# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>EDITORIAL</strong></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BEACON</strong></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Interpretation of Psychoanalysis</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BEACON</strong></td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Holophrase, between Psychosis and the Psychosomatic</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>LOG</strong></td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Report on the VIth Congress of the New Lacanian School of Psychoanalysis “The Body and its Objects in the Psychoanalytic Clinic”</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>LOG</strong></td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexandre Stevens “Seminar on Autism”</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>LOG</strong></td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impressions of (a) in Buenos Aires 2008</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>LOG</strong></td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacques –Alain Miller at the Coliseo Theater in Buenos Aires</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BOOKMARK</strong></td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tolstoy and Lacan: Phallic Jouissance and the passage à l’acte in Anna Karenina</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SENTINEL</strong></td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Weekend on the Frontier: Some Reflections on Clinical Study Days 3</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SENTINEL</strong></td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closing Remarks Clinical Study Days 3, in Omaha, Nebraska, June 8, 2008</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHART</strong></td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Editorial

Gary S. Marshall

We are pleased to bring you this 13th issue of the Lacanian Compass. In each issue, we present dynamic material from key figures in the Lacanian orientation, Americans writing about Lacan, and reports on the activities of groups working in the Lacanian tradition in the United States.

This issue begins with two works in the Beacon section that have been just translated into English. The first is Jacques-Alain Miller’s course of March 19, 2008 entitled “The Interpretation of Psychoanalysis”. The second, is a piece previously published in Ornicar? by Alexandre Stevens on language and psychosis. We are excited to bring you these important essays and want to thank Thelma Sowley and Jack W. Stone for their translations. We also thank Liliana Singer for her translation of Vicente Palomera’s essay on the objet a and psychosis in the previous issue of the Compass.

The Bookmark section features a full-length essay by Maire Jaanus on the concept of phallic jouissance in Anna Karenina. The reports in our Log and Sentinel sections reflect the high volume of activities of which we are involved from the NLS conference in Ghent, the NEL seminar on autism in Miami, the WAP conference in Buenos Aires, to the Third Clinical Study Days (CSD3) in Omaha. Of course we are all looking forward to the Paris English Seminar on Ordinary Psychosis, which will be taking place as this 13th issue becomes available.

The Sentinel also includes Alicia Arena’s closing address at CSD3. In it, she delineates the question of “interpretation” as we move from the clinic of the Other to a clinic of the Real. Apropos of this, we are especially pleased to be publishing Jacques-Alain Miller’s course of March 19, 2008 in this issue of the Lacanian Compass.

Finally, our Chart section highlights upcoming activities in each of the enclaves of the Lacanian orientation in the United States. We welcome Pam Jesperson who now catalogs all of the information for the Chart. We also bid farewell and extend a big thank you to Liliana Kruszel, for her tireless work as Secretary of the Lacanian Compass.

As the August holidays approach, we in the United States find ourselves energized not only by the level of activity in which we are engaged but also by degree of rigor and the quality of insight that informs our practice.
Beacon

The Interpretation of Psychoanalysis

Course of March 19, 2008

Jacques-Alain Miller

Translated by Thelma Sowley

JAM returns in this course to his intuition of the preceding course, about liquid speech, in order then to pose questions on the discourse of the analyst as teacher and his responsibility.

So, “the discourse of the analyst who teaches has the function of interpreting psychoanalysis itself”. Psychoanalysis can be interpreted because it is a question of fact.

JAM broaches the two moments of the psychoanalytic experience formalized by Lacan: that of the beginning and that of the end. He attributes to the pass, the value of the major interpretation Lacan gave to psychoanalysis. We can read, at the very end of this Course, remarks on the narration of the pass that “Lacan gave us a glimpse of without specifying its coordinates”, and whose most salient feature is allusion. A narrative that “translates the bypassing of what, depending on the sense, appears as a void”.

(From Ten Line News, n. 386)

You should know that while we are talking about psychoanalysis, there is a pen scribbling on a sheet of paper fixing the status of what psychoanalysis will be in the future. In effect, the French State, like the other European States, is taking an interest in our practice, which has been undergoing an extension in influence that obliges the public powers to consider regulating it. It has been on the agenda for nearly five years now and we made ourselves heard on several occasions with respect to this. The process will soon come to its term, it seems, and given the posture, the engagement that I took, I am obliged to respond and to participate in it. This deducts from my time and my preoccupations a cost for which you unfortunately pay the price. Since this involves negotiations, which are not to be publicized, I cannot, however much I might like to, tell you about it, but it goes without saying that the weight you represent, you whom I address here and elsewhere, counts in the balance. I hope it will be sufficient to prevent the practice that is ours from being confined to the place some would like to give it, a luxurious and private place. I hope it will continue to be present in public institutions and will not disavow the influence it has today in public establishments. But finally all this requires time and requires in particular on my part a mobilization that takes up time that does not always depend on my choice.
This said, I shall go back to what I was talking about last week, at which time I well realize I took a risk by expressing myself from an intuition, or rather by giving expression to the intuition itself, raw, with as little elucubration of knowledge as possible.

Knowledge is elucubrated. This is a designation we owe to Lacan and which is well chosen to keep knowledge at a distance, to indicate the distance there is between knowledge and fact. It without a doubt includes a certain devalorization of knowledge, which is what Lacan was led to. And so, correlative, there is a certain value undoubtedly attached to suspending the elucubration of knowledge, or, at least, to introducing it only step by step, by trying to dose it, in such a way that it modifies as little as possible the facts that are presented.

This intuition that I confided to you is that of a liquid psychoanalysis. One week later, it now seems to me that I let myself go when I delivered that to you in an impulse similar to what leads us to free association.

Evoking psychoanalysis as liquid meant — this is clear to me now — flouting the proprieties of what should be said and even of what should be done. This makes me aware that I am generally bridled by a preoccupation with what should be said and what should be done. One way to say this is: I am held back by the spirit of responsibility. Is that the most suitable way to say it?

What does it mean to be responsible for what one says? It means, to say it more simply, being able to answer for what one says. Being able to confront the question of the other as to the foundations of what you say, what authorizes it and what the consequences are. In effect, when you are in the face of the public powers, you must, you are ordered to be responsible, to answer on occasion for the practice of psychoanalysis, what authorizes some and not others to practice it. And you are certainly required to know how to present this in terms that can be admitted by this other, who, in fact, has the power, — the de facto power and also, very likely, the legal power — to demand it.

But finally, here, in the confines of this lecture hall, I do not have to think about this other. It is not this other who is present. He is a slave. The other concerned is you, you that I address as psychoanalysts, which is surely a simplification of the diversity of those present, who perhaps, probably, are not all psychoanalysts, but who, after all, represent that community.

Last week it seems that, at least in the beginning, I freed myself from the censorship; that heavy responsibility that weighs on one in front of the body of analysts. When one speaks in the mode called free association, one suspends responsibility. Within the psychoanalytic enclave, the analysand is invited to be irresponsible. We can say that it is as if he were obeying the following formula: "I say it and I do not repeat it, I say it and I continue to say." It is, within the analytic experience, what allows the other, the analyst, to repeat what you have said, that is to say, to quote it, and return it to you. Repeating, quoting what is said by the analysand is, in some way, the degree zero of interpretation.

This is moreover what we can, on occasion, turn into a comedy. How do you play at being an analyst? You just repeat what your interlocutor has said with a question mark, you do not show your cards, and then the unfortunate person takes it up from there.
This is a way to play the analyst, I do not advise you do it, it can be very badly taken outside the analytic situation.

The quotation, which produces the same, introduces, a difference as well. It is constitutive of the enunciation — there is properly speaking an enunciation only when there is a quotation. The quotation, I would say, crystallizes liquid speech, solidifies it into a signifying unit, and, when it is used within an exchange between speakers, it re-launches what we call the enunciation, that is to say liquid speech.

So, does the psychoanalyst, a psychoanalyst, have the right to be irresponsible when he is teaching? It is certain that the question weighs heavily on those who are in that position and often leads them, often leads us, to hide behind the statements of psychoanalysts that have preceded us: it leads us to willingly take refuge precisely in quotations. But quoting is not teaching, it is not teaching in the sense that Lacan brought to this term. To the question I evoke concerning the possible irresponsibility of the psychoanalyst when he teaches, Lacan brought an answer — not one, but one among others — which is found on page 836 of the Écrits, I give an approximate quotation: The discourse of the teacher, he says, when he is addressing psychoanalysts, does not have the right to consider itself as irresponsible. The word carries its weight. I can say that, since I began to have access to this position, this phrase, this word, has remained present to me.

How did I gain access to this position? Not institutionally. The institution — the institution in which I consented and still consent to be inscribed — authorized me to teach on the subject of psychoanalysis. I found myself teaching to psychoanalysts because psychoanalysts came to my classes. I remember very clearly my surprise some time ago in remarking the presence of one, two, three … of a greater number coming to follow the deciphering of Freud and Lacan in which I was myself engaged. This gave an even greater weight and presence to the notion of responsibility whose nature was specified by Lacan when he said — these are the terms he then employed — that the subject of desire must know he is an effect of speech, that is to say, he must know that he is the desire of the Other, and that the discourse of the analyst who teaches must be responsible for this effect of speech. There is a contrast between the strong stress put on the word irresponsible and the complexity of what it refers to.

I have already commented and attempted to define the precise point that this responsibility bears on. Today I see it like this. Normally, when you teach, you occupy the place of the Other by function. You are supposed to know, and, in certain respects, by function, you cannot fail to. You end up moreover by becoming accustomed to the unbelievable docility of those who listen, a docility that is only rarely broken. We are pervaded these days by the nostalgia of May '68, when this docility was reversed into contestation, until we realized that contestation was only the symmetrical of docility. There could only be contestation because the words of teachers, in those times, carried a really remarkable weight. Today it is not worth rising up against. Essentially, teachers are asked to teach how things must be done.

This is present in the space where psychoanalysis is taught. There was a time when the ardent question was what the foundations of psychoanalysis were, what could its truth value, its merit be. While today it is solicited much more at the level of comment faire, of
what I had made fun of some time ago as the American question of How to? – How to do it? (Comment on fait?). I just observed that the shelves in bookstores were filled by works whose titles, in all disciplines, begin with How to: handbooks. Those who teach psychoanalysis testify to the same phenomenon. The demand addressed to them today is of this order. It is expressed as a demand for clinical knowledge, but the clinic concerned, the clinic they ask for is a clinic of savoir-faire. I will not embark here on satirizing this demand, which would be useless. It is an element we must work with, that we must know how to handle and that we can take from an angle that is not depreciative: this is what I am probably trying to do moreover. It is a demand for know-how that is intolerant or impatient with elucubrations of knowledge and that requires going to the heart of the experience itself.

For this, the teacher occupies, by hypothesis, the place of the Other. He can only, through his discourse, convey a desire, and, through this desire he determines the place of the subject who is listening. This responsibility also holds for the analyst when he teaches the rule of “free association” to his patient: in doing so he determines his place. And throughout the analytic experience, he has the responsibility of determining the place from which the analysand is going to satisfy him.

What Lacan proposes is that any discourse can consider itself as irresponsible for this effect of speech, which determines the place, and we might say, the worth of the subject, — what you do with what I say is your business — except for the psychoanalyst who teaches. The psychoanalyst who teaches must take into consideration, must know and must handle the effect of speech, the effect of subjective worth, that his discourse bears. This is a tremendous exigency, which is difficult to satisfy, and I realize to what extent it had — I used the term that came to me — bridled me.

Perhaps I might try to elucubrate minimally by saying with respect to this — in the optic for which I use this quotation of Lacan — that the discourse of the analyst teaching functions as an interpretation. What does it interpret? Well, it interprets psychoanalysis itself.

There’s a statement of the kind to make us think. If psychoanalysis can be interpreted, this is first of all because it is for us today — now that it has been practiced for a century — a matter of fact. There is psychoanalysis: there is the history of psychoanalysis, there are analytic institutions, there are psychoanalysts, there are persons who think of beginning an analysis, who begin an analysis — this is a question of fact. And that leaves open the space for interpreting psychoanalysis as a fact. We know it can be interpreted, for example, in the register of sociology — this was attempted —, in the register of collective psychology, the question here is of the psychoanalytic interpretation of psychoanalysis, which is not forcibly unaware of the other determinants of psychoanalysis.

