

## DOCILE TO TRANS

**by Jacques-Alain Miller**

The storm has broken. The trans crisis is upon us. Trans people are in a trance (let's get that one out of the way, it was to be expected) while among the psy community, pro-trans and anti-trans grapple with each other with all the gusto of Big-Endians and Little-Endians in *Gulliver's Travels*.

I'm joking.

Rightly so—and yet, how inappropriate it is to joke, to laugh and to mock when the stakes in this war of ideas could not be more serious and when what is at stake is nothing less than our civilisation and its famous malaise, or *discontent*, diagnosed by Freud at the very beginning of the 1930s of the last century? Is the satirical mode suitable for such a serious subject? Certainly not. So, I will make amends. I will not be caught again.

I wrote “War of ideas”. This is the title of Eugénie Bastié's latest book. It came back to me unexpectedly. I don't think the word “trans” appears in it a single time. The book ends on the current state of radical feminism and the war of the sexes. Given that this pretty young mother is also the savviest of journalists, it's safe to say that the outbreak of the French trans crisis came after the book was written. Let's find the date of the book's launch, and we'll know that, three months earlier, this crisis was not yet perceptible to a media eye as sharp as Eugénie B's.

Let's see. I pre-ordered *La guerre des idées. Enquête au cœur de l'intelligentsia française* through Amazon and it was delivered on the 11th of March. So, at the beginning of this year, trans had not yet entered what the author—this auteur, auteure, autrice—calls “the public debate”. It was invisible, or *invisibilised*, to use a word dear to *decolonials* and other *wokes*. Or perhaps we were all, not authors of any persuasion, but *ostriches*?

Another play on words! A repeat offender! Incorrigible! I plead guilty. But with extenuating circumstances: a difficult childhood, an addiction to signifiers, pernicious influences. I cannot go any further into the trans question without pleading my case.

## **The pro domo plea**

From a very young age, I liked to play with and on names and words. For example, I used to call my younger brother, Gérard, Géraldine. He didn't become a transsexual, and nowadays he sports a beard on all the television channels. I've been reading since I was very young, and what were my first favourite books? Jules Verne's *Journey to the Center of the Earth* and Edgar Allan Poë's *The Golden Scarab*, both stories of a secret message to be deciphered. I loved Rabelais lists, Molière's farces, Voltaire's antics, Hugo's litanies, Alphonse Allais's absurdities (but not Camus's "philosophy of the absurd"), Gide's *Les Caves du Vatican* (but not *Les nourritures terrestres*), the Surrealists' 'exquisite corpse', and Queneau and Co.'s "exercises in style".

When I knew Latin, I read the classics, of course, but secretly cherished the satires of Juvenal. Not being a Hellenist (my father had demanded that I learn Spanish, because "so widespread in the world"), I read Lucian of Samosate only in French. I never missed the spoonerisms of "L'Album de la Comtesse" in *Le Canard enchaîné*. I read Freud's book on the *Witz* very early on.

So I was not very serious. I respected no one but the great writers, the great philosophers, the great artists, the great warriors and statesmen, or rather state personalities, poets and mathematicians. I had even conceived, like Stendhal, an "enthusiasm" for mathematics; perhaps it came to me also from "my horror for hypocrisy".

Then, at the age of twenty, I had the misfortune to fall into the clutches of a 63-year-old doctor, psychiatrist, psychoanalyst, known as the white wolf for being a black sheep [*mouton noir*]. Over time he became a *brébis galeuse*<sup>1</sup>—transition! He lived in a dark, low-ceilinged mezzanine, a den, a real lair, in a building in the 7th arrondissement where Isidore Ducasse's banker had lived, which makes it the only place in Paris where we are sure that Lautréamont actually visited. Dr Lacan, for it is him I am talking about, made a big deal of the fact. He told me about it the first time he received me in his office, whose cramped conditions made any 'social distancing' between bodies impossible and forced an oppressive proximity.

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<sup>1</sup> [TN: A French variant of black sheep.]

This irregular, non-standard character did not hide his game. My Stendhalian horror of hypocrisy could find nothing to reproach him for. He was a devil in open view, who ostensibly mocked everything, that is, everything that was not him and not his cause. In the age of benevolence, he was not shy about saying to his Seminar, "I have no good intentions". On the one occasion when he spoke on French television, prime time, he said, referring to the analyst as a saint: "Not giving a damn for distributive justice [...] is where he most often started from".<sup>2</sup> He went so far as to boast in public, shortly before his death, that he had spent his life "being the Other in spite of the law". To make matters worse for me, he not only sheltered me under his wing, his black wing, his demonic wing, but I became his relative: he granted me the hand of one of his daughters, the one who had the devil's beauty, so to speak, and whom he had named Judith, playing his cards close to his chest: the man who would enjoy her had to know that he would pay for it with a fate worthy of Holofernes.

