'Without the Warmth of Your Own Image'

Michèle Sinapi

'. . . or else stop your soul swinging, exist in a reasonable coldness, in the absence of feelings, so in the inhuman and thus without the warmth of your own image . . .'
Agieev's *Roman avec cocaïne*, 1930

Maybe we need to give full weight to the word 'circumstances' in order to start a thinking process, which would not claim to be either sociological or philosophical – in the sense that philosophy would refer to an ontology of being and event – around what was labelled 'the crisis of the working-class suburbs'. So 'circumstances' rather than 'event': the word is not euphemistic, it prejudges neither the force of the upheaval nor its value as a symptom, but it indicates a position; a circumstance is what surrounds, what makes both the specificity of the case and its area of indeterminability. The word also expresses the circumspection of the implied spectator, all those who might be called 'circumstants' (bystanders), standing around watching what burns their eyes.

Gang effect and contiguity

The events in the suburbs first of all caused difficulties for the categories of political sociology and raised a labelling problem: what should they be called? Revolt, riots, popular uprising, crime? Are the participants criminals, 'not even suicidal' André Glucksman said, incipient felons or rebels without a cause? The accumulation of socio-economic statistics surrounded that uncertainty about labels with what F.-X. Ajavon writing in *Le Monde* (17 November 2005) called 'flabby causality'. Political analysis came up against the silence of the participants who, surprisingly, did not seem to be parroting the sociological discourse about them, leaving the inquisitorial grilling unanswered. So there arose the problem of ambivalence in politics: we constantly saw, amid the media saturation, a nameless feverish agitation, a flare-up with no slogans, no words at all, no demands, so equivocal that no traditional political

line of communication could become its spokesperson. We could only observe that any form of ideological, political, religious or 'communal' allegiance was being confounded. The only word that could be used was 'gangs'; gangs of child-teenagers, with a certain mobility, leaderless gangs – their faces concealed – giving a horizontal picture of small groups – maybe a few tribes – pointing simply to a strict *contiguity* of districts, tower blocks, a capillarity from one street to another, a contiguity of fire moving from one car to the other. That contiguity suggested the idea of a lower-level connection (not through a society, not through a job, not through a church, with very little family and often no father) without any of the forms of searching for or serving the One: therefore no 'politics'. It was also nearly stationary, a mobility on the spot: 'the actors torch where they live', said the Nanterre prosecutor (*Le Monde*, 9 November 2005). The space is divided up into traffic areas and plagued with prohibitions. That skimpy space is the territory, and it belongs to the police.

But it is a space for police ambiguity too and for a tracking game: in that contiguity there circulates what acts as a clue to a surreal elsewhere. Effects of quotation, mimesis, exchange of signifiers can be detected there. In Morocco people who come up from sub-Saharan Africa are called 'burners' (*brûleurs*) because they long (*ils brûlent*) to rush (*brûler*) the border in order to cross the strait (into Europe): Nadia Tazi ('Les états du détroit', in manifeste.org) reminded us that '*détroit*' (strait) has the same etymology as '*détresse*' (distress). Here it all started with two dead bodies, electrocuted on an Electricité de France transformer while running away and being chased. Then the fires blazed, funeral fires or signs, purifying or destroying, fires of phallic affirmation and male rivalry, symptomatic fires where dreams and metaphor have no place.

It has been tempting to rationalize these symptoms by interpreting them as an entry process. 'They entered politics . . . occupying for the first time a space that was strange to them, inaccessible, alien or forbidden', wrote Françoise Blum in *Le Monde* on 10 November 2005. In saying this she was probably dismissing the reifying and tear-jerking discourse on the '*ban*' (banishment) and exclusion, but the question raised is now: what does 'entering politics' mean? What is this threshold?

