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SUMMARY

Le Point sur la recherche sociocritique dans les centres internationaux

ARTICLES

ON DISCOURSE *

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Etymologically discourse finds its origin in the Latin verb *discurrere,* to run about, probably by way of the French form *discourir.* This particular genealogy is more indicative than it might first appear because discourse, as the term is used in classical rhetoric, emphasises language as motion, as action. If the rhetorician was concerned with arresting language so that he could specify the various relations into which words could enter, to classify the figures and the topics, discourse constituted both the object and the aim of the study. Rhetoric started from and ended with the running together of the forms and the subjects in a continuous utterance — in, exactly, a discourse. It is within this perspective that we can consider discourse as indicating the articulation of language over units greater than the sentence. The major divisions of rhetoric accomplish just such supra-sentential divisions : *exordium, narratio, argumentatio, refutatio, peroratio* (Curtius 1953 : 70). A particular set of articulations will produce a field of discursivity — the site of the possibility of proof and disproof [it can be recalled that the study of rhetoric found its early rationale in relation to forms of popular law

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* This study has already been published in *Tracking the signifier. Theoretical essays : film, linguistic, literature.*

(cf. Barthes 1970b : 175)]. It is to such a notion of discourse that *Cahiers pour l'Analyse* made reference when in the *avertissement* to the first number, Jacques-Alain Miller defined the magazine's task as the constitution of a theory of discourse, specifying that by discourse 'we understand a process of language that truth constrains' (1966 : 5). And, in a reference to the content of that first number, Miller made clear that the constraint of truth has as its inevitable corollary the production of a subject, a subject divided by the very process of language that calls it into being.

It is this division of the subject in language, a division figured in the Lacanian concept of the signifier, which is essential to the elaboration of any theory of discourse. Without it, and whatever its lexical possibilities, the term 'discourse' no longer indicates the site(s) of the articulations of language and sociality but simply functions as a cover for a linguistic formalism or a sociological subjectivism. The linguists Zellig Harris (1952a & b) and Emile Benveniste (1971) will serve as important examples of these alternative hazards. If the Lacanian concept of the signifier articulates the initial support for the argument, the considerations advanced will necessitate further questions, ones that will lead, by way of the consideration of the work of Michel Pêcheux, to the problem of the politics of the signifier.[1]

Emile Benveniste and the status of the subject

Benveniste's use of discourse emphasises the lexical reference to the intersubjective use of language. In his famous article on the relation of tenses in the French verb he emphasises that 'Discourse must be understood in its widest sense : every utterance assuming a speaker and a hearer, and in the speaker, the intention of influencing the other in some way.' (1971 : 208-9) Such a personal use of language must be differential from the unpersonal mode of *histoire*. Benveniste uses this distinction to give an account of the tenses of the French verb. His starting-point is the apparent redundancy of forms of the past tense which change according to whether one is speaking or writing. That used in the spoken language is a compound past tense formed by the verb *avoir* (to have) and the past participle (and hereafter called there perfect), that in the written is a distinct
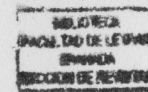
inflection of the verb (and hereafter called the aorist). It is a commonplace amongst both native speakers and linguists that the aorist, which is the older form, is disappearing and that it will be replace, in time, by the perfect. It is this commonplace that Benveniste is concerned to dispute. Benveniste wishes to demonstrate that, despite its long disappearance from the spoken language, there is no question that it is similarly menaced in the written language, and this because despite appearances, it serves a different function from the perfect. What is needed to determine the future of the aorist is not statistical studies but an understanding of the tense system of the French verb. The double entry for the past tense is not a redundancy which the language has been slow to remedy but the visible evidence of the fact that there ar two separate tense systems which are differentiated by the relation of the speaker/writer (hereafter called *the subject of the enunciation*) to the statement (hereafter called *the enounced*). In that relation which Benveniste terms *histoire*[2] 'event that took place at a certain moment of time are presented without any intervention of the speaker in the narration' (1971 : 206). The tenses of this relation are the imperfect (with which Benveniste includes the conditional), the aorist and the pluperfect together with the atemporal present of definition and a compound tense which Benveniste suggests should be called the prospective. Benveniste notes that these three basic tenses articulate perfectly the world of *histoire* and demonstrates this with quotations from a history text and a Balzac novel (examples which, as we shall see, have a great deal more significance than Benveniste would assign to them) :

There is no reason for them to change as long as the historical narration is being pursued and, furthermore, there is no reason for the narration to come to a standstill since we can imagine the whole past of the world as being a continuous narration, entirely constructed according to this triple correlation of tenses : aorist, imperfect and pluperfect. It is sufficient and necessary that the author remain faithful to his historical purpose and that he proscribe everything that is alien to the narration of events (discourse, reflections, comparisons). As a matter of fact, there is no longer even a narrator. The events are set forth chronologically, as they occurred. No one speaks here ;

the events seem to narrate themselves. The fundamental tense is the aorist, which is the tense of the event outside the person of a narrator.

(1071 : 208)

This is the impersonal relation that is opposed to *discours*. *Histoire* produces no involvement of the subject of the enunciation in the enounced while it is the very definition of *discours*. In speech the tenses are always related to the present instance and must thus give way to a tense which defines its pastness in terms of the present : 'Like the present, the perfect belongs to the linguistic system of discourse, for the temporal location of the perfect is the moment of the discourse, while the location of the aorist is the moment of the event' (1971 : 210). By thus distinguishing the two forms of the past in French, Benveniste can also explain further features of the tense system. In particular, he demonstrates how the secondary compound tenses are produced in response to the pressure created around the first person forms of the two past tenses.[3]

It is not accidental that it is the first person which Benveniste isolates as the crucial articulation in the historical development of the language, for it is the category of person which provides the field within which Benveniste's tense distinctions are articulated. On the one hand there is the world of *discours*, the world of *je/tu* (I/you). On the other is the world without person, the world of *histoire*, the world of *il* (he/it). It is the emphasis on person which links this article to the others collected in Section 5 of the *Problems in General Linguistics*. The constant theme of this section is that the apparently regular structure of the three persons in many Indo-European languages is grossly misleading for the analysis of person. There are not, in fact, three persons but two *je/tu* which find themselves in opposition to a realm of 'non person' *il*. Benveniste finds an awareness of this in the Arab grammarian's analysis of person which distinguishes the first and second person, 'he who speaks' and 'he who is spoken to' from the third 'he who is absent'. This division marks the asymmetry between the persons, an asymmetry which finds further support in the fact that in many languages the third person is unmarked in relation to the first and second and that the third person pronoun is not a universal phenomenon.

The argument so far outlined would seem to rest its analyses on a distinction between subjective and objective functions in language. Language is the combination of two autonomous but intersecting systems : the world of the first and second person, which define a subjective realm of *discours* with a tense system related to the moment of speech, and the world of the third person, which defines an objective realm of *histoire* with a tense system related to the moment of the event. It should be noted that, even granted Benveniste's assumptions, the distinction suffers from certain crucial weaknesses. Firstly there is the occurrence of the third person within the realm of *discours,* an embarrassment which provides somes of Benveniste's weakest arguments : event if it is not explicit, the relationship of person is everywhere present in *discours* ; it is only with *histoire* that we reach the 'true' realm of the non-person (1971-209). Secondly, and just as serious, is the fact that the anchor-tense of *discours,* the present, occurs within *histoire* ; which occurrence Benveniste terms 'an atemporal present like the present of definition' (1971 : 207).

