In the long and somehow unfortunate encounter between psychoanalysis and Marxism, the references that Lacan made to Marx in Seminar XVI D’un Autre à l’autre and in some other parts of his teaching feature some undisputed elements of originality. Samo Tomšič in his text made clear how Lacanian interest in Marx parts ways with the tradition of Freudo-Marxism and in general with any approach that considers psychoanalysis a ready-made set of concepts applicable to a certain field. Psychoanalysis cannot be used to give an “unconscious flavour” to a relation of exploitation along the lines of the concept of “repression” as in a Marcusean fashion. The path that Lacan chose to develop is rather structural, logical, or as perspiciously underlined in the text, homological. Moreover the reference to Marx represents a fundamental step in order for Lacan to develop in a more precise manner—to “situate the function” as he says—the concept of object (a) in his own conceptual apparatus. Thus the problem is not so much to fill a gap between psychoanalysis and Marxism in order to provide a theory of social relations to psychoanalysis. It is rather to incorporate the already psychoanalytically relevant (although implicit) Marxian reflections into psychoanalysis itself. We could say that Lacan is not interested in proving the validity of Marxism per se, but rather in testing how Marxism relies on fundamentally relevant concepts for psychoanalysis: or even more how Marxism manages to untangle some deadlocks which would be extremely problematic if remaining on the pure logic of signifier. As Tomšič said “Lacan finds in Marx something that Saussurean structuralism failed to offer, precisely the theory of production, or better a theory of production that departs from discursive asymmetry or social non-relation.” More than being the instrument for a more effective analysis of social relations—such as complicating the relation between the classes with unconscious processes, libidinal implications etc.—psychoanalysis can actually benefit from a stronger engagement with Marxism. Why? Because Marx invented the logical function of the symptom: “the proletariat as the social symptom embodies the truth of the social bond, which consists in the fact that there is no social relation, that theories of ‘contract,’ be it social or economic [...] are constructions, the function of which is to mask a discursive deadlock.”
From Structure to Jouissance

What does it mean that social bond relies on a fundamental deadlock? What does it mean that the social field is characterized by a non-relation or by a discursive asymmetry? The purpose of the theory of discourses that Lacan developed starting with Seminar XVI, D’un Autre à l’autre and in the years after until Seminar XX, Encore is precisely to clarify this point. The emergence of the concept of object (a) in the sixties forced Lacan to reconsider the whole problematic of the relationship between the subject and the signifier chain in a different manner if compared to the Saussurean years of his early teaching. Simply put, from a model based on three terms—S, S1, and S2—we pass to a model on four terms—S, S1, S2, a.

In the classical Lacan, the Subject—an unsubstantial void lacking any positive determination—is destined to never find a single signifier able to successfully represent it: the latter being precisely defined by not being something or in other terms, a pure negative difference in respect to another signifier. The lack of the subject and the negative differentiability of the signifying chain are two sides of the same coin: the constant movement of substitution and permutation that characterizes the series S1-S2 is none other than the impossibility of the subject to be counted as a presence in the chain; from here the famous definition of the subject “as what a signifier represents for another signifier.”

The theory of suture developed by Miller in the early sixties will try to give an account of this relation: according to this theory, the lack of the subject is responsible for putting into motion the signifying chain while being at the same time rejected from it. The subject can have access to the series of signifiers only under the guise of an absence. What underlies the seemingly autonomous negative difference between S1 and S2 is none other than the causality of the manque-à-être.

In those early years, the problem of the relationship between S and S1-S2 was accounted for as a short-circuit between two levels. Lacan named this problem in a lot of different ways but, in the end, they all responded to the same fundamental dialectic: the sequence of the signifying chain and the foundational point of the chain; the series of signifiers and the master-signifier; the structure and the causal truth of the structure etc. In this leap between level and meta-level, a certain term sneaks into the picture: identification. An end of analysis would be defined as the successful shift from an individual imaginary identification—characterized by the representation as presence in the form of an image—to a symbolic identification: the identification with a founding lack (in the form of the signifier that signifies the signifying chain, the master-signifier, the unary-trait etc.). The subject of the unconscious needs to identify with the pure void of the self-referential enunciation in order to surpass the lure of the subject’s ideological/imaginary presence.

