

1968-2018, or from the "Revolution impossible" to the Impossibility of Revolution? Variations on the objet petit s¹

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Abstract: In France, the celebrations of the fiftieth anniversary of May 68 are coming to an end, so my contribution will be *late*. As it should be, since its main purpose is to submit a hypothesis that would have no other address than the position of the 50th anniversary of 1968: with regard to the historical-dialectical concept of "revolution" in relation to which "68" is the "impossible revolution" of which we are the contemporaries; but also, in return, on the side of an alternative construction of the concept and practical idea of "revolution" that can draw some consequences from fifty years of defeat and erasure of any kind of revolutionary strategy... The question would therefore be that of the passage from a "thought of emancipation" (or "subjectivation") and "resistance" (ontologically first, if not strategically) to a new thinking about revolution for our times of permanent counter-revolution.

Keywords: Revolution, Molecular Revolution, Subjectivation, Counterrevolution, Strategy, Ontology, Dialectic, History, Antagonism.

I
In France, the commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of May '68 is coming to an end, so my contribution will be late. It could be deliberately late, and even offbeat, if primarily it is a matter of submitting a hypothesis that would have no other address than the *position* of the 50 years of (May) 1968. Or, if you want to really count, a time longer than that which separates the crushing of the Commune from the victorious revolution of October, 1917. And no one, from my political generation, danced on the snow for so much time, and the times were *adverse*. To the point that one could almost think of the backwards path, from victory to defeat, a defeat continued despite "uprisings" of history whose outcome can sometimes be described only in terms of crushing.

A hypothesis, therefore, that it would be necessary, before formulating it, to introduce into the long duration of this past, impossibly present in the manner of a blind spot (*tache*) (and perhaps as a blind task (*tâche*)), designating this always mobile point that would include blindness as its most proper possibility. By this ellipsis, I call the revolution *under erasure*, namely what has become the most *problematic* for "we, the people", who can no longer be said so, if not "lacking" and missing (*qui manque*) (*the missing people replace the desire without lack coming from 1968*), or make multitude(s)² (the Spinozist immanence

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1 The text presented here is a first "cut" of a work in progress with Maurizio Lazzarato to be titled *Guerres et Révolution*, which is the second part of the work opened by *Guerres et Capital* (Paris, Amsterdam, 2016 / English trans., Los Angeles, Semiotext(e), 2018).

2 More tactical than strategic, the *Multitude*s debate was rather epic at the time of the foundation of the French magazine *Multitudes* in the year 2000.

projects lack on the side of Capital), or/and any other forms of existing multiplicities or yet to be invented... So many 'qualities' are showing, demonstrating that we have well and truly gone through the "Impossible revolution of 1968". Not to mention that '68 was also this "path of Damascus" (Badiou) for those (the gender is here essentially masculine) - perhaps not the most numerous, but the most "militant" - who wanted to force its possibility with the models of "the Chinese cultural revolution and the principles of a regenerated Marxism in the theory of Althusser" (here I quote Jacques Rancière in this article written in 2008, the Fortieth Year after 68, "May 68 revised and corrected"³).

Here, we can think of certain commentaries by Félix Guattari, about "The Masochist Maoists or the impossible May" (1970), the opportunity for which had been given to him by a misprint in a Mao pamphlet published by *L'Idiot International* where two leaders of the Proletarian Left engaged in an exercise of "self-criticism" envisaging a book on after May (*Vers la guerre civile [Towards the Civil War]*, 1969, which had not been foreign to the formation of the so-called "groupuscule"), to which the same Guattari had collaborated.⁴ In a skid of sorts, where an "s" inconveniently came to replace a "d", the *lapsus calami* reads *without reality in France* of the (supposed) universality of Maoism (instead and in place of: "*in its reality in France*").⁵ This is our *object small s*. Focusing on these militants ready to "fight back against what Lacan refers to as the 'real impossible'", Guattari summarizes the situation as follows: "The manifested evidence is the impossible revolution. From there, how to decipher a *latent* real, a social unconscious of the revolution? Two ways to proceed: either stand with the six hundred million Chinese and make a great leap forward through imaginary vapors, historical dreams... or side with this 'impossible real' and build, piece by piece, the revolutionary machine with a clear head ». Perhaps, Guattari is the first to recognize that *after May 1968, only the first way has been efficient*. "Only the craziest of the French maoists have had the guts and the gall to go out of the student ghetto, to weave relations of fight with young workers, and finally start to unblock the revolutionary struggles in 1970. All this in a mess, an incredible logomachy, and which these comrades could not have done without, one must believe, if one considers by contrast such paralysis, in which inhibitions have remained blocked the anarchists, the unorganized and the enlightened intellectuals". Which is the *proof that a lure is capable of mobilizing desire* - and that we must therefore "find something

3 Rancière 2009, p. 194.

4 See Guattari 1969. Guattari puts forward in this discussion "*the strategic unconscious*" protesters and the barricade as a "cut-off".

5 I am referring to the words 'sans' and 'dans' which in English translate as 'without' and 'in' respectively. So that the 'd' substituted for 's' inadvertently transforms (and reverts) the meaning of the status of the (supposed) universality of Maoism in France.

else: if possible, a completely other thing! Something that combines revolutionary efficiency and desire"⁶. It is this "truth" of May that must be reinvented, already, at a new expense to break with what "tends to make that we are always beaten on the same beaten track"⁷.

