

ROLAND
BARTHES

Sade

Fourier

Loyola

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University of California Press
Berkeley and Los Angeles
First California Paperback Printing 1989
Published by Agreement with Farrar, Straus and Giroux, Inc.
Translation © 1976 by Farrar, Straus and Giroux, Inc.
Originally published in French as *Sade, Fourier, Loyola*
© 1971 by Éditions du Seuil, Paris
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First American edition, 1976
Printed in the United States of America
Designed by Charles E. Skaggs
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Barthes, Roland.
Sade, Fourier, Loyola.

Translation of: Sade, Fourier, Loyola.

Includes bibliographical references.

1. Sade, marquis de, 1740-1814--
Criticism and interpretation.
2. Fourier, Charles, 1772-1837.

3. Ignatius, of Loyola, Saint, 1491-1556. I. Title.

PQ2063.S3B313 1989

808

88-29580

ISBN 0-520-06628-6 (alk. paper)

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set out in a discursive system of annotations, notes, points, preambles, precautions, repetitions, reversals, and consolidations which form the strongest of defenses. The obsessional character of the *Exercises* blazes forth in the accounting passion transmitted to the exercitant: as soon as an object, intellectual or imaginary, appears, it is broken up, divided, numbered. The accountancy is obsessional not only because it is infinite, but above all because it engenders its own errors: being a matter of accounting for his sins (and we shall see that in this regard Ignatius has provided a graphic bookkeeping technique), the fact of accounting for them in a faulty way will in turn become an error that must be added on to the original list; this list is thus made infinite, the redeeming accounting of errors calling up *per contra* the very errors of the account: for example, the particular Examination for the first Week is above all designed to make an accounting of the lapses committed with regard to prayer. In fact, it is the neurotic nature of obsession to set up a self-maintaining machine, a kind of homeostat of error, constructed in such a way that its function alone provides it with operating energy; thus we see Ignatius, in his *Journal*, requesting a sign from God, God delaying in giving it, Ignatius growing impatient, accusing himself for being impatient, and recommencing the circuit: one prays, one regrets praying badly, one adds to the faulty prayer a supplementary prayer for forgiveness, etc.; or: in order to decide whether masses designed to inspire a good decision should be abandoned, one plans . . . to say another mass. Accountancy has a mechanical advantage: for being the language of a language, it is able to support an infinite circularity of errors and of their accounting. It has a further advantage: dealing with sins, it helps to create between the sinner and the countless number of his sins a narcissistic bond of property: lapse is a means of acceding to the individual's identity, and in this sense the totally bookkeeping nature of sin as Ignatius's manual establishes it

and which was little known in the Middle Ages, aware, above all, it seems, in a more cosmic way of original sin and of hell, cannot be completely foreign to the new capitalist ideology, articulated both on the individualist awareness of the person and on the inventorying of the goods which, belonging to him personally, constitute him. We see the ambiguity of the *Exercises*; it establishes a psychotherapy designed to awaken, to make resonate, through the production of a fantasmatic language, the dullness of this body which has nothing to say, but at the same time it provokes a neurosis whose very obsession protects the submission of the retreatant (or Christian) with regard to the Divinity. In an other way it might be said that Ignatius (and the Church with him) sets up a psychotherapy for the exercitant, but constantly refuses to resolve the trans-ferential relationship that it implies. A situation with which must be contrasted—if we want truly to understand the Christian particularity toward which we can be blinded through force of habit—another type of ascesis, Zen for example, whose entire effort is on the contrary to “de-obsessionalize” meditation by subverting, in order better to supersede them, classes, lists, enumerations—in short, articulation, or even: language itself.

The Scale and the Mark

To conclude, we must return to the multiple text of the *Exercises*. Everything we have hitherto said concerned above all the third text, the active text, by which the exercitant, in possession of the language of interrogation established for him by Ignatius, attempts to obtain from the Divinity a response to the practical dilemma of his actions, i.e., a “good choice.” It remains to be seen what Ignatius has been able to say about the language of the Divinity, this second facet of every mantic art.

This language—it has been ever thus—reduced itself down to a unique sign, which is never more than the desig-

nation of one of the two terms of an alternative; this designation, which can be uttered in many ways, is the ancient *numen*, the nod by which the Divinity says *yes* or *no* to what is set before it. The rhetoric implied by the third text of the *Exercises* in fact consists in effacing the obstacles to deliberation, in reducing it obstacle by obstacle to an equal alternative where the sign from God can intervene simply. We see what the Divinity's role is: it is to *mark* one of the two terms of the binary. Now, this is the fundamental mechanism of every linguistic apparatus: a paradigm of two equal terms is given, one of the terms is marked against the other, which is not marked, and the meaning emerges, the message is uttered. In mantic art, the *numen* is the mark itself, its elementary state. This production of meaning is not devoid of reminders, on the lay level, of Platonic rhetoric, as it can be seen at work, for example, in the *Sophist*: for this rhetoric, too, it is a question of progressing in the discourse by a series of alternatives, the interlocutor being requested to mark one of the terms: it is the concession of the respondent, linked to the master by an amorous relationship, which removes the alternative from the impasse and permits proceeding to the next alternative, thereby coming ever closer to the essence of the thing. In mantic art, the divinity, faced with the alternative offered by the questioner, in like manner *concedes* one of the terms: that is its answer. In the Ignatian system, paradigms are given by the discernment, but only God can mark them: the generator of meaning, but not its preparer, He is, structurally, the Marker, he who imparts a difference.

This distribution of linguistic functions is a rigorous one. The exercitant's role is not to choose, i.e., to mark, but quite the contrary to offer for the divine mark a perfectly equal alternative. The exercitant must strive not to choose; the aim of his discourse is to bring the two terms of the alternative to a homogeneous state so pure that he cannot humanly extricate himself from it; the more equal the dilemma the more rigorous its closure, and the clearer the divine *numen*, or:

the more certain it will be that the mark is of divine origin; the more completely will the paradigm be balanced, and the more tangible will be the imbalance God will impart to it. This paradigmatic equality is the famous Ignatian *indifference* which has so outraged the Jesuit's foes: to will nothing oneself, to be as disposable as a corpse, *perinde ac cadaver*; one of Ignatius's disciples, Jerome Nadal, when asked what he had decided, replied that he was inclined toward nothing save to be inclined toward nothing. This indifference is a virtuality of possibles which one works to make equal in weight, as though one were to construct an extremely sensitive scale on which one would place materials constantly being brought into balance, so that the arm leans neither to one side nor to the other: it is the Ignatian *balance sheet*: "I must be indifferent, without any inordinate attachment, so as not to be either more inclined or attached to taking what is offered me than to leaving it, no more to leaving it than taking it. Yet I must be like the needle of a scale in order to follow what I feel to be more for the glory and praise of God our Lord and for the salvation of my soul."

Consequently, it is clear that measure here is not a mere rhetorical notion, but a structural value which has a very precise role in the linguistic system Ignatius has elaborated: it is the very condition that permits offering the best possible paradigm for marking. Measure guarantees the language itself, and here we find once again the contrast we have already noted between Ignatian asceticism and Flemish mysticism: for Ruysbroeck there is a link between the subversion of the very function of language and the vertigo of excess; contrasted with the strict accountancy instituted by Ignatius is the mystical intoxication ("I call intoxication of the spirit," Ruysbroeck says, "that state in which bliss surpasses the possibilities glimpsed by desire"), this intoxication so many hyperboles attempt to encompass ("the excess of transcendence," "the abyss of super-essence," "bliss crowned in measureless essence," "naked and super-essential beatitude"). A

possible path of knowledge and union, excess cannot be a means of language; thus we see Ignatius struggle to preserve the purity of the milieu in which the scale is to operate (“Let the first rule of your actions be to act as though success depended upon you and not upon God, and to abandon yourself to God as though He were to do everything in your stead”¹⁰) and continually to re-establish the balance by appropriate calibrations: this is the technique of *contra agere*, which consists in systematically going in the direction opposite to that toward which the scale seems spontaneously to tip: “In order better to conquer every immoderate appetite and every temptation of the Foe, if one is tempted to eat more, let him eat less”: excess is not corrected by a return to balance, but according to a more careful physics, by a countermeasure: an oscillating instrument, the scale does not come to rest in perfect balance save through the interplay of a *plus* and a *minus*.

Equality thus being achieved at the cost of a labor of which the *Exercises* forms the story, how will the Divinity, whose role it is, move the arm, mark one of the terms of the choice? The *Exercises* is the book of the question, not of the answer. In order to give some notion of the forms which the mark God puts on the scale can take, we must turn to the *Spiritual Journal*; there we shall find the outline of the divine code whose elements Ignatius notes down with the help of a whole repertoire of graphic signs which have not yet been completely deciphered (initials, dots, the // sign, etc.). These divine manifestations, as might be expected in an area dominated by the fantasmic, occur principally at the level of the body, this broken-up body whose fragmentation is precisely the path of fantasy. These are, first, tears; we are aware of the importance of the *gift of tears* in Christian history; for Ignatius, these very material tears (we are told that his dark eyes were always a bit veiled with weeping) constitute a veritable code whose matter is differentiated into signs according to the time of their

¹⁰ Sentence attributed to Ignatius, but disputed.

