation would be unleashed through this

nascent liberalism. However, accelerationism was in fact “in dangerous consonance with new forms of capitalist accumulation” (Noys 2010: 2), Lyotard later repudiating *Économie libidinale* as an “evil book” (7). Boltanski and Chiapello describe Western capitalism’s mutation from the 1970s, granting workers greater possibilities of self-management, encouraging creativity and privileging flexibility over security (1999: 257-280). Theories from the radical left in the 1970s fed into the reinvigoration of capitalism in the 1980s and, rather than emancipatory, *Lignes* would argue that these aggravated working conditions became flexible to the point of precariousness. Capitalism responded to demands for greater personal liberation and creative expression, Boltanski and Chiapello consequently suggesting that the artistic critique “est actuellement paralysée par ce que l’on peut appeler, selon le point de vue adopté, sa réussite ou son échec” (568). Life was indeed being submerged in art as the avant-garde had desired, yet rather than being shaken by this, capitalism appeared to be emerging all the stronger.

In contrast to this failure of affirmative accelerationism, in the new millennium Pier Paolo Pasolini suggests to *Lignes* a different trajectory through this period. Placed at the end of a transgressive lineage encompassing Sade, Nietzsche and Bataille, Pasolini also questioned how to “concilier la liberté créatrice” with “l’engagement politique” (Magnette 1994: 149). As with Sade and Bataille, for Pasolini “l’art comme la pensée sont affaire de volupté” (Curnier 2005: 72), but he attempted to articulate his sensuality with a wider, communist politics. This French re-reading of Pasolini’s legacy is presented as significant: Pasolini’s French contemporaries, such as Barthes and Foucault, were hostile to the Italian, and Magnette argues that French readings since have rarely been “probant” (1994: 141). *Lignes*, then, plays a part in a recent French re-evaluation of Pasolini, a key contributor being Alain Naze given his recent, extensive studies (2011a, 2011b). One potential reason for the French hostility was Pasolini’s frustration with the “anti-literary function” of the “many little terrorist periodicals” of the 1950s and ‘60s (Pasolini 2005: 127). Whilst subversive at the turn of the twentieth-century, an extreme formalism had now eliminated “the social (literary) values of the language”, rendering such works “insignificant” as vehicles of “protest” (128); Pasolini argued that the real “terror” or “taboo” no one dared to tackle in the 1960s was “reality” itself (130). Searching for an approach more conducive to a politically engaged art, Pasolini abandoned poetry and fiction to satisfy “the desire to use another technique [...] cinema” (132).

Yet in his enthusiasm, Pasolini perhaps overstates the power of cinema: rather than a mere representation, he affirms that cinema “reproduces reality” (Pasolini 2005: 133), Naze

associating this with “l’espoir benjaminien” that cinema could allow workers to directly present themselves and so generate class-consciousness (Naze 2005: 99). Pasolini initially embraced Gramscian notions “d’une réconciliation entre le peuple et les intellectuels” (94) through popular culture, producing quasi-neo-realist films such as *Accattone* (1961). Yet he developed a “frustrated awareness of a disjuncture” between his political conception of cinema and “the booming culture industry spawned by neo-capitalism” (Gordon 1996: 22). Rather than fully supporting popular culture, he began to see “the traditional family, predicated on patriarchal values” as the backbone of capitalist reproduction, and so imagined the unleashing of transgressive desires as one way of destabilising the system (Lawton 2005: x). His aesthetic stance began to owe a debt to Adorno, Horkheimer and Marcuse, despite the fact that “il a prétendue ne les avoir pas lus” (Magnette 2005: 14), as he tried to reconcile formalism with his socio-political concerns and injected aesthetic negativity into films such as *Teorema* (1968) and *Porcile* (1969). Throughout the 1960s, then, Pasolini can be seen to shift from Benjamin’s embrace of popular cinema to Adorno’s more critical stance of mass culture as a vehicle for the reproduction of capitalist society.

However, in contrast to accelerationist currents, Pasolini became sceptical of radical sexuality’s efficacy as a revolutionary force. Whilst acknowledging his previous support for the “sexual liberalisation” of 1968, Pasolini also warns of the “anthropological crisis” brought on by a newly affluent society, as values of “liberalisation” and “tolerance” are co-opted by capitalism to produce a degraded, atomised society (Pasolini 2005: xvii-xix). It was no longer possible to “opposer les ‘corps innocents’ à la massification culturelle et commerciale” as sexuality had been “injectés dans les circuits de la consommation” (Brossat 2005a: 48). He repudiated the ‘Trilogy of Life’ and created *Salò* (1975), a much more aggressive, virtually unwatchable film which compares sexual liberation under capitalism to fascism, intensifying his negativity to an unprecedented degree. Such an intensification also suggests both the end of the artistic critique and of an entire revolutionary sequence. Spaulding argues that avant-garde art “stood for everything beyond the law of value”, and its “immense labour of the negative” was an attempt to resist its subsumption into the market economy (2014). Hence, he argues, works had to “be opaque” to resist the recuperation of their aspirational “utopia” (2014). The coldness and cruelty of *Salò*’s form and content, however, seem devoid of any utopic hope. Furthermore, if the avant-garde’s artistic critique of capitalism was carried out with a “certain proximity to revolution” (Spaulding 2014), a similar intensification of negativity was also present with the “the staggering level of political violence in the long decade that stretched from 1969 to 1980”, with the terroristic emergence

of the Red Brigades, Weathermen and urban guerrillas (Kinkle 2010: 91). For Spaulding, the sequence of European revolutionary hopes and the avant-garde can thus be read as ending in 1979, “the year when the Italian state arrested leading figures associated with the nebulous phenomenon called *Autonomia*” (2014); the consensus of the 1980s was soon to settle on France. In these readings, the dual failures of affirmative accelerationism and an intensified negativity mark the exhaustion of the artistic critique of capitalism. Yet as Brossat insists, instead of “rend[ant] les armes” as many former *gauchistes* did in France, Pasolini experienced “un nouvel élan critique”, again re-orientating his analysis and approach (2005a: 53). Having detected this “definitive historical paradigm shift” (Gordon 1996: 288), alongside *Salò* Pasolini moved back to the novel form with *Petrolio*, this unfinished work allowing him to undertake “a series of deep incisions into the social, cultural, economic and political history of Italy”, mixing formal experimentation with a “hugely ambitious ideological critique of neo-capitalist modernity” (285-6). The novel is also littered with footnotes and meta-textual interruptions, as Pasolini meditates on the role of intellectual activity and aesthetic production in this new historical moment, probing their possibilities and limitations.

In contrast to Bataille, Pasolini is a model of the artist thoroughly comfortable with politically engaged works, mediating an iconoclastic desire for personal liberation with a necessary negotiation with cultural forms and communal responsibilities. *Lignes*’ reconstruction of this trajectory suggests both the exhaustion of transgressive aesthetics and the artistic critique, but also that a more acute understanding of neo-liberal economic mechanisms is necessary for a theoretically renewed critique. Furthermore, Pasolini is exemplary for his refusal to resign: his entire career was a series of experiments with the political analysis and effects cultural products could provide. Crucially for *Lignes*, although more of an “intuitive” than fully theorised argument, Pasolini also identified the new consumer society as a “fertile” ground for the rise of “neo-Fascism” (Ward 1995: 99).<sup>30</sup> Guy Debord, living in Italy in the 1970s, also argues that the country “résume les contradictions sociales du monde entier”, amalgamating “bourgeoise et bureaucratique-totalitaire” modes of social repression and prompting “la solidarité économique et policière” (1992a: 142-3) subsequently critiqued in Surya’s *De la domination*. In the *Lignes* genealogy explored in this chapter, it is then Debord who is best placed to develop Pasolini’s intuitions.

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<sup>30</sup> Cf. Chapter 4, especially Marmande’s claim that Berlusconi’s rise to power justified *Lignes*’ fears of a return of European fascism.

## Structural Alienation: Guy Debord, *marxiste*

Pasolini adjusted his aesthetic as a newly affluent society produced “des ennemis inédits (par exemple l’hédonisme)” (Surya 2005: 5). Furthermore, an old world had been “remplacée par une autre” (Valtat 2005: 181): Debord called this ‘autre’ *La Société du spectacle* (1967). Initially, *Lignes*’ reception of Debord was ambiguous. In the issue devoted to him (May 1997), Curnier emphasises Debord’s desire to destroy the historical avant-gardes; art had become autonomous and elitist, and so its “autosuppression” was necessary before art and life could be mutually reconstructed (Debord 1992b: 141). The activities of the Situationist International are depicted here as mostly ludic and destructive, another form of intensified negativity. Whilst admiring his “pratique de l’insoumission à l’état brut”, Curnier argues that nothing here remains theoretically useful (1997a: 101). In this issue, only Michel Löwy stresses that “*Guy Debord était marxiste*” with a fully-fledged critique of capitalism (1997: 162). James Becht agreed in a subsequent issue, and whilst he criticised Anselm Jappe’s *Guy Debord* (1993) for only re-presenting Debord’s theory without any theoretical advancements (1998: 138), Jappe’s later reworking of Debord’s Marxism provides *Lignes* with a distinct critical impetus. Therefore against those who see *La Société du spectacle* as “secondairement [...] un ouvrage théorique” (Kaufmann 2001: 119), Debord is henceforth taken up by *Lignes* as principally a Marxist, one who crucially allows a reconsideration of the concept of alienation.

Debord, Jappe argues, continues from where Pasolini left off: given the generally increased Western affluence, “what use was being made of the immense accumulation of means now at societies’ disposal?” (Jappe 1999: 4). Rather than richer, was social life not becoming poorer as the individual seemed “deprived of any control” (4)? Yet against the “sentiment vague” that there had been “une sorte d’invasion rapide” which obliged “les gens à mener une vie très différente”, no one knew what to do: experienced “comme une modification inexplicquée du climat [...] l’ignorance sait seulement qu’elle n’a rien à dire” (Debord 1992a: 16). Debord blamed this sense of powerlessness on *La Société du spectacle*, which created “le mouvement autonome du non-vivant” (Debord 1992b: 3). Yet far from a simple critique of new mass-media communication technologies (a frequent misconception which would lead Neyrat to argue that “le concept de spectacle est mal choisi” (2004: 110)), Debord deployed a Marxist analysis of the means of production. As increasingly automatised production rendered workers superfluous, new jobs were needed for the “organisation de l’arrière-travail” (1992b: 27). Meanwhile, to achieve the levels of consumption needed for

capitalism's survival, leisure time was also commodified: hence the marketisation of counter-cultures and creative industries as capitalism saw the profitable potential of the 'artistic critique'. The economy thus relied on an expanded tertiary sector, immaterial labour "façonne directement une multitude croissante d'images-objets", spectacularising production (8). Yet the automatising of production mirrors a second: that of an ever more complex global economic framework. Feelings of helplessness and disorientation are then "la réalisation technique de l'exil des pouvoirs humains dans un au-delà" (10). It is this "autocratic reign of the commodity economy" that Debord refers to as "alienation" (Jappe 1999: 11). Furthermore, as capital replaces human needs with its own need for economic growth, "decisive change" will never come from within the capitalist system, Debord concluding that alienation can only be resolved by a revolutionary restructuring of social relations and production (18). Debord's account here is clearly Eurocentric: subsequently, the emphasis on immaterial labour and an economy of rent over production came to define some conceptions of "le capitalisme tardif" as a wholly new form, but which has since been criticised as "tous les traits du capitalisme classique réapparaissent" when one looks outside of Europe and America (Badiou 2011b: 15). The emphasis in this section remains on alienation as experienced in Europe, but the global dimension of the debate is re-inserted in *Lignes* by Brossat, below.

It is of considerable importance to ascertain whether for Debord 'alienation' is a structural or ontological phenomenon. Debord was heavily influenced by Georg Lukács' *History and Class Consciousness* (1923) which, denounced within orthodox Marxism, was being rediscovered by heterodox thinkers in the 1960s. However, Lukács has been seen to conflate "alienation and objectification" (Jappe 1999: 26). Whilst in Marx only social relations became reified under capitalism as people treat others as if they were commodities, Lukács implies that "les individus eux-mêmes" actually become commodities (Bensaïd 2011: 87). Lukács has then been compared to Heidegger, as here reification affects the individual on the "ontological level of life" (Postone and Brennan 2009: 311). In *Lignes*, Becht describes this slightly differently, noting that confusing alienated social relations with objectification "confond le psychologique et le social en risquant de noyer le second dans le premier" (Becht 1998: 153). The implication of this conflation is that humans become alienated from their very essence, incapable of naturally spontaneous affect and relationships untainted by commerce. Artistic critiques of capitalism were often based on such a conflation, with autonomous art seemingly providing the kinds of authentic experiences impossible under capitalism.