How did he catch me? By putting in my hands Gottlob Frege's *Foundations of Arithmetic*, *Die Grunlagen der Arithmetik*, 1884, a logistic elaboration of the concept of number (according to him, arithmetic was based on logic.) Three years earlier, Lacan had himself done his utmost to demonstrate to his *followers* the similarity between the dynamic genesis of Frege's sequence of natural integers (0, 1, 2, 3, etc.) and the unfolding of what he called a signifying chain. "They only hindered me", he said, "let's see if you can do better". My simple presentation earned me a triumph among the psychoanalysts, his disciples, and at the same time aroused much jealousy on their part: "But how did he do it? And to think that he is not even in analysis!" And I wasn't even the 'son-in-law' yet, although a discreet romance had developed between myself and Judith.

Philippe Sollers, a prince of Letters who had just begun to follow Lacan's Seminar, "charming, young and trailing all hearts behind him", asked me for my text for his review *Tel Quel*. I had the nerve to refuse him, wanting to reserve it for the first issue, mimeographed at the École normale, of *Cahiers pour l'analyse*, which I had just founded with three friends, Grosrichard, Milner and Regnault. A fourth, on the other hand, Bouveresse, a member of the same Cercle d'épistémologie, was still fulminating twenty years later, now a professor at the Collège de France, against the nerve I had had to *Lacanise* Frege, who was sacrosanct for the logicians. As for Derrida, my philosophy

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<sup>2</sup> [TN: Jacques Lacan, *Television: A Challenge to the Psychoanalytic Establishment*, (London & New York: Norton, 1990) p. 16.]

tutor, he pouted: he judged my demonstration to be abstruse (he was not very well versed in mathematical logic). Strangely enough, through channels I don't know, my little exposé entitled "Suture" became a classic for film studies in the United States (?).

This was how the world wagged at the time when the strict structuralism of Roman Jakobson and Claude Lévi-Strauss was becoming an intellectual epidemic in and around Paris. The episode made my reputation as a precocious genius of Lacanian studies. I was forever pinned like a butterfly on the album of the Parisian intelligentsia: *Papilio lacanor perinde ac cadaver*. This is how I found myself at the mercy of Jacques Marie Emile Lacan, a great sinner of men before the Eternal.

Fifty years after the fact, it is time for *MeToo* to confess. *Horresco referens*, it's awful to say, but I was, for years, a victim of unspeakable and incessant abuse of authority by my father-in-law, in both public and private, constituting a true crime of moral and spiritual incest. I gave in to something stronger than myself. I even consented—*Shame!* as Adèle Haenel would say—to take some pleasure in it, a certain pleasure. I remained divided forever.

The monster having passed away forty years ago, the lawsuits I would come to initiate would only have a symbolic but nevertheless decisive impact on healing the wounds in my soul and repairing the damage done to my self-esteem.

I reserve for the judicial authorities the details of the testimony I am giving. But I want it to be known: just like the dust of which he was made that spoke through the mouth of Saint-Juste, braving persecution and death, do not forget, dear reader, that it is *a proud victim*,<sup>3</sup> a proud victim, who speaks to you through mine. "*But I defy them to wrest from me the independent life I gave myself before the centuries and the heavens*".

Let's go back to our trans people. They are victims. Like me.

### ***The trans revolt***

It seems that the current directors of the École de la Cause freudienne—which was once brought to the baptismal font by me and mine before being adopted by Lacan—had a good nose for it, since they invited the famous trans Paul B. Preciado, darling of the woke media, to speak at the École's 2019 Annual Conference in the Grand Amphitheatre at the Palais des Congrès in Paris. Preciado accepted graciously.

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<sup>3</sup> [TN: In English in the original.]

Why this unprecedented invitation, which startled the psy community? The trans crisis was not yet upon us, but it could be anticipated. Indeed, if we take an overview of things, if we look back and take the long view of the process that has culminated today, in France, in the trans revolt, what do we see?

Let us say it quickly. We must remember that the sick, our patients, all those suffering souls who used to present themselves to be *taken care of* by *healers*—whoever they were: nurses, doctors, pharmacists, surgeons, dentists, acupuncturists, osteopaths, physiotherapists, psychiatrists, psychologists, psychotherapists, and even psychopomps, not to mention the bonesetters, fortune-tellers, witches, so deeply scrutinized in the past by a Jeanne Favret-Saada, then a Lacanian, in a memorable study, marabouts, healers, spell-casters, and so on, without forgetting the rest of us, *not least* psychoanalysts, Lacanian and others—this mass therefore of *seekers* of care were kept stupefied before “power-knowledge” (Foucault) of *dispensers* of care. Their only right was to remain silent, except with the psy, of course, and other charlatans of all kinds.

A new paradigm emerged after WW2. Day after day, year after year, governments of the left, governments of the right, governments of the centre, whispered to them, these oppressed ones: “Speak up! Don’t let them do it to you! You have rights. Just because you are sick, you are no less a citizen. Do as everyone else does: complain! make them accountable! get yourself reimbursed! get yourself compensation! The *health dictatorship* is over! Make way for the *health democracy*!”

### **“What do you think happened?”**

“What do you think happened? The people revolted. The “trans” and their allies got the message loud and clear, and they are now pushing it to its ultimate consequences. Often, to rise up, you need some encouragement or even an injunction from above, from the Great Headquarters. Example: the Chinese Cultural Revolution. It was Chairman Mao’s directives that led to the formation of gangs of Red Guard across that vast country, creating havoc throughout society.

