

THE ART OF SLOGANS (THE PERFORMATIVE PART)

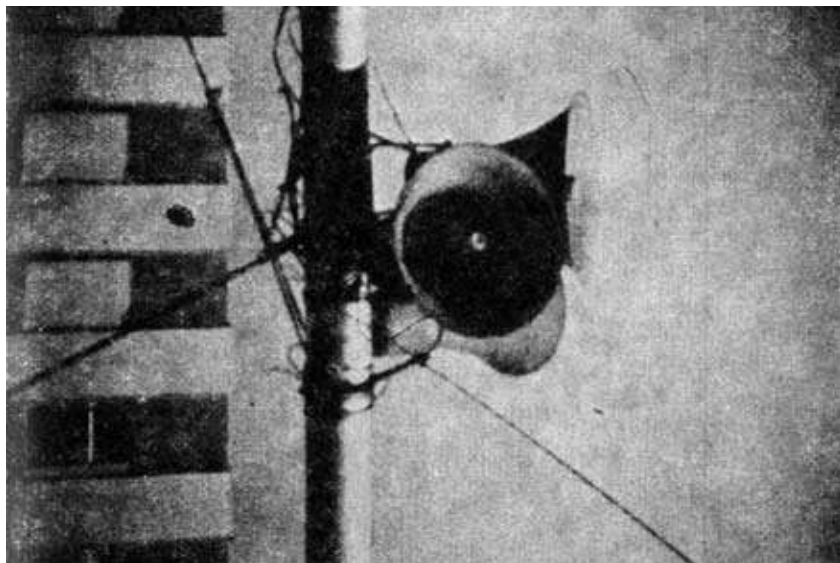
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1. SLOGANS ACCORDING TO DUŠAN MAKAVEJEV

*Art cannot be politically kicked around and whoever tries to do it will break his legs.
And those who did broke their legs.*

Dušan Makavejev, quoted by Bora Ćosić in *Sodoma i Gomora* (Sodom and Gomorrah), 1984

Slogans, explicit or implicit, are probably the most frequent form of expression that Dušan Makavejev uses in his films. They are so full of all kinds of statements, declarations, directives, blurts, and other types of performative speech acts, that one may well argue that slogans constitute both the form and content of Makavejev's films. To begin, this proliferation of slogans contains a special association to "socialism" usually connected with the language of bureaucratic decrees. Typically, this comes as a part of a general belief that slogans, as a product of collective ideologies (with the socialist ideology as the most enduring one), stand in direct opposition to ordinary human communication. To penetrate into the historiography of this line of reception, we would have to deconstruct the entire apparatus of Cold War ideological discourse, which is still with us. But for now, it will suffice to say that these non-communicative aspects of slogans constitute the elements of the *ideology* of Makavejev's slogans. It is not an exaggeration to claim that Makavejev's slogans have a formally important role in suturing his film work. It is this *suturing* effect of slogans that I want to address here. It is clear that this effect has a very ideological function (for example, that of unifying contradictory elements into a single consistent narrative), but at the same time, the role of slogans in this suturing process grounds the tension that is elementary in producing the conditions that are necessary for any political performance, the ultimate goal of which is collective emancipation. In this text I will try to insist on an even further intensification of this political performance, by looking at possibilities of un-suturing slogans. To lay out the complex nature of slogans, we must begin by addressing their formal (in our case even epistemic) nature. My position here is that in socialist theory and practice (historical materialism), slogans possess all the elements necessary for constituting a critical theory of language and action, which will consequently help us to understand the role of art and politics in this theorisation. To get to this formal or theoretical aspect of slogans, one must begin by criticising their narrow or ideological elements, or, more precisely, the practical and everyday use of slogans, which is a fashionable critical manoeuvre in many critiques of socialist theory and practice.



"Loudspeakers, which only transmit decrees, orders, and resolutions", in *Enver Hadžina Albanija* [Enver Hoxha's Albania], Tanjug news agency, Belgrade, 1981.

Probably the most extreme version of this anti-slogan approach in criticising real-socialist regimes is commonly applied in the case of the Socialist Republic of Albania. According to this interpretation, communication among ordinary men and women was completely imbued with abstract and alienated slogans, which in the socialist Albania penetrated every pore of one's living being. Usually, Albanian communism is described as a place of decrees, slogans, and orders, which continuously harassed both the souls and bodies of its population. It is hardly surprising, then, that the title of the first successful auteur or independent film made in the post-socialist Albania was *Slogans*. Directed by Gjergj Xhuvani in 2001, *Slogans* tells the story of the good-hearted people of Albania who happily submit to the foreign element of socialism (the slogans) without acknowledging the supposed meanings of these condensed thoughts. It is a familiar story of misunderstanding, so dear to the intellectual atmosphere of post-socialist intellectuals, which ends with a real (tragic?) story of human relations interwoven with endless comedy situations. Regarding not only Albania but the entire former Eastern Bloc in general, the accommodation of its socialist past in today's cinematic and artistic imagery is based on the following anti-slogan ideology/assumption: slogans are far from everyday reality, they are alienated utterances that belong in the linguistic domain of bureaucracy and ideology. The constant reproduction of this same old story of Cold War ideology is common to all artistic interpretations of the socialist past, which is now making, due to the independent institutional context (multi-capital co-productions, independent film festivals, etc.), an even more subtle and successful impact on "democratic" audiences.¹