Noël (Chapter 2) and Surya (Chapter 3) can tend towards an ontological understanding of alienation, whilst others in *Lignes* problematise this position. Bensaïd notes that this idea requires “une commune essence humaine authentiquement perdue dans les apparences du monde” (2011: 54). Nancy notes that having philosophically problematised “toute pensée de la propriété, du propre, du pur, de l’originaire ou de l’authentique”, this conception of alienation is put “en difficulté” (1998: 47). Boltanski and Chiapello concur, arguing that the deconstruction of ‘authenticity’ by Derrida, Bourdieu and Deleuze placed further strain on the artistic critique’s nostalgic demand for the emancipation of humankind’s ‘true’ essence (1999: 549). Jappe argues that Debord attempted to avoid this problem: if humankind *does* have an essence in Debord, it is “not given” but a constant process of becoming “understood as man’s self-creation in time” (1999: 32). Neyrat agrees, noting that an embrace of its own impropriety and therefore a destruction of sclerotic identities is “un désir que l’humanité comme sans-essence manifeste” (2004: 113): the issue with capitalist alienation is that it aggravates this desire by submitting it to an economic logic “sans limite” (107) and of “la pire violence” (113), demanding that people are “*formé, réformé en permanence selon les exigences de la production capitaliste*”: it is not humankind’s essence that is alienated, but its processes of becoming that are intolerably accelerated (111). However, Jappe concedes that for Debord “community is an authentic human need” for which everyone needs a “direct experience of reality” (36). Whereas for Adorno “pure immediacy and fetishism are equally untrue” (141-2), Debord does sometimes have recourse to such discourses of authenticity; *La Société du spectacle* encourages such readings by describing the spectacle as “le lieu du regard abusé et de la fausse conscience” (Debord 1992b: 4). For some, then, the Situationists “remained too attached to a suspicious romantic idea about moving beyond representation towards pure presence” (Rasmussen 2002: 349). Jappe and Becht deliberately downplay these aspects to produce a Marxist Debord shorn of his romanticism in which alienation is a structural, rather than psychological or ontological phenomenon. The “véritable anarchie de la circulation” dominates society’s ability to organise itself according to its own desires and needs (Becht 1998: 142), and come the financial crisis humanity will seem ever more powerless to control its own collective future.

Becht and Jappe both stress the importance of this reading of Debord in a French context in which the “young Marx” of alienation is privileged over political economy and the cultural “superstructure” is often considered independent of its material base (Jappe 1999: 126). Baudrillard is thus a target for both. In *Lignes*, Baudrillard had re-iterated his theory of the new “fractal” stage of value (1993: 35), claiming that “la sphère des capitaux flottants et

spéculatifs est tellement autonomisée que ses convulsions mêmes ne laissent pas de traces” (1990: 27). Financial capital was now in orbit, and so its crises would not tangibly impact the real world. Whilst Baudrillard was influential early on for *Lignes*, by the mid-1990s turn to economic questions his ludic approach began to seem inadequate. Becht argues that Baudrillard ignored “le matérialisme de Marx” and had only “une appréhension idéaliste” of how markets really functioned (1998: 150). The subsequent prevalence of Debord over Baudrillard in *Lignes* can be traced to this need for a more materialist analysis of financial capital in the twenty-first century.

As with Pasolini, Debord’s stock also rose the more his analyses fit the contemporary moment. In *La Société du spectacle*, he delineated two modes of spectacular domination: the *diffuse* mode prevalent in Western capitalist countries; and the *concentrated* form of Nazi Germany and the USSR. By the *Commentaires* (1988), however, the “*spectaculaire intégré*”, pioneered in Italy, is the globally dominant mixture of the two (Debord 1992a: 21). This does not connote a global victory of liberal capitalism over totalitarianism, but the integration of overtly repressive modes of population control into western democracies: *Lignes* would agree, especially regarding the increasing securitisation of immigration policies. Debord now described an “économie toute-puissante” that had “devenue folle” and had begun “à faire ouvertement la guerre aux humains” (1992a: 58). These are exactly the sentiments expressed in *Le Devenir Grec de l’Europe néolibérale* (October 2012), as Amador Fernandez-Savater states: “Nous ne sommes pas anti-système, le système est anti-nous” (2012: 156). For *Lignes*, the concerns of the markets have become disproportionately more pressing than those of actual people: in 2012, with 30% of the Greek population living below the poverty threshold, the EU aimed to “sauver les créanciers”, protecting financial institutions over people (Skoumbi et al 2012: 7). Rather than ‘false consciousness’ or ‘objectification’, this is the structural signification of contemporary alienation: whilst the needs of the market were relentlessly served, no proposed solution tackled the human cost of the crisis.

This chapter returns to a Debordian analysis of the financial crisis later, to then question whether the social critique of capitalism can restore some sense of agency in the face of austerity. First, however, it turns to the crises of art and culture in the intervening period. As Debord demonstrated, the commodification of leisure time led to an explosion of the culture industry. For Adorno, “high art” and the “culture industry” were “two halves of an integral freedom”, art defining itself however against culture (Bernstein 1991: 2). Yet as the artistic critique implicit in high art seemed exhausted by the 1980s, and the “programmatisation” of the avant-garde at an impasse (Spaulding 2014), a sense of disorientation and crisis

pervaded a contemporary art scene increasingly immersed in popular culture. Furthermore, with art seemingly less and less autonomous, the problematising of authenticity also questioned the quasi-romantic discourses of a pure *écriture*, and so for a different genealogy of thinkers in *Lignes* the submission (or servility) of aesthetics to politics became once again an option.

### **Contemporary Art in Crisis – Mass Culture and the Institutions**

Although presenting a reading of Debord shorn of its romantic aspirations, one could argue that Jappe is not immune from some of its residual, aesthetic implications. As art and culture can now rarely escape “*la dictature de l’économie*” as capitalism encroaches further into the creative industries, Jappe argues that this subjugation to financial constraints produces a generalised “tittytainment” lacking artistic merit (2011: 218-220). He compares culture and art to sweet and bitter tastes: sweet tastes are immediately palatable, whereas the body has to learn to love the bitter. Art should be “*dur et difficile*” to prompt a more sophisticated aesthetic response and mental cognition of the world around us (246). High art can thus have a positive, critical role, but only if definitively separated from commercial culture. Yet this reading is based on a similar kind of psychologism that Jappe tried to divorce from Debord: commodity fetishism here leads to the “infantilisation” of the population, propagating the “narcissism” of “*une adolescence éternelle dégradée*” (220-22). Until the market economy can be superseded, for Jappe high art is the best cure for such psychological disorders.

Problematically for *Lignes*, this position is identical to Alain Finkielkraut’s cultural conservatism, which also associates “the debasement of classical culture” with an “infantilisation” of the population (Silverman 1999: 99). Other thinkers note the rise of psycho-social disorders under neo-liberal capitalism: Bernard Stiegler links the rise of attention deficit and adolescent hyperactivity disorders to the “destruction industrielle de la conscience” by the “psychotechnologies” of contemporary media (2008: 103). Yet Stiegler also stresses that today’s technologico-cultural apparatus “ne fasse pas systématiquement obstacle” to “la formation d’une attention rationnelle et critique” (103). It is instead a “*pharmakon*” (19) with positive and negative potential, suggesting a more nuanced approach than dismissing culture as regressive *tout court*. For a stronger rebuttal, Bensaïd argues that blaming mass culture for producing a psychologically underdeveloped population displays “un superbe mépris social envers ce peuple de travailleurs, de consommateurs, de

spectateurs” (2011: 20). Boltanski and Chiapello agree, noting that whilst the “artistic critique” of culture seemed valid in the 1950s and 1960s in the face of the homogenous production denounced in *One Dimensional Man*, the return of such arguments since the 1980s tends to instead reveal “le rejet aristocratique” of a democratisation of culture and “le mépris pour des formes culturelles peu légitimes” (1999: 502). Adorno’s notorious ‘disdain’ for popular culture can be read as an extended, rational inquiry into whether art and culture were “blocking” rather than “promoting” emancipation and “social transformation” (Bernstein 1991: 2). Such theories seem appropriate to the period between the 1930s and 1960s in which art was much more widely believed to harbour revolutionary potential: in the current period, in which art is seen as having a “manque total de poids dans la vie collective” (Jappe 2011: 251), denigrations of mass culture in favour of a reified art appear more nakedly contemptuous. In *Lignes*, Dollé argues that this contempt was always a feature of such arguments: Adorno and Bataille’s conceptions of individual liberty as “une rupture” or “une exception” were therefore only concerned with “individus exceptionnels” (2002a: 169); and Marx, the Surrealists and the Situationists all nurtured “un robuste mépris pour les individus ordinaires” (2002b: 141). This produces a split in *Lignes*, many seeing Adorno as culturally “conservat[eur]” (Besnier 2001: 22) and arguing that Benjamin’s faith in popular culture placed him closer to “l’esprit de notre temps” (Hirsch 2003: 76). Others, however, celebrate the fact that Sade was “un horrible aristocrate” (Sichère 2004: 150). For Sichère, the pleasure of high art is often due to its rejection of mass-cultural forms, and this deliberate differentiation produces “une infinie fécondité” (158) as the motor of aesthetic experimentation. More aggressively, for Curnier culture “est tout juste bonne à jeter, et dans son entier” (2000: 60).

Notably, it tends to be those interested primarily in the canon of *écrivains* discussed in Chapter 2 who denigrate mass culture, and popular fiction is never discussed in *Lignes*. Essays on the plastic arts, film, and music tend to be more open to the political potential of mass culture. Marmande interviews musicians who argue that contemporary rap music has inherited jazz’s “grande puissance d’attaque” (Shepp 1998: 21). Mathilde Girard praises rave culture for providing “la forme contemporaine, révolutionnaire, d’une marginalité heureuse et volontaire” (2005: 143). Following a discussion of Greil Marcus’ *Lipstick Traces* and the “cash from chaos” commercialisation of punk (Marcus 2001: 17), Jean-Christophe Valtat goes on to examine “la fameuse ‘éthique’ indépendante” of American post-hardcore bands such as Fugazi, who encouraged a DIY culture to attempt to circumnavigate commercialised production and distribution, educating listeners in ethical consumption along the way (2005:

121). Although none of these accounts unproblematically accept commercial music as a means of effective cultural politics, they implicitly reject accounts that mass culture is unthinking, homogenous and wholly recuperated into capitalist ideology: increasingly, a mediated negotiation with the market seems necessary, but some degree of critical distance can still be achieved.

Rather than separating art and culture, others in *Lignes* desire a mixture of the two. Referencing the ethic of impurity elaborated by *Lignes* via Rushdie, Salgas calls for an art combining the poetry of the academic publisher POL with contemporary rap (1994: 97). Balibar agrees, complaining of “la circularité, et la stérilité” of arguments trying to keep art and culture apart, and also questioning “l’ambiguïté des regroupements politiques auxquels elle donne lieu” (1997c: 176): above, Jappe and Finkielkraut occupy the same territory and, as discussed below, in 1996 so did Baudrillard and Alain de Benoist. Yet Baudrillard’s contributions suggest that a critique of the institutionalisation, politicisation and commercialisation of art under the rubric of ‘culture’ is a more suitable target than cultural productions themselves.

The 1980s and 1990s witnessed a polemical debate over the crisis of contemporary art. Jean Clair’s *Considérations sur l’état des beaux-arts* (1983) launched the French discussion by defending “figuration” and humanism against abstract formalism and structuralism (Heinich 1998: 229). The debate intensified as detractors of contemporary art (such as the *Esprit* dossiers discussed in Chapter 3) defended “la Grande Culture” against an endless regress into “relativisme”, “la vulgarité” and “la bêtise” (Michaud 1997: 9): high art and European values were then pitted against mass culture and multiculturalism. Michaud notes the “perspicacité” of Didi-Huberman’s response in *Lignes*, which demonstrated the reactionary conservatism of contemporary art’s detractors who ended up gaining the support of a resurgent, nationalist right by associating mimetic art with traditional French values (22-24). The debate reached “boiling point” as Alain de Benoist’s new-right journal *Krisis* joined the attack on contemporary art in 1996 (Leydier 2006: 324). Baudrillard’s appearance in *Krisis*, alongside his controversial *Le complot de l’art* (1997c), associated him with the anti-art contingent; yet whilst Michaud argues that Baudrillard said “purement et simplement que l’art contemporain est nul” (1997: 13), a closer analysis clarifies Baudrillard’s position.

The main interventions in *Lignes* involved Baudrillard’s collaboration with Jean-Paul Curnier regarding Hervé Papaponaris’ *Tout ce que je vous ai volé*, exhibited in the Musée d’art contemporain de Marseille (the MAC). Papaponaris’ installation displayed objects he had stolen from others, yet it was the MAC’s director who called the police when another

artist, Jen Delsaux, attempted to retrieve his stolen property: the police sided with the museum. As Bürger notes, once museums accept subversive works as canonical, they “no longer provoke” (1991: 52): here, Curnier argues, the museum itself tried to play the subversive role. Yet whilst Duchamp’s urinal “faisait éclater la question de la valeur de l’objet d’art”, museums bestow value upon artworks by introducing them into the canon (1996: 195); hence the futility of this attempt at “subversion officielle”, Curnier arguing that contemporary art needs to abandon these “pseudo transgressions” (198). Baudrillard agrees, emphasising the travesty of aligning transgression with “la propriété privée et de sa police” (1996: 206). As for art itself, Baudrillard describes it as a hyperbolic mirror of our society, and in a world “voué à l’indifférence, l’art ne peut qu’ajouter à cette indifférence” (1997b: 16). Brossat responds by stating that “on croirait entendre Jean Clair” (2005a: 62), and Baudrillard’s position seems close to *Esprit*’s account of the dead-end reached by twentieth-century art. Yet Baudrillard’s argument was more about the atony of the contemporary moment rather than a specific assault on art which, “au fond, n’est pas mon problème” (1997a: 21); presenting an atmosphere of generalised indifference, superficiality and disorientation, he had argued that even political parties had lost “l’illusion de représenter vraiment quelque chose” (1985: 86). Debord would present this disorientation as the result of capitalist alienation: the consensual climate of the 1980s was exacerbated by the shift of the PS towards neo-liberal policies, producing the sentiment that there was no alternative to this form of macro-economic management. In this reading, the rapprochement between Jappe and Finkelkraut, Baudrillard and Benoist, would not be accidental, but symptomatic of a wider disorientation of art, culture and politics when faced with the automatisations of the economy and the alienation of human capabilities.

