Pre-Modern Joking Relationships in Modern Europe: From *Le Neveu de Rameau* to *Le Neveu de Lacan*

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Two decades ago, midway between the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Twin Towers, Franco Moretti offered a geographical sketch of modern European literature. A decade later, halfway between Moretti's sketch and this article, Rastko Močnik proposed a theoretical formalization of modern European politics. Writing at a time when Europe fell "in love with Milan Kundera," Moretti ("Modern" 109) sensed the end of modern European literature, including its novel. Writing in a time when the "implicit philosophy of the Council of Europe" entrusted culture to "the invisible hand of the 'free market'," Močnik ("Regulation" 201, n. 3) announced the eclipse of modern European political institutions, including its nation-states. In my article, I will use these respective histories of the European novel and the European nation-state in order to trace and comparatively read a set of modern texts on the relationship between uncles and nephews: Denis Diderot's *Le Neveu de Rameau* (ca. 1761-74), Karl Marx's *Der achtzehnte Brumaire des Louis Bonaparte* (1851-52), Louis Althusser's *L'avenir dure longtemps* (1985), and Jacques-Alain Miller's *Le Neveu de Lacan* (2003).

I will thus delineate this Parisian topos of uncles and nephews against the background of Močnik's theoretical formalization of the paradigmatic political institutions of modernity, which I will in turn read alongside Moretti's historical sketch of the modern institution of literature. Moretti traces modern European literature as it is being terminated by the postmodernism of Milan Kundera's kind; conversely, Močnik grasps modern European politics as it is being sublated by the new para-

digm of institutional identity politics. In short, while the former announces the death of the modern novel, the latter declares the demise of the modern nation. For my part, I will sketch a certain dimension of both the literary and political modernity in Europe, namely a set of political as well as literary renditions of emblematic uncles and nephews as it was recently finalized by Miller's return to Diderot's initial introduction of the theme.

Močnik speaks about key modern political institutions—monarchic authority, nation, and identity community—by comparing them to pre-modern ones, particularly the so-called joking relationships between, for example, uncles and nephews. I will use this account of modern politics in order to speak about modern European literature, which is Moretti's concern. This will allow me to delineate a set of texts that belong not only to the literature that interests Moretti, but also to the politics that concerns Močnik; texts that, as it were, reflect on Močnik's political institutions by means of Moretti's institution of literature. The object of my inquiry will hence be found somewhere between Moretti's and Močnik's objects, that is, between the **371** literature and the institutional politics of European modernity. Moreover, not unlike the object of my inquiry, the inquiry itself will be something between Moretti's and Močnik's, as my synoptic reading of the former's geographical sketch and the latter's theoretical formalization will serve to yield a kind of theoretical sketch.

Moretti starts his essay on "Modern European Literature" by negating a certain persistent notion of European literature. From Novalis's *Christianity, or Europe*, through T.S. Eliot's "Ulysses, Order, and Myth," to E.R. Curtius's *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, European culture was perceived as anything but modern: as Moretti notices, and as the titles themselves suggest, European literature was considered to be an entity as long as it was not modern. Be it Christianity, the *Odyssey* (as the pre-text of *Ulysses*), or the Latin Romania, this pre-modern Europe is the pre-nationalist Europe, according to Moretti ("Modern" 87). This hostility toward the nation-state is easy enough to understand, given that these three texts have respectively been written "during the Napoleonic Wars" and "after the First and Second World Wars" ("Modern" 87). However, beside these circumstances Moretti also finds a structural reason for this hostility: in all three cases, European literature is seen as an entity only insofar as it is a homogenous unity, and "to the extent that European culture can exist *only as unity* (Latin, or Christian, or both), then the nation state is the veritable *negation of Europe*" (Modern" 87).

