Towards a Theory of Minor Subjectivation
Global Perspectives in the Work of Didier Eribon

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The present article discusses the ways in which Didier Eribon's work engages with texts of postcolonial and African American provenance, linking heterogenous forms of writing about social domination in what I will call a theory of minor subjectivation.[1] In so doing, I want to examine in how far autosociobiography can be conceived as a genre that transcends its Franco-German or European origins, and which latent affinities and interwoven relations would be revealed from a perspective that considers autosociobiography as part of a broader phenomenon of contemporary literary production. As will become clear, Eribon adapts three key building blocks in his own writing: the *topos* of the 'return narrative' as deployed by James Baldwin, Assia Djebar's concept of 'writing in the language of the adversary', and Patrick Chamoiseau's notion of a *sentimenthèque*. Considering that these three elements – the return to one's origin as the starting point of narration, a reflection on language and the role of literature in constructing the *transclasse* self[2] – have been named as characteristic traits of autosociobiographical texts in general, I want to inquire how an examination of Eribon's approach can reshape our conception of autosociobiography as a "*genre in the making*" (Blome et al. 2022: 12, original emphasis)

1 I would like to express my gratitude to Philipp Lammers for his valuable feedback, and to Jonathan Stafford for proofreading this article.

2 The term 'transclasse' was coined by the philosopher Chantal Jaquet to describe the position of those with a history of upward social mobility; employing it in lieu of the more established 'transfuge de classe' ('class fugitive', 'class defector') avoids the latter's derogative connotation of treason, see Jaquet 2023: 22.

and cast fresh light on its potential for narrating and theorising various forms of social domination and marginalisation.

These reflections derive from the observation, already advanced multiple times in existing scholarship (see Blome 2020; Blome et al. 2022; Lammers/Twellmann 2023), that when texts are assembled under the "label autosociobiography" (Blome et al. 2022: 22), they are mainly referred to as a phenomenon of French provenance whose genealogy – its origins and predecessors – is traced solely to European authors. In practice, that principally means French writers (notably Pierre Bourdieu and Annie Ernaux), although Richard Hoggart's *The Uses of Literacy* is sometimes mentioned, too.[3] To a certain extent, this way of perceiving the genre is promoted by the authors themselves via the theoretical and literary influences they emphasise, both in interviews and within their works; first and foremost, however, it is the point of view of literary critics and scholars, who tend to highlight this specific literary (and sociological) canon.[4] Linked to this process of genre mapping is a second observation, namely that the texts in question tend to describe social relations and mechanisms that are situated in a specific historic and political context: the French post-war period, the turn towards neoliberalism in the 1980s and 90s, deindustrialisation, and the dismantling of the welfare state. Is it possible to transpose the narrative element of upward social mobility and the emphasis on class and the educational system – central *topoi* of autosociobiographical texts – to literatures from times and cultures where society is structured differently?[5]

One way of mapping the genre on a more global scale would consist in defining its characteristics by departing from its core textual canon (Ernaux, Eribon, Louis, Bourdieu) and looking for similar texts and currents in spatially and temporally divergent languages, cultures, and literary traditions. This procedure would resemble the establishment of the notion of autofiction, which, too, was originally coined in a very specific literary and sociohistorical context – the postmodern shift in late 1970s French Literature from the *Nouveau*

3 For a discussion of Richard Hoggart's (hidden) influence on the form of autosociobiography, see Lammers/Twellmann 2023.

4 Interestingly, German scholars played a much bigger (and earlier) role in this process of genre description than their French counterparts, prompting Lammers and Twellmann to inquire whether "autosociobiography [should] be regarded […] as a German idiosyncrasy" (Lammers/Twellmann 2023: 48).