Except that, despite the explosion "in several capitalist countries, under the flag of Maoism, [of] these new forms of struggle" that could lead to "the Cultural Revolution without Mao, even against Mao"⁸, and the advance of the Italian "Operaist" May far in the 1970s⁹ (until its final breakdown in April, 7th of 1979), these same years will not have given rise to the construction of the *alternative revolutionary war machine* called for by the "political activist and psychoanalyst" (In this order, according to the words of Deleuze opening his preface to *Psychoanalysis and Transversality*). This can not be foreign to the fact that the '68 French thought, to better side with (*prendre son parti*) this impossible real, will have not stopped thinking about the *impossible* revolution of '68 by investing in this single "impossibility" regarding the tutelary model of Marxism-Leninism as its most differential potentiality ... This is what Rancière calls "the questioning of all patterns of historical evolution" to project it immediately against this "Marxist revolution" that the activists of May '68 thought to make, despite the fact that "their action undid it on the contrary, by showing that a revolution is an autonomous process of reconfiguring the visible, the thinkable and the possible, and not the accomplishment of a historical movement led by a political party to its purpose."¹⁰ It is, almost, and in a way less *aesthetic*, what the same Guattari was agitating and thinking since the mid-1960s - in a vigorous *contra Althusser* worthy of denouncing the "structuralist impasse"¹¹ - in terms of "rupture of historical causality", of "subjective

6 Guattari 1972, p. 277-278.

7 These are the last lines of *Ibid.*, p.284), and the end of the article *Nous sommes tous des groupuscules* [We Are All Groupuscules] (1970).

8 *Ibid.*, p. 278. "It is as if the Chinese Cultural Revolution had put into circulation a certain model of spontaneous struggle, a struggle which for some time has more or less escaped the hands of the Chinese Communist Party apparatus." We can amuse ourselves here to raise a *certain* convergence of analysis with the last position of Alain Badiou on the question (see Badiou 2018). Beside the saturation of the Party-State model, *contradictorily and impossibly* expressed in and by the Cultural Revolution, there is the idea that "All kinds of subjective and practical trajectories have found, in the tireless inventiveness of the Chinese revolutionaries, their *nomination*". (47). What remains here of "signified" (i.e. "the unentering inventiveness of the Chinese revolutionaries"), Guattari slid it towards the emergence of the "signifier" as subjective cut of the history-development in his texts from the sixties. Not without a certain relationship with what Badiou will do, in the late 1970s, in his seminars that will give rise to his *Theory of the subject*.

9 Badiou must be contradicted: the Maoist current is certainly not the "only true creation of the sixties and seventies" *Ibid.*, p. 47.

10 Rancière 2009 p. 195.

11 We will think here of Rancière's famous sentence in *La leçon d'Althusser* [Althusser's Lesson]

cut” and “signifying cut” (*coupure signifiante*) where the loss of control of “structured signifying chains” *signifies* that “events are ‘flush with the real’” while carrying their subjective potentialities far beyond “the simple ‘political revolution’” imagined by Trotsky.¹²

Our hypothesis can be stated as a kind of problem-question: *If it is as a philosophy of the event, and then as a political philosophy of emancipation that has been stated the principle of a thought faithful to its constituent relation to the “events” of ‘68 and to the forms of subjectivation that cause history to differ from itself, the “liquidation of the liquidation” of the legacy from May 1968 - pointed out by Rancière at the end of his article in reference to the resurgence of the anti-capitalist trait of ‘68 into the struggles of the present - should it not today tend to the reflection, and our collective reflection, towards a new construction, towards an alternative construction of the concept and the practical idea of “revolution” which would take a few lessons from fifty years of defeat?*

Would anyone object to the “regressive” nature of such enterprise in its effect of repeating the program of the immediate after-68, as it was stated by Guattari in terms of “Molecular Revolution and Class Struggle”, that we could begin by arguing that the question of the articulation between “the class struggle, the implic[a]te struggle for liberation for the existence of war machines capable of opposing the oppressive forces” and “the the struggle, on the front of desire, of collective fixtures carrying out a permanent analysis, a *subversion of all powers*, at all levels”, has not, after all, lost any of its actuality. Just as the observation that the molecular revolution (Guattari successively refers to the struggles towards rights of common law prisoners, homosexual struggles, women's liberation movements, against psychiatric oppression...) quickly stumbled upon “the absence of a great revolutionary war machine¹³”. On the side of the Italian “movement of 77”, the lesson of *L’Orda d’Oro* is rigorously complementary: “We have probably lost because of our inability to produce a new social model from within the refusal of work, to link our practice to a program. We lost because of a lack of intellectual extremism. The adversary, on the other hand, has produced a coherent extremism[...].”¹⁴

published in 1974: “Althusserism was dead on the barricades of May along with many other ideas of the past” (Rancière 1974, p. 10).

12 Cf. Guattari 1972, p. 176-180.

13 Guattari 1977, p. 30, p. 34. “Molecular Revolution and Class Struggle” is the title of Part I. On a European scale, and not only in Italy where, in the field of autonomy, the “movement of 77” culminated as the social force of all the ruptures of which 1968 was synonymous, 1977 is undoubtedly the last year in which a continuum of struggles (including armed struggle) is deployed in *direct connection* with 68.

14 Balestrini and Moroni 2017, p. 589.

But forty years later, it would be a question of risking the passage of from a “thought of emancipation” (or of “subjectivation”) and of “resistance” (primarily ontological, if not strategically) to a new thought of the revolution *for our times of permanent counter-revolution*. For it is important to remember: if it no longer has to justify itself “the text and the image of the good revolution¹⁵” (with the party seizing the power as an apparatus equipping the organic subject of history: the working class), “the impossible revolution of ‘68” must have opened new possibilities for everything to happen, *since ‘68 and in response to ‘68*, as if - as Etienne Balibar recalls in a recent intervention on the concept of revolution¹⁶ - *the permanent world revolution had passed into the camp of capital*. Thus, Capital finally closes its reformist parenthesis by intensifying all the variants of the civil war in a “post-fascist figure”, “that of a [world] war machine which directly takes peace as its object, as the peace of the Terror and of Survival”, while commanding the “most terrible local wars as its own parts”¹⁷ and this *global war* that is not that of the Anthropocene but of *Capitalocene*.