Indeed, reflecting on this cultural pessimism five years after the official end of the Cold War, Moretti could easily himself mistrust the consolidating powers of the nation-state, were it not for structural differences between these views and his own. I will return to the circumstances of Moretti's intervention, but for now let me only note that his modern Europe is still an entity, although no longer a homogenous one; on the contrary, it is a totality only insofar as it remains a heterogeneous battlefield of individual nation-states. For in Moretti's approach, "the German catholic Novalis is countered by the French protestant François Guizot: 'In the history of non-European

peoples, the simultaneous presence of conflicting principles has been a sort of accident [....] The opposite is true for the civilization of modern Europe [...] all forms, all principles of social organization coexist here [....] Among these forces, a permanent struggle'" (88). Guizot's equation of "the civilization of modern Europe" with "a permanent struggle" might remind one of the capitalist class and the way it consolidates by simply allowing competition between individual capitals; and indeed, Moretti's modern Europe is the Europe of capitalism.

Moretti's first instance of modern European literature is a case in point. As the Europe unified by Christianity and Latin makes way for the first modern states, the tragic genre unified under the models of Seneca and popular religion is replaced by baroque tragedy, a genre whose strength is derived from, rather than stifled by, the fact that it is divided into no less than four powerful and competitive variations: the theater of the *siglo de oro*, the *Trauerspiel*, the *tragédie classique*, and Shakespearean drama. In each case, the self-determining rejection of feudal ties forces the new abso-**372** lute sovereign to tragically tie himself to his own court and state; yet no matter which court he ties himself to as its inevitable tyrant, he unties himself from one and the same ancient and feudal Fate. Baroque tragedy is "the form through which European literature is first touched by Modernity, and in fact torn apart by it" (91).

This constellation of four new cultural centers is countered by one last attempt at unification. The relationship between the four variations of baroque tragedy is not strong enough to prevent one of the four centers, France, to revive the *Res publica Christiana* as *République des Lettres*. Unlike the stateless Germany, and the less populated and geographically less central Spain and England, France is able to override the first modern cultural autonomization of European states not only with the cosmopolitan *âge classique* but also with the *guerres napoléoniennes*. Yet there are two additional reasons for this success—freedom from the economic constraints of an empire and from the cultural burden of a Dante, or a Shakespeare, or a Calderón— which tell Moretti ("Modern" 94) that this undoing of the rise of modern states is always already attempted by one of these states (rather than their pre-modern predecessors). As such, it can ultimately only strengthen the communication between the new cultural centers (instead of weakening it).

Hence the great European novel. Radcliffe, Goethe, Scott, and then Austen, Stendhal, Shelley, Pushkin, Balzac, and Manzoni—it only took a handful of names and decades for the novel to introduce most of its modern European forms and to cover the majority of the modern European nations. The *âge classique* with its pre-revolutionary *conte philosophique* and its quasi-imperial Paris is followed by the long nineteenth century in which the post-revolutionary *Bildungsroman* struggles to replace *conte*'s cosmopolitanism with nationalism, just as Paris becomes a mere capital of a nation: "At this point, diversity joins forces with interaction, and after [Henry] Hallam's paratactic Europe, and the French Republic of Letters, it is the turn of the European literary system in the proper sense. Neither European literature, nor merely national ones, but rather, so to say, national literatures of Europe" (95).

Hence, after breaking free from Curtius's Romania via the *tragédie classique* and then reviving it on its own terms in the *âge classique*, French literature finally replaces Romania with its great *roman réaliste*. Yet if the *conte philosophique*, the dominant genre of the *âge classique*, was unmistakably French, the *Bildungsroman*, which replaces the conte, was not; and if the initial break with Romania was achieved by the *tragédie classique* as well as the *Trauerspiel*, the second and final break was executed by Germans, if not even Scandinavians and Russians. The final break with pre-modernity and Romania is a farewell to the Mediterranean. France, the former northern edge of Romania, becomes a southern center of the new European bourgeois mimetic literature or "poetics of solidity" (Moretti, "Modern" 100).

This solidity, once it spreads across the new Europe, is suddenly broken up by a set of extreme polarizations: between Joyce and Kafka; Eliot and Rilke; Picasso and Kandinsky; or, say, Schönberg and Stravinsky. Once saturated geographically, the new European space is opened up aesthetically, as in these great modernist oppositions. Moreover, as a whole, these oppositions are themselves in opposition to the other dent in European realism, namely mass literature. The space of Europe is therefore opened up not only aesthetically but socially, as "[a]n audience space" (104): at the turn of the century, the bourgeois readership turned either to modernism's or to mass literature's negation of realism.