Already in the early 1960s, Makavejev was writing about this issue in relation to filming or documenting the ultimate practice of socialist collectivism known as the youth work action (*radna akcija*):

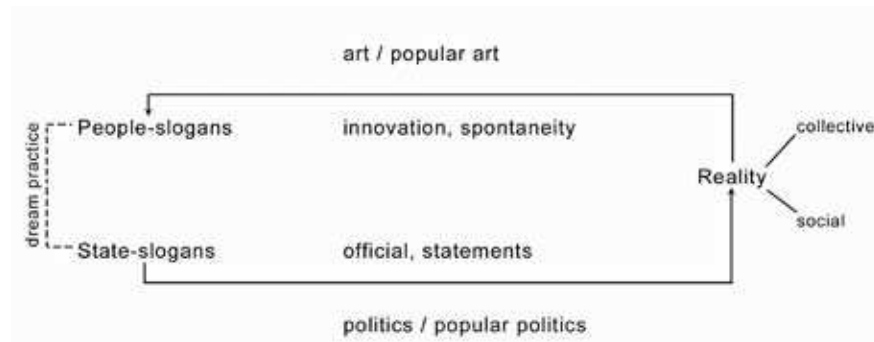
It is impossible to make documentary films about youth work actions without including the slogans. I decided, then, *not to escape the slogans*. I had to approach them, to hear them, and to understand their inner meaning. This is the task that we [i.e., film makers] must undertake now in a more general fashion. (Makavejev 1965, 36)

Referring especially to slogans chanted in collective actions such as youth work actions, Makavejev was underscoring here the ambivalent nature of these proclamations as manifestations of sensual as well as ironic gestures. Because of this ambivalent nature of slogans used in socialist practice, Makavejev proposed a new slogan, a slogan for a new cultural policy of the new socialist Yugoslavia: a new work duty - to read the writings of comrade Oskar Davičo!

As a pre-war surrealist, a prominent member of the National Liberation Movement during the war, and an important writer, editor, and cultural-policy maker after the war, Davičo was an interesting choice. This slogan, which also refers to the historical ambivalences of Davičo's writings, or to the much acclaimed ambivalence of Serbian surrealist writings between sensuousness, irrationality, political commitment, playfulness, and concrete antagonisms, constitutes the most serious textual influence on Makavejev's artistic work. In a few words it is the contradiction of a situation that induces the necessity of uttering a slogan on ambivalence. According to Makavejev, the reality (or the index of various social realities) of the Socialist Yugoslavia was contradictory. It is a reality that he describes as an "everyday Dadaism" (Makavejev 1965, 53) and a "spontaneous Dada of modern urban folklore" (Makavejev 1965, 54). Reminding us of Gramsci's optimistic conceptions of the raw, materialist, contradictory, and rebellious common sense of the proletariat, he also provides many examples of this strange Dadaist reality, drawing them mostly from the "transitional" social realm of mass-media popular (or folk) culture. As I tried to show elsewhere (Boynik 2011, 12-15), Makavejev's worldview of Yugoslav socialism was neither naïve nor idealist; rather, he developed a very complex position on the issue of cultural policy, which in turn informed his film-making in general. Here one must briefly note that for Makavejev there were always two realities in the Socialist Yugoslavia: the one based on the official representation of the State and the other, which can be described as the unofficial or unorthodox reality of the People. Accordingly, these two worlds developed their own respective collections of slogans. At this point we can already recognise that Makavejev was somehow aware, if only intuitively, that slogans and language have

¹ In the sleeve notes to his LP *Albanian Summer* (performed by Jan Steele and Janet Sherbourne, Practical Music No. 2, 1984), Dave Smith, an English avant-garde composer who worked with Cornelius Cardew, Gavin Byars, and Christian Wolff, among others, describes the situation in Albania as one of a "real material, social and cultural progress", in which the "communist government enjoys an almost unanimous support from its people". He also cites the kinds of music he was able to hear on the radio in Albania during 1973 - folk music, compositions, "light" music, and revolutionary songs - no mention of Tanjug's nightmarish Orwellian dystopic loudspeakers constantly blaring the same slogans and orders.

