SOCIALITY AGAINST THE STATE:
THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF PIERRE CLASTRES

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Abstract. Clastres 'de-substantializes' the state, which is not 'the Elysium, the White House, the Kremlin,' but 'an actualization of a relation of power.' There is no reason, therefore, to believe that, in a Durkheimian mood, he has reified society. Even though he makes no use of the concept, I believe there is already a concept of 'sociality' at work in Clastres: hence, the idea of sociality against the state. In the three sections of this study, I show the role played by 'society,' the 'state' and 'against' in Clastres's writings. In this way, I aim to demonstrate that his ethnography is filled with indications about how to deal with some of the continuing dilemmas of anthropology, such as: how can we avoid methodological individualism without becoming spellbound by a transcendental holism or vice-versa? How can we erect models of intentionality without a subject? How can we conceive of social relations without a society? And finally, how does the 'objectivity' of sociality work through the 'subjectivity' of persons-in-interaction?

'… something exists in absence.'

Pierre Clastres, 1974

1. Towards a Minor Shakespeare

Carmelo Bene is fond of losers. In rewriting two classic plays by William Shakespeare − *Romeo and Juliet* and *Richard III* − he conducts a similar kind of 'surgery' in each.[2] In the first, he prematurely 'amputates' the gallant Romeo from the original story; in the second, he removes all the male lead characters apart from Richard III himself. This shoves Power off-stage, literally: the power of the families in *Romeo and Juliet*, and the apparatus of the State in *Richard III*. By applying a 'minor treatment' (Deleuze and Bene 1978: 96) to a 'major playwright,' Bene unleashes potentialities that had remained unexplored in Shakespeare, since something always exists in the apparent absences.

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[2] This is how Deleuze describes the theatre of Carmelo Bene (Deleuze and Bene 1978: 97). The comments that follow are mostly based on Deleuze's observations concerning Bene's *Richard III* (ibid.: 85 ff.).

How does one apply a 'minor treatment' to a 'major author' in such a way as to uncover potentialities otherwise unexplored in his or her work, as well as so many becomings prematurely aborted? Deleuze provides a 'formula' in explicating the outcome of Bene's dramaturgy: one begins by extirpating all the elements of power – in language, in gestures, in representation, and in the represented. One abolishes History, the 'temporal marker of Power,' and extinguishes structure, its 'synchronic marker, a set of relations between invariants' (ibid.: 103). What is left? Everything, replies Deleuze. Thus, 'operation by operation, surgery against surgery, one conceives (…) how to 'minorize' (a term used by mathematicians), how to impose a minor or minorizing treatment, to extract becomings against History, life against culture, thought against doctrine, fortune and misfortune against dogma' (ibid.: 97).

What sense could there be in 'minorizing' an author already deemed 'minor'? In actuality, "minor" and "major" do not designate intrinsic characteristics of the authors in question, but "operations" or "surgeries" to which their texts are subjected (Goldman 1994: 32; Vargas 2000: 260). Following Deleuze and Guattari's argument about languages, even English – despite its universalistic ambition – is open to 'minor' uses: Black English and other American ghetto dialects corrupt its constants and any supposed homogeneity (Deleuze and Guattari 1997 [1980], Vol. 2: 47-8; Deleuze and Bene 1978: 98-102).[3] However, far from rarely, the dogmas and rules of 'royal science' (Deleuze and Guattari 1997 [1980], Vol. 5: 26) and the petty demands of our 'theoretical brandings' inhibit 'minor readings,' possible even in the case of authors deemed to be 'major.' The disciplinary (in all senses) use of their more comforting texts smothers any subversive threat: let us receive the soothing balm of the positivism of the *Les structures élémentaires de la parenté*, rather than the disturbing and fluid 'rosaceous' method of the *Mythologiques*. It is perfectly understandable why so much more effort is unleashed in the domestication of 'minor authors.' If they trouble the canons of our 'royal science,' let it subject them to aseptic corrective readings so we may sleep like angels. Unfortunately, some among us suffer from acute insomnia.

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What point is there in returning to the work of Pierre Clastres? The question recalls

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[3] In the case of Deleuze and Guattari, citations have been translated into English from the Brazilian editions of their books. All other citations refer to the original books. In the case of originals in French or Portuguese, the citations have also been translated into English.

another, one repeated a thousand times in the reader of *Mille Plateaux* with the cadence of a refrain: 'why keep returning to primitive peoples, when the issue is our own lives?' (Deleuze and Guattari ibid., Vol. 3: 84)? François Châtelet provides elements for a reply in claiming the absolute contemporaneity of studying the history of philosophy. The reference to the past, he asserts, permits a desacralization and demythologization of the current discourses of power (Châtelet 1976: 34). In sum: a deterritorialization.

Although anthropology has always looked to exorcise the perpetual threat of evolutionism, this has not prevented it from casting a typically evolutionist eye over its own history (Goldman 1999: 9), as though ideas are born, ripen and die and could be neatly organized in pigeon-holes: evolutionism, functionalism, structural-functionalism, structuralism, contemporary fragmentation, etc. However, ideas don't die – 'Not that they survive as archaisms' – Deleuze and Guattari remind us. 'Ideas can always resume their usefulness, precisely because they were always useful, but in the most varied actual modes' (1997 [1980], Vol. 4: 14). This implies, therefore, taking the anthropological program seriously enough to enable an ethnological appraisal of the discipline's own history, registering differences, and registering them precisely for ourselves and for our actuality (Goldman 1994: 23-4). This is what Châtelet recommends for the history of philosophy: 'the reference to the past allows us to think of our actuality (and who knows: imagine our future) through the *differential factor*' (1976: 40, author's italics). Thus, 'concepts developed in specific historical circumstances – that is, during intellectual (political) debates with precise dates, inserted in mental structures distinct from our own and possessing different codes – … can be imported to another epoch, to another system of rationality, and remain in operation, functioning as decisive factors of intelligibility' (ibid.: 51). A genealogy of ideas as a critique of the present thereby acquires sense: the approach suggested by Châtelet allows at one and the same time the comprehension of philosophical statements; the precise rules of production, dated, which gave rise to them, and a distancing from the reality in which we are immersed, to which we can import concepts that will function as grids of intelligibility and, perhaps, as a guide to our political action (ibid.: 49, 52).– a 'spatial view' of philosophy, which transforms history into a *geography* of ideas.

In this way, concepts can be uprooted and deterritorialized and, reterritorialized in the future, can supply grids of intelligibility for other realities and other authors.

Clastres himself had already suggested a similar path in an article in which he exposes the paradox of ethnology and what he believes amounts to its only way out: 'Between Silence and Dialogue' (1968b). Ethnology was born as a science in thrall to a certain humanism, whose 'reason' refused any alliance with the 'strange tongues' of the mad and the savages: Artaud among the Tarahumara (ibid.: 35). However, it defined itself as a branch of knowledge *about* those peoples it would prefer to see excluded:

> The paradox of ethnology is that it is at once a science and a science of the primitives; entirely disinterested, it achieves, more than any other activity, the Western idea of science, but by choosing as its object those found the furthest from the West: the surprising thing in the end is that ethnology is possible! (ibid.: 36)

While it may be possible, there is a price: by claiming itself to be a *discourse on* primitives, it carries in its wake all the arrogance 'of the most foolish product of the 19th century, scientificism' (Clastres 1978: 167).

Since paradoxes corrupt organicity *from within*, a viable escape route needs to be sought: as the only 'bridge' spanning the tragic divide between the West and the savages, ethnology should cease *discoursing about* primitives and look to establish a *dialogue* with them (Clastres 1968b: 37). This removes from the stage the distanced ethnologists, dictating from Sirius marriage rules, food taboos and norms of social avoidance for 'their' natives. No more metaperspectival and geometrical premises, the point of view of all points of view, from where the anthropologist would proudly look down on 'his' or 'her' societies. As dialogue, anthropology is produced alongside, with, next to. It forms a bridge – and a two-way one. Immersed in state forms, we can easily comprehend that indigenous societies resort to powerful mechanisms to inhibit the full-blown development of the former – which are already there and function, present in their apparent absence. Likewise, and inversely, indigenous societies provide us with the grids of intelligibility allowing us to comprehend the action of anti-state forces among ourselves, suppressed but likewise present in their apparent absence. Everything is in everything and reciprocally, in Donzelot's delightfully apt expression (cited in Carrilho 1976: 155): State among the Indians; anti-State among ourselves; Clastres in the dilemmas of contemporary anthropology and vice-versa.