It is true that this 'they' essentially means teenage children – in this case boys (after the business of the girls' headscarves); it would be right to call them *pueri*, to maintain the indeterminateness, between adult and minor, of that Latin word and the Italian Renaissance. History provides us with many examples of violence and the political use of gangs of children: I will refer in particular to the book *Il seme della violenza*, by Ottavia Nicoli (1995) about gangs of children in Florence in Savonarola's time.[1] She traced the changes in them: gangs waging 'wars with stones' and copying the confrontations in the wars of Italy – confrontations that had been seen and credited with a prophetic value – or gangs which, in serving a 'justice' alongside or beyond the law, sometimes backed up clan vendettas and sometimes became the agents of a supra-judiciary, quasi-divine justice, or finally Savonarola's white-clothed *pueri* or *fanciulli* summoned to 'save their fathers' and protect themselves from sexual stain. In this example from the Renaissance the child-gangs were both instrumentalized by the families and set up as agents of divine justice: the *pueri* acted as a point of articulation between several levels of power and Florence could construe a representation of itself through them.

Nowadays they seem to occupy the blind spot between two languages, an in-between discourse of legitimacy. This in-between has no connecting point in the drama of institutions. This is why the contiguity, without being a 'holding together' or a 'being together', seems to be the form of political philosophy that cannot be found: the portion of a contact without links that cannot be decided, without transcendence, dissolving if an attempt is made to read into it lasting forms of allegiance or obligation. But in fact it exemplifies those 'areas bordering the sexual and the political' in Michèle Montrelay's (1981) formulation, those 'frontier points that periodically break down and cause the piecemeal expulsion of signifiers and bodies': the analysis of these political topologies has still to be carried out, she noted in 1980.

That portion associated with the anomic, which may be designated the formless in politics, arouses fears of contamination and insinuation. The formless is noted on police records: it has to be defined, circumscribed, reduced. The contiguity may be seen as an effect of a growing management reality: current political manipulation manages human beings as separate packages and moves them about – nuclear waste as well as human material – without a 'total' hierarchical structure having been put in charge of the gradual reduction of the remains. So the remains are still disposable but not eliminable since their survival has to demonstrate the institution's perfect functionality.

This manipulation is accompanied by a considerable restriction of the imaginary, which calls on a limitless collage-love, on the pretence of individuation of 'it's my choice',[2] and which in addition, and probably in an unprecedented way, comes under the auspices of the scientistic ideal, since techno-science proposes to make everyone's unconscious wish – 'it's all possible' – come true.

Therefore those border areas – opaque and maybe resistant points – signal the existence of two holes: the first, the in-between cultures, not in the relative proximity of Europe but in the clash of continents and time – the residual institutional and memory leftovers from colonization and 'dyschronies' (an idea introduced by Tazi, 2006). If exile may sometimes depend on a rejection, an 'I couldn't be part of it' and introduce a creative caesura, immigration on the other hand means a double loss: the need to forget, and the impossibility of giving weight to what you are required to forget, leave the children with no existence and seal the fathers' decline.

That first breach especially feels the shock of a second, common to everyone: the clash between a techno-scientistic management with global ambitions on the one hand, which proceeds by grabbing and destroying images and languages,[3] and on the other the demands of subjectivity, which may be longstanding. What is to be understood by that? We cannot but be particularly drawn by what Freud (1994) says when, between 1920 and 1930, he returns to the question of the relationship between culture and subjective formations, and encounters a 'crisis' of culture, that is, not only indifference but 'hostility towards culture'. 'The crucial question', he says, 'for the destiny of the human race' is whether and how culture can 'gain control' of the disturbance that is due to 'the drive to aggression and self-annihilation': this assumes that there is constant re-evaluation of the relationship between the ego and the possibilities for sublimation without which identifications and identities fall apart. From 1920 onwards Freud shows both the permanence of materials brought into play and the historicity of configurations of the ideal. This is what makes so enlight-

ening his 1923 analysis of attempts to construct the ego or what he calls the 'character', that is, what 'results from the possibility of a sedimentation of investments of abandoned objects' (Freud, 1989). And this possibility for sedimentation should not be blocked and should be able to produce a 'modification of the ego'. Corresponding to this condition there is a narcissistic recovery, transformation by the ego from object libido into narcissistic libido, which consists, says Freud, of 'a kind of sublimation' and is the first act in 'the general path of sublimation' (p.270). In this operation the ego must 'control the id' but also 'deepen its relationship with it, in reality at the price of a great meekness as regards what is experienced by the id'.