In France, the public authorities did their best to dismantle the ancient “subject supposed to know” that governed the medical order. What is happening? The S<sup>2</sup>K finds himself cast off with the dregs,<sup>4</sup> discredited, lacerated, wrung out, tortured, down on his

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<sup>4</sup> [TN. S<sup>3</sup> (*sujet supposé savoir*), S<sup>2</sup>K (subject supposed to know)]

knees, with a dunce's cap upon his head, dragged through the streets amid jeering, thrown out of the window. He falls like Humpty Dumpty to the foot of the wall behind which the suffering population had been penned up, and there he is, Humpty, in a thousand pieces. The wall in turn collapses. The prisoners are having a ball. Everywhere it is the Night of August the 4th, the end of the medical and healthcare practitioner's privilege.<sup>5</sup> And order went *plop!*, which in the past, and not so long ago, prevailed with difficulty in matters of arse.

### ***Humpty Dumpty***

*Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall.  
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall.  
All the king's horses and all the king's men  
Couldn't put Humpty together again.*

### ***Respect and kindness***

In affairs of the arse, that is to say, in the field of sexuality if you prefer to speak like a stiff, it's now a big mess. Now everything is upside down. Butler and her Maenads have made an impossible shambles of it all. I roasted Eric Marty for a good three hours, but I didn't get to the bottom of the mysteries of *gender*. The Mysteries of Pompeii is a mere trifle by comparison. In short, they can be summed up as follows: "The phallus, I tell you. "Phalle, you will guide our steps", as Zimmerwald once did. But *gender*? No need for a compass. Everyone is losing their bearings. No longer fooled by anything, people are wandering. It's the night in which all the cats are grey, as in Schelling's Absolute mocked by Hegel. Nevertheless, everyone is talking about it. Everyone has an idea. Gender is nowadays a matter of course for the "contemporary subject".

My grandson, the last of the Millers, the youngest heir to the name, 16 years old, an environmental activist, a fan of mathematical physics and *In Search of Lost Time*, lectures me on *gender*. He has trans friends in his class. Half a century ago, I was in the same high school, at the same age, and there were no trans people among us, at most one or two dandies who were a bit androgynous around the edges and who *dandied around* to amuse the gallery. We were all boys. No girls, no trans people. My generation still wore smocks at elementary school. We wrote with a dip pen, a ballpoint was not allowed. It was the Middle Ages.

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<sup>5</sup> [TN. Cf. the Night of the 4<sup>th</sup> of August 1789, and the abolition of feudal law in France on that day.]

My grandson: “You mustn’t say, Jacques-Alain, that he has *become* a girl. It’s upsetting for him. No, he *is* a girl”. I reply, “And when your big, well-coiffed friend tells you he’s a girl, what do you do?” “I accept what he says with respect and kindness”, he says. End of story. “*No pasaran?*”<sup>6</sup> Well they *han pasado*, they well and truly have passed. “*E pur si muove!*”<sup>7</sup> The phrase is apocryphal, it means: In spite of all the inquisitions, all the demonstrations, gender is turning! Of it one can make neither head nor tale. But no problem. The less clear it is, the better it works. And it sweeps everything along in its path.

### **MGTOW**

National public health policy since 1945 has paved the way for the trans revolt. A chronology can be reconstructed, step by step. Before going into the causes of the event, let us not dismiss the facts—unlike Jean-Jacques in his *Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality among Mankind*. This is, I think, the book I reread most in my adolescence, between the ages of 14 and 18. The title re-emerged during my analysis, in a dream, in the form: “... *on the inequality between men and women*”. The unconscious had interpreted me. This was an occasion for he who I was to laugh inexhaustibly, followed by the recognition in him of a machismo hidden behind a bias towards my mother. In fact, in my childhood, when my father *made* my mother *cry*, who suffered from his compulsive Don Juanism—which he kept like Swann until his death at the age of 93—I definitely took her part. I was his mother’s little white knight.

The male chivalric fantasy has since been pinned down and classified. *White Knight* has recently become a term used to stigmatise the saviours of women in distress, and all those who declare themselves to be supporters of *gender equality* in order to cede all privileges to women. It is not clinicians who have isolated the phenomenon, but male militants, defenders of a virility they believe to be under threat by the progress of feminism. They are grouped in the *masculinist* movement MGTOW, for *Men Going Their Own Way*.

The word ‘*Way*’ carries a lot of weight. We remember Sinatra crooning *My Way*. There is also the American idiomatic expression, “*My way or the highway*”. It translates as: “Take

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<sup>6</sup> [TN: “They shall not pass”, answered in the next sentence meaning “they have passed”.]

<sup>7</sup> [TN: “And yet it moves”, a phrase attributed to Galileo.]

it or leave it", "You do as I say or get out", etc. The expression became the title of a song by a so-called *pimp-rock* band. MGTOW is in a way the Tao of macho men.