I said: Psychoanalysis is a question of fact. Can we describe this fact?

We would need a method that would resemble, for example, the method of what some time ago was called the New Novel: to try to designate as nearly as possible the surrounding world as being made up of objects placed next to each other, by giving as nearly as possible their coordinates, by playing at purging the description of any
adventitious signification, as if we were articulating the procedure for an experiment. How might we describe psychoanalysis as the New Novel was described? I would say that it is a matter of opening the door, welcoming, installing on a support, a seat, a piece of furniture, an individual — if we suppose that Aristotle is congruent with the New Novel —, and forcing this individual to be reduced to being the one who speaks for an other who listens, and who speaks from time to time. Probably, at the level of fact, we would be led to already distinguish two modes of speech, liquid speech — speech at a pure loss — and interpretation, which is rather solid speech, speech that is brief and dense. Of course, we would have to describe the fact that one directs and receives the individual, receives the payment — but finally, I leave this factual description to your style, your imagination, I am aiming at a certain degree zero, that I am not trying to produce.

And then, over and above this, all the rest is of the order of the interpretation of psychoanalysis. What takes place in what conventionally is called a situation, a setting or an experience, all this belong to the interpretation of psychoanalysis. Freud’s work and Lacan’s teaching are of the order of the interpretation of psychoanalysis.

It is notable if we refer to one or the other, it is a massive, obvious fact, that for the one as for the other, this interpretation is transformed over the course of time. And if we relate the one to the other, it is because once they are involved in this affair, they do not stop. Freud did not stop producing articles, books and lectures, in a continuous movement. And it is even more flagrant with Lacan who obliged himself to interpret psychoanalysis every week for thirty years, never putting his burden down, never saying, “That’s it” or saying it only to immediately open up the way to complements, corrections and transformations. This is quite singular, if we think about it, if we rid ourselves of this habit.

With Freud it is classical to distinguish between, for example, the epoch of the first topic and that of the second, in which the coordinates of the interpretation of psychoanalysis are modified. For Lacan too, his teaching lends itself to being cut into periods. I was, I believe, the first to do this, or at least I was the most stubborn: the first Lacan, the classic Lacan, the last teaching, the very last teaching and this has been validated at least by the fact that it is taken up by his readers.

This of course opens onto the question as to what contemporary interpretation can be given to psychoanalysis, since everything shows that the interpretation of psychoanalysis depends on the time that passes. To be more precise, we might even say that the interpretation of psychoanalysis depends on the effects and consequences of the practice of psychoanalysis on psychoanalysis.

So, we shall allow ourselves a return to the history of psychoanalysis, precisely on what appeared during the 20th century as a censorship, after twenty years of the practice of psychoanalysis, around the year 1920. Everyone agrees to see in this date a turning point of psychoanalytic technique, a turn towards what was called the analysis of resistances.

Lacan relates this turn to what analysts had to observe at this date of what he calls a diminution of the results of analysis. I refer you to the Écrits, page 332, a page that
figures in the Écrit entitled “Variations on the Standard Treatment” in which Lacan tries to inscribe at its place in the historic course of psychoanalysis the attempt he had just inaugurated with his “Discours de Rome”, the year before, in 1953. He rewrites this history then in accordance with the attempt he inaugurates himself. And he recalls, with humor, that Freud recommends, before the 1920s, that haste be made to achieve the inventory of the unconscious before it closes up again. Freud had the intuition that the operation he was implementing would not leave the object of his investigation inert, but that, for having been solicited by psychoanalysis, his object, called the unconscious, would render itself unseizable to his grip. We can say, at least by approximation, that practicing analysts, around the year 1920, experienced something like a moment of closure of the unconscious, that it was no longer as it had been before. This impression, that we have touched the unconscious in a way that does not permit us to interpret psychoanalysis quite as before, does not date from today. It is what had already been experienced by the analytic community around 1920.

Up until then, the key word, the major form of practice was the deciphering of the formations of the unconscious. To analyze was to decipher: dreams, bungled acts, slips of the tongue, Lacan adds to these the disorders of recollection, the caprices of association and he says etc. — the symptom must be added.

What analysts experienced then was the gap between the success of the deciphering and the failure of the truth. The deciphering did not ipso facto have as a consequence the curing of the illness. Since it was still in this guise that the analysand appeared in the analytic cure. The fact that we commonly speak of an analysand rather than of a sick person was already the result of a reinterpretation of psychoanalysis by Lacan, and the fact that we spoke of the analytic experience rather than of the cure was also a reinterpretation. At that time, the analysts painfully felt that deciphering was not, in itself, transformational and they attempted to account for this gap by the concept of resistance. The patient, they thought, resisted recognizing the sense of his symptoms. And because of this, they undertook, they defined psychoanalysis, they interpreted psychoanalysis, over and beyond the deciphering of the unconscious, as the analysis of resistances.

Lacan’s position, at the beginning of his attempt, was that the analysis of resistances, in which all the analysts except Freud were engaged according to him, translated, I quote him, a movement of abdication with respect to the use of speech. In parentheses, there is probably reason to question the relation that exists between this supposed abdication with respect to the use of speech and the explicit devalorization that the use of speech undergoes in the very last teaching of Lacan: is what he designated as abdication that which returns as a devalorization of the use of speech at the end of his own trajectory?

The analysis of resistance promotes two categories, that of the ego, taken from the second topic, which would be the agent of the resistance (while in his second topic, Freud gives a place to the resistance of the id and the superego) and the category of defense. These two categories converge in the concept produced by Anna Freud of the mechanisms of defense of the ego, which will become the major doctrine of the analytic community until the emergence of the category of counter-transference.

Lacan inaugurated his teaching by the critique of the analysis of resistance, that is to say, by a renewed faith in the powers of speech and its effectiveness on the drive. He
called this a new alliance with Freud's discovery. A new alliance renewed by the support
found in linguistics, but let’s say a new alliance that reunited with the faith of its origins
and gave to his “Discours de Rome” the enthusiasm of laying bare the spirit of
psychoanalysis.

This also supposed substituting to the ego what Lacan called at that time the subject-
point of interpretation. The subject-point of interpretation is his first definition of the
subject: what he called the subject is what is docile to interpretation; what he called
subject is a variable to which an interpretation can give its value. That places outside its
field what is inert with respect to the action of speech — considering that this inertia is
only secondary. And so, it is, in a way, a transparent interpretation of psychoanalysis.

Effacement of the ego, substitution of the subject to the ego, and thirdly, this supposed
the supremacy of desire. Desire, while being in a relation of derivation with respect to the
demand, is subjected to interpretation, or is even identical to interpretation. We have
Lacan's famous statement: Desire is its interpretation. And the supremacy of desire is
particularly the supremacy of desire over the drive. We can say that the essential thesis
by which Lacan outclasses the difficulties that had given birth to the analysis of
resistance is: desire structures the drives. Which means: the incentive is in every case,
an incentive of speech.

Lacan translates this dominance of speech into the constant promotion of the symbolic,
so far as replacing the defense mechanisms of the aging Anna Freud by the signifying
mechanisms of metaphor and metonymy. He uses for this purpose the word
“mechanism”, which, in the framework of analytic discourse, inevitably evokes the Anna
Freudian term.

So, resistance. Why had they interpreted psychoanalysis during the 1920s in terms of
resistance? Because they believed they could conclude that liquid speech had no effect,
did not have a sufficient effect beyond a certain point, that it only had limited effects. And
finally resistance was the name of this limit. So that, in certain respects, resistance might
be what Lacan had rediscovered under the form of jouissance.

For a long time, during more than ten or twelve, thirteen years, Lacan had left his
doctrine of the end of analysis in some suspense. It remained in his Seminars, in his
Écrits, as a horizon, as if a certain difficulty was attached to specifying the end of
analysis when it is conceived, to say it very simply, with reference to speech.

It was at the time that he proposed, that he interpreted psychoanalysis by the pass that
he thought he had overcome this obstacle. The pass is probably the major interpretation
of psychoanalysis that Lacan produced. He interpreted psychoanalysis in the sense that
it had to have an end, and that this end translated this passage. In the text in which he
presented this — since he put it into writing before turning it into a course — called
“Proposition sur le psychanalyste de l’École”, written on October 9, 1967, while he had
begun his teaching in 1953, so fourteen years later, it must be noted that he focuses in
effect on the beginning and the end of analysis. This is well known, except that it must
be added that he had reserved, as it were, his doctrine on the course of analysis. The
third term is the course of analysis, what we have between the beginning and the end.
What is notable in this? It is in quite different terms that he articulates the beginning and the end. To say things very simply, he articulates the beginning in terms of signifiers and the end in terms of jouissance — he essentially uses the term fantasy, but we know that he will forge the concept of fantasy in the direction of bringing out the jouissance that is retained, produced or hidden in it. We have then a terminological gap between the beginning and the end, and it is this gap itself that will motivate him, in his Seminars, to look for the articulation of these two moments.

For the beginning, what is involved? It involves essentially the installation of the transference, which is then interpreted by the subject supposed to know. Interpreting the beginning of psychoanalysis by the subject supposed to know requires the reduction of the unconscious to signifiers that are supposed. This supposes we interpret the unconscious in terms of signifiers and since these are signifiers that are only supposed, we interpret the unconscious in terms of significations of knowledge. The initial situation for Lacan is a situation he calls conventional, that is to say articulated by a convention, which comes in place of the term which it rejects, but which it transmits in another way, by a contract. This marks in fact a certain agreement.

In this interpretation, what is above all remarkable is that, reducing the analysand to one signifier and the analyst to another: S→Sq, he does not place this signification of knowledge: s as appended to the analyst [JAM first places s underneath Sq], he places it as appended to the analysand [JAM erases the s from underneath the Sq and places it under S]. But we must understand that this is like the delayed effect of the connection with the analyst, that it is the articulation of the signifier “analysand” to the signifier “analyst”, which is supposed to give birth to the signification of unconscious knowledge. This affectation of the unconscious knowledge on the side of the analysand permits him in fact to emphasize that the analyst himself [JAM underlines Sq] knows nothing of the signifiers that are supposed for the unconscious of the analysand [JAM encircles s]. It places stress on his ignorance, and so justifies the Freudian recommendation to approach each new case as if nothing had yet been acquired from the deciphering of other cases. In any case, to simplify, the beginning here is articulated in terms of signifier and signified. And if there is a desire implied, the only one that can be distinguished is a desire to know.

While, if we consider the end of the analysis, what is remarkable is that a new term appears, that of the object little a: (a), which is brought into function with the term of the castration complex, written minus phi: (-φ), like two solutions that can be brought to the question of the being of the psychoanalysand. The terms, the object, castration, being were all absent from the initial presentation. We can even say, correlativey, that, in the register of the beginning, it seems we were only in the order of dis-being; the desire to know has no hold except on a dis-being [JAM writes désêtre underneath the schema of the beginning], and here, on the contrary, we are supposed to have access to being [JAM writes être underneath the schema of the end].
We have here a cleavage, the terms are posed, but the passage remains problematic, and this is what inspired Lacan's research in his subsequent Seminars.

It is simply said that the exit from analysis implies that the analyst partner must vanish; that in this relation only the vain knowledge was elucubrated of a being that steps aside, and does not reveal itself, in the examples that Lacan himself showed; that in what we can call a fixation of jouissance [JAM writes on the board: fixation of j.], which is quite distinct from what had been designated as the signification of unconscious knowledge. Lacan names this fixation of jouissance, for which he gives two examples drawn from his practice, naïveté. This term is well chosen in opposition to the sophistication of the relations of the signifier and the signified: the labyrinthine research inaugurated by the subject supposed to know gives rise to a naïve solution, which he formulates in just one sentence. His successive attempts were to invent a logic that would lead from the knowledge supposed to the discovery of a fixed jouissance. He approached this fixed jouissance by means of the fantasy, then by an enlarged concept of the symptom.