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No author is unique, and Clastres is no exception. As we know, the illusions and risks of the 'author function' are manifold (Foucault 1969), transforming the writer into a unit, his or her work into a unit – in both cases, isolated islands, eternalized

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Trobriands, awaiting a biographer to translate their supposed equilibrium. Neither work nor author are closed and self-sufficient monads however, and excessive contextualizations, as Vargas reminds us, 'hem ideas into the time and place in which they emerged' (2000: 27), inhibiting graftings capable of allowing these concepts to pollinate other territories.

Clastres's ethnography provides us with lines of flight enabling escapes from some of the dilemmas of contemporary anthropology. While the linguistics of Sapir and Whorf suggested a certain 'semantics of culture', as though a correlation necessarily existed between linguistic and cultural structures, and the linguistics of Saussure and Trubetzkoy inspired a 'syntax of culture', with language and culture being seen as actualizations of immanent rules presiding over the organization of both systems, Clastres offers us an escape route in the form of a third modality, namely a *pragmatics* of culture. 'From this third point of view,' Goldman writes, 'the aim is not to apprehend codes on the basis of their internal organization (privilege of syntax) nor of analyzing them according to their relations to the referents to which they refer (privilege of semantics), but of seeking out the specific modes through which these codes are actualized, played or manipulated in the concrete reality of each particular society – a kind of "pragmatics", therefore' (1999: 20).

Not that Clastres allows himself to fetishize a particular conception of the 'person' as an individual, something non-existent among the Guayaki. In identifying the concern with *praxis* as an increasingly prominent feature in anthropological studies from the 1980s onwards – providing them with a degree of unity, perhaps – Ortner does not fail to point out the evident, and also unresolved difficulties arising from this shift in approach, deriving precisely from the nature of the interaction between 'practice' on the one hand and 'system' on the other (1984). Indeed, how does 'practice' engender a 'system' and a 'system' engender 'practice'? In the end, we are forever faced with the same dichotomies, the same pairs eternally held to be exclusive: the 'all-powerful society' and the 'manipulating individual.' However, as Ortner indicates, 'the study of practice does not comprise an antagonistic alternative to the study of systems or structures; it is, rather, their necessary complement' (ibid.: 146, 147). Not the 'system' *or* 'practice,' but the 'system' *and* 'practice.'

In Guayaki 'pragmatics,' Clastres finds the line of flight escaping the paralyzing

dualism of 'individual' and 'society.'[4] The precise challenge seems to be how to construct models of intentionality without subjects? How to avoid personifying society, turning it into a mega-subject? How to escape methodological individualism without falling into a kind of transcendental holism, or vice-versa? How to think of social relations without society? Or, put otherwise, namely in terms more in line with the following discussion: how does the 'objectivity' of sociality operate by means of the 'subjectivity' of people-in-interaction?

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Like Bene, I'm equally fond of 'losers.' Hence, it is not my intention to discuss the legitimacy of the readings typically made of Clastres's work by his detractors: they are perfectly valid, for sure, but just not the most interesting. Indeed, there has been a tendency to banish the work of Clastres to a remote corner, extirpating it from the corpus of royal science, with its demands and politics (Deleuze and Guattari 1997 [1980], Vol. 5: 24 ff.), and transforming him into a 'minor author,' a 'loser'. In a sense – an ironic sense, of course – I shall take this tendency to paroxysm: his exile deterritorializes him, allowing us to recover his work from a new perspective, free of the strait-jacket of the narrowly Durkheimian reading. For this reason, I shall 'minorize him' even further, extirpating his work from one of its central concepts – 'society' – not so much from a desire to convert him into a 'winner,' but simply because the 'rules of the game' appear lacking in sense.

Freed from the constraints of the concept of 'society' *à la Durkheim*, which some analysts insist in foisting upon it, Clastres's work can start spinning on other axes – like the tragedies of Shakespeare liberated from Romeo and the powerful male figures of *Richard III*. All we have to do is select other passages and other developments than those that sustain the traditional approaches, thereby allowing us to identify unsuspected potentialities in Clastres's writings – for example, a particular conception of 'sociality,' in the meaning given to the term by recent British anthropology (Gell 1999; Ingold 1996: 55-98; Strathern 1988) – which, in truth, were always there, present in their apparent absence.[5]

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[4] For a provocative debate concerning the actuality or obsolescence of the concept of 'society' – and its excrescence, that of the 'individual' – see 'The concept of society is theoretically obsolete' in Ingold 1996: 55-98.

[5] I have no intention of disrespecting here one of the canons of ethnology through the hasty attribution to 'our native' – here, Clastres himself – of concepts which have nothing to do with him. Rather, my hypothesis is that a certain conception of 'sociality,' *in operation*, already exists in his ethnography.

In sum, the present reading, while not necessarily being interesting, is at least *interested* in Clastres, a reading that is willing to accept his points-of-view, and a political reading, for sure, as all readings are.

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There is Clastres the sociologist, Clastres the political philosopher, Clastres as the ethnographer-in-becoming, all simultaneously and reciprocally, which makes the division of this article into discrete sections highly artificial.[6]

The first part of this study charts a genealogy. It inspected tradition and demanded precautions: royal science was always lying in wait. The aim was to quickly map the transmutations (Châtelet 1976: 52) undergone by the concept of 'society' in the horizon defined by the works of Durkheim and Lévi-Strauss.[7] My hypothesis is that the healthy exercise that Clastres performs of 'approaching and moving away from' Lévi-Strauss need not imply re-establishing Durkheim.

When the genealogy threatened to turn into an arborescent stratum (Deleuze and Guattari 1997 [1980], Vol. 1: 54, 88, 89), I undertook the first flight and aborted the root, converting it into a radicle: we return to aspects of political philosophy in Clastres. In actual fact, the treatment he gives to the 'state' allows us to pursue a complementary deterritorialization of his own concept of 'society.' The state, claims Clastres, 'is not the Elysium, the White House or the Kremlin' (1978: 166), but the 'effective actioning of the relation of power' (1976b: 115): this is what enables us, for example, to assert that the state exists among the primitives, present in its apparent absence.

At this juncture, the third, rhizomatic flight emerges: 'the rhizome is an antigenealogy' (Deleuze and Guattari 1997 [1980], Vol. 1: 20). By placing Clastres's conception of the state against his notion of society, both concepts uproot themselves, allowing us to perceive both as sets of relations: socialities, machines of subjectification with no externality in relation to the people who engender them and are engendered by them. Identifying in what Clastres 'does not say and yet is present in what he says' (Deleuze, cited in Goldman 1994: 379), we shall re-encounter, over the course of this work and throughout his work, his ethnography.

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[6] On the 'roots,' 'radicles' and 'rhizomes' used to divide this work into sections, see Deleuze and Guattari 1997 [1980], Vol. 1: 13; Vol. 5: 220.

[7] This exercise will be deliberately succinct, since its purpose is not to embark on an ambitious critical survey of the works of Durkheim and Lévi-Strauss, but to mark the difference – and the 'novelty' – of Clastres's concept of 'society' in relation to these authors.

2. Roots: 'Society' in Clastres, Durkheim and Lévi-Strauss

Durkheim contributed to a certain canonization of a state-form of thinking in sociology. Deleuze and Guattari record that, in the *Timaeus*, Plato contrasts two models of science – one of the Identical and the Uniform, the other of Becoming – only to discard the latter very swiftly (1997 [1980], Vol. 5: 36). The first legal and legalist model highlights constants, reasons through theorems and axioms, and looks to subtract operations from the conditions of intuition in order to convert them into 'concepts' and 'categories': this is the royal science, a state-form of thinking. However, there is always 'a Palestinian, a Basque and a Corsican' to challenge the sense of security thus acquired. Meanwhile, the second model operates with variables rather than constants, reasons through problems and, instead of occupying the stable, eternal and identical, opts for becomings and heterogeneity. To essences, it prefers events, accidents and transmutations. The 'polished binarisms': gift and commodity; status and contract; *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*; affective reasoning and instrumental reasoning; organic solidarity and mechanical solidarity; individual and society – true stopping points that are so characteristic of state science – end up in the latter case being discarded in name of a logic of flows passing between points, *intermezzos* in continual movement. Opposing this, however, was Durkheim's favouring of large-scale collective, binary, resonant and over-codifying representations, which established a school of followers (ibid., Vol. 3: 98).

In *French sociology*, Lévi-Strauss shows how the entire Durkheimian system can be related to the individual/society pairing (1947 ff.). Hampered by antimonies from one end to the other – the finalism of consciousness versus the blindness of history; sociology versus psychology; the logical sense of 'origins' and 'elementary forms' versus genealogy; moral norms versus sensual appetites; concepts versus sensations; the sacred versus the profane (Lukes 1973) – the Durkheimian edifice looks to surpass the inevitable ambiguities that arise in the process by determining intermediary levels of collective reality (Lévi-Strauss ibid.). However, he vehemently rejects the adoption of a similar attitude at the individual level. Yet, in Lévi-Strauss's opinion, it is precisely the delimitation of these intermediary levels, such as unconscious thought, which enable the transposition of the apparent opposition between individual and society. Refusing to face the question head on, Durkheim persists in the ambivalence of the pair, a fact which traverses his theoretical constructions as a whole.