It is in such a “context” that we must observe the double prohibition striking these two words: “revolution” and “civil war”, even though, as Rancière reminds us, the novelty of the movements we invent (France’s *Nuit Debout* is the latest) is in itself taken by a logic “which is primarily to resist the enemy.” *Without much success*. As for the coming insurrection, which, ten years later, has not really come, its penholders *Now* tell us that we must renounce the revolution as a process to better ensure the “patient growth of the power of insurrection” in a daily self-organization of life favoring forms of subjective dissent. This is the “secessionist” path of/in the post-68 that Rancière thought it should be reminded of the egalitarian demand while thinking afresh its “aesthetic” dimension. Not without the philosopher of emancipation finally pointing his fingers, and very precisely, at what seems to be the limit of the exercise when the modern history of the “good revolution” is completed. I take the liberty of quoting here at somewhat greater length because our “hypothesis” depends to a large extent on the problem raised by Rancière in answer to the question *En quel temps vivons-nous?* [In which time do we live?]

15 According to the expression of the collective *Les Revoltes Logiques* in introduction of the special issue on *Les Lauriers de Mai ou les chemins du pouvoir* (1968-1978), February 1978, p. 5. (Jacques Rancière was one of the animators of the magazine.)

16 Balibar 2016

17 Deleuze and Guattari 1980, pp. 525-526. It will be noted here that this theme of the “becoming” *world war machine* of capital has been very little exploited by the Deleuzians, who on the other hand wonder at length on the validity in itself and *for us* of the phrase “machine of war”. They prefer the “smooth space” because of its supposed “nomadic” creativity. On the contrary, Alliez-Lazarato, *Wars and Capital*, 2016/2018, challenges to reconstruct, step by step, the assembly of the war machine of capital.

“Spring 2016 [i.e. *Nuit debout*] has given new relevance to the idea of a community of struggle that is also a community of life. It has, at the same time, re-enacted the problem of the connection between the two, between a process of constitution of an autonomous people and that of the constitution of a force of struggle against the enemy. All modern history has been traversed by the tension between a class struggle conceived as the formation of an army to defeat the enemy and a class struggle thought of as a secession of a people inventing their institutions and their autonomous forms of life. The tension could be solved as long as the same people could include the army of combatant workers and those of the emancipated producers. On the other hand, it ruptures when it is no longer the factories or even the universities that are occupied, these are no longer the places of social function bringing together conflicting forces, but the empty space of the squares places where the community is symbolized in assemblies of the egalitarian times of speech, while in the surrounding streets resonate slogans like 'Everybody hates the police' and that the destruction of a few cash machines derisively compensates the destruction of thousands of jobs by the financial powers against those which the labor struggle proved powerless. [...] To be together - against a world order that separates and competes - and to fight against the enemy, are two forms of building up a subjective force stay apart from one another. That is to say that the being-together can not constitute itself as conflictual in its separation, in its autonomy.”¹⁸

Then, it is indeed necessary *to rethink the strategy*, as Rancière puts it a little further on.¹⁹ But how to do it if, after having made the diagnosis, one immediately affirms on a quasi-ontological level the existence of two types of conflicts, the conflict of forces (to which is referred the class struggle of the Marxist tradition) and the conflict of worlds (going through the subjective self-affirmation of the autonomy of the political subject)? What exactly is a strategy without conflicts of forces, if not a *strategy without force* that can only refer the "extraordinary invention of institutions" which is synonymous to revolution as a process - quite the opposite of the Leninist model, which liquidated in the aftermath of the Revolution his only *institutional innovation*, namely the soviets²⁰ - to the *only* "work of re-elaboration of the perceptible and the thinkable"²¹.

18 Rancière 2017, pp.28-29

19 Ibid., p.65.

20 See in this sense the Guattarian analysis of the "Leninist cut" (in Guattari 1972, p.186).

21 Rancière 2017, p. 63: "What really characterizes this revolution [the French Revolution] is its extraordinary invention of institutions - both official and parallel - [...], it is his work of re-elaboration

So that the "'we' that wonders if 'we do not have to define strategies by ourselves'... exists only as a subject of speech and a way of speaking"²². The Rancierian *fictional hypothesis* here presents itself as a third "aesthetic" way between the Butlerian performative and the strategy of the signifier of Laclau regarding the people it "articulates" (to use an Althusserian term of which we have ourselves made use) in a descriptive phenomenology of the present whose aesthetic relief leaves the "strategic" question curiously untouched. Last quote: "a fictional hypothesis[...] can only make sense by linking itself to other hypotheses, other propositions of world that makes as many different holes in the fabric of the dominant world."²³

Let's turn now to Balibar, at the end of his paper:

"if capitalism has become in a sense "ultra-revolutionary", beyond the conditions of its own stability, then every resistance that is rooted in life, labor and culture, is already "revolutionary", because it challenges "TINA" [There Is No Alternative], and raises the possibility of a *bifurcation*, or it contradicts the dogma of the acceleration of "progress" as unilineal and one-sided. For me, the *material conditions* - be they geopolitical, due to economic conjunctures, or ideological (since ideology is a very powerful material force) are "determinant". But civic and democratic insurrections, with a central communist component against ultra-individualism, also involving a "intellectual and moral reform" of the common sense itself (as Gramsci explained), are probably not destructible. Call "revolution" the indestructible? I would suggest that possibility."²⁴

But, on one hand, does this "possibility" not classically refer to the impossibility of a revolution when the *determining* "material conditions" are not present; and on the other hand, in a more contemporary and biopolitical way (in a sense, probably more Deleuzian than Foucauldian), to the ontological overdetermination (the indestructible, the indestructible vitalism) of resistance whose modes of subjectivation are obviously more *immediately* for a *becoming-revolutionary* than for

of the perceptible and the thinkable. It is this political imagination that changes the world. It is that which is cruelly lacking today and which is not compensated by the call of some to the communes and the call of others to the resurrection of the party and the soviets". Needless to say, we absolutely agree with this last point, without making ours what remains the presupposition of Rancière: the revolution of the 'people' as a political subject (in the, then unavoidable, framework of the nation as a collective reality)...

