"Il y a de la plèbe": Figurations of the Minor between Complicity and Dissent

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Abstract

In this article I discuss the logic of "complicity" and "dissent" that, under current forms of ultra-neoliberal capitalism, is no longer (if it has ever been) one of opposition but rather corresponds to a logic of unrealized potentials, or "as if"s that "manage" dissent and complicity in conjunction, and erase the dividing line between them, or their value as separate concepts. I examine the genealogy of this opposition and its dilution as a symptom of our contemporary political reality. Michel Foucault presented a paradigmatic view of this genealogy in his analysis of power and the taxonomic separation of three regimes of power: the sovereign, the disciplinary, and the biopolitical. While sovereign power maintains a "negative" distinction between acts of complicity and of dissent, implemented in the decision over life and death, both the disciplinary and the biopolitical power adopt a "positive" paradigm that relates, as I will argue, to figurations of the minor, inferior or infamous. It is precisely within these figurations that the paradoxical logic of "complicity" and "dissent" becomes more palpable, inasmuch as they demonstrate that acts of complicity can turn into acts of dissent; and vice-versa, that any act of dissent can also function "as if" it was an act of complicity. Thus, there is no outside of power. Instead every power challenges strategies of counter-power, that at once interrupt and fuel the existing structures of domination.

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