In this nexus, the ego's 'meekness' as regards this 'experience by the id', we can perhaps apprehend what we might call an ultimate faculty for 'suffering', which would be the necessary source of sublimation and the ability to think. But the difficulty is great if, as Freud adds, 'the id cannot undertake the experience or test of an external destiny without going through the ego which represents for it the external world'. But 'nonetheless we cannot talk of a direct hereditary transmission into the ego'. 'The ego's lived experiences are first lost': we can only rely on their repetition for their 'transposition into lived experiences of the id' (pp.279–80). Here 'a faultline' opens up, says Freud, who talks of the lability of the suffering conditions. And so the different avatars appear of the 'conflicts between the ego and the ideal', which 'will reflect the opposition between real and psychic, external world and internal world' (p.277). As we know, Freud names some of them: slippage of the ego's ideal towards the 'mass ideal', today the identificatory offering in the hypnotic/impersonal mode, but also towards forms of a 'mass delusion' with a religious underlay to the extent that the ego's ideal 'contains the germ from which all religions were formed' (p.277) – to which we should add the upsurge of the superego, which we might say is especially activated in the current forms of police expert, mandated by omnipotent science, which has been promoted to be a new kind of invisible.

A triadic configuration: apathy, pharmakon, prosthesis

In the light of this analysis the crisis triggered does not seem to be a simple transgression of a social normativity, but brings on a certain regime of impression: impression of a breakthrough from underground, of tectonic plates shifting, in that it implies a blurring of our capacities for representation and perception. I have mentioned the problems of categorization faced by experts and, on the other hand, the gangs' silence; but a few snatches of text have been extracted from this silence, fragmentary speech included in reports and interviews. What dominates – and this has been noted – is an idea of de-legitimation: de-legitimation of state institutions, de-legitimation of the law. But this de-legitimation has vague outlines, it is the site of a split: it may take the form of a critical assessment of institutional distortions – a criticism of lack of clarity and confusion of registers of discourse,[4] reduction of institutional mechanisms to a simple 'gang effect'[5] – accompanied by an ambivalent criticism of television,[6] to which we shall return. But it can also act as a substrate to quite a different affirmation, a requirement for insensitivity, apathy. One of the statements goes: 'You really have to be psychologically feeble to be disgusted when you

see a head cut off',[7] after this remark: 'Even if it's faked, the more trashy it is the more we like it.'

In this claimed lack of differentiation between reality and faking, the 'feeling of existing' may be compromised: there is no longer legitimacy in living, because of the dislocation of various ideals, struggling with an impossible 'sedimentation'. The relationship between reality and normativity is then attacked at its source: you no longer know which experiences might make it possible to rearticulate the legitimacy of a normative system and the play of its semblances.

This fundamental disturbance, which affects both the conditions of experience and connection to the source of normativity, is related to what Günther Anders (1964), in his open letter to Eichmann's son, called the 'gap' between our faculty of fabrication and our capacity for representation and perception, a gulf that is constantly getting wider so that 'we, as beings endowed with the faculty of feeling, are no longer at the level of our actions' and cannot form an image of them any more. Then comes a 'darkened world', for the analysis of which the idea of alienation ceases to have operational value, since alienation – which still assumed that 'people walk in the image'[8] – no longer accounts for the new mechanisms of 'making people believe', or the subjective modes of capture by the social ideal. The sequential cutting-up of actions has produced subjects cast adrift from the causality principle: 'we are failing', they say, 'in the very foundation of our existence.'