Furthermore, Michaud emphasises that the debate over this ‘crisis’ was largely undertaken by “étrangers au monde de l’art” (1997: 11). In *Lignes* Christian Boltanski complains that, instead of canvassing the opinions of artists, during the re-launch of the Pompidou centre there was “une volonté des organisateurs de les effacer” (cited in Mesnard 1992b: 155). *Lignes* attempted to counteract this somewhat, giving space in the *revue* to practitioners such as Boltanski (1992), Hans Haacke (1989), Heiner Müller (1999), Václav Havel (1989) and Jochen Gerz (2001), amongst others. Baudrillard and *Lignes* rarely, if ever, attack particular artists: it is the art institutions who are critiqued, in this example the MAC, but elsewhere the Pompidou centre’s proximity to private businesses, Jack Lang, and “la politique culturelle de l’État français” come under fire (Mesnard 1992b: 160). Despite an expansion of “the state definition” of “*Culture*” into “*cultures*” to encompass “diverse forms

of popular culture, from popular music to tagging”, Lang continued the Gaullist legacy in giving “stated-inspired cultural projects” a “national function” tied to a patriotic “construction of *la plus grande France*” (Silverman 199: 97-98): in *Lignes*, Lang was thus accused of turning the Ministry of Culture into a centre for “la propagande du socialisme libéral” (Lepage 1992: 190). Furthermore, the Socialists theorised “the intentional linkage of culture with the economy”, arguing that both worked best when promoting the interests of the other (Poirrier 2004: 302). For Lepage, the financing of ‘official’ artists, not to mention their reliance on private investment, neutralises “complètement leur capacité d’intervention” (1992: 196). Hans Haacke thus contributed by exploring the problems with the increasing privatisation of the art market and the reliance of museums on industrial sponsors: Mobil oil, for one, believed that only non-controversial exhibitions “attirent les foules populaires” (1989: 142). Haacke also notes that such a *doxa* may be disingenuous on the oil industry’s part: their association with the art world is an attempt to “neutraliser les critiques d’ordre consumériste ou écologique” vis-à-vis their own companies, and therefore it is in their interest to be linked to affirmative works rather than anything that challenges their enterprises (138). Such sponsorship has been described by Philippe de Montebello, former curator at the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art, as “une forme inhérente de censure, insidieuse et cachée” (142). This suggests that the biggest threat to contemporary art, rather than an increased proximity to culture, is museums themselves being increasingly subjected to financial concerns, hamstringing art’s negative potential, and what Osborne calls the new “affirmative culture” as governments and industries use art’s uselessness in strategies of national or corporate branding (2013: 21).

As a contextual example of this affirmative implementation of art as a quasi-social policy, Nicolas Bourriaud’s *Esthétique relationnelle* became “the theory of the 1990s” (Leydier 2006: 317): although not treated in the *revue*, *Lignes* contributors have criticised Bourriaud’s attempt to make art “utile” (Jappe 2011: 246) as “un art marqué par les catégories du consensus” (Rancière 2004b: 161) rather than “la logique du dissensus provocateur” (81). Whilst the above *Lignes* examples show capitalism co-opting art, Bourriaud provides a correlative example of art co-opting capitalism. Drawing on Debord, Bourriaud argued that our social relationships are no longer “directement vécues” and need to be actively restored (Bourriaud 2001: 10). Art, free from “l’uniformisation des comportements” (10), is the ideal space for this intervention as “l’aliénation” dominated the social field “partout ailleurs” (86). Art thus provides “ways of living and models of action”, establishing “links from within the community in order to enable resistance to ‘formatting’”

(Leydier 2006: 317). Notably, Bourriaud draws on the definition of alienation problematised above, in which capitalism suppresses authentic human subjectivity; the desire to challenge a uniform ‘formatting’ also seems more appropriate to the era of Marcuse’s *One Dimensional Man* than the twenty-first century. Furthermore, despite a vague anti-capitalism, there is little of a negative critique here. For Jappe, encouraging “les individus à être un peu plus gentils et conviviaux” is the extent of the theory’s political dimension, treating art as a “thérapie contre la froideur du monde” (2011: 246).

In describing art as an “*interstice social*” Bourriaud also ignores the increasing imbrication of art with political and economic interests (2001: 47). His discourse even becomes synonymous with neoliberalism, privileging the “réseau” as the paradigmatic contemporary artistic formation (85), group work, micromanagement and networking also being keywords of the new *esprit* of capitalism (Boltanski and Chiapello 1999: 155). Bourriaud embraces this consonance, describing the artist as an “entrepreneur/politicien /réalisateur” rather than a fabricator of works (2001: 112). Therefore Leydier argues that, although the 1990s was traversed by an “obsession” with “critical art” (2006: 318), an art-world assured of its left-wing credentials often failed to produce works that sufficiently probed the economic conditions of its own existence. As capitalism increasingly relies on immaterial labour and creative industries, “artistic labour” in fact “apes forms of service work in its performance of affect and forms of social provision” (Iles and Vishmidt 2011: 55). Relatively uncritical forms of participatory entertainment that produce a sense of authentic social interaction are precisely the experiences that capitalism wants to provide for consumers. As opposed to “the thesis that the dissolution of the borders between art and productive labour (or art and politics) heralds emancipation” (58), art’s critical capacity appears undermined by such a process. Dominique Baqué therefore argues that much ‘critical’ art is today “idéologiquement faible” and “naïf” (Baqué 2004: 32), making this the first time “dans l’histoire de l’art moderne [...] que l’art ne conteste pas le modèle économique dominant, à savoir le capitalisme, mais tente à l’inverse d’en épouser les lois de fonctionnement” (83).

Yet as noted, it is increasingly hard to avoid financial concerns and modern marketing techniques. *Lignes* investigate its own industry’s commercialisation in *Situation de l’édition et de la librairie* (May 2006), in which Mahfoudi claims that “un livre sans support médiatique est un livre mort-né” (2006: 195). The purchase of prestigious and respected French publishers such as Seuil and Flammarion by holding companies is seen as worrying, as concerns with “marketing”, “communication” and sales are reported to increasingly



dominate the decision making process (Pagès 2006: 56). François Maspero, himself one of the last “libraires éditeurs” (2006: 172) notes how the industry has become more precarious since the 1960s, but praises La Fabrique for remaining “une petite maison d’édition” with “une très forte personnalité” (176). Surya’s own struggle to maintain *Lignes* as a *revue* and publisher with a relative degree of autonomy was sketched in Chapter 3. However, rather than complaining about these circumstances, Surya notes that in reality this is “rien d’autre que le mouvement naturel du capital” (‘Lignes’ 2006: 6). With autonomy therefore harder to come by, a more canny and critical mediation with the market seems inevitable, rather than a puritanical withdrawal.

Under an accelerated capitalism, then, the distance between ‘high’ art and ‘low’ culture has become difficult to maintain, as both are subjected to the economic logics of either a state-sponsored democratisation of official culture, or exercises in inoffensive corporate branding. The neo-liberal hegemony installed in the 1980s, and the heightened structural alienation produced by an increasingly globalised financial capitalism, has left politics, and so art, disorientated. Examples above either produce a weakly critical yet general and unspecific anti-capitalism, or embrace neo-capitalist models of affirmative social praxis and participation. Given the stronger, militant stance of *Lignes* in its second series, the next section explores whether contributors such as Brossat provide a more political role for contemporary art.

### **Political and Ethical Art in Context**

In *Lignes*, Boltanski stated that it was becoming harder “d’être activiste” as an artist (1992: 184). Suggestively, just as Osborne blames the multiplication of international biennials for a more generalised “affirmative culture” (2013: 21), Boltanski states the importance of a local context: “J’ai horreur des artistes “internationaux”; je crois qu’il est très important d’être lié à une histoire, à des histoires qui forment autant d’histoires différentes pour chacun” (1992: 183). Similarly, Balibar noted that Documenta X supplied “*informations supplémentaires* dont il faut disposer pour en percevoir le sens” of artworks, from contextual background on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to a depiction of the New York art scene (1997c: 186). Václav Havel asserts that under Soviet rule, artists had “un rôle politique” with “un pouvoir indirect, certes, mais effectif” (1989: 14-16), yet this efficacy is more diffuse in a Western art-world so intricately linked with consumer culture. Political art, then, often

necessitates “tailoring oppositional action to local situations” (Sell 2005: 22), with some contexts proving more amenable to interventionist works than others.

The historical contexts of political art was the major theme of Alain Brossat and Jean-Louis Déotte’s 1999 conferences in Latin America, published as *L’Époque de la disparition* (2000).<sup>31</sup> Extracts and responses were published in *Lignes*, expanding the *revue*’s concern with global political violence and genocide. Papers explored the “enjeux politiques et esthétiques” of the ‘disappearances’ enacted by the military governments and dictatorships of Brazil (1964-85), Chile (1973-90) and Argentina (1976-1983) (Brossat and Déotte 2000: 7). For Brossat, twentieth-century genocides attempted the “disparition sans traces” of a particular population (Brossat 2000a: 53). Whilst not genocidal, these later ‘disappearances’ comprised of the abduction and murder of political opponents, bodies rarely being found and perpetrators generally unidentified. The continuation of this legacy of spectral violence for Brossat and Déotte marks the twentieth century as an *époque de la disparition*, and they identify “un autre régime de l’art” formed in response (Déotte 2002: 118): in *Lignes*, Déotte stresses that such a regime is less concerned with the formal probing of representational limits, but instead “questions ontologiques, enfin, modestement, des questions d’existence” (2002: 119). Déotte argues that former logics of representation implied the existence of an original to copy; without the presence of a model to mimetically reproduce, *disparitionniste* works rely upon “l’absence comme condition de possibilité de l’art” (Déotte 2000: 15).

As Déotte notes, Rancière questioned whether *disparition* really ushered in a new aesthetic regime (Déotte 2002: 115). For Rancière, *disparition* raises ethical questions, but “ce débat n’est pas esthétique” (2006a: 238): disappearance “ne produit pas une invalidation de l’apparaître” as previous regimes of art have had “stratégies artistiques” to represent absence (238-9). Nevertheless, Brossat and Déotte highlight the different political and representational stakes of art in different global contexts. Paul Ardenne demarcates two major configurations of a *disparitionniste* aesthetic: firstly, via figurative citations “on montre ce qui a disparu, on le représente en validant une esthétique des restes”; and secondly, an abstract approach in which “l’absence même d’une figuration plastique de la substance disparue redouble sur un mode métaphorique la réalité de la disparition” (2000: 247). The former appears more suitable in Latin America whilst disappearance was being used as a means of terror. During “l’époque de la politique de disparition, la culture cesse d’être esthétique comme elle le reste majoritairement en Occident” (Déotte 2000: 13). Against “une

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<sup>31</sup> This volume was followed by another, Déotte and Brossat (2002).

politique négationniste”, “l’art revient à l’image en incorporant des traces, des empreintes de disparus”, withdrawing from abstraction and returning to material, analogue technologies of reproduction such as photography (13). Chilean artists, such as Dittborn, Altamirano and Diaz, incorporated photocopies of images and documentation into their works. Subsequently, a double movement of public resistance took hold, as official statues and monuments were defaced, whilst photographs of those missing produced alternate histories across entire cities. In Argentina, the public representation of missing individuals became an “explosif” issue as subsequent governments tried to suppress such memories (Brossat and Déotte 2000: 8). 30,000 silhouettes were painted onto the walls of the public ‘Plaza de Mayo’ in Buenos Aires, and mothers embroidered the names of their missing children onto head-scarfs, assembling to march through public squares and creating “un cimetière en mouvement” (Mercado 2000: 216). Subsequently, as Brossat argues in *Le Principe d’amnistie* (March 2003), an amnesty is a manner “d’oublier institutionnellement, officiellement, que la cité s’est divisée en deux camps” (2003: 13): in such circumstances, political art aids memory to relocate “sa fonction polémique et non consensuelle” (24). Such a strongly interventionist role for art re-enforces *Lignes*’ desire to repoliticise discourses of victimhood.

Ardenne’s more abstract ‘disparitionniste’ aesthetic is placed more squarely in a European context, Boltanski being noted for his “conceptuel”, rather than representational interest in photography (Vernier 2000: 316). By blowing up and manipulating images of schoolchildren in *Le Lycée Chases* (1986) their faces became “anonymes”, some resembling “des cadavres décomposés” (316). Déotte argues that this “fantomal” quality makes this a “constatif” art, rather than one of “résistance”, Boltanski’s work tending towards representations of ontological fragility and operating on a more ethical register (2000: 27). Paraphrasing Nancy, in *Lignes* Déotte argues that such works highlight “l’essentielle entretexposition des singularités dans la communauté” (Déotte 2002: 120). Many of Boltanski’s projects involved aspects of memorialisation, Salgas arguing that artists preserve the memory of the Holocaust better than museums, citing Kantor, Beuys, Boltanski, Vostell, Opalka, Kiefer, Gerz and Lanzmann as examples (Boltanski 1992: 169). Yet he also notes that with Perce’s *W* (1975) and Lanzmann’s *Shoah* (1985) there is a shift to represent executioners as well as victims, and to pluralise the histories narrated. This moves memorialisation away from specifically ethnic or religious discourses, as previously discussed, towards a more universal examination of mortality: as Boltanski states, today, too, “on meurt comme des mouches” (1992: 175). Outside of totalitarian regimes where disappearance is used as a political tactic, then, the ontological aspect of *disparitionniste* art

tends towards an ethical register; as Claire Bishop notes, Western art thus accompanied the “ethical turn” which was “consolidated in 1990s theory”, drawing on Blanchot, Derrida and Levinas (2012: 25).