very determined structural causalities. The antagonisms of these two distinct worlds of slogans were the driving force of Yugoslavia's contradictions. Makavejev's decision not to escape the slogans initially referred to the slogans of the People, about which "the newspapers were not writing much" (Makavejev 1965, 34), not to the ubiquitous slogans of the State. Examples of these People's slogans vary from the sensuous (such as "Long live Dara the Nigger" painted by a Belgrade secondary-school youth-work-action brigade in letters as big as those used in the "Everybody to the polling stations" official slogan) and spontaneous (such as "A lončići a lončići u red u red u red bum bum aaaaaa!" / "And pots and pots into the line into the line boom boom aaaaaah", chanted by the Osijek brigade) to surrealist (such as the five-foot-tall lower case letter "a" painted in one of the barracks of a youth camp). Their common characteristics include rhyming, their potential for different variables and language distortions, their grounding in primitive expressions and frequent connotations of music and various sounds. Makavejev describes the complex structure of the People's slogans as an "interest toward things fresh, alive, and strange", an interest of an "ordinary character", the peculiar function of which is the "demystification of all possible slogans" (Makavejev 1965, 37). A digression must be made here, to consider the emancipatory possibilities of these two dichotomous types of slogans. Makavejev does not oppose the State slogans (such as "Long live comrade Tito" or "Long live Brotherhood and Unity") to the People's slogans as the utterances of a supposedly free creative individuality or expressions of an emancipated self-realisation. Both kinds of slogans are *collective* and social; the key difference between them concerns their respective geneses. In other words, the State slogans were conceived behind closed doors, under the strict censorship of the Party; with their elitism, they were in direct contrast to the People's slogans, which were spontaneous, direct, down-to-earth, and considerably more imaginative.² This imaginative moment, which Makavejev in another text describes as *Dream-Practice*, constitutes the real emancipatory potential of the People's slogans. It is the collective spontaneous pragmatic language of a new reality that is the stuff of these slogans, a reality that could only be verbalised through slogans: "we live in a reality that is more innovative than dreams... we are able to invite, as Mayakovski did, the sun for tea!" (Makavejev 1965, 29). Considering that this reality is a product of innovative labour of previous generations, now reified as the State, Makavejev quotes the most oxymoronic and paradoxical slogan, inscribed by the side of Highway 60: "Let us overcome our fathers so we can be their equals!" (Makavejev 1965, 29)



One can glean from the above that the world of slogans comprised two separate configurations, the People's slogans and the State slogans, which never came together, but were connected through the nature of their shared "reality", which carried social and collective attributes. These different slogans related to this reality in different ways. It is obvious that State slogans, with their force, decrees, and statements, participated in the construction of this reality (e.g., the participation of the communists in the National Liberation Struggle was a force that generated a different, socialist Yugoslavia), which in turn shaped the conditions for the production of the People's slogans (e.g., collective youth work actions and policies of mass education are direct consequences of socialist politics). Apart from these conditions, the "reality" had no direct influence on the production of the People's slogans. These slogans were an independent and spontaneously generated set of practices that appeared to be an intrinsic part of the universal human condition called creativity. Makavejev's world of slogans can be divided into two fields: the political and the artistic. In that division, politics would be the field of State slogans and art the field of the People's slogans. Also, Makavejev distinguished between

² Stating that imaginative solutions in youth work actions are beneficial for the "social health" of youth, Makavejev apparently felt obliged to clarify, perhaps owing to the fascist connotations of the term, that he borrowed that statement from the American Marxist (?) Erich Fromm.

those two fields by their respective degrees of appropriation (for example, the popular politics of the partisans becomes reified and appropriated by Party "politics", just as the popular art of collective youth could be distorted in the form of pure or high "art"). Even if this subdivision may not be entirely arbitrary for our purposes, it will be better to concentrate here on the main division in this world, that between politics and art. It seems that those two fields, with their respective sets of actions (art = innovation, creativity; politics = force, decrees), are completely detached from each other. State slogans are not influenced or impacted by those of the People. Makavejev's proposal in his theory of slogans is most clearly manifested in his elaboration of the concept of "dream-practice", which offers a clue for the renewal of this alienated system. Or, in more straightforward terms, to add "innovation", "imagination", "spontaneity", and some "surrealism" to State slogans. It is related to a creative change in the language of politics; or, one could say to the making of "artful politics". Makavejev introduced the concept of dream-practice in order to stabilise the antagonisms between politics and art; this schema makes it clear that even if the role of "art" *post facto* concerns this refreshment of social circulation (the reason might be as banal and optimistically affirmative as "social health"), its existence matters the most in the constitution of this world of "creativity". This schema does not offer any clues as to how and under what conditions this dream-practice (which has an artistic character) occurs: in the end, it concerns a pure intrusion of artistic elements (such as spontaneity) into politics. Certain elements that are common to both worlds, such as the "collective", "social", and the "popular", are concepts that enable this intrusion, which, in the last instance, serves to enable the appropriation of politics by means of the elements of art.