But this does not mean that this division between mimetic realism and anti-mimetic modernism and mass literature is without a geographical dimension. If the novel of the major nation-states or the drama of the stateless German nation spanned the capital and the provinces, or the city and the countryside, the new audience space is shaped by communication between cities themselves. This is a literature of exiles welcomed by metropolises. Joyce's *Ulysses*, whose polyphony forms the above-mentioned opposition with Kafka, "is the clearest sign of a literature for which national boundaries have lost all explanatory power" (106). English modernism, as such, is a product of exiles—if English is the right word for *Heart of Darkness*, *Cantos*, *The Waste Land*, "or finally, but it's too easy, for *Finnegans Wake*" (106). Finally, "for the avant-garde, Paris is closer to Buenos Aires than to Lyon; Berlin more akin to Manhattan than to Lübeck" (105).

It seems that the closer Moretti comes to his own present, the more European modernity is constrained by Europe itself. And indeed, with the crisis of classical imperialism, which was to modernism and the avant-garde what the French revolution was to realism, both Manhattan and Buenos Aires started supplying European literatures not only with themes but also with forms. With North American postmodernism and South American magic realism, the flow of extra-European exchanges is hence for the first time turned around; "as for intra-European relationships, a continent that falls in love with Milan Kundera deserves to end like Atlantis" (Moretti, "Modern" 109).

Just before forsaking Novalis's pre-modern unity in homogeneity for Guizot's modern unity in heterogeneity, Moretti invokes a text that assumes the perspective

of the former, unity-as-homogeneity, to look at the object of the latter, modernity. In *The Theory of the Novel*, Georg Lukács presents a European "novelistic universe" that "is no longer a 'home' for the hero," no longer, in other words, the Europe presented by Novalis. "And even though Lukács never explicitly says so, his novelistic universe [...] is precisely modern Europe," concludes Moretti ("Modern" 88). *The Theory of the Novel*, "which opens with an unmistakable allusion to the first lines of [Novalis's] *Christianity*" ("Modern" 88), spells out the consequences of the absence of Novalis's pre-modernity from Guizot's modernity. Novalis posits the pre-modern European culture; Lukács negates this by positing its absence from modern Europe; and Moretti in effect negates this negation itself by positing the absence of pre-modern Europe in modernity as a specific presence, a condition constitutive of modern Europe, the Europe that can reproduce itself precisely because is it free from any pre-modern center "(Latin, or Christian, or both)." If Lukács conceptualizes the implications of Novalis's Europe, reading the modern novel as the absence of the pre-modern epic, then Moretti in his turn conceptualizes Lukács's own implications, recognizing in that absence of the epic no less than modernity itself.

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This is then how Moretti seems to negate, as I claimed above, a certain persistent notion of European literature. This negation, however, is not severed from the circumstances of Morettti's intervention; as I also mentioned, there is something to be said about the fact that Moretti writes on Novalis and Lukács five years after the end of the Cold War. Beside the obvious immanent differences in approaches—due to which Moretti equates European identity not with its imperialist homogeneity, as Novalis and Lukács do, but with its nationalist heterogeneity—there is also a difference between the pan-European wars during which Novalis and Lukács are contemplating Europe and the wars that follow the fall of the Berlin Wall. The wager of Rastko Močnik's reflection on modern European institutions, to which I will turn now, is that the so-called ethnic conflicts of the early 1990s, during which Moretti is writing, speak not of the hegemony of the nation-state, but of its crisis in the face of the rise of post-national and neo-colonial identity communities. So, if Lukács looks back on the European empires as the Great War is replacing them with a heterogeneous system of nation-states, Moretti looks back on nation-states as post-socialist conflicts are dissolving them into ever new identity communities awaiting recognition by the new hegemon.