The issue, in Anders' view, is: 'What has made the "monstrous" possible? What are the roots that go down deeper than political roots?' When he says 'the inadequacy of our feelings is not just one defect among others, it is one of the roots of the monstrous', we need to understand the repeated effects of that change – and the hardened effects of Nazism – because 'Auschwitz stamped its seal on our times.' We forget that, beyond current liberal policies, the figure of the state is connected with a certain regime of representation. The de-legitimation of the state is not the result of a current rupture, a new horizon of the world, it bears first the mark of what experience of the Nazi state was and there is a carry-over.[9] Nazism not only blurred the frontiers between private and public and pointed to a privatization of the state. Nazi legalism gave the form of law to a required self-gratification, encouraging people to cast off psychic inhibitions and all 'sentimentality':[10] Nazism de-instituted state and law with a state discourse that declared as a principle of authority the requirement to murder.[11]

Thus the change in feeling and the issue of legitimation grow out of common soil – and there was an experiment, Nazism, an unprecedented experience of the law's reversal and destitution. We are in a second era which has yet to confront and respond to a certain form of institutional nihilism. How should we reverse the other's message without it being a simple 'reply in negation'?[12] That is the problem: the same one as was encountered by another movement, English working-class youth in 1975–7 after the shock of immigration – the punk movement which grabbed hold of all the 20th-century signifiers and attempted a radical critique of the ideology (Sinapi, 2006).

We can return to Anders' (1964) remarks on 'the exploitation of the gap': if the 'gap' causes a blurring of sensoriality and a destruction of feeling, nevertheless, under certain conditions, the failure of our attempts at representation might be a

lucky chance, because it would help us to understand that we have reached 'the last fork in the road' of anaesthetic lack of feeling or shock. But if that experience of the attempt at representation, like the experience of its failure, does not happen, there can only follow a certain kind of indifference or *apathy* – not an apathy through the mediation of representation but through its impossibility. No one is excluded from that apathy: so it has several modalities. It can contradictorily be stridence; the experience of the impossibility of making the still-preserved expectation of feeling coincide with the act gives a time in the present, a dimensionless vacuum with no possibility of experiencing a break.[13]

In certain cases this apathy may be one of 'innocent accomplices' or even actors, as some recent incidents have shown:[14] the issue of this apathy's relationship with sadistic apathy is inevitably raised. But the sadistic dimension does not account for everything. Apathy, as an attack on the feeling of existing and the legitimacy of living, as a non-relationship with the self, tries to respond to the incommensurable and somehow puts guilt on deposit, holding it as collateral in words that are becoming banal such as addiction or horror.[15] It contains an appeal and combines with a number of moves.

Indeed, if we always situate ourselves in that non-experience of the failure of representation, we have to assume that instead of the 'gap' there are substitutes that come 'in the place of', preventing what Anders calls the 'lucky chance of failure'. In this place of avoidance there grows up a triadic relationship between apathy and two forms of substitute, which today limit the field of the 'gap' and are also two forms of ambivalent *pharmaka*: drug use and prosthetic practice – meaning by that the use of ordinary technical objects that constitute a continuous sensorial apparatus. It may be noted that this triadic configuration affects each of the terms: combining apathy with drugs or prostheses indicates a modification of our capacity for representation and our sensoriality, a modification which would need to be identified based on another triangle – image/word/body. We can only provide some pointers.