5 This question is also raised by Laélia Véron and Karine Abiven in their study of *transclasse* narratives, see Véron/Abiven 2024: 24.

roman towards the subject – by a specific author (Serge Doubrovsky) to theorise his own literary project, and later expanded to a much broader concept used to engage with contemporary tendencies in life writing. The latter's success is, at least partially, related to the fact that what Doubrovsky described as his poetological concept – the idea that the 'I' of an autobiographical text does not precede the text, but is created in the writing process and is therefore also always fictional – resonated with the (post-)structuralist and deconstructivist literary theories prevalent at the time (see e.g. Gronemann 2022: 340). Moreover, literary research discovered similar insights and similar hybridisations of factual and fictional aspects in a broad variety of autobiographical narrations throughout time and space: Vincent Colonna, for example, argued that auctorial fictionalisation was already to be found in the works of Dante, Cervantes, and Proust (see Gronemann 2022: 338), whereas Martina Wagner-Egelhaaf pointed out that the autofictional construct is the dispositif of *every* kind of autobiography (see Wagner-Egelhaaf 2005: 5). The concept of autofiction thus proved to be highly transferable and extendable to all kinds of literary forms (and genres) – especially in the context of contemporary literature, where the writing of Annie Ernaux, Didier Eribon and Édouard Louis has often come to be subsumed under the category (see e.g. Graw/Weingart 2019; Sauer 2022).

Yet rather than debating the genre affiliation of these specific texts, I would like to pursue the question of whether the notion of 'autosociobiography' has a similar potential of global transferability. As was the case with autofiction, the literary project of autosociobiography – narrating the subject as an effect of social structures (and not merely of textual strategies), linking the personal to an analysis of the socio-political, combining the knowledge production of literature and the social sciences – overlaps to a remarkable degree with current tendencies in literary studies, specifically the 'social turn' (Brüns, 2008) and the concept of 'post-autonomous literature' developed by Josefine Ludmer in the context of Argentinian literary theory. Central to Ludmer's claim is the idea of a literary sphere that is always already entangled with other spheres such as the political, the social, the digital, and so on, rendering the idea of the autonomy of fiction obsolete (see Ludmer 2018). The 'social turn', meanwhile, proposes a perspective that considers the social in the aesthetic and the aesthetic in the social; it responds, to a certain degree, to a literary field where concepts from the social sciences – such as class, milieu, poverty, and domination – are already present and used by the authors to analyse their narrated journey through life.

Autosociobiography thus forms part of a much broader phenomenon, both in literature and beyond (for example in literary theory, public discourse, and other media). This includes, but is not limited to, the return to social questions in the arts; an interest in aesthetic forms that for a long time were considered to be 'insufficiently literary'; the fusion of the form of the theoretical essay with a literary narrative; the highlighting of personal narratives; and the concomitant use of the 'I' as a way of anchoring the narrated story in a specific (lived) experience as well as a means of verifying it (on the last point, see e.g. Blome 2020: 545–6). All these characteristics can easily be put in a 'global perspective', in the sense that we encounter them in literatures around the globe and across historical periods that do not have any direct intertextual or referential relation to the French trio Ernaux, Eribon and Louis.

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By linking such considerations back to the canonical French autosociobiographies, I seek to elucidate the latter's entanglements with historical events and literary traditions that extend beyond the European context. More precisely, I am interested in the presence of global sociohistorical dynamics in the works of Didier Eribon, and the parallels between autosociobiography and other literatures that deal with (social) domination. How do Eribon's texts reflect on France's colonial and postcolonial history of violence, and what kind of literary influences can be identified other than the Western European ones foregrounded by the author and his academic critics? As Mario Laarmann has pointed out, one potential link can be established with authors of *Créolité*, such as Patrick Chamoiseau and Édouard Glissant (see Laarmann 2023: 131): both literary currents exhibit an aesthetics of hybridity regarding the form of the texts and the relationship between theory and literature; both subscribe to a fragmented realism that refutes the idea of direct access to, or direct representation of, reality;[6] both are based on an autobiographical/autofictional framework; and both engage in a (political) reflection on language.

6 Referring to the tendencies of a 'renouveau du réalisme' (renewal of realism) and a 'retour du réel' (return of the real) in contemporary French literature in general, Laarmann argues that *Creolité* literature rejects the totalising interpretation of the world espoused by the self-assured realism of the nineteenth century (see Laarmann 2023: 122).