In fact, the individual/society distinction comprises an especially opportune tool in Durkheim's endeavour to define an autonomous domain for sociology. This independence was particularly desired in relation to psychology and philosophy. Working a series of epistemologically innocuous substitutions (full of implications at the ontological and political levels; Vargas 2000: 140), Durkheim looked to free his reasoning from the metaphysical notions then in vogue – such as God or Kantian *aprioris* – resorting to concepts which struck him as cloaked in far greater scientificity. As a result, the categories of logic and the ideas of God and totality acquired extralogical – or more precisely, sociological – matrices. It is society, he argues, which is found at the root of classificatory systems, concepts such as totality and divinity and the classical philosophical concepts. However, the conquest of a supposedly autonomous domain for sociology in the field of scientific knowledge demanded a high price, namely the radical splitting of individual and society and the (imperial) prevalence of the latter over the former. This inaugurated a tradition whose difficulties would be inherited wholesale by anthropology and from which it has only very recently become aware and worked to extricate itself (Viveiros de Castro 1996: 518, 521; Ingold 1996: 57 ff.).

An explanatory key for everything, 'society' in Durkheim thus ends up naturalized and itself remains unexplained. As Gianotti, quoted by Vargas (2000: 158), carefully observes, at bottom there is no epistemological difference between the God of the spiritualists and the 'society' of Durkheim: both comprise the ultimate foundation, attributing rationality to everything, and beyond which no question is justified. There is consequently a marked irony in the fact that Durkheim's extreme sociologism viscerally depends on its excrescence, the individual. It could not be otherwise in fact: the difficulty arises precisely from the supposition that entities such as individual and society exist and lead an independent, autonomous and external life in relation to each another. Durkheim's 'society' betrays the emancipatory aims which the scholar daydreamed for his discipline. Impure, as it could not fail to be, society depends on individuals since it is itself thought of as a mega-subject endowed with wishes, a conscience, a personality, a being and a soul, even (Lukes 1973: 11, 236, 523, 526). And, surprisingly enough, it is devoid of life. It is van Gennep who writes:

> I fear that M. Durkheim, despite his apparent respect for ethnographic data, appreciates only metaphysical and, moreover, scholastic conceptions; he

> attributes true reality to concepts and words. Deprived of the meaning of life – that is, the biological and ethnographic meaning – he transforms living entities into scientifically dissected plants, as though in a herbarium. (cited in Lukes 1973: 526-7)

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A plane can point in two directions (Deleuze and Guattari 1997 [1980], Vol. 4: 54-5). In its first version, the plane remains hidden. At each instant, it ensures that the given is given, but the plane itself hides, and nothing can be done apart from inferring it or inducing it – simultaneously or sequentially, in synchrony or diachrony – on the basis of what it agrees to reveal. Teleologic, it functions as a mental principle, always in a supplementary direction (n + 1) to what it effectively reveals. It is a plane of transcendence, par excellence: 'it may be in the spirit of a god, or an unconscious aspect of life, the soul or language' (ibid.: 54). In the second version of the plane, there no longer exist forms or developments of forms, subjects or formation of subjects, structures or geneses, only relations of movement and stillness, speed and slowness of elements still not yet – or never to be – formed. This is a plane of immanence, par excellence: here one knows only of longitudes and latitudes, velocities and hecceities, affects and individuations without subject, forming collective assemblies (ibid.: 55).

The structuralism of Lévi-Strauss depends fundamentally on a plane of transcendence. In searching to circumvent the difficulties of Durkheim's propositions on the social origins of symbolism and substitute them for the thesis of the symbolic foundations of the social, Lévi-Strauss resorts to the notion of the unconscious. The obligations to give, receive and return, concrete exchanges and their mystical and affective concrete bases (Lévi-Strauss 1950: XLVI), rocks of the social world in Mauss, become mere appearances in Lévi-Strauss, in denouncing the operation at a deeper level of the unconscious. In exchanges, Lévi-Strauss argues, there are more than the things exchanged (1967: 520): as reflexes of the operation of the principle of reciprocity, exchanges testify in the cultural domain to an unconscious natural structuration, responsible for the emergence of symbolic thought (Simonis 1968: 35). Exchange, reciprocity and communication, in increasing levels of abstraction, occupy a central place in Lévi-Strauss's theoretical edifice in so far as they allow the inherent contradiction of symbolic thought, the perception of the same as belonging to self and other, to be overcome and enable the 'dialogue' between the two. Here we have the bases for a new humanism making possible the anthropological exercise itself.

But what, then, are the conditions of possibility of this anthropology, concerned, in Kantian fashion, with the conditions of possibility of life in society? What, in order to function, does it find itself forced to exclude? Here we encounter a very particular relationship to ethnography, transformed into a tool for accessing the universal unconscious. The liturgy of Lévi-Strauss suggests a circle in its doubly progressive and regressive reasoning: in response to concrete cultural diversity, the analyst should seek out constants which provide clues to the system of social structure under study (ibid.: 170ff.). However, the investigation doesn't stop there: once these constants have been verified, the scholar may *think* cultural diversity and extract from it constitutive pairs, whose relation of opposition characterizes the structure of the unconscious. Meanwhile, closure of the circle lies in demanding the return to the concrete lived world. Here, though, something is lost – because something is always lost – and the return ceases to be eternal.

What are lost are history, time – which is never found again – and the lived world. There is little point, however, in attempting to anaesthetize the evident effects of ethnography, transforming its data into a mere manifestation of a structural unconscious – a form of surpassing, but only on this plane, the antinomies of Durkheimianism, especially between individual and society, and relating it to the cerebral binary matrices which make Man out of men and submerge culture in nature. In this way, man really does end up naked. However, to a certain extent, this procedure also strips the clothing off the king.

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'Naked as a worm' except for 'the boot – I would have been unable to walk barefoot and feared the snakes – and a thick leather belt which held my 38 in its holster. […] It was with this bizarre equipment that I started to march' (Clastres 1972: 146). This is how Clastres relates his decision to free himself of clothes when he plunged into the forest along with a group of Indians. Perceiving that his clothing would prevent him from keeping up a quick pace alongside his companions, Clastres decided to go naked. Here we can detect a kind of Indian-becoming of the ethnologist, a real condition of possibility for an anthropology which doesn't produce discourses *about* alterity but constructs itself halfway, in an eternal *intermezzo*, an ever-renewed effort of deterritorialization which makes us strangers not only in strange lands but also, and in an even more radical sense, in our own.

The centrality accorded to ethnography in his work – magnificently illustrated by the *Chronique des Indiens Guayaki* – explains the slow uprooting from Lévi-Strauss. Although Clastres starts where Lévi-Strauss had stopped – with naked men (Verdier in Abensour 1987: 25), we are not dealing with the same men. Following the example of Elena Valero, captured while still a girl by the Yanomami, with whom she lived until, when adult, she decided to flee the tribe and fascinate us with the report of her years lived among the Indians, what Clastres undertakes is a savage ethnography: instead of just remaining *before* the indigenous world, he also journeys *within* it (Clastres 1969b: 34). In place of the savage mind, we are presented with a savage ethnography and a savage politics.

As a result, the hero of the report changes (Verdier in Abensour 1987: 26). The gods beat their retreat (ibid.: 35) at the level of the narration itself: there is no longer a perspective of perspectives, Sirius, the proud ethnographer who extracts statements from his informants with forceps. In spite of the fact that Clastres makes no attempt to mask his presence in what he narrates (Dadoun in Clastres 1972: 292) – even speaking at times in the first person (Lefort in Abensour 1987: 184) – those who really speak, act and claim centre stage in his ethnography are the Guayaki (Verdier in Abensour 1987: 26), who, very much alive, 'acquire a subjectivity generally excluded from anthropological analyses […] they have passions, they are active' (Goldman and Lima 2001: 308). Clastres is a field man (Abensour 1987: 7) wishing to be a chronicler: no trace of the desire to build a 'system of universal explication, to which all social formations, past and present, reveal their secrets' (ibid.: 44). 'I don't develop programs,' he writes; 'I am content with describing' (cited in Cartry 1978: 49). To questions like 'what does this mean?', 'how is this possible?' or 'what is this used for?', he counter-poses another, less ambitious question: 'how does this function?' Indeed, as he proposes, 'the Aché are what they do' (Clastres 1972: 209).