The pimps' band is called *Limp Bizkit*, and I learn by Googling that the name is a distortion of *Limp Biscuit*. Highly suggestive. For a pimp, having a limp biscuit probably means horror, unemployment, shame. So the name is apotropaic: you ward off the curse by the mere fact of assuming it *with pride*. This is what the gays did with the insult "queer".

There's more: while consulting *The Urban Dictionary*, from the reading of which I always derive a *surplus-enjoyment* because of the extraordinary inventiveness of American street talk, I came across the expression *Penis biscuit*, which refers to a certain practice involving the foreskin. Go and see for yourself, because, as they used to do in the old days in order to veil obscenities, I couldn't reproduce the definition without translating it into Latin, and since my *khâgne* is now a long way behind me,<sup>8</sup> I don't have the vocabulary I need right now.

However, it is enough to follow [mgtow.com](http://mgtow.com), the website responsible for disseminating the philosophy of the movement and its main activities, to verify that it does indeed, as Wikipedia says, cultivate a misogynistic, anti-feminist and hateful ideology. We do not yet have the equivalent here in France.

I can only think of Zemmour's speech, which could pass for the prefiguration of such a movement, or rather for the expression of the desire for it to exist. But the French polemicist remains a timid masculinist, who is far from showing women the same loathing he has for minorities of colour—in a well-argued polemic, it must be admitted — who, in his eyes, infest the country and are leading it to ruin. He sees the French Muslims as future dominants, and he makes the *kafir* majority tremble by predicting that they will inexorably become a minority. What is noticeable is that his rhetoric is modelled on that of those de-colonials, genderqueers and *woke* people whom he vows to demonise. He simply reverses it. That's the way of the age: the same structure of thought is imposed on everyone, on you, on me. It's the spirit of the age, the *Zeitgeist*.

### ***The axiom of supremacy***

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<sup>8</sup> [TN: An induction course in French universities, officially known as the *classe préparatoire littéraire*.]

If I dwell on MGTOW, it is because we see at work in this movement, and as if for all eyes to see, several of the constitutive axioms of the *paradigm shift* of the new times. The word is Kuhn's, the idea owes a lot to Foucault, who is himself indebted to Koyré, I won't go back any further.

What is the initial notion of this paradigm shift? Let us say by hypothesis that it is distributive injustice. This very old notion here takes the form of what I will call the axiom of supremacy. It is understood that society is structured from top to bottom by a matrix of domination, domination being an asymmetrical relation between two powers of opposite sign (binarism!). With MGTOW, it is not capitalists and proletarians, nor the elites and the people, nor Franks and Gauls, what have you, it is simply women and men.

According to MGTOW, it is women who hold the upper hand in society. Society is run for their exclusive benefit, and to the detriment of men. They have the desire and the intention to cheat, despoil and castrate men (Lacan, let's admit it, sometimes went in this direction, but I won't say that without a pinch of salt).

As soon as we decide to count them, the evidence of female supremacy is innumerable: in divorces or separations, the courts regularly favour the second sex; on the strength of the faith accorded to women's words, men see themselves groundlessly accused of harassment, incest and rape, while there is no one to redeem the affronted male innocence. Everything conspires to deprecate, ridicule and drive out masculine values.

At home, one Alain Juppé—well-named by antiphrasis—has suffered for years for having once proclaimed, when he was Prime Minister: "I am straight in my boots". I had the opportunity to tell him one day in his office at Bordeaux City Hall—where I had come to ask for his help in countering the undertakings of a senior member of his party who saw the fact that there was no state diploma in psychoanalysis as a 'legal vacuum' that had to be filled—that the times no longer allowed a politician to play the proud man by talking about his boots and his 'standing straight' like an erect phallus, the Name-of-the-Father having long since disappeared from the ballot paper to be replaced by the Desire of the Mother. A few years later, the psychoanalyst-journalist Michel Schneider, although a rabid anti-Lacanian, was to excellently baptise the metaphorical signifier with an Orwellian nickname: *Big Mother*.

In Macron, four years ago, France was to elect a mama's boy of the finest water, married very clearly beyond Oedipus.

### ***The separation axiom***

Does this mean that, from now on, everything will be benevolent, gentle, tender, in a word, delivered with *care*?<sup>9</sup> This English word encompasses prudence, *awareness*, being mindful of things, becoming cognisant of something, the attention given to the execution of a task, providing a living being with the means to perpetuate itself in being, etc.

Does this mean that we will get out of the supremacist logic by peaceful and legal means, by diplomacy and transaction, by long debate, drawn out discussion or by negotiating with the dominant ones?

It has happened. Think of the 'Velvet Revolution' of 1989 in Czechoslovakia, the *Sametová revoluce*. Or the smooth exit from apartheid in South Africa, for which Nelson Mandela and the formerly dominant white minority leader, Frederik De Klerk, were jointly awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1993. Going further back in time, the American civil rights movement in the 1960s had the protest song, *We Shall Overcome*, as its war song, but its inspiration was no less non-violent, humanistic and universalist, as manifested in the 'negro spiritual' *Kumbaya, my Lord*, a call for God to come back (*kumbaya* is a corruption of *come back*) to help those concerned, to meet their needs, in short, *to take care*.