22 Ibid., p.68

23 Ibid.

24 Balibar 2016

“revolution”? And does this “becoming-revolutionary”, according to the notion elaborated by Deleuze and Guattari in the mid-1970s, not fall in a more phenomenological than strategic way of describing the “minority” spirit of the most singular struggles of ‘68 and of after-’68 as they continue until today? The affirmation of the prevalence of the ‘lines of flights’ over the dialectical contradiction poses in the foreground the revolutionary power of the connections between minorities in a non-totality of “transversality” and “connection” (we say today intersectionality) that can “find his figure or his universal consciousness in the proletarian²⁵” (or in the “multitude”) without properly confronting the question of a new (non-dialectical) principle of antagonism, negation and “division” capable of orienting the pragmatics of “transformation-multiplicities” (Deleuze and Guattari’s *multiplicités à transformation*) in history. And to rupture in our history dominated by the counter-revolution. To assert that “*everything* is divided but in itself²⁶” will not fail then to refer the question of non-totalization to the examination of the difficulties of the “intersections” between “minorities” with split sensitivities and radically divergent strategies.

II

Having begun in the middle, as it should be, I start again from the beginning by analyzing briefly and broadly the historical-dialectical concept of “revolution” with respect to which “‘68” is the “impossible revolution” of which we are still the contemporaries.

1 / Historical necessity *oblige* everything begins with the French Revolution. And for *good reason*: the revolution abandons the cosmological circle and its political application (with the eternal return of a certain number of constitutional forms which succeed one another that cannot be transgressed: nothing new under the sun, the revolution is a repetition) ~~for~~ to become “revolutionary” in the sense of an acceleration of time worth both irreversible direction and progress engaging an entire philosophy of history (whose prelude could only be the Terror: Hegel *explains*). Because the revolution is also an evolution (that is to say, bourgeois revolution), it can be applied to the “industrial revolution”, before this one is confronted with the movement leading from political revolution (the “right of representation”) to social revolution (the presentation of the movement of history in the world). Since 1830, and even more so after 1848 in his Marxist reading, “the history of the future becomes the history of the revolution” (Koselleck). The anticipation of the future becomes the dimension of the revolutionary

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25 Deleuze and Guattari 1980, p. 589.

26 Deleuze and Guattari 1972b, p. 91.

project: the awareness, the *consciousness (prise de conscience) of the laws* of history animated by the contradictions of capitalism supports the historical agent who will sweep away the past. With all the defeats of the nineteenth century, the crushing of the Paris Commune belongs to this past *overcome (aufgehoben)* by the victorious revolution of October 1917, supposed to bring the “human race” to the International of the Future (“The International will be the human race”). 1968, the *events* of ‘68 mark the threshold from which, on the scale of the world, in a total reversal of the concept of “world revolution” towards the new conditions of a revolutionary world, this future belongs to the past (*Koselleck's Futures past*). The revolution is no longer a *project for the future*. It is the *present alone* which creates less futures than possibilities (*des possibles*) brought about by what Guattari calls, in the 1960s, “collective agents of enunciation” capable of performing in a singular way the immediate knotting of social production and of the desiring production which is no longer *lacking*. This is one of the keys leading to *Anti-Oedipus*: the extension of “production” to “machinations of desire” and *production of subjectivity* (Guattari) invests on the present as a “machinic rupture” (with respect to the order of structure) and *construction* of all kinds of multiplicities and temporalities in a movement whose “transversality coefficients” are never given (past-present) or projected (in the future). The discontinuity of the revolutionary enunciation involves the “subjective rupture” (or subjectivity in rupture) of its forms of content and expression. At its simplest: with regards to ‘68 and the immediate French after-68, the March 22 Movement, the Action Committees and the Information Groups, the new ways of doing and talking promoted by the feminist and homosexual movement, which will inevitably conflict with the reconstruction of the party-form in ‘groupuscules’ where the “division” remains between the vanguard and the masses. The Guattarian difference between “subject-group” and “subjugated group” makes the political constructions of subjectification in each collective pass through as a radical problematization of politics itself, in the tension never “resolved” between these two poles. The history put in the present *becomes* this field of forces where, in an unprecedented sense, the “rupture of historical causality” is played out. A rupture, a break in the present of a non “programmatic” but “diagrammatic” form, where the subjective rupture with the set of power relations established throughout the cold war and that crystallizes in the *American way of life* is *consumed*. To stop returning to the same, the revolution must be total and totally present in each of the variables that determine its mutations: “We want everything. Now”.

It is this “revolution of the revolution” pointed out by Maurice Blanchot (in a letter to Marguerite Duras dated October 13, 1968) as the coming (and not the future) of the *communist imperative* and the only possible truth of the French May. Truth is this possible as a forcing of the “impossible real”.