Through the Aché, his investigative strategy appears to nomadize (Deleuze in Clastres 1972: 297). Forever in search of lines: of conjunction, of disjunction, of flight. A reading of the 'The bow and the basket' (1966), for example, suggests a first line of conjunction: *men-hunters-forest-bow-prey*. This line calls up another, this time a line of disjunction: *women-bow*, since women are forbidden to touch bows. This in turn introduces another line, now one of conjunction again: *women-domestic tasks-encampments-basket.* From this point on, the text inflates the lines; eventually, however, they explode in a line of flight. Especially if compared to the relative good

fortune of Krembegi, the misfortunes of Chachubutawachugi, reported by Clastres in 'Life and death of a pederast' (1972), illustrate the point well. The perspective of the line of flight, which enables abandonment of the 'territory' (Deleuze and Guattari 1997 [1980], Vol. 5: 224), favours a certain analytic richness, not only because it accentuates the 'order' of the society in question, but also because it spares the scholar from having to constrain his or her informants with strait-jackets. Krembegi is a *kyrypy-meno*, an anus-lover-maker, a pederast. The Guayaki are not aggressive towards him, as long as he makes no claims to being a hunter, a man. Among the Guayaki, a man is only a man vis-à-vis a woman, and Krembegi faithfully observes the limits arising from this fact; he carries a basket rather than a bow; and his sexual partners are his brothers, in a metaphor of incest which confirms for the group that true incest, between a brother and sister, threatens the social body. 'Krembegi is the Aché world upside-down, but this still does not make him the counter-order of the existing social order (…) [he comprises] an inverted image, but still an image, of order and "normal" rules' (Clastres 1972: 219). Chachubutawachugi does not enjoy the same fortune. Although unable to hunt, he wishes to remain in the universe of masculinity. His obstinacy in occupying a third position, between male and female, which in any rigorous sense does not exist, provokes resistance on the part of the Guayaki, who find him ridiculous and, at best, deserving only of pity. 'A pathetic inhabitant of an impossible dwelling place. This is what makes him "invisible", he is elsewhere, nowhere, everywhere' (ibid.: 217). And yet Chachubutawachugi indeed *exists*, and his existence, although almost subliminal, finds a space in the pages of Clastres.

Described in this abstract way, warns Deleuze (in Clastres 1972: 297), this method of investigation, which proceeds by lines – of conjunction, of disjunction, of flight – loses much of its dynamism, and there is a risk of its progressive character vanishing. By means of this composition in the form of irradiation, a local theory of the group is developed, piece by piece, segment by segment (ibid.). There is no need for a pre-existing totality – a *society* in Durkheim's sense – whose parts would be duly put together. Instead of seeking out structures, Clastres simply accompanies what the Indians do and 'follows the path of the savage nomads' (ibid).

The incidents of Guayaki life thus become absorbed into a plane of primary intersubjectivity, which pertains to the sociological and the psychological domain, and neither of them, at the same time, blurring the boundaries between the two disciplines

until they completely disappear. Clastres writes:

> The constant preoccupation of the Indians is to use the event from individual history as a means of restoring tribal unity, as a pretext for resuscitating in each of them the certainty of constituting a community. […] Hidden here are a personal ethics and a philosophy of society which proclaim that the fate of men is only established on the horizon of the collectivity and demands that each one renounces the solitude of their self, the sacrifice of private delight. (1972: 41)

'Echoes' of the last page of *The elementary structures of kinship* (Lévi-Strauss 1982 [1967]: 537)? Undoubtedly, but only up to a certain point.

De près et de loin. The dialogue which Clastres knew how to maintain with Lévi-Strauss never translated into subjection: always so near to the Lévi-Straussian problematic, and paradoxically always so far. Some identify in Clastres's attempt to distance himself from Lévi-Strauss an eternally lurking Durkheim. It is certainly true that the actual vocabulary used by Clastres sometimes appears to reify *society*, bordering on voluntarism; this is precisely what happens with his more 'popular' articles, such as 'Society against the state' (1974b). However, the excessive esteem for a possibly inadequate vocabulary and the slippery reasoning found in some of his articles only hinders access to alternative readings. The distancing from Lévi-Strauss does not necessarily imply a re-establishment of Durkheim, especially since, most of the time, and particularly when producing ethnography, Clastres avoids the simplifying dichotomies of the 'individual versus society' kind and proposes no form of exteriority between the 'primitive social machines' and the 'forms of subjectification' which they operate. In the text 'The return to enlightenment', Clastres himself, in rebutting the critique of Birnbaum, reflects on the distance separating him from Durkheim:

> [For Birnbaum] it is a matter of establishing that 'the society against the State appears (…) as a society of total constraint'. […] 'Social control' is exercised here in absolute form: it is no longer society against the State, but society against the individual. Ingenuously, Birnbaum explains to us why he knows so much about primitive society: he has read Durkheim. (1977a: 149)

Structuralism's difficulty in accounting for rites is well known (Clastres 1978: 160). This 'grand discourse of anthropology' (ibid.: 158) was developed with another purpose: its concern centres on kinship systems and mythological systems. In both its analysis of kinship and its analysis of mythologies, however, structuralism renounces

the study of the *place of production* of kin and myths: society (Abensour 1987: 9). 'What is eliminated, suppressed from structuralist discourse […] is concrete society, its mode of functioning, its internal dynamic, its economy and its politics' (Clastres 1978: 158). Here the 'savage ethnography' of Clastres makes the difference, and this is really the fundamental distinction between Lévi-Strauss and Clastres: the former is preoccupied with the logic which allows society to function, the latter with the logic of society as it functions. Lévi-Strauss, writes Clastres, produces a 'theology without god […], a sociology without society' (ibid.: 160). Perhaps this is also the real reason why Clastres had to use the word 'society', which here doesn't betray any Durkheimian inclination. What we find in his savage ethnography are functioning societies, social machines in operation, which, on the basis of the specific forms of subjectification which they engender and which are engendered by them, prevent the emergence of exploiters and the exploited, dominators and the dominated, and therefore act *against* economy and *against* the state.

Clastres's first essay, 'Exchange and power: philosophy of the indigenous chief' (1962), launches a programme of work to which he remains faithful throughout his career, a program which appears inscribed in a typically Lévi-Straussian problematic. In studying the place of the chiefdom in primitive societies, Clastres certifies that the 'exchanges' between the chief and the group are made up of the same elements whose circulation, according to Lévi-Straussian theory, institute society – words, goods and women – which would appear to indicate the profound nature of the questions raised by power. Here, though, Clastres does not establish any kind of reciprocity between the chief and the group: words and goods trace a one-way flow, invariably from the chief to the group, while women go in the opposite direction. These therefore involve 'terms' that do not easily fit into the category of 'signs' which found communication. Noting that this involves a chief without power, Clastres expresses surprise that the group bestows its chief with the privilege of polygyny. Why, if they are not forced to do so, do the Indians gratuitously transfer one of the most valuable of goods to the chief, namely their women? The impasse reveals a fundamental aspect of politics, present even in the 'powerless power' of indigenous chiefs: power is against the group. The chief benefits from an excess of women, and the words and goods which travel in the opposite direction are insufficient as any form of compensation. The article 'The primitive economy' (1976a) provides additional explanations. The chief's family unit, bolstered by the 'extra arms' of his 'extra women,' enable the production

of the goods which the group expects to receive from him: this because the chief *owes* the group. He owes words, which explains the importance of his oratory skills (and the speeches, always ignored, will make it clear to the chief that he does not possess a voice of command); he also owes goods, which explains his 'forced generosity.' Further still, the debt shows where the power in primitive societies really lies: in the group, which subjects the chief to the condition of being eternally in its debt (ibid.: 140).

In place of reciprocity, debt. In place of exchange, warfare. Differences from Lévi-Strauss – and, definitively, differences which make a difference. The 'Copernican revolution', to which Clastres invites us in 'Copernicus and the savages' (1969a), demands that we think of 'debt' and 'warfare' positively and not as reflections of a lack – of faith, of laws, of kings – which would condemn primitive societies to a state prior to the emergence of politics. Debt makes evident the place of politics in indigenous groups by producing, in one and the same movement, a chief without power and a society without a state, and hence without a political body hovering over it. It is the same aim which pursues the productive machine and the war machine of primitive peoples, both safeguarding the singular totality of primitive societies – that is, maintaining them entirely homogeneous and preventing the emergence of the One, the State, the distinction between a chief-who-orders and a group-which-obeys (Clastres 1977b: 191-2).