This configuration first of all positions our whole relationship with culture at the angle of the prosthetic. And it is precisely from this viewpoint that Freud directs his analysis of culture in *Civilization and its Discontents*. He returns to the motif of 'hostility towards culture', which he had dealt with in 1915, at the start of the war, in the short text *Vergänglichkeit* (transience). War, he says in 1915, makes manifest the possibility, which he had hitherto dismissed, of a non-resolvable mourning, even when there is overinvestment in common social ideals. The loss is such that it places the libido, 'so impoverished of objects', in a hyperbolic mourning that finds no relief and makes the devaluation of the things lost last so that 'those who seem prepared to let go finally, because the precious object did not turn out to be solid, simply find themselves *in mourning for the loss*'. Springing from this monastic mourning, hostility towards the culture becomes the prevalent expression of 'disturbance' in the dead-end of distress. If the gods had previously been 'cultural ideals', individuals have 'so to say become sort of prosthetic gods, when they put on all their adjuvant organs. But they do not integrate with them.' Freud mentions the paths available: in the collective domain, either 'violent fixation . . . and inclusion in a mass delusion' as a component of religions, or the state practice of art and culture as a drug for the masses. In the individual domain, 'gaining pleasure from chronic intoxication or else

the attempt at desperate revolt that is psychosis'. What was not yet in place at the time when Freud was writing was the collusion between drugs for the masses and the omni-legitimizing position of science, which makes possible coalescence between the techno-prosthetic object and the effects of either hypnotic or hallucinatory belief.

In 1930 a few books attest to this burgeoning configuration – and the oblivion that surrounds their authors gives them an almost emblematic status: I will cite the sole novel from an author, who remains unknown, under the name of M. Agieev, *Novel with Cocaine*, from which I shall borrow some elements, and a picture by Heinrich Hoerle, *Monument à la prothèse inconnue*.[16]

Without going into the very difficult questions raised by drug use, we can see in experiences and reports that use in its ordinariness is no longer seen as an unusual experiment with other territories or practices with a high risk of death, but as a culture that cannot be reduced to pure and simple consumption because it shapes a way of being, a relationship with the object and the goal. This use in an ordinary, apathetic stridence defines the 'common good', the figure of the new absolute object. The culture gives substance to a space, a kind of collective body largely structured by the trade's demands. It defines new subjective modalities handed out ready-made, contact networks, a style of recognition, a controlled collage. It might be said that the culture organizes a quasi-public devotion: we are dealing with the institution of a liturgy with its rituals and cult language. This liturgy is not hidden as far as its existence and impact are concerned, but its meaning and political effect are often concealed.

Agieev's narrative connects with Sylvie Le Poulichey's analysis half a century later. For Agieev the drug demonstrates 'what a person lives for' and actualizes it as a hallucinatory short-circuit that ends the pain of existing by a paradoxical narcissistic turning inward. If 'what is important to an individual' is not events themselves but only 'the effect of events on consciousness', cocaine wipes out the gap between reality and consciousness and shortcuts the break between representation and sensation. Sylvie Le Poulichey (1987) says in a similar way that, in the 'operation of pharmakon', 'any upsurge of a break is neutralized'. She calls drug addiction the 'operation of pharmakon' in that it is 'a montage', she asserts, that circumscribes and creates a barrier: it is 'an alternative time and the moment of a withdrawal', whereas a breakthrough has already occurred (p.103). Drug-taking seems to be a narcissistic formation – and not a symptom,[17] like the paradoxical construction of another body, when the body 'can no longer let a Father take care of its self-preservation' (p.105).

In Agieev's narrative the drug has a prosthetic use, it is a prosthesis replacing negativized parental images; though not a single word in the text mentions a father, cocaine is superimposed on the image of the mother, a harassed little figure, poor and servile, 'flabby', from whom he snatches money and who hangs herself.