For Moretti, the zenith of modern European literature is its nineteenth-century novel. As he shows in his *Atlas of the European Novel 1800–1900*, these novels map the city as being divided in half between the ruling and the lower classes—until Balzac and Dickens introduce the third, mediatory sphere, which becomes the true protagonist. This sphere can be embodied in a character, the market, culture, or, as in the case of *Comédie humaine*, Paris itself, argues Moretti (*Atlas* 105-06). On the basis of Močnik's theory, this third sphere mediating between labor and capital can be identified with nation itself, when it comes to Balzac and Dickens: the national character, the national market, the national culture, or, indeed, Paris as the

nation's capital. Moreover, Moretti's third sphere is homologous to what Močnik ("The Balkans" 114, n. 59; 115, n. 66; 113, n. 55) conceptualizes by referring precisely to the institutionalization of our uncle/nephew relation: the so-called joking relationships. As "a relation between two persons in which one is by custom permitted, and in some instances required, to tease or make fun of the other, who in turn is required to take no offence" (Radcliffe-Brown 90), the joking relationship solves the problem of unavoidable encounters of two mutually exclusive relationships, according to A.R. Radcliffe-Brown's classical interpretation. In a patrilinear kinship system that, say, institutionalizes the male child's attachment to his mother's relatives as well as detachment from his father's relatives, the relation to his mother's male sibling becomes a problem, as it demands both attachment and detachment. This problem is then solved by the supplementary institution of joking relationships, "a compound of friendliness and antagonism" (Radcliffe-Brown 104), which allows nephews to make fun, and even to take the property, of their mothers' brothers. The contradiction produced by the normal functioning of the institution of kinship is resolved by more of the same, a supplementary institutionalization of compromise. The demand of both attachment and detachment is satisfied by a compromise between attachment and detachment—be it joking, as between uncles and uterine nephews, or avoidance, as between mothers-in-law and sons-in-law.

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This supplementary institutional resolution of inherent institutional contradictions that Radcliffe-Brown discovered in status societies Močnik finds in individualist societies as well. In modernity, the increasing social contradictions are alleviated by the institution of nation with its monarchist pre-history and identitary aftermath. The nation resolves the contradictions arising between now legally free individuals by providing a sphere of mutual translatability of their positions—primarily the national culture, including, one might add, Moretti's Balzac and Dickens. The nation thus achieves what the early modern state relegated to the monarchic authority and what the postmodern identity community will try to accomplish with its struggle for recognition by transnational institutions. Universalizing the pre-modern mediatory sphere of joking relationships, the nation relegates its demand of mediation to language as such; the national language becomes the Other that was embodied in the monarch in early modern societies and which will be sought in the new global hegemon by post-national identity communities. So, throughout modernity, the resolution of contradictions resulting from the normal functioning of institutions is entrusted on three supplementary institutions: the absolute monarch, whose authority is used precisely to decide the undecidable; the nation, whose very language and culture translate its contradictions in non-antagonistic terms; and, finally, the identity community, according to which its contradictions are resolved as soon as its identity is recognized by the hegemon (whose recognition is sought by emerging identity communities in a time when, as mentioned above, Moretti looks back on their predecessors, the modern nation-states).

The "distinguishing principle of the power of the sovereign as such" is "the moment

of ultimate *decision* as the *self-determination* to which everything else reverts and from which its actuality originates," writes Hegel five years after the fall of Napoleon (313). The "'struggle for recognition' is fast becoming the paradigmatic form of political conflict in the late twentieth century [....] In these 'post-socialist' conflicts, group identity supplants class interest as the chief medium of political mobilization," writes Nancy Fraser six years after the fall of the Berlin Wall (68). Between this self-determined absolute monarch and these self-doubting identity groups, the national language and its culture emerge, according to Močnik, as the source of self in the era following early modernity and preceding postmodernity.