The primitive productive machine purses an ideal of autarchy, since it operates according to a centrifugal logic, just like the war machine (ibid.: 194-5). Pitting groups against each other, armed conflicts forestall their unification and allow each one to maintain its singular totality against the unifying principle of the One, the State: primitive societies demand an upside-down reading of Hobbes. For this reason, society against the state is a society-for-war (ibid.: 187, 201). This is precisely where its positivity lies, which prevents Clastres from developing an *exchangeist* theory of warfare and characterizing it, in Lévi-Strauss's wake, as a simple negation of exchange, as an exchange which failed (ibid.: 186 ff.). Once more, the negation of reciprocity; once more, the re-reading and widening of Lévi-Strauss's problematic. Clastres does not question the fact that, at the level of a socio-logics, the Kantian-style preoccupation with the conditions of possibility of social life, reciprocity operates and ensures the institution of society, through the establishment of a discontinuity in relation to nature (ibid.: 198). However, this does not allow us to seek out exchange

and reciprocity everywhere, as though every blink of an eye had to be returned in kind. This accounts for the need to distinguish between the planes on which the analysis is developed (ibid.: 188, 199 ff.): on the level of instituting society, exchange necessarily unfolds, but on the level of the functioning social life it doesn't, precisely as shown by the discussion concerning the exchange of women and alliance with brothers-in-law. The prohibition on incest forces the exchange of women: in this sense, it founds society and inaugurates our definitive separation from animality. So far, Clastres accompanies Lévi-Strauss (ibid.: 201). But the operationalization of the exchange of women, the actual exchange, in operation, demands another type of reasoning: on this terrain, Clastres demonstrates, warfare precedes alliance, and alliance establishes the limits of exchange. It is because primitive societies have enemies (and the latter are needed: they would be invented if societies hadn't them (ibid.: 204), as wars have to be fought since they conspire in favour of the logic of the centrifugal) that brothers-in-law are necessary. Hence alliances are expected to strengthen the group, enabling it to defend itself and preserve its autonomy and independence in relation to others.

Clastres seems to ask himself how, on the basis of Lévi-Strauss, can ethnography be pursued? In fact, it is Lévi-Strauss himself who emerges transformed from the clash with savage ethnography. However, the society which makes its comeback with Clastres does not suffer from the same illnesses which irremediably hindered the concept since Durkheim. Here society does not refer to cohesive entities, discrete units opposed, in supposed concrete fashion, to their inescapable (and politically dangerous) excrescence, the individual.[8]

Clastres's work – ethnographic in essence – undeniably ends up containing a philosophical and political dimension (Abensour 1987: 7). In a sense, the ethnological knowledge summons up the philosophical interrogation, in so far as social life implies, for those immersed in it, a questioning of man and the world (Lefort in Abensour 1987: 191-2). Ethnologist and philosopher – and both at once – Clastres takes his reflections on primitive societies far enough to 'reveal to us an unknown and crucial aspect of every society' (Gauchet 1977: 55). In this way, he avoids

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[8] Lady Thatcher's declaration that 'society does not exist, only individual men and women' illustrates the point well. The phrase betrays the individualist creed of the former Prime Minister, who justified the dismantling of the welfare state in the United Kingdom in a curious and far from naive inversion of Clastres, involving the *State against society*.

essentialisms and teleologisms – whether those of society or of the state – and bequeaths to us a work, which, at once philosophical and ethnological, gains form *in the meeting* with a sociological planet different from our own (Richir in Abensour 1987: 61-2).

3. Radicles: the 'state' in Clastres and political philosophy

Clastres never produced a state science, though not exactly in the sense that he didn't produce a political sociology. Although he did not institute a school as such – Clastres 'belongs to a family of spirits without a family spirit' (Meunier in Clastres 1972: 307) – he did found a political sociology, only *in another way* and *from another perspective*. Here it is a question of the kind of Copernican revolution he proposes (1969a: 23) in shifting from *privation* to *opposition* and in identifying in indigenous societies not absences – of faith, of laws, of kings – but affirmative presences and desires, against economy and against the state. His assertion concerning the fully political status of indigenous societies is based on a hypothesis, namely that it is possible to escape the umbrella of the state and think beyond the boundaries it imposes, which, at the limit, culminates in the questioning of the institution itself as an inescapable principle of social organization.

Both so-called political anthropology and political philosophy became addicted early on to the viewpoint of the state and tended to focus their attention on the analysis of order, cohesion and mechanisms of control. However, this privilege denounces precisely a certain consecration of the state's perspective, as though accepting as 'necessarily given in advance that which perhaps only exists as its very mode of operation' (Goldman and Lima 2001: 304). In this way, the circle closes itself in a dubious philosophy of history, to which Clastres opposes an ethnology that excludes ourselves not so much as objects but as points of view.

Despite the tradition of all the dead generations weighing like a nightmare on the minds of the living, the tropics very quickly imposed their own particularities on the anthropologists who disembarked there from the 1960s onwards. The analytical instrument of Fortesian inspiration which many brought in their baggage quickly revealed its shortcomings. Clastres notes this fact: 'The British typologies of African societies may possibly be pertinent to the black continent; they do not serve as a model for America' (1969a: 12). Apart from a few rare exceptions, the traditional equation which reduces power to coercion and the command–obedience relationship –

precisely *our* conception of what politics should be – does not function in America (ibid.: 10, 11). Moreover, behind ethnology's refusal to recognize the eminently political nature of the powerless power typical of Amerindian societies eternally lurks the 'ever vivacious adversary' (ibid.: 15) of anthropological research, ethnocentrism, which, by making ourselves the inescapable *telos* of all human groupings (Clastres 1974a: 161), 'mediatizes every gaze upon differences to *identify them* and finally *abolish them*' (Clastres 1969a: 15). Although indigenous societies reject political power as coercion or violence, this negation does not necessarily correspond to a void. 'Something exists in the absence' (ibid.: 21), Clastres asserts. It is possible to think politics without violence, but there is no way to think of the social without politics (ibid.).

Lebrun recalls that the definition of politics is usually accompanied by the notion of force (1984: 11). On this subject, he makes use of Julien Freund's statement on politics: '[It comprises the] social activity which proposes to ensure through force, based generally in law, the external security and the internal harmony of a particular political unit' (ibid.). Power, which presupposes force in accordance with such a vision, therefore only exists *against* someone: directors, foremen, military chiefs, helmsmen and presidents only exist because those lacking the voice of command respect their orders (ibid.: 18). It matters little that power – and at this point we can opportunely qualify it as potent – has become bureaucratized, technicized and sophisticated so as to organize domination: its basis remains being force (ibid.: 22). It is not always so, nor was it always so.

Despite choosing ethnology, Clastres's apparent renunciation of political philosophy naturally does not exonerate him from eternally returning to it (Cartry 1978: 47-8; Abensour 1987: 115-16). Just as something continues to function in the apparent renunciation, political philosophy – initially deterritorialized by Clastres's *démarche*, only to be reterritorialized soon afterwards – reveals its hitherto unsuspected potentialities. Loraux initiates us into a healthy 'academic impudence' by admitting the pleasure with which she disrespected the ban – recommended by morality and the appeal to method – on comparison (Loraux in Abensour 1987: 157). Specialists in classical Greece, she assures us, mostly feel at home and find, at least to a certain degree, complicity among the Guayaki of Clastres (Loraux in Abensour

1987: 155).[9] An undivided society that wishes to remain as such resorts to warfare – as a mechanism which produces and protects the dispersion of different groups – in order to preserve itself in the face of the multiplicity of other units of a similar nature: 'Clastres talks about the Indians; I think of the Greeks,' writes Loraux (ibid.: 156). The same rule prevails in both cases: against the outside, violence, so as to eliminate tensions among the indigenous companions and among the Greek citizens (ibid.). Among the Guayaki and the Athenians alike, therefore, the internal lack of division is neither given nor immediate: its maintenance and re-institution demand specific strategies (ibid.: 157).