Obviously, there is a difference between approaching it through the fantasy or through the symptom or the sinthome. The difference is the one he reveals in his text on “Joyce the Symptom”, that the jouissance proper to the symptom is opaque, that is to say, it excludes the sense. This could not be better phrased, the fixation of the jouissance essential to the subject, when we call it “symptom”, is outside sense [JAM writes on the board: S: outside sense], that is to say, it is outside the hold of the matrix that was posed initially.

Having recourse to sense to resolve jouissance, this is for Lacan a flattening, it implies giving to analysis only a flat end, and he congratulates Joyce, for example, for having avoided it.

Analysis uses the paternal metaphor to solve the question of jouissance, it uses the paternal metaphor and, let’s say, its usual conceptual caboodle to buffer the enigma of jouissance and bring it to turn towards the sense, but this is only — and Lacan’s very last teaching is engaged in this — this is nothing but a dupery. Having recourse to the paternal metaphor is only a dupery with respect to the enigma of a jouissance that excludes the sense.

This is why Lacan could only say this about the end of the analysis, — in fact, he did not say it, I’m following the direction he indicates — that the end of the analysis is a construction of the analysand. It is the sense of his question: what pushes anyone to historicize himself, especially after an analysis? What pushes an analysand to narrate his analysis, to make a narration out of it that has sense, especially after an analysis? Which means that the analysis must have taught him what excludes the sense from jouissance. So why weave a tale that would account, in the sense, for the fixity of jouissance?
And he gives an indication. He indicates, in his last reflections, the cleavage there is between the lying truth, which is elaborated in the initial dimension [JAM points to the schema of the beginning], and what is obtained at the end and which, authentically, is not coherent with the system. This leaves open an order of narration that is nevertheless conceivable on condition that its own incompleteness is preserved.

The account of the pass, such as Lacan suggests without giving its coordinates, is a narrative that must include essentially the character of the allusion, of what is neither said fully, nor directly, but a narrative that translates the circumscription of what, depending on the sense, appears as a void.

I shall have to stop there, first because it is time, and above all because it is not fitting to give the key of the allusion.

Until next week. (Audience applause)
Beacon

The Holophrase, between Psychosis and the Psychosomatic

Alexandre Stevens

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Translated by Jack W. Stone. (Original Pagination Included)

Jacques Lacan utilizes the term "Holophrase" a number of times in his teaching.\(^1\) He borrows it from linguistics, but in this field, the usages and destinies of this term are not univocal and do not overlap. Moreover, this recourse to linguistic terminology does not signify that the holophrase remains for him a linguistic notion. We know Lacan made many other borrowings from the science of language, and at times they were much more prominent as to their destiny in his teaching. It is obvious that these borrowings are on the order of a means, and that Lacan submits them to the conceptual twists necessary to his object, psychoanalysis.

So we have sought to make clear the particular destiny Lacan gives to the term holophrase, a particular destiny as to the twists he works on this linguistic notion, but also as to the evolution of his usage of it at different moments in his teaching.

I. Some Origins

The adjective "holophrastic" appears in the literature in 1866. The substantive, "holophrase," probably comes a little later. Let us start by giving three definitions dating from the last century.

"Holophrastic: grammatical term. Holophrastic languages, languages where the whole term, the subject, verb, rule, and even its parenthesis [incident], are swallowed up in a single word."\(^2\)

"Holoprasia: system of holophrastic languages."\(^3\)

"Holophrastic: said of languages where a whole phrase is expressed by a single long word. Such is the case in American languages. So it is that in Delaware the word

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\(^1\) This article was edited from a work presented in September 1986 for the obtainment of the Diplôme des Études approfondies from the Department of Psychoanalysis of the University of Paris VIII.


\(^3\) Nouveau Larousse illustré (8 vol.), Paris, 1899-1904, vol. 5, p. 144.
 kuligatchis signifies: 'Give me your pretty little paw.' Linguists still call these languages 'incorporating' or 'polysynthetic.'

When Lacan signals, in Book I of the Séminaire, that the term holophrase has made a lot of ink flow, he is saying it in reference to the multiplication of theories on the origin of language. We must nonetheless note that the linguists utilizing the term "holophrase" are not very numerous, although the word-phrase notion is quite widespread. Several important dictionaries, including linguistic ones, neglect the term, while others give it a definition borrowed from – if not dated from – Jacques Lacan, as does the Trésor de la Langue française: "Holophrase: there are some phrases, some expressions, that are not decomposable, and that are related to a situation taken as a whole; these are holophrases (J. Lacan, le Séminaire, book I)."

**Linguistic Contexts**

This word, or the notion it covers, the word-phrase, appears in three different contexts in linguistics, which based on this find themselves associated, but for each of which we must recognize its own pertinence.

It appears first in the typology of languages to characterize a grammatical relationship. Thus, in this sense, it is a fashion of interrogating the functioning of the phrase inasmuch as it founds a unity. The holophrase allows us, in the classification of spoken languages, to gather under its grammatical principle all the languages that are neither flexional nor isolating. This attempt cannot be correctly understood without reference to the context in which it prevailed, that of the historical and comparative linguistic science of the 19th century.

But a number of these holophrastic languages are those of peoples called, in the 19th century, "primitive" or "savage." The encounter of this fact with Darwinian theory is going to make of the holophrase the link, if not missing at least intermediary, between animal modes of expression and human language. So the second linguistic context in which this notion occurs is that of theories of the origin of language. It is distanced from any scientific context to be inscribed as a hypothesis in a Romantic framework. One is astonished to see that these hypotheses can reappear, here and there, in the 20th century, after the epistemological cut the Saussurian project and structuralism founded in relation to theories of this type.

On the other hand, one is not astonished, without however adhering to it, by the third context, psychological this time. The putting of the "primitive" in a series with the origin is quite naturally going to be completed by the child. This is the passage from phylogenesis to onto-genesis in the framework of developmental theories dear to Piaget and often taken up again by the Anglo-Saxons.

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1 Ibid.
Typology

The first linguistic context – and the only properly linguistic one – where the notion of holophrase appears is that of the typology of languages, which is to say of the classification of languages by the usage of marks internal to their structure. Our project, in this paragraph, cannot be to exhaust the set of the linguistic typologies or of the critiques they have given rise to. We will limit ourselves to giving some points of reference necessary to circumscribe the function of the holophrase which is, in typology, the model of a whole series of languages called, according to the classifications, agglutinative, incorporative, polysynthetic . . .

Typologies flourished in the 19th century. The cause of this was incontestably the discovery, at the end of the 18th, of Sanskrit and its relations to the languages spoken in the major part of Europe, as well as to the ancient languages – Greek and Latin – from which they issued. The extraordinary progress of this discovery in historical linguistics and comparative grammar definitively founded linguistics as a science in separating it from philology. Linguistics remained fundamentally historical and comparative from then until the Saussurian cut.

The distinction between types of language, their classification, or their typology, is determined by the level of description and the criterion chosen to discriminate them. One does not obtain the same distribution with a phonetic, a grammatical, a semantic, or again a genetic criterion. One of the difficulties of 19th century typology comes from its not having sufficiently taken into account the disjointed character of these criteria.

Von Humboldt's tripartition has remained no doubt the most classic of 19th century typologies. He distinguishes between isolating languages (Chinese and the languages connected to it), flexional languages (Indo-European and Semitic), and agglutinative languages (all the others). This distribution is founded on "the predominate structure of the word as grammatical unit."¹ The holophrase is inscribed in the last type.

In effect, word-phrases are constituted by the agglutination of morphemes "the translations of which would be represented by separate words in more familiar languages."²

Von Humboldt was led to develop two non-superimposable typologies (let us signal that other typologies will arise, which will take into account other discriminative criteria), one founded on the structure of the word – which is the one we gave above – and the other on the structure of the phrase. This makes it so that holophrastic languages are found under the first classification as "agglutinatives," under the second as "incorporating."³ Let us clarify these two mechanisms with the help of examples.

¹ R. H. Robins, A Short History of Linguistics, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1967, p. 176. We should note that the tripartition we are giving is a reading of Von Humboldt's typology by A. Schleicher.
Agglutination concerns the structure of words in which prefixes and suffixes are linked to the root to form new, more complex lexicalized words. Ex.: in French: in-just-if-iable. Bantu languages function systematically in this mode. Ex.: Mu-ntu mu-ya, a good man, ku-longola, re-do, ku-longezia, make do [faire faire].

Incorporation concerns the structure of the phrase where semantic and grammatical functions are agglutinated and form what one can call a holophrase. Ex.: "In Brazilian, tuba is both a substantive expression signifying his father, and a verbal expression signifying: he has a father; in addition, the same word is also employed for father in general, although the idea of father is always a relative idea. Likewise, xe-r-uba is at once my father and I have a father; and so on for all the persons. The indecision of the grammatical idea in this case goes even farther, and tuba can, in keeping with other analogies that exist in this language, also signify: he is father [ . . . ]. The grammatical form is here reduced to the simple juxtaposition of a pronoun and a substantive, and it is the understanding that must introduce into it the link in relation with the desired sense. It is clear that the indigenous speaker, in this expression, conceives of nothing other than the words and the father united, and that one would have to go to a lot of trouble to make him clearly hear the difference between expressions we find confused here." Sapir gives an example of incorporation "in the form of a joke" in reference to an American Indian tribe. When these Indians speak of another tribe, reputed to have a flaw in their pronunciation, they systematically introduce into the word-phrases the sound "tc" which serves as a sign for this flaw but which, from being introduced in certain places in these word-phrases, nonetheless does not imitate this flaw. On sees already brought out by these two examples of the holophrase the idea that the word-phrase is an amalgam constituted of elements not perfectly lexicalized and which only maintain their signification from the amalgam in which they are taken. G. Guillaume will take this idea farther, in showing that in the holophrase there is a logical antecedence of the phrastic seizure [saisie] to the lexical seizure. We will come back to this.

Linguistic typology, its principle itself, has been profoundly upset by Saussurian thought. F. de Saussure contests, one could say, the pertinence itself of typology: "[ . . . ] no family of languages belongs by right and once and for all to a linguistic type. [ . . . ] No character is permanent by right; it can only persist by chance." Likewise, Benveniste underscores the non-identity between structural relatedness and genetic relatedness: "[ . . . ] Takelma (an Indian language) possesses all of the six traits of which the union constituted, in Troubetzkoy's eyes, the distinctive mark of the Indo-European type. It is probable that an extended investigation would confront us with analogous cases in other

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families.”¹ For Jacobson as well, it is a question of highlighting the fundamental forms of some “possible linguistics,” without necessarily being led to group languages in types.²

G. Guillaume himself reconstructs a typology on some new bases. In his course of the year 1948-1949, the opposition between the lexical seizure, the phrastic seizure, and the radical seizure allows him to define certain states of language. The phrastic seizure is the perception of the unity of the phrase with the closed loop of signification it entails. The lexical seizure signifies that the word belongs to the code, which is to say it can export its signification when it is moved into other places in the syntactical ordering. One sees from the start the proximity of this double seizure with the terms message and code that Lacan utilizes in the graph. For Guillaume, the holophrase corresponds to a moment where the phrastic seizure and the lexical seizure are confused, which amounts to saying that there is no lexicalization as such at that moment, and that the phrastic seizure is therefore logically first.³

In his course of 1956-1957, it is again a question of the construction of a typology. This construction keeps the same foundations, but is expressed by the particularization of three linguistic areas. The first area corresponds to "linguistic man no 1, that of the holophrase."⁴ In the first part of this course, Guillaume situates the holophrase as an act of language where "act of representation" (language [la langue]) and "act of expression" (discourse) coincide. This coincidence evokes the "monolith" (between subject and signifier) that Lacan talks about in his Seminar on "Desire and its Interpretation" and that we will comment on later.