Whilst Levinas was not a major figure in *Lignes*, the 1992 Boltanski interview falls between the dossiers on Blanchot (September 1990), Jabès (June 1992) and Antelme (January 1994), chiming with *Lignes*’ early concern for the Holocaust and *négationnisme*. In the new millennium, however, thinkers close to *Lignes* such as Badiou and Rancière were at “the centre of opposition” to this “ethical turn”, and instead were in favour of “strategies of disruption” and “intervention” (Bishop 2012: 25). For Rancière, “le tournant éthique” simply means that art is “aujourd’hui de plus en plus soumis au jugement moral” (2004b: 145), continuing Surya’s disdain for the moralisation of French debate since the 1980s. The more militant tone of the *revue* accompanies such an opposition, and Brossat argued for a stronger politicisation of such works: rather than a monumental “*devoir de mémoire*” (2003: 9), he prefers the anti-monuments of Jochen Gerz which aim to “démontrer les faux comforts d’une mémoire conservatrice, pieuse et vertueuse indexée sur la monumentalité” (Brossat 2003: 24). In *Lignes*, Gerz argues that monumental memory “est une façon de désertier le milieu” (2001: 309), and that the Holocaust had been allowed to occur because “le peuple allemand avait disparu” (Gerz 2001: 309): the importance of an active citizenship can be eroded by a monumentality which implies that past events have no latent impact on society. Régine Robin subsequently praised *weiss 104*, the public washing machines in which “les Berlinois étaient invités à venir laver leur linge sale en public tous les samedis” (2001: 252). As noted, for Rancière politics occurs where there is “une communauté structurellement divisée” (2004b: 132), and art should partake in exposing and exacerbating such divisions. Thus in Europe, too, *disparitionniste* works can prompt a discussion over the political meaning of history and its impact on the constitution of contemporary society. Such works may remain less directly and effectively interventionist than their Latin American counterparts discussed above, or Havel’s dissident activities; nevertheless, this is art consciously in the service of political demands, and alongside the *revue*’s more militant orientation in its second series some newer contributors are much more comfortable with such politicisations.

Discourses of the end of the avant-garde and the depoliticisation of art are therefore shown to be Eurocentric. Political art responds to its local climate and historical context and, in regions of intense conflict or repression, works more easily take on an interventionist role. This places the structural alienation and political disorientation of Europe into an even starker contrast, and the stronger of political or ethical claims of Western works tend towards

Europe's conflictual past rather than its capitalist present, which is often met with a vague but unspecified 'critical' attitude. However, in *Lignes* Déotte suggests that a *disparitionniste* aesthetic could also function towards exposing the "spectralité sociale" (2002: 130) of those *vaincus* of capitalism who live on European soil: the homeless, the precariously employed, black market labourers and *sans-papiers*. If art depends on a contextual understanding of its historical and political moment of fabrication, and financial capitalism operates with ever-greater opacity and distance from daily life, a deeper analysis of contemporary economic structures would perhaps be key to re-launching a social critique of capitalism.

### Theorising the Financial Crisis

From 1994 the *revue* welcomed the interventions of those "extérieur à *Lignes*" to help analyse "les impasses, économiques, intellectuelles, morales" which had led to the left's "désorientation idéologique profonde" (Cahen 1994: 154): a better understanding of global financial structures became an explicit aim of the *revue*. In an early intervention, however, Cahen emphasised that the left should focus on the ideological, rather than economic battle, re-enforcing the sense that the markets could not be controlled (179). In 2006, two articles by Ahmed Henni provided a more controversial analysis. For Henni, capitalism had profoundly mutated from an economy based on production to one based on rent: value was no longer extracted from productive labour, but from "une circulation vertigineuse des signes immatériels dans la sphère dite des services" (2006a: 8). Following Nixon's flotation of the dollar on the international currency markets, value had become relative. For Henni, then, the best way to solve internal French crises, such as the *banlieue* riots, was not the provision of jobs for the poor, but a greater ability to capture global rents by developing "un système bancaire et financier mondialement efficient" (13). Yet this did not sit easily within *Lignes*, especially as this was a nationalist, rather than internationalist solution: as Henni notes, the greater capture of rents in the first world exacerbates poverty in the third. Furthermore, Renaut doubts whether capitalism is truly rent-based, as it still seemed to be relying on "la forme primitive d'extraction de la plus-value", simply shifting material production to the third world and forcing people to work longer hours for less pay in the first (2008: 117).

The German Groupe Krisis<sup>32</sup> proffered a different account in *Lignes* monographs since 2002's *Manifeste contre le travail*, and articles by Jappe in the *revue* since 2007. Robert

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<sup>32</sup> Not to be confused with Alain de Benoist's *revue Krisis*.

Kurz is the main theorist of their *Wertkritik*, or “value-form critique” (Larson 2011: 86), and their re-reading of Debord’s Marxism was designed to address the Frankfurt School’s “greatest theoretical deficit: a sustained, reconceptualised and re-actualised critique of political economy” (87). Whilst many have identified an external limit to capitalist production in the dual threats of resource depletion and ecological catastrophe, it is the notion of an internal limit that makes *Wertkritik* more alarming. In this reading of Marx, not only is there a tendency for the rate of profit to fall, but also a falling amount of value that it is possible to extract from labour, rendering the global economy unsustainable in the long-term. As Debord argued, the increased mechanisation of production not only “rend superflu” more and more workers (Kurz 2010: 16), but value itself “est rongée par l’économie marchande surdéveloppée” (Debord 1992b: 28). Capitalism can mitigate such losses in value by diversifying production and expanding the service economy, but for Kurz this merely delays the moment at which value drops below breaking point. The third industrial revolution, that of micro-electronics, for Kurz is this point, as it has made workers redundant at a faster rate than capitalism has been able to new develop markets and locate new sources of value. André Gorz agrees that “cette limite est atteinte”, as the “masse de capital que l’industrie financière draine et gère dépasse de loin la masse de capital que valorise l’économie réelle” (2008: 26-7). Debord had also argued that the automatisisation of capital “doit être en même temps sa perte” (Debord 1992b: 30). Yet Debord’s reasons for this ‘inevitability’ were more Freudian than Marxist: once real needs are eliminated, capital needs to invent pseudo-needs to sustain consumption, unleashing the destructive power of unconscious desire onto the market and driving it to “ruine” (30). Therefore Kurz’s theorisation of this explicitly *economic* internal limit to capitalism is his principle theoretical advancement from Debord.

Debord’s analysis of crises subsequently differs from Kurz. For Debord, revolutionary action is needed as “l’intervention constante de l’État” can mitigate the long-term effects of crises (Debord 1992b: 56); for Kurz, capitalism will self-destruct without this agency. Each major crisis sustained by global capitalism happens “à un niveau d’accumulation et de productivité supérieur à celui du passé” (Kurz 2010: 7). In the nineteenth century, capitalism could still spread extensively into undiscovered global markets to shore up a deficit in value. During the 1930s, Fordism accelerated production and Keynesian public spending stimulated growth. Subsequently, the response to the 1970s stagflation was “une politique inflationniste fondée sur le crédit d’Etat”, creating a global deficit in value that only a deregulated financial sector could temporarily mask. Henni’s rental economy, then, is merely papering over the cracks that, to Kurz, suggest that the internal limit of capitalism had been reached. Rather

than a scourge ruining the global economy, financial capital has therefore actually allowed the “survie artificielle” of capitalism (62). However, Kurz notes that after 2008 “il n’existe aujourd’hui aucun nouveau mécanisme permettant de résoudre la crise au niveau de productivité atteint” (9). There may be “de brefs rebonds” but, without a genuinely novel way to accumulate value, “un irréversible déclin” has set in (29).

Groupe Krisis therefore pose serious questions for the left, and for *Lignes*. For starters, “la lutte des classes est terminée parce que la société de travail l’est elle aussi” (‘Groupe Krisis’ 2012: 46). Unless strikes lead to “un nouveau mouvement social à grande échelle”, by defending employment trade unions merely prop up an ailing system (Kurz 2010: 20). Krisis also bolster *Lignes*’ arguments against parliamentary participation, Jappe noting that their analysis means it is “évident que rien n’aurait changé si c’était Royal au lieu de Sarkozy” who was elected, and also denouncing Bensaïd and “ces représentants de la gauche ‘radicale’” who end up embracing the electoral sphere (2008: 57). Furthermore, as capitalism makes people “moins” rather than “plus [...] aptes à le renverser”, Jappe is also dubious regarding Badiou’s voluntaristic form of subjective agency: “Le sujet est alors ce dont il s’agit de s’émanciper” (2007: 267-8). Structural adjustments to capitalism are also insufficient: moderate solutions from the anti-capitalist left, such as a Tobin tax to redistribute the wealth generated from financial transactions, are attacked in *Lignes* for fighting for only a better “*distribution* des ‘biens’” which would not solve these structural problems (2007: 265). As for recent theories of an economy of *décroissance* or a return to agrarian values and organic production, these prompt only “une morale de la frugalité” which would be unable to feed the world on a global scale (Kurz 2010: 21). As capitalist production is itself in crisis, a “capitalisme décroissant” or “capitalisme écologique” would not tackle the core problem (Jappe 2011: 196): the only solution for Kurz is to remove social production from circuits of monetary exchange (2010: 23). Jappe is more pessimistic, his first contribution to the *revue* suggesting that mankind can only watch the “chute” of its own economic system from the side-lines, completing the process of its own alienation (Jappe 2007: 274). Subsequently, rather than prescribing action, the only role for a *revue* is to search for “une véritable clarté”: “Chaque progrès dans la compréhension théorique, de même que sa diffusion, est donc en lui-même un acte pratique” (Jappe 2008: 65).

How valid is this analysis of *Wertkritik*? There is dissensus from those close to Kurz, who in 2004 himself broke from *Krisis* to form *Exit!*, as those remaining in *Krisis* jettisoned the internal limit of value and recognise only “une limite extérieure, purement écologique” (Kurz 2010: 113). André Gorz came later in life to support the majority of Kurz’ analysis, but

was more optimistic about the potential of “autoproduction” to radically transform social relations (Gorz 2008: 35). Moishe Postone, the American theorist closest to Kurz, argues that there “is nothing linear about capital’s development” implying that, given moments of real crisis, capitalism can backtrack from technological advancements to recover more primitive and valuable levels of production. David Harvey stresses that rather than an actual lack of value, the real problem is “over-accumulation” (2006: 195): Badiou agrees, noting that we are witnessing “une crise de la surproduction classique” (2011b: 15). Outside of Marxism, neo-classical economists, who see value as being set by a process of negotiation rather than inherent in labour time, would bypass the debate entirely (Kunkel 2014: 17). Such explicit critiques of *Wertkritik* do not appear in the *revue* itself, yet it is far from being unanimously accepted. In the 2012 issue on the European crisis, some contributors still pose economic, monetary solutions to what Jappe sees as a crisis in value: Kakogianni advocates economic “décroissance” (2012: 207), Calame “un écosocialisme” (2012: 35). Lordon argues that Greece should default on its sovereign debt, quit the Euro and regain control of its own currency and bank. Although this would not solve the country’s long-term problems, it would provide “les conditions d’une possible résolution” in the mid-term (Lordon 2012: 66). The formation of a new party fighting for “une Europe sociale, solidaire, démocratique, féministe, écologiste” is suggested (Gauthier 2012: 182). Others, less confident in state governance, suggest “la prise en charge directe d’une série de tâches abandonnées par l’État social sur un mode autonome et politiquement intransigeant” (Boni 2012: 136). Balibar argues that the whole European Union needs to be completely re-founded. All these contributors demonstrate an implicit rejection of the conclusions of *Wertkritik*, even if they do not explicitly tackle the *Krisis* analysis on its own terms.

Furthermore, even if the *Krisis* prognosis is accurate, for *Lignes* more broadly there is still a political argument to be held in the present. Contributors such as Bensaïd were keen to seek out “de formes émergentes, d’acteurs et d’agencements” (Schérer 2011: 11), and “représentations apocalyptiques” such as Jappe’s savaging of all alternatives are seen by some in the *revue* as unnecessarily demotivating (Persichetti 2002: 201). Furthermore, the lack of positive options could also encourage acquiescence to the claims of Europe’s financial elites that there is no alternative but governmental austerity to save capitalism. *Le Devenir Grec de l’Europe néolibérale* (October 2012) opposes this passive acceptance of crisis management and, as in the late 1990s, *Lignes* once more houses discussions of social and economic policy. They also repoliticise the debate. Within Europe, smaller states are described as bullied by the larger ones: whilst Italy and Spain were treated generously as



countries which were seen as being too big to fail, Portugal, Ireland and Greece were forced to accept stimulus packages with punitive interest rates and enforced austerity measures. As such measures closely resembled the ‘strategic adjustment’ packages foisted onto Latin American countries by the IMF in the 1990s, this imposition is described as “une politique néocoloniale” (Calame 2012: 29). The media discourse propagated to defend such actions was also probed. Alongside widespread stigmatisation of the Greek population as lazy, wasteful and averse to paying taxes, the country itself was targeted, an article in *Le Monde* asking ‘La Grèce est-elle un pays européen?’ (cited in Michael-Matsas 2012: 114). This discourse of Europeanism is seen as “une nouvelle forme de l’exclusion et du racisme” (115). Germany, by contrast, is portrayed as driving the Euro’s economic policy, and thus it is “son obstination et elle seule qui est en train de ruiner l’Europe” (Lordon 2012: 76). Balibar stresses that it is important to avoid nationalist sentiment and stereotypes in such debates, but notes that by maintaining interest rates and economic policies favourable to the German economy, German unemployment is being exported to Greece (2012: 53-4). The political argument therefore concerns how the fall in living standards prompted by the financial crisis was going to be distributed across Europe. Whilst the theoretical debate as to whether capitalism has met its end in the long-term or not would continue, such an approach suggests focusing on the human costs, rather than economic compromises, in the present moment.