And it may be noted that the expression “revolution of the revolution” fits for Blanchot in the wake of the work of Régis Debray, *Révolution dans la Révolution. Lutte armée et lutte politique en Amérique latine* (1967). This does not prevent him from quickly adopting the most spontaneous conception of the Action Committees, which he will push to the hyperbole of a “kind of eternity of immanence” aiming so little to work or to be inscribed in history that *impowerlessness* (*désœuvrement*) absolutely replaces any kind of organization²⁷. If Blanchot cites Benjamin's theses *On the concept of history* at the header of the first issue of the Student-writer Action Committee, the “Rupture of Time: Revolution” it is to identify the “power of refusal” to the *underworld* (*pègre*) and its lack of regard for the outcome of the insurrection: we are at the “end of history”, put “to the test of radical nihilism” against all kinds of *constituent powers*. The “rupture of time” is then the fact of a “vacancy of history” that does not only dislodge the revolution of a future to build, but also of any kind of inscription in the duration that could only *consent to a coup by which power is instituted and perpetuated*. Purely *destituent*, the conception of revolutionary politics as a continuation of war by other means is then only aimed at “provoking or [...] terrorizing” - and not at “gathering”²⁸. From Blanchot to Agamben, from Agamben to Tiqqun and to the Invisible Committee, the consequence unfolds following the thread of what has been lost in the long after '68 when the notion of “resistance” has finally imposed itself regarding the counter-revolution on march - namely, this “*effectiveness of the offensives*” (Foucault) which has as presupposed, but not as sole condition, this “Great Refusal” (Marcuse, focusing on the students of American campuses) which has rightly been said to haunt “the imaginary of the sixties” by combining under the sign of anti-capitalism the subjective rupture with what Foucault gives us to think, for a time, in terms of strategic refusal of the game of governmentality: “it is not about confrontation inside the games, but resistance to the game and refusal of the game itself [...]; we prevent the game from being played”²⁹.

Still, while placing at the heart of his analysis this strategy of refusal, Foucault does not seem to grasp the reality of the political-economic turn in Capital's response to *the impossible '68*, and that it is imposing on a forced march in the late 1970s. For what the French philosopher theorizes in terms of the “analytical philosophy of politics” is the substitution of power game for the economic stake of wealth

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27 See Blanchot 1969.

28 “Let's wave the red, the black, either, but to provoke or to terrorize and not to gather,” writes Blanchot in a typewriting.

29 See Foucault 1994, pp. 543-544. See also Foucault 1982, and the analysis that we propose in Alliez -Lazzarato 2016/2018.

production³⁰, which has been the *subject* of “what is called, since the nineteenth century, the Revolution”³¹. And that is still the difference between the “revolutionary struggles” which are affirmed by “this kind of resistance and struggle [having] essentially as a goal facts of power themselves, much more than what would be something like an economic exploitation, much more than something that would be an inequality”. Resistance struggles will therefore be called “immediate” in the sense that they do not seek “the main enemy or the weakest link” (as in Leninism) and neither do they expect salvation “from a future moment that would be revolution, that would be liberation, classless society, the decline of the State, the solution of the problems”. Foucault further defines the same struggles as “anarchical [in that] they inscribe themselves within a *history that is immediate, accepts and recognizes itself as indefinitely open*” in their challenge to reformism: while Reformism stabilizes the system of power, this is here “a destabilization of the mechanisms of power, a *seemingly endless destabilization*.”³²

At this point, it is hard not to argue that there was indeed a “main enemy” who was resuming the initiative with strategies of social warfare that without having to declare the “end of history”, have *managed to close* their “indefinitely open” being by bending the present to the new laws of wealth accumulation and redesign of *economic power* to put an end to the “seemingly endless destabilization” of power mechanisms. *Economic power* - it is obviously necessary to reunite what Foucault separates by prolonging at the wrong time - with all the exponents of the '68-thought - the optical effect of the “Glorious Thirties”. Keynesian or neoliberal, the economy enlarged to all its *mechanisms of power* which overdetermines it, is the politics of capital as science of domination.

2 / On its historical-dialectical development plan, the “world revolution” whose Idea nevertheless took shape outside the temperate zones of the Marxist economicist projection (Russia, China, Cuba... *the revolution against Das Kapital*, to use the Gramscian formula) is essentially Eurocentric in that it involves the division between the center and the periphery proper to the evolutionist schema: formation of the Nation-State - bourgeois revolution - proletarian revolution. With the hegemony of the proletariat in the national framework of a bourgeois revolution (Plekhanov repeated by Lenin in *What to do?*), it is up to the proletarian revolution to put an end to the contradiction between the development of the productive forces and the relations of production. On the periphery, it

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30 “This problem of the impoverishment of those who produce wealth, of the simultaneous production of wealth and poverty, I am not saying that it was totally solved in the West at the end of the twentieth century, but it does not pose more with the same urgency” (Foucault 1994, p. 536).

31 Ibid., p.551

32 Ibid., p.545-547.

will therefore be necessary to quickly build on the “delay” (with regards to the accomplishment of the historical mission of capitalism) in order to explain the success of the revolution (Russian or Chinese)³³, and the fact that uprisings, guerrillas, insurrections, etc., can since follow one another by making the model of “war of movement” their own. Even before the defeat of the German Communist Party, it is, as we know, the same position that is criticized in the West as “adventurism”: Lenin again, and of course Kautsky-Gramsci vs. Rosa Luxemburg. It is precisely because of the supposed progressive nature of capitalism that the strategic fracture between metropolis and colonies, constituted by the racial division over which capitalism *has been built in its totality and as a totality* after the conquest of the Americas, is reproduced within the theory of revolution by Marxist geography. Hence, post-war European Marxism shows such a weak awareness of the ongoing world revolution, and that it hardly gives itself the means to anticipate, organize and even analyze the change in conditions of possibility of revolution in the light of decolonization. Yet, that *from the beginning*, the revolutions *are not produced or fail where they should*, and that *they occur where they should not...* should contribute questioning with Foucault what could be called the “strategic method” - but by relating it to the theory of revolution. All the more so as the historical-dialectical schema was totally disrupted by the importance taken by the decolonization struggles in the very heterogenesis of the “impossible revolution of ‘68”: the Algerian war (a “police operation”: It was not until September 1999 that the expression “war of Algeria” was endorsed by the French National Assembly), the Vietnam War and the Guevarist armed struggle in Latin America - but all anticolonialist struggles have to be taken into account on a global scale, involving the “colonized from within” of imperialist metropolises: struggle for civil rights in the US, the question of “immigrants” in France, etc.: what Henri Lefebvre, in one of the first books published on the French ‘68 will call “endo-colonisation.”³⁴

To put it simply: with its planetary, transnational and polycentric dimension intersecting the global and the local at the crossroads of all the crises that jostle the economy of the North-South and East-West axes, 1968 is, as *the first (and impossible) (non-socialist) “World revolution”*, the first phenomenon of *alter-globalisation*. And it is indeed up to the “liberation wars” to have exploded the Eurocentric framework

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33 Lenin explains in his “Report on War and Peace” of March 7, 1918, that the world’s socialist revolution can not begin as easily in the West, in the advanced countries, as in Russia.