Note that as much by these structural references, as by the opposition phrastic seizure/lexical seizure that suggests the one inscribed on Lacan's graph,

message/code, as finally by the manner in which he includes everything in excluding the question of the origin of language, Guillaume, who taught at L'École pratique de haute Études from 1938 to 1960, indeed appears to be Lacan's major reference as regards the holophrase.

The Origin of Language

Formulated since the most distant antiquity, theories and hypotheses on the origin of language particularly flourished in the 18th and 19th centuries.

In the 18th century, they consisted of speculations which, in their essentials, did not yet arise from a properly linguistic study, since linguistic science, in the modern sense of the

word, had not yet been born. These theories are not founded on the structural elements internal to languages really spoken, or on the comparison of these elements between diverse languages. We evoke here only Condillac and Rousseau, who have very similar conceptions of the origins of language: “Language originated in deictic and imitative gestures and natural cries, but since gestures were less efficient as communicative signals the phonic element in human language became dominant [. . .].”\(^1\) “The natural cries served then as a model for making a new language.”\(^2\) “It was neither hunger, nor thirst, but love, hatred, pity, anger, that tore the first voices from them.”\(^3\) “[ . . . ] the sounds would be quite varied [. . . ] they would sing instead of speaking; most of the radical words would be from sounds imitative of or with the accent of passions, or of sensible objects: onomatopoeia would make itself felt there continually.”\(^4\)

Likewise, the theory of the formation of Meridional languages and Northern languages that we owe to Rousseau, even if can be compared with certain theories of onomatopoeia,\(^5\) is fundamentally pre-linguistic – “The principle cause that distinguishes them is local; it comes from the climes where they are born.”\(^6\) – because they are not founded on the study of structural elements internal to languages.

The emergence, in the 19th century, of historical and comparative linguistics, and their encounter with the evolutionary theories of the naturalists – Lamarck and above all Darwin – founds some new theories on the origin of language. The explicit content of these theories is not always new in relation to the hypotheses of the 18th century, since the principle among them repose on the development of expressive animal cries in the form of human interjections, and imitations of the noises of nature in the form of onomatopoeias.

The first big difference between the theories of the 18th century and those of the 19th is that the latter are founded on the structure of spoken languages and on the comparison of diverse structural elements between these languages, which is to say, on the historical evolution of signs that constitute human language. Of course, after Saussure, one will be able to say that “these descriptions of the 'savage' sign (that of others) are savage descriptions of the symbol (ours).”\(^7\) Even if there is a certain naïveté in the attempts, even in certain typological enterprises, to reconstruct an originary language, the fact of their founding themselves on the study of signs to draw from it some consequences for the origin of these signs nonetheless constitutes the first difference between the linguistics of the 19th century and the hypotheses of the 18th.

The second big difference is that the 19th century theories try to explain the step made from the animal to the human. It is a question, implicitly or explicitly, of reconstructing the

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7. T. Todorov, op. cit., p. 262.
missing link of evolutionism. The holophrase takes its application from this thread, from which Lacan extracts it to demonstrate the non-pertinence of this supposed transition.¹

This transition is already wholly given in the work of Darwin. From the organization of the image for the animal to the detour stage it may well be capable of, and to the origin of human language, there is for him only a small step: "some early progenitor of man, probably first used his voice in producing true musical cadences, that is in singing, as do some of the gibbon-apes at the present day. [. . . ] It is, therefore, probable that the imitation of musical cries by articulate sounds may have given rise to words expressive of various complex emotions. [. . . ] May not some unusually wise ape-like animal have imitated the growl of a beast of prey, and thus told his fellow-monkeys the nature of the expected danger? This would have been a first step in the formation of a language."³ Human language is therefore, for Darwin and a number of linguists of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th, instinctive in nature, in continuity with the innate expression of emotions.⁴

The influence of Darwin’s evolutionist theories – but already present before him at the beginning of the 19th century, in Lamarck – is largely made felt in the linguistic theories on the origin of language. In 1863, Schleicher even published a work titled Darwinian Theory and Linguistics, where he “regarded himself as a natural scientist and his field, language, as one of the natural organisms of the world, to be treated by the methods of natural science [. . .].”⁵

In this context, the holophrase is evoked, explicitly or implicitly,

51

by a number of theories on the origin of language that we are going briefly to pass in review. The intermediary stage between the animal expressive cry or the noise of nature and human language – whether one calls this stage “interjection” or “onomatopoeia,” or something else – arises from the apperception of a global situation in which a sign is associated in this way, a sign given its sense by this situation taken as a whole. This sign, which will appear to us more or less arbitrary, appears, in these theories, as natural as it already does cultural. The holophrase thus arises, in this context, from a Romantic project of reconciliation between nature and culture.

This position is caricatured in certain contexts, but much more nuanced in others. Thus, in Von Humboldt, who should probably be considered, like Saussure, one of the founders of modern linguistics, one finds at the same time remarks on the origin of language that appeal to the holophrase – the “originary syllabic agglutination” – and an already almost structuralist position on the same question. He considers in fact that at

2. We do not wish to elaborate on these questions any further. We suggest the reader refer to Darwin, The Descent of Man, New York, New York University Press, eds. Paul H. Barret & R. B. Freeman, vol. I, p. 80 (for details on the experience of the pike in regard to the imaginary relation), Chap. II-III, p. 15-80 and 82-83 (concerning the detour stage, as Lacan names it in Book I of the Séminaire), Chap. III, p. 91-92 (on the origin of language).

Page 20 of 76
the moment of origin, language has to already be there, which is to say, without transition.¹

Linguistic theories on the origin of language refer themselves, practically all of them, to four types of solutions: onomatopoeias – given as imitative of a natural noise –, interjections – which more directly evoke the animal cry –, noises accompanying muscular efforts, and songs. The principle of these theories is always the same. A noise acquires its signification from a whole situation. This, whether or not it is made explicit, is the principle of the holophrase.²

Let us take an example from the fourth type of these theories, those founded on the passage of the non-formulated song supposed to accompany the activities of pre-human animal hordes, above all amorous activities, to the proper name or to the designation of whole situations. The principal representative of this type of theories is no doubt Otto Jesperson. “If a certain number of people have together witnessed some incident and have accompanied it with some sort of impromptu song or refrain, the two ideas are associated, and later on the same song will tend to call forth in the memory of those who were present the idea of the whole situation. Suppose some dreaded enemy has been defeated and slain; the troop will dance around the dead body and strike up a chant of triumph [. . .] This combination of sounds, sung to a certain melody, will now easily become what might be called the proper name for that particular event. [. . .] Under slightly altered circumstances, it may become the proper name of the man who slew the enemy. The development can now proceed further by the metaphoric transference of the expression to similar situations (‘There is another man of the same tribe: let us kill him as we did the first!’) or by a blending of two or more of these proper-name melodies.”³

The holophrase as J. Lacan discusses it in Book I of the Seminar in reference to the origin of language, is consistent [au principe] with most of these theories. “Men did not at all begin by having some parts of discourse that they then would have learned to stitch together; but by articulating some sounds having a general sense [. . .] a single word sufficing to recount a whole deed, a whole history, as sometimes still happens with us.”⁴

We must nonetheless signal that if certain linguists think that the ditch between animal language and human language can be filled, others remain incontestably more prudent.⁵ Sapir, for example, well situates the two major flaws in these theories. To begin with,

³ O. Jespersen, op. cit., p. 440.
interjections and onomatopoeias have little weight in languages really spoken today. The problem, then, is less of knowing the type of the originary phonic element than of grasping how the symbol could have been detached from its first imaginary, expressive value. He shows that none of the theories of the origin evoked thus far answer this question. This does not however prevent us from recognizing a properly linguistic pertinence to these hypotheses founded on the holophrase, without for all that considering them to solve the problem of the origin of language.

Already in the 17th century, Géraud de Courdenay remarks that there is a means of making natural signs, those expressing emotions, deceptive. But the Saussurian cut is required for the arbitrariness of the sign to relegate to the storeroom the theories of the origin founded on the continuity between the signs of emotion and the signifiers of language. Even if such theories still occasionally flourished after Saussure, they are from before him, or are not linguistic.

Linking on the same plane historical primitiveness and linguistic primitiveness is what is done in the theories of the origin we have evoked. Now, precisely, the cut between animal and man is not "historical," but "it happens in the middle of man himself, in that precisely, as a living being, he is traversed at full throttle [de plein fouet] by his own language."

53

The double putting in a series, of the primitive and the child, of the origin of language in nascent humanity and the acquisition of language by the little man, is often encountered in linguistic literature, when it concerns itself with the origin.

If we believe Herodotus, the idea that the emergence of language in the child must no doubt reflect the appearance of language in the world has been around since distant antiquity. In fact, the Pharaoh Psammetichus was to have locked up two children together, isolating them from their earliest youth from all verbal contact with other humans, with the idea of discovering the language they would spontaneously speak on their emergence from their splendid isolation, this language being the supposed one of nascent humanity. The experience would have, they say, succeeded, since one would have recognized in their language some Phrygian words, demonstrating that this language is that of the origin.
Numerous more recent authors have again taken up this idea that childhood language gives us, as in a "natural" relationship of ontogenesis to phylogenesis, an idea of what language could have been at its origins. This analogy, however, is very dubious.¹

The recognition of a holophrastic stage in the language of the young child, as a particular of development, has more recently known a vigor accrued by Anglo-Saxon labors. Here is an example: "Holophrase: A term used in language acquisition to refer to a grammatically unstructured utterance, usually consisting of a single word, which is characteristic of the earliest stage of language learning in children. Typical 'holophrastic' utterances include dada, allgone, more, there" [in English].² It must be stressed however that these ideas derive more from psychologies of development than from linguistic science.³

We will not further develop this third context where the notion of the holoprase appears, because the texts of Lacan we are going to comment on do not refer to it. Lacan, we know, brushes aside almost from the start any notion of development, psychoanalysis only concerning the history of the subject.

II. – No Transition between Imaginary and Symbolic

In Book I of his Seminar, Lacan speaks of the holoprase in the context of theories on the origin of language.⁴

This passage, which is presented as a parenthesis, has as its aim to reveal the fundamental impasse Balint is engaged in with his theory of primary love. Balint in fact supposes a putting in continuity of the imaginary and the symbolic: the first satisfaction of need is primary love, where the intersubjective relation is founded, and this primitive plane of need functions in an absolutely symmetrical way, the object of love and care – the child for its mother in this moment of primary love – capable of being instantly, if necessary, transformed into her prey. "The eating of Children [ . . . ] for the Australian woman is a simple satisfaction of an instinctual need free from any burden of guilt [ . . . ] The relation between mother and child is built upon the interdependence of the reciprocal instinctual aims."⁵

This is the position that Lacan inverts: "If you look at it closely, this symbolic domain is not in a simple relationship of succession with the imaginary domain of which the pivot is

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¹ Concerning this, see R. Jacobson, Langage Enfantin et Aphasie, Paris, Flammarion, 1980, especially p. 70. Even if Jacobson evokes, as do many others, a holophrastic "stage" for the child (as in The Sound Shape of Language, Indiana University Press, 1979, p. 57), he refuses to put it in a series with "the primitive" and the question of the origin.


the mortal, intersubjective relation.\(^1\) It is this logical impossibility of a leap from the imaginary to the symbolic that comes to underpin the passage on the holophrase.

At the same time that Lacan insists on the reversal of perspective to be brought to the questions dealt with by Balint, he himself brings this reversal to the problem, debated in historical linguistics, of the origins of language.

Any discussion of the origin of language is tainted with a certain cretinism, because it makes its own the idea that thought is anterior to language and that this thought progressively isolates the tools necessary for its communication. This in fact is one of the \textit{a priori} that preside over numerous discussions of the origin of language of the two last centuries. Now, we are already swimming in where language had its advent. The pact of the given speech always presides over its invention. In fact, we have known since Saussure that the isolation of the detail, of the particularity, of the combinatory element only operates in the share of significations because of the signifier, and that the signifier only gets its value from finding itself opposed to the set of other signifiers. The cut the signifier effects in significations, at the same time as in the sonic flow, constitutes the mental image that is the signified. Thought can therefore not be invoked \textit{a priori} in the constitution of this signifying cut, since it is constituted by it.