2. THE STUTTERING SLOGANS OF DELEUZE AND GUATTARI

*O-o-o ... The Language of the Working Class is Uni-ve-er-er-sal;
Its Lyricism Lightens the Heart-art-art-tt
Art & Language, Singing Man, 1975*

Associating Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari with the problematic of "language" by means of slogans and suggesting that these slogans "stutter" might seem a very perverse provocation. Deleuze, who was very much against the "language turn" in philosophy, advanced, in fact, some rather strong claims regarding language, which directly related to his overall philosophical conceptions. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari open the chapter on the "Postulates of Linguistics" with the following assertion: the elementary unit of language – the statement – is the order-word (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 76). "Order-word", which is a translation of the French *mot d'ordre*, means "slogan". So, the elementary unit of language is the slogan. This assertion, itself a theory slogan or a transmission of a theoretical statement, is crucial in understanding the importance of the performative in speech. Only through this performative act may language, consisting of elements of slogans, leave its idealist associations behind and entirely move into the world of action. This was Deleuze and Guattari's starting point: to overcome the idea that language is all about information and communication (or what J. L. Austin called the "descriptive fallacy") and to reach a more subtle and at the same time pragmatic and political theory of language. In this world, language as "the set of all order-words, implicit presuppositions, or speech acts current in a language at a given moment" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 79) is by definition the transmission of collective utterances. Or, as Deleuze and Guattari explain, there is no such thing as individual enunciation. Rather, every enunciation has a "necessarily social character" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 80). In other words, every enunciation is a *collective assemblage*. If language boils down to the transmission of slogans, which are collective and social, as Makavejev tells us, then it makes ample sense to presuppose that language is based on collective enunciations. It is at various moments of declarations and statements, usually pregnant with a political character (such as 20 November 1923, the date cited in the title of the chapter on linguistics, when the authorities of Germany *declared* that the Reichsmark no longer constituted money in that country; according to Deleuze and Guattari, that declaration was an order-word with a political character) that we are constituted as subjects with no possibility of individual enunciation. Every utterance is collective; even "I love you", typically considered the most intimate and individual of utterances, is, according to Deleuze and Guattari, a declaration of a collective character. Or, to put it more interestingly, every declaration of love is a slogan. Here, we are still in the same field of Makavejev's slogans of youth, full of love and passion, which in their collective rejoicing make the most beautiful and sensuous of slogans, belonging to everyone. But this is only a seeming similarity; in their scheme, Deleuze and

Guattari have no need for extrapolation in order to collectivise slogans. By contrast, as we saw above, Makavejev did postulate the need for an extra – that is, political – field, the role of which was to ensure the conditions of production for spontaneous and amorous slogans. In Deleuze and Guattari – and this is the best part of their theory of order-words – the “amorous” situations, various arts, and “ordinary daily conversation” (or more simply the “ordinary” in Makavejev) are themselves political. The way we enunciate language, through its slogan elements (that is, collective and social), makes all our “cultural” acts necessarily political. At the same time, this suggestion implies that the art field of slogans needs no “reality” to materialise them in it; rather, their immanence is the sole factor or force of their materialisation.

In order to avoid any possible implications of “banality” in the arts (e.g., equating ordinary language with art-language), Deleuze and Guattari propose the concept of “incorporeal transformation”. It is this concept that makes things complicated; the concept of slogans as collective assemblages that guaranteed the materiality of language (and art) is now seemingly dematerialised in this new dynamic concept of incorporeal transformation. Notwithstanding their role in saving art from everyday banality, incorporeal transformations at the same time abolish the autonomy and stratification of the field of politics. Just as the declaration that the *Reichsmark* was no longer money made it no longer money, so the act of hijacking an airplane occurs when the hijackers declare that the plane has been hijacked; or, in Deleuze and Guattari’s explanation: “the transformation of the passengers into hostages, and of the plane-body into a prison-body, is an instantaneous incorporeal transformation” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 81). Given Deleuze and Guattari’s aversion toward metaphors, we must take these things seriously: an incorporeal transformation is a non-material effect with a concrete figuration. In this theory, slogans constitute the most powerful kind of utterances or declarations, which brings incorporeal transformation to its most effective. It is at this point that Deleuze and Guattari invoke Lenin’s theory of slogans, which, according to them, constitutes an incorporeal transformation of the new proletarian class. In his text *On Slogans*, which he wrote in 1917 whilst hiding somewhere in Finland, Lenin asserted that every slogan had its time of validity. For example, the slogan “All Power to the Soviets” was valid only from 27 February to 4 July 1917. Deleuze and Guattari take this as an account of the ultimately pragmatic implications of utterances (order-words), which imply constant variables and different configurations. In more direct terms, they argue that slogans are declarations with temporal political effectuality valid only in appropriate conditions. But herein lies the problem: if slogans are the elementary units of language and if, reciprocally, language is the transmission of slogans, then how may one distinguish ordinary language from political language, which initiates transformations in the existing ordinary structure? Since Deleuze and Guattari make no distinction between “just” slogans and those that are more than “just” slogans, one may claim that order-words, slogans, and declarations are those elements that secure the omnipresence of politics by means of their ultimate pragmatism. As a consequence of this, any politics that becomes present everywhere ends up denying/annihilating itself. In this theory, there is no place for an exclusive or distinct political field; rather, incorporeal transformations occur through the immanence of language pragmatism. This is why Lenin’s theory of slogans with its pragmatism, transformation, and ad hoc character is so dear to Deleuze and Guattari: it places language into the field of effectivity and force (seeing it as more than just communicating information) and introduces new elements into it. For example, Lenin argues for the necessity of a *new slogan* to replace the old, reified slogan of the Bolshevik party. It seems that what Deleuze and Guattari find really exciting in Lenin is this element of the *new*, even more than his theorisation of slogans. Only by introducing a new language (or a new set of order-words) is it possible to initiate an incorporeal transformation. Its unprecedented character is one of the possibilities for announcing this new element – which for Lenin was the crucial element in his theory; see, for instance, Lenin’s “April Theses”, which he wrote at the same time as “On Slogans”; in the respective cases of the replacement of the *Reichsmark* and the hijacking of an airplane, discussed above, the respective declarations (that the *Reichsmark* is no longer money and that the airplane has been hijacked) would constitute that new element. But, as Deleuze and Guattari would no doubt remind us, these new elements or changes must happen without any extrapolation, inside the immanence of language. Here we arrive to the theory of the stuttering of language, which introduces a completely new configuration of utterance and the possibility of a new pragmatics, which they named metamorphosis. The stuttering of language is a very strange notion, which should be, again, understood as a non-metaphorical and concrete novelty. Deleuze and Guattari make it clear that this incorporeal change will