Such a divide suggests that *Lignes* continues to tread a dual path, described by Abensour as “une articulation entre la critique de la domination toujours d’actualité et la pensée du politique” (2007: 87). Kurz and Jappe developed Debord’s theory of alienation which has provided a fertile analytical framework to approach the history of the relationship between art and politics since the 1970s, and which is consonant with Surya’s own accounts of domination and his habitual stance of critical pessimism. Yet this clashes with the political optimism and activism of Badiou and Bensaïd, and also seems inadequate when faced with the contemporary fallout and human costs of the financial crisis. The rapid increases in poverty and unemployment suggest that this social fallout could be the site for a resurgent critical aesthetics, rather than directly tackling the alienating abstraction of the global economy.

## **The Social Creation of Political Culture**

What, then, is the role of art under such conditions? Given the intractable nature of the financial crisis in which European experts and intellectuals were divided over the correct

economic response, disparaging art for lacking an appropriate riposte seems churlish. In a study on Debord's legacy, Rasmussen states that art "has to move as fast as politics or else it is recuperated by politics and becomes merely a fictive language of a non-existent community" (2002: 348). Yet since the turn of the millennium the political ground has kept shifting at such a rapid pace that "it has become very difficult to predict where the political is heading. This fact makes it easy for politics to recuperate art but difficult for art to appropriate politics" (348). As we have seen, when facing overt political repression the orientation for an artistic response is clearer; a complex web of international financial concerns is much harder to target. Others, however, argue that since the crisis has prompted a shift from "a cod-progressive New Labour agenda of social inclusion" to one of "serfdom" and social exclusion, art could again "become a 'progressive' critic of the mode of production and the barbarism of its social relations" (Iles and Vishmidt 2011: 55). Such a claim points towards the fertility of the social, rather than aesthetic critique of capitalism.

Some examples of *disparitionniste* art gesture towards this as they denounce exploitation and poverty. Jacqueline Salmon's *Chambres* (1996) takes social precariousness as its subject, demonstrating how the homeless are often absent from public discourse and so are unrepresented. Yet instead of photographing these individuals, Salmon photographs empty rooms in homeless shelters, framing the homeless "dans leur milieu spécifique" but leaving the beds deliberately "*vides de corps*" (Ardenne 2000: 259). Ardenne argues that rather than the "journalisme de marché", there is no "spectacle" or emotive manipulation here, but a formal representation of the discursive absence of these figures (259). Drawing on Rancière, Bishop argues that the paucity of much contemporary 'critical' art was the declarative obviousness of its political position, in which "such didacticism effectively removes the perverse strangeness that bears testimony to the rationalised world and its oppressive intolerability" (2012: 29). Works such as Salmon's, which formally and aesthetically represent social precariousness without a strong didacticism, could indicate a renewed, engaged social practice at work in the arts. In contrast to the positive and convivial sociality of Bourriaud, a social approach infused with aesthetic negativity could generate more tension and questions.

Indeed, whilst commentators often argue that the 'artistic' and 'social' critiques "do not easily merge" in artworks (Bishop 2012: 275), Boltanski and Chiapello called for their reconceptualisation and re-alignment. Rather than seeking an "autonomie absolue" for art, such a critique would accept the necessities of cultural and commercial mediation in the present moment (Boltanski and Chiapello 1999: 574). Furthermore, recognising that

discourses of uninhibited flux and creative, temporary, project based work were synonymous with capitalism, it would focus on how society can continue to exist between projects, to stem the flows that weaken and precarise social relationships, and to foster stability. Instead of the absolute independence previously ascribed to artistic emancipation, this would require “un compromis avec des dispositifs à la fois contraignants et sécurisants” (573). Although, then, such a program sounds closer to a social critique of capitalism, the authors argue that with a general orientation contesting the “marchandisation de l’humain”, we are still on the grounds of the artistic rejection of commercial rationalisation and the reduction of life to economic principles (574). As responses in *Lignes* suggest, the human costs of structural alienation and crises seem an appropriate point from which to politicise the social and develop orientations for such a renewed aesthetics.

These are merely speculative comments surrounding issues raised in and around *Lignes*; what such an art would look like is in the hands of contemporary artists. Yet the emphasis on social relations and an abandonment of an absolute aesthetic autonomy re-enforces the notion that art always emerges in a precise socio-political context. As Rancière argues in *Lignes*, it is often such a context which determines whether a work is considered to be “apolitique” or “critique” (2006b: 159). Formally, “il n’y a pas de critère de correspondance entre vertu esthétique et vertu politique” (157), and even if the content of a work is expressly political there is no guarantee that it will “coïncide avec une action de construction de dissensus politiques” (160): Chapter 3 suggested the arbitrary events necessary for Rushdie’s novel to cause a global scandal, and the subsequent mobilisation of *Lajja* by the BJP. In other words, a “work of art requires a political culture within which it can be interpreted” (Rasmussen 2002: 347), and such a culture is a social, as well as an artistic product. Pasolini thus returns for *Lignes* as “le nom d’un certain type d’activisme intellectuel” (Prigent 2005: 29). Despite his increasing rapprochement with Adorno and formalism, Pasolini always attempted to promote a wider public debate through the printed media: his *revue Officina* was an important bulwark of the 1950s, and in the 1970s, whilst writing a regular column for the widely circulated daily *Il Corriere della Sera*, he continued to publish small *revues*. As Alain Naze argues, Pasolini shifted throughout his career from speaking about the people, to speaking to the people, to finally allowing the people themselves to speak, “en faisant collaborer les enfants qui sont ses élèves aux petits revues qu’il parvient à faire publier” (2005: 93); Pasolini demonstrated that the creation of a political climate, and a discussion of art within that framework, is a necessary corollary of culturally effective interventions.

Whilst always inevitably invested in such cultural debates, *Lignes*' second series shifts perceptibly towards the political appropriation of art through the cultural milieu as advocated by Rancière and Pasolini. The Rushdie and Nasreen affairs arose as objects of debate and scandal, yet for *Lignes* more by accident than design. Early in the second series, articles on film tended to still take an interpretive approach: Marmande used Kubrick's *Eyes Wide Shut* to detect a "sorte de bleu" troubling the geo-political climate (2000: 213), and Jacquot suggested why people are scared of difference through Bergamn's *La Honte* (2004: 68). However, after their period of cultural retrospection from Adorno and Benjamin (2003) to Pasolini (2005), the *revue*'s more militant phase tended to focus on artworks produced directly and deliberately in response to current events, and contextualised them in tightly thematic dossiers alongside analysis and activism: within Brossat's drive to acknowledge global genocides, Marc Nihanian's text on Armenian literature argues that one must "traduire en réponse au deuil catastrophique" (2007: 243); Nicholas Klotz discusses how his films document the travails of immigrants (2008), followed by Cordelier's petition in favour of housing the *sans-papiers* (2008); an article decrying the censorship of political works at the 10th Sharjah Biennial in 2011 was placed in the context of the Arab Spring and noted as "un flagrant anachronisme avec l'ardent désir de changement exprimé par les peuples de la région" (Benfodil 2011: 117); and whilst denouncing the essentialisation of the *roms* in France and their lack of representation, Kovacshazy describes *la littérature tsigane* as both a form of "militantisme" and "une écriture polyphonique qui permet d'articuler différents points de vue" (2011: 164). Cultural products are explicitly linked to critical analysis and an activist culture. As an accompaniment, the recent issue *La pensée critique contre l'éditorialisme* (October 2013) demonstrates the *revue*'s concern to foster a more overtly critical publishing culture and participates in the sociologically driven critique of media discourse.

*Lignes* could then provide the cultural platform for a rejuvenated artistic-social critique, especially with recent new contributors including Marxist economists, sociologists, and thinkers and activists across Europe. Notably, however, the issue *Littérature & Pensée* (May 2012) cleaved closer to the Bataillain privileging of sovereign *écriture* described in Chapter 2, and in what appears to be another moment of transition for the *revue* Surya is also soliciting the participation of *écrivains* (Alain Hobé, Jacques Brou) and former Derrideans or students of Nancy (Philippe Beck, Serge Margel), demonstrating a desire to keep this trajectory in tension with the more engaged works privileged in the second series. Furthermore, given the limited readership of such *revues*, one must always be cautious of

over-stating the socio-cultural role a publication like *Lignes* can have: looking back over the *revue*'s history, Noël admits *Lignes*' "impuissance à changer la suite des événements en dépit de l'évidente justesse de sa critique" (2007: 291). Yet he admires "l'obstination de *Lignes* à s'y maintenir" (2006a: 187), and also notes that if "un livre de la collection rencontre 3000 ou 4000 lecteurs, je suis sûr qu'il attire l'attention sur d'autres livres de la collection, et qu'un mouvement s'ensuit. En multipliant les croisements: fiction, art, poésie, politique, j'espère multiplier l'attention" (Noël 2006a: 187). This was before the "phénomène Badiou" (Garuet 2009: 149) brought *Lignes* greater attention, giving this citation added pertinence. The editorial tension maintained by Surya, between theory and art, philosophy and literature, activism and critique, has at the very least given the *revue* the task not "de convaincre, ni de gagner, mais de tenir en échec" the mutual unfolding of French and international history (Noël 2007: 298). The rest remains to the surrounding social, cultural and political actors, and their own respective *lignes*.

## Conclusion

### Revue, French Theory and Identity Politics into the Twenty-First Century

Now considered an *ultragauchiste* whilst defining himself *centre-gauche*, Éric Fassin exclaims: “C’est le paysage politique qui a changé (pas moi!), en se déportant sans cesse vers la droite” (2013: 53). This also aptly depicts *Lignes*’ trajectory over twenty-five years. If in 1987 *Lignes* was already orientated against a reactionary intellectual atmosphere, this drift to the right seems to have inexorably continued. In *La Révolution rêvée* Surya argues that Sartrean engagement ignored “la possibilité qu’on s’engage mal”: having “retrouvé une bonne conscience professionnelle” after the war, intellectuals were assumed to be virtuously left-wing (2004b: 22-3). By 2007, however, this assumption was troubled, a *Le Nouvel Observateur* cover asking: “Les intellos. Virent-ils à droite?” (cited in Frey and Noys 2007: 243). The trajectories of Pierre-André Taguieff and Alain Finkielkraut, from anarcho-syndicalism or Maoism in the 1960s to neo-conservatism today, are symptomatic. Yet was *Le Nouvel Observateur*’s provocative question premature? Shortly after, the financial crisis hit Europe and prompted another cultural mutation. Never, since the 1980s, had the centre-left’s adherence to liberalism been subjected to such critical scrutiny, and was accompanied by “l’intense activité éditoriale autour de Marx et du marxisme” and the transformation of Alain Badiou into a media celebrity (Guénoun 2010: 49). After thirty years, the implicit ban imposed on communist and Marxist thought from 1977 was, by the close of 2007, lifted.

Oscillating between critical scepticism and the desire for agency, *Lignes* periodically surveyed the field for fresh impetus in issues such as *De la possibilité politique et des politiques possibles* (October 2002). The financial crisis catalysed such thinking, fomenting groups such as Les Économistes atterrées and proliferating alternatives, from a capitalism of *décroissance* to eco-socialism. *Lignes* became more open to previously occluded avenues of thought. For example, during the 1990s ecology, when not ignored, was described as “un discours du ressentiment qui se double d’une stupéfiante vanité” (Curnier 1990: 23). The radical left in France saw contractual approaches to sharing ecological resources as “an intellectual mystification that conceals how the state functions as an instrument of the ruling class” (Whiteside 2002: 88). In *Lignes*, Marmande suggested that this would mean the rich “viv[ant] dans des milieux plus protégés” whilst the poor were abandoned (Dobbels, Marmande and Surya 1991: 87). Bensaïd was alone in defending an ecological “solidarité entre générations” in *Lignes*’ first series (1993: 64), devoting a chapter of *Marx l’intempêtif* (1995) to political ecology.

Arno Münster's *Pour un socialisme vert* (2012) was the first expansive ecological manifesto to appear in *Lignes*, Münster also delineating André Gorz's thought in *Le socialisme difficile* (2008) (Gorz's *Écologie et Politique* (1975) was one of the first sympathetic accounts from within the French intellectual left). Typically, the new concern for the environment manifests itself mainly in the book collection, including Félix Guattari's *Qu'est-ce que l'écophilosophie?* (2014). Yet references increasingly appear in the *revue*, with positive appraisals of eco-socialism from Calame (2012) and Sauvêtre (2013) despite the reservations of Jappe and Badiou, the latter having "aucune inclination d'aucune sorte pour l'écologie" (Deguy 2013b: 70). The most radical rethinking of the natural world came in *Humanité Animalité* (February 2009). Following Derrida's *L'animal que donc je suis* (2006c) and Surya's *Humanimalités* (2004a), Surya situates this issue as a development of Antelme's efforts towards "un autre anti-humanisme" (2009a: 7). Boyan Manchev stresses that "*L'écopolitique est une politique non pas de l'homme mais des formes de vie*" (2009b: 85), with Yves Dupeux calling for "une ontologie qui concerne *tout* étant comme tel", living and non-living (2009: 105). Such accounts bring *Lignes* closer to contemporary New Materialist theories prominent in the Anglophone academy, such as Jane Bennett (2010), and Bruno Latour in France (2012), which attempt to theorise a truly post-humanist body politic, radically decentring human consciousness and agency to conceptualise the co-existence of all things.