Here is the transition from the pre-modern to the national supplementary institution:

> We conceive *the nation as the zero-institution* pertaining to *the individualist type of society*. It differs from the non-individualist zero-institution in that it is *inclusive in the heterogeneous dimension* (it includes other institutions of the same society), *and exclusive in the homogeneous dimension* (it excludes other institutions of the same kind, i.e., other nations); the "standard" non-individualist zero-institution, by contrast, is *exclusive in the heterogeneous dimension* and is *inclusive in the homogeneous dimension*. (Močnik, "After" 126-27)

And here is the relation between the nation's pre-history and aftermath, that is, between monarchic authority and identity community:

> At the dawn of modernity, Corneille's Chimène was torn between genealogical loyalty and the loyalty to her emerging bourgeois Ego: an impossible dilemma which could only be resolved by having recourse to the alibi of the monarchic authority. But if Chimène needed complex ideological backgrounds to construe *cette généreuse alternative* with which she addressed the king, nothing so redundant is needed any more: the "ideological background" is now the alternative itself. (Močnik, "Regulation" 189)

In this respect, our uncles-and-nephews series traces the transformations of a supplementary institution of pre-modern status societies in the enlightened, modern world. Intervening in the pre-revolutionary, bourgeois revolutionary, and post-May '68 Paris with enlightened, historical, and structuralist materialism, these texts on uncles and nephews exemplify in many ways the two histories of European modernity offered by Moretti and Močnik. Both these histories open with the absolute monarch and Corneille's *tragédie classique*; they are both continued with the rise of national languages offering a "formal matrix of mutual translatability of all actual or possible notional schemes" (Močnik, "After" 127) and thus curbing "[t]he multiplication of languages and ideologies" (Moretti, "Modern" 96); and, finally, they both end with neoliberalism and its "submission of cultural sphere to the mechanisms of 'free market'" (Močnik, "Regulation" 201, n. 3) all across the "continent that falls in love with Milan Kundera" (Moretti, "Modern" 109). In terms of Paris—"a metropolis which is a true palimpsest of history" (100)—the Enlightenment and the *conte philosophique* mediate between the age of the monarch and Corneille, on the one hand, and the age of the nation and the novel, on the other, with the latter age being in turn

followed by the ongoing period of identity communities using their Kunderas to obtain recognition in Paris.

As mentioned above, the texts that will interest me here are Diderot's *Rameau's Nephew*, Marx's *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, Althusser's *The Future Lasts Forever*, and Miller's *Lacan's Nephew*. These quasi-(auto)biographical texts depict Jean-François Rameau, Louis Bonaparte, Louis Althusser, and Jacques-Alain Miller as respective nephews of a celebrated composer, a worshipped emperor, a mysterious homonymous uncle, and a legendary psychoanalyst. Comparing a famous composer with an infamous original, a tragic revolutionary with a farcical counter-revolutionary, the anonymous Louis Althusser with the notorious one, and the wittiest follower of Freud with the strictest follower of that follower, the texts respectively belong to and intervene in the Enlightenment of pre-revolutionary France, the 1848-51 phase of the bourgeois revolution in France, and the structuralist movement in post-May '68 France. As such, they can be read from the standpoint of some of the most world-historic moments of the "capital of the nineteenth century" (Benjamin 3; Moretti, "Modern" 106).

Diderot's *Rameau's Nephew* embodies, as it were, the point of intersection of two kinds of focus on contemporaneity: the Enlightenment one and the novelistic one. In Michel Foucault's (37-39) reading of Immanuel Kant, the Enlightenment brings about reflection on the present as the present of this reflection, a reflection that, moreover, explicitly perceives itself as Enlightenment reflection. And in Mikhail Bakhtin's ("Epic" 13-38) reading of yet another German commentator of the Enlightenment, namely Goethe, the modern novel returns to the dethroning genres of Menippean satire and the Socratic dialogue in order to open up the epic and its enthronement of what Bakhtin calls, building on Goethe, the "absolute past" ("Epic" 13).

Exemplified in works such as Petronius's *Satyricon* and Apuleius's *Metamorphoses*, Menippean satire is a "carnivalized genre, extraordinarily flexible and as changeable as Proteus, capable of penetrating other genres," according to Bakhtin (*Problems* 113). In *Rameau's Nephew*, Bakhtin sees "in essence a menippea, but without the fantastic element" (143), an idea Stephen Werner develops into a book-length discussion of *Rameau's Nephew* as a Menippean satire: "As revised by Diderot's second version of the form, satire maps out interests of an aesthetic as well as philosophical kind. The affinities the form displays are with the novel rather than Horatian satire [....] Indeed, with *Le Neveu de Rameau*, satire falls away from its position as a mere genre [....] Satire is now an independent *Socratic mode*" (Werner 69). Because of its Menippean anti-individualistic novelization of (auto)biography, *Rameau's Nephew* can even serve here as a paradigm for the actualizations of the nephew theme in Marx, Althusser, and Miller. For the same features of Menippean satire can be observed in Marx's materialist carnivalization of such merely monologic Horatian satires on Napoleon's nephew as Victor Hugo's *Napoléon le Petit*; in Althusser's shocking honesty, which reverses the confessions genre and reminds one of the "extremely frank confessions" that Bakhtin (*Problems* 143) underscores in Diderot's Menippean satire; or, finally, in