Apart from such internal inconsistencies, however, there are more serious criticisms to be levelled at the whole project. Benveniste fails to give any account of the relation between the two systems which does not fall back into the subjective/ objective couple. Objective, as always on this account, becomes the paring away of the *contingent* effects of subjectivity to arrive at the necessary relations beneath. Language, with an equal familiarity, is defined as a simple mirror to reflect reality, which becomes opaque once the realm of reason is disturbed by the illogicalities of passion. This caricature is designed to highlight the similarity of this position to the traditional denigration of the order of language in relation to the speaker (rhetoric) as opposed to the order of language in relation to the facts (logic). That this caricature captures at least some of the elements of Benveniste's position is evident in section of the article on the use of pronouns :

If each speaker, in order to express the feeling he has of his irreducible subjectivity, made use of a distinct identifying signal (in the sense in which each radio transmitting station has its own call letters), there would be as many languages as individuals and communication would become absolutely impossible.

Language wards off this danger by instituting a unique but mobile sign, I, which can be assumed by each speaker on the condition that he refers each time only to the instance of his own discourse.

(1971 : 220)

This formulation approaches dangerously close to the Port-Royal conception of pronouns which holds that pronouns are simply used to avoid unnecessary repetition but are granted no effectivity of their own (cf. Arnauld and Lancelot 1969 : 43-3), a conception which informs the whole of Port-Royal's theory of discourse. But that Benveniste's position is more ambiguous is indicated by the fact that he considers pronouns to be 'absolutely' essential to language function although he offers no theoretical justification of this abso- luteness. It is when he approaches the question of subjectivity in language directly that these contradictions manifest themselves most clearly. For while the distinction *discours/histoire* would ultimately seem to rest on a clear distinction between the subject using the language and the language, Benveniste explicitly refuses such a position in a paper written practically simultaneously :

We are inclined to that naive concept of a primordial period in which a complete man discovered another one, equally com- plete, and between the two of them language was worked out little by little. This is pure fiction. We can never get back to man separated from language and we shall never seem him inventing it ... It is a speaking man whom we find in the world, a man speaking to another man, and language provides the very definition of man.

(1971 : 224)

It is clear that Benveniste considers that language is constituted in relation to the other. But he fails to investigate the linguistic basis of this other, and in what amounts to a tacit acceptance of a person- alist other, he is left, however reluctantly, with an account which thought it interrogates its own foundations at certain moments, is finally dependent if it is to be retained in its totality, on a classic account of subjectivity. The miscognition on which Benveniste's

theory rests is the failure to grasp two elements as participating in the same structure. To distinguish them as elements is his major contribution ; the task that remains is to provide the structure that articulates them and such an articulation will depend on cutting back across some of the original distinctions. To oppose *je/tu* to *il* is to shatter the assumptions that make the passage from 'I' to 'you' to 'he' to 'it' an inevitable and obvious progression but to ignore their inter- relation is to ignore that I/you can only functions as the deictic categories for the subject of the enunciation after the passage through the third person ; a passage which allowd this pronoun to assume both personal and impersonal forms. Similarly *discours* is determined in its forms by *histoire* for it is the involvement of the subject of the enunciation in *histoire* that determines its appearance in the enounced of *discours*.

The interrelation is analysed in Luce Irigaray's 'Communications linguistique et spéculaire' (1966). In my summary of this argument it is important to recognise that what is in question is a diachronic fable of a synchronic functioning. In the development of the child there is a moment when the infant (*infans* : unable to speak) enters language. In this process of entry, he/she becomes aware of certain places which he/she as subject can occupy — these are the points of insertion into language. Crucially this involves the learning of pronouns : the realisation that the 'you' with which the child is addressed by the father or mother can be permutated with an 'I' in a situation from which it is excluded — when the parents speak to each other. This realisation is the understanding that the 'you' with which he or she is addressed can be permutated with a 'he' or 'she', which is the possibility that the proper name is articulated in a set of differences — and that the child is only a signifier constantly defined and redefined by a set of substitution relations. The binary I/you is transformed from two terms into a relational structure by the pas- sage through the empty place of the 'he' or 'she' and it is through the experience of this empty place that the child enters language. The passage through this empty place is the exclusion necessary to the proper control of language and the experience of this exclusion is the first taste of annihilation — the constitutive moment at which the entry into human life is preceded by a voyage through death. It is this which gives language its fearsome quality because the experience of

the sign involves a castration at the linguistic level; a castration acknowledged in medieval depictions of grammar. The crucial text for the medieval description of the liberal arts was Martianus Capella's *De nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii* (The wedding of Philology and Mercury). Curtius gives a thorough summary: Lacking a bride, Mercury is counselled to marry the learned maid Philologia. The major part of the poem is taken up with Philologia's admittance to the rank of the Gods: 'Philologia is adorned by her mother Phronesis and greeted by the four Cardinal Virtues and the three graces. At the bidding of Athanasia, she is forced to vomit up a number of books in order to become worthy of immortality. She then ascends to heaven in a litter born by the youths Labor and Amor and the maidens Epimelia (application) and Agrypnia (the intellectual worker's night labours and curtailed sleep). 'More crucial for a metaphorical understanding of the process I have just traced is the appearance of Grammar: 'Grammar appears as a gray-haired woman of advanced age, who boasts that she descends from the Egyptian king Osiris. Later she lived for a long time in Attica, but now she appears in Roman dress. She carries an ebony casket, containing a knife and a file with which to operate surgically on children's grammatical errors' (Curtius 1953 : 38-9).

To accede to the world of absence — to the world of the sign where one thing can stand for another — we must wound perpetually, if not destroy, a narcissism which would render the world dependent on our presence. This process is also the engenderment of the 'one' of identity in a contradictory movement by which this absence is taken up and named: this naming thus conferring a unity and an identity, a presence. The proper name is transformed from a set of physical qualities into the enumerable mark of an absence. The name is that which marks the exclusion of the subject from the realm in which he/she is thus constituted. An this exclusion is constantly relived in the progress through language. When the substitution rules have been mastered, the child finds itself divided between two worlds — the world of the enunciation, where he or she is constantly in play as signifier and the world of the enounced, where he or she is constantly in place as signified.

Benveniste's great contribution is to have distinguished two different axes of language, the enunciation and the enounced, but his

exposition of their relation is vitiated by his uncritical acceptance of the notion of the subject. The consequence of this acceptance is that the relationship between the subject of the enunciation and the subject of the enounced remains obscure. *Histoire* and *discours* are distinguished by the presence of the subject of the enunciation in *discours* and its absence from *histoire*. But the considerations just advanced demonstrate:

1. that the subject of the enunciation does occur in the realm of the third person because even if there is no direct appearance in the pronouns of the enounced the subject is constituted in the signifier, and thus

2. that *discours* is dependent on *histoire*, most evidently in that the predicates that can be attached to proper names will determine the place of pronouns in *discours*.