Beyond these poetological similarities, Eribon himself has stressed the connection between *Créolité* literature and his own concepts in several of his works. Already in *Une morale du minoritaire* (2001), his (not yet autobiographical) essay on gay subjectivation, he links his analysis, mainly based on the work of Jean Genet, to postcolonial authors such as Frantz Fanon and Patrick Chamoiseau, and argues for a "decolonization of the mind" (Eribon 2023: 294).[7] Borrowing the analytical tools developed in one theoretical field (or literary tradition) and transferring them to the context of another kind of social domination is, as I will argue, a major principle in Eribon's writing. In *Retour à Reims* (2009; published in English under the title *Returning to Reims* 2013), for instance, it functions as the starting point of the entire book: here, Eribon draws on his earlier works on the process of queer subjectivation and applies these insights to his analysis of class-related subordination (see Eribon 2013: 26–9). In the process, Eribon relies on the work of other authors in a way that often goes beyond mere citation (for example in the form of references in footnotes or by naming them as examples) – their presence supports a kind of literary community-building and serves as a framework that enables him to tell his own story.

Eribon develops this principle of literary community-building through his engagement with Patrick Chamoiseau's *Écrire en pays dominé* (1997). Chamoiseau combines his own narration with a plurality of literary voices that had a crucial impact on the formation of his self. Beyond being a mere intellectual influence, Chamoiseau asserts that he is linked to these texts and authors by an affective relationship: "So much reading since childhood has left me with more than just memories: with feelings. More than just a library: a sentimenthèque." (Chamoiseau 1997: 24)[8] In *Retour à Reims*, Eribon picks up on this idea and builds his own *sentimenthèque*, consisting, he writes, of "books that 'call to us', as Patrick Chamoiseau puts it, books that make up a 'library of feelings' and help us overcome the effects of domination within our own selves" (Eribon 2013: 220). Eribon refers to the texts of Jean Genet as offering a literary model of affective identification for his own project of gay subjectivation (Eribon 2023: 38); yet his *sentimenthèque* is constructed from all sorts of literary and theoret-

7 "décolonisation des esprits". Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are my own.

8 "Tant de lectures depuis l'enfance m'ont laissé mieux que des souvenirs: des sentiments. Mieux qu'une bibliothèque: une *sentimenthèque*."

ical texts that speak of multiple forms of social domination.[9] In the following sections, I will outline the impact of these texts on the core concepts of Eribon's writing. Discussing two examples from *Retour à Reims* and *Principes d'une pensée critique* (2016), I will first explore the influence of Baldwin's *Notes of a Native Son* (1955) on the construction of Eribon's return narrative, before proceeding to a discussion of how the politics of language developed by Assia Djebar in *L'amour, la fantasia* (1985; *Fantasia: An Algerian Cavalcade* 1989) and *Ces voix qui m'assiègent* [Those voices that besiege me] (1999) came to serve as a matrix for his own thinking about language and domination.

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How, then, does Eribon utilise the return narrative, departing from his readings of James Baldwin's *Notes of a Native Son* (1955)? And how does the latter's example become not only a narrative but also a theoretical framework for his writing? To answer these questions, we must first determine the meaning of 'return' in Eribon's autosociobiographical *œuvre* (or, as he terms it, his "self-analysis", see Eribon 2013: 160).

In *Retour à Reims*, the return is, first of all, a narrative one, and as such constitutes a dominant element of the plot: it is the starting point that initiates the story. After his father's death, Eribon returns (temporarily) to his hometown to see his mother after a long absence. As he talks to her and pores over old photographs, he starts to wonder why he, who has written several books on sexual shame and homosexual subjectivation, has never written about *social* shame: "Why, when I have written so much about processes of domination, have I never written about forms of domination based on class?" (Eribon 2013: 25) His physical return, as it is staged by the narrative, is then followed by a reflexive one – the act of writing, which tries to re-approach the former self by discussing the class system and the impact of social inequalities from

9 In addition to sociological and autobiographical treatments of class, social difference, and the estrangement from one's origins that comes with upward mobility (the most prominent examples being works by Pierre Bourdieu and Annie Ernaux), Eribon also engages with writings about racism and colonialism, including the works of Afro-Americans like James Baldwin, John Edgar Wideman, and Tony Morrison; of members of the French Caribbean Négritude and Creolité movements such as Aimé Césaire, Patrick Chamoiseau, and Édouard Glissant; and of authors from the Maghreb and the Middle East like Mahmoud Darwish and Assia Djebar.

a personal point of view. However, the *transclasse* narrator has no immediate knowledge of, or access to, their own history, which can be related to on an individual level – in the form of memories – but not in terms of the social reality that shapes and embeds these experiences. In order to be able to tell their story not merely as an autobiographical but as an auto*socio*biographical one, and to come to an awareness of their writing position as a "transfuge de classe" ('class defector', Eribon 2009: 25), they must first make the detour of contextualising it in a collective political framework, that is, of inscribing themselves in a genealogy of textual predecessors. In other words, the knowledge the *transclasse* individual has acquired about the self as a social self and about their class origins is not spontaneous, but is accessible only via the process of distancing themselves from the narrated self.