But identification with the signifying chain (especially when it is supposed to have been successful) risks overshadowing one of the pivotal elements of the logic of the signifier—which is also, and not by coincidence, a fundamental building block of the
second Freud: repetition. Interestingly, a new importance given to the term repetition and the emergence of the object (a) appear at the same time in Lacan’s teaching, roughly during the years of Seminar X and XI. In particular, during these seminars Lacan differentiates two different meanings of the term repetition: the automaton, which is the insistence of the relation between signs in the symbolic chain (we could say: repetition as it was addressed in the “Seminar of ‘The Purloined Letter’”); and tuche, which is the originary trauma triggering this very insistence. This second meaning of repetition aims at separating the aforementioned two dimensions of difference: the first between S1 and S2; and the second between S and S1-S2. Now we have two different levels that in the theory of suture were previously conflated in a short-circuit between level and meta-level.

The unsurpassable reluctance of tuche to be resolved in the relationship between the void subject of enunciation and the sequence S1-S2, between level and meta-level, opens up a dimension of radical impossibility. There is a remainder of tuche impossible to be symbolized and it characterizes the function of (a). Here it is important to be extremely precise: such an impossibility should not be mistaken for a dimension entirely beyond the signifying chain (as Tomšič underlined: an unmediated “great outdoors”). The function of the (a) is rather a combination and simultaneity of three features:

- Internality: it is a part, even though not counted as such, of the symbolic (a part of no-part);
- Foundational, or causal: it is the primary trauma at the base of the insistence of the structure;
- Exclusion: even though not in the sense of being carried out of the space of the symbolic structure, but rather in the sense of being an internal remainder (and at the same time a product) of the very impossibility of the subject to successfully achieve a symbolic identification with the signifying chain (a successful resolution of the relation S/S1-S2).

The logical quandary is: how to account for the simultaneous integration of these three features? As with every mathematical function, the definition of a variable is equal to its relative position to the other factors. Therefore the articulation of the four terms—S, S1, S2, a—will also constitute for Lacan the building block in order to account for a renewed structuralism where concepts such as repetition, jouissance, remainder, will be included along with the signifier battery and the subject of the unconscious. The goal would be to account for the a priori conditions that regulate the relationship between these terms. Discourse is in fact etymologically derived from the Latin discursus, which comes from dis-currere: i.e. to run from a place to another. The Lacanian discourse is in fact a structural system of places and relations that regulates the interaction between these terms, i.e. their currere from a place to another and their mutual exchange of positions. Differently than Foucault, whose theory of discourses is centered on the historical and anonymous conditions that regulate a set of enunciations in a historicist transcendentalism, Lacan tries to
elaborate the structure of these places without referring to any historical externality. As Jean-Claude Milner perspicuously puts it, the theory of discourses is a way for Lacan to purify a theory of break:

By a doctrine of the plurality of places, of the plurality of terms, of the difference between properties of place and property of terms, of the mutability of terms in relation to places, what is obtained is what could be called a nonchronological and more generally nonsuccessive articulation of the concept of break.4

Some psychoanalysts tend to underline the clinical dimension of the theory of discourses and describe it as the different positions that a subject can occupy in relation to his/her jouissance and to his/her location in the structure.5 But the risk in such simplifications is to reduce a formalization to a purely abstract categorization of different particularities. The subject in Lacan is never represented by a structure, it is always subjected to it; it is therefore deceiving to consider the discourses clinical models, as if they were more formalized versions of traditional clinical types such as obsessional neurotics, hysterics, perverts, phobics etc. The four discourses are four nonhistorical configurations of the possible relations of places and elements within a structure, with the inclusion—if compared to the early Lacan—of a fundamental element: jouissance.

Such is the project outlined in Seminar XVII, The Other Side of Psychoanalysis. Lacan in fact invokes in the inaugural session of the seminar a return to Freud, but of a slightly different kind than before, i.e. in a reversed mode. Freud should be taken from the end, from Beyond the Pleasure Principle and from the Freudian reflection on the repetitive dimension of jouissance. In the theory of discourses, the key in the relationship between the subject and the signifier chain is not only the causal effect of truth (and the structural causality of the lack), but also the insistent repetition of this very effect. The shift is from the content of the effect of truth to its topological and morphological placement: the effect of jouissance.