FOURIER

Beginnings

I. **O**NE DAY I was invited to eat a couscous with rancid butter; the rancid butter was customary; in certain regions it is an integral part of the couscous code. However, be it prejudice, or unfamiliarity, or digestive intolerance, I don't like rancidity. What to do? Eat it, of course, so as not to offend my host, but gingerly, in order not to offend the conscience of my disgust (since for disgust *per se* one needs some stoicism). In this difficult meal, Fourier would have helped me. On the one hand, intellectually, he would have persuaded me of three things: the first is that the rancidness of couscous is in no way an idle, futile, or trivial question, and that debating it is no more futile than debating Transubstantiation;¹ the second is that by forcing me to lie about my likes (or dislikes), society is manifesting its *falseness*, i.e., not only its hypocrisy (which is banal) but also the vice of the social mechanism whose gearing is faulty; the third, that this same society cannot rest until it has guaranteed (how? Fourier has clearly explained it, but it must be admitted that it hasn't worked) the exercise of my manias, whether "bizarre" or "minor," like those of people who like old chickens, the eater of horrid things (like the astronomer Lalande, who liked to

¹ "First we will deal with the puerility of these battles over the superiority of sweet cream or little pies; we might reply that the debate will be no more ridiculous than our Religious Wars over Transubstantiation" (VII, 346).

eat live spiders), the fanatics about butter, pears, bergamots, Ankles, or “Baby Dolls.”² On the other hand, practically, Fourier would at once have put an end to my embarrassment (being torn between my good manners and my lack of taste for rancid things) by taking me from my meal (where, in addition, I was stuck for hours, a barely tolerable situation against which Fourier protested) and sending me to the Anti-Rancid group, where I would be allowed to eat fresh couscous as I liked without bothering anyone—which would not have kept me from preserving the best of relations with the Rancid group, whom I would henceforth consider as not at all “ethnic,” foreign, strange, at for example a great couscous tournament, at which couscous would be the “theme,” and where a jury of gastrosophers would decide on the superiority of rancid over fresh (I almost said: *normal*, but for Fourier, and this is his victory, there is no normality).³

² “Ankles” are men who like to scratch their mistress’s ankle (VII, 335); the “Baby Doll” is a sixty-year-old man who, desirous of being treated like a spoiled child, wants the soubrette to punish him by “gently patting his patriarchal buttocks” (VII, 334).

³ Fourier would, I am sure, have been enraptured at my friend Abd el Kebir’s entry into the couscous tournament, in defense of the Rancid side, in a letter I received from him:

“I am not a Rancist either. I prefer couscous with pumpkin, and a light sprinkling of raisins—well blended, of course—and that produces: an insubordination of the expression.

“The apparent instability of the Moroccan peasant’s culinary system proceeds, dear friend, from the fact that rancid butter is made in a strange underground hearth at the intersection of cosmic time and the time of consumption. Rancid butter is a kind of decomposed property, pleasing to interior monologue.

“Dug out in handfuls, rancid butter is worked in the following circular rite: a huge and magnificent ball of couscous is ejaculated into the throat to such an extent that the rancidity is neutralized. Fourier would call it a double-focus ellipse.

“This is why the peasant works to get rid of it: the parable means a surplus, since the earth belongs to God. He inters the fresh butter, then extracts it when the time is ripe. However, the female is the one, the squatter, always squatting down, who carries out the operation

II. Fourier likes compotes, fine weather, perfect melons, the little spiced pastries known as *mirlitons*, and the company of lesbians. Society and nature hinder these tastes a bit: sugar is (or was) expensive (more expensive than bread), the French climate is insupportable except in May, September, and October, we know no sure method of detecting a melon's quality, in Civilization little pastries bring on indigestion, lesbians are proscribed and, blind for a long time as far as he himself was concerned, Fourier did not know until very late in life that he liked them. Thus the world must be remade for my pleasure: my pleasure will be simultaneously the ends and the means: in organizing it, in distributing it, I shall overwhelm it.

III. Everywhere we travel, on every occasion on which we feel a desire, a longing, a lassitude, a vexation, it is possible to ask Fourier, to wonder: What would he have said about it? What would he make of this place, this adventure? Here am I one evening in a southern Moroccan hotel: some hundred meters outside the populous, tattered, dusty town, a park filled with rare scents, a blue pool, flowers, quiet bungalows, hordes of discreet servants. In Harmony, what would that give? First of all, this: there would come to this place all who have this strange liking, this low mania for dim lights in the woods, candle-lit dinners, a staff of native servants, night frogs, and a camel in a meadow beneath the window.

from above. Slow and painstaking preparation, making my couscous taste rather androgynous.

"Thus, I agree to act within its limits: the rancid is an imperative fantasy. The pleasure is in eating with the group.

"Relating this manner of conserving butter underground to a traditional practice of mental healing, the frenzied madman is buried for a day or two, left almost naked, without food. When he is brought out, he is often reborn or really dies. Between heaven and earth there are signs to be seen for those who know.

"The high price put on couscous—a truly enigmatic material—obliges me to sign off and to send you my friendly wishes."

Then this rectification: the Harmonians would scarcely have need of this place, luxurious owing to its temperature (spring in mid-winter), because, by acting on the atmosphere, by modifying the polar cap, this exotic climate could be transported to Jouy-en-Josas or Gif-sur-Yvette. Finally, this compromise: at certain times during the year, hordes of people, driven by a taste for travel and adventure, would descend upon the idyllic motel and there hold their councils of love and gastronomy (it would be just the place for our couscous investigations). From which, once again, it emerges: that Fourierist pleasure is the end of the tablecloth: pull the slightest futile incident, provided it concerns your happiness, and all the rest of the world will follow: its organization, its limits, its values; this sequence, this fatal induction which ties the most tenuous inflection of our desire to the broadest sociality, this unique space in which fantasy and the social combinative are trapped, this is very precisely *systematics* (but not, as we shall see, the system); with Fourier, impossible to relax without constructing a theory about it. And this: in Fourier's day none of the Fourierist system had been achieved, but today? Caravans, crowds, the collective search for fine climate, pleasure trips, exist: in a derisory and rather atrocious form, the organized tour, the planting of a vacation club (with its classed population, its planned pleasures) is there in some fairy-tale site; in the Fourierist utopia there is a twofold reality, realized as a farce by mass society: *tourism*—the just ransom of a fantasmatic system which has “forgotten” politics, whereas politics pays it back by “forgetting” no less systematically to “calculate” for our pleasure. It is in the grip of these two forgettings, whose confrontation determines total futility, insupportable emptiness, that we are still floundering.

The Calculation of Pleasure

The motive behind all Fourierist construction (all combination) is not justice, equality, liberty, etc., it is pleasure.

Fourierism is not a radical eudaemonism. Fourierist pleasure (*positive happiness*) is very easy to define: it is sensual pleasure: “amorous freedom, good food, insouciance, and the other delights that the Civilized do not even dream of coveting because philosophy has taught them to treat the desire for true pleasures as vice.”⁴ Fourierist sensuality is, above all, oral. Of course, the two major sources of pleasure are equally Love and Food, always in tandem; however, although Fourier pushes the claims of erotic freedom, he does not describe it sensually; whereas food is lovingly fantasized in detail (compotes, *mirlitons*, melons, pears, lemonades); and Fourier’s speech itself is sensual, it progresses in effusiveness, enthusiasm, throngs of words, verbal gourmandise (neologism is an erotic act, which is why he never fails to arouse the censure of pedants).

This Fourierist pleasure is commodious, *it stands out*: easily isolated from the heteroclite hotchpotch of causes, effects, values, protocols, habits, alibis, it appears throughout in its sovereign purity: mania (the ankle scratcher, the filth eater, the “Baby Doll”) is never captured save through the pleasure it procures for its partners, and this pleasure is never encumbered with other images (absurdities, inconveniences, difficulties); in short, there is no metonymy attached to it: pleasure is what it is, nothing more. The emblematic ceremony of this isolation of essence would be a *museum orgy*: it consists of a simple exposition of the desirable, “a séance

⁴ Let us briefly recall that in the Fourierist lexicon, *Civilization* has a precise (numbered) meaning: the word designates the 5th period of the 1st phase (Infancy of Mankind), which comes between the period of the federal patriarchy (the birth of large agriculture and manufacturing industry) and that of guaranteeism or demi-association (industry by association). Whence a broader meaning: in Fourier, *Civilization* is synonymous with wretched barbarism and designates the state of his own day (and ours); it contrasts with universal Harmony (2nd and 3rd phases of mankind). Fourier believed himself to be at the axis of Barbaric Civilization and Harmony.

wherein notable lovers lay bare the most remarkable thing they have. A woman whose only beautiful feature is her bosom exposes only the bosom and is covered elsewhere . . ." (we refrain from commenting on the fetishist character of this framework, evident enough; his intention not analytical but merely ethical, Fourier would not deign to take fetishism into a symbolic, reductive system: that would be merely a mania *along with* others, and not inferior or superior to them).