This is what makes Lacan say, in reference to these theories on the origin of language: "Thought would by itself cross through the detour stage, which marks animal intelligence, to pass to that of the symbol. But how, if there is not first the symbol, which is the structure itself of human thought?"\(^2\)

This supposed passage from the intelligence of the animal to human language is a presupposition explicit or implicit in the theories on the origin of language of linguists of the 19th century. The vogue for these presuppositions has not however disappeared in our day, since it is indeed in this line that is inscribed the attempt to pass from animal ethology to a human ethology.\(^3\) A relatively recent book on language by a Polish Marxist philosopher bears further witness to the vogue they sustain. Adam Schaff writes this: "The unity of thought and the utilization of language is a unity of elements that differ by their genesis [ . . . ] Verbal language is born of the animal cries that express emotions and serve an affectively ‘contagious’ emotional communication. As for thought, it draws its origin and is developed starting from the animal orientation in the world."\(^4\)

Now, there is no continuity between the two – animal intelligence and human language – no more than there is a simple succession between the domain of the imaginary and that of the symbolic. It is not that the animal is without intelligence, but the "detour stage" it can attain to involves no symbolic dimension, despite the presence of three terms – the animal, its prey, and the detour to be effected, whether this detour be in the trajectory to

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item J. Lacan, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 248-249.
\item \textit{Ibid.}, p. 250.
\item We are especially referring here to Karl Lorenz's essay, "Psychologie and phylogénèse," \textit{Essais sur le comportement animal et humain}, Paris, Seuil, 1970.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
follow or in the occasional use of an instrument – because the detour is wholly ensnared\[\textit{engluée}\] in the dimension of the real image in which its prey is precipitated. No pact presides over their relations.

Nor is there any more of the pact in the mechanisms of the parade, and one knows the place the lure can occupy there, demonstrating perfectly the imaginary ensnarement in which the animal is taken with the image that is presented to it.

The image can have a certain degree of precision. The precision in the development of the sexual dance moreover has the consequence of preventing the coupling between species resembling each other. This is what Tinbergen notices about the stickleback: even if a female from a very similar species is approached, the sexual behavior of the male will not fully express itself, for lack of the precise sequence required of the partner.\(^1\)

But this precision of the image does not make a signifier. This is why, if holophrases exist – and they surely do –, they are not a passage between an animal cry and a signifier from language.

Quite to the contrary, the image, for the animal – and also the animal cry, which arises from the same field if it takes on a particular function – far from involving itself in the world of the signifier, is ensnared in the real situation.\(^2\)

Hence, Lacan can say that "between this thing that is phenomenologically the sun [ . . . ] and a circle, there is an abyss," and "even if one crosses it, what progress is there over animal intelligence? None."\(^3\) It all depends in fact on the place assigned to this circle, which may very well only be a lure, an image ensnared in real things. This sun designated by a circle only has value – value in the Saussurian sense – to the extent it refers to other signifiers in an already constituted symbolic field.

The word does not replace the thing. It founds it, renders it present over a ground of absence, transforms it. It has some real effects. This contradicts, let us note in passing, elucubrations concerning the holophrase in its function of origin of language, since they suppose that the word-phrase replaces the thing and is founded by the encounter of a global situation with the cry, onomatopoeia, or interjection, none of which are already taken in a world of symbols. Now, "The symbol only has value if it is organized in a world of symbols."\(^4\) Remember that the value in question is value in the Saussurian sense. It is a part of signification, but a part determined precisely by the relationship of opposition between signifiers.\(^5\)

Hence, Lacan reversed the problematic of origins. At the origin, there is the rule of the game, "the symbolic order, from where the other orders, imaginary and real take their

\(^1\) N. Tinbergen, \textit{la Vie sociale des animaux}, Paris, P. B. Payot, s.d., p. 54.
\(^3\) \textit{Ibid.}, p. 250.
\(^4\) \textit{Ibid.}
\(^5\) F. de Saussure, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 162.
place and are ordered." We are therefore forewarned: one can only accord a value to the holophrase in an existing symbolic fabric.

Let us get more precisely to what Lacan says of the holophrase: "Those who speculate about the origin of language, and try to arrange transitions between the appreciation of the total situation and symbolic fragmentation, have always been struck by what one calls holophrases

[ . . . ] some phrases, some expressions that are not decomposable, and that are related to a situation taken as a whole [ . . . ] One believes oneself to grasp there a point of junction between the animal, which gets by without structuring situations, and man, who inhabits a symbolic world."¹

Everything that comes before in his text – and in our commentary – shows sufficiently that there is no transition, no point of junction between the imaginary ensnarement, the total and unstructured situation,

and the discontinuity the symbolic dimension introduces. It is not for all that – the thing is moreover very clear in the example that is going to follow – that holophrases would not refer to a situation principally situated in the imaginary. But this grasp on a situation of imaginary intersubjectivity no less obligates us to consider them as elements of the symbolic weave. The imaginary adequacy only has pertinence for the animal.² For man, the inadequacy of the imaginary arises precisely from the fact that the imaginary plane is determined by the symbolic field. Notice that the definition Lacan gives of the holophrase is not exactly that of linguists. "Some phrases, some expressions" – it little matters if it is a question of phrases of a single word without syntactical structure; at least this is not for him a characteristic worth insisting on. In every respect, in fact, whether it is a question strictly of a phrase, of a single word, or of a more complex expression, they are already taken in a structure of language. Lacan prefers to insist on the non-decomposable character of these word-phrases.

On the other hand, linguists also on occasion relate the function of the holophrase to something like a situation taken as a whole. It is to this type of situation that the ethnographer cited by Lacan refers, concerning the Fijian holophrase reported in the text – *Ma mi la pa ni pa ta* – which is pronounced in a "situation of two persons, each looking at the other, each hoping that the other is going to offer to do something both parties desire but are not disposed to do."³

The "innocence" of the ethnographer, as Lacan says, is in the extent of the misrecognition to which ideas on the origin of language hold him in regard to his own statement, which nonetheless situates very clearly, as Lacan stresses, a state of inter-gaze, a situation already taken in an elementary intersubjectivity, already marked by the

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field of the symbolic and far, therefore, from corresponding to a moment of transition between a pre-human animal and the speaking human.

If therefore, in the situation to which the holophrase refers, the intersubjective relationship is in fact already there, as it appears in the given example itself, Lacan can logically conclude this passage on the holophrase with a double affirmation. The first part is negative: "The holophrase is not intermediary between a primitive assumption of the situation as total, which would be from the register of the animal action, and symbolization. It is not some kind of first ensnarement of the situation in a verbal world." As Lacan says a little earlier, "there is no possible transition between the two registers, that of the animal desire, where the relation is an object, and that of the recognition of the desire."  

Note that the term ensnarement [engluement] utilized here by Lacan returns several times in this Seminar, always in reference to situations concerning the imaginary plane.  

The second conclusive affirmation is positive: "It is a question rather of something where what is of the register of symbolic composition is defined at the limit, at the periphery 

[. . .] Every holophrase is attached to limit situations, where the subject is suspended in a specular relation to the other." The holophrase therefore concerns these limit situations, "in this intermediary, ambiguous zone between the symbolic and the imaginary."  

This sort of prevalence given to the imaginary field, that of the specular relation and of the "imaginary" intersubjectivity of the inter-gaze, by which Lacan situates the holophrase in this passage, should not make us forget that, as we have amply shown, this place made for the holophrase is only pertinent from being already founded in the symbolic field of the signifying opposition, and that this does not therefore lead the question back to any kind of transition between the two planes.

III. – The Monolith

The passage on the holophrase in the Seminar on "Desire and its Interpretation" is led by Lacan into a double context.

First, in contrast with the well known dream of Anna Freud which, if it is not reduced to a simple statement of needs in the instinctual mode that one could attribute to the

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2. Ibid., p. 242-243.
4. Ibid., p. 251.
5. Ibid., p. 252.
animal, is no more reduced to the function of the holophrase, to the extent itself that the message and code are found explicitly distinguished there.

Moreover, this reference to the holophrase is to be situated in the larger context of the construction of the graphs as Lacan works it out in the first sessions of this Seminar. The holophrase is in fact situated by Lacan on the lower chain of the graph, which later will be articulated as that of the statement [énoncé]. There is no doubt an artifice in thus situating the holophrase on the lower chain. Besides, Lacan does not precisely say that. Rather he situates there "something that participates [ . . . ] in the function of the holophrase." We will of course have to clarify what this function is on the basis of what follows in the development Lacan gives to it.

But it must be added here that if there is indeed a function of the holophrase that clarifies the lower chain, Lacan specifies just before speaking of it

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that "of course, both chains are involved in every process;"¹ and a little later he adds: "What happens in the other line is altogether something else. What one can say of it is not easy to say, but for a good reason: it is that it is precisely this that is at the base of what happens in the first line, the one below."² Therefore, no holophrastic statement is strictly and solely equal to the function of the holophrase, to the extent that it is taken in the discourse of a subject.

This clarification is imperative, since as we have seen, certain people make of the holophrase the paradigm of the acquisition of language by the child, even at times linking ontogenesis and phylogenesis at this level, and so referring us to a conception of the origin of language starting from instinctual development. It cannot in fact be a question for Lacan of steps of development between the two stages of the graph, but indeed of a process [proces] of logical anteriority.³

In this Seminar, Lacan relates the holophrase and the interjection: "To illustrate at the level of demand what the function of the lower chain represents, it is 'bread!' [du pain!] or 'help!' [au secours:]." And he identifies the function of the holophrase with a function of unity of the phrase: "It is something that participates in the unity of the phrase, of this something that has made us speak in a fashion that has made so much ink flow, of the function of the holophrase."⁴ The function of the holophrase is the paradigm of the unity of the phrase to the extent that the code and message are found conjoined there.⁵ "It is a question of that, it is the articulation of the phrase, it is the subject inasmuch as this need, which no doubt must pass through the defiles of the signifier as need, is expressed in a distorted [déformée] fashion, but monolithic at least,

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² Ibid.
³ Ibid. lesson of November 19, 1958.
⁴ Ibid. lesson of December, 3 1958.
⁵ This is quite coherently articulated by some linguists. In particular, G. Guillaume, _Leçons de linguistique 1956-1957_, p. 32-33 and W. von Humboldt, _Introduction à l’oeuvre sur le kavi et autres essays_, p. 294-299.
the monolith in question is the subject itself at this level that constitutes it.”¹

Two terms appear to us to have to be highlighted here: "in a distorted fashion" for the expression of need, and "monolith" for what concerns the subject. Let us examine them both.