not happen in the sphere of everyday (or a major) language (or set of slogans): it is only possible in metamorphosing, stuttering, stammering, deconstructing, or in minor languages. Obviously enough, this definition of slogans did not come from Lenin, but his insistence on novelty, transformation, and pragmatism does have certain similarities with it. It seems that this element of incorporeal transformation is somehow artistic in nature. If we look at Deleuze and Guattari’s own examples of this transformation in language, we will see that they all come from avant-garde art: the writings of Beckett and Gherasim Luca, music by Dieter Schnebel or Luciano Berio, films by Godard or Carmelo Bene are all examples of works that make “language itself stammer” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 98). These are moments when language completely transforms itself and because it has this immanent force in its slogan elements, of which it consists, then any transformation in language will also impact (imply) a transformation of the world. But this will not happen all by itself. This is the main difference between Makavejev’s and Deleuze and Guattari’s respective conceptions of artistic slogans. In Makavejev, artistic slogans spontaneously emerge from the collective being of ideological materialist conditions and are by their nature opposed to the reified ordinary world. This was possible in Makavejev’s world, as we might remember, only through the element of the “popular” as immanent both to the political and the artistic fields, and always having an attribute of immersing creativity. In Deleuze and Guattari, by contrast, this element does not exist; the transformation of language (i.e., the set of slogans) will not happen by itself, but must be induced by working on language, or, to put it more clearly, by consciously working on language (which sometimes might imply even non-verbal variables). Deleuze and Guattari even outline a policy for this transformation: opposing legislation by constants, not prohibiting metamorphoses, refusing to give figures clear and stable contours, not setting forms in binary oppositions... (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 107). By the end of their chapter on language it becomes clear that slogans are impenetrable in this theory of incorporeal transformation. With their overall associations or relations to normative politics (all those “do-not’s” prescribed by Deleuze and Guattari), slogans present obstacles to a full realisation of metamorphoses; so instead of order-words, Deleuze and Guattari propose pass-words, which are beneath order-words *qua* organised and stratified compositions (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 110). So, whereas in Makavejev politics is to be made artful and exist separately from art, in Deleuze and Guattari it disappears by becoming art. Jean-Jacques Lecercle, who wrote a book-length study on Deleuze and language, understood this theoretical problem, or contradiction, as he calls it, in the same way as a disposition of the performativity of language. If Deleuze’s theory of language interprets utterance mostly by means of Leninist concepts of materialist elements, pragmatism, force, and the decentralisation of the subject into collective enunciations, how may one, then, connect this set of norms to the high-modernist avant-garde deconstruction of language (Lecercle 2002, 219)? Or more precisely, how may one combine the structure and coherence of slogans with the stutter of the avant-garde? Or, how does one combine politics with art? This would not be so much of a contradiction for Lecercle if he did not, in his problematisation of Deleuze (by “Deleuze” he really means “Deleuze and Guattari”), place slogans at the core of his theory of language. Since to “communicate is not to co-operate but to claim and ascribe places in a power game, an agonistic exchange”, as Lecercle explains, then force and pragmatism constitute the most important aspects of this philosophy. Lecercle accordingly concludes that “the most notorious expression of this philosophy of forces is the question of slogans, of *mots d’ordre*” (Lecercle 2002, 169). Apart from adding the elements of force and materiality, slogans at the same time allow us to conceptualise language as entirely collective and indirect (i.e., the assemblages) (Lecercle 2002, 172). This conceptualisation also has a political character itself. But, Lecercle warns, this political character of slogans is not restricted to *political and historical events* but may be found everywhere in daily life (Lecercle 2002, 172). This clearly means that politics occurs not only in political and historical events, but also in language and utterance itself. As Lecercle puts it, in what almost sounds like a linguistic slogan, “Language is made up of sedimented slogans”. This notion of sedimentation is important in understanding the Deleuzian conception of language; since assemblages are a crucial element of this strand of linguistics and make the best examples of the sedimentation of collective enunciation (i.e., “assemblage is described as a mode of segmentation”, Lecercle 2002, 186–187) then it seems that slogans and assemblages are similar in nature. If the policy of Deleuze’s “new pragmatics” is a de-sloganisation of language (or changing order-words to pass-words), then de-assemblage is its necessary conclusion. Or as Lecercle wittily puts it, the ultimate Deleuzian slogan would be: Always experiment with assemblages! (Lecercle 2002, 185–186) This is a very arbitrary definition of slogans; it sounds like a tautology: Our slogan is always to experiment with slogans!