The Production of the Discourses

But how does the relationship between elements function in the theory of discourses? And why do they rely on a fundamental deadlock? And why would Marx be essential in order to account for this formalization?

First of all we have to consider the matheme of the discourses abstracted from any specific element, as a pure system of void places. Lacan bases his explanation on a premise: every structure is based on a fundamental relation of one signifier to another. The battery of signifiers (“that we have no right, ever, to take as dispersed, as not already forming a network of what is called knowledge”) is presupposed but, as with every system of negative differences, there has to be a founding point in order for it to emerge as an ensemble of differences. The minimal founding gesture is therefore
the intervention of an active point toward an Other. Given this primary relation, we have a structure of differences along the model S1–S2.

Every system of knowledge is dead, however, if there is not an agent that intervenes in it (every *langue* needs a *parole*); at the same time the agent would be completely closed in itself if it couldn’t pose itself as other-of-itself. This dialectic of mutual positing of the One and the Other conceals something: on one hand the causal dimension of truth, on the other, as we saw with the repetition of *tuche*, the fact that this relation cannot be posed as successful once and for all. There is always something that sticks out and forces the relation between the element and its positing gesture to continuously repeat itself. The upper level of the matheme with the Agent and the Other is structurally dependent on a lower level. On the one hand, the Agent is put into motion by the causality of truth (the arrow from Truth to the Agent). It is therefore not an autonomous Agent but a "seemingly" autonomous one, i.e. a Semblance. On the other hand, the relation between the Agent and the Other always produces a remainder, which forces the relation to continuously repose itself (the Agent is doomed to continuously intervene on the Other).

If we start to fill the places with the elements of the first discourse of the four—the Discourse of the Master—we can see that things become much clearer.

\[
\begin{array}{c}
S_1 \\
\rightarrow \\
S_1 \\
\end{array} \\
\begin{array}{c}
S \\
\rightarrow \\
a \\
\end{array}
\]

The system of knowledge of the signifiers, S2, is structurally depended on the contingent foundational inscription of the Master Signifier that puts them into motion. But this agent is only seemingly the true active part in this relation: it is in fact only a Semblance dependent on the causal dimension of truth. The stabilizing effect of the capitonnage of the Master Signifier is only a perspective illusion destined to never be definitively successful. The relation between the Agent and the Other (S1 and S2) has a causal truth in the manque-à-être of the S which, as the theory of
suture claimed, is present in the signifying chain while being at the same time rejected from it. This system of three elements would successfully resolve the relation between the $S$ and the signifying chain (meaning, it would guarantee a successful identification/signification for $S$) if there weren't an unsymbolizable remainder which always jeopardizes the structure, which is $(a)$.

We have not left undesignated the point from which we extract this function of the lost object. It's from Freud's discourse about the specific sense that repetition has in the speaking being. Indeed, repetition is not about just any old effect of memory in the biological sense. Repetition bears a certain relationship to what is the limit of this knowledge, and which we call *jouissance*.$^{7}$

This remainder marks the limits of knowledge ($S_2$) while being at the same time a constitutive part of it. The function of $(a)$ is therefore at the same time that of production (it is the variance difference of the irresolvable relation between $S$ and the structure) and of loss/remainder. This is what Samo Tomšič means when he claims that *jouissance* "is no longer something that simply accompanies the decrease of tension, but something that is produced in its increase."$^{79}$ Object $(a)$ is at the same time an inassimilable too-muchness—a surplus product—and a bare nothing—a loss, a remainder. Here we can start to see why this concept has resonances with the Marxian theory of value in the capitalist mode of production.

1. Value in capitalism is structurally in surplus. There is no such a thing as a non-surplus value. Like the object $(a)$, it embodies the constant productive dynamism of capitalism.

2. The discursive asymmetry of $(a)$—i.e. the fact that there's no such a thing as a successful relationship between $S$ and the signifying chain—is the same discursive asymmetry of the social sphere where the relation between the classes has a structural incompatibility based on the system of production of value.