Thus a prosthetic montage stands in the absence of an image. Agieev describes this 'reasonable coldness', this machine-like expropriation in an 'indifferent horror' towards what he calls the inhuman, where the individual 'is without the warmth of his own image'. When the prosthesis takes the place of the image in this way, it gets very hard to separate the two aspects of the 'montage' Sylvie Le Poulichey (1987: 213) analyses, both in the 'operation of pharmakon' and in the prosthetic: the dimensions of *replacement* or *supplement* which she says are not exclusive of one another and can communicate. Between quasi-hallucinatory restitution of a body fragment

and avoidance of castration there play a non-bound ambivalence and an undecid-
ability which the relationship with the visual illustrates in particular: it is a question
of determining whether passing through the sovereign place is experienced fictively
or not.[18]

The apathetic visual

If Agieev indicates how the link between apathy, drugs and prosthesis is made at the
expense of an adjustment of the image and the body, it is not necessary to emphasize
how far all the current aspects of the 'crisis' may be read in this register. The speed
of change in techniques of visualization brings out the 'anthropological function' of
images. The composite nature of picture set-ups, the appeal to 'visibility' and the
manipulation of that visibility have been pointed out: without those fires we cannot
be seen, we are not being watched. Getting hold of machines for making images,
making them and circulating them appears to be an imperative. It is true that there
are some major crucial elements: both the bait mechanism which television uses and
is being rolled out worldwide – as if the 'small screen' could not help taking advan-
tage of a planet-wide influence and was downsizing the world in order to integrate
it for western use – and overlaying these images of 9/11, that is, what seems
the reversal of the taboo on representation, a murder exhibited, in saturation-level
visibility, to those for whom the taboo made no sense anymore.

It is precisely an issue of the 'visual', total visibility, and not image, if we will
return to that distinction of Serge Daney's, that is, a visual without invisible; or at
least the invisible of that visual is none other than the police expert's eye, hence the
imperative attached to it. The accomplishment of that total visibility has a history,
which Hans Belting (2004) recounts and which is connected with the use of photog-
raphy. We shall mention only the use some deadly administrations have made of it:
for instance the Khmers Rouges, for whom it was, says Rithy Panh, 'the first act of
destruction'. So if the image metabolizes death, the visual consists, more or less
virtually, of an action-shot of it.

This visuality today comes via the 'model of television' analysed by G. Anders
(1980) in the 1950s as tending to 'wipe out the difference between living and being
informed', between 'immediacy and mediation'. We should not forget that television
and telephony are two aspects of the same technology: production and circulation of
images on mobile phones is completing the apparatus and blurring even further the
frontiers between private and public. The television model is being improved, with
media that make it possible to store and circulate images which are, whether chosen
individually or all at once, already there and indefinitely modifiable. This circulation
of words and images runs alongside contiguity and encloses it in a form of sociality
labelled 'impersonal sociality' and 'perpetual contactuality',[19] a form of gang con-
straint creating perpetual action and continuous soundtrack. So contiguity has as its
correlate projection out of oneself of action and voice, a wraparound that acts as a
prosthetic 'normality'.

The imperatives encountered – self-gratification, visuality, apathy – in their para-
doxical combination are to be found in the latest current montages of the visual and

impulsive: in 'happy-slapping', the practice that consists of group-recording the offending act (attack or rape) and circulating the image of it. It seems that, though happy-slapping looks like a reaction to the Blair laws related to punishment of young people's anti-social behaviour (Anti-Social Behaviour Order, November 2002), it is itself situated at a crossroads: it is first of all return to sender of full control, then appropriation, in a twisted mode, of the absolute position of image creator as iconothete. From this sovereign position it is the instrument to capture the victim's point of subjective weakness, the point where violence isolates the other's 'suffering', like an organ, an object detached from the body. Technical mediation achieves at one and the same time capture of the subject as voyeur and his innocence as actor, the accomplice of a so-called 'faked' set-up.