This used to exist, but that was before the *paradigm shift*. Since then, the second axiom, which I would qualify as separation, has irresistibly imposed itself. What does it say? It says things like this: "Thou shalt not have friendly relations with the other side. Thou shalt go thy own way. Thou shalt not make pacts. Thou shalt not love thy neighbour as thyself, but thy fellow man. Thou shalt love the same as thyself. Thou shalt flee from the other like Satan. Those who are alike shall come together. Let no one enter here who is not alike".

If I wanted to please my Argentinian friends, I would say that this is the Perón axiom. Indeed, among the great principles enunciated by Evita's husband was this one: "*No hay nada mejor para un peronista qué otro peronista*".<sup>10</sup> What proper noun could be assigned to the axiom of supremacy? No Marxist name. No, it could be the Gobineau axiom.

In the grip of the separation axiom, many MGTOW members go so far as to refrain from sexual commerce with the opposite sex, in order to avoid exposing themselves to the

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<sup>9</sup> [TN: In English in the original.]

<sup>10</sup> [TN: "There is nothing better for a Peronist than another Peronist".]

unpleasantness that awaits those who collaborate with the enemy, particularly those false allegations with which the #Metoo vixens are familiar.

Alice Coffin's *Lesbian Genius*, which caused almost all of the country's enlightened opinion to gag last fall, is just MGTOW in reverse: WGTOW, so to speak. Nothing but *classic*.

*Soon, retiring to a hideous kingdom,  
The Woman will have Gomorrah and the Man will have Sodom,  
And, casting an irritated glance at each other from afar,  
Both sexes will die separately.*

Vigny already had in his own way this concept of the “monosexual” in which Foucault, in the last years of his life, placed all his hopes for happiness, and from which he drew his joy of living, as demonstrated by Eric Marty in *Le Sexe des Modernes*. Alice Coffin has had the merit of lending her voice to what has been whispered about since time immemorial in the most respectable and established lesbian circles. What's new is that what was once whispered in the ears of girlfriends is now being shouted out in public and over the airwaves. Why this new tolerance for intolerance? Because we live under the axiom of separation.

And when Tartuffe and Tartuffa recriminate, crying out: “*My God, let us be spared the disgusting tastes of these dykes!*” What can we say to them, except: “Zap, T and T, zap, for God's sake, if it revolts you so much! Keep to *yourselves!*”

Valerie Solanas said it all back in 1967 in the *SCUM Manifesto*: “Life in this society being, at best, an utter bore and no aspect of society being at all relevant to women, there remains to civic-minded, responsible, thrill-seeking females only to overthrow the government, eliminate the money system, institute complete automation and destroy the male sex”. And *bang!* And *bang!* And *bang!* She fires three shots at Andy Warhol, poor guy. He almost died, and lived his life in terror of Solanas. She had to undergo a psychiatric evaluation and serve three years in prison. She died in San Francisco in 1988. In San Francisco, her play *Up Your Ass*, which she had given to Warhol as a manuscript, was first performed in 2000. According to the *Village Voice*, she vowed to

wipe all men off the face of the earth. Norman Mailer called her the Robespierre of feminism (see Wikipedia).

At this stage, Solanas or MGTOW, everything is still simple. It's the war of the sexes, known since the dawn of time, only heated up, with live ammunition (there are no reports of MGTOW murders yet, but that will come soon).

This incandescence reflects the irresistible rise of the desire for segregation, to call it that. To parody Sully, suprematism and separatism are the two breasts of segregation. It rolls us in its wave, all of us, the pros, the cons, the neutrals, the right, the left and the rest.

### **A new thrill**

Hugo wrote of Baudelaire to Baudelaire that he had created "a new thrill". That's it.

With the entry on the scene of the trans person, an often colourful character in our human comedy—Balzac's trans person? Of course, in the guise of the androgynous Seraphitus-Seraphita—a new thrill passes through civilisation.

What trans people bring is disorder [*trouble*]. Not disorder in gender, which is intrinsically confused, but disorder, a skirmish, in the immemorial war of the sexes.

Before trans people, the monster was the hermaphrodite. He too disturbed sexual public order. But hermaphroditism is only a matter of organs. A hermaphrodite is a biological case, a rare one at that. Androgyny, on the other hand, is a creature of myth, a matter of *look* and *lifestyle*. An androgynous person is someone whose appearance does not allow you to determine to which sex he or she belongs. This was already the case in ancient Greece or Rome: see Luc Brisson's *Le sexe incertain*. It is not as such a sexual identity disorder. Trans is something else again.

### ***The prosopopeia of trans***

Like Voltaire, Foucault liked to play the ventriloquist. In his books, he willingly gave the floor to fictitious interlocutors, opponents. He would invent arguments for them, compose speeches for them, and then abandon his belly voice to resume his throat voice in order to answer in his own name to his puppets. He uses the technique, if I remember correctly, from the end of the *History of Madness* on. Well, how would a trans activist of today—an editor, for example, of one of these well-made sites that have been flourishing

on the Internet for the past two years, *Vivre Trans* or *Seronet*—take me to task if, by chance, my conversation with Eric Marty were to come to his attention? It's up to me to invent it.