The interrelation between *discours* and *histoire* and the crucial role of proper names in this interrelation is evident in what I have termed elsewhere the classic realist text (above and MacCabe 1979). It is through the determination of the possibilities of predication that the novelist can produce the moral judgements of *discours*. What can and cannot be said in *discours* is determined by the articulation of *histoire*. A consideration of Benveniste's example from Balzac will enable us to understand this functionning:

> Après un tour de galerie, le jeune homme *regarda* tour à tour le ciel et sa montre, *fit* un geste d'impatience, *entra*, dans un bureau de tabac, y *alluma* un cigare, se *posa* devant une glace, et *jeta* un regard sur son costume, un peu plus riche que ne le permettent en France les lois du goût (I). Il *rajusta* son col et son gilet de velours noir sur lequel se *croisait* plusieurs fois une de ces grosses chaînes d'or fabriquées à Gênes ; puis, après avoir jeté par un seul mouvement sur son épaule gauche son manteau doublé de velours en le drapant avec élégance, il *reprit* sa promenade sans se laisser distraire par les œillades bourgeoises qu'il *recevait*. Quant les boutiques *commencèrent* à s'illuminer et que la nuit lui *parut* assez noire, il se *dirigea* vers la place du Palais-Royal en homme qui *craignait* d'être reconnu, car il *côtoya* la place jusqu'à la fontaine, pour gagner à l'abri des fiacres l'entrée de la rue Froidmanteau

(1971 : 208)

When the young man had gone round the gallery, he looked up at the sky and then at his watch, made an impatient gesture, went into a tobacconist and once inside lit up a cigar. He stood in front of a mirror and glanced at his clothes which were rather more dressy than is allowed by good taste in France. (I) He straightened his collar and his black velvet waistcoat on which one of those heavy gold chains made in Genoa was crossed and recrossed several times; then after throwing over this shoulder in one smooth movement his double cloak of velvet so that it draped him in elegant folds, he resumed his walk without allowing himself to be distracted by the stares of the bourgeoisie that were directed towards him. When the shops began to light up and the evening had become dark, he made his way towards the square of Palais Royal like a man who was frightened of being recognised for he hugged the walls of the square up to the fountain so that he could reach the entry to the rue Froidmanteau under cover of the carriages.

Benveniste underlines all the occurences of the tenses of *histoire* and for the one occurrence of a present tense he adds as a footnote (I) 'Reflexion de l'auteur qui échappe au plan du récit' (Reflection of the author which falls outside the scope of the narrative).

The crucial moment in this passage is the moment which Benveniste recognises as escaping his division, the moment at which Balzac intervenes in order to inform us that the young man's clothes are a little too overdone. Benveniste argues that this present tense relates directly to the author independently of the narrative. But this is to ignore the extent to which the figure of the author is a function of the narrative. The introduction of a present tense locates the author as omniscient in the present but his position does not find its authority in the present tense nor in the historical figure Honoré de Balzac but rather in the wealth of detailed aorists which guarantee the truth of the narrative and, by metonymy, of its writer. The relation between the tenses in this type of novel, or better this practice of writing, is not one of separation or division but of solidarity. If the aorist becomes excluded from speech, this absence becomes the guarantee of the truth of the written form. And it is this truth which justifies the present tenses that occur within a novel.[4]

Benveniste's distinction between the tenses finds its basis not in some grammatical features of the verb but in a certain practice of writing which has pulled in its wake certain grammatical features.[5] A practice is defined as a transformation of material through time and a practice of writing is a constant transformation, work on the signifying material of language. It is within this perspective that one might venture certain historical explanations of the tense system in French. In particular one might be able to situate the aorist's exclusion from speech and the rise of the novel as contemporary events. As to the contemporary situation: although Benveniste provides a perfectly satisfactory synchronic account of a stable system, it does not follow that the aorist is not menaced by extinction. If Benveniste is quite right to criticise the received notion that the aorist is succumbing to some inexorable natural process, it is important to recognise that in the last forty years (and particularly in the last ten) there have arisen various practices of writing which aim at the disruption of the stable system that Benveniste describes. In his first novel *L'Etranger* Albert Camus wrote a narrative which systematically avoided the aorist and in the wake of Camus's book a variety of anti-aorist ideologies have been articulated. The refusal to use the aorist has been theorised in terms of existential authenticity (it is the tense that burdens you with a past that exhausts your definition) or of a more structural sensibility (it is the tense of the novel in which one refuses to be written) or of a political refusal of the social and educational divisions inscribed within the French language (the aorist is an 'elitist' tense). *Histoire* and *discours* depend on a distinction between a language use from which the speaking subject is excluded and a language use in which the subject can identify his/her place. The detour through psychoanalysis demonstrates that the identifying of the place by the subject is the experience of exclusion and its modalities. We cannot find a language independent of subjectivity, nor a subjectivity independent of language but must attempt to understand their joint constitution. Benveniste's analysis is a vital and important step in the attempt to understand the linguistic mechanisms across which the 'I' and the 'it' form and re-form: the process by which a subjectivity is produced, along with its constant subversion. But if Benveniste's distinction is of such crucial importance, it is necessary to recognise that because his own attempts to develop it are caught within the

terms of classical philosophy, he is often forced to return, against his explicit theses, to a conception of language as transparent mirror between subject and object, a mere reflection for worlds constituted outside its operations.

Zellig Harris and the constitution of the corpus.

It is now so evident that for linguistics to constitute itself as a science it was necessary to drop normative concerns that one can all too hastily recuperate such a decision within a spontaneous 'objectivist' theory of science and ignore the complex play of theories and practices that were re-aligned by the Saussurean revolution. If, until then, the grammarian had been concerned with laying down the rules and means of expression in reference to an optimum then inevitably his concern was with *texts* of considerable length in which this optimum could be demonstrated with reference to specific effectivities. Once, however, the notion of *langue* as system has been introduced, language is studied in terms of the operations which allow the possibility of the specific production of sense and *no longer* in terms of a sense which it is language's function to produce. At this point the text ceases to be an object for the linguist because the set of systems which allow combination and regular substitution are smaller than the text. Over and above the sentence we leave the domain of *langue* to enter into the world of a full subjectivity where *langue* is simply at the service of *parole*. Jakobson, in a famous passage, states the position thus :

There is an ascending scale of liberty in the combination of linguistic units. In the combination of distinctive traits into phonemes the user's liberty is nil ; the code has already established all the possibilities that can be used in the language in question. In the combination of phonemes into words his liberty is heavily circumscribed ; it is limited to the marginal situation of the creation of new words. The constraints upon the speaker are less when it comes to the combination of works into sentences. But finally in the combination of sentences into statements the action of the constraining rules of syntax stops and the liberty of each grows substantially, although one should still not underestimate the number of stereotyped statements.

(Jakobson 1963 : 47)

This belief in the creative freedom of the individual at the supra-sentential level (freedom limited only by what guarantees its reality — the risk of stereotype) has effectively vitiated the majority of work done by linguists on discourse analysis, or, as it is also described, text-linguistics.[6] If the lexical ambiguity of the term discourse indicates that the articulatory and intersubjective functions of language are *one and the same*, that it is the major articulations of language which provide the field for the appearance of subjectivity, the example which provide the field for the appearance of subjectivity, the example of Benveniste proves that as long as the problem of the subject is left unresolved then the analysis will collapse back into the presuppositions of the Saussurean concept of *parole*. To analyse discourse we must start from Lacan's insight that language operates on a continuous misconstruction of its constitution ; which misconstruction is the appearance of the subject.