This conclusion wishes to examine such moments of confluence and conflict between Anglophone and French concerns to achieve some critical distance from *Lignes*. Just as 'French Theory' was popularised in the Anglophone academy, the intellectual "revirements et basculements" from 1977 meant that "la possibilité même d'un débat à leur sujet se trouvaient bannies de l'Hexagone" (Cusset 2003: 323-4). Yet it has since become "something of a commonplace" to assert the French resistance to Postcolonial Studies and Queer Theory, whilst there are instead signs that such disciplines are now establishing themselves in France (Forsdick and Murphy 2009: 8). As well as the introduction of specialist journals (such as *Genre, sexualité & société* and *Études coloniales*), the *revue* of the Collège internationale de philosophie, *Rue Descartes*, has been particularly open to 'French Theory'. In the militant sphere, activist *revues* such as *Multitudes* also express their interest in "les subaltern studies, les minorities studies, les gender et queer studies".<sup>33</sup> Even "the French resistance to cultural studies" is being countered (Downing 2012: 227), with the short-lived *Fresh théorie* tackling

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<sup>33</sup> See <http://www.multitudes.net/Multitudes-ses-declinaiisons/> [accessed 20 April 2014]

popular cinema (*The Matrix*), music (Michael Jackson), cereal packets (Kellogs), and television (Teletubbies) (Alizart 2005: 26). *Lignes* is one of the French *revues* with the closest ties to what is loosely referred to as *la pensée 68*, and so could be expected to cleave closer than most to Anglophone approaches. To situate *Lignes* within the return of French Theory to France, their relationship to postcolonial theory and gender and sexuality issues will be delineated below, with particular attention to the problems posed by identity politics.

### **Postcolonial Theory – (Cultural) Politics**

In 2005, the *banlieue* riots and debates over the “positive accomplishments” of colonialism pushed postcolonial theory into the spotlight (Stam and Shohat 2012: 102): many, including Rada Iveković in *Lignes*, asked “comment se fait-il qu’il n’y ait pas d’études postcoloniales en France?” (2006: 79-80). Although Achille Mbembe’s *De la postcolonie* (2000) should have launched this discipline in France, it was only after 2005 that “a veritable explosion of such studies” (Stam and Shohat 2012: 104) allowed the postcolonial to “gain a foothold in French intellectual life” (Forsdick and Murphy 2009: 9). The “antipathy within the French university system” towards interdisciplinary approaches (Revenin 2012: 165), and so the “precarious institutional status” of researchers engaged in such work (Bancel and Blanchard 2009: 296), are often cited as reasons for such a lag. Yet if the academy was hostile, compared to the Anglophone world there has been much more “political and intellectual activism” related to colonial issues (Stam and Shohat 2012: 104). Therefore it could be argued that comparable work has been carried out in France, but on the margins of academically recognised institutions.

Intellectual *revues*, as para-academic publications, are one such sphere: given that racial and immigration issues have been its most consistent focus, the internationalism of *Lignes* seems eminently ‘postcolonial’. Events such as Sarkozy’s 2007 neo-colonial discourse in Dakar, which “met with almost total silence in the French press” (Forsdick and Murphy 2009: 3), were critically covered by *Lignes*. Furthermore, French intellectuals tied to social movements (such as Grandmaison and the RESF), often provide an analysis of the world as a post (or neo-)colonial entity. The ties between intellectuals and activism is stronger in *revues* such as *Asylon(s)* and *Drôle d’époque*, in which *Lignes* contributors Brossat, Iveković, Grandmaison, Girard, Voltaire and Hauser play a key role. Such *revues* resemble the more militant wing of *Lignes*, shorn of its more literary and philosophical concerns.



Rather than politics, it is the “meta-theoretical” aspects of Anglophone postcolonial studies (conversely the most influenced by ‘French Theory’) that the French are seen to be “relatively uninterested in” (Stam and Shohat 2012: 93, 106). Exhaustion with the textual terrorism of the 1960s, alongside the need for a more sober analysis for efficient political interventions, could account for the absence of ludic wordplay and neologisms in *Lignes*. Yet *Lignes* does support the critique of “the epistemic violence of western thought” (109) found in Anglophone postcolonialism. In *Penser le racisme* Alain David highlighted “un blanchissage généralisé” in Western metaphysics which “est ainsi le résultat d’une grande opération de nettoyage” (1990: 11); and Sala-Molins emphasised the complicity of Enlightenment thought with colonial violence, a critique built on by Anglophone scholars such as Buck-Morss (2006). In the essay collection *La réponse d’Ulysse et autres textes sur l’Occident* (2012), Lacoue-Labarthe is re-positioned as an explicitly postcolonial thinker. Via his engagement with Heidegger’s fascism, the West became “ouvertement et nommément” a problem for Lacoue-Labarthe (Bianchi and Kharlamov 2012: 152), and his 1960s opposition to the Algerian war meant that Europe also “désigne pour lui la question de la colonisation” (146): subsequently, his thinking revolved around the deconstruction of terms such as “Occident, Europe, Philosophie, Allemagne, Sujet, Modernité, Colonisation, Capital” (164-5). Furthermore, suggesting an internalisation of this critique of Euro-centric (or even Franco-centric) thinking, rather than assuming that French intellectuals can accurately analyse global politics, issues on Central Europe, Yugoslavia, Italy, Algeria, Latin America, the Arab Spring and Greece all principally rely on intellectuals and activists based in the countries involved. This is a deliberate attempt to avoid *Lignes* remaining “a specifically French, Parisian phenomenon”, as *revues* were in the past (ffrench 1995: 44).

The history of colonialism is central to *Lignes*’ understanding of the present. Alongside Balibar, Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe’s two-year seminar on the ‘Géophilosophie de l’Europe’, extracts of which appeared in *Lignes*, asserted that Europe cannot be thought solely from within Europe itself (Nancy 1993a: 125). A key consideration was how imperialism pioneered the modern nation state: before colonialism, countries were made up of “singularités, diversités plurielles”, whereas when empires receded these groups were experienced “comme particularités, particularismes, produits du fractionnement d’un projet posé à la fois comme universel et souverain” (Guénoun 1993: 134). The relationship between colonialism and national identity is central to *Algérie – France: Regards croisés* (February 1997). This issue investigates the French legacy in Algeria, as even amongst Islamic fundamentalists “aucune n’envisage de remettre en question l’État tel qu’il a été légué par

l'ancienne puissance coloniale" (Benkheira 1997: 24-5); but also how "la France d'aujourd'hui s'est faite (et sans doute se fait toujours) en Algérie, avec et contre elle" (Balibar 1997a: 8). Lyotard outlines "l'hétérogénéité remarquable" of Algeria's pre-colonial history (1997: 68), whereas for Rancière colonialism "est la constitution d'un devenir-peuple" (1997b: 38). This issue represents a paradigmatic approach to a postcolonial understanding of the contemporary moment. Notably, however, *Lignes* perpetuates the blind spots noted by Forsdick and Murphy, as the Middle East and Algeria garner much more attention than sub-Saharan Africa, the Caribbean, Asia and the Pacific (2009: 24).

If *Lignes* embraces the political and intellectual stakes of Anglophone postcolonialism, the "literary bent" is less appreciated however (Stam and Shohat 2012: 93). Anglophone scholars tend to focus on creative works and read "postcolonial literary texts as 'texts'", moving away from "anthropological or sociological readings" (Forsdick and Murphy 2009: 7). Global studies of Francophone literature have "emerged in spite of metropolitan French indifference and hostility" (Stovall and Abbeele 2003: 3), which tends to prefer empirical, historical research. There remains an attachment to a specifically French (and Parisian) literary milieu which lacks the "anti-canonical impulse" of the Anglophone academy (Stam and Shohat 2012: 93): *Lignes* is no different, retaining a largely modernist, European literary canon.

Yet a more specific reason for *Lignes'* indifference could be the certain type of cultural politics which Hallward, inspired by Badiou, identifies as "the predominant tendency of cultural studies in general and of postcolonial criticism in particular" (2001: xix). In embracing cultural diversity, postcolonial literature is often portrayed as a palliative for increasing racial tensions. Édouard Glissant's "unflagging advocacy of a creolising world of Diversity and Relation" and an "*unpredictable* process of hybridisation" is one example (Bongie 2009: 91). Despite having common theoretical ground with Glissant, sharing a notion of an impure identity and the "*opacity*" of language and social relations (91), the celebration of *métissage* is problematic for *Lignes*. For Brossat, hybridity does not result from innocent trans-cultural encounters but from political conquests; the uncritical celebration of hybridity can "rendre innommable le tort subi par les vaincus de cette histoire" (2001: 43). Hallward likewise argues that there is no "inherently or automatically progressive politics" to be gleaned from cultural hybridity (2001: xix). He calls for "a sharp conceptual break between culture and politics", adding that "cultural politics" is a "disastrous confusion of spheres" (xix). This stance is reminiscent of Mascolo, who argued that without an effective materialist politics literature remains a luxury. Surya takes a similar stance, noting that the

“liberté supplémentaire (extra-ordinaire et subversive)” found in literature is only available if “la liberté ‘ordinaire’” is granted (2007c: 21). The shifting emphasis from *écriture* in the first series to a more activist stance in the second can be read along these lines. Surya would however agree with Hallward that literature is an important realm of “*thought-ful* freedom” (2001: 334). Yet whilst for Hallward this legitimates the demand to read widely, including from the former colonies, *Lignes* still tends to rely on the contemporary French literary scene for such thought. Despite critiquing Western thought, *Lignes* is not as pro-active when seeking out non-Western alternatives.

### ***Identités indécises***

Culturally defined critical approaches are also problematic in *Lignes* for the assertion of identity they can entail. Cécile Kovacsazy celebrates the “militantisme tsigane” contained in Romani literature, but worries that her own excitement for – and labelling of – the genre “littératures tsiganes” re-enforces “les discours essentialistes” (2011: 164-6). This was especially worrying at a time when Sarkozy was subjecting French *roms* to a “ciblage ethnique” (Amselle 2011: 70). Amselle is the biggest critic of postcolonial theory in *Lignes*, largely because he sees it as being predicated on identity categories, and designating such categories “est rarement bénéfique” (82). He also attacks ‘hybridity’ as he conceives this notion as being predicated on “pures”, “authentiques” or homogenous identities *before* a process of mixing takes place, with such new, hybrid identities being seen “comme inauthentiques”, betraying a “phobie” of *métissage* (2008: 23). This appears to be a weak reading of Derridean postcolonial theories in which identity is generally seen as a construct, rather than an essential, authentic given. But significantly, this reading prompts Amselle to question whether Anglophone ‘French Theory’ is “véritablement une bonne chose pour le renouveau du débat intellectuel dans l’hexagone” (2007: 179). This is a common argument in France, Jean-François Bayart lambasting the ‘academic carnival’ of postcolonial studies which “s’enferment dans le concept catastrophique d’‘identité’” (2010: 45). In *Lignes*, hostility towards identity categories can have several sources: the French Republic is predicated on universal rights and so should be blind to particularity, Badiou developing this into a philosophical, universal injunction via St Paul (see below); Nancy’s deconstructive embrace of the *impropre* attempts to shift identity away from closed communal groupings; and Foucault portrayed identity discourses as entrapping subjectivity within repressive “power relations” (Johnston 2008: 695), instead privileging opacity and a Deleuzian *devenir*

*imperceptible*. For many contributors “pour vivre heureux, vivons cachés”, and this includes an aversion to overt identity categories (Jacquemond 2010: 83).

Yet this rejection of identity can also align the *revue* with surprisingly conservative positions. *Lignes* is not enthusiastically Republican, *laïcité* being abandoned as it was increasingly linked to islamophobia. Yet a residual Republicanism remains latent in some contributors. Bensaïd is a key example, as he was pro-immigration and supported positive discrimination to help migrants settle in (Amselle 2011: 56). Yet regarding overt displays of cultural difference, such as the *foulard*, Alex Callinicos notes a “*ni-nisme*” which “turns out to be his default position when confronting conflicts over identity” (2008: 158): Bensaïd avoided a strongly partisan response, and seemed to prefer not to comment on identity issues at all if possible. Callinicos argues that this betrays “the influence of the republican ideology” (159), and this is not uncommon in *Lignes*: even Surya is unusually cautious on the *foulard* issue, wanting to counter the “bruit disproportionné” of those calling for veils to be banned (2010f: 105), whilst admitting he has little “goût” for such garments and that his argument opposing a ban was probably false (111).