3. Value, like the object $(a)$, has a relation with the capitalist mode of production of internality, causality and exclusion: a) the source of value, i.e. living labor, is at the core of the production process; b) it is the foundation of capital given that all the accumulation of capital is none other than dead labor, i.e. made possible by the extraction of living labor from labor-power; and c) it is internally excluded given that none of the surplus-value produced will go to benefit the living-labor that has previously produced it. There is thus a relation of exclusion between living labor and surplus-value.

The argument according to which the reference to Marx is not a metaphor nor a pure analogy for Lacan is thus absolutely correct. It is rather a necessary resource in order to explain the logic underlying that element that stays at the bottom right of the schema of the discourses. It is an element which, as we saw, emerges in order to address the question of the relation between the subject of the unconscious and
the chain of its discourse, and which is pivotal for Lacan’s teaching. But there is another important consequence for this argument that emerges in Tomšič’s text. Paradoxically enough, Marx is relevant for Lacan within the theory of discourses not so much as a theorist of the social bond, as everyone would expect, but rather as a theorist of the structure as such (or better, of the integration of the inassimilable element within the functioning of the structure). What Marx enables Lacan to locate is the function of \((a)\) within an abstract system of relations. Lacan is not interested in Marx as a sociological description of the relation between social classes within capitalism. If it is true that Marx gives a formalization of the functioning of the capitalist mode of production, the emphasis for Lacan should be put on “formalization” far more than on “the functioning of the capitalism mode of production.” Lacan, in fact, does not seem to have properly understood the Marxian analysis if not in its more abstract and formalized way. Proof of this is when Lacan tries to translate the functioning of the discourses into an analysis of capitalism as an historical formation with the infamous fifth discourse—the discourse of the capitalist. On that occasion, Lacan gives a profoundly non-Marxian account based on a presumably infinite and manic drive of consumption triggered by capitalism which would ignore the unsurpassable limit of lack and castration. We cannot develop this point further here but it is known that the law of accumulation in Marx was never based on consumption and the fundamental contradiction incarnated by the extraction of living-labor from labor-power cannot but be a continuous limit imposed on capital by the materiality of the production process.

But despite the discourse of the capitalist, Lacan seems to look in another direction and to rather be interested in the fact that surplus-value within capitalism demonstrates that any theory of production can never be anything but a theory of surplus-production. And as much as the object \((a)\) is not a mere deviation in an otherwise manageable system of relations between \(S\) and \(S_1-S_2\), super-value is not a mere deviation in an otherwise fair distribution of the products of labor: surplus-value is the fundamental disequilibrium at the core of the relation between the worker-as-labor-power and the worker-as-living-labor.

**Surplus-value: a problem of representation?**

The problem is that while Lacan’s argument for the homology between the \((a)\) and surplus-value may sound convincing in abstract, it becomes less convincing when we start to go deeper into what Lacan has in mind with surplus-value, and therefore which relation of homology would be involved between the two elements. Regardless of whether the relation is homology, analogy etc., a preliminary problem is the correct definition of what the two elements are. In Samo Tomšič’s words, Lacan gives an account of the origin of surplus-value in terms of representation:

[Lacan] sums up the very same discrepancy […] that reveals the capitalist mode of production as a non-relation between two different circulations. As
we know the circulation \( C \rightarrow M \rightarrow C \) formalizes the exchange (selling and buying), and aims at the equivalence Saussure was already talking about in his analogy; the circulation \( M \rightarrow C \rightarrow M \) (that Marx also writes \( M \rightarrow C \rightarrow M' \), whereby \( M' = M + \Delta M \)), on the other hand, no longer produces equivalence but non-equivalence or difference within apparent equivalence. Lacan speaks of a gap in representation, and it is within this gap that the surplus value is produced. Marx considered the proletarian as a social symptom precisely because (s)he is a sign of the gap between the two circulations, a sign that there is no social relation.\(^{10}\)