In this perspective the work of Zellig Harris provides a much more promising start in its resolute refusal of any problematic of subjectivity although we shall also see how this refusal blocks Harris's own development of his procedures of analysis. For Harris the failure of linguistics to pass beyond the threshold of the sentence can be ascribed to the fact that effective grammars can be constituted without so doing. In his concern to propose an analysis which does move beyond the sentence, Harris's starting-point is a definition of discourse as 'connected speech or writing', a definition which starts from the very opposite emphasis to Benveniste's intersubjectivity. Harris believes that there are regularities and constraints to be discovered at the level of discourse and, further, that these discoveries will relate language to its cultural situation : to the problem of subjectivity. However, the problem of subjectivity is left to a further stage of the analysis which must start from the formal investigation of particular texts. The choice of particular texts as the corpus is determined for Harris by two considerations. First, we can discover no general supra-sentential rules because of the heterogeneity of language-use, it is only within individual texts that we can discern regularities. Second, in relation to the problem of subjectivity and language, Harris holds that the relation of discourse to its cultural situation must be investigated in individual instances because the relation *changes in each instance*. Thus discourse analysis, by concen-

trating on one continuous text, allow both the construction of regularities that go beyond the sentence and, at the same time, the possibility of studying the relation between these regularities and the conditions of the production of the text. The method pre-supposes no knowledge except that of morpheme boundaries but, in fact, Harris uses grammatical knowledge in order to construct larger equivalence classes, a concept we shall come to in a moment. Harris summarises his position at the end of the introduction to the article 'Discourse analysis' thus : 'We have raised two problems : that of distributional relations among sentences, and that of the correlation between language and social situation. We have proposed that information relevant to both of these problems can be obtained by a formal analysis of one stretch of discourse at a time' (Harris 1952a : 4-5). We shall return to these arguments after considering Harris's procedure.

The distributional methods that Harris proposes for the analysis of discourse are derived from those set out in Harris's *Methods in Structural Linguistics* which had been published the year before although composed some time earlier (it has since been reissued as *Structural Linguistics*). Lyons describes the methodology as follows :

> it was assumed that the proper task of 'structural linguistics' was to formulate a technique, or procedure, which could be applied to a corpus of attested utterances and, with the minimum use of the informant's judgements of 'sameness' and 'difference', could be guaranteed to derive the rules of the rules of the grammar from the corpus itself.
>
> (1968 : 157)

Starting, that is, from a *corpus,* the result of the collection of statements produced by members of the same speech community at the same time, the distributional analyst, rejecting all explanations in terms of function or meaning, attempts to subdivide the corpus in terms of contexts or *environments*. To describe an environment is to describe what precedes and follows a particular unit. The problem then becomes one of ordering the occurrences of units within similar environments with the aim of producing an account of the distribution of a unit. If we imagine a language close to English but in which, for simplicity's sake, the adjective always preceded the noun

and never appeared without the noun, a distributional grammar would describe it simply as a unit A which always precedes another unit N, this second unit having the possibility of appearing without unit A and in combination with other units. This is exactly the method that Harris follows, with the proviso that the corpus is constituted by one text because of the necessity of avoiding any criteria from outside language (includind meaning) in specifying the corpus.

Given the simple aim of constituting classes with the same environment and considering their appearance within a specific text so that certain patterns and regularities can be analysed, Harris's paper on structural linguistics is devoted to sketching the difficulties involved in the analysis. Taken strictly the methods of distributionalism would prevent the analysis of any but the most simple kind of text because there are just not that many identical repetitions in any normal use of language. Harris is concerned to specify criteria of equivalence which are not dependent on meaning. The construction of equivalences is a question of paraphrasing the original phrase until the element under investigation can be isolated in the same position as the one with which an equivalence it to be established. This may seem rather a circular procedure. Harris comments :

> The criterion is not some external consideration like getting the longest possible chain, but rather the intrinsic consideration of finding some patterned distribution of these classes. In other words we try to set up such classes as will have an interesting distribution in our particular text. This may seem a rather circular safeguard for constructing equivalence chains. But it simply means that whenever we have to decide whether to carry an equivalence chain one step further, we exercice the foresight of considering how the new interval will fit into our analysed text as it appears when represented in terms of the new class. This kind of consideration occurs in descriptive linguistics when we have to decide, for example, how far to subdivide a phonemic sequence into morphemes.
>
> (Harris, 1952a : 12)

In rearranging the position of phrases we take the horizontal order of the segments of the sentence as immaterial. Our aim,

however, is to construct a vertical order which will reveal in the regular distribution of the equivalence classes certain systematicities in discourse which were not evidently available.

In determining the equivalence classes it is the division of the sentences into segments that is crucial for 'we want not simply the same distributional classes but the same relationship between these classes'. Grammatical criteria will normally provide the necessary divisions but certain cases remain problematic. Harris's example of such a difficulty is the sentence 'Casals who is self-exiled from Spain stopped performing after the Fascist victory.' The problem for Harris is whether 'who' continues or repeats Casals : 'If *who* continues *Casals*, we have one interval, the first section (C) being *Casal who*, while the second section (S) is *self-exiled ... stopped ...* If *Who* repeats Casals instead of continuing it, we have two intervals, one embedded in the other : the first consists of *Casals* (again C) plus *stopped performing* (marked S1), the second of *who* (taken as an equivalent of Casals) plus *is self-exiled* (S2).' For Harris the choice simply depends on whether we can find elements of the second half of the sentence occuring separately. And this matter is considered relatively unimportant by Harris : 'The only difference between taking a dependent element as a continuation and taking it as a repetition is the number of intervals one or two into which one can analyse the total' (Harris 1952a : 16-17).

Harris's comments ignore the importance of the choice of analysis. In order to analyse the regularities of occurrence we must know what can count as an equivalence class, for a predicate which contains two verbs might not be equivalent to a predicate with one. Indeed in this particular case we are dealing with a sentence for which it is extremely unlikely that one can set up any equivalence classes given Harris's original definition of the corpus. For in this passage Harris glides over the problem of relatives ; a problem which is crucial to an understanding of discourse. Traditionally relatives are analysed into restrictive and non-restrictive. The restrictive relative cannot be removed from the sentence in which it occurs without a change in meaning because it determines one of the terms within the main clause. Transformational grammars tend to analyse restrictive relatives in terms of an embedded structure whereby the relative clause is found as a sentence attached to a noun phrase in the deep structure (cf. Huddleston 1976 : 101-9). Thus an analysis of the sentence 'Mary believed the rumour that John had started' produces the sentence 'John started the rumour' as dependent on 'the rumour' in the deep structure. On the other hand, the non-restrictive relative can, in principle, be abstracted from the sentence without a consequent change in meaning ; thus 'Moses, who was a prophet, led the Jews out of Egypt'. Here the relative does not identify a constituent part of the main sentence. Traditionally generative grammars analyse such sentences in terms of co-ordination insted of subordination with two separate sentences in the deep structure. But this grammatical distinction is not at all clear if we consider the discursive functioning of the relative. For in the sentence 'Casals, who is self-exiled from Spain, stopped performing after the Fascist victory' *who is self-exiled* does nos identify the subject of the sentence because a proper name cannot be further identifies. A proper name is precisely an identification and nothing more, the enumerable mark of a specific absence. But if we consider the sentence about Casals, we can recognise that the main and subordinate clause enter into a relation which produces something over and above their separate assertions. What is asserted is a relation of consequence which escapes our grammatical analysis. Casal's exile and his refusal to perform are bound together.

In fact it is relatives which provide a key fulcrum in the functionning of discourses and this precisely because relatives produce some of the crucial subjective effects of the discourse, effects which Harris's examples demonstrate clearly although Harris never explicitly concerns himself.[7] In brief, and following the arguments advanced by Michel Pêcheux in *Les Vérités de la Palice* (1975), we can describe the non-restrictive relative in terms of a discourse turning back on itself and constantly providing a series of equivalences for the terms it is using. The non-restrictive relative produces evidence of an alternative which would say the same thing only differently and it is this possibility of an alternative, of a set of alternatives, which constitutes the effect of sense and subjectivity and their necessary certainty. Sense does not arrive with each word but is produced across a set of alternatives within a discourse. It is this possibility which produces the effect that 'I' am in control of my discourses, that I say what I *say* because I can always go back and

offer a set of explanatory alternatives : Moses — a prophet — the leader of the Jews out of Egypt, etc.