Fourierist pleasure is free from evil: it does not include vexation, in the Sadian manner, but on the contrary dissipates it; his discourse is one of "general well-being": for example, in the war of love (game and theater), out of delicacy, in order not to disturb, no flags or leaders are captured. If, however, in Harmony, one chances to suffer, the entire society will attempt to divert you: have you had some failure in love, have you been turned down, the Bacchantes, Adventuresses, and other pleasure corporations will surround you and lead you off, instantly efface the harm that has befallen you (they exercise, Fourier says, philanthropy). But if someone has a mania to harass? Should they be allowed? The pleasure of harassing is due to a congestion; Harmony will decongest the passions, sadism will be reabsorbed: Dame Strogonoff had the unpleasant habit of harassing her beautiful slave by piercing her breast with pins; in fact, it was counter-passion: Dame Strogonoff was in love with her victim without knowing it: Harmony, by authorizing and favoring Sapphic loves, would have relieved her of her sadism. Yet a final threat: satiety: how to *sustain* pleasure? "How act so as to have a continually renewed appetite? Here lies the secret of Harmonian politics." This secret is twofold: on the one hand, change the race and, through the over-all benefits of the societal diet (based on meats and fruits, with very little bread), form physiologically stronger men, fit for the renewal of pleasures, capable of digesting more quickly, of being hungry more frequently; and

on the other hand, vary pleasures incessantly (never more than two hours at the same task), and from all these successive pleasures make one sole continual pleasure.

Here we have pleasure alone and triumphant, it reigns over all. Pleasure cannot be measured, it is not subject to quantification, its nature is the *overmuch* (“Our fault is not, as has been believed, to desire *overmuch*, but to desire *too little* . . .”); it is itself the measurement: “feeling” depends on pleasure: “The privation of the sensual need degrades feeling,” and “full satisfaction in material things is the only way to elevate the feelings”: counter-Freudianism: “feeling” is not the sublimating transformation of a lack, but on the contrary the panic effusion of an acme of satiety. Pleasure overcomes Death (pleasures will be sensual in the afterlife), it is the Federator, what operates the solidarity of the living and the dead (the happiness of the defunct will begin only with that of the living, they having in a way to *await* the others: no happy dead so long as on earth the living are not happy; a view of a generosity, a “charity” that no religious eschatology has dared). Pleasure is, lastly, the everlasting principle of social organization: whether, negatively, it induces a condemnation of all society, however progressive, that neglects it (such as Owen’s experiment at New Lamarck, denounced as “too severe” because the societaries went barefoot), whether, positively, pleasures are made *affairs of State* (*pleasures* and not *leisure*: this is what separates—fortunately—the Fourierist Harmony from the modern State, where the pious organization of leisure time corresponds to a relentless censure of pleasure); pleasure results, in fact, from a *calculation*, an operation that for Fourier is the highest form of social organization and mastery; this calculation is the same as that of all societal theory, whose practice is to transform work into pleasure (and not to suspend work for the sake of leisure time): the barrier that separates work from pleasure in Civilization crumbles, there is a paradigmatic fall, philosophical

conversion of the unpleasant into the attractive (taxes will be paid “as readily as the busy mother sees to those foul but attractive duties her infant demands”), and pleasure itself becomes an exchange value, since Harmony recognizes and honors, by the name of *Angelicate*, collective prostitution: it is in a way the monad of energy which in its thrust and scope ensures the advance of society.

Since pleasure is the Unique, to reveal pleasure is itself a unique duty: Fourier stands alone against everyone (especially against all the Philosophers, against all Libraries), he alone is right, and being right is the desirable thing: “Is it not to be desired that I alone am right, against everyone?” From the Unique derives the incendiary character of pleasure: it burns, shocks, frightens to speak of it: how many are the statements about the mortal shock brought on by the over-abrupt revelation of pleasure! What precautions, what preparations of writing! Fourier experiences a kind of prophylactic obligation for dispassion (poorly observed, by the way: he imagines his “calculations” are boring and that reassures him, whereas they are delightful); whence an incessant restraint of the discourse: “fearing to allow you to glimpse the vastness of these pleasures, I have only dissertated on . . .” etc.: Fourier’s discourse is never just propaedeutic, so blazing with splendor is its object, its center:⁵ articulated on pleasure, the sectarian world is *dazzling*.

The area of Need is *Politics*, the area of Desire is what Fourier calls *Domestics*. Fourier has chosen *Domestics* over *Politics*, he has constructed a domestic utopia (but can a

⁵ “If we could suddenly see this arranged Order, this work of God as it will be seen in its full functioning . . . it is not to be doubted that many of the Civilized would be struck dead by the violence of their ecstasy. The description [of the 8th Society] alone could inspire in many of them, the women in particular, an enthusiasm that would approach frenzy; it could render them indifferent to amusements, unsuited to the labors of Civilization” (I, 65).

utopia be otherwise? can a utopia ever be political? isn't politics: *every language less one*, that of Desire? In May 1968, there was a proposal to one of the groups that were spontaneously formed at the Sorbonne to study *Domestic Utopia*—they were obviously thinking of Fourier; to which the reply was made that the expression was too “studied,” *ergo* “bourgeois”; politics is what forecloses desire, save to achieve it in the form of neurosis: political neurosis or, more exactly: the neurosis of politicizing).

Money Creates Happiness

In Harmony, not only is wealth redeemed, but it is also magnified, it participates in a play of felicitous metaphors, lending the Fourierist demonstrations either the ceremonial brio of jewels (“the diamond star in a radiant triangle,” the decoration of amatory sainthood, i.e., widespread prostitution) or the modesty of the sou (“20 sous to Racine for his tragedy *Phèdre*”: multiplied, true, by all the cantons that have chosen to honor the poet); the operations connected with money are themselves motifs in a delectable game: in the game of love, that of the redemption (repurchase) of captives. Money participates in the brilliance of pleasure (“The senses cannot have their full indirect scope without the intervention of money”): money is desirable, as in the best days of civilized corruption, beyond which it perpetuates itself by virtue of a splendid and “incorruptible” fantasy.

Curiously detached from commerce, from exchange, from the economy, Fourierist money is an analogic (poetic) metal, the sum of happiness. Its exaltation is obviously a countermeasure: it is because all (civilized) Philosophy has condemned money that Fourier, destroyer of Philosophy and critic of Civilization, rehabilitates it: *the love of wealth* being a pejorative *topos* (at the price of a constant hypocrisy: Seneca, the man who possessed 80 million sesterces, declared that one must instantly rid oneself of wealth), Fourier turns

contempt into praise:⁶ marriage, for example, is a ridiculous ceremony,⁷ save “when a man marries a very rich woman; then there is occasion for rejoicing”; everything, where money is concerned, seems to be conceived in view of this counter-discourse, frankly scandalous in relation to the literary constraints of the admonition: “Search out the tangible wealth, gold, silver, precious metals, jewels, and objects of luxury despised by philosophers.”⁸

However, this fact of discourse is not rhetorical: it has that energy of language that in writing makes the discourse waver, it forms the basis for the major transgression against which *everyone*—Christians, Marxists, Freudians—for whom money continues to be an accursed matter, fetish, excrement, has spoken out: who would dare defend money? There is *no discourse* with which money can be compatible. Because it is completely solitary (Fourier does not find on this point among his colleagues, “literary agitators,” any co-maniac), Fourierist transgression lays bare the most secret area of the Civilized conscience. Fourier exalted money because for him the image of happiness was properly furnished with the mode of life of the wealthy: a shocking view today, in the eyes of the contestants themselves, who condemn all pleasure induced from the bourgeois model. We know that metonymy (contagion)

⁶ “Whence a conclusion that may seem facetious but that will nonetheless be rigorously demonstrated; in the 18 societies of Combined Order, the most basic quality for the triumph of truth is the love of wealth” (I, 70). “Glory and science are truly desirable, of course, but quite insufficient when unaccompanied by fortune. Fame, trophies, and other illusions do not lead to happiness, which consists first of all in the possession of wealth . . .” (I, 14).

⁷ “One must be born in Civilization to tolerate the sight of those indecent customs known as marriages, where one sees the simultaneous coincidence of magistrate and priest with the fools and drunks of the neighborhood” (I, 174).

⁸ Since the coming of Harmony was imminent, Fourier counseled the Civilized to profit at once from the few goods of Civilization; this is the age-old theme (reversed, i.e., positive): Live to the full now, tomorrow is another day, it is futile to save, to keep, to transmit.

is the purview of Error (of religion); Fourier's radical materialism stems from his constant, vigilant refusal of any metonymy. For him, money is not a conductor of sickness but merely the dry, pure element in a combinative to be re-ordered.