We know that need is expressed in a distorted form. Lacan’s teaching up to this date has insisted a lot on the radical distortion of need – in the sense of the need which, for the animal, receives its solution from the instinctual – based on its introduction into the terms of demand, on the necessity of its being made to pass through the defiles of the signifier, on the grasp of the desire of the Other it submits to. We evoked this twisting of need by demand in the commentary on the passage in Book I that retained us earlier. This distortion of need by its necessary articulation in demand is what Lacan re-articulates in a particularly limpid manner, in a text a few months anterior to the one we are commenting on, "The Direction of the Cure," where he writes: "Needs are subordinated to the same conventional conditions which are those of the signifier in its double register: synchronic from its opposition between irreducible elements, diachronic from its substitution and combination, by which language, if it does not fill them all, structures every inter-human relation."² Let us add here only that in "Desire and its Interpretation," Lacan of course returns to this question. One can even say that this fourth session of the Seminar repeats the process, since it is a question, in a first time, of showing that in The Interpretation of Dreams, even where "desire would go straight, in the most direct fashion, to what it desires,"³ which is to say particularly in the dreams of children, the manifest text of the dream is in no way reduced to need. And this is already readable in Freud’s text, since "a hallucinated conduct is distinguished in the most radical fashion from a conduct of autoguidage" (which is to say, instinctual).⁴

On this basis Lacan opposes, in Freud’s text, Anna Freud’s dream – Anna Freud, Er(d)beer, Hochbeer, Eier(s)peis, Papp⁵ – to the remark that comes several lines later in the Freudian text: "I do not myself know what animals dream of. But a proverb, to which my attention was drawn by one of my students, does claim to know. 'What,' asks the proverb, 'do geese dream of? And it replies: Of maize.' " Freud adds in a note: "Pigs dream of acorns and geese dream of maize.' [ . . . ] A Jewish proverb runs: What do hens dream of? – Of millet."⁶

The opposition between Anna’s dream and what geese might dream of is double. Firstly, the goose, we could say, is supposed to dream – but quite obviously “we would be more sure of what hogs and geese dream if they themselves told us”⁷ – of a need one attributes [suppose] to it and that its instinctual behaviors demonstrate sufficiently, while

⁴ Ibid.
⁵ S. Freud, Die Traumdeutung, G.W. II/III, p. 135.
⁶ S. Freud, The Interpretation of Dreams, p. 131-132.
Anna's dream can only be read as a palimpsestic writing. If we can consider what she dreams of as objects that would please her, these signifiers are no less unified, reunited, from being what had been prohibited to her the day before. They represent it and prohibit it, and the nurse chatters about it. This is why what one hesitates from then on to call needs, can only be told in being distorted in the grasp of demand. This, let it be noted, is also true of the holophrase and the examples Lacan give of it. In effect: "Hearing does not force me to understand. What I hear no less remains a discourse, were it as little discursive as an interjection. For an interjection is of the order of language, and not of the expressive cry. It is a part of discourse that is cedes to none other for the effects of syntax in such or such a determined language."¹

The second opposition Lacan makes appear between Anna's dream

and that of the goose concerns the function of the message. It will likewise not be in reference to the holophrase, since the holophrase constitutes a monolith, as we shall see. Anna Freud's dream begins in fact with her name. This is what Lacan stresses: "When one telephones another from a booth, one begins by announcing what? One announces oneself; one announces the one who is speaking. Anna Freud, at nineteen months, during her dream, announces herself, she says: "Anna F-eud," and she makes her series. I would almost say that one only expects one thing, after having heard her articulate her dream, and it is that she say at the end: finished."² Must we add that it is obviously scarcely envisageable that, in the dream imagined for the goose, it name itself?

In this passage, Lacan therefore makes it clear, first of all, that in the holophrase what is knotted differs from the case of the goose (to the extent it dreams), because the signifier, as solidified as it may be, is never reduced to the instinctual. Lacan had already developed this position in Book I of the Seminar. But he makes it clear in the second place – and this was not present in Book I – that the holophrase differs from the text of a dream, however simple it is, such as that of Anna Freud, in that the subject does have to be counted there. It is already identified. It is solidified in the holophrastic signifier. It constitutes with this signifier a monolith. The monolith is the subject, which is reduced here to the emitter crying: "Bread!" [du pain!]. The pure articulation of the phrase suffices to constitute this elementary subject, because it is already included in this articulation itself and remains indissociable from it: "When the individual, or the crowd, or the rioters cry: 'Bread!', one knows very well that all the weight of the message bears on the emitter, I mean that it itself is the dominant element, and one even knows that this cry suffices by itself in the forms I evoke, to constitute it, this emitter, even if it is from a hundred, a thousand mouths, as a well and good unique subject. There is no need to announce oneself; the phrase announces one sufficiently."³

Jacobson, in a text that is hardly posterior since it dates from 1960, also situates the interjection as essentially centered on the emitter (which he calls the "addresser"

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³ Ibid.
[destinateur]: "The so-called EMOTIVE or ‘expressive’ function, focused on the ADDRESSER, aims a direct expression of the speaker’s attitude toward what he is speaking about. [. . . ] The purely emotive stratum in language is presented by the interjections. They differ from the means of referential language both by their sound pattern (peculiar sound sequences or even sounds elsewhere unusual) and by their syntactic role (they are not components but equivalents of sentences). ‘Tut! Tut! said McGinty’: the complete utterance of Conan Doyle’s character consists of two suction clicks."  

This subject solidified in the pure articulation of the phrase is the function of phrasal unity such as it is given in the holophrase. The subject is reduced in it to this cry that identifies it with the situation, the crowd, the riot. It has no need to name itself, the holophrase names it sufficiently. Lacan indeed brings forth here the function of the holophrase, as we can see it already laid out by Von Humboldt in the following example, beginning with expressions drawn from languages called holophrastic, where it appears the verb includes the emitter and cannot do otherwise than already include it, to the extent that this verb has no pertinence in the language, outside of the inclusion of what we call the pronoun: "Ni-na-ca-qua, I eat meat. One might be tempted to see in this combination of substantive and verb a type of verbal compound but it is clear that the language deals with it otherwise. For, when, for whatever reason, the substantive is not incorporated in a person, the language replaces it by the third person pronoun, which clearly demonstrates that it holds to inscribing with and in the verb the schema of the construction: ni-c-qua-nacatl, I eat it, the meat. The verb must already formally anticipate the phrase which is only made clear after the fact, as by a sort of apposition. According to the representative mode proper to the Mexican, the verb has no existence independent of this complement of auxiliary determinations."

Let us stress nonetheless that the function of the holophrase – as function of the unity of the phrase – submits to, in Lacan’s text, a slight slippage in relation to the linguists. For the linguists we have cited, what is brought out is the indissoluble link between code and message. For Lacan, that becomes a monolith where the subject is equaled to the message. It is not surprising that some years later, Lacan appeals to the structure of the holophrase to respond to psychosis, as we shall see later.

In the holophrase, the human subject does not count itself in the sense of the counting Anna Freud effects in her dream, or in the sense in which a child might say: "I have three brothers, Paul, Ernest, and me." He is pre-counted there. Think of the effect the naming of the emitter preceding the emission of the cry of interjection would have on the hearer: far from identifying the subject with the situation or with the crowd, it would instead be

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the situation that would, for example, veer from the tragic to the comic. In the style of: the crowd crying "du pain!" and Dupont crying "Du-pont."

Let us remark therefore that in this session of his Seminar, Lacan puts the accent on the function of the holophrase in a symbolic structure.

This structure is that of the unity of the phrase when it is ultra-reduced, a monolith where the subject does not have to count itself. This will be important for the reading we will be able to make of the process of the holophrase when Lacan will take it up again in Book XI of his Seminar. Note already that this monolith is not reducible to a condensation in the sense of metaphor. We will have to come back to this.

This presentation of holophrase in terms of structure – the monolith – is different from the passage we commented on in Book I, where the symbolic is still defined "at the limit, at the periphery," and where the essential part of Lacan's commentary tended to demonstrate that the holophrase is in no way a situation intermediate between instinct and the subject. This remains true, but the particular relation in which the subject is found suspended is made clear here. Let us add that not every interjection is reduced to the function of the holophrase – to the monolith. This moreover is quite simply indicated in the literary or rhetorical usage that can be made of it.¹

IV. The Holophrase and Structure

Let us now take up the passage in the Seminar, Book XI, The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis. It is a question of point 2 in the eighteenth session, that of June 10, 1964.

The term "holophrase" appears here in a phrase that gives this time an indication on the problems of structure in the psychoanalytic clinic: "I will go as far as to formulate that, when there is no interval between S₁ and S₂, when the first couple of signifiers is solidified, is holophrased [s’ holophrase], we have the model of a whole series of cases – while, in each, the subject does not occupy the same place."²

And Lacan puts in a series the psychosomatic effect, the child debilitated to the extent that the psychotic dimension is introduced into its education, and psychosis.

Let us remark to begin with that the word "holophrase" appears here in a form that is quite unusual. It is even a neologism. We have already signaled that the terms "holophrase," "holophrastic," or "holophrasia" are relatively little used in the linguistic literature. But the reflexive verb "s’ holophrase" never figures there. If therefore Lacan coins a new word here, that should already give some indications on the usage he is

going to make of it. With this verbal form, he in effect brushes aside any reference to some concrete holophrase, to examples drawn from holophrastic languages or common discourse – such as the interjection –, to what we have called holophrastic statements. Based on this, the accent finds itself placed on the particular structure he brought out earlier starting with interjections, what we have stressed as the "function of the holophrase," at once the function of the unity of the phrase and the monolith. By this simple operation, the transformation of a substantive into its verbal form, Lacan therefore clears the function of the holophrase of any phenomenal contingency, and makes it a structural term.

The fact that in this Seminar the holophrase is a structural term is altogether confirmed by the immediate context. In the same sentence, one in fact finds the matheme $S_1 \rightarrow S_2$, in relation to which the $3$ must occupy a certain place and, immediately afterwards, Lacan gives a matheme that anticipates what will be written later in the four discourses. The whole set is inscribed in the topology of alienation and separation, the relations of the subject to the field of the Other, to the lack in the Other, and to its lack as such.

Let us therefore specify this place accorded to the holophrase in structure. Lacan equates the holophrase with the solidification of a couple of signifiers $(S_1 \sim S_2)$: "when the first couple of signifiers are solidified, are holophrased," and a few lines later: "This solidity, this mass seizure of the primitive signifying chain [. . .]." ¹

The signifier, we know, cannot designate itself. Between a signifier and the signifier by which one designates this signifier, there is a non-coincidence, a gap [faille], an interval which at the same time permits the dimension of metaphor – which is to say that any signifier can come to the place of another and produce some signification – and founds for the subject the desire of the Other, inasmuch as this desire is interrogable by the subject. "The signifier with which one designates the same signifier is obviously not the same signifier as that by which one designates the other, this leaps into view. The word 'obsolete' inasmuch as it can signify that the word 'obsolete' is itself an 'obsolete' word is not the same word 'obsolete' on the one side and the other." ² "The property of the signifier [is] to not be able to signify itself, without engendering some failure of logic." ³

The solidification of the couple of signifiers that the holophrase designates here is therefore precisely a suspension of this function of the signifier as such, inasmuch as the signifier cannot designate itself. So it is that in psychosis, the signifier emerges in the real, which amounts to saying that it designates itself, and that in the psychosomatic effect, it disappears in its value itself of signifier: "The psycho-somatic is something that is not a signifier." ⁴ Think, for example, of the patch

¹. Ibid.
². Ibid., p. 190.
³. Ibid., p. 225.
⁴. Ibid., p. 205.
of eczema, which, though inscribed on the body, is still not a signifier, unlike the signifier inscribed on the body in hysterical conversion.

That is why this solidification of the signifying chain, this holophrase, is not a condensation. There is no question, therefore, of effecting its decomposition into its “primordial” signifiers. We are thus forced to disagree with certain interpretations of this phrase of Lacan, like that given by Jean Guir: “What we see in the analyses of people suffering from psychosomatic illnesses is the introduction, above all in their dreams and the natural explanation of their illnesses, the appearance of particular holophrases the extraction [découpe] of which by the analyst will have the value of an interjection. Ex.: Westminster: Where is this mystery [Où est ce mystère]? Winchester: Yes, your sister to shut up [Oui, ta soeur à taire]. There is indeed here an unveiling of an infantile slang on the order of the prattle situated at the level of the I of enunciation.”

Far from debating the pertinence of these interpretations – from the clinical point of view – since in fact they do seem to have the best effect in the progress of the treatment, we cannot however consider that is a question here of the holophrase, in the sense in which Lacan speaks of it in this Seminar, since the interpretations demonstrate in the treatment the character of signifying condensation that the signifiers in question have there.

The signifying solidification is opposed to the metaphoric effect. Holophrase is even, we will say, the name Lacan gives here to the absence of the dimension of metaphor. In effect, two signifiers being in this way solidified, holophased, with there being no interval between the two, is equivalent to saying that the one cannot come to the place of the other, cannot substitute itself for it – substitution and condensation being the defining principle [au principe] of metaphor – since they already occupy the same place.