34 Lefebvre 1968, p. 103 sq. The book - from a long article originally published in the “*Dossier de la révolte étudiante*” of the journal *L’Homme et la société* (April-May-June 1968) - opens with the question of the event: “The event thwarts the forecasts; to the extent that it is historical, it upsets calculations. It can go as far as to reverse the strategies that took into account its possibility. Conjunctural, the event shakes the structures that allowed it. The predictions, the suppositions, inevitably based on analyzes and partial observations, can not rise to the total character of what occurs.”

of THE revolution by imposing a radical break with the dialectical scheme that animated it. Fanon *via* Nietzsche vs. Hegel-Marx: the struggle for recognition *violently derails* by affirming the antagonistic difference of colonized people from the non-synchronous nature of European and non-European perspectives. This rupture is therefore also the bearer of a whole “epistemic decolonization” (Matthieu Renault) which renews in depth the relationship between war and politics. Because we realize that war as a continuation of politics by other means is a European “formula” that has never been practiced in the colonies. But, it is also the question of internal colonization that introduces politics as a continuation of war by other means at the heart of metropolises by reintroducing at the same time all the modalities of world war in revolutionary theory. Hence the importance of the substitution of the North-South axis (the African continent is boiling, the guerrilla warfare is raging in Latin America) to the East/West axis, with the multiplication of Souths in the North - and the break-up of the ideological bloc of “real socialism” in the East (Prague, Warsaw, after Hungary in 1956)... The dividing line, nonetheless remains: hundreds of protesters are killed, wounded, arrested or reported missing after the Mexican army opened fire on the students gathered at the Three Cultures Square Tlateloco in Mexico against the “socialist” government of the Institutional Revolutionary Party. It is October 2nd, 1968, ten days before the opening of the Olympic Games, where two black American athletes will raise a black-gloved fist in tribute to the Black Panthers.

It is worth mentioning Hans-Jürgen Krahl, a young philosopher who died early and was a major figure in the German student movement, in his speech at the Congress on Vietnam held in Berlin in February 1968, attracting thousands of European protesters³⁵: Vietnam, Cuba, the guerrillas in Latin America “have created a new, qualitatively new fact in the history of the world: *the actuality of the revolution* [*Aktualität der revolution*, Lukacs’ term]. For the first time in the history of capitalism, revolution is a globally present and vivid possible/possibility (*eine global gegenwärtige und anschauliche Möglichkeit*) that is real/realized, even if, for now, it only takes place on the outskirts of late-capitalist civilization, as an armed struggle by the oppressed and poor countries of the third world [...] [But] What is the mediation between the actuality of the revolution in world history and the daily actions of protest movements in

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35 As noted by Geneviève Dreyfus-Armand and Jacques Portes, this Vietnam Congress “is the highlight of the meeting between the European protest movements” (“The International Interactions of the Vietnam War and May-68”, in *Les Années 68. Le temps de la contestation*, Geneviève Dreyfus-Armand, Robert Frank, Marie-Françoise Lévy, Michelle Zancarini-Fournel (ed.), Brussels, Éditions Complexe / IHTP, 2000, 66. It was during this meeting that the French discovered the tactics of struggle of the German students of the SDS (*Sozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund*), borrowed from the practices of action of the *American Students for a Democratic Society*.”

the metropolis?"³⁶. The question takes on a new relevance in 2011, when the permanent crisis maintained differentially across the planet by neo-liberalism, with the 2007-2008 financial crisis and its "shock treatment"³⁷, reaches a level such that the incidence of antagonism seems to give a new principle of reality to the impossible revolution. But the "movement of the squares" which develops on both sides of the neocolonial dividing line, will come up against structures of power and social warfare that are far from being the same in the US (Occupy Wall Street), in Greece (movement against the debt), in Turkey (mobilization around Gezi Park against the new ottoman sultan) or in Spain (with the Indignados), and in Tunisia or in Egypt. A manifested example of the "objective contemporary non-contemporaneity" (Ernst Bloch re-read by Krahl) commanded by capital, that knows how to hold together, in times of global exploitation and domination, radically heterogeneous temporalities by intensifying globalization. Facing On the other hand, the impossibility of an "a-critical transcription (*eine unkritische Übertragung*)" of guerrilla strategies in the metropolises no longer allows to retain from them "the model of a fight without compromise (*eine Modell kompromisslosen Kampfes*)"³⁸ where it is still a question of conflict and war. What Foucault had withheld when he was still advancing ten years later: "What I would like to discuss, starting from Marx, is not the problem of class sociology [privileged by Marxism], but of the strategic method of struggle. [...] What is the struggle, when we say class struggle? Because saying struggle, it is about conflict and war. But how does this war develop? What is its purpose? What are its means? [...] My interest goes to the incidence of the antagonisms themselves: who enters the struggle? With what and how? Why is there this struggle? What is it based on?"³⁹

The difference compared to the 1968 years - engaging with our point of *non-contemporaneity* to 1968 - is that no one, in the North as in the South, seems to be asking the question of the revolution, this question that Krahl wanted to distinguish from a "revolutionary theory" ("a revolutionary theory is not the same as a theory of revolution"). Everything happens as if neo-liberalism had succeeded in erasing the revolution from the memory of the "vanquished", in the course of a trial reducing it to a "regime change" (the surplus reserved for "backward" countries). To follow Asef Bayat, *Refolution* (composed of *reform* and *revolution*) and *Revolution without Revolutionaries* are needed as expressions *Making Sense of the Arab Spring*. "Rich in tactics of mobilization but poor in vision and strategy of transformation, [...] a mix of revolutionary mobilizations