My imaginary trans interlocutor would say something like:

“Neither Marty, nor you, nor Butler, are trans. You *talk about* trans people. Trans people are the *objects* of your chatter, just as they have, for a long time now, been the *objects* of medical discourse, psychiatric discourse and psychoanalytic discourse. Well, that's all over. A shift in forces has taken place, on a scale that you cannot imagine, one that is likely to upset culture and civilisation, so that just as once the Bastille was taken, trans people have now *taken the floor* [*pris la parole*], just as Michel de Certeau (S.J.) used to say about May '68. From now on, trans people will talk about trans people, we will talk about trans people to trans people, we will talk about trans people to non-trans people, who have a lot to learn and a lot to make up for. Who more than a trans person is qualified to talk about trans people?”

He or she would continue: “Despite what a vain people might think and desire, there will be no turning back. The Genie will not fit back in the bottle. That is the way it is. In the future you will have to reckon with us, with *our* words, with *our* sensibility, with *our* demands and *our* hopes, with *our* sufferings as we express them with *our* words and not with yours, which, between us, stink of something rancid. You are no longer raw, you are cooked, you are no longer credible. One plays the epistemologist, Marty, a professor of literature, the other plays the clinician, Miller, a graduate in philosophy. Your epistemology, like your clinic, is nothing more than waste products of an outdated and exhausted ideology, reflecting structures of patriarchal and heterosexual domination that are forever out of date. We are no longer the prisoners, the helpless hostages of your detestable ‘power-knowledge.’ The words that are our own are not intended to feed your critical nit-picking. What you proudly call your “clinic” is nothing but a “human zoo”, worthy of those where, in the days of the colonies, you exhibited the unfortunates that you ruthlessly tore away from their free and wild life, so much more civilised than yours, to make of them foreigners in their own country, natives, and finally circus freaks”.

Conclusion: “You have only one thing to do: shut up. And then, once you have repented, you will go to the school of the trans, where you will finally learn who we are, which you have no idea about. You will learn in what terms to address us, and with what ears to

listen to us. You will lose the habit of speaking for us. And you will turn your tongue seven times in your mouth before contradicting us, because who knows better than us what our experience is and what it feels like to be trans?”

**“How well did I descend?”**

“How well did I descend?” Cécile Sorel's sentence, uttered one evening in the 1930s, has passed into common usage. She had left the Comédie-Française for the Casino de Paris, where, in her debut performance as vedette, she aimed this remark at Mistinguett—the presiding star of the music-hall with “the most beautiful legs in the world”—who was watching her jealously from the wings. Sorel had just coolly descended the Casino's grand Dorian staircase, which according to Google “has broken more than one ankle and ended more than one light dancer's career”.

And I – did I play the trans without a false note, without twisting my light dancer's ankle? Seeing as it is by dancing that it is suitable to write, isn't it, as both Nietzsche and, later, my dear friend Severo Sarduy said, the Cuban darling of François Wahl, editor of Lacan at Seuil, who was a faithful friend of mine before the dissolution of the École Freudienne in 1981.

If I were Mistinguett now, and I if had to evaluate JAM's performance as a trans ventriloquist, I wouldn't give him such good marks. Would a real trans say that the words of a psy “stink of something rancid”? Yes, it's a fact that many do stink. Where the wind that Lacan blew on psychiatry and psychoanalysis did not sweep away the miasma, it does not smell good, as Deleuze and Guattari said nastily about the analyst's consulting room. But you have to be familiar with the place, as I am and as Guattari once was, to allow yourself such profanity. It seems to me that a real trans person would not say it in these terms. They'd be more polite.

**Preciado enters the scene**

The only proof of this is the height of vision and rigour—a rigour which is admittedly a little stiff for my liking—with which Paul B. Preciado (*FtoM*) addressed the audience gathered for the 49th Study Days of the École de la Cause Freudienne. He made a commendable effort to re-educate us, and to persuade us that psychoanalysis could only survive if we took him and his friends as our guides and abandoned our reverence for a patriarchy that had long since died and been buried without us even noticing. That was just under two years ago. Preciado was so pleased with himself, if not with us, that he

immediately turned his lecture into a book, under a title inspired by Kafka: *Can the Monster Speak. Report to an Academy of Psychoanalysts*,<sup>11</sup> a book under the patronage of Judith Butler, the dedicatee, which was welcomed by Olivier Nora at the prestigious Grasset publishing house that he directs.

Preciado can certainly be reproached for having gone beyond the mutually agreed time of half an hour for his lecture, which shortened the half hour intended for the improvised conversation he was due to have on stage with two analysts delegated to him by the School. The exchange lasted only eight minutes, against the clock. However, during this brief moment that he conceded *in fine*, he was truly encouraging for the profession: “I think that you will be able to keep your place and the place that you have historically invented, as long as you will be able to enter into dialogue with and be in relation to the present, with the contemporary political radicalness”. A courteous invitation to an *aggiornamento*. The carrot after the stick. I think as you do: the profession is a metro behind.