A number of conceptual alternatives, Anders (1980) says in addition, no longer have currency today; this is so with the alternative between the Apollonian and the Dionysian, because 'if the Apollonian consisted in the joy of transforming what is finite into a thing that is now completed and the Dionysian in the intoxication of exploding the bounds of the finite, the confrontation between them has no meaning any more, since we are no longer finite and the explosion is now behind us'. But the ambivalences still remain and we shall take note of those contained in destruction by fire: vandalizing the 'patrimoine' or its paucity of meaning, as well as the technical object's fragility and visualization of its immediate transformation into trash, producing of emptiness. The punk moment, on the torched rock stage, with a minimalist rhetoric and texts in the form of puzzles, has attempted a resistance on the edge of nihilism and been able for a short while to 'hold up' the social mirror. Today that moment is over. The silent fire tells of the cross-fertilizing, the telescoping of two extreme experiences and their effects: to name them in brief, Nazism and colonialism. From rubbing up against the contiguous there also arises the interrogation and interpretation scene: it proceeds by 'verbal attack', says a speaker today who chose as his pseudonym 'Big sick body'.

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Notes

1. Here I am referring back to the exposé given by Ottavia Nicoli on 12 January 2006 at the Streben seminar led by M.L. Cravetto (Maison des Sciences de l'Homme).
2. We recall that this is the argument put forward by the girls in television studios to justify their wearing the headscarf.
3. I am referring to P. Legendre's thinking, particularly Legendre (2001).
4. 'Those words aren't ones a minister would use', *Libération*, 8 November 2005.
5. The police are said to be: 'another gang, they're the best armed gang and they're lawful': radio programme on *France Culture* 'Les pieds sur terre' quoted in *Libération*, 21 November 2005.
6. Cf. these words reported in *Libération*: 'the fact of showing the violence, that makes violence normal' and 'a camera's a weapon'. This might be compared with certain sociologizing statements on the playful, 'cathartic' nature of the violent images (*Le Monde*, 25/26 June 2006).
7. *Libération*, 23 May 2006.

8. A theological theme written about at length by Augustine, particularly in *La Trinité*, XIV, IV, 6.

9. I. Kertész says in a recent interview: 'Since Auschwitz nothing has happened that has refuted Auschwitz, quite the reverse. Before Auschwitz, Auschwitz was unimaginable. Today that is no longer so. Since Auschwitz existed it has entered our imaginary and now is part of us. The horrors we can imagine because they really existed can happen again' (quoted in *Le Courrier International*, August 2006). Thus the imagination is fixated on a certain reality.

10. Cf., for example, the formulations of instructions from Goering to police authorities on 17 February 1933: 'Police officers who, in the exercise of their functions, make use of their weapons, will be covered by me without restriction for the consequences of their actions; on the other hand those who fail in their task through sentimentality must expect disciplinary sanctions' (Broszat, 1981).

11. I refer to Pierre Legendre's analyses, particularly Legendre (1999).

12. As Lacan's phrase has it in *L'Etourdit.*

13. Cf. a student's words about a piercing: 'It was just a technical action. I pierce, I pay. Cheers. It was empty. Immediately after I thought I should do another one', quoted by Le Breton (2005).

14. I am referring to the circumstances of Ilan Halimi's murder, the chief suspect and the words of the many active accomplices who, they say, 'were helping out'.

15. Addiction refers back to slavery for debt and *effroi* (horror) means etymologically 'fined'. We remember Agieev's (1998) phrase: 'the indifferent horror, faced with the thing I was about to do'.

16. Heinrich Hoerle (1895–1936) belongs to Cologne's Gruppe progressiver Kunstler. The painting is in Wuppertal; it was on show in the Paris *Mélancolie* exhibition in 2005. In the guise of a Nativity the picture shows two machine parents framing a child-prosthesis, incomplete and chopped up, itself waiting for an improbable prosthesis in order to be born.

17. Le Poulichey (1987: 99): the narcissistic formation 'accomplishes a re-routing of the process of imaginative and symbolic alienation in which creation of symptoms is conceived'.

18. I refer readers to P. Legendre's problematic around the issues of specularity and the figure of the 'Hermes-child': especially in Legendre (1998).

19. Terms used by Christian Papilloud in his article 'Brève autopsie du happy-slapping', downloadable from the web address http://www.libertysecurity.org/IMG/pdf/PapillouHappySlapping.pdf. The points that follow are also provided by him.

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