Inventor, Not Writer

To remake the world (including Nature), Fourier mobilized: an intolerance (for Civilization), a form (classification), a standard (pleasure), an imagination (the "scene"), a discourse (his book). All of which pretty well defines the action of the signifier—or the signifier in action. This action continually makes visible on the page a glaring lack, that of science and politics, that is, of the signified.⁹ What Fourier lacks (for that matter voluntarily) points in return to what we ourselves lack when we reject Fourier: to be ironic about Fourier is always—even from the scientific point of view—to censure the signifier. Political and Domestic (the name of Fourier's system),¹⁰ science and utopia, Marxism and Fourierism, are like two nets whose meshes are of different sizes. On the one hand, Fourier allows to pass through all the science that Marx collects and develops; from the political point of view (and above all since Marxism has given an indelible name to its shortcomings), Fourier is completely *off to one side*, unrealistic and immoral. However, the other, facing, net allows pleasure, which Fourier collects, to pass through.¹¹ Desire and Need pass through, as though the two

⁹ “. . . seek the good only in operations having no relationship with the administration or with the priesthood, that rest solely on industrial or domestic measures and that are compatible with any government, without having need of their intervention” (I, 5).

¹⁰ “. . . to demonstrate the extreme facility of exiting from the civilized labyrinth, without political upheaval, without scientific effort, but by a purely domestic operation” (I, 126).

¹¹ “. . . sophists deceive us about their incompetency in calculations of amatory or petty politics, and occupy us exclusively with ambitious or major politics . . .” (IV, 51).

nets were alternatively superimposed, playing at topping hands. However, the relationship of Desire and Need is not *complementary* (were they fitted one into the other, everything would be perfect), but *supplementary*: each is the *excess* of the other. The *excess*: what does not pass through. For example, seen from today (i.e., *after* Marx), politics is a necessary purge; Fourier is the child who avoids the purge, who vomits it up.

The vomiting of politics is what Fourier calls Invention. Fourierist invention ("For me, I am an inventor, and not an orator") addresses the absolutely new, that about which nothing has yet been said. The rule of invention is a rule of refusal: to doubt absolutely (more than did Descartes, who, Fourier thought, never made more than a partial and misplaced use of doubt), to be in opposition with everything being done, to treat only of what has not been treated, to stand apart from "literary agitators," Book People, to preach what Opinion holds to be *impossible*. It is in sum for this purely structural reason (*old/new*) and through a simple constraint of the discourse (to speak only where there has not yet been speech) that Fourier is silent about politics. Fourierist invention is a fact of writing, a deploying of the signifier. These words should be understood in the modern sense: Fourier repudiates *the writer*, i.e., the certified manager of good writing, of literature, he who guarantees decorative union and thus the fundamental separation of substance and form; in calling himself an inventor ("I am not a writer, but an inventor"), he places himself at the limit of meaning, what we today call Text. Perhaps, following Fourier, we should henceforth call *inventor* (and not *writer* or *philosopher*) he who proposes new formulae and thereby invests, by fragments, *immensely and in detail*, the space of the signifier.

The Meta-Book

The meta-book is the book that talks about the book. Fourier spends his time talking about his book in such a way

that the work of Fourier that we read, indissolubly blending the two discourses, finally forms an autonomous book, in which form incessantly states form.

Fourier escorts his book a long way. For example, he imagines a dialogue between bookseller and client. Or elsewhere, knowing his book will be brought into court, he establishes a whole institutional system of defense (judge, jury, lawyers) and diffusion (the rich reader who wants to clear up some doubts for himself will call in the author to give lessons, as in sciences and the arts: “a kind of relationship without consequences, as with a merchant from whom one buys”: after all, it is something like what a writer does today, going off on lecture tours to repeat words he has stated in writing).

As for the book itself, he posits rhetoric, i.e., the adaptation of types of discourse to types of readers: the *exposition* is addressed to the “Curious” (that is, to studious men); the *descriptions* (insights into the delights of private Destinies) are addressed to Voluptuaries or Sybarites; the *confirmation*, pointing up the blunders of the Civilized in thrall to the Spirit of Commerce, is addressed to the Critics. We can distinguish bits of *perspective* and bits of *theory* (I, 160); there will be *insights* (abstract), *summaries* (half concrete), *elaborate dissertations* (bodies of doctrine). It follows that the book (a somewhat Mallarméan view) is not only pieced out, articulated (a banal structure), but, further, mobile, subject to a rule of *intermittent* actualization: the chapters will be inverted, the reading will be speeded up (expedited movement) or slowed down, according to the class of readers we want to reach; at its limit, the book is composed of nothing but jumps, full of holes like Fourier’s manuscripts (especially *Le Nouveau Monde amoureux*), whose words are constantly missing, eaten by mice, and which therefore have the dimensions of an infinite cryptogram whose key will be given later.

This reminds us of reading in the Middle Ages, based on the work’s legal discontinuity: not only was the ancient text

(subject of medieval reading) *broken up* and its fragments then capable of being diversely combined, but, further, it was normal to conduct on any subject two independent and concurrent discourses, shamelessly put in a redundant relationship: Donatus's *ars minor* (abridged) and *ars major* (extended), the Modistes' *modi minores* and *modi majores*; this is the Fourierist opposition of insight-abridgment and dissertation. Yet the effect of this doubling up is twisted, paradoxical. We would expect that like any redundancy it would completely cover the subject, fill it out and end it (what can be added to a discourse that essentializes its purpose in résumé form and develops it in the form of an elaborate dissertation?). Now the contrary: the duplicity of the discourse produces an *interstice* through which the subject leaks away: Fourier spends his time in withholding the decisive utterance of his doctrine, concerning it he gives us only examples, seductions, "appetizers"; the message of his book is the announcement of a forthcoming message: *wait a little longer, I will tell you the essential very soon*. This method of writing could be called *counter-paralypse* (the paralypse is the rhetorical figure that consists in stating what one is not going to say and thus stating what one pretends not to say: *I shall not speak of . . .* followed by three pages). The paralypse implies the conviction that the indirect is a profitable mode of language; however, Fourier's countermarch, other than that it obviously translates the neurotic fear of failure (like that of a man afraid to jump—which Fourier, transferring to the reader, utters as the mortal fear of pleasure), points out the vacuum of language: caught in the toils of the meta-book, his book is *without subject*: its signified is dilatory, incessantly withdrawn further away: only the signifier remains, stretching out of sight, *in the book's future*.

The Old Shoe Ablaze

Somewhere, Fourier speaks of "nocturnal furnishings." What do I care that this expression is the trace of an earth-

shaking transport? I am carried away, dazzled, convinced by a kind of *charm* in the expression, which is its delight. Fourier is crammed full of these delights: no discourse was ever *happier*. With Fourier, the expression derives its felicity (and ours) from a kind of upheaval: it is excentric, displaced, it lives on its own, outside its context (the context, the semanticists' puzzler, has all the ingratitude of law: it reduces polysemy, clips the wings of the signifier: doesn't all poetry consist in liberating the word from its context? doesn't all philosophy consist in putting it back?). I do not resist these pleasures, they seem "true" to me: I have been "taken in" by the form.

Of what do these charms consist: of a counter-rhetoric, that is, a way of contriving figures by introducing into their code a "grain" (of sand, of madness). Let us here, once again (after many centuries of rhetorical classification), distinguish tropes (or simple metaboles) and figures (or ornaments that act upon an entire syntagm). Fourier's metaphorical vein is the path of truth; it supplies him with simple metaphors of a definitive precision ("from delivery vans we derive *fatigue dress*, the gray cloak and trousers"), it clarifies meaning (monological function), but at the same time and contradictorily it clarifies *ad infinitum* (poetical function), not only because the metaphor is drawn out, orchestrated ("Nocturnal furnishings will be considerably assorted and composed of our vivid and variously colored moons, next to which Phoebe will appear as what she is, a pale ghost, a sepulchral lamp, a Swiss cheese. One would have to have as bad taste as the Civilized do to admire this pallid mummy"), but further and above all because the Fourierist syntagm simultaneously produces a sonorous pleasure and a logical vertigo. Fourier's enumerations (for his verbal "delirium," based on calculation, is basically enumerative) always contain a preposterous point, a twist, a wrinkle: ". . . the ostrich, the deer, the jerboa . . .": why the jerboa, unless for the sonorous flourish at the end, for the sound? "And what can Hell in its fury in-

vent worse than the rattlesnake, the bug, the legion of insects and reptiles, the sea monsters, poisons, plague, rabies, leprosy, venereal disease, gout, and all the morbid virulences?": the bug and the sea monster? Rattlesnakes and venereal disease? This string of nonsense derives a final savor from the *morbiferous*, plump and brilliant, more alimentary than funereal, both sensual and ridiculous (Molièresque), that crowns it; for the enumerative *cumulus*, in Fourier, is as abrupt as the movement of the head of an animal, a bird, a child who has heard "something else": "There will remain only the useful strains, like the whiting, the herring, the mackerel, sole, tuna, tortoise, in short, all those that do not attack swimmers . . .": what charms us is not the content (after all, there is no question that these fish are beneficent), but a certain turn that makes the affirmation vibrate toward its opposite region: mischievously, through an irresistible metonymy seizing the words, a vague image becomes detached which, across the denegation, reveals the whiting and the mackerel in the process of attacking a swimmer . . . (a properly surrealist mechanism). Paradoxical, for it is always in the name of the "concrete" that Civilization claims to teach the "mad," it is always through the "concrete" that Fourier becomes absurd and charming at once: the "concrete" is constructed in a scene, the substance calls upon the practices metonymically attached to it; the coffee break refers to the whole of civilized bureaucracy: "Isn't it shocking to see thirty-year-old athletes crouched over desks and transporting a cup of coffee with their hairy arms, as though there weren't women and children to attend to the finicky functioning of offices and households?" This vivid representation provokes laughter because it is out of proportion with its signified; hypotypose usually serves to illustrate intense and noble passions (Racine: "Imagine, Céphise . . ."); in Fourier, it is demonstrative; a kind of anacoluthon intervenes between the domestic detail of the example and the scope of the utopian plan. This is the