This way of recounting one's own history via a detour to the texts of other authors is very prominent in *Retour à Reims*. Early on in the narrative, Eribon refers to Annie Ernaux's *La Place* (1983, *A Man's Place* 1992) when he describes the relation between his physical and his reflexive return, both provoked by the death of his father. However, by the time he begins to analyse his troubled relationship with his own father, and the complicated feelings he experiences when he is looking at a photograph of him taken shortly before his death, he turns to James Baldwin's *Notes of a Native Son* – a book that revolves around the distant relationship between the author and his father, and the former's delay in visiting the latter on his death bed. Along with numerous other quotations from Baldwin, *Retour à Reims* cites the following passage from *Notes of a Native Son*:

> The moment I saw him I knew why I had put off this visit so long. I had told my mother that I did not want to see him because I hated him. But this was not true. It was only that *I had* hated him and I wanted to hold on to this hatred. I did not want to look at him as a ruin: it was not a ruin I had hated. I imagine that one of the reasons people cling to their hates so stubbornly is because they sense, once hate is gone, that they will be forced to deal with pain. (Baldwin qt. in Eribon 2013: 33–4)

Referring to Baldwin's text, Eribon concludes that the lack of understanding and affection between father and son was due to their respective social positions and to the distance they entailed: "As had been the case for Baldwin with his father, so I began to realise that everything my father had been, which is to say everything I held against him, all the reasons I had detested him, had been

shaped by the violence of the social world." (Eribon 2013: 36) Eribon repeatedly uses expressions like "as had been the case for Baldwin" or "like Baldwin", thereby stressing the importance of imitation when it comes to constructing one's own story as a literary text. And while, from a literary point of view, it might be argued that there is no original way of telling one's own story, but that each and every autobiographical text is always already shaped by its predecessors, Eribon employs the template of Baldwin's account to an extent that can be considered specific to autosociobiography: it is the detour via the words of others, and more precisely the sense of distance from his own memory achieved by the defamiliarisation effect of citing the individual experiences of others from their (literary) autobiographies, that enables his access to the reality of his own story.[10] The entanglement of Eribon's manner of narrating his own relationship to his father with Baldwin's is also evident from his choice of using similar phrases even when he does not quote Baldwin directly. For instance, Baldwin's statement "I had not known my father very well. […] When he was dead I realised that I had hardly ever spoken to him. When he had been dead a long time I began to wish I had" (Baldwin 2017: 88) is mirrored by Eribon with the following words: "I never had a conversation with him, never! He wasn't capable of it (at least with me, and me with him). It's too late to spend time lamenting this. But there are plenty of questions I would now like to ask him, if only because it would help me write this book." (Eribon 2013: 35)

Eribon describes Baldwin as a paradigmatic example of a 'reflexive' return. In order to become a writer and to live his life as a homosexual, Baldwin had to leave his narrow family environment in Harlem and his father's contempt for all things artistic and literary – Eribon here mirrors his own experience as a gay 'transfuge de classe' in Baldwin's story. And to be able to analyse his doubly marginalised social position – being Black and being gay – Baldwin had to 'return' to his childhood by writing a theoretical essay on the social mechanisms that shaped his father. From his reading of Baldwin's text, Eribon develops his own autosociobiographical methodology, which gains knowledge of the personal by means of an analysis of the social: "Perhaps too, beginning this process of historical and political deliberation would allow him [Baldwin] one day to reclaim his own past on an emotional level, to get to a place where he could not only understand, but also accept himself." (Eribon 2013: 36)