Amselle is the most straightforwardly Republican in this vein, as demonstrated in his *Lignes*’ publications *L’Ethnicisation de la France* (2011) and *L’Anthropologue et le politique* (2012). He argues that as soon as specific ethnic groups are identified, “rien n’interdit de faire l’hypothèse de minorités impossibles à absorber” (1996: 170): the recognition of cultural difference automatically tends towards racism. As a result, whereas in the US and the UK ‘multiculturalism’ tends to describe a contemporary global space shared by different cultural communities with relative degrees of harmony, Amselle sees it as a prescriptive program that causes “la fragmentation du corps social” (2012: 117). Whilst acknowledging that this ‘model’ has been successful in America, Amselle asserts that “multiculturalisme a échoué en France”, having caused “le renforcement de l’identité ‘blanche’” and “une montée du racisme” (2011: 30-31). Amselle reads geopolitical manoeuvring into such a situation, arguing that “la force de l’impérialisme américain réside en effet dans sa capacité à utiliser ses positions multiculturalistes” (2008: 270) to “fragmenter le récit national français” (2011: 108). This residual anti-Americanism pervades many French critiques of postcolonial studies, as the promotion of a liberal or libertarian logic is subjected to “accusations of anti-republicanism” (Bancel and Blanchard 2009: 303). It is this negative conception of multiculturalism which leads to “the *anti-communautariste* rhetoric” which is “almost an obsession among some French intellectuals” (Revenin 2012: 169). Amselle subsequently approvingly notes that Taguieff denounced the 1990s anti-racist movements on the grounds

that positively promoting racial identities causes social fragmentation (Amselle 2011: 54). Yet it was precisely this logic that led Taguieff from the activist left towards neo-conservatism, and that these arguments return in *Lignes* emphasises that identity politics remains an ambiguous problematic for some in the *revue*. Rada Iveković, by contrast, see the privileging of French Republicanism over multiculturalism as a “*particularisme provincial*” rather than a progressive universalism (2006: 80).

Universal Republicanism has been criticised as it “refuses in principle to recognise differences that separate citizens from one another” (Boyle 2012: 276). Once there are instances of discrimination on the ground, the recourse to abstract, universal values can merely obscure these concrete tensions. In the case of the *roms*, whilst it is true that if they were not identified as scapegoats they could not be racially targeted, the fact is that they are threatened as such, and so a more active intervention seems necessary. Balibar argues that a strategic choice needs to be made between two struggles, one *majoritaire*, one *minoritaire*: the former uses discourses of universal human rights to alter global legislation, whilst the second “cherche à développer la conscience d’une identité commune”, promoting “solidarité” amongst minority groups to pressure the EU into acting on specific prejudices (2011: 143). Both routes have pitfalls, so the *roms* must strategically “inventer la combinaison la plus efficace” (144). Balibar’s response here suggests a more nuanced use of essentialism, one which “although it denotes a strong identity politics, it also points out its contingency” (Lépinard 2007: 394). Amselle rejects strategic essentialism, arguing it seems a hopelessly weak position when faced with “le ferment de tous les fondamentalismes”, notably radical Islam (2008: 146-7). However, in particular instances, with specific goals, others would argue that it is an effective strategy. Below, two situations in which such an approach could have been welcome are explored: the recent accusations of anti-Semitism levelled at Badiou, and the conflict between the PACS and Parity campaigns at the turn of the new millennium.

### **The Badiou Controversy: Universal vs Strategic Essentialism**

Exemplary of the problems related to a strong universalism are the accusations of anti-Semitism levelled against Badiou following *Lignes*’ publication of *Circonstances 3: Portées du mot ‘juif’* (2005). *Lignes* closed ranks in support: Surya noted that his *revue* was not known for publishing “des auteurs et des livres antisémites” (2009d: 208); despite their differences, Bensaïd was “l’absolument premier à être intervenu publiquement dans la presse” to support Badiou (Badiou 2010a: 23); and Marc Goldschmit having called Badiou

one of the “nouveaux antisémites” in *Les Temps modernes* (Goldschmit 2009: 146), Surya emphasised that Goldschmit was now “hors du cercle de ceux que *Lignes* rassemble” (2009d: 208). The accusations of anti-Semitism seem misplaced, yet Badiou’s discourse can still be seen as “insensitive” (Hammerschlag 2010: 265). This controversy is worth examining in depth as it is the most significant conflict *Lignes* had with another *revue* throughout its second series, and is directly related to the issues of essentialism described above.

To fully contextualise these accusations, two sequences would have to be delineated. One begins in the Maoist years from 1968 to 1975, when Badiou was active in the *Union des communistes de France marxistes-léninistes* (UCFM-L) and Benny Lévy (then Pierre Victor) led the rival *Gauche prolétarienne* (GP). That Sartre rallied to the GP was “une sorte de blessure” for Badiou (Badiou 2009a: 205), who referred to Lévy as a “rabbin sectaire” (Segré 2009a: 199) after the publication of Sartre’s *L’Espoir maintenant* (1991). Here, Sartre stresses “the importance to non-Jews like himself of the Jewish concept of the coming of the Messiah” (Judaken 2006: 208-9), Lévy’s part in the interview being seen by many as the “corruption of an old man” (227-8). Lévy subsequently became one of “those *soixante-huitard* Jews who are critical of French political traditions in reclaiming Jewish Orthodoxy”, abandoning “revolutionary politics” (278). Lévy went on to form the *Institut d’études lévinassiennes* with Alain Finkielkraut and Bernard-Henri Lévy, whilst Badiou is outspokenly critical of the ‘ethical turn’ inspired by Levinas, arguing that it over-emphasises “l’état de victime” over a positive ethics of capability (Badiou 2003c: 31). This sequence ends with Benny Lévy labelling Badiou the “principal philosophe anti-juif en France” (cited in Segré 2009a: 178).

The second sequence begins with the “sharp rise in the frequency of anti-Semitic threats and acts” in France between the onset of the Second Palestinian Intifada (September 2000), and its suppression by Israel in April 2002 (Cohen 2009: 27). Although the number of attacks subsequently decreased to a level only “slightly higher” than the pre-2000 figure (28), commentators such as Finkielkraut continued to decry the “francophobie” and “judéophobie” of “certains immigrés” (Badiou and Finkielkraut 2010: 37, 59). Badiou acknowledges that there is anti-Semitism amongst some politicised Muslims in France (2005: 9), though studies show it is far less prevalent than assumed (see Brouard and Tiberj 2005). However, an exaggerated “grouping together of fascists, Muslims and leftists” in a “brown-green-red alliance” has been mobilised to discredit all criticisms of Israel as anti-Semitic (Cohen 2009: 24). For example Edgar Morin, having referred to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as a “cancer”, was found guilty of “judeophobic” comments in 2005, but was subsequently

acquitted (31-2). In addition, since Claude Lanzmann became its editor in 1986, the “pro-Israélien” *Les Temps modernes* has been seen to conflate “l’antisionisme” with “l’antisémitisme” (Lindenberg 2010: 41). Within this already tense climate, it was clearly a provocative gesture on Badiou’s part to send a text to *Les Temps modernes* in which Cécile Winter attacks Lanzmann for having “sacralisé” the Holocaust “sous le nom de ‘Shoah’” (Winter 2005: 105) to help Israel extract “le maximum de bénéfice” from the tragedy (113). That Winter’s text was appended to Badiou’s *Circonstances 3* further explains the hostility that this book received, especially from *Les Temps modernes* and the *Institut d’études lévinassiennes*.

But the political claims of *Circonstances 3* are, if controversial, not anti-Semitic. As with Brossat, Badiou’s position towards Israel is hostile, referring to it as a colonial state responsible for “l’oppression des peuples démunis” (2005: 13). Yet he deplores the rise in anti-Semitism that results from Middle-Eastern tensions (9), arguing that the existence of Israel as a specifically Jewish state is “la plus grave menace qui puisse peser sur le nom des juifs” (25). Therefore when critics represent Badiou’s position as one in which “Israel as it currently exists must be eliminated” (Kritzman 2013: 149), the term ‘elimination’ implies a violence not present in Badiou’s text. In line with his political universalism, which requires that nation states are not founded on religious predicates, Badiou supports a one-state solution, a “laïque et démocratique” Palestine (2005: 16). This would not require the relocation of populations, but a new multicultural state structure that moves Israel beyond “sa prétention identitaire fermée à être un ‘État juif’” (15). It is only within the context elaborated above that Badiou could subsequently be aligned with “ceux qui désirent fanatiquement l’anéantissement du fait juif” (Marty 2007: 35-6).

Badiou’s approach becomes more problematic over issues of cultural identity. Generally, Badiou is more tolerant of cultural particularity than Amselle. In *Saint Paul: La fondation de l’universalisme*, Badiou argues that rather than “la suspicion contre les Juifs” (1997: 5), Paul’s “rapport à la particularité juive est essentiellement positif” (109). For Badiou, Paul’s famous statement “Il n’y a plus ni Juif ni Grec” does not imply that these identities no longer exist, as “le fait est qu’il y a des Juifs et des Grecs” and inevitably “il y a des différences” (105): instead, it means that truth is universal and valid for “toutes les nations”, rendering such particularisms irrelevant (110). This is not an assault on cultural particularity: Badiou argued against banning the *foulard* from schools, considering matters of clothing or custom to be politically irrelevant, whereas Amselle sees the *foulard* as responsible for the ghettoisation of Muslim communities (Badiou and Finkielkraut 2010: 35).

However, when it comes to Judaism Badiou tends to dissociate the religion from its cultural heritage. As Sarah Hammerschlag explains, in the early twentieth century the French association of Judaism with “exile, up-rootedness, and alienation” was “the essentialised and accidental simplification of a very real historical people” (2010: 262-3). Yet this subsequently became “a trope with a history in its own right” mobilised by Sartre and then Levinas as exemplary of an anti-particularist community to come, Levinas suggesting that the “deracination” of Judaism “should be venerated” (263). Via Blanchot and Derrida, this trope is one of the roots of the “suspicion” of “communal fusion” we have explored in Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy (263). As Brémonty has recently argued in *Lignes*, “cette conception du judaïsme est contestable” (2014: 114), and Derrida had reprimanded both Lacoue-Labarthe and Blanchot for the idea that “le Judaïsme rompt avec le mythe”: for Derrida “Il y a des judaïsmes. Il y a des courants [...] Il y a des hérésies” (115). Derrida thus cautioned them against reducing a plural and diverse religious heritage to a singular rejection of rootedness.

In *Circonstances 3* Badiou takes this notion of an “*intrinsically Jewish*” nomadism to an extreme, making this rootlessness the only Jewish quality (Hammerschlag 2010: 266), and depicting a Jew “robbed of any religious content” (Kritzman 2013: 150). Furthermore, Badiou notes that many groups have been persecuted, such as “les tziganes, les malades mentaux, les homosexuels, les communistes”, but “les juifs” is “le nom des noms” (2005: 40), becoming a master term for persecution rather than a particular group. Elsewhere, stating that Israeli policy has led to “une diaspora palestinienne”, Badiou argues that ‘Palestinian’ could become “le nouveau nom des vrais juifs”, as it is they who are now stateless (27). In addition, as Jews are supposed to be nomadic and stateless, describing staunch Israeli nationalists as Jews produces “une dévastation du sens” (28). Lastly, in response to the accusations of anti-Semitism, Badiou states that as a universalist philosopher contesting particularism he is the best representative Jewish nomadism: “le juif, c’est moi” (2006a: 747). Not only does Badiou make the word ‘juif’ “un signifiant vide” (Marty 2007: 77), he also “puts himself in the position of the onomastic guarantor of who may be referred to as a ‘Jew’” in a unilateral manner that cannot fail to aggravate those attached to Jewish cultural heritage (Kritzman 2013: 149). This approach has been read by more sympathetic commentators as “insensitive”, and begins to explain the ferocity of the responses to *Circonstances 3* (Hammerschlag 2010: 265).

May ’68 provides a famous example in recent French history of secular individuals claiming a Jewish identity. Protesting the arrest of Daniel Cohn-Bendit, crowds of students brandished banners claiming ‘Nous sommes tous des juifs allemands’. This was “a gesture



that communicated resistance to the dynamics of group identification”, exploding the boundaries of what being German and Jewish meant, but was done so as a demonstration of solidarity (Hammerschlag 2010: 264). It is an act that remains paradigmatic for French thinkers as a way to universalise struggles that could otherwise remain locked into identity politics: one could call this strategic universalism. Yet Badiou’s ‘Le juif, c’est moi’ operates differently: rather than expressing solidarity, it implies a rebuke to those who are attached to the cultural heritage this strategic universalism erodes.

Judith Butler provides a useful counterpoint as someone steeped in Anglophone ‘French Theory’. Like Badiou, she has been referred to as a “well-known anti-Semite and enemy of Israel” (Benhabib 2013: 150). She has participated in French debates, contributing to *Antisémitisme: l’intolérable chantage. Israël Palestine, une affaire française?* (‘Collectif’ 2003), and *Parting Ways* begins by contesting the notion “that any and all criticism of the State of Israel is effectively anti-Semitic” (Butler 2012: 1). Arguing that “cohabitation is not a choice, but a condition of our political life” (23), Butler is also in favour of a unified, secular state in Palestine “that would eradicate all forms of discrimination on the basis of ethnicity, race, and religion” (208). In contrast to Badiou, however, Butler deploys a strategic essentialism, rather than universalism.