secret of these amusing syntagms frequent in Fourier (in Sade too) that join in a single sentence a very ambitious thought and a very futile object; starting from the notion of the culinary contests in Harmony (“thesis meals”), Fourier continues to concoct strange and delicious, ridiculous and decisive syntagms, in which the tiny pastries (which he so liked, *mirlitons*) are associated with highly abstract terms (“the 44 systems of tiny pastries,” “the batches of tiny pastries anathemized by the council,” “the tiny pastries adopted by the Council of Babylon,” etc.). Very precisely, this is what we can now call *paragrammatics*: namely, the superimpression (in dual hearing) of two languages that are ordinarily foreclosed to each other, the braid formed by two classes of words whose traditional hierarchy is not annulled, balanced, but—what is more subversive—disoriented: Council and System lend their nobility to tiny pastries; tiny pastries lend their futility to Anathema, a sudden contagion *deranges* the institution of language.

The transgression Fourier commits goes even further. The frivolous object he promotes to demonstrative rank is very often a *base* object. This conversion is justified because Harmony recuperates what Civilization disdains and transforms it into a delightful good (“If the Vaucluse phalanstery harvests 50,000 melons or watermelons, almost 10,000 of them will be set aside for its own consumption, 30,000 for exportation, and 10,000 will be of inferior grade and divided among horses, cats, and for fertilizer”: here we find that art of enumerative cadence we have just mentioned: Fourierist enumeration is always reverse conundrum: what is the difference between a horse, a cat, and fertilizer? None, for the function of all three is to reabsorb inferior-grade melons). Thus a poetics of rubbish is constructed, magnified by the societary economy (e.g., the old marinated chickens). Fourier knows this poetics well: he knows the emblems of rubbish, the old shoe, the rag, the sewer: an entire episode in *Le Nouveau Monde amoureux*

(VII, 362 *et seq.*) hymns the exploits of the new crusaders, dealers in old shoes and boot cleaners, whose arrival at the Euphrates crossing is greeted by a magnificent display of fireworks “ending with an old shoe ablaze, beneath which is the legend: Long live pious cobblers.”

Naturally, Fourier was aware of the “ridiculousness” of his demonstrative objects (of his rhetoric);¹² he was well aware that the bourgeoisie is devoted to the hierarchical division of languages, objects, and usages as strongly as it is to those of class, that nothing is worse in their eyes than the crime of *lèse-language*, and that one has only to join a noble (abstract) word and a base (denoting a sensual or repulsive object) term to be sure of loosing their zeal as proprietors (of “fine” language); he knew that people made fun of his faithful melons, of the triumph of his leathery fowl, of the English debt paid off in hens’ eggs. Yet he assumed the incongruity of his demonstrations with a certain martyred air (the martyrdom of the inventor). Thus to the paragrammaticism of his examples (interweaving two exclusive languages, one noble, one outcast), must be added a final, infinitely dizzier, ambiguity: that of their utterance. Where is Fourier? in the invention of the example (old marinated chickens)? in the indignation he feels at the laughter of others? In our reading, which simultaneously encompasses the ridicule and his defense? The loss of the subject in the writing has never been more complete (the subject becoming totally irreparable) than in these utterances where the disconnection of the utter-

¹² “This respectable convoy of cobblers marches after them in pomp and the finest boat is loaded with their baggage and this is the arm upon which they lean to win the palms of true glory. Bah! glory in old shoes, our Civilized will say; I was expecting this stupid response. And what fruit have they gleaned from the trophies of St. Louis and Bonaparte who have led immense armies vast distances only to have them drown in their trophies after having ravaged the country and been execrated by it?” (VII, 364).

ance occurs *ad infinitum*, without a brake, on the model of the game of topping hands or the game of “rock, scissors, paper”: texts whose “ridiculousness” or “stupidity” is based on no certain utterance and over which, consequently, the reader can never gain any advantage (Fourier, Flaubert). “God,” Fourier says, “displays a subtle and judicious irony in creating certain products that are enigmatic in quality, like the melon, made for the innocent mystification of banquets ill suited to divine methods, without in any way deceiving the gastronomes who cleave to the divine or societal diet” [allusion to the difficulty that exists in choosing a good melon, “such a perfidious fruit for the Civilized”]. “I do not mean to say that God created the melon solely for the sake of this jest, but it is part of that fruit’s many uses. Irony is never overlooked in the calculations of nature. . . . The melon has among its properties that of *ironic harmony* . . .” (in short, the melon is an element of a *writing*). What reader can hope to *dominate* such an utterance—adopt it as a laughable or a critical object, *dictate to it*, in a word?—in the name of *what other language*?

Hieroglyphics

Fourier wants to decipher the world in order to remake it (for how remake it without deciphering it?).

Fourierist deciphering starts from the most difficult of situations, which is not so much the latency of signs as their content. There is a saying of Voltaire that Fourier refers to in this regard: “But what obscure night still enveileth nature?”; now, in this veil finally there is less the notion of mask than of a cloth. Once again, the task of the logothete, of the founder of language, is an endless cutting up of the text: the primary operation is to “grab” the cloth in order then to pull on it (to pull it off).

We must therefore in some measure make a distinction between deciphering and cutting up. Deciphering refers to a

pregnant depth, to an area of relationships, to a distribution. In Fourier, deciphering is postulated, but in a completely minor way: it concerns the lies and pretenses of the Civilized classes: thus the “secret principles” of the bourgeois “who begins by debiting a hundred lies in his shop by virtue of the principles of free trade. Hence a bourgeois goes to hear Mass and returns to debit three to four hundred lies, to trick and steal from thirty or so buyers in line with the secret principle of businessmen: we are not working for glory, we want money” (VII, 246). Quite another thing, and of quite another order of importance, is cutting up—or systematization (putting to a system); this reading, an essential part of the Fourierist task, concerns all of Nature (societies, sentiments, forms, natural kingdoms) as it represents the total space of Harmony—Fourier’s man being totally incorporated into the universe, including the stars; this is no longer a denunciatory, reductive reading (limited to the moral falsehoods of the bourgeoisie), but an exalting, integrating, restorative reading, extended to the plethora of universal forms.

Is the “real” the object of this second reading? We are accustomed to considering the “real” and the residue as identical: the “unreal,” the fantasmatic, the ideological, the verbal, the proliferating, in short, the “marvelous,” may conceal from us the “real,” rational, infrastructural, schematic; from real to unreal there may be the (self-seeking) production of a screen of arabesques, whereas from unreal to real there may be critical reduction, an alethic, scientific movement, as though the real were at once more meager and more essential than the superstructions with which we have covered it. Obviously, Fourier is working on a conceptual material whose constitution denies this contrast and which is that of the *marvelous real*. This marvelous real is contrasted with the marvelous ideal of novels; it corresponds to what we might call, contrasting it directly with the novel, the novelesque. This marvelous real very precisely is the signifier, or if one

prefers, “reality,” characterized, relative to the scientific real, by its fantasmatic train. Now, the category under which this novelesque begins to be read is the *hieroglyphic*, different from the symbol as the signifier can be from the full, mystified sign.