10 Eribon has repeatedly rejected the idea of the authenticity of the direct report, see for example Eribon 2016: 71.

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Eribon's concept of 'return' (as both part of the narrated plot and of the theoretical analysis) is thus marked by extensive references to, and use of, other authors' words. This method enables him to develop a socio-political understanding of his own story while at the same time situating himself in a lineage of predecessors – not only of other 'class fugitives', but of "all those who do not reproduce the dominant model and discover their identity after being branded by an insult or taunt" (Jaquet 2023: 22). It is in a very similar vein that Eribon engages with Assia Djebar's thoughts on language in general, and her reflections on what it means for her as an author from postcolonial Algeria to use the French language in her writing. Eribon refers to Djebar's hybrid autobiographical works, *L'amour, la fantasia* and the more theoretical *Ces voix qui m'assiègent*, in his follow-up volume to *Returning to Reims*, *La société comme verdict* (2013), and notably in the essay *Dates de naissance. Récits de soi et ontologie du présent*, a text included in *Principes d'une pensée critique* (2016).

Eribon's concept of 'dates of birth' – which would be the translation of *Dates de naissance* – is drawn directly from a passage in Djebar's *L'amour, la fantasia* that proposes a different chronological mode. He states that when writing about one's life from an autosociobiographical perspective, one cannot simply start with the date of one's biological birth (or that of one's parents or grandparents); rather, there is a need to consider the social, geographical, and political situations that shaped one's position, and so the question is: "[W]here and when does the autobiography begin? […] At what point in time must we go back? In what territory should this beginning be fixed? Where and when does the 'I' begin?" (Eribon 2016: 33).[11] Eribon finds the model for his approach in the following passage from the end of Djebar's autobiographical novel, which opens with the destruction of her ancestors' village by the French colonial army:

> I am forced to acknowledge a curious fact: the date of my birth is eighteen hundred and forty-two, the year when General Saint-Arnaud arrives to burn down the *zaouia* of the Beni Menacer, the tribe from which I am descended, and then he goes into raptures over the orchards, the olive groves,

11 "[O]ù et quand commence l'autobiographie? […] À quel moment du temps faut-il remonter? Dans quel territoire faut-il fixer ce commencement? Où et quand commence 'je'?"

> 'the finest in the whole of Algeria', as he writes in a letter to his brother – orchards which have now disappeared.
> It is Saint-Arnaud's fire that lights my way out of the harem one hundred years later: because its glow still surrounds me I find the strength to speak. Before I catch the sound of my own voice I can hear the death-rattles, the moans of those immured in the Dahra mountains and the prisoners on the island of Sainte Marguerite; they provide my orchestral accompaniment. They summon me, encouraging my faltering steps, so that at the given signal my solitary song takes off. (Djebar 1989: 216–7)

Djebar, as she herself acknowledges, can only write because she is carried by the voices of the tortured. Yet, she writes in French, in the "language of the adversary" (Djebar 1999: 41),[12] as she calls it in *Ces voix qui m'assiègent*. It may well have been this particular phrasing that drew Eribon to reflect upon her concept of language, because a very similar one is used by Ernaux when she considers her position as a writer from a working class background "who is writing, as Jean Genet said, in the language of the enemy, who uses the writing skills 'stolen' from the ruling class" (Ernaux 2011: 33).[13] To Ernaux, this 'stolen language of the enemy' means the tool of literature, whereas for Djebar, it is French as the language of the colonisers. As a French speaker and a French writer, her 'date of birth' coincides with the moment of the French invasion of Algeria. She discovers herself in the 'language of the adversary' because she writes her books in the idiom that has also given her access to culture, emancipation, and independence as a woman, as she puts it. When Djebar tells the story of the colonised in the language of the colonisers, she uses the very tool that has silenced the speech of her ancestors – the French language thus becomes a sort of "loot" (Djebar 1999: 69).[14]

Eribon then tries to relate Djebars 'date of birth' to his own past (in a social and in a personal sense) by reflecting on the colonial history of France in Algeria, where his ancestors had been on the side of the oppressors, as well as on the racist slurs against Algerians he grew up with as a child. "Does this past still live in us as a shared past? I mean, does it live in me as intensely as it does in her

12 "Écrire dans la langue de l'autre."

13 "qui écrit, comme disait Genet, dans la 'langue de l'ennemi', qui utilise le savoir-écrire 'volé' aux dominants".

14 "Du français comme butin."