For Lebrun too, the *arkhé politiké* of the Greeks has little to do with modernity's concept of political power, viscerally dependent as it is on the idea of domination (1984: 26). The expositor par excellence of this concept is also, par excellence, an anti-Aristotelian (ibid.: 37), namely Thomas Hobbes. The demands of politics in Hobbes subvert the Aristotelian teleology. Citizens, previously equal through the Greek myth of autochthony (ibid.: 43), will have their equality preserved, but only *in their submission* in the face of another myth, that of the Leviathan (ibid.: 44). The

[9] Since 'dialogue … does not live by concordances alone' (Loraux in Abensour 1987: 159), it is precisely when Clastres explicitly returns to Greek thought as the origin of the One, the State, that the historian of Greece ceases to recognize, on the pages of the French anthropologist, a universe with which he is familiar (ibid.: 159). To the 'active insurrection against the empire of the One' of his Indians, Clastres opposes the supposed 'contemplative nostalgia of the One', which he imputes to the Greeks as if, in thinking of the same, the One, the savage prophets and the ancient Greeks had attributed swapped values to it, negative in the first case, positive in the second. For Loraux, by seeking to find the origin of Western political metaphysics in Athens – founded on the difference between the dominant and the dominated, deemed to be immanent in society – Clastres fabricates for himself a Greece that is made to measure. Politics in ancient Greece, Loraux tells us, is undertaken between equals according to the mode of the *arkhé*, which, by promoting a rotation of the *polis*'s administrative tasks among its citizens, enables each and everyone, in his own time, to command and obey. Although the Greeks indeed placed politics under the dominion of the One, they did so not in the sense of inaugurating a hierarchy between dominators and dominated – in reality, this was non-existent – but, Loraux suggests, in the sense of evading the threatening potentiality of the two. By submitting their politics to the empire of the One, the Greeks sought to preserve the indivision at the heart of the *polis* and avoid the emergence of the two (ibid.: 163). Meanwhile, according to Clastres, the Guarani worshipped the two as the number of the Land-without-Evil, which would allow them to be men and gods at the same time. In a sense, at this point Loraux inverts the reasoning of Clastres, expanding and subverting it: to the 'active insurrection against the *two*' of her Greeks, she opposes the 'contemplative nostalgia of the *two*' of Clastres's Indians. And curiously enough, *only* contemplative, as Loraux acutely observes: faced by the very real two, manifested in the inescapable existence of two sexes, Clastres's Indians opted to seek refuge in the monadism of the one, which means a man is obligatorily and irrefutably a man, a hunter is a hunter, A is A. This makes Chachubutawachugi, the man who is unable to hunt and who, nonetheless, wants to remain in the universe of masculinity, a ridiculous figure, since he insists on occupying a place halfway between the male and the female, which, in all rigour, does not exist (Clastres 1972: 217).

Greek-style community in principle no longer exists, and the integration of men –
withdrawn in their atomism of dispersed wolves, zealous of their independence, and
selfish in the defence of their interests – only occurs by operationalizing the Leviathan
through the creation of adequate stratagems: the *individual*, isolated, apolitical, and
owner of natural rights (ibid.: 44, 45); the *people*, constituted as a political body
(ibid.: 32-3), and finally *society* (*societas*) as a sphere in which private life develops,
distinct from participation in public life (ibid.: 37). The link established between the
advent of the isolated individual, understood as a fundamental tool in the construction
of politics, and the institution of a sole power as a condition of the City (*civitas*) is
therefore inextricable. The difference between *civitas* and *societas* digs the abysm, the
abysmal gap, the modern phantasmagoria which buries Greece for us once and for all,
where man only realized his essence as a political animal through full participation in
the business of the *polis* (Châtelet et al. 1982: 15). By transferring the right to self-
government to the Leviathan, identified as the only effective anti-disorder possible
(Lebrun 1984: 35), the modern citizen – already now undeniably a subject –
inaugurates the splits between private life and public business, society (*societas*) and
civitas. Life in *society* no longer requires life *in* the city; irremediably depoliticized,
man, already an '*individual*', becomes preoccupied only with those affairs which
directly concern him, transferring the carrying out of public business to the Leviathan.
Hence, the state not only enables, but also, in a sense, invents both society and the
individual alike (ibid.: 38, 45). As an *operation*, the state therefore demands, in order
to function, the convergence of subjective figures and specific social arrangements –
the 'individual' and 'society.' It remains to be known what happens to these figures
and arrangements when they move offstage, or at least when the state operation ceases
to prevail.

Étienne de la Boétie urges a shift from history to logic (cf. Clastres 1976b: 112)
and declares himself astonished that so many have subjected themselves to just one
authority and have done so willingly: '[W]hat misfortune was this that so denatured
man, the only being really born to live freely (…)?' (la Boétie 1983 [1576]: 143). The
wonder is due to the fact that, although the societies to which la Boétie refers only
provided him with examples of the misfortune, at least on the terrain of logic it could
be imagined that things could proceed otherwise. Clastres proposes another shift,
from logic back to history (which, ironically enough, demonstrates that the state is not
historically ineluctable (Clastres 1976b: 112; Châtelet and Pisier-Kouchner 1983:

712). His astonishment is different from la Boétie's. He asks himself: why does Jyvukugi, the 'chief' of the Guayaki in Arroyo Moroti, feel obliged to go from *household to household* to notify his people what they already knew, since they had already been informed by the Paraguayan who presided over the encampment?

> For the first time, I could directly observe – since it was functioning, transparently, under my very eyes – the political institution of the Indians.… The Guayaki, devotees of … savage political philosophy, radically separated power and violence: in order to show he was worthy of being chief, Jyvukugi had to demonstrate that, differently from the Paraguayan, he did not exercise his authority through coercion but, on the contrary, performed it through what is most opposed to violence … in the word. (Clastres 1972: 78-9)

Here we can witness, under our very eyes, a non-state *in operation*, which confers a fresh intelligibility on the state, also in operation, and already among us (and not only). Clastres tells us: the State is not 'the ministries, the Elysium, the White House, the Kremlin. […] The State is the *exercise* of political power' (1978: 166, my italics). Faced by a power being exercised, the question 'How does this function?' is more fruitful than the alternative and much more ambitious 'What does this mean?' or 'Where does this come from?'. It functions due to the convergence of specific social machines and subjective figures, which allow it to function. The same applies to a power that is *not* exercised.

The power that is *not* exercised, the non-state operates through social machines and subjective figures that perennially conjure up the possibility of the emergence of division in the midst of the group. Societies against the state resort to their own strategies and make use of vigorous mechanisms – such as war, economy, religion, language and the actual 'subjectification' of their 'chiefs' – as a way of avoiding the emergence within themselves of a bad desire to command and, as its necessary counterpart, the equally bad desire to obey (1976b: 119). And here we can perceive just how much politics there is in desire (1977a: 154-5).

Hobbes and the savages. Out of this conflict emerges the 'contra-Hobbes' of Clastres (Abensour 1987: 121): we need to think of war *in another form*, no longer as a symptom of severe chaos and an asocial state (or, worse, a pre-social state, in a reasoning which once more elevates us to the position of the inescapable *telos* of indigenous groups), but as a mechanism for instituting the primitive social cosmos (Clastres 1977b: 195). Warfare, as an anti-state machine par excellence, preserves the

logic of the multiple so characteristic of indigenous groups and conspires against the One (ibid.: 188): *there exists a sociality which is instituted in and through war*, which obliges us to undertake the healthy intellectual exercise of, on the one hand, avoiding the dialectically excluding Manichaeisms and, on the other hand, thinking of warfare *and* society at one and the same time. For Clastres, the savage *politeia*, an original form of politics, is instituted *in* and *through* warfare, not because war attracts exchange and clamours for the birth of reason, but because, *in* and *through* war, we pass from 'wolves to men' (Abensour 1987: 128). The primitive community inscribes its political order in a territory from which the Other is violently excluded (Clastres 1977b: 189, 192) and this defines its external politics. Its internal politics is geared towards its affirmation as a homogeneous unit, preventing the emergence of any splitting in its midst, of any division between dominators and the dominated.

How is a chief made? With his words – and so too with the sweat of his own face, and those of his wives, strategically granted to him by polygyny (Clastres 1962: 33; 1976c: 137-8; Lizot 1976: 167). The three terms – words, goods and women – whose exchange had assured us the definitive passage from animality to society, now serve for torsions (Clastres 1962: 34ff.) – not on the ethereal plane of mythologies, but under our eyes, assuring our passage, likewise irrevocable, from society to *political sociality*. This is not because there already exists a miniature despot here (Clastres 1972: 81; 1974a: 175), whose potentialities will be increasingly perfected by later forms of political organization, but because the problem of politics is already posed here in its entirety. Power is inevitably exterior and *against* the group (Clastres 1962: 38; Gauchet 1977: 64) and is resolved, with particular subtlety by primitive societies (Clastres 1962: 40), through the establishment of an institution – chiefdom – which functions *in the void* and, precisely for this reason, *functions*. It functions by *denying* and *going against* the exteriority of power: by rupturing the logic of reciprocity precisely where chiefdom is located. Primitive society, while recognizing the inescapable exteriority that defines power, blocks its virtual threats, preventing the leader from taking shape as a heavy nucleus hovering over the other members of the community (Clastres 1962: 38; Richir in Abensour 1987: 63). In actuality, the chief ends up *owing* the group and remains chief as long as he continues in its debt (Clastres 1976c: 141): his 'generosity' comprises more than an obligation: an eternal – and voluntary? – servitude (Clastres 1962: 28).

This prevents a power which *is already there*, present in its apparent absence, from becoming dominant.