The hieroglyph (the theory of which is set forth principally in the *Théorie des Quatre Mouvements*, I, 31 *et seq.* and 286 *et seq.*) postulates a formal and arbitrary correspondence (it depends on Fourier’s free will: it is an idiolectal concept) between the various realms of the universe, for example between forms (circle, ellipse, parabola, hyperbola), colors, musical notes, passions (friendship, love, parental, ambition), the races of animals, the stars, and the periods of societal phylogenesis. The arbitrary obviously resides in the attribution: why is the ellipse the geometric hieroglyph for love? the parabola for parenthood? Yet this arbitrary is just as relative as is that of linguistic signs: we believe there to be an arbitrary correspondence between the signifier/pear tree/and the signified “pear tree,” between some Melanesian tribe and its totem (bear, god), because we spontaneously (i.e., by virtue of historical, ideological determinations) imagine the world in substitute, paradigmatic, analogical terms, and not in serial, associative, homological—in short, poetic—terms. Fourier has this second imagination; for him, the basis of meaning is not substitution, equivalence, but the proportional series; just as the signifier /pear tree/ or the signifier *bear* is *relatively* motivated if taken in the series *pear tree—plum tree—apple tree* or in the series *bear—dog—tiger*, so Fourierist hieroglyphics, detached from any univocity, accede to language, i.e., to a system both conventional and reasonable. The hieroglyphic, in fact, implies a complete theory of meaning (whereas only too often, relying on the presence of the dictionary, we reduce meaning to a substitution): hieroglyphics, says Fourier, can be explained in three ways: (1) *by contrast* (beehive/wasp’s nest, elephant/rhinoceros): this is the

paradigm: the beehive is *marked* with productivity, a characteristic absent in the wasp's nest; the elephant is marked with lengthy defenses, a trait reduced to a short horn in the rhinoceros; (2) *by alliance* (the dog and the sheep, the pig and the truffle, the donkey and the thistle): this is the syntagm, metonymy: these elements usually go together; (3) lastly, *by progression* (branches: giraffe, stag, buck, roebuck, reindeer, etc.): this, foreign to linguistic classification, is the *series*, a kind of extended paradigm, consisting of differences and proximities, out of which Fourier creates the very principle of societal organization, which basically consists in putting in a phalanstery contrasting groups of individuals, each group linked by an affinity: for example, the sectine of Flowerlets, amateurs of small, varied flowers, contrasted to but coexisting with the Rosist sectine: it might be said that the series is an actualized, syntagmatized paradigm, by virtue of the number of its terms, not only *livable* (whereas the semantic paradigm is subject to the law of rival, inextinguishable opposites, which cannot cohabit), but even *felicitous*. Progression (the series) is undoubtedly what Fourier adds to meaning (as linguists describe it for us), and consequently, what frustrates its arbitrary nature. Why, for example, in Association, is the giraffe the hieroglyph for Truth (I, 286)? A farfetched notion and assuredly unjustifiable if we try, desperately, to discover some affinitive or even contrasting trait shared by Truth and this huge mammiferous ungulant. The explanation is that the giraffe is caught up in a system of homologies: Association having the beaver as its practical hieroglyph (because of its associative and constructive abilities) and the peacock as its visual hieroglyph (because of the spread of its nuances), we need, across from but yet in the same series, that of animals, a properly unfunctional element, a kind of neuter, a zero degree of zoological symbolism: this is the giraffe, as useless as the Truth is in Civilization; whence a counter-giraffe (complex term of contrast): this is

the Reindeer, from which we derive every imaginable service (in the societary order there will even be a new animal created, even more ecumenical than the Reindeer: the Anti-Giraffe).

So replaced in the history of the sign, the Fourierist construction posits the rights of a baroque semantics, i.e., open to the proliferation of the signifier, infinite and yet structured.

Liberal?

The combination of differences implies the respecting of the individuation of each term: there is no attempt to redress, to correct, to annul taste, whatever it may be (however “bizarre” it may be); quite the contrary, it is affirmed, it is emphasized, it is recognized, it is legalized, it is reinforced by associating everyone who wishes to indulge it: taste being thus incorporated, it is allowed to act in opposition to other tastes at once affinitive and different: a competitive game (of intrigue, but *coded*) is initiated between the amateurs of bergamot pears and the amateurs of butter pears: to the satisfaction of a simple taste (a liking for pears) is then added the exercise of other, formal, combinative passions: for example, *cabalistics*, or the passion for intrigues, and *butterfly*, if there are unstable Harmonians who take pleasure in switching from the bergamot pear to the butter pear.

From this semantic construction of the world it follows that, in Fourier’s eyes, “association” is not a “humanist” principle: it is not a matter of bringing together everyone with the same mania (“co-maniacs”) so that they can be comfortable together and can enchant each other by narcissistically gazing at one another; on the contrary, it is a matter of associating to combine, to contrast. The Fourierist coexistence of passions is not based on a liberal principle. There is no noble demand to “understand,” to “admit” the passions of others (or to ignore them, indeed). The goal of Harmony

is neither to further the conflict (by associating through similitude), nor to reduce it (by sublimating, sweetening, or normalizing the passions), nor yet to transcend it (by “understanding” the other person), but to exploit it for the greatest pleasure of all and without hindrance to anyone. How? By playing at it: by making a text of the conflictual.

Passions

Passion (character, taste, mania) is the irreducible unity of the Fourierist combinative, the absolute grapheme of the utopian text. Passion is *natural* (nothing to be corrected about it, unless to produce a *contra-naturam*, which is what occurs in Civilization). Passion is *clean* (its being is pure, strong, shapely: only Civilized philosophy advises flaccid, apathetic passions, controls, and compromises). Passion is *happy* (“Happiness . . . consists in having many passions and ample means to satisfy them,” I, 92).

Passion is not the idealized form of feeling, mania is not the monstrous form of passion. Mania (and even whim) is the very being of passion, the unit from which Attraction (attractive and attracting) is determined. Passion is neither deformable, nor transformable, nor reducible, nor measurable, nor substitutable: it is not a force, it is a number: there can be neither decomposition nor amalgamation of this happy, frank, natural monad, but only combination, up to the reunion of the *integral soul*, the trans-individual body of 1,620 characters.

The Tree of Happiness

The passions (810 for each sex) spring, like the branches of a tree (the classifier’s fetish tree) from three main trunks: *lustful-ness*, which includes the passions of feeling (one for each of the five senses), *group-ness* (four basic passions: honor, friendship, love, and family), and *serial-ness* (three distributive passions). The entire combinative stems from

they state how to conciliate, balance, set in motion, and permit the transformation of the other passions, each of which would be nugatory in isolation, into a series of "brilliant and countless combinations." These rules of the game (these formal, distributive passions) are precisely the ones society rejects: they produce (the very sign of their excellence) "the characters accused of corruption, called libertines, profligates, etc.": as in Sade, it is syntax and syntax alone that produces the supreme immorality.

Thus the twelve radical passions (like the twelve notes in the scale). Naturally, there is a thirteenth (every good classifier knows he must have a supernumber in his chart and that he must make adjustments for the outcome of his system), which is the very trunk of the tree of passions: Unity-ness (or Harmonism). Unity-ness is the passion for unity, "the individual's tendency to reconcile his happiness with that of everything around him, and with every human type"; this supplementary passion produces the Originals, people who appear to be ill at ease in this world and who cannot accommodate themselves to the ways of Civilization; it is thus the passion of Fourier himself. Unity-ness is in no way a moral, recommendable passion (*love each other, unite with each other*), since the societal unit is a combinative, a structural game of differences; Unity-ness is in direct contrast to simplism, the vice of the Civilized spirit, "the use of the mind without the marvelous, or of the marvelous without the mind"; simplism "made Newton miss out on the discovery of the system of nature and Bonaparte on the conquest of the world." Simplism (or totalitarianism, or monologism) would today be either the censure of Need or the censure of Desire; which, in Harmony (in Utopia), would be answered by the combined science of one and the other.

Numbers

Fourier's authority, the Reference, the Citation, the Science, the Anterior Discourse that enables him to speak and

to have personal authority concerning the “carelessness of 25 learned centuries that failed to conceive of it,” is *calculation* (as for us today it is formalization). This calculation need not be extensive or complicated: it is a *petty calculation*. Why petty? Because although important (the happiness of mankind depends upon it), this calculation is simple. Further, pettiness includes the notion of a certain affectionate complacency: Fourier’s petty calculation is the simple lever that opens up the fantasmagory of adorable detail.

Everything occurs as though Fourier were searching for the very notion of detail, as though he had found it in a numeration or frantic subdivision of every object that came into his mind, as though this object instantly released in him a number or a classification: it is like a conditioned reflex that comes into play apropos a whole crazy total: “In Rome in the time of Varro there were 278 contradictory opinions concerning true happiness.” A question of illicit liaisons (in Civilization)? They exist for Fourier only if he enumerates them: “During the twelve years of bachelorhood, man forms on the average 12 liaisons of illicit love, around 6 of fornication and 6 adulterous, etc.” Everything is a pretext for numbering, from the age of the world (80,000 years) to the number of characters in it (1,620).