It seems here that surplus-value is generated from an impossible relation between two different circulations: a deceiving one represented by the schema Commodity—Money—Commodity where “selling” and “buying” seems to follow a logic of equality (the value of the first and the second commodity is equal) and the circulation Money—Commodity—(Surplus)Money which produces a surplus: the money generated at the end of the process is not of the same quantity as at the beginning. Tomšič claims that money as a means for purchasing a commodity in the realm of circulation is different than money used “as capital” to buy labor-power for the production process. Labor-power is in fact the only element outside of capital and therefore the most important one (and logically the only one) in order for a surplus to be generated. The problem here is that this structural asymmetry is described by Lacan as a problem of representation. As Tomšič said:

The labourer gets paid “fairly,” according to the representation in terms of exchange value. But since the production is internally doubled the just payment is simultaneously unjust. Translated in the vocabulary of the logic of the signifier: the subject is represented only as far as it is misrepresented. The subject of exchange value is represented next to the use-value hence means that labour power implies a fundamental non-identity because value is internally differentiated on use-value and value, and because exchange value cannot stand alone.\(^{11}\)

Following this logic, the problem would be that the worker cannot be represented fairly, because in order for the surplus to be generated it is necessary to have a certain dissymmetry between the worker as labor-power in the sphere of exchange and the worker as use-value in the realm of production. There would be an impossible coexistence in the worker between its side as exchange-value and its side as use-value. The production of \((a)\) is therefore reduced to a question of non-identity with itself,\(^{12}\) as happens with the logic of the signifier. Such an outcome is coherent with the schema of the theory of the discourses recalled earlier: as Lacan said “henceforth non-identical to itself the subject no longer enjoys. Something called surplus jouissance is lost.” The impossibility of the representation of the subject is the other side of the lost enjoyment in the product/remainder of the lower part of the schema.
In order to sustain such a homology, Lacan has to stick to the definition of the relation between use-value and exchange-value as a problem of mis-representation which is problematic as a reference to the Marxian text. Once the relation between (a) and surplus-value is believed to be homological, the consequences have to be followed until the end. Tomšić in fact coherently claims that, according to Lacan, “we are not only dealing with a homology between two surpluses, but also with the same subject: the subject of capitalism is the same as the subject of the signifier.” But is the problem of the relation between use-value and exchange-value of the worker really a problem of representation, as in the relation between the subject and the signifier? Is the symptomatic kernel of capitalism really only the impossible representation of these two different and incompatible logics? The logic of exchange and the logic of the surplus? The use-value and the exchange value? Money as means of exchange and money as capital?

Conclusion

In conclusion, I will present some thoughts on the value of the introduction of the concept of jouissance in the Marxian reflection, and some implicit critical remarks on the Lacanian reading of the asymmetry at the base of the capitalist social bond as a problem of representation.

The translation of jouissance from subjective-individual terms in the discourse of psychoanalysis to a wider reflection concerning a mode of production can be in fact extremely fruitful. The idea to define labor activity as irreducible to any good/moderate measure and aimed only at satisfying a pure self-propelled drive for accumulation of abstract wealth is one of the most important features underlined by Marx in the analysis of the capitalist mode of production. The law of accumulation is at the base of a production process not concerned with the satisfaction of basic needs and not even with the satisfaction of the capitalists’ needs. Contrary to a common belief according to which Marxism would be the narration of a conflict between two groups of people—the people who are rich and have the majority of the resources and the means of production, and the ones who are poor and have nothing—capitalism is a perfect abstract machinery where actual people are only personifications of a structural necessity. If there is one thing Marx is sure about, it is that capitalism is not driven by greediness, theft or mere inequality. Relations of inequality of access to resources were common in many non-capitalist modes of production. Capitalist accumulation means first and foremost that the surplus-value produced in the cycle has to be converted into constant capital and variable capital in order to have more surplus-value in the following cycle. The fact that in the process some people, known as capitalists, will actually consume some of the commodities produced is an accident, not a structural necessity.

Even before defining surplus-value as a quantity in excess over social necessary labor, it is interesting to follow Marx’s counterintuitive argument when introduc-
ing the genesis of the concept of surplus. According to Marx, capitalism managed to mobilize an unprecedented potential of transformation. Far from developing a merely negative critique of capitalism, Marx is renowned for having been fascinated by the potentiality of capitalism in many passages of his work. Contrary to the production of pre-capitalist societies, capitalism is able to deploy that surplus Lacan talks about with the term *jouissance*.