The restrictive relative, on the other hand, is the site of two discourses intersecting and being homogenised by the action of the relative. If we examine the example that Harris uses we can see that the operation in question is a binding together of the discourses of politics and music around the name of Casals. It is this 'binding' that the traditional analysis of proper names and relatives obscures by considering that the relation between Casals and the relative is one of non-restriction and, therefore, of simple co-ordination. For the elements of the sentence are held together because of the implied consequence between exile and the refusal to perform, a consequence which supports a conditional of the form 'If one is a musician (if one is Casals) then one would exile oneself from Spain and stop performing.' The proof that this relation of implication is contained in the indicative is that if one refuses the conditional then one is inclined to contest the indicative sentence. The text produces a complicity with its reader which provides the mechanism for understanding the movement from *histoire* to *discours* (in Benveniste's terms) that I have already discussed. Around the proper name is produced a general statement which then permits of substitution with 'you' or 'I'. Indeed if we think of the refusal of complicity it is obvious what is at stake. 'He doesn't care about Spain' 'He's just trying to make more money' 'He's just an artist.' Another discourse rescues us from an identification we reject.

Harris would object violently to the argument that I have just sketched. For I have assumed that I can specify discourses independently of the analysis. But we touch here at the arguments about the constitution of the corpus. By limiting himself to a single text, Harris cannot proceed very far with his explicit aim of relating the supra-sentential regularities to the cultural situation. It is extremely doubtful that the selection of the single text as a corpus can be given any justification other than there is no obvious alternative which would constitute the corpus independently of considerations of meaning. But to take this position is to ignore the reality of social institutions, however analysed, and to so ignore institutions is to run the risk of re-introducing meaning back into the field of linguistics (under the form of some logicist universal semantics). De Saussure's

inauguration of linguistics takes the form of a double separation. On the one hand he separates *langue* from any problem of subjectivity (this subjectivity is not interrogated but simply re-placed in the realm of *parole*). On the other hand he separates *langue* from any other social institution because of the determinate and evident relation between means and ends in all social institutions except *langue* (cf. de Saussure 1972 : 110 ; 1974 : 76).

The error about institutions is the reverse side of the mistake which constitutes *parole* as the realm of a pure subjectivity in control of language. To presume that means are directly related to ends in institutions and find their base in some 'nature' is a naivety which is no longer tenable sixty years after de Saussure's death. Both Marxist and sociological analyses refuse such transparency to the other institutions. The functioning of an institution is not reducible to its ends and its ends are not so easily specifiable as de Saussure seems to have imagined. One of the most important of 'means' within any institution is language and if we concede that the operations of language cannot be reduced to the institutions' ends, explicit or otherwise, then it is possible to see how one can specify a discourse institutionally while still being unable to answer any of the questions about the specific functioning and effectivity of that discourse. It is this functioning and effectivity which Harris's method of analysis offers the possibility of investigating. Obviously the discursive structure thus analysed will feed back into the original social analysis in certain ways. What the discursive analysis should reveal are the different linguistic methods of identification within a specific discourse. That is to say where it can turn back on itself and propose alternatives (the working of the conscious in retrieving material from the preconscious) and there where constitutive moments of fusion do not allow of investigation without the breaking of that very identity (the unconscious of the discourse).

The arguments of this section are taken directly from, or are simple elaborations of, the work of the French philosopher and linguist Michel Pêcheux (1969, 1975).[8] Pêcheux has argued consistently that linguistics constitutes itself by separating itself from any notion of 'subject' or 'institution' and that the refusal to theorise these notions at the level of language entails a return of the subject which haunts linguistics in the form of a universal semantics. He

argues further that the only way to remove semantics as a threat to linguistics is to give an account of the effectivity of discourse which will be concerned to demonstrate how specific discursive processes work on a linguistic base to produce specific discursive effects. Discursive formations can be specified in terms of a social and ideological analysis but this specification will not demonstrate their modes of functioning. These modes of functioning may, in turn, reveal weaknesses in the original specification (Pêcheux 1978). Harris's method provides the first step towards the possibility of analysing the specific discursive processes but without a theory of ideology he cannot specify a corpus. and further, and this constitutes the second major argument against the original method, he is blind to the problem of determining those new sequences which can be generated within a discourse and those which cannot.[9]

Michel Pêcheux and the politics of the signifier

The argument of the paper so far has been as follows. If one examines Benveniste's distinction between *discours* and *histoire,* one discovers that, despite the appearance of a basis in grammar and particularly in the tenses of the French verb, this distinction rests on an unexamined notion of the subject whcih transforms a specific set of linguistic practices (largely practices of writing) into a set of eternal relations between subject and language which reproduce the rhetoric/logic distinction traditional to Western thought since the seventeenth century. However, in the course of his investigation Benveniste distinguished two different relations to language — the subject of the enunciation and the subject of the enounced — which are indeed central to an understanding of the functioning of language. Benveniste thought that one could specify language uses in which the subject of the enunciation was not involved (this indeed is the very definition of *histoire*) but a reflection on the psychoanalytic account of the subject contradicted this position. The crucial nexus in the acquisition of language (an acquisition which, on this account, must be understood as constant, as interminable) is the moment at which the child grasps the systematic substitutability of pronouns. This moment introduces, to use Lacan's terminology, the big Other, an introduction understood *not* as the encounter with the parents on the level of demand but as the encounter wiith the parent as the site

of language and desire which outruns any particular statement of demand. This encounter turns on the parents' speech with each other about the child. It is this experience of articulation which produces the divided subject of psychoanalysis, for on the one hand the speaker is caught up in the play of signifiers, of the differential oppositions which produce meaning independently of the activity of the individual, and, on the other, the child takes its place as the 'I'of experience and language, the unified subject of classical philosophy and modern linguistics. (The field and modalities of this division can be understood as congruent with the division which locates the child both in the movement along the play of the parents' desire, a multiplicity of positions, and in its appropriate place, its signified sexuality).

Before proceeding further, it might be useful to consider, if only to reject, an argument to the effect that this account is merely another version of the genesis of the subject and, like all such accounts, it presupposes what it proves, having need of a subject already in place who then recognises him/her self as subject. For, the argument continues, in order to ensure recognition there must already be a subject ready to recognise its own essence but, if this is so, it implies that this essence must be autonomous of its appearance in language. A feature of man (viz, the unconscious) is made the determining principle of language. The reply to this is that the recognition in question is not the recognition of an essence but rather the recognition of the possibility of another signifer. As such it is not a question of defining man with an unconscious and then discussing language but rather a question of defining language in such a way that there is unconsiousness for he or she who wishes to speak.