The Fourierist number is not rounded off, and in fact this is what gives it its insanity (a minor sociological problem: why does our society consider a decimal number “normal” and an intradecimal number “irrational”? At what point does normality occur?). This insanity is often justified by the even more insane reasons Fourier gives in denying the arbitrary constants in his accounts, or, which is even crazier still, displaces this arbitrary by justifying not the number given, but the standard for it: the height of societary man will be 84 thumbs or 7 feet; why? we will never know, but the unit of measurement is pompously justified: “I am not being arbitrary in indicating the foot of the King of Paris as a natural measurement; it has this property because it is equal to the

32nd part of the water level in suction pumps” (here we find that sudden twisting of the syntagm, the anacoluthon, the audacious metonymy that makes Fourier’s “charm”: in the space of a few words, we have suction pumps mingled with the height of societary man). The number exalts, it is an operator of glory, as is the triangular number of the Trinity in the Jesuit mode, not because it enlarges (which would destroy the fascination with detail), but because it demultiplies: “Consequently, if we divide by 810 the number of 36 million which the population of France has attained, we will find that in this Empire there exist 45,000 individuals capable of equaling Homer, 45,000 capable of equaling Demosthenes, etc.” Fourier is like a child (or an adult: the author of these lines, never having studied mathematics, has been very late in experiencing this feeling) discovering with enchantment the exorbitant power of combinatory analysis or geometrical progression. In the end, the number itself is not needed for this exaltation; one need only subdivide a class in order triumphantly to achieve this paradox: detail (literally: *minutia*) magnifies, like joy. It is a fury of expansion, of possession, and, in a word, of orgasm, by number, by classification: scarcely does an object appear than Fourier taxinomizes (we are tempted to say: sodomizes) it: is the husband unhappy in Civilized marriage? It is *immediately* for eight reasons (risk of unhappiness, expense, vigilance, monotony, sterility, widowhood, union, ignorance of his wife’s infidelity). Does the word “harem” arise *currente calamo* into the sentence? *Immediately*, there are three classes of odalisks: honest women, petites bourgeoises, and courtesans. What happens to women over 18 years of age in Harmony? nothing, save to be *classified*: *Wives* (themselves subdivided into *constant*, *doubtful*, and *unfaithful*), *Misses* or *Demi-dames* (they change protectors, but successively, having only one at a time), and *Galantes* (both further subdivided); for both terms in the series, two taxinomic embellishments: *Damsels*

and *Independents*. Wealth? there are not only Rich and Poor, there are: the poor, those who scrape by, those who have just enough, the comfortable, and the rich. Of course, for anyone with the contrary mania, tolerant neither of number nor of classification nor of system (numerous in Civilization, jealous of “spontaneity,” of “life,” of “imagination,” etc.), the Fourierist Harmony would be hell itself: at thesis meals (contest meals), every course would have two labels, written in large letters, visible from afar and set on pivots, in both directions, “so that one can be read from across the table and the other the length of the table” (the present author has experienced a minor hell of this sort—but the system came from a French brain: in the American college where he took his meals, in order that the students might converse profitably while eating, and that they might benefit equally from the professor’s lively discourse, each diner was supposed to advance one place at each meal, moving closer to the professorial sun, “in a clockwise direction,” as the rule stated; there is little need to say that no “conversation” resulted from this astral movement).

Perhaps the *imagination of detail* is what specifically defines Utopia (opposed to political science); this would be logical, since detail is fantasmatic and thereby achieves the very pleasure of Desire. In Fourier, the number is rarely statistical (designed to assert averages, probabilities); it is, through the apparent finesse of its precision, essentially quantitative. Nuance, the game being stalked in this taxinomic hunting expedition, is a guarantee of pleasure (of fulfillment), since it determines a *just* combinative (knowing with whom to group ourselves in order to achieve complementarity with our own differences). Harmony must thus admit the operators of nuances, just as a tapestry workshop has specialists who are detailed to knot the threads. These nuance makers are: either operations (in Fourierist erotics, the “simple salute” is a preambular bacchanalia, a scrimmage enabling

the partners to test each other before making a choice; during it, "trial caresses or reconnoiterings of the terrain" are practiced; this takes about eight minutes), or they are agents: there are: either "confessors" (these confessors do not hear any Fault: they "psychoanalyze" in order to elicit sympathies, often hidden by the subjects' appearance and ignorance: they are the decipherers of complementary nuances) or "dissolvents" (dissolvents, introjected into a group that has not yet found its just combinative, its "harmony," produce tremendous effects on it: they undo erroneous couplings by revealing to each his passions, they are transferers, mutators: thus lesbians and pederasts, who, thrown into the scrimmage, first accost the "champions of their own ilk," "recognize their own kind and sunder a good number of couples whom chance had united").

Nuance, the acme of number and of classification, has the *integral soul* as its total field, a human space defined by its amplitude, since it is the combinative dimension within which meaning is possible; no man is self-sufficient, no one his own integral soul: we need 810 characters of both sexes, or 1,620, to which are added the omnititles (the complex degree of contrasts) and the infinitesimal nuances of passion. The integral soul, a tapestry in which each nuance finds utterance, is the great sentence being sung by the universe: it is, in sum, the Language of which each of us is but a word. The Language is immortal: "At the era of the planet's death, its great soul, and consequently ours, inherent in it, will pass on to another, new sphere, to a planet which will be implaned, concentrated, saturated . . ."

The Nectarine

In any classification of Fourier, there is always a portion that is reserved. This portion has various names: passage, composite, transition, neuter, triviality, ambiguity (we might call it: *supplement*); naturally, it has a number: it is the $\frac{1}{8}$

cultation: the neuter principle is controlled by mathematics, the pure language of the combinative, of the composed, the very badge of the *game*.

There are ambiguities in every series: the sensitive, the bat, the flying fish, the amphibians, the zoophytes, sapphism, pederasty, incest, Chinese society (half barbaric, half civilized, with harems and courts of law and etiquette), lime (fire and water), the nervous system (body and soul), twilights, coffee (ignominiously ignored at Mocha for 4,000 years, then suddenly the subject of a mercantile craze, passing from abjection to the highest rank), children (the third passionate sex, neither men nor women). Transition (mixed, Ambiguous, Neuter) is everything that is contrary duplicity, junction of extremes, and hence it takes as its emblematic form the ellipse, which has a double focus.

In Harmony, Transitions have a beneficent role; for example, they prevent monotony in love, despotism in politics: the distributive passions (composite, cabalistic, and butterfly) have a transitional role (they "mesh," ensure changes of "objects"); Fourier always reasoned contrariwise, what is beneficent in Harmony necessarily proceeds from what is discredited or rejected in Civilization: thus Transitions are "trivialities," ignored by civilized scholars as unworthy subjects: the bat, the albino, ugly ambiguous race, the taste for feathered fowl. The prime example of Trivial Transition is Death: transition ascending between Harmonian life and the happiness of the other life (sensual happiness), it "will shed all its odiousness when philosophy deigns to consent to study the transitions it proscribes as trivial." Everything rejected in Civilization, from pederasty to Death, has in Harmony a value that is eminent (but not pre-eminent: nothing dominates anything else, everything combines, meshes, alternates, revolves). This functional *justness* (this *justice*) is ensured by the $\frac{1}{8}$ error. Thus, the *Neuter* is in opposition to the *Median*; the latter is a quantitative, not a structural, notion;

it is the amount of the oppression to which the large number subjects the small number; caught in a statistical calculation, the intermediate swells up and engulfs the system (thus the *middle class*): the neuter, on the other hand, is a purely qualitative, structural notion; it is what *confuses* meaning, the norm, normality. To enjoy the *neuter* is perforce to be disgusted by the *average*.

System/Systematics

“. . . that the real content of these systems is hardly to be found in their systematic form is best proved by the orthodox Fourierists . . . who, despite their orthodoxy, are the exact antipodes of Fourier: doctrinaire bourgeois.”

Marx and Engels, *German Ideology*

Fourier perhaps enables us to restate the following opposition (which we lately stated by distinguishing the novelistic from the novel, poetry from the poem, the essay from the dissertation, the writing from the style, production from the product, structuration from the structure¹⁴): the *system* is a body of doctrine within which the elements (principles, facts, consequences) develop logically, i.e., from the point of view of the discourse, rhetorically. The system being a closed (or monosemic) one, it is always theological, dogmatic; it is nourished by illusions: an illusion of transparency (the language employed to express it is purportedly purely instrumental, it is not a writing) and an illusion of reality (the goal of the system is to be *applied*, i.e., that it leave the language in order to found a reality that is incorrectly defined as the exteriority of language); it is a strictly paranoid insanity whose path of transmission is insistence, repetition, catechism, orthodoxy. Fourier's work does not constitute a *system*; only when we have tried to “realize” this work (in phalansteries) has it become, retrospectively, a “system” doomed to instant

¹⁴ *S/Z* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1974), p. 5.

fiasco; system, in the terminology of Marx and Engels, is the “systematic form,” i.e., pure ideology, ideological reflection; *systematics* is the play of the system; it is language that is open, infinite, free from any referential illusion (pretension); its mode of appearance, its constituency, is not “development” but pulverization, dissemination (the gold dust of the signifier); it is a discourse without “object” (it only speaks of a thing obliquely, by approaching it indirectly: thus Civilization in Fourier) and without “subject” (in writing, the author does not allow himself to be involved in the imaginary subject, for he “performs” his enunciatory role in such a manner that we cannot decide whether it is serious or parody). It is a vast madness which does not end, but which permutates. In contrast to the system, monological, systematics is dialogical (it is the operation of ambiguities, it does not suffer contradictions); it is a writing, it has the latter’s eternity (the perpetual permutation of meanings throughout History); systematics is not concerned with application (save as purist imagining, a theater of the discourse), but with transmission, (significant) circulation; further, it is transmittable only on condition it is *deformed* (by the reader); in the terminology of Marx and Engels, systematics would be the *real contents* (of Fourier). Here, we are not explaining Fourier’s system (that portion of his systematics that plays with the system in an image-making way), we are talking solely about the several sites in his discourse that belong to systematics.