One of Butler’s aims is to demonstrate that there are “Jewish resources for the criticism of state violence” and also “values of cohabitation with the non-Jew” (2012: 1). However, the exclusive recourse to Jewish thought could be seen to extend “Jewish hegemony” over Palestine, reduplicating “the Zionist effect” (3). Yet abandoning Judaism has its own problems: if one’s “opposition to the current policies of the State of Israel” leads “to the conclusion that one can no longer affiliate as a Jew”, this “ratifies the notion that to be a Jew is to be Zionist, a historical equation that is to be countered if Jewishness is to remain linked with the struggle for social justice” (19-20). Butler argues that it is important to “sever” the connection between Judaism, Zionism and Israel (3); yet a critique of Israeli policy through Jewish thought at least contests Israel’s assumed right to act on behalf of all Jews. Butler therefore suggests that a critique of Zionism is necessary both from a secular, universal standpoint, but also in the name of Judaism so as not to cede this ground to Zionism.

To overcome the tension between universal and essentialist positions, Butler champions a deconstructive “self-departure”, arguing that “dispersion is the mode in which Jews have in fact survived”, not just geographically but as “an ethical modality” (2012: 5-6). This argument is similar to Badiou’s, above, but Butler stresses that this dispersal of identity

“is not the same as self-annihilation” (5). For Butler “it does matter that I arrive at these particular values and principles through a specific formation, specifically, my schooling and early childhood formation within Jewish communities” (20): Butler’s particular heritage has marked her subjective formation and subsequent thought. Whilst French discourses of universalism could see this as problematically close to *communautarisme*, Butler argues that no universal mediation is ever free of a culturally specific subjectivity: “Even as the process of universalisation can and does take place through more specific forms of translation, there is no universal that is not finally negotiated at (or *as*) the conjuncture of discourses” (22). Butler’s strategic essentialism recognises cultural particularity whilst attempting to arrive at positions of universal political relevance. In this particular context, it seems to be a more sensitive and convincing approach than Badiou’s strategic universalism. This is also a strong example in which a political position upheld by many in *Lignes* (the preference for a one-state solution in Israel) is concomitant with a strategic use of essentialism.

### **Essentialism with a Vengeance: Parity and PACS**

The lack of appreciation for strategic essentialism is mirrored by the virtual absence of gender and sexuality issues in *Lignes*. Notably, debates surrounding the institution in 2000 of Parity laws attempting equalise the gender balance in parliament, the creation of civil partnerships (PACS) in 1999, and the legalisation of same-sex marriage in 2013, all go (almost) unmentioned in *Lignes*, despite “at least a decade of widely publicised debates” (Robcis 2004: 111). Such identity issues have often been rejected by Marxists as “les questions minoritaires risquent surtout de distraire de l’enjeu principal” (Fassin 2009: 14): ignoring “economy in favour of culture”, they overlook class conflict (Stam and Shohat 2012: 105). As we saw in Chapters 4 and 5, *Lignes* succeeded in yoking the racial to the economic as immigration and neo-liberalism were analysed as one imbricated problem. Gender and sexuality are harder to weave into a broader anti-capitalist rhetoric, and so are rejected by Badiou as being lower down the “hiérarchie des importances” (Badiou and Finkielkraut 2010: 39).

Consequently, Amselle criticises the PS for courting “les minorités visibles” such as homosexuals (2012: 110-11). Yet focusing on gender and sexuality provides a different image of the PS which counters the remorselessly negative depiction in *Lignes*. In France “public policies have favoured both women’s entrance into the workplace and their opportunities to access quality child care”, Mousli and Roustang-Stoller emphasising that

“the State can certainly be thanked for this” (2009: 3); and although the Parity debate began in the early 1990s, the campaign accelerated after 1996 when “the PS enshrined the goal of Parity in its program” and ensured that 30% of its candidates in the next election were women (Bereni 2007: 197). It was Mitterrand who decriminalised homosexuality in 1982, Jospin who instituted PACS, and Hollande who legalised gay marriage. The PS can be seen as progressive on gender and sexuality issues, compared to the negative depiction of their economic and immigration policies in *Lignes*.

Key figures in French gay and lesbian studies contribute to *Lignes*, such as Stéphane Nadaud and Éric Fassin, yet though Fassin is one of “the most prominent” researchers in this field (Davis and Kollias 2012: 140), his main contribution was in defence of the *roms* (Fassin 2011). Nadaud’s *Homoparentalité hors-la-loi* (2006) is the only work devoted to gay issues, and likewise Geneviève Fraisse’s *Les Excès du genre* (2014) on gender and sexuality, both appearing only in the book collection: neither feminism nor gay rights have been deemed important enough to warrant their own issue of the *revue* in 25 years. This is not unusual in France, Revenin arguing that “gender and sexuality studies are invisible in France” (2012: 165). Furthermore, whilst Fassin and Didier Eribon have been pioneering “les études gay et lesbiennes” in France for over twenty years, their focus is more historical and sociological; Queer Theory has taken longer to arrive, Butler’s *Gender Trouble* (1990) only being translated into French in 2005 (Davis and Kollias 2012: 139). So after some resistance, “the adventure of queer theory in France has only just begun” (138).

*Lignes* shows some interest in “l’aventure, dans les années soixante-dix, des pédés et des gouines”, notably the activity of Guy Hocquenghem and René Schérer in the Front homosexuel d’activité révolutionnaire (Nadaud 2003: 91-2). Nadaud also edits the volumes of Félix Guattari’s writings published by *Lignes*, and his introduction to *De Leros à La Borde* promotes the radicalisation of psychoanalysis for “l’exercice des micropolitiques minoritaires” (2012: 7). This period fits with *Lignes*’ tendencies towards transgressive libertarianism and personal emancipation. Subsequently, the AIDS crisis in France was “unique in the sense of the devastation caused among its intellectual classes”, causing Foucault and Hocquenghem’s deaths and halting political momentum (Pratt 2012: 184). When gay activism returned in the 1990s it was more “reform-oriented” than revolutionary, *Lignes* being less enthused by governmental co-operation (Mousli and Roustang-Stoller 2009: 8). There has been some growing frustration with this stance, however, Fassin recently stating that he voted for the PS to facilitate “l’ouverture du mariage et de la filiation aux

couples de même sexe” (2013: 53) and Schérer being aggravated at having “reçu une sévère semonce d’Alain Badiou” for his similar decision (2013: 132).

Yet rather than just policy issues, the debates sparked by Parity and PACS had significant conceptual ramifications, especially concerning essentialism. For the former campaign to be successful, activists wished to accommodate Parity within the universal Republican framework. Whilst a constructivist account of gender was originally posed, by the late 1990s “Parity advocates [...] defined gender difference as anthropological and therefore universal” (Lépinard 2007: 377). Gender difference was then essentialised, mobilising anthropological and psychoanalytic theories (via Levi-Strauss and Lacan) in which gender was “described as an immutable principle prevailing over all other differences (e.g. class, age, ethnicity, race, etc.)” (Bereni 2007: 201). Politicians increasingly referred to the “symbolic order” to justify Parity; yet the use of this term was confused, being “variously employed to designate sexual difference, society at large, language, culture, or thought”, or “all of these at once” (Robcis 2004: 18).

The essentialism propagated by Parity campaigners was problematic in several ways. As fundamentally different to men, women “were supposed to bring something else to politics, such as a concern for ‘care’ issues”, reinforcing gendered stereotypes (Mousli and Roustang-Stoller 2009: 7). Secondly, by emphasising the universality of gender above all other differences, campaigners deliberately set themselves apart from disadvantaged minorities: “the relationship between feminism and antiracist movements has been marked by several *rendez-vous manqués*”, this being another such occasion (Lépinard 2007: 385). Crucially, this caused tension with the concurrent PACS campaign. Sylviane Agacinski’s *Politique des sexes, mixité et parité* (1998) was a key moment in turning a constructivist campaign into a strongly essentialist one. Agacinski encouraged “psychoanalytic attacks” against PACS “articulated around the problems of the interruption to ‘the symbolic’” that same-sex parenting might cause (Robcis 2004: 18); this became “the cornerstone of [Agacinski’s] strong argument against homosexual families” (Bereni 2007: 202). Subsequently, Irène Théry’s report to the PS on the viability of PACS in 1998 stated that “it could be dangerous to deny the consequences biological difference between parents has on filiation”, casting PACS as a harbinger of same-sex parenting (Johnston 2008: 697). This caused rancour amongst pro-PACS activists, Eribon noting the “homophobie” of Agacinski’s tendency to “vanter la ‘supériorité éthique’ du couple hétérosexuel” (2007: 26).

The “medicalisation and the psychologisation of sexual issues” in France had already been “pronounced”, with psychoanalytic journals more prone to discuss gender and sexuality

than the humanities (Revenin 2012: 166); the essentialist discourses surrounding Parity reinforced this institutional prevalence. One could argue that in such debates the use of the “deconstructive, dis-identificatory” approaches of Queer Theory and strategic essentialism may have led to a less divisive campaign (Celestin, DalMolin and Schehr 2008: 4). “Queer engages with positionality, not identity”, and is therefore more conducive to inclusive, rather than exclusionary, politics (Downing 2012: 228). Notably, *Lignes*’ only interventions on this issue gestured towards this approach. In May 1999, Benslama and Surya state that whilst psychoanalysis demonstrates that sexual difference plays a role “dans l’émergence du sujet humain”, they argue that biology is not destiny: identity is “subvertie par l’ordre du langage” and as such “elle se différencie de tout et différencie tout, infiniment” (Benslama and Surya 1999: 119). In 2001 Catharine Malabou compares Butler to Agacinski, largely arguing in favour of Butler’s performative, constructivist approach to gender that is not necessarily tied to sexuality (though she does concede that Butler’s theory is “très pauvre sur la question de la maternité”) (2001: 172). *Lignes*’ rare comments countered strong essentialist claims, and Nadaud’s knowledge of Guattari’s anti-Lacanian micropolitics could also have disrupted these rigid accounts of the ‘symbolic order’. This implies a role for strategic essentialism that the *revue* seems well placed to espouse yet has not interrogated in detail, suggesting that this could be a productive line of future enquiry for *Lignes*.

Such a strategic approach does not seem alien to positions *Lignes* adopts elsewhere. As we saw in Chapter 3, Surya manipulated Nancy’s notion of the *impropre* to make it explicitly political, defining a community of ‘the left’ who fought to erase communal identification. This seems to be a parallel move to the kinds of deconstructive, strategic essentialism outlined above. In addition, Eribon argues that he also prefers to “inventer de nouveaux modes de vie et de nouveaux droits”, and so admitted that the PACS campaign “ne m’avait jamais paru très exaltante” (2004: 12). Yet whilst it was easy to dismiss it as “conformiste” and reformist and to adopt “la pose de la radicalité transgressive” (14), he decided that if this was the fight most conducive to positive progress in the contemporary period, he would support it “inconditionnellement” (12): “il arrive que l’on soit amené par des développements inattendus, à reformuler ce que l’on croyait penser [...] On ne choisit pas l’actualité: elle s’impose d’elle-même” (14). Surya came to a similar conclusion regarding *Lignes*: “elle serait ce que l’époque ferait d’elle et non ce qu’elle ferait de (à) l’époque” (2007c: 12). It remains to be seen what the future makes of *Lignes*: but the recent presence of more texts on ecological concerns (Deguy 2013b), Donna Haraway and feminist identity

politics (Indermuhle 2013), and frustration with the *revue*'s lack of engagement with sexual politics (Fassin 2013) suggests a welcoming to avenues of thought hitherto ignored.

*Revue*s still play a role in the construction of the French political, social and aesthetic fabric; their ability to continue to do so may rest on the relevance their arguments are felt to have in contemporary life. Fassin argues that if “les questions minoritaires sont aujourd’hui des questions politiques par excellence, c’est précisément parce qu’elles interrogent notre définition de la politique” (2009: 15). They seem increasingly relevant, especially amongst “les jeunes Français, étudiants ou militants” who have begun to embrace ‘French Theory’: having done much to protect the heritage of *la pensée 68*, *Lignes* would seem well placed to foster such students (DalMolin and Célestin 2014: 15). The generational aspect could also become crucial for *Lignes*: Domenach argues that “la volonté de prolonger une revue au-delà de l’espace d’une génération (une vingtaine d’années, au maximum) comporte évidemment une risque de sclérose” (1986: 22). Debray agrees that a *revue* “dure, d’une vie nécessaire, ce que dure une génération, après quoi elle se survit ou se métamorphose: entre vingt et vingt-cinq ans” (1979: 87). *Lignes* successfully re-invigorated itself at the turn of the millennium with a new editorial board and monograph series and has now passed its twenty-fifth year, in itself a considerable achievement. The appearance of many new contributors alongside the departure of Brossat from the editorial board in 2011 suggests that the *revue* is in a process of renewing itself to stave off the generational redundancy that can be the fate of such publications.

Whether a wholehearted acceptance of identity politics, and a renewed social focus on gender, sexuality and racial issues would be an entirely positive development is another question. It was the *deuxième gauche* emphasis on social movements that many blamed for the capitulation of the PS to neo-liberalism in the 1980s, and despite the recent progressive measures, even Eribon accuses the PS of being “un frein à l’innovation social, politique et intellectuelle au cours des vingt dernières années” (2007: 27). And as has been shown in this chapter, although Badiou is both the most famous and most controversial figure in *Lignes*, such a polarising contributor produces strong currents of thought either in attraction or repulsion; that the *revue* is split 50-50 for and against governmental participation could also signify a healthy divergence of approaches, rather than a mortal tension. Such a polarity is inscribed into *Lignes*' intellectual genealogy in the form of Blanchot's two vectors, of which “L’un *nomme* le possible et veut le possible. L’autre *répond* à l’impossible” (Bataille 1997: 596). Refusing to follow either line exclusively has been Surya's attempt to keep *Lignes* moving into an uncertain future.

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