It is the recognition of the division of the subject in language that enables one to pass beyond the rhetoric/logic distinction to discover the speaker at play in every function of language. Harris's article offers a technique for attempting to grasp in more detail the relation between enunciation and enounced but if it has the immense merit of refusing the classical conception of the subject, it fails completely to render a more adequate account of the subject. This weakness affects Harris's analysis at the level of the constitution of the corpus where deprived of any theory of ideology or institutions, a

banal empiricism ensures no real investigation of the 'correlation between language and social situation'. Pêcheux's work over the last ten years marks the most serious attempt to develop Harris's techniques in line with a theory of discourse which attempts to take account not only of the divided subject of psychoanalysis but also of language's place within the class struggle, where language is not only the instrument of communication, so beloved of linguistic theorists, but also the instrument of non-communication, so necessary to the divisions of modern capital. Pêcheux's work is itself marked, however, by a resurgence of the rhetoric/logic moder, a resurgence which corresponds to an unresolved political difficulty with Lacanian theory. In this final section I want to sketch the arguments that Pêcheux develops in *Les Vérités de la Palice* and to indicate their weaknesses.[10]

Pêcheux's starting-point is the feebleness of those Marxist positions which, garnishing themselves with one or two comments from *The German Ideology*, accept unreservedly the whole structure of communications theory complete with autonomous senders and receivers using codes to convey messages. Pêcheux, on the other hand, stresses that language functions both as communication and non-communication, that when one moves from morphology and syntax to meaning, one must leave behind the notion of *langue*, to which each speaker bears a similar relation, and consider discursive formations, specific areas of communicability that set in place both sender and receiver and which determine the appropriateness of messages. Centrally Pêcheux is concerned to establish the moments at which a scientific theory of the social formation, namely Marxism, is intimately concerned with the discursive functioning of language and he proceeds about this task by a long discussion of the analyses of relative clauses since the time of Port-Royal, a discussion that ends, as we have seen above, with a demonstration that the distinctions between relative clauses can only be understood in terms of discursive rather than grammatical function.

Port-Royal's analysis of sentences starts from the premise that one can understand the functioning of language, its grammar, in terms of the operations of the mind, operations which essentially consist of but one : predication. This position subordinates the order of grammar and rhetoric to the order of thought (a refurbished

Aristotelian logic) and enables Arnauld and Lancelot to make a precise distinction between relatives in terms of the determination of the subject of the main clause. If the subject is determined by the relative then the relative simply functions as an aid in the identification of the subject and as such it can be understood as part of a rhetoric which, for Port-Royal, is now wholly defined in terms of a pedagogy. If, on the other hand, the subject can be identified independently (if it is a proper name for example) then the relative clause represents an autonomous act of judgement which must be understood in terms of the general logic of judgement.

Within Port-Royal's terms there is no problem of the subject of the enunciation. The world and its representation exist independently of the enunciation of language and thus, for example, pronouns can be explained on the grounds of economy and politeness (it would be rude to endlessly repeat one's own name — the pronoun 'I' thus saves one social embarrassment). But by the time we reach Leibniz and the British empiricists in the next century the relation between world and representation becomes less certain and the problem of the subject's place as the movement between the two becomes dominant. Leibniz solves this problem by creating an infinity of possible worlds in which the seeming alternatives offered by language find resolution if one occupies the positon of God. Significantly Leibniz's position leads him to analyse all relative clauses attached to names as restrictive. The effect of this is to multiply the population considerably as there are as many persons as there are names followed by relative clauses. The John Smith in 'John Smith who left his house this morning...' becomes different from the John Smith in 'John Smith who ate lunch in McDonald's at one o'clock...' To understand this multiplicity of possible worlds in which representation is one again transparent we would have to be God. If Leibniz solves the problem by expanding reality to occupy the space allocated to it by language, the British empiricists undertake to reduce reality to the perspective of the subject. It is the subject who becomes the source of a language charged with no more than representing his needs or sense impressions. Thus instead of finding ourselves in a world of Leibnizian necessity, if only we were God, we occupy a world in which everything is merely a useful fiction or construction. What we can see at work in the consideration of Leibniz and the British em-

piricists is a movement from the problem of necessary and contingent towards the problem of subjective and objective, a problem which haunts philosophies of language up to the present day. What Pêcheux is concerned to demonstrate across a series of historical readings is that the traditional philosophical questions about language are produced within epistemological problematics and that both the rationalist and empiricist versions of language take their starting-point in a refusal to understanding the historical development of science as a set of theoretical struggles which have definite conditions of existence. Pêcheux's thesis is that the link between philosophy of language and epistemology is crucial and that as long as one does not have an adequate account of the development of science one will be stuck with a philosophy of language which will endlessly reproduce the idealist categories of subject and object instead of addressing itself to the problem of discourse and discursive formations. For Pêcheux this constitutive misunderstanding of science can essentially be resumed under two headings : those of metaphysical realism and logical empiricism :

empiricist theories of knowledge, just as much as realist theories, seem to have a stake in forgetting the existence of historically constituted scientific disciplines to the profit of a universal theory of ideas, whether this takes the realist form of an a priori and universal network of notions or the empiricist form of an administrative procedure applicable to the universe considered as a collection of facts, objects, events or acts.

(Pêcheux 1975 : 68, author's emphasis)

For Pêcheux the exemplary modern discussion of the problem of language in relation to science is Frege's and, in particular, the criticisms that Frege addressed to Husserl over the status of arithmetic. For Husserl the subject is the source and unifying principle of representations whereas for Frege the subject is the bearer of representations which it neither creates nor unifies. But if Frege succeeds in displacing the subject in his discussion of science, he fails, on the other hand, to understand the necessity of theorising the production of the subject in language. In the place of such a theory we find the dream of the production of a language from which all 'imperfections'
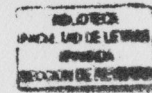
have been removed, a dream to which one can have no objection in so far as it embodies a wish to liberate mathematics from the effects of language but which does, however, fall back into traditional concerns, if it is interpreted as the wish to liberate language from its own imperfections.[11] Once again the functioning of the relative provides a focal point for philosophical debate. Frege was worried by sentence like 'He who discovered the elliptical orbit of the planets died in poverty'. The problem for Frege is that one cannot logically disentangle the main and subordinate clauses because the main clause depends for its truth or falsity on the fact that the subordinate clause has a reference. For Frege the functioning of language produces an illusion : a pre-supposed statement of existence. What, for Frege, is a regrettable imperfection of the language is, for Pêcheux, the evidence of the functioning of language as discourse. Indeed such sentences provide the quintessential example whereby discourse produces within one domain of thought another domain of thought *as if* this other domain had already been introduced. In discourse there is no beginning for the subject who always already finds itself and its discourses in place. It is this particular functioning of the relative that Pêcheux uses as a justification for the thesis advanced by Althusser in his essay on Ideological State Apparatuses (1971) that the subject is always already interpelated in ideology. For Pêcheux it is the fact that the complex whole of the discursive formations, which he terms the *interdiscourse*, constantly provides already available positions, which he terms the *preconstructed*, within any specific discursive formation that provides the material basis for Althusser's theory of interpellation. It follows from this that the interdiscourse is identified wtih the Subject (with a big S) which Althusser had used in a reformulation (whose problems we shall shortly investigate) of Lacan's big Other. Pêcheux makes clear this equation between Subject and Other, identified materially with the interdiscourse, and attempts to distinguish this effect of the introduction of the preconstructed from another discursive function of the relative, which he terms the *support effect*, in which the relative signals a discourse turning back on itself (as in the example of Moses) rather than the introduction of the interdiscourse. This discursive function, as we saw above, is identified with the pre-concious. So, on the one hand, we can identify the support effect, the doubling back, as the construc-

tion of the effects of sense and certainty; construction along and across the possible paraphrases that constitute a discourse. It is in these alternatives (often purely grammatical) that one can locate the effect of sense and an imaginarily full subjectivity — constituted by the very possibility of doubling back and restating. In the operations of the preconstructed, on the other hand, such paraphrase is not possible because so to do would be to step outside the discourse and locate its unconscious constitution.