(Fourier puts the system to flight—cuts it adrift—by two operations: first, by incessantly delaying the definitive exposé until later: the doctrine is simultaneously highhanded and dilatory; next, by inscribing the system in the systematics, as dubious parody, shadow, game. For example, Fourier attacks the civilized [repressive] “system,” he calls for an integral freedom [of tastes, passions, manias, whims]; thus, we would expect a spontaneistic philosophy, but we get quite the

opposite: a wild system, whose very excess, whose fantastic tension, goes beyond system and attains systematics, i.e., writing: liberty is never the opposite of order, it is *order paragrammatized*: the writing must simultaneously mobilize an image and its opposite.)

The Party

What is a “party”? (1) *a partitioning*, isolating one group from another, (2) an orgy, or *partouze*, as we say in French, wherein the participants are linked erotically, and (3) a hand, or *partie*, the regulated moment in a game, a collective diversion. In Sade, in Fourier, the party, the highest form of societary or Sadian happiness, has this threefold character: it is a worldly ceremony, an erotic practice, a social act.

Fourierist life is one immense party. At three-thirty in the morning on the summer solstice (little sleep is needed in Harmony), societary man is ready for the world: engaged in a succession of “roles” (each one being the naked affirmation of a passion) and subject to the combinative (meshing) rules of these roles: this very exactly is the definition of mundanity, which functions like a language: the mundane man is someone who spends his time *citing* (and in *weaving* what he cites). The citations Fourier employs in blissfully describing the worldly life of societary man are drawn paradoxically (paragrammatically) from the repressive lexicons of the Civilized regime: the Church, State, Army, Stock Exchange, Salons, the penitentiary colony, and Scouting furnish the Fourierist party with its most felicitous images.¹⁵

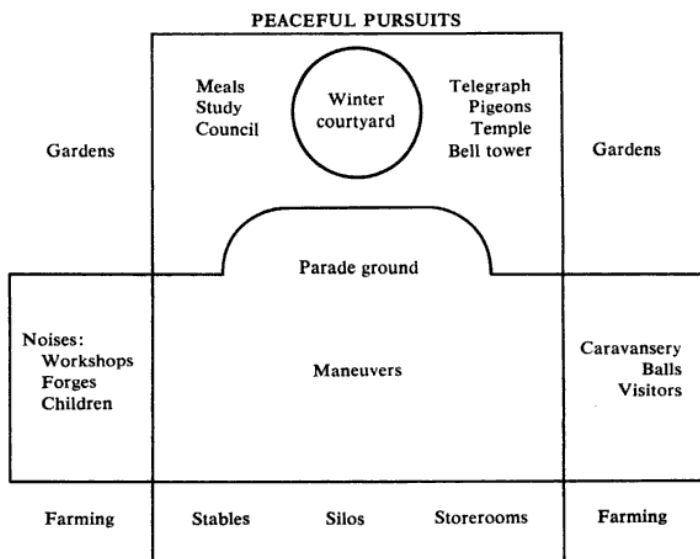
¹⁵ Innumerable locutions, such as: “Saints and Patrons beatified and canonized in the council of the Spheric Hierarchy.” “Every pivotal sin is liable to a sevenfold reparation” (VII, 191)—true, that this reparation is hardly penitential, consisting as it does of making love seven times with seven different people. “The Official Journal of Gastronomonic Transactions of the Army of the Euphrates” (VII, 378), etc.

All mundanity is dissociative: it is a matter of isolating oneself in order to retreat and to trace out the area within which the rules of the game can function. The Fourierist party has two traditional enclosures, that of time and that of place.

The topography of the phalanstery traces an original site which is broadly that of palaces, monasteries, manors, and great blocks of buildings in which are mingled an organization of the building and an organization of territory, so that (a very modern viewpoint) architecture and urbanism reciprocally withdraw in favor of an over-all science of human space, the primary characteristic of which is no longer protection, but movement: the phalanstery is a retreat within which one moves (however, trips are taken outside the phalanstery: great mass excursions, ambulatory "parties"). Obviously, this space is functionalized, as shown in the following reconstruction (very approximate, since Fourierist discourse, like all writing, is irreducible).

The greatest concern of this organization is communication. Like the adolescent groups who live together during their summer vacations with constant pleasure and regretfully return home in the evenings, the societaries have only a temporary place for undressing and sleeping, warmed only by a brazier. In contrast, Fourier describes with great predilection and insistence the covered, heated, ventilated galleries, sanded basements, and corridors raised on columns that connect the palaces or manors of neighboring Tribes. A private place is allowed solely for lovemaking, and even this is only so that the unions made during the bacchanalias, get-togethers, or meetings for the purpose of selecting a companion, can be consummated—or "sealed."

Corresponding to topographical delimitation is this apparatus for temporal enclosure called *timing*; since a passion (for investments, for objects) must be changed every two hours, the optimal time is a divided time (the function of *timing* is to demultiply duration, to superproduce time and



thereby to augment life power: "The day will never be long enough for the intrigues and merry reunions produced by the new order": we might be listening to an adolescent who, on vacation, has discovered his "group"); for example, in the combined Order there are five meals (at 5 A.M., the matutinal or "eye opener," at 8 A.M., lunch, dinner at 1, snack at 6, and supper at 9), and two collations (at 10 and 4): reminiscent of the schedule in an old-fashioned sanatorium. Harmonian man—physiologically regenerated by a diet of happiness—sleeps only from 11 in the evening to 3:30 in the morning; he never makes love at night, a detestable Civilized habit.

Love (erotic happiness, including the sentimental *eros*) is the main business of the long Harmonian day: "In Harmony, where no one is poor and where everyone is acceptable for lovemaking until a very advanced age, everyone devotes

a set part of the day to this passion and love thus becomes a principal business: it has its code, its tribunals [we already know that the penalties consist in new loves], its court, and its institutions." Like the Sadian *eros*, Fourier's is a classifier, a distributor: the population is divided into amorous classes. In Sade, there are storytellers, fuckers, etc.; in Fourier there are troops of Vestals, Youths and Favorites of both sexes, Genitors, etc. From Sade to Fourier, only the *ethos* of the discourse changes: here jubilant, there euphoric. For the erotic fantasy remains the same; it is that of *availability*: that every love demand *at once* find a subject-object to be *at its disposal*, either by constraint or by association; this is the province of the ideal orgy, or in French, *partouze*, a fantastic site, contra-civilized, where no one refuses himself to anyone, the purpose not being to multiply partners (not a quantitative problem!) but to abolish the wound of denial; the abundance of erotic material, precisely because it is a matter of Desire and not of Need, is not intended to constitute a "consumer society" of love, but, paradox, truly utopian scandal, to make Desire function in its contradiction, namely: to fulfill *perpetually* (*perpetually* meaning simultaneously *always* and *never* fulfilled; or: *never and always*: that depends on the degree of enthusiasm or bitterness in which the fantasy is concluded). This is the sense of the supreme amorous institution of Fourierist society: the Angelicate (another ecclesiastical citation): in Harmony, the Angelicate is this handsome couple who, through "philanthropy," properly give themselves to any man or woman desiring them (including the deformed). The Angelicate has an additional function, not philanthropic but mediatory: it *conducts* desire: as though, left on his own, every man were incapable of knowing whom to desire, as though he were blind, powerless to invent his desire, as though it were always up to others to show us *where the desirable is* (clearly not the principal function of so-called erotic representations in mass culture: conduction, not substitution); the Angelic couple is the apex of the

amorous triangle: it is the vanishing point without which there can be no erotic *perspective*.¹⁶

The party, a ritual common in Sade and in Fourier, has as its “proof” a fact of the discourse which is to be found in both: the amorous practice cannot be uttered save in the form of a “scene,” a “scenario,” a “tableau vivant” (a strictly fantasmatic disposition): the Sadian “séances” which often even have a “setting”: gardens, woods, colored veils, garlands of flowers, in Fourier the Cnidian novel. In fact, they are part of the very force of fantasy, of the destructive power it has over cultural models by using them *disrespectfully*, of “representing” the erotic scene in the most insipid colors and with the “proper” tone of petit-bourgeois art: Sade’s most shocking scenes, Fourier’s pro-sapphic ravings, occur in a Folies-Bergère setting: a carnival-like conjunction of transgression and opera, the sober site of mad acts, where the *subject is swallowed up in its culture*, a decision that simultaneously sweeps away art and sex, denies transgression itself any gravity, prohibits its ritualization (by providing for widespread prostitution the stage setting of *The Pearl Fishers*), the headlong flight of the signified across the shifting of aesthetics or sex, which ordinary language tries to achieve in its fashion when it speaks (in French) of *ballets roses* and *ballets bleus* (“performances” by girls [pink] or boys [blue] “danced” before older men).

Compotes

An Eastern book says there is no better remedy for thirst than a little cold compote, well sweetened, followed by a few swallows of cool water. Fourier would have been doubly

¹⁶ Can a more Sadian classification be imagined than the following: the Angelicate is organized along three degrees of novitiate: (1) *cherubic* (the postulant must sacrifice an entire day to each member of the venerable choir); (2) *seraphic* (the sacrifice lasts several days and is offered to both sexes); (3) *sayidic* (the sacrifice is offered up to a chorus of patriarchs: probably even older!).