[Djebar], as she describes it?" (Eribon 2016: 35),[15] he asks. Eribon then proceeds to narrate a family anecdote involving his maternal grandmother, who tried to help injured survivors of the Charonne subway massacre in February 1962, when the French police brutally attacked a demonstration against the Algerian War, resulting in the deaths of nine people. He also reflects on the glorifying way the colonial conquest of Algeria was taught in school and the ongoing intellectual influence exerted on him by authors marked by the Algerian War of Independence (Sartre, Bourdieu, Derrida, Fanon) (see Eribon 2016: 36), calling to attention how deeply both colonisers and colonised are entangled in colonial and postcolonial power structures, even if this involvement seems much less obvious to the White French population.

However, as his "purpose is less to comment on her work than to take up her questioning of what it means to write in the language of the enemy" (Eribon 2016: 38),[16] Eribon adapts Djebar's concept of historic 'dates of birth', and, turning it into a theoretical lens, looks for potential landmarks related to his own specific social situation. From this, he deduces that there are always multiple, and sometimes conflicting, possibilities of how one's past can be (re-)constructed; a constellation he already approached (in a more narrative way) in *Retour à Reims*, where it is the underlying theme of the whole book: by choosing to present himself as a gay child, and thus inscribing himself into a gay history, Eribon had rejected for a long time that he also had the history of a worker's child. The key moments he lists in response to the question "When was I born?" (Eribon 2016: 50)[17] belong to different timescales that cannot always be reconciled in a unified, totalising temporality.[18] Indeed, the intersections of the different identities and temporalities of the 'I' are always partial and tentative:

15 "Est-ce que ce passé vit encore en nous comme un passé commun? Je veux dire, est-ce qu'il vit en moi avec tant d'intensité qu'en elle [Djebar], selon la description qu'elle en donne?"

16 "mon propos est moins de commenter son œuvre que de reprendre son interrogation su ce que cela signifie d'écrire dans la langue de l'ennemi".

17 "quand étais-je né, alors?"

18 He proposes 1895 (when Oscar Wilde's trial for gross indecency was held), 1924 (when Gide published *Corydon*), and 1952 (when Sartre published *Saint Genet*) as possible 'dates of birth' in the history of his gay self; as far as the history of his working-class origins is concerned, the dates seem less clear to him – he suggests, among others, the publication of the *Communist Manifesto* in 1848, the suppression of the Paris Commune in 1870, and the strikes of the Popular Front in 1936, see Eribon 2016: 50–51.

"Intersection is never given once and for all. It is constantly being constructed and invented, and it must be emphasised that it is constructed against previous political representations, which nevertheless will not disappear" (Eribon 2016: 52).[19]

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It is in relation to this rejection of a totalising perspective that would level conflicting positions – whether they concern the different facets of the self, political claims, or forms of writing – that Eribon develops what I would call a theory of minor subjectivation. 'Minor' here refers to a minoritarian, subordinated social position. The term mirrors what Eribon himself calls the process of "minoritarian subjectivation" (Eribon 2023: 31),[20] that is, the building of a subjectivity that reinvents the self via practices of affirmation and identification under conditions of interiorisation and stigmatisation. In many cases, minor subjects find the means for this process of self-building in literature, which offers them an alternative imaginary that enables the 'decolonisation' of their consciousness from dominant discourses.

Eribon develops this theoretical framework in relation to Chamoiseau's above-mentioned notion of the *sentimenthèque*, the ideal library of texts that shapes the self to become someone other, someone distant from one's origins, and that later provides the tools for 'returning' to this former self. The example of Baldwin's returning and his analysis of a conflicted father-son relationship enables Eribon to confront a hitherto rejected part of his history, giving a form of access to social reality that a simple account of his memories could not have provided. However, literature is not merely a means to 'overcome the effects of domination within ourselves'; it is itself heavily implicated in domination, the 'language of the enemy', as the example of Djebar (and Ernaux) has shown. This constellation – wherein literature is both a tool of the ruling class and a tool of emancipation for Eribon as *transclasse* – necessitates a reflection on the poetics of autosociobiographical writing, and the development of an aesthetic form that stands contrary to traditional forms of literature (which, in the case

19 "L'intersection n'est jamais donnée une fois pour toutes. Elle se construit et s'invente sans cesse, et il faut souligner qu'elle se construit contre les représentations politiques antérieures, qui ne vont pas disparaître pour autant."

20 "subjectivation minoritaire".

of *Retour à Reims* and *Dates de naissance*, Eribon achieves by a hybridisation of theoretical and autobiographical registers).