Your monster speech, the stick, you have read it. A resounding, militant, impassioned harangue. You spoke to us as a master, an imprecator, almost as a prophet. However, our colleague Ansermet, one of the two members of the ECF charged with debating with you, a Lacanian psychoanalyst, professor of child psychiatry in I don't know how many university and hospital departments and services in Switzerland, author of I don't know how many books, and the only foreign member of the French Ethics Committee, was able to welcome your manifesto with warmth and equanimity: “*Paul, thank you. Well, we knew you had something to tell us!*”

That you published your lecture afterwards without mentioning the concluding exchange with Ansermet at all, that you let the sympathetic press present you as persecuted, cursed and booed by an audience of snarling fools, I can understand (I can act Swiss too, in my spare time, just as Ansermet can act French very well when he wants). You have an audience of your own, and you mustn't disarm them too much by telling them that you were received by attentive practitioners who were not in the least aggressive towards you. The audience appreciated the goodwill you showed in accepting our invitation, and warmly applauded your eloquence. There were two or three hostile shouts, that's right, while your listeners numbered three and a half thousand. And don't

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<sup>11</sup> [TN: Due to be published by Fitzcarraldo Editions on the June 2021 and by *semiotext(e)* in August.]

tell me that each person sees what they want to see: the *Journées* of the ECF are always filmed.

So you cheated, Preciado. I'd say it would be fair enough if we were at war. But we're not, even though it would fit you like a glove if we were, because you need Bugbears and Bogeymen to animate your trans troupe, which is not all trans at all, but the walking wing of a community that is creating itself precisely by moving forward in a forced march.

I knew those hopes, too. And the *barbudos*, there weren't not many of them when they brought down the dictator, Batista, in Cuba and installed the Castro family in power, which is still there today, 1959-2021. So, anything is possible.

### ***A dizzying demography***

You know, Preciado, that we, as analysts and psychiatrists, meet trans people by whatever name they are called, more often than not, especially now that their numbers are increasing, in accordance with the sacerdotal wording of the Pentateuch: "Be fruitful and multiply", from the verbs *parah* and *rabah* (*Genesis*, I, 28). I will tell you straight away that on this point my knowledge is new and comes from a recent article in the *Nouvelle Revue théologique*, by Father Maurice Gilbert (S.J.), former rector of the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome.

He notes in this regard that a rabbinic tradition holds that the injunctions given in *Genesis I:28* are addressed only to men, in other words, not to women. How on earth did they intend to "multiply"? I don't know any more. It's a riddle wrapped in a mystery.

A homily, whether by Basil or Gregory of Nyssa, adds to this binomial expression a third injunction: "And fill the earth". It cannot be said that the Jews benefited from these recommendations. And even if they are sometimes credited with having a stranglehold on the world, this is only a drop in the ocean—there are only 14 million of them, while Muslims number 1.6 billion, and will be nearly 3 billion in 2050, making them the equal of Christians, who number 2 billion or so today. At the same time, Jews will have grown by only 2 million. My figures are from 2010, but the source is reliable (the *Pew Research Center*).

A “peculiar intertwining”, as Foucault would have said.<sup>12</sup> As the demographics of the small “chosen people” decline, “the trans population” are taking over and seem set to “fill the earth”. All the indicators point in the same direction: more and more people in the world feel and say they are trans. In France, we don't count them—not yet. Nevertheless, estimates were made in 2011, which give the figure of 15,000 people identifying themselves as transgender. In the US, on the other hand, they are counting and counting. Five years ago, the US trans population stood at 1.4 million adults, or 0.6% of the adult population. Five years earlier, in 2011, the figure was less than half that, at 0.3%, or 700,000 people (I'm using the figures given in a 2016 *New York Times* article).

To get an idea of what such a growth rate represents, let us compare, for example, the French population. Knowing that the rate of increase of the latter is 0.4%, the curve representing the Napierian logarithm of 2 allows us to know that in France, at a constant rate, the population would take 173 years to double, whereas the doubling of the trans-American population, for which we have reliable and detailed data, is carried out, as we have seen, in only five years.

Hence the widespread feeling in the uninformed public of an “invasion”, an “epidemic”, and the pernicious thesis recently spread in the French media by a certain bourgeois academic authority, according to which there would be “too many” transgenders. This is a biopolitical value judgement, formulated in a cookie-cutter way, devoid of any scientific basis, and expressing a prejudice in an offensive form.

Does this mean that we should give the trans avant-garde a free pass on its often triumphalist discourse? It suggests, to paraphrase Aragon,<sup>13</sup> that trans is the future of man *and* of woman—of every which one of us, whomsoever.

The trans person is nowadays often described as a hero of the new times for having brought down the ancient patriarchy and its odious stereotypes in order to open up the radiant path of gender autonomy for humanity. The non-trans, on the other hand, appears as a shameful, inhibited or neurotic trans, denying through cowardice, stupidity and transphobia, the *becoming-trans* that would be the vocation of every human being.

<sup>12</sup> [TN: The phrase (“curieux entrecroisement” in French) appears in the opening paragraph of the *Archeology of Knowledge*, and again in the first paragraph of his “Response to the Circle of Epistemology”, in the section on “History and Discontinuity”.]