> [Primitive societies] do not purely and simply eliminate from themselves the dimension of power. They do not act as though power does not exist. On the contrary, they place a 'chief,' an individual formally distinct from the rest, in the place which could be that of someone who gives orders, sets out rules, possesses force.… [T]hey place him there to mark the fact … that the place remains empty. (Gauchet 1977: 59-60).

To cast out is to precede (Deleuze and Guattari 1997 [1980], Vol. 5: 121), and, if primitive societies reject the state, it is because it is already there (Gauchet 1977: 60). 'Yes', Clastres concedes: 'the state exists in primitive societies' (in Carrilho 1976: 76). In fact, the more archaeologists delve downwards, the more states they uncover (Deleuze and Guattari 1997 [1980], Vol. 5: 23).

The perennially cast-out presence of the state in primitive societies, as well as lending intelligibility to the functioning of the savage *politeia* and to the primitive social mechanisms and specific subjective figures through which it operates, allows us to see the non-state where it apparently is not and yet acts: among ourselves. This enables an anthropology which takes itself to be a dialogue, a bridge – and a two-way one – projected between our societies and those from 'before the divide' (Clastres 1968b: 37). Once the absolute vulnerability of excludent ontological dualisms is exposed – dualisms which demand that societies either have a state or do not, that their politics is defined as either segmentary or centralized, that we are men or jaguars and the Bororo are Bororo or macaws, discarding aprioristically and prematurely the fertile possibilities of mixtures and juxtapositions – new horizons open up for analysis. This is an indication that, as long as we think against the current, 'fertile corruptions' can reveal previously unsuspected potentialities in 'idioms' once considered in the radical isolation of their monadism. Deleuze and Guattari write:

> *As many centres of power exist already in primitive societies as exist in societies with a State; or, if we prefer, as many centres of power still exist in societies with a State as in primitive ones.* (1997 [1980], Vol. 3: 87, italics in the original)

There is a thus a certain state of the state, constant and present everywhere, and a certain state of war, also constant and present everywhere, one or the other inhibited

or potentialized, depending on the form in which the operation of the social mechanisms, and the subjective figures through which they act, takes place. In both states, however, something is always left out, claiming and imposing its presence despite its apparent absence. The street-children of Bogotá are indeed insolent (Meunier 1977).[10]

4. Rhizomes: 'against' in Clastres and minor anthropology

Some anecdotes should be taken seriously. In trying to disprove the arguments of Marilyn Strathern and Christina Toren – his opponents in an debate on the theoretical obsolescence of the concept of society, in which both advocated its substitution by that of *sociality* – Jonathan Spencer makes the ironical comment: ''Sociality against the State' somehow loses the force of Clastres's original title' (in Ingold 1996: 80). But is this really so?

In actuality, Clastres himself uses the term 'sociality' in two places.[11] Although, in terms of the relationship between two authors, the ideas of forewarning and precedence are at the very least complicated (and if to cast out is to precede, perhaps to precede is also to cast out) – and it is certainly not my intention to detect in Clastres a Strathern (1988) in embryonic or foetal form, which would be, moreover, a totally inappropriate *démarche* – Clastres's use of the term 'sociality' in these two places should at least arouse our curiosity.[12]

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[10] On the *galladas,* the 'singular forms' – anti-state, I should add – of the organization of 'bands' of street children in Bogotá, see Meunier 1977.

[11] I cite the passages in question: 'It is not exchange which is first, it is warfare, inscribed in the mode of functioning of primitive society. Warfare implies alliance, alliance stimulates exchange (understood not as the difference of man and animal, as the passage from nature to culture, but, of course, as the unfolding of the *sociality* of primitive society, as the free play of its political being). It is through warfare that exchange can be comprehended, and not the inverse' (1977b: 200, my italics). And: 'Taking seriously, on the one hand, primitive societies and, on the other, the ethnological discourse on these societies, I ask myself why they are without the state, why power is not found separate from the social body. Little by little, I am convinced that this non-separation of power, and this non-division of the social being, are not due to a foetal or embryonic state of primitive societies, to an unfinished nature or incompleteness; they relate, rather, to a sociological act, to an institution of *sociality* which refuses the division, just as it refuses domination. If primitive societies are without the State, it is because they are against the state' (1977a: 153-4, my italics).

[12] Although I am primarily concerned here with how the concept of sociality possesses a high analytic yield in Clastres's work, this does not eliminate – quite the opposite – the complementary question: what can Clastres's work add to the concept of sociality? The replies, however, would demand another article.

In fact, we have just ascertained that Clastres promotes a certain desubstancialization of the state, which is not 'the Elysium, the White House or the Kremlin' (1978: 166), but an 'effective actioning of the relation of power' (1976b: 115). Evidently, he proceeds in the same way with the anti-State and 'society' (so to speak), both also seen as effective actionings of relations, as machines that function – '*this* works' – and that function precisely by means of the subjective figures that produce and put them into operation: the chiefs, eternally immersed in debt; the warriors, in eternal search of wars which will confer prestige on them; the husbands, eternally compelled to share their respective wives with other consorts; the hunters, eternally obliged to give away the prey they are forbidden to consume; the men and women, whose bodies – eternally marked by rituals of initiation – offer them evidence of the eternal law of the group – 'you, whose skin carries identical marks, are worth no more than any of the others.' However, it should not be imagined that these figures are erected as ideal types and raised to an immaterial theoretical heaven from where they contemplate, abstractly, our all too human-ness. They have names, they are alive, and they have the passions and reactions of the living (Goldman and Lima 2001: 308).

Nor do individuals exist here, properly speaking. The 'against' in Clastres – which, rhizomatically distributed throughout his work, constantly breaks down any potential hard nuclei – never permitted him to determine the existence of an 'individual' against 'society.' By establishing the formula 'society against the State', which I believe should be more precisely termed 'sociality against the State', Clastres reasons not in terms of abstract entities – '*the* society,' '*the* State' – but, on both sides, in the sense of social machines without any externality with the forms of subjectification that engender them and through which they operate. In some of the essays in *The archaeology of violence*, and especially in his ethnography of the Guayaki (1972), we can find social machines at work producing the chiefs, warriors, men, women, homosexuals and neither-men-nor-women-nor-homosexuals through which these machines operate.

Ethnographically, since '*this* works',[13] Clastres confronts some of the difficulties faced by anthropology. In fact, in the name of metaphysical entities – such as the

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[13] The phrase is inspired by Deleuze and Guattari, themselves interested in tracking the ways in which various social machines, in response to the assemblies operating them, produce specific forms of subjectification – see, for example, the chapter 'Savages, barbarians and civilizeds' in *Anti-Oedipus: capitalism and schizophrenia* (1972).

'individual' and 'society,' which despite being 'fallacies of misplaced concreteness,' seem to enjoy a supposedly material existence – what is truly constitutive is very frequently obliterated, namely relations. The challenge is precisely as follows: in attempting to escape methodological individualism without falling into a kind of transcendental holism or vice versa, how do we think of social relations even in the absence of society, or, if one prefers, how do we build models of intentionality without subjects?

In his work, Clastres multiplies – in a 'rhizomatic progression,' so to speak – the ethnographic examples of how the 'objectivity' of 'sociality' can operate by means of the 'subjectivity' of people-in-interaction. 'We note […] that the author's interrogation is twofold' – observe Goldman and Lima:

> On the one hand, it involves society as a machine and, on the other, that which makes the machine function concretely and comprises at once an effect of its existence and a condition of its functioning.… Since, as Clastres sees it [the idea of the 'society against the State'], either as a property of primitive social machines, or from the viewpoint of the subjective figures which accompany them, we run the risk of losing sight of the fact that in the two instances we are faced with the same thing. (2001: 306-8)

We already know how a chief is made: through the sweat of his own face, which, through the 'generosity' into which he is forced, allows him to repay to the group, though never entirely, his eternal debt, necessarily a relationship. He stays chief as long as he is capable of remaining in debt. No externality, then, separates the chief from his group: the debt places both in a relationship and defines their respective places. While a certain desire for prestige is fed in the chief – care being taken, of course, to satisfy it – his access to a certain desire for power, duly censored, is simultaneously denied him (Clastres 1976c: 139). Both the chief and those he 'leads' end up satisfied, but in their *good desire*:

> What does the big man get in exchange for his generosity? Not the realization of his desire for power, but the fragile satisfaction of his point of honour; not the capacity to command, but the innocent pleasure of a glory whose maintenance exhausts him. He works in a proper sense for glory. Society grants him it willingly, seeing that it is busy tasting the fruits of the toil of its chief. Every flatterer lives at the costs of the one who listens to him. (ibid.)