Miller's ambivalent positioning between Diderot's *Moi* and *Lui*, the *philosophe* and the *original*. So, Tzvetan Todorov (8-9), for example, is simply misleading when he attributes the rise of the novel and autobiography in the Enlightenment to the rise of the individual. As Bakhtin shows us, the process has more to do with the history of genres itself, starting with the carnivalization of the epic; and as Foucault shows us, the rise of the individual in the Enlightenment coincides with the rise of the transindividual categorical imperative.

In the light of Moretti's third, mediatory sphere—such as Paris itself—the opening of *Rameau's Nephew* is striking: the *philosophe* meditates on the pleasures of the *promenade*, the *allées*, and the *cafés* of Palais-Royal before introducing Rameau, "a compound of elevation and abjectness" (Diderot 8-9), who spends his nights in garrets, suburban taverns, and stables. In the course of the dialogue, this notorious nephew of the famous composer Jean-Philippe Rameau tries to transgress every ideological barrier by transgressing the barrier dividing Paris in half, ending the dialogue abruptly on the "bell" not of the church, which is open to anyone, but of the elitist Opéra (87). As such, Diderot's Rameau personifies the capital of modernity, the Paris of contradictions depicted in Rousseau's *La Nouvelle Héloïse* (Stierle 101-05), the bestseller of the century published in the same year that Diderot started working on his clandestine satire. So, the joking relationship, "a compound of friendliness and antagonism" (to go back to Radcliffe-Brown's description), no longer connects the infamous nephew with his famous uncle, but is embodied in him, "a compound of elevation and abjectness" (to reuse Diderot's characterization).

Marx, too, uses the figure of nephew to depict the compromise mediation between the halves of Paris. During the revolution of 1848-51, Louis Bonaparte raises the specter of his uncle, Napoleon, to represent in the capital city the peasants of the provinces, "the most numerous class of the French," which "do[es] not form a class" (Marx 101). He mediates between the socialist prologue from February to June 1848 and its betrayal during a year-long rise and fall of the republican bourgeoisie by becoming the President, only to mediate between the parliamentary bourgeoisie and his own presidency by orchestrating the *coup d'état* of 2 December 1851. An entire century of class struggles in Paris, France, and even Europe is condensed in the *Brumaire*'s final image of the statue of Napoleon the soldier, which, "high on the column in the Place Vendôme, will plunge to the ground" as the "imperial mantle falls at last onto the shoulders of Louis Bonaparte" (Marx 109)—which came true between 1863, when the nephew-emperor made his uncle change into the imperial uniform, and 1871, when the statue was demolished by the Communards.

On the other hand, Althusser and Miller use the nephew to embody not social mediation but merely their own unmediated individualities, the difference between themselves and their media reception—as if the lie of the latter were not dialectically linked to the truth of the former. Both their texts are highly testimonial. Althusser wrote *The Future Lasts Forever* in 1985, five years after killing his wife in a state of mental illness from which he had suffered most of his life. The text was supposed to

intervene in the private and media reports on this killing by referring to the facts of the author's life, starting with his fixed idea that, through him, his mother lived her love for his father's dead brother after whom Louis was named. The name "contained the sound of the third person pronoun ('*lui*'), which deprived me of any personality of my own, summoning as it did an anonymous other. It referred to my uncle, the man who stood behind me: '*Lui*' was *Louis*" (Althusser 39). By choosing the perspective of the nephew, Althusser loses sight of the third, mediatory sphere, which he had been analyzing in all his previous theory. This is why the memoir cannot realize its internationalist or postcolonial potential, even though its author was born into a petit-bourgeois family from Algiers and went on to teach (and live) in the École normale supérieure for thirty years, making "the name of the 'rue d'Ulm' echo as far as the *poblaciones* of Chile and the campuses of Japan and Australia" (Balibar 107). It was only his student and colleague, Étienne Balibar, who sketched a proper Althusserian analysis of Althusser's legacy by reflecting precisely on Althusser's attachment to the mediatory sphere, the Parisian intellectual life of the 1960s and 70s.