This conclusion makes it apparent that in Deleuze slogans are those conceptual elements that make thought practical or pragmatic; or, one could say that they perform the trick of justifying the practical aspects of a theoretical practice. Now at last may we fully understand the contradiction or tension that Lecercle has identified in Deleuze: slogans are political, but in order to have any real political effect, they must disappear (or eliminate their contours and stable figurations). Only in experimentation may the performativity of language flourish to its full potential. So a real metamorphosis, pass-words, or re-assemblages, or even de-sloganisation can be expressed, as Lecercle puts it, by parodying the famous feminist slogan: the artistic is political. As Lecercle admits at the very end of his book, this is “an avant-garde position: the avant-garde artist as revolutionary” (Lecercle 2002, 246).

This conclusion, which is similar to mine, has but one very serious strategic problem: it enables the artistic avant-garde to take up a pragmatic (i.e., political) position mobilising the conceptual elements of revolutionary theory. It is about appropriating revolutionary theory. Now we must see whether one could develop a fine and complex set of theses on language and slogans from revolutionary theory and practice.

3. HOW TO DO THINGS WITH THE WORDS OF SLOGANS

*People have now adopted a new slogan,
the slogan of the “different uses of language”.*
J. L. Austin, “Performative Utterances”, 1956

The pragmatism of language, so crucial for Deleuze and Guattari’s theorisation of order-words, is based on speech-act theory, first developed by Anglo-American philosophers. The initial thrust of this philosophy of language, most famously advanced by J. L. Austin, was to overthrow the idealist fallacy of the supposedly neutral descriptiveness of language and put the performativity of speech and utterance at the core of the human condition. By showing that there is no such thing as a purely verbal criterion that might enable us to distinguish between performative and constative utterances, Austin asked if “constative utterances are not, after all, the performance of an act, namely of stating” (Austin 1971, 20). Instead of treating communication as the transmission of information, we are invited to treat it as the transmission of statements. Austin dubbed these units of communication “performative-constatives”, which sounds similar to Deleuze’s order-words.

Or, as Austin put it himself:

To perform a locutionary act is in general, we may say, also and *eo ipso* to perform an illocutionary act [...] Thus in performing a locutionary act we shall also be performing such an act as: asking or answering a question, giving some information or an assurance or a warning, announcing a verdict or an intention (Austin 1975, 98) According to Austin, there is no such thing as pure and idealist communication – language is a pragmatic business in every sense. One should note here that Austin was not trying to posit the effects of the performativity of locutions as an extrapolated act of some hidden illocutionary remnants of our strange everyday utterances. This would be more appropriate to the romantic pragmatism of Makavejev’s slogans. To the contrary, Austin insisted on the *force* as immanent to all locutions: We must avoid the idea that the illocutionary act is a *consequence* of the locutionary act, and even the idea that what is imported by the nomenclature of illocutions is an *additional* reference to *some* of the consequences of the locutions (Austin 1975, 114).

This means that in fact, locutions are illocutions and constatives are performatives. These speech-acts produce effects by securing an *uptake* (Austin 1975, 117) and in “certain ways”, which means that they produce changes in the natural course of events (Austin 1975, 117). This means that an illocutionary act is most effective when, for example, it is addressed and consumed by conditions that make the uptake as a normal procedure. That is when perlocution takes place, or when a certain effect is achieved by saying something. Austin provides an example of a failed uptake with his ship-naming story:

Suppose that you are just about to name the ship [“Queen Elizabeth”], you have been appointed to name it, and you are just about to bang the bottle against the stem; but at that very moment, some low type comes up, snatches the bottle out of your hand, breaks it on the stem, shout out “I name this ship the Generalissimo Stalin”, and then for good measure kicks away the chocks. (Austin 1961, 226–227) This is a classic case of infelicity, or an infelicitous speech-act, in which the uptake does not take place. Following Deleuze and Guattari, Lecercle explains:

If the scandalous working-class militant in Austin’s text is only a passing example of infelicity, a wink at the reader, it is because the universe of which he is the representative or the symptom (the universe of class struggle) is absent from speech-act theory. (Lecercle 2002, 162)

But even if the politics of class struggle is absent from Austin’s philosophy of language, the pragmatism he offers is enough to mobilise *a politics* from this theory; again, reverting to Lecercle’s explanation regarding the ship-naming: “[even if it is a case of infelicity] it shows that politics is always near at hand, lying in ambush, eager to seize the pretext for re-entering language that pragmatics is willing to offer it” (Lecercle 2002, 161). This automatically political *effect* of language, as I tried to show in the previous section, might lead to a complete disavowal of politics as an arbitrary element in a philosophy based on the pragmatism of language.