Through this practice, an intention is realized which is properly political, and political in its entirety. All Clastres's analyses converge on this point, always in search of

social machines and subjective figures that boycott on a daily basis any hierarchical whims. 'His general thesis was based on converging analyses', Lefort agrees, and then enumerates them:

> [That] of chiefdom which reveals the interdiction made on who was installed in a pre-eminent position to exercise command; that of the initiation ritual, in which the elders imprint on the bodies of adolescents, by means apparently akin to torture, the law of the community – a law of which they will know forever that it imposes on each one to remain equal to the rest; […] or that of the incessant wars to which the savage tribes dedicate themselves, whose function seems to be to maintain the integrity of each one in function of the fight against the stranger or, more generally, to preserve the configuration of a diversified world, refractory to any intrusion of a conciliatory and unifying potency. Clastres unites the facts which various ethnologists had already described without relating to each other and explains them, showing that, beyond the singularity of behaviours and institutions, one finds an intention common to all primitive societies, a political intention. (Lefort in Abensour 1987: 190)

Indeed, the same 'order presides over the disposition of the lines of force of this geography' (Clastres 1972: 212), whether in the form in which a warrior is made, how a hunter is made, how a husband is made, and finally, how adult men and women are made.[14]

How is a warrior made? Through his own blood, which, if not in a war situation and in front of other warriors, will be spilled in vain. In fact, just as there are no wars without warriors, so there are no warriors without wars: 'the warrior is above all his passion for war' (Clastres 1977c: 219). Warriors are made in and through warfare – whose permanent state preserves the centrifugal logic of indigenous societies, even if the battles themselves are not constant – and in and through their relations with other warriors. The warrior's desire for prestige, pursued individualistically in competition with himself and with others, leads him to aspire, at the limit, to a glorious death. This impedes the group of warriors – continually riven by visceral disagreements, since the glory of one is only ever achieved at the costs of and in comparison to the others – from affirming itself as a faction feeding on the caprice of subordinating society. Simultaneously, it prevents a more valiant warrior, perhaps, from wanting to become chief and take command for himself: at this point, he would be irrefutably dead

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[14] Here I shall only have room to indicate how a warrior is made. For an indication of how the 'desire' of each one and the 'will' of the group – without any externality – act in the constitution of hunters, husbands and adult men and women, see Barbosa 2002: 78-84.

(Clastres 1974a: 178-9). Devoured by an inescapable 'scaling of temerity' (Clastres 1977c: 233), 'a precise adjustment between the ethical world of tribal values and the warrior's individual point of honour' (ibid.: 217), our duellist will only carry out his luck: submitting him to an eternal 'flight forward' (ibid.: 229) – each conquest, though it may serve to nourish his prestige, places him on trial and compels him to other, even more audacious deeds – his constant dissatisfaction condemns him from the outset. Clastres explains to us the misfortune of the savage warriors: '*[The] warrior is never a warrior*, except in this infiniteness of his task, when, performing the supreme exploit, he gains death, precisely the absolute glory' (ibid.: 237, original italics).

Expressions such as 'desire' and 'will' in Clastres carry no psychologizing inspiration, as if the spectre of the 'individual' was in eternal pursuit of us. These expressions 'do not refer to constants rooted in a supposed human nature given in advance, but to the subjective effects of particular functionings which take place on a plane of primary intersubjectivity and which are equally manifested at the sociological level properly speaking' (Goldman and Lima 2001: 308). Here Goldman and Lima echo the words of Deleuze: 'As for ethnography, Clastres said everything, in any case the best for us. What we try to do is put the libido into relationship with an 'outside'' (in Carrilho 1976: 80).

The reading of this part of the present article should be summarily discarded if it has led to the crystallization of impervious identificatory notions such as *the* chief, *the* warrior. There is no need here for identificatory machines producing faciality, the latter being already inescapably a state-form of thinking. Indeed, 'the face is a politics' (Deleuze and Guattari 1997 [1980], Vol. 3: 50), and there are power assemblies which dispense with the face (ibid.: 42). In primitive societies, very little takes place via the face, since 'the "primitives" may have the most human, the most beautiful and the most spiritual heads; they do not have the face and do not need it' (ibid.: 43). Continuing in the same line, Deleuze and Guattari point out the reason for this: 'The face is not a universal, not even the face of the white man; it is the White Man himself…. the face is the typical European' (ibid.), whose unity is constituted always by exclusive choices: it's a man *or* a woman; a rich person *or* a poor person; an adult *or* a child; a boss *or* a subaltern; an x *or* a y (ibid.: 44). The polyvocal primitive machines unveil new possibilities – including for ourselves. When we consider that people are multiple due to the varied intersubjective relations in which

they are and will be, at one and the same time, taking part and constituting, it becomes clear that we can be at once chrysanthemums and spades, citizens of England, husbands, parents, stoneworkers, members of a particular parish, voters in a particular electoral cycle, members of a union, affiliates of the Workers Party, men and women, 'our thousand little-sexes' (ibid.: 91).

In fact, there is another form of individuation which dispenses with subjects and individuals and which Deleuze and Guattari call *hecceities*:

> A season, a winter, a summer, a time, a date have a perfect individuality, lacking nothing, although it is not the same as the individuality of a thing or a subject. These are hecceities, in the sense that everything here is a relation of movement or rest between molecules or particles, the power to affect and be affected. […] It is the wolf itself, or the horse, or the child who cease being subjects in order to become events in assemblies which are never separate from a time, a season, a climate, an air, a life'. (ibid., Vol. 4: 47, 50)

True *total* social facts – no less and much more.

Hence: neither 'whole,' nor 'parts.' Moving beyond a certain methodological fetishism which anthropology has always shown for the whole and surpassing the 'metonymic freeze' which usually 'imprisons' the 'parts' in submitting them to the 'whole,' we can assume the pleasure and risk which the methodological rigours would possibly condemn (Loraux in Abensour 1987: 157), invited by the autonomy of Clastres's *gai savoir*. It is possible to reason non-dialectically, and there are no motives for giving way to the ruses of the tedious and worn out pendular movement which drags us from 'structure' to 'history,' from 'permanence' to 'change,' from 'synchrony' to 'diachrony,' from 'culture' to 'nature,' from 'male' to 'female,' from 'complex' to 'native,' from 'society' to 'individual.' There will always be something 'native' in 'us,' and something of 'us' in the 'native', and this indeed seems to be the *condition of possibility* of an anthropology that does not rid itself of the destabilizing potential of difference, which – by itself providing the evidence that everything can be and also is, and at the same time is so in another way – boldly reveals freedom to us. This already works against the crystallization of the principle of identity, which wishes a 'native' to always and only ever be a 'native,' satisfying the academic (and other) needs for exoticism: here difference ends up domesticated and in the eternal service of identity, reflecting back to Narcissus the (inverted) image he so much needs. But what is the principle of identity? On this point, we return once again to the

savages – for sure, since it is always ourselves involved – and avail ourselves of Guarani metaphysics. What does it teach us in its genealogy of unhappiness? That things, in their totality, are one and, for us, who do not wish this, they are bad (Clastres 1972-1973: 147). Humans inhabit an imperfect world, and the Guarani were never good savages. They reside on this earth, true, but they never ceased dreaming of *ywy mara-ey*, the Land-without-Evil, the place of the non-One, 'where maize grows alone, arrows bring their prey to those who no longer need to hunt, the careful flow of marriages is unknown, and men, forever young, live eternally' (ibid.: 150). The inhabitants of *ywy mara-ey* are still men, but not just men: they are also already gods. The imperfect land, where things in their totality are one, thus reveals itself to be a field of the finite, of the incomplete, the place of the rigorous application of the principle of identity: 'For to say that A = A, that this is this, and that a man is a man, is to declare at the same time that A is not-A, that this is not that, and that men are not gods. Naming the unity in things, naming things according to their unity, is also to mark them as the limit, the finite, the incomplete' (ibid.: 149). What is the One, then? 'I believe we can discern, under the metaphysical equation that equates Evil with the One, another more secret equation, which says that the One is the State' (Clastres 1974a: 184-5).

If so, what powers has anthropology cultivated in its search, forever renewed and almost obsessive, for the principle of identity? What illusionist effects – though full of concrete repercussions – have ensued as a result, and what will be the future of this illusion? Again, the *refrain*, and, one last time, we return to the Indians – because it continues to involve ourselves – who, in the eloquence of their silence, reveal to us a tautology: however, one which seems not to be so self-evident, namely that a mirror is a mirror:

> We had distributed to the Indians, who had never seen them before, small mirrors which they called *chaã*…. Half an hour, sometimes even hours on end, they looked at themselves (especially the men), the mirror now on the tip of the arm, now under the nose, stunned into silence as they saw this face which belonged to them, yet only offered them, when they tried to touch it with the tip of the fingers, nothing more than the cold and hard surface of the *chaã*. (Clastres 1972: 101)

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