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As for Miller, he completes our body of texts as he assumes both viewpoints of Diderot's satire, the *philosophe*'s and Rameau's, and subsumes them under the title "Lacan's Nephew." But his 2003 "satire," *Le Neveu de Lacan*, lags behind not only *Le Neveu de Rameau*, but even *The Future Lasts Forever*. Like Althusser, Miller broke a long silence. In his case, however, the silence was caused not by a personal tragedy, but by editorial work on the seminars of his teacher (and father-in-law) Jacques Lacan; and the break was caused not by public and private ostracism, but by a pamphlet by Daniel Lindenberg accusing everyone who was anyone on the French intellectual scene, from the anti-communist Alain Finkielkraut to the communist Alain Badiou, of being the new reactionaries. And like Althusser, Miller resorted to his dead uncle, only in his case a fictitious one sufficed. Even Miller's fantasies fall short of Althusser's, as, say, the image of a fictitious "Académie des sciences immorales et politiques" run by the actual Jesuits (Miller 80-101) is a far cry both from Althusser's illness and from his attempts to analyze it. Diderot's reply to Charles Palissot's comedy *Les Philosophes*, whose prime target was none other than Diderot, was silence due to his editorial work on the *Encyclopédie*; and his nephew text itself cannot possibly be reduced to a retort to Palissot. On the other hand, Miller's response to Lindenberg's attack, whose anti-intellectualism was no smaller than Palissot's, was precisely his failed return to Diderot's nephew text, and that despite the fact that he was not Lindenberg's main target at all, and that there is still a lot of editorial work on Lacan's seminars ahead of him.

As mentioned in relation to Močnik, our set of texts on uncles and nephews traces in the modern world the transformations of a supplementary institution of pre-modern status societies, the joking relationships between such relatives as uncles and nephews. As we have seen, all four texts acknowledge the anachronism of this supplement; they all show that joking relationships, which had allowed uterine nephews to tease and even take the property of their uncles, are no longer in place. So,

the musical legacy of Jean-Philippe Rameau is no longer his nephew's birthright: the joking relationship, Radcliffe-Brown's "compound of friendliness and antagonism," no longer connects Rameau the infamous nephew with Rameau the famous uncle; instead, this "compound of friendliness and antagonism" is embodied in the nephew, who is himself "a compound of elevation and abjectness." So too, Louis Bonaparte can only simulate Napoleon's authority; Althusser can no longer rely on his mother's levirate marriage; and Miller cannot even identify with Lacan's nephew and choose between *Lui* and *Moi*. However, the chronotopes of Rameau and Louis Bonaparte are allegorical of the supplementary institution of their time, namely the absolute monarchy in its enlightened, even revolutionary, transition into a modern nation. On the other hand, in their identitary struggle for media recognition, Althusser's and Miller's nephews are merely part, rather than reflexive allegories, of the ongoing global dissolution of the national social supplementation into the identitary one. Rameau, the "compound of elevation and abjectness," and Louis Bonaparte, the last **380** monarch and first president of France, are a negative and a positive sign of the end of absolute monarchic rule: the former registers the crumbling feudalism, while the latter registers the rising nationalism. On the other hand, Althusser's and Miller's structuralist work around 1968 and their autobiographic follow-up are a negative and a positive sign of the end of the hegemony of nations: their radically critical structuralist work stands for the crumbling nationalism, while their late autobiographies stand for the rising identity politics. Diderot and Marx speak of an anti-colonial institution, the nation, and consciously; Althusser and Miller speak of a neo-colonial institution, the identity community, and spontaneously—as if to mark the eclipse of modern European literature and politics.

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