In the *Grundrisse*, Marx traces a division between societies whose production is devoted to satisfying a pure reproduction of themselves (therefore societies only aimed at the entire consumption of the produced use-values)—where the social character of labor is reduced to a function of the basic needs of the community—and proper capitalist societies. In the former, no surplus is generated because only what is needed for survival is produced. The question regarding the purpose of labor—i.e. the aim, the goal, what a certain labor should be used for—emerges only in capitalism when the equilibrium is ruptured:

Thus the old view, in which the human being appears as the aim of production, regardless of his limited national, religious, political character, seems to be very lofty when contrasted to the modern world, where production appears as the aim of mankind and wealth as the aim of production. In fact, however, when the limited bourgeois form is stripped away, what is wealth other than the universality of individual needs, capacities, pleasures, productive forces etc., created through universal exchange? The full development of human mastery over the forces of nature, those of so called nature as well as of humanity’s own nature? The absolute working out of his creative potentialities, with no presupposition other than the previous historic development, which makes this totality of development, i.e. the development of all human powers as such the end in itself, not as measured on a predetermined yardstick?¹⁴

Even though limited by its bourgeois form, capitalism is able to generate a surplus which retains the possibility of expressing and developing the creative potentialities of the universality of mankind. The cut separating the capitalist mode of production from allegedly ancient societies devoted to the pure reproduction of themselves should be welcomed as great progress. This excess—i.e. a surplus in the way humans relate to their world and reproduce themselves—is not limited to the satisfaction of basic needs. It is an element that, as with *jouissance*, cannot be explained in pure conservative and homeostatic terms. It is something more than pure survival. Marx believes that it is only when a surplus is created that a certain knot that ties together the community is broken, leaving the space for something new to emerge. A community that produces only for its own survival, as in the scheme of simple reproduction, cannot inscribe itself in a proper history because its production cannot create anything that changes the system of equilibrium of the community itself. Pre-capitalist societies technically do not feature any production but only a reproduction: at the end of the cycle, things are exactly as they
were at the beginning. A community of that type would be a community where the production of the new, and therefore of history, would be impossible.

This irreducibility to the plan of basic needs recalls a basic Lacanian concept: desire. If a human being is defined by the impossibility to be reduced to a pure level of satisfaction of the basic needs; if a human being is defined by being thrown into the domain of language from its very first day in this world and because of that to be condemned to be permanently detached from a mere survival, does it entail the connection between a mode of production aimed at the creation of the antinaturalistic excess of the surplus and desire? Should we conclude that capitalism is the most developed expression of desire? Does capitalism produce for the sake of desire? Were Deleuze and Guattari right when they understood capitalism as a system of mobilization, organization and canalization of desire?

On the one hand, it would seem that capitalism is the most natural form where desire, being irreducible to the level of the basic needs, can express itself. On the other hand, it would seem that the current “bourgeois form,” as Marx claimed, imposes some limitations on it. If capitalism, in its current state, is defined by the satisfaction of one and only one law—the law of accumulation—whose desire is this kind of satisfaction? The Italian philosopher Roberto Finelli hypothesizes that in capitalism there are no longer any subjects. There is only one subject, which is capital. And its purpose is the expression of its striving for accumulation. From the point of view of capital, there is only one reason to live in this world: the continuance of the extraction of living labor from the labor power in order to accumulate abstract wealth. The scission desire/needs is in the end only an ideological one: every surplus produced by the cycle of accumulation is not meant to trigger and cultivate a desire in excess over its basic survival needs. A worker’s desire is not mis-represented by the capitalist organization of production, because following the inversion of subject and predicate typical of capital, it is not the worker who is subjected to its being labor-power. It is labor-power that is the true agency of the production process, which features as an unfortunate appendix: the real worker in flesh and bones. Nevertheless this unfortunate appendix cannot be cut out by capital. Even though capital tries in every way to extract living-labor without the presence of the worker; it has never managed to do so, and the presence of the worker attached to the labor-power seems to expose an inevitable sign of weakness in the cycle of accumulation. As Claudio Napoleonio said “[Labour-power] is a very particular commodity, because it is not an object belonging to the worker, it is the worker himself in one of his own particular determinations, i.e. his being a labour-power.” Finelli seems to forget that capital has at least this unsurpassable symptomatic weak point: in order to extract living-labor—the only source of value—from labor-power it has to rely on this minimal element of uncertainty: with the labor-power, it also has to trail along its human appendix.