36 Krahl, 2008, p. 148 sq.

37 See again Alliez and Lazzarato, 2016/2018, last chapter

38 As stated by Krahl 2008, p.. 150.

39 Foucault 1994, p. 606.

and reformist trajectories. Defenselessness against the domestic and regional counterrevolution was one of such anomaly."⁴⁰

3 / The old regime of the revolution was essentially "ruled" on the dialectical model of the Hegelian-Marxist *Aufhebung* recognizing no other revolutionary subject than the working class (the most skilled and therefore the *most conscious*) as the driving force of history at work. Now, what arises around 1968 is a new working "class", or rather a new, *unskilled proletariat* that embraced in their own struggle the anti-union and *disintegrating* (with regard to the "integration" of the working class⁴¹) theme of the "refusal of work" in its struggles. The refusal of work commands to the *politics in act* of the "revolutionary task [aimed at] the suppression of the proletariat itself, that is, from now on, the suppression of the corresponding distinctions [to those that the bourgeoisie have introduced into the proletariat] between the vanguard and the proletariat, the proletariat and the sub-proletariat [...] to free, on the contrary, subjective and singular positions capable of communicating transversely⁴²". *On the contrary, therefore*, of the socialist renewal of the State in the Party, as it unfolds between the "Leninist rupture" and the Cultural Revolution - which is definitely "the last significant political sequence still internal to the Party-State and failing there (*s'y échouant*)"⁴³.

The new "class composition" (including immigrants) emerging in the years 1968 is in close conjunction with the proletarianization of the student's world which in turn modifies the "class antagonism" by extension of the "socialization of capital"⁴⁴. This is not without extending the question of capitalist production to "reproduction" (with the explosion of the "female labor force"⁴⁵) and to the condition of women outside the sole question of "domestic work" - because "Women are oppressed within the sexual model". Hence, too, that '68 marks the explosion of the "wars of subjectivity" directed against power, and against a *diffuse power* whose "microphysics" can no longer be fought by the mere seizure of political-institutional power, supported by by the "professional revolutionary" of a male avant-garde speaking the

40 Cf. Bayat 2017, p. 22, p. 27.

41 Recall the title of the third part of "Causality, subjectivity and history": "Integration of the working class and analytical perspective" (1966).

42 Deleuze 1972a, p. VII.

43 Badiou 2018, p. 49. We take for a touch of humor the following sentence: "Already, May 68 and its aftermath, it is a little something else."

44 Cf. Krahl 2008, p. 339 sq.

45 Think here about the female worker in the documentary "The return to work at the Wonder factories in June 1968": "No, I will not go in there! I will not put foot in this jail!" (<https://vimeo.com/276078088>).

“universal militant language”. The “bolcho complex” (Guattari again) works here with the Oedipus complex. Carla Lonzi, with the group *Rivolta Femminile*: “Behind the Oedipus complex, it is not the taboo of incest that we can guess, but the exploitation of this taboo by the father to ensure his salvation”. It is this reversal of psychoanalysis that *Anti-Oedipus* will seek to think on the plane of immanence of the “coextension of social production and the production of desire,” and that Guattari, after having “restored the unconscious historical perspectives on a background of unquietness and unknown⁴⁶”, will develop in terms of “micropolitics of desire and everyday life” (homosexuality is affirmed inseparable from a “becoming woman” that concerns everyone).

III

But is it not Deleuze himself who says in 1980:

“*Anti-Oedipus* has been a complete failure. It would take a long time to analyze, but the current situation is very difficult and stifling [...]. I cannot say why I have so many bad feelings⁴⁷”.

Four short years later, and after the socialist government of Mitterrand promoted the “turning point of rigor” (a neoliberal-inspired policy of austerity *made in France* combined with trade union consultation), Deleuze signed an article with Guattari entitled “Mai 68 n’a pas eu lieu⁴⁸” [May ‘68 did not take place]. The defeat is so well recorded (*we are in 1984*, with Orwellian echoes included) that it somehow reflects on the explanation proposed in the context of the failure of a “left” reformist policy whose focus is to reorient the terms - rather than analyzing the defeat of ‘68 and the failure of its reformist “reconversion” sealed by the left government. Because the socialist left is engaged in a completely different movement: of *conversion* to the values of the market economy and its neoliberal international order. Deleuze and Guattari write in what will be their last text on the events of 1968: “French society has shown a radical inability to carry out a *subjective reconversion* at the collective level as required by ‘68: then, how could it currently operate an *economic reconversion* under the conditions of the ‘left’?” (our underlines). The American New Deal and the Japanese post-war boom, despite “all sorts of ambiguities and even reactionary structures,” are taken as “very different examples of subjective reconversion[...] capable of meeting the demands of the event”. So much so, that it is towards this reformist hypothesis cut off from the relations of social and geopolitical forces that imposed it, and which are lacking at a time when “the only subjective conversions at the collective level are those of the American wild

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46 Deleuze 1972a, p. III.

47 Deleuze 2003

48 Ibid.. All the quotes that follow are taken from this text.

capitalism, or of a Muslim fundamentalism”, that the constituent relation of the event with the “new collective subjectivity” seems to be renewed. Like its outcome and impasse, depending on whether “*the society*” will be able or *not to* “form collective agency corresponding to the new subjectivity”. But this one is now that of the *children of May ‘68*, of whom Coppola’s Rusty James is the biotype: “a little at the end of the line[...] a mixture of culture coming from the street and from the university[...] and he does not see nothing [...]”. The question of life or death created by the event (“*du possible, sinon j’étouffe [give me something possible, otherwise I will suffocate]*”) on the mode of a clairvoyance phenomenon (“as if a society suddenly saw what was intolerable in it and also saw the possibility of something else⁴⁹”) becomes a matter of survival in a present with *no other possible* than the *no future* of the late 1970s. “Every time the possible has been closed” by the reaction against ‘68, “on the left almost as much as on the right,” concludes Deleuze and Guattari. Before reopening in *extremis* the prospect of a “*creative reconversion*” discovering that the field of the possible must be “elsewhere” *to take over from a general May ‘68* that did not take place. A geopolitical Elsewhere moving along the West-East axis to “disaggregate the relationships of conflict” and distribution of the world in zones of influence by the shared policy of overarmament (pacifism); and on the North-South axis to invent a new internationalism, “which is no longer based solely on an alliance with the Third World, but on third-world phenomena in the rich countries themselves.”