<sup>13</sup> [T.N. Cf. an axiom from Louis Aragon's *La Fou d'Elsa*: “L'avenir de l'homme est la femme”, “The future of man is woman”. Here JAM is playing on the homophony that exists in French between the word for *is* ‘est’ and the word for *and* ‘et’.]

Surfing on the demographic euphoria generated by the exponential growth in the number of trans people, the actual reality of which we have seen above, the leaders of the trans emancipation movement now tend to make statements that sometimes take the form of what could be described as trans suprematism.

### **One caveat**

I will say a word that will hurt: it is *Schwärmerei*. The word is Kantian. It is untranslatable. It is variously rendered: enthusiasm or spiritual exaltation, fanaticism, divagation, extravagance, or illuminism. Let us come down to earth. Perhaps the following data will be more acceptable to trans leaders when it comes from one of their own and not from a psychiatrist or a professor of psychopathology. Let's read for example what Claire L. wrote (*MtoF*) on her blog at [mobilisnoo.org](http://mobilisnoo.org) in 2018: "The reason we feel the need to keep count of trans people is primarily because this population is at a much higher risk of suicide than the rest of the population, and they require special medication and, in some cases, surgery". She adds: "Compared to cisgender adults, transgender adults are more than 3 to 6 times more likely to contemplate suicide, attempt suicide". Finally, in the interests of good public health management, she recommends "a conservative estimate of the number of people affected. This volumetry [would also allow] adequate administrative measures to be taken so as to be able to manage, within a reasonable timeframe, the civil status changes necessary for a normal life for transgender people". This is a salutary reminder that not everything is rosy in the land of trans people, and that before being activists of the trans cause, they are simply people who are more fragile than others, more threatened, and who suffer more.

### **The capture of hysterics**

How can practitioners who come from Freud refuse to listen to trans when they express the desire to be listened to, which is not always the case? It is well known that Freud in his time knew how to listen to these hysterical women whom the most attentive doctors considered to be simulators and comedians. Charcot exhibited them in his little theatre at his department at the Salpêtrière. Freud witnessed this, going to train with him from October 1885 to February 1886. In the little rue Le Goff, in the Latin Quarter—where, until the age of twelve, Sartre, Poulo of *Words*,<sup>14</sup> spent his childhood—a plaque at the Hôtel du Brésil commemorates the stay of the young Austrian scholarship holder.

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<sup>14</sup> [TN: Jean-Paul Sartre's Autobiography.]

Back home, Freud did not emulate Charcot. He did not open a Viennese theatre of hysteria. He received these women—and a few no less hysterical men too—and began to listen to them one by one, in his little consulting room, which has since become a place of historical interest. When he arrived quivering to meet the discoverer of the unconscious, in 1921, the young André Breton was horribly disappointed to discover “a house of mediocre appearance”, patients “of the most vulgar sort”, and a practitioner whose modest figure of a “well-ordered bourgeois” had nothing Dionysian about it (see Lacan, *Écrits*, p. 536). Let's be fair: thirty years later, Breton piteously disavowed the account he had given of his visit, whose blindness he blamed on “a regrettable sacrifice to the Dada spirit”.

For it was indeed from this place, which did not look like much, that a movement was to start that would gradually spread throughout the West and radically change the mores of our societies. It is in fact, to the introduction of a new character in the human comedy, the psychoanalyst—the very opposite of the “Master”, of whom one particular photo of Charcot gives a caricatured representation, not unlike a painting in the Bouville museum in *Nausea*—the psychoanalyst and his practice of listening—which has nothing in common with the judicial practice of confession any more than with the religious practice of confession, with all due respect to Foucault of *The Will to Know*—that we owe the disappearance from the entire surface of the globe of those great “hysterical epidemics”, as psychiatrists called them, which made the headlines in the 19th century. One of them, in 1857, the famous demonic possession of Morzine, a small Savoyard village, was once the subject of a thesis in the Department of Psychoanalysis, which I was once the director of at Paris 8.

However, in Freud's time there were no militant groups or lobbies dedicated to the emancipation of hysterics, to their *empowerment*. These women came to him each their own volition, on their own account, and he welcomed them one by one, face to face, and then he invented a practice in which they reclined. It wasn't exactly “Arise ye prisoners of starvation! Arise ye wretched of the earth!”<sup>15</sup> None of the phenomena that characterise groups or masses, “crowds” as Gustave Le Bon called them, interfered. This is not to say that Freud thought these phenomena were outside the field he had opened up. He was to structure them in metapsychological terms in his *Massenpsychologie* of 1921—which

<sup>15</sup> [TN: Lyrics from “The International”, song of the international workers movement.]

Lacan taught us to read in 1964, in his Seminar on *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*. Later, during the events of May 1968, Lacan opened up a new path with his invention of the discourse of the Master as the *other side* or *reverse* of psychoanalysis, from which stems his idea that “the unconscious is politics”, a very enlightening formula that has been little understood.

Lacan praises Freud for being “docile to the hysterical”. I would like to be able to congratulate the practitioners of today for being “docile to trans”. But is this the case?

*To be continued*

Translated by Philip Dravers, Pamela King and Peggy Papada