These considerations are as much political as they are poetical. The notion of a 'theory of the minor subject' also relates to what Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari have called "minor literature", a concept they developed through their engagement with the writings of Kafka.[21] The characteristics of minor literature outlined by Deleuze and Guattari, that is, "the deterritorialization of language, the connection of the individual to a political immediacy, and the collective assemblage of enunciation" (Deleuze/Guattari 1986: 18), also apply to autosociobiography; and this holds all the more true given that "minor no longer designates specific literatures but the revolutionary conditions for every literature within the heart of what is called great (or established) literature", that is, "popular literature, marginal literature, and so on" (Deleuze/Guattari 1986: 18). Linking autosociobiography to these considerations inscribes it into a broader phenomenon of literary forms in which the aesthetic and the socio-political are inextricably interwoven. For Deleuze and Guattari, "everything […] is political" (1986: 17) in minor literature, in the sense that individual concerns are immediately tied to the overarching organisation of the social space; and "everything takes on a collective value" (1986: 17) due to the collective value of the literary enunciation and its community-building function.

What is more, minor literature opts for a language that showcases "its very poverty […] to the point of sobriety" (Deleuze/Guattari 1986: 19). In this sphere, notions like 'truth' and 'the real' make a reappearance as political claims, but they are always located in individual positions, as Mario Laarmann has shown with his notion of "minor universalism", developed in the context to Caribbean literatures (see Laarmann 2023: 123). Here, "[t]ruth can no longer be found in universalist stances uttered from a presumably neutral position, but only in forms of situated, *minor* knowledge" (Laarmann 2023: 123). From an analogous perspective, Eribon pleads for a notion of the global that is not unifying, but leaves space for the specific: "[I]sn't it the sum of all these tensions, of all these processes of divergence, which, by making inward-looking globalisation

21 Eribon himself refers to Deleuze and Guattari's *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* in his Essay "Politiques mineures", where he reflects on their idea of an unconscious structured by the social and the political (as opposed to oedipal symbolism), albeit without explicitly mentioning their theorems of minor literature (Eribon 2016: 182–3).

impossible, will enable new voices, new words, new political subjects… to emerge?" (Eribon 2016: 52–3)[22]

To summarise, from the very beginning, Eribon's autosociobiographical works can be seen to go beyond the contexts into which they are normally inscribed, and to which they are sometimes reduced, namely the Franco-German literary discourse and the question of class relations. Autosociobiography, then, is always already global in several respects: first, by extending to other forms of social domination, whose mutual entanglement is a central concern, and second, because its theoretical and literary relations transcend the European context. As I hope to have shown, the engagement with these relations has had a crucial impact on autosociobiography. Regarding the case of Didier Eribon, autosociobiography is clearly the product of global entanglements – but is this conclusion transferable to other authors, too? One could argue that global historico-political relations of domination, and especially the (post-)colonial situation, have at the very least exerted an underlying influence on autosociobiography and the social theories it is based on – the fundamental importance of Bourdieu's experiences in Algeria for his sociological *œuvre* is just one of many possible examples (see Erdur 2024: 7). But those influences – pertaining, for instance, to language, literary forms, and the topics discussed – are very seldom explicit; they remain a presence at the margins. In my view, this dynamic has more to do with the mechanisms of literary reception in the 'world republic of letters' (see Casanova 2004) than with the authors' personal engagements as such. The position from which they write, albeit structured by the marginalising experience of class domination, is, in a global perspective, still a 'dominant' one, if for no other reason than that they hail from France, one of the literary (and economic) centres of the world.

If we keep in mind Eribon's conception of minor subjectivation when we attempt to map autosociobiography (as a genre) on a global scale, the question is not so much about appropriation or equalising various relations of domination. On the contrary: the engagement with other literary traditions and the links established with other forms of social marginalisation points to new ways of conceptualising critical thinking and literary writing as an emancipatory project – with all its divergences and indissoluble I mbalances of power.

22 "[N]'est-ce pas la somme de toutes ces tensions, de tous ces processus de divergence, qui, en rendant impossible la globalisation fermée sur elle-même, va permettre à de nouvelles voix, à de nouvelles paroles, à de nouveaux sujets politiques… d'émerger?"

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