But is not this “elsewhere” the result of a political strategy that would “take over” above all from this philosophy of *pure event* supposed to distinguish, as such, and as ontologically at the beginning of the article⁵⁰, 1968, from the revolutions that preceded it (the French Revolution, the Commune, the October Revolution), where the share of event was (still) mingled with “determinism and causality”? This is the nuclear heart of ‘68 thought, where the *1968 subject* would think himself somehow in its most constituent ontological-political difference. It will take nothing less than all the “machinic materialism” (Guillaume Sibertin-Blanc) of *Thousand Plateaux* to give meaning to the statement that “before being, there is politics⁵¹”. Stating that for our part, with Maurizio Lazzarato, we translate or *transduce into: strategy precedes ontology*. In 1984 at least, when the

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49 This will strangely send Deleuze’s reader back to what he wrote of post-war Italian neo-realism as the rise of pure optical situations determined by the “crisis of the image-action”. What can therefore be returned to the side of the failure of the “Leninist break”, committed to the successful revolution. The bourgeois woman of Europe 51 “sees, she has learned to see”. Let’s say “a mutation concerning the general notion of situation. The bourgeois of Europe 51 “sees, she has learned to see”. This is “a mutation concerning the general concept of situation.” Deleuze 1985, p. 7-17.

50 Hence the convocation of Prigogine and Stengers’ Far-From-Equilibrium Physics in the first paragraph.

51 Deleuze and Guattari 1980, p. 249.

spring primers of the molecular revolution (“new relationships with the body, time, sexuality, environment, culture, work...” mentioned under the “subjective conversion”) gave way to the “Winter Years” (Guattari), the exclusion of “determinisms and causalities” leads, as “collective agents”, only to a *society* that is a little too “civil” and a *new subjectivity* without any “class” connotation, whose horizon and framework can only be that of Europe. For it is indeed this European “reformist” illusion, this Eurocentrism in which the ‘68 thought undoubtedly meets one of its main limits, which has made it possible to ignore the mutant multiplicity of war strategies that capital adopts in these same years by *calculating* as never the violence, repression, economic and technological “innovations” according to the situations and according to the intensities of the conflicts which traverses them.

It is to face the radicality of the subjective *and objective* ruptures operated by the 1968 “movements” in their exploration of “the social unconscious of the revolution” (Guattari) that capital launches against the emerging possibilities (*les possibles émergents*) of this “strange revolution” a no less “strange civil war”, cold *and* hot, which extends throughout the 1970s. Its most striking and dramatic episode are civil wars of incredible violence that have crossed the entire South American continent, and that the Eurocentric perspective of ‘68 thought hardly grasps in its extent and scope. That, from the strategic point of view of capital, this is not a civil war waged in “peripheral” environments is sufficiently demonstrated by the “experiments” of the Chicago Boys in Chile. The policies of structural adjustments, privatization, pension funds, the new role of the State and the dismantling of Welfare policies, access to university and “education” conditioned by access to credit , etc., was a research laboratory of the fascist “pacification” of a military dictatorship. These neoliberal policies were then then gradually implemented under the the IMF's leadership in the rest of the world, with all the debt policies that mark the entry into a total social war (*the organization* of the fiscal crisis of the city of New York gives the starting point of the *new urban wars*) that can extend to a continent (Africa).

We return to our original hypothesis, which we can now risk formulating in the form of a *thesis*: because the counter-revolution we have been facing since 1968 is a “permanent revolution” of the world war machine of capital, the “liquidation of the liquidation” of 1968 will have to go beyond “the closing of classical revolutionism⁵²” by reopening the question-problem of revolution. For if there is no longer any possible dialectical mediation on the horizon of a reformism always imposed by a local and global relationship of forces, or within the national framework of a “left-

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52 Badiou 2018, p. 40.

wing populism”, the logic governing the relations of power is definitely war, in its regime of extensive multiplication (*proxy wars* on several fronts) and intensive (these wars of classes, races, sexes capitalized by the new fascisms). What Foucault, on the one hand, with the reversal of Clausewitz's formula that has already taken place (politics is the continuation of the civil war by other means), Deleuze and Guattari, on the other, with their war machine and analysis of the mutations of capitalism had done more than glimpsing. Before turning to a thought of “subjectivation” without revolution that can be said, here and there, “ethico-aesthetic.”

Foucault, who imposed the term “subjectivation” at the turn of the 1970s, introduced into his genealogy the old Horkheimer question: “But is this revolution so desirable?”. *This* revolution? The question is so badly *or so well* posed that it resuscitates the figure of an “infinite” power to which one can only oppose, in order to limit it, “impassable laws and unrestricted rights” in which the philosopher will greet a development, at the universal level, of liberal governmentality in its defense of *society* against the State. We would simply like to recall, in conclusion, that it is not only revolutions that end badly when they must be opposed, in the name of defending uprisings (against their fallout in history), to an anti-strategic theoretical morality.⁵³

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53 See Michel Foucault, “Inutile de se soulever?” (1979), in *Dits et Écrits*, op. cit., p. 794. This is the last text published by Foucault on the Islamic revolution in Iran, which precedes for a few months the courses of the College of France on liberal governmentality.

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