The curious consequence is that despite the drive for accumulation being the only true desire expressed by capital, it cannot realize it by itself. It has to deal with the “vanishing mediator” of the worker, which blocks up the path going from the
labor-power to the living-labor. The problem is not the impossible representation of worker as both use-value (living-labor) and exchange-value (labor-power). It is rather the continuous transition in every cycle of accumulation from labor-power to living-labor—a transition that despite being regulated in every possible way, from repression to ideology, from labor legislation to partial concessions to the workers, it can never be taken for granted once and for all. More than an impossible representation, the cycle of accumulation should actually be accounted for as a never-ending dynamic: a continuous and unstoppable movement that in every cycle goes from abstract value (dead labor, as capital at the beginning of the cycle) to more abstract value (living labor morphed into abstract labor or money, through the mediation of the body of the commodity). The problem for capital is that, in order to be effective and to accumulate an increased quantity of money, the movement that leads from abstractness to abstractness is forced to pass through the concreteness of living-labor. In this passage from abstractness to concreteness to abstractness lies the symptomatic critical point of the cycle of accumulation. The symptom of capital is the dependence on the activity of living labor.

The jouissance of capital is therefore strictly incompatible with the potentiality of a change of desire. The transformative capacity of living-labor—its power to negate, transform and rearticulate the concrete determinations of the world—is subjected to a pure drive of accumulation of abstracted wealth. The creativeness and inventiveness triggered by the capitalist mode of production, even though incomparable in relation to the previous modes of production, are still not expressed at their fullest. For Marx, capitalism is by far the best mode of production that has appeared in history so far, but there is a better one: communism. The symptom incarnated by the possibility of class struggle at the core of the production process—in that uncertain moment where the potentiality of the labor-power is converted into the actuality of the living-labor—is the only political space for a transformation of the capitalist mode of production into something where the jouissance is not subjugated to a circular repetitive movement but is liberated into a new form. The wager of the translation of the concept of jouissance into the vocabulary of the capitalist mode of production relies on this shift in terms of scale. Jouissance in capitalism is not deprived of a subject: its subject is capital. But if we follow the argument to its most radical consequences, we have to ask ourselves how to interact with such a perverse and jouisseur subject. The problem for an anti-capitalist psychoanalysis should not be the cure of hystericized subjects in order for them to be compatible with such a regime of unethical and anti-psychoanalytic mode of accumulation. A regime of accumulation of such a kind depresses and humiliates the possibility of the new. The only possible question would thus be: how to hystericize the only subject of modernity: capital? How to work through the symptom of the extraction of living labor in order for the subject of capital to abandon the repetitive drive of accumulation? If class struggle is capital’s symptom, how to listen to that symptom in order to rearticulate capital’s way of enjoyment? Maybe Lacan was only partially
right in Seminar XVII. It may be that structures do not march in the street, but they definitely do work in a factory.

Notes

2. Tomšič, 99.
3. Brigitte Balbure writes regarding the conceptualization of the term repetition in the "Seminar on ‘The Purloined Letter’" that "the functioning of the signifier chain, based on which the subject has to recognize itself as such in order to open up the dimension of parole, is determined by the operation of repetition. The signifiers constantly return—which is a linguistic structural fact—because they depend on a primary signifier originarily disappeared to which this very disappearance gives a value of inaugural trauma." Brigitte Balbure, "Repetition" in Roland Chemana, Bernard Vandermersch eds., Dictionnaire de la Psychanalyse (Larousse-Bordas, 1998).
8. Tomšič, 97.
10. Tomšič, 104
11. Tomšič, 105.
12. The position of $S$ as “non-identical to itself”—as a lack, or as a generating agent of truth—was the main argument of Jacques-Alain Miller’s text La Suture: Éléments de la logique du signifiant, one of the most influential Lacanian article of the Cahiers pour l’analyse, the famous journal published between 1966 and 1969 by the Cercle d’Épistémologie of the École Normale Supérieure.
13. Tomšič, 105