At this point it becomes clear that “performative-constative” could be used as a “slogan”, following Deleuze and Guattari’s Leninism;³ but as Lecercle observes, Austin’s pragmatism is too cooperative and rooted in the *status quo*, as well as not materialistic enough to realise this possibility. One can say that Lecercle’s interpretation of Deleuze’s philosophy of language rests on enhancing Austin’s speech-act theory with certain elements of the artistic avant-garde’s deconstructive potential. Following Lecercle’s reading, apart from his ahistoricism, non-materialism, and methodological individualism, Austin also shows a lack of consideration for institutions. What Lecercle implies as a Deleuzian novelty, but actually and inevitably refers to Althusser, is the possibility of using speech-act theory in institutional interpellation: institution – ritual – practice – speech-act (Lecercle 2002, 163). This practically means that “performative-constatives” are the missing link in the seemingly too representational chain of interpellation, as theorised by Louis Althusser. Even if Lecercle still sees Althusser’s theory as a constellation of Deleuzian philosophy, this should pose us no difficulties, given that he uses “Deleuze” as a collective enunciation, or some kind of sedimented slogan of intellectual-collective property.⁴

Nevertheless, Lecercle’s application of speech-act theory to Althusser’s theorisation of ideological interpellation is not an isolated example; for instance, Rastko Močnik in his article “Toward a Materialist Concept of Literature” attempted to concretise a rather “abstract indication” of Althusserian theory of interpellation through the work of J. L. Austin. If interpellation occurs, as Althusser wrote, through the process of re-cognition, or, as Močnik explains: “to ‘understand’ an (ideological) utterance is to submit oneself to its specific ‘rationality’ that is, swallow its (ideological) presuppositions”, then in the final instance communication emerges as an elementary condition, without which no ideological interpellation can be complete (Močnik 1986, 76). Since every ideological interpellation reaches its completion in the process of *subjectivisation*, one could clearly consider communication “a nuclear instance of the ideological mediation of social integration” (Močnik 1986, 176). The practical force of language or its performative devices, which are crucial in Austin’s theory of speech-acts, are what enable the process of interpellation to take place in its full materialist import. To put it more directly, Močnik claims that the force of illocutionary acts is a precondition for any materialisation of (ideological) interpellation. Reverting to Austin’s vocabulary, then, interpellation is thus an instance of a happily concluded proper “uptake” (Močnik 1986, 179–181). Since social integration conditions all ideologies (and Močnik is clearly aware of this, quoting Marx that “speech, passions, and illusions are necessary for the ideological integration of a revolutionary movement”) and given that its realisation/materialisation occurs in communication, then how may one deal with the inherent ambiguity of speech acts? Precisely how is it possible to situate the concept of “performative-constative” in the chain of interpellation when this concept has a constative as well as performative character both at once? And furthermore, if the uptake is realised in the context of a particular piece of communication (i.e., in the “natural” course of events or Austin’s “normal way”), which itself is a condition of the subjectivisation of illocution (of the integrated subject), then we face an “unpleasant metaphysical dilemma”, as Močnik describes it. The dilemma of illocutionary ambiguity is this: either we want to save the human condition from

³ Lecercle draws several examples from the ranks of analytical philosophers, who dealt with language and came to similar conclusions: “J. R. Ross, an early disciple of Chomsky, proposed the performative hypothesis, whereby every declarative sentence was, in deep structure, subordinate to a performative clause, which being performative, is closer to a slogan [...]; Ann Banfield sought to add to the first node of Chomsky’s rewriting rules a special node [...] which was meant to accommodate all ‘expressive’ utterances, insults, exclamations, perhaps even slogans; and J. C. Milner sought to develop what he called a ‘grammar of insults’” (Lecercle 2002, 170).