If the relationship we are establishing between the holophrase and the absence of the metaphoric dimension is correct, we should be able to find traces of it in psychosis. In the Seminar, Book XI, Lacan moreover gives the holophrase as a “model,” notably for psychosis. To clarify this, let us take an excerpt from Schreber’s text concerning some "talking birds": "In the spring it usually appears as a woodpecker or blackbird, in the summer as a swallow and in the winter as a sparrow. The joking name title, ‘picus, the woodpecker,’ is used by the other voices, even when it appears as a blackbird, swallow or sparrow. I know exactly the numerous phrases given it to repeat constantly in the course of the years, and I have often made lists of them as also those of the other miraculously created birds; they always proved correct.”

Lacan stresses, in The Seminar on The Psychoses, that no metaphoric dimension is discernible in the Schreberian text. Let us add that in the fragment we are citing, one

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can see clearly how the swallow does not come to the place of the woodpecker because she is already at the same place. The voices name her at this place: woodpecker *picus*, and show in this way the holophrased structure of the signifier. Schreber’s talking birds are in no way poets, but they tell us of the difficulty the psychotic subject experiences with the signifier and with these funda-mental rules of the signifying structure: the signifier cannot designate itself without another signifier, and a signifier is always substitutable for another signifier.

Let us return to the passage in Lacan we want to comment on. This holophrase, this solidity, this mass seizure of the signifying chain is also an absence of an interval between S₁ and S₂. The fact there is no interval is indeed what would allow the signifier to designate itself. What in fact is this absence of an interval a question of? Let us first specify that it is a question of the "first of a couple of signifiers"—we will then see how this absence of an interval should be articulated to the double movement of alienation and separation.

The first couple of signifiers is that which determines the division of the subject, it is also that of the movement of alienation, that by which "when the subject appears somewhere as sense, elsewhere it is manifested as fading, as disappearance."¹ A signifier being that which represents a subject for another signifier, the first signifier (S₁, let us say), the one incarnating the notch on the primal bone or the tattooing, is that of the unary trait, that which represents the subject, from being introduced into the field of the Other, next to another signifier. The binary signifier, which is also the Vorstellungrepräsentanz—"this Vorstellungrepräsentanz which is

[ . . . ] the signifier S₂ of the couple"² is the one next to which the subject is represented, and beneath which, therefore, he disappears in the aphanisis. This S₂ is the signifier of the couple that makes the subject come into play as lack.

The holophrastic solidification of the first couple of signifiers therefore directly concerns the process of alienation. Let us take up again for a few lines this movement of alienation as Lacan develops it in Book XI, to bring out then what the holophrase might signify in relation to this field. The subject can only appear in the field of the Other, represented by a signifier that gives rise to its signification, all in reducing it to being nothing but a signifier. But this signifier represents the

subject next to another signifier (S₂) which has the effect of producing the fading, the aphanisis of the subject. This appearance of the subject as lack constitutes alienation.³

We can then better grasp what is in question in this holophrase of the couple S₁–S₂. Remember that we do not see in the holophrase any "new signifier," but only a mass

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² ibid., p. 195.
³ ibid., p. 191 and 199. We refer also to Jacques-Alain Miller’s commentaries on alienation and separation in his course (Département de Psychanalyse, Université de Paris VIII), "1, 2, 3, 4" (unedited), sessions of March 20, 1985 ("what functions at the lower stage of the graph is alienation […] while what functions at upper stage is separation"), and of April 24, 1985 for the development of these commentaries.
seizure of the signifier as such. If the signifying couple necessary to the process of alienation is holophrased, then the relationship of the subject, as signification (what is produced beneath the first signifier of the couple when it is not holophrased), to its disappearance, to its *aphanisis* (beneath the second) finds itself modified. The subject no longer appears as lack, but indeed as a mono-lith whose signification is equivalent to the stated message.

The "monolith," the subject already given in the message – as Lacan articulates it in the Seminar "Desire and its Interpretation" – is precisely what emerges in the holophrase, as a solidification of the first couple of signifiers, when one is referred to the time of alienation.

Thus this notion of the holophrase clarifies very well certain phenomena observed in psychosis. So it is, for example, for the elementary phenomenon of the heard voice. Let us take up again under this angle the commentary Lacan makes on the case of the “I am coming from the pork butcher” in Book III of the Seminar. When upon stating this sentence this lady hears in the real the response “Sow,” this response, much more than being her message that the subject receives in an inverted form, is at once her own message and herself as subject.¹ We have there a fine example of the monolith – the holophrase – as the subject.

In the analysis we are doing of the passage on the holophrase in Book XI, we are saying that if the solidification of the first couple of signifiers concerns the time of alienation, the absence of an interval between $S_1$ and $S_2$ concerns, rather, that of separation.

Separation is in effect articulated by Lacan to the interval between the two terms of the signifying couple. In this interval lodges desire – which is another way of saying that "the brook of desire flows as if diverted from [comme en dérivation de] the signifying chain."² Thus, this desire which appears first of all as the desire of the Other, because it lodges in the interval between these two primordial signifiers, only appears to the subject as interrogable, as a possible benchmark in the constitution of his desire, from being situated in this articulation as a gap, as an interval, as a lack in the Other.³

So desire, which is always the desire of the Other, is originally articulated from the overlapping of two lacks: that which, from being discernible in the Other, introduces the subject to the question of desire, and that by which the subject comes to respond to this lack in the Other, his own lack, that of the moment of *aphanisis* engendered in the preceding time, alienation. "One lack overlaps the other. [ . . . ] It is a lack engendered from the preceding time that serves to respond to the lack given rise to by the following time."⁴

². J. Lacan, "The direction of the cure [ . . . ]," *Écrits*, p. 623. [Bruce Fink translates this passage "the brook of desire runs as if along a branch line of the signifying chain, [ . . . ]." *Écrits*, New York, W. W. Norton & Company, p. 520 – tr.].
So the lack of an interval between $S_1$ and $S_2$, the holophrase, signifies that the desire of the Other does not appear to the subject in the gap where it would be interrogable, does not leave the subject any chance of modeling his desire on it. From then on the subject occupies a certain place in relation to this signifying articulation; this desire of the Other without gap appears as a jouissance the subject can only be reduced to the object of, and this in the form of a heard voice, such that it as an obscene and ferocious superego erupting in the real that it will on occasion encounter this concoction [fantasie] – in the sense of an interrogable desire – of the Other. The holophrase gives there the "model" of psychosis, inasmuch as there is fundamentally at work a process of non-dialectization of the signifier. 1

It would be appropriate here to mention a little problem with this text. Why does Lacan refer psychosis to the holophrase and not to the forclusion of the Name-of-the-Father? Let us say to begin with that this Seminar was held against the background of another, which did not take place, "The Names-of-the-Father." Lacan moreover reminds us of this in the session that follows the one we are commenting on here. The Name-of-the-Father does in fact pose a problem. In the "Question Preliminary [ . . . ]," Lacan situates it in a position that does evoke an Other of the Other, since it forms the place of the Law there in the place of the Other of the signifier. 2 The holophrase, inasmuch as it does not situate an additional Other but only an absence of an interval, is in this respect an elegant solution. What is certain is that the concept of the forclusion of the Name-of-the-Father is implicitly present in the notion of the holophrase as it appears here. More precisely – at least for the model of psychosis, including for the child – the holophrase appears as the effect of the absence of the signifying cut of the paternal operation. The holophrase shows the cause – solidification, absence of interval – and at the same time states its effect, the non-dialectizable character of the signifier. Thus, in a certain sense, the holophrase is another name for the forclusion of the Name-of-the-Father, just as the paternal metaphor is another name for the operation of the Name-of-the-Father. So the holophrase becomes a notion of the same order as of metaphor and metonymy, but situated outside of the discursive field – in the sense that psychosis is outside of discourse [hors-dicours].

We must now take up the question posed by the matheme

immediately following the sentence we are commenting on. This matheme 3 is not among those that have inspired the most commentary and remains, it is appropriate to say, difficult to read. One can nonetheless remark that it links the two signifiers $S_1$–$S_2$ to three terms that concern the subject: $X$, sequence of meanings [suite des sens], sequence of identifications. Éric Laurent, at a conference in Brussels in 1982, on "Psychosis in the Child," 4 commented on this schema, and we will refer to three of his remarks. First of all, this matheme implies an organized bipolarity between the subject of

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1. Ibid., p. 215-216.
4. Éric Laurent, "La psychose chez l’enfant dans l’enseignement de Jacques Lacan," Quarto, no IX, p. 3-19. It is a question of a transcription published with his permission but without being reviewed by him.
the signifier (sequence of meanings) and the subject of *jouissance* (sequence of identifications). Then, the correlation is noted of the subject not with the object *a*, but with the object inasmuch as it is clothed by the image. Finally, finally É. Laurent points out that this schema is only readable put in a series with another schema from the same *Seminar*,¹ and in the perspective of the construction of the four discourses several years later, that of the master in particular.

Let us nonetheless specify that this schema, if it must in fact be taken in this perspective, does not at all signify that the holophrase would be articulable *in* discourse – in the sense that this term takes in the four discourses – nor that psychosis would not be fundamentally outside of discourse. In fact, Lacan situates, with this schema, the psychotic child – or the “psychoticized” mentally debilitated child [*le debile*] – not as subject of discourse, but at a certain place *in* the discourse of the mother, thus situating him as object *a* for his mother.²

We must nonetheless return again to the putting in a series that Lacan produces around the holophrase. "It is the model for a whole series of cases": the psychosomatic effect, the debilitated child, psychosis.

For the debilitated child, it is useful to specify that Lacan refers directly to the Maud Mannoni text that came out at about that time. He pays homage to it and responds to it. Maud Mannoni, as one knows, brought mental debility back to the side of psychotic structure in referring to three essential elements: the dual situation with the mother, the refusal of symbolic castration, and difficulties in acceding to symbols.³

Lacan is careful about this articulation. He does not say that the debilitated child results from psychosis. Instead he specifies that, to the extent the debilitated child occupies a certain place for the desire of his mother, the psychotic dimension is introduced. Let us go further. Éric Laurent very precisely points out that Lacan, in these few sentences, proposes to Maud Mannoni another articulation: "It is not so much that they have but a single body, a single writing surface, a single wound; it is that they have but a single signifier."⁴

Thus, Lacan keeps a distance from Maud Mannoni’s position. He does not say that the debilitated child is psychotic, but only that to the extent he is "psychoticized," the holophrase of the first couple of signifiers accounts for his structure.

We must still clarify the relations of the holophrase to psychosomatic phenomena. Let us first point out that Lacan never speaks of a psychosomatic structure. The psychosomatic is not, in the Lacanian oeuvre, nor in the psychoanalytic clinic, a

⁴. E. Laurent, article cited, p. 5.
subjective structure in the sense of neuroses, psychoses, or perversions. Hence there is no need to consider here the relations of the holophrase with the point de capiton of the whole of subjective structure that is the Name-of-the-Father. In this respect, the subject does not occupy the same place in the psychosomatic effect as in psychosis: "We have the model of a whole series of cases – although the subject does not in any of them occupy the same place."¹ While in psychosis the set of relations of the subject to the signifier and to the Other find themselves modified, in the psychosomatic, it is a question of the relations of desire with a signifier, which is not a signifier for the subject, but which nonetheless produces its effects in the form of a real sign marked in the body.

Let us moreover stress that Lacan speaks of a “psychosomatic effect,”² in specifying that this is not a signifier for the subject, because at this level there is no question of the aphanisis of the subject.³

Lacan’s major reference concerning the psychosomatic, in this Seminar, is Pavlov’s experiment, which permits us to “situate what is to be conceived of the psychosomatic effect.”⁴ Lacan shows how this experiment is only conceivable inasmuch as a signifier – from the Other – provokes a cut in the organization of a need – which is to say, of something that does not arise from the gap, the lack, and beneath which no aphanisis of the subject is produced. The desire in play here is that of the experimenter, of the Other, but the signifier of this desire takes on none of the pertinence of a signifier for that which is submitted to it.

Of course, the animal has no chance of being a subject. But this detour shows quite well what the psychosomatic phenomenon is about. This holophrase, this obscure term, remains non-formulable for the subject, and from then on it leaves the desire of the Other uninterrogable. It marks the body with a sign, which does not constitute, up to then, a symptom in the psycho-analytic sense.