If this account might seem to provide an account of the division of the subject in language and relate it to the problems of ideological analysis and struggle, it must be recognised that the division here proposed has little to do with Lacan's concept of the subject but rather involves the construction of an ego completely dominated by a super ego. An investigation of the problems of the Althusser-Pêcheux conception will, however, enable us to pose the political problem of Lacan's concept of the signifier and the divided subject which there finds its constitution. At a simple level one could accuse Pêcheux of failing to grasp the force of the Freudian unconscious, a failure which has its effects in the description of both discursive functions. If we consider the support effect, where paraphrastic relations produce both subject and sense, we can note that even if the subject is produced as effect rather than invoked as cause, it is a subject in full control of language. But the situation of paraphrase in which Pêcheux locates both suject and sense bears witness in itself to the functioning of a desire which is absent from Pêcheux's formulations. For the request for a remark to be paraphrased is always more than a demand for clarification which allows the production of inter-subjective sense, it always entails the desire for knowledge of the other which disrupts the sense by drawing attention to the surplus of signifiers. Even in the realm of the support effect, a parapraxis can bear witness to the divided nature of the subject. Pêcheux's production of the subject in relation to sense without any possibility that the truth of language can explode on to the scene of subjectivity finds its complement in an account of the production of the unconscious which, following Althusser, provides it with all the imaginary power of an omnipotent super ego. If we recall the central scenario of Althusser's essay, it describes the action of a policeman who calls out 'hey you !, a shout to which our inevitable response is an index of the

fact that we are always already there in the position of 'you', that we are always interpellated in ideology. If we compare this scenario to that sketched by Irigaray — the child listening to the parents talk about it — we can notice that Irigaray's account emphasises that the child is only present as signifier in the parents' speech in so far as it is excluded from that very speech (conscious and unconscious are produced in the same turn of phrase). Althusser's account, from which nothing is excluded, leaves nothing unconscious : the subject is reduced by the terrorised presence of the ego to an imaginary super ego. (Houdebine makes this point in telling fashion when he insists that the Althusserian drama should be told from the point of view of the policeman. With this difference : as the interpellated subject turns the policeman sees that he has hailed the wrong person and thus experiences, even from the position of authority, the dominance of the signifier (Houdebine 1976 : 91).)[12]

To content oneself, like Houdebine, with a superior condemnation of Althusser's ignorance of Lacan — he hasn't read the *Ecrits* properly — misses the importance of a mistake which requires, exactly, analysis. Althusser's re-articulation of Lacan is political and it comprises both a positive and negative aspect, aspects which are necessarily linked. Negatively, the identification of the Other and the Subject represses the Other as the heterogenous site of language and desire. Instead of Lacan's insistence on the impossibility of a consciousness transparent to itself, Althusser produces an omnipotent subject who is master of both language and desire. The consequence of this mastery is that there is no *theoretical* perspective for ideological struggle in the face of dominant ideologies for there is nothing which escapes or is left over from the original production of the subject by the Subject (this political pessimism coincides with the functionalism of the concept of the Ideological State Apparatus). If Althusser had simply transported Lacan's concept of the Other into the analysis of the social formation then it would have been possible for him to give an account of the construction of subversive ideologies. A Marxist reading of the division of the subject in the place of the Other would theorise the individual's assumption of the place produced for him or her by the complex of discursive formations and would insist that these places would be constantly threatened and undermined by their constitutive instability in the field of language

and desire. Such a reading of Lacan's Other would immediately, and in its very account of dominant ideologies, offer a material basis for the constuction of subversive ideologies. But, and here we come to the positive aspect of Althusser's transposition, such a Marxist reformulation of Lacan, deprived of its articulation within the drama of the Oedipus, would leave the formation of subversive ideologies, and discourses to the chance play of the signifier. Althusser's positioning of the drama of the subject in the policeman's call for identity can be read as an effort to call in question the Lacanian concept of the signifier in so far as Lacan deduces the divided subject from the very fact of language itself and makes the actual sites of language use (the family, the school, the workplace) merely unimportant variations with no effectivity inscribed in the theory (this difficulty appears within Lacanian theory itself in the status to be accorded to the terms Father and Mother in relation to biological and social identities). To shift attention to the site of enunciation is to insist that it is not simply the formation of the unconscious that must be theorised but the formation of specific unconsciousnesses, a formation which cannot be divided into social and individual components but which dramatises in each individual case that which is generally unconscious.

If we now return to Pêcheux's division of discursive functions into the pre-constructed and the support-effect, we can indicate how this division, rectified in the light of our criticisms of the Althusser-Pêcheux conception of the unconscious, may well provide one of the starting-points for an investigation of the articulation of the general and specific in the unconscious. It should be noted that Pêcheux's division, as he himself formulates it, resurrects a logic/rhetoric distinction with the support effect understood as the simple substitution of grammatical equivalents (the logical) opposed to the preconstructed which introduces the interferences of the ideological (rhetoric). Thus even from a purely linguistic view there is every reason to be suspicious of the division as it stands. The problem with Pêcheux's interdiscourse is that, like Althusser's policeman, it re-introduces the philosophical subject, coherent and homogenous, into a Lacanian schema which has as its explicit aim the subversion of that subject. The cost of the re-introduction is clear : the disappearance of the body and desire from the schema. The failure to grasp the radical

heterogeneity of the Lacanian Other means that there is nothing left over in that place to function as the object of desire. A first step in the rectification of Pêcheux's position would necessitate a greater emphasis on the other practices imbricated with the interdiscourse and, in particular, the positioning and representation of the body. It is through an emphasis on the body and the impossibility of its exhaustion in its representations that one can understand the material basis with which the unconscious of a discursive formation disrupts the smooth functioning of the dominant ideologies and that this disruption is not simply the chance movement of the signifier but the specific positioning of the body in the economic, political and ideological practices.[13] The analysis of the operations of the preconstructed will thus involve a far more concrete attention to specific ideological and political struggles in which the discursive formations are articulated. If the emphasis in the analysis on the preconstructed is on its particular configuration within the social formation, the concept of the support effect must be reworked to take account of those moments where the unrolling of grammatical equivalences is interrupted by the irruption of a desire which can only be read in the specific form which resists any relation of paraphrase.[14].

NOTES

1) The first version of this paper was given in November 1976 at the seminar on Social Relations and Discourse organised by Paul Q. Hirst and Sami Zubaida at Birkbeck College, London. I am grateful to those who participated in the discussion there and to Michel Pêcheux for the conversations we had when I was writing the final draft.

2) The standard English translation of Benveniste's term *histoire* is *narrative*. Such a translation loses the force of the French term which combines the sense of history and story. I have therefore retained the French *histoire* and *discours* in my discussion of Benveniste.

3) Accounts of the relations between compound and simple tenses have run into difficulties because they have failed to analyse the two functions of the compound tenses and the way that these distinct functions intersect with the division between *histoire* and *discours*. On the one hand the compound tenses are all 'perfects', that is to say that they all denote an action as 'accomplished' with regard to the 'actual' situation which results from this accomplishment. As perfects, the compound tenses can occur outside any relations of subordidnation.

But the compound tenses serve a second function which is to indicate anteriority and this anteriority is posed in relation to the corresponding simple form of the verb. This means that in their anterior function the compound tenses can only occur in a subordinate clause for which the main clause uses the corresponding simple form. But the compound tenses find themselves articulated within a double system of relations. While as the tenses denoting 'accomplishment' they find themselves in opposition to the other compound tenses, in expressing 'anteriority' they are simply defined in relation to their corresponding simple form. With this distinction in mind we can understand how the replacement of the aorist by the perfect in speech created certain strains within the tense system. The point of pressure between the aorist and the perfect occurred in the rival first person forms, e.g. *je fis* and *j'ai fait*.

in so far as the realm of *histoire* excludes person then *je fis* is inadmissible in that realm but in so far as it is the aorist it is excluded from the realm of *discours*. There is a slide from the accomplished of the present — *j'ai fait* — to a simple past. But if *discours* thereby gains a temporal distinction it loses a functional distinction.