⁴ Elsewhere, this also allowed Lecercle to propose his notion of *counter-interpellation*, inspired by Judith Butler’s reading of Althusser: “The concept aims to describe the fact that, while speakers enters [*sic!*] into a language that is prior and external to them, they appropriate it (this is called a style)” (Lecercle 2006, 209).

equivocation, but then must abandon the concept of illocution to its inherent ambiguity; or, we decide to keep the concept, but then we have to take a rather pessimistic view of the very possibility of communication among humans (and as a consequence of that, finally have to abandon the concept altogether) (Močnik 1986, 180). This fundamental dilemma is important in helping us understand why the simplistic approach of so-called deconstructing ideology by deconstructing language is a dead end. If we accepted that ideology = language = slogans, then a simple reversal of this set of equivalences would imply that different slogans could induce a different social integration. Apart from its “pureness”, this scheme would also contradict speech-act theory, that is, its claims that a proper uptake of a slogan will hold only under proper ideological conditions. Austin’s pragmatism is very conditional and status quo practicalism which introduces the ideology as a conscious set of beliefs which one shares about the world. He does not have much of contradictions, in his idealist cosmos of uptakes the order-word (slogan) is a production of the order-world (ideology) and vice-versa. But in Močnik’s conception, the performative character of illocutionary acts, which ultimately conditions every ideological operation, is at the same time also an obstacle to an unconditional subjectivisation of ideology, idealistically predicated on human beings *qua* free agents of constative communication.

Simply, this metaphysical conundrum is the following: if communication is that which generates subjectivity, the genesis of subjectivity in communication is that which suspends the subject itself. In other words, if we assume, as it is generally assumed, that communication preconditions our entering into ideology and that our “entrance” materialises through the “performative” characteristic of our communicating, then we end up powerless to say anything that is not ideological. The dilemma is metaphysical because a “human agent” and process of identification are among its main concepts. But if we moved away from the “human” part and applied this problematic to the concept of slogans, we could reach a more contradictory, therefore also materialist theory of slogans. I think that now we have reached the point where we can pose the following question: what is the role of slogans in the process of ideological interpellation? As the most direct manifestation of perlocution, slogans certainly aim for collective recruitment. But at the same time, slogans do not target “ordinary” audiences (or an already existing collective), but seek to effect a transformation in the social integration by introducing a new thought. If so, then we have just made a long detour almost for nothing: we have reached a position where we must admit that slogans are performative and constative both at once. That is exactly where we began. But actually, we are in a different “move” now, one of trying to strengthen the *constative* nature of slogans. As we saw above, Lecercle, as well as Deleuze and Guattari all criticise as a fallacy the idealistic conception of language as based on constative communication and view its *sloganistic* character as evidence of the materialism and performative nature of utterance. This enables us, for example, to improvise on the idea that language itself (as the sedimentation of slogans) is political. In adherence to the materialist conceptions of Rastko Močnik, I would like to propose that we try to think slogans as constatives, which would initially entail considering the “content” and “theory” of slogans more seriously than it has been done before. This would not be a simple détournement or turning Deleuze and Guattari’s position on its head; rather, it would be a possibility to enhance Lenin’s theorisation of slogans even further.

Before making this position more explicit, I should clarify that a necessary precondition for including the notion of theory slogans (we can call them Althusserian slogans) to philosophy is to occupy a materialist position. Lecercle introduces this notion, which is not there in Deleuze and Guattari, through the idea of “institution”, which he includes in the otherwise abstract process of the effectivity of order-words. The materialistic existence of words and their transformative effects should not be understood as simple empiricism, or, to caricature it a bit, as word atoms flowing from those in the mouth to those in the ear and effecting changes in those in the brain, concluding in the proximity of atoms in the lips (for example, the effect of “I love you”, Deleuze and Guattari’s favourite slogan, would be something along those lines). Rather than a materialistic explanation of the world, this would be more of a mechanistic, or to paraphrase Deleuze and Guattari a “machinistic” explanation, turning everything to atoms, that is, everything but “knowledge”, which always stays somewhere in between atoms, in other words, the famed “ether” of communication. It is clear that the notion of incorporeal transformation was added to this theory in order to keep that of a materialist “uptake” possible. Nevertheless, the content or constative part of slogans is not important in this conception; in Deleuze, for example, Lenin’s slogan is not important as a concrete analysis of a concrete situation, but primarily as a potential for transformation. When it comes to slogans and language, because the constative is less important than the performative (i.e., “I love you” and “Power to the Soviets” are both equally

political), then the only possibility to thwart the completion of this “ideological” (or assembling) system lies in de-sloganization; or, as I tried to show above, in the stuttering slogans. This is a common emphasis in the deconstructive tendencies (their “artistic” character) of all critical/different theories of language. But in the last instance, I could say that whereas Deleuze and Guattari sought to problematise language through slogans, my aim is to problematise slogans by means of language and the notion of the Althusserian slogan. This means that if slogans are performative, which lends force to language, then it is equally legitimate to claim that this performativity is also of a very visible constative, or theoretical nature. Given that so many examples make it clear that slogans are performative and constative at the same time, it is surprising to note that in most interpretations the “performative” aroused such an excitement that it completely overshadowed the constative. This means that apart from having explicit “practical” implications, slogans are also quite “theoretical” in nature. Of course, these “theoretical” aspects of slogans are not so easy to identify, but must be demonstrated through a rigorous research of concrete situations inside language. My aim here is to make this more explicit. Some readers will be surprised, perhaps, that

I have chosen to perform the following survey in the field of artistic production.

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