> In itself, *j'ai fait* is a perfect that furnishes either the form of the perfective or the form of anteriority to the present *je fais*. But when *j'ai fait*, the compound form, becomes the 'aorist of discourse', it takes on the function of the simple form, with the result that *j'ai fait* is sometimes perfect, a compound tense, and sometimes aorist, a simple tense. The system has remedied this difficulty by recreating the missing form. Alongside the simple tense *je fais* is the compound tense *j'ai fait* for the notion ot the perfective. Now, since *j'ai fait* slips into the rank of a simple tense, there is a need for a new compound tense that in its turn will express the perfective, this will be the secondary compound *j'ai eu fait*. Functionally *j'ai eu fait* is the new perfect of a *j'ai fait* which has become the aorist. Such is the point of departure for the secondary compound tenses.
>
> (Benveniste 1971 : 214–15).

4) The particular process by which the authority of the written is linked specifically to the aorist is peculiar to France, and would have to find further explanation in terms of the ideological and political investment in language during the seventeenth century. In England there is no such evident index of the written although the contemporary growth of the periphrastic tenses and the rise of the novel suggest more complicated links between the grammar of the language and practices of writing.

5) The writing of history is as much a specific practice as that of the novel. The assumption that the past has its own order independently of its present enunciation finds itself challenged in the famous thesis of Walter Benjamin : 'To articulate the past historically does not mean to recognize it « the way it really was » (Ranke). It means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger. Historical materialism wishes to retain that image of the past which
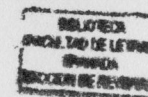
unexpectedly appears to man singled out by history at a moment of danger' (1970 : 257). Such a conception of history will have an evident effect on the distribution of tenses within a particular text.

6) This freedom will often be theorised in terms of its limitations in a variety of sociological perspectives but it is never radically questioned in the posing of subjectivity. Gadet and Pêcheux (1977) offer a comprehensive over-view of the contemporary situation in linguistics.

7) This political thrust of discourse analysis is even more evident (although still not explicit) in the detailed analysis of an article from *Commentary* that Harris published in the same year (1952b : 474-94).

8) For the sake of clarity I have not emphasised the changes in Pêcheux's position. In fact there is a considerable difference between the *Analyse automatique du discours* (1969) and the two texts of 1975 : *les Vérités de la Palice* and 'Mises au point et perspectives de l'analyse automatique du discours' (a text written with the linguist Catherine Fuchs). In particular this involves a shift from the analysis of discourses defined through a sociology of institutions to the analysis of discursive formations defined through the contemporary political and ideological struggles (cf. Pêcheux 1978).

9) Pêcheux's formal method superposes sub-sequences with similar contexts rather than setting up the chain of equivalences. One has then to consider the relation within those sub-sequences which have been grouped together (Haroche, Henry, Pêcheux 1971 : 104-5).

10) These criticisms owe much to Jean-Louis Houdebine's review of Pêcheux in *Tel Quel* (1976) and to Pêcheux's own self-criticism which appears as an appendix to the English version of *Les Vérités de la Palice* (1982).

11) 'It is not contestable that logic as the theory of artificial languages in effect developed by taking « natural » language as its original material but one must immediately add that this work always and exclusively aimed to free *mathematics* from the effects of « natural » language (in they way that logic has progressively come to be a part of the domain of mathematics), and not in any way to free *generally* « natural » language itself from its illusions. If not logic would contain within itself all the sciences to turn a remark of Frege, concerning psychology, against himself', (Pêcheux 1975 : 86-7).

12) What Houdebine does not, however, add is that the policeman who has made the mistake is *all the more likely* to give his interpellation a retrospective justification. But to offer this analysis would risk contradicting the major (and indeed only) political thesis of his article, namely that the only agent of repression in France is the French communist Party.

13) It is through a greater attention to the positioning and representation of the body that Pêcheux would be able to give more political weight to what is politically the most interesting, if theoretically the weakest, section of the book : the discussion of identification. Pêcheux distinguishes three forms of relation to a discursive formation. First, identification (the 'good subject') who assumes without problem the positions offered ; then, in direct opposition, counter-identification (the 'bad subject') who identifies him or herself through the refusal of a certain discourse,

a refusal which finds itself marked by a variety of grammatical and discursive funtions, notably an increased presence of 'shifters' : '*Your* social sciences', 'What *you* call liberty', and the deliberate negation in the main clause of an existence that is asserted in the preconstructed of the subordinate clause : 'He who died on the cross to redeem the world never existed'. This position, which could be politically qualified as that of revolt, is essentially defensive but can open onto a third possibility : *disidentification*. It is this concept which is the most vital and least developed part of Pêcheux's work. In it he attempts to describe those practices which displace the agent from that position of subjective centrality which is the result of both identification and counter-identification. These practices are defined as those of science and proletarian politics. Pêcheux's difficulty is that he, quite rightly, finds it impossible to accept a classic science/ideology or proletarian politics/bourgeois politics distinction in which universal and formal features define the divisions. On the other hand Pêcheux remains committed to a *general* description of ideology and bourgeois politics with the result that ideology and bourgeois politics become the eternal hell to which we are subjected and their alternatives are only momentary displacements into a better world. Ideological subjection thus becomes a feature in language while science and proletarian politics are transformed into ephemeral agents of grace which fleetingly rescue us from the sin of the subject position into which we inevitably relapse. The strengths and weaknesses of Pêcheux's position resemble Althusser's. The weakness is the identification of subject and ego, a formulation of the grounds of political and ideological struggle such that defeat is inevitable, the strength is the posing of the problems of identification as politically and ideologically crucial. To rectify the schema offered by Pêcheux it is necessary to stress the incoherence of the interdiscourse, an incoherence grounded in the contradictory positioning and representations of the body. It is in terms of these contradictions that one can provide a material base for an account of the elaboration of specific sciences (there is no need of a general theory of science, simply the specification of the particular developments, which displace and break with the experiential-perceptual centrality of the body). Politically the effect of the emphasis on the body is to stress the importance of a politics of sexuality as the crucial moments in the subversion of the policeman's demand for identification.

14) What is in question here is perhaps the most important of the disidentificatory practices of language which Pêcheux fails to mention : those practices of writing which are generally named as 'literature'. If much literature is devoted to a re-articulation of crucial social identifications, there are certain practices of writing which break definitively with the very possibility of identification. 'Literature' may be limited to certain elites in our class society but its disidentificatory practices on language find wider social currency in certain forms of jokes.

INTERDISCOURS, SYSTEME DU SYMBOLISME COLLECTIF, LITTERATURE
Thèses à propos d'une théorie Générative du discours et de la littérature

Jürgen LINK

J'ai l'intention de parler dans les thèses suivantes entre autres du « symbolisme collectif », y compris de « symboles collectifs », au singulier. Je suis bien conscient du fait que le terme de « symbole » se prête à la confusion terminologique la plus chaotique qu'on puisse imaginer. Ne me demandez donc pas pourquoi je me suis lancé dans ce chaos — je ne saurais vous répondre autrechose que c'est fait, c'est parti ... Disons pour commencer que par « symbole », j'aimerais comprendre des *images signifiantes*, par conséquence plus que de simples *signes*. L'illustration historique la plus suggestive serait l'*emblème* dans le sens baroque, p. ex. l'image de l'arbe avec la signification de « constantia ». Par « symbole collectif », je comprends donc une image signifiante dont l'aspect collectif provient de sa surdétermination socio-historique, p. ex. techno-historique. Je proposerai une condition de plus, à savoir qu'un symbole collectif dans mon