V. – Two Clinical Fragments

We have already spoken of the danger of “concretizing” the holophrase, of thinking it might be enunciable in a particular signifier of the subject, a signifier that would have to be, in the work of the treatment, decomposed, decoded, as if it were a question of a condensation. We will now present two clinical fragments,⁵ one drawn from the observation of a psychotic child in an institution, the other extracted from the beginning of the treatment of a paranoiac, to support the pertinence of the notion of the holophrase we have tried to encompass in our commentary on Lacan, which is to say, to pin-down the logical form of the holophrase as a lack of distance between two signifiers. We will see that the holophrase is not enunciable in a particular signifier, but that it is discernible in the structure itself of the signifiers in question.

² Ibid.
³ Ibid., p. 206.
⁴ Ibid., p. 215.
⁵ It is a question of two personal observations. The first was the object of a presentation at Prémontré during the Journées sur la psychose, in 1985, the second of a talk given at Mons in 1986 (unpublished).
On entering the institution, this six-year-old child presents a classic picture of childhood psychosis. Keep in mind only that he wanders in circles like an automaton without letting anything stop him, and rams his bowed head into the door when it is closed. He emits sounds and cries, but not a word.

His history, or rather his prehistory, is marked by a secret that concerns the name of the father, more precisely that of his paternal grandfather. The father, bearing the name of his mother, does not know that of his father, and although one of his sisters knows this name, he is prohibited from asking it. This secret, this prohibition of speech for the father, is doubled in the real by the operation of a throat cancer that had taken away his voice, if not his speech, for which all rehabilitative efforts are in vain. He remains alive, but mute. This operation occurred when his son was four years old, and rather than being what triggered the child’s psychosis, it is, we will say, a repetition in the real of the prohibition of speech the father is stricken with in the form of the secret.

The cries, the modulations of the voice the child produces as he circulates, feeling his throat as if trying to feel the vibrations – as one teaches laryngectomized persons to do in re-educating them to speak – are so many appeals to the speech of the father.

What appears here as an absence of distance between his body and his father’s secret – what Maud Mannoni calls making a single body – is to be considered as an absence of interval between two signifiers, that with which he is, he tries to be, represented – place here the modulations of the voice – next to another signifier – the father’s secret. This lack of a lack makes a holophrase of these two signifiers. Through an intervention, the situation finds itself modified at the same time as it clarified. One day he is found in a room with a closed door; as is his habit, he does not cease banging his head against the door. It is then proposed to him, in tracing a line on the floor between the door and him, that he not pass beyond this line. An effect of surprise. A play of gazes. And he begins to take this line as the limit to cross or not to cross, addressing, without any possible doubt, his question to the other. In the days and weeks that follow, he himself organizes some lines, some limits; he plays with some edges. At the same time, he begins to say some words, which are still only cores of speech – it is exclusively a matter of imperatives – but which nonetheless constitute appeals to the other.

The trait that inaugurated this series is nothing other than a distance posed between the door where he bangs his head and the question of the limit, of the cut, which, in reducing itself in a first time to the noise of his head on the door, only receives its address – let us say here: to the father – from the installation of this distance.

The noise of his head against the door, the modulations of his voice imitating what the father would produce if he was not incapable of it, show us the effects of the holophrased signifier, but the holophrase designates strictly and solely the lack of an interval between two primordial signifiers which, based on this, do not find themselves constituted as such and leave the subject, in this case, somewhere short of speech.

"The BBL is Thinking of You"
It is a matter this time of a patient who came to see me in the days following the triggering of a delusional episode.

The triggering moment is the death, then the funeral, of his old nurse. On the way home from this funeral, in the train, he hears two you women speaking Yiddish to each other. He immediately draws from this the certitude that "one" wants to remind him that it was in Jerusalem that he sold his first computer for the CCC – the initials of the business he works for as a salesman. The next day, he hears on the radio the news of the arrest of several alleged members of the CCC,¹ a terrorist group who had claimed responsibility for several attacks in Belgium in the preceding months, one of which was committed at the head office of the BBL,² close to where he lives. The radio broadcast specifies that at least one of the members of the group has escaped the police round-up, and also gives a vague description of the arrested terrorists: young men, well-dressed, in business suits, with attaché cases, in the style of young business executives. This description worries him a lot because, he tells me,³ it could also apply to him.

The next day produces a hallucinatory phenomenon. He is surprised by an advertising poster of the BBL, the slogan of which, "The BBL is thinking of you,"⁴ immediately makes it appear to him as wanted poster aimed at him, and concerning the attack committed by a member of the CCC at the head office of the BBL. He is confirmed in this certitude in recognizing his twin brother on the poster illustration. Thus, there is at once the phenomenon of a double and the irruption of a phrase which, although written, nonetheless functions as the strict equivalent of a voice. An imaginary hallucinatory phenomenon comes therefore to double the irruption of a signifier in the real. Immediately afterwards, he feels that he is being followed, surveilled, listened to on the telephone.

We will not say, of course, that this expression – "The BBL is thinking of you" – is "his" holophrase, but that the relationship this phrase establishes between the subject and the signifier shows us the holophrased structure of the signifier for him, a structure without a gap. The subject is made equivalent to the message. In any case, it is a monolith. It does not slip beneath the signifiers, it is in complete certitude there, in the form of the allusion Lacan insists on in Book III of the *Seminar*. The signifying chain constitutes a block there, finds itself taken *en masse*; the signifier designates itself. The "BBL" in fact designates the signifier "BBL" inasmuch as it "thinks." It is not, in this expression, someone who suspects him, but the signifier that makes the suspicion bear on him. The certitude of the subject comes to him in that the signifier, instead of coming to the place of another signifier to produce a metaphoric effect, designates itself there as such. This is what makes it so the [la] CCC, where he works, also designates the [les] CCC, and at

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¹. CCC: Cellules communistes combattantes [Communist Combatant Cells]– sometimes presented as a Belgian division of *Action directe*.
². BBL: Banque Bruxelles-Lambert, one of Belgium's principal banks.
³. He came to see me for the first time on the day after these events.
⁴. Let us signal that it a question of a slogan well known in Belgium, since it was part of an intense advertising campaign lasting several years.
the same time designates him as wanted by the police [le désigne du même coup à la vindicte policière]. Between the two CCC’s, there is for him no signifying substitution but rather a designation in the real.

When the BBL posted "The BBL is thinking of you" on the walls of Brussels, everyone understood that it was only about making it believed so as to induce the signifying substitution, so that, at the opportune moment, you might think of the BBL. This substitution is not operable in the holophrased signifier, and we must not expect this absence of substitution to be enunciable in a signifier, to constitute a phenomenon

in the form of a stated holophrase. It can only be discernible as a structure of language – but outside of a structure of discourse – producing its effects.

The examination of the occurrences of the term "holophrase" in linguistics allows us to establish that Lacan utilizes this term in a different sense in each of the three passages in his teaching we have commented on.

In Book I, the holophrase is a reprise of the discussions of the origin of language, on which Lacan takes support to demonstrate the fundamentally discordant character of the imaginary field and the symbolic field. He turns around the argument of linguists to show that there is no possible transition between the two planes. Furthermore, the holophrase lets it be seen here that it concerns an imaginary situation, but that it is already taken in a symbolic structure.

In the Seminar "Desire and its interpretation," Lacan's linguistic reference is essentially to the holophrase in the typology of languages, and more precisely, we think, to the use Guillaume makes of it. Lacan takes support from the notion of the unity of the phrase, but he fundamentally distances himself from linguistics to introduce the subject as reduced here to the message itself. The imaginary character of the situation in question is not brushed aside, but Lacan makes all the weight bear on the subject-monolith in the holophrase, where it must not be counted since it counts for itself. The context in which this passage is taken implicitly responds on the other hand to the linguistic usage that makes of the holophrase a stage in the child's acquisition of language. Anna Freud's dream in fact shows that there is no "development," that she is already in language.

In Book XI of the Seminar, Lacan gives his full development of the term holophrase, although in a single phrase, in making it a precise notion in the structure of language. The holophrased signifier shows the signifier at work when it has not taken on its value of a signifier for the subject. Based on the absence of an interval between the subject's two primordial signifiers, this does not appear as a subjective vacillation, but as a certitude where it is determined by the non-dialectizable character of the signifying chain and the non-metaphorizable character of the signifier. Lacan thus makes of the holophrase, if not a concept, at least a notion that we will willingly range alongside metaphor and metonymy in the code of Lacanian signifiers, since all three concern the functioning of the signifying chain.
Log

Report on the VIth Congress of the New Lacanian School of Psychoanalysis
“The Body and its Objects in the Psychoanalytic Clinic”

March 15 and 16, 2008

Ghent, Belgium

Pam Jesperson

Words were missing after sitting spell bound by the artistic production of “Milk;” a performance by “In Vitro and Hermes Ensemble.” Based on Ovid’s “Metamorphosis,” this event punctuated the first days work on the object a. “Milk” was a declarative statement of one women’s sense of estrangement from her body during pregnancy and the use of the breast to feed the baby. A fragmentation, a foreignness of the body was explicitly exposed on the stage. Something of the body was given up, lost, and disconnected. Was it pleasant to watch “Milk?” No. Was it a vivid and evocative portrait of the body’s extimacy? Yes.

Gil Caroz opened the Congress with; “We are gathered for a party to celebrate the work of the year.” He opened the first plenary session with a summary of the ethics of the object a in our society today. Advertisements glorify the perfect, imaginary body as being within our reach thus creating a surge of plastic surgeries and injections of poisonous substances which actually paralyze muscles to create the ideal image. He stated that medicine cannot change the character of the object a, in fact it creates a wider gap, a further foreign character to one’s own skin. Ann Lysy- Stevens set the stage for the Congress, going from the erogenous zones of the object a; knotting of the RSI with the sinthome; to delineating the subjects relationship to jouissance in the character structure of the neurotic, psychotic and perverse subject.

The work of the year within the NLS was evident in the clear clinical material presented in the plenary sessions. The work of those cases was distilled through the cartels of the societies, groups, and circles. Despina Andropoulou presented a case, (which is included in the newest NLS Bulletin) of how a subject created a symptom with her writing as she constructed a web site. The web site kept the intrusive Other at bay. The next case by Lieven Jonckheere describes how a “gut feeling” got symbolized into a desire to be abandoned. The transference reconstructed this desire. In her treatment the analysand began to write to herself; a very private exclusion of the Other and a symptom of her psychosis.
Each of the cases represented the specificity of the symptoms constructed in the analysis. The creativity of each of the analysands was elucidated in the use they made of the object a in their libidinized body’s erogenous zones. The interpretations and silences of the analyst powerfully evoked new openings for each of the subjects.

Eric Laurent’s presentation, “The Object a and the Pragmatics of the Cure” was concise and to the point. In his opening remarks, he gave credit to the intellectual community of Ghent and the Flemish Movement which rediscovered a way to use the body, reflecting a void. Laurent then posed a question: Is there a moebius strip between art and analysis? Does each reflect the side of the other? Carefully he spoke of sublimation and metamorphosis in the cases heard that day. Fetishes were spoken of as an imaginary transportation of a thing into the libido. Wulfing’s case was the representation of the object a lost, children taken from a woman, and then seen everywhere outside herself.

In the “cure” Laurent saw the use of language as worthy of study for the next Freudian Field event. He talked about extracting the object a from the interior to placement in the exterior, sometimes through sublimation. Lacan’s last teachings focused on the speaking being’s imaginary belief that he has a mentally consistent body. The analyst must extract himself out of the web of the repetition of the signifiers of the unconscious and the object a. The analyst must be up to the job to act with interpretation to cut, to create a hole in meaning for the subject. The analyst must fade away as the analysand deconstructs “The Subject Supposed to Know.”

The theme of the VIIth Congress of the New Lacanian School of Psychoanalysis will be “Lacanian Interpretation.” This seems a logical theme to follow the object a. Lacan’s desire was for his theory not to be a technique but a wager on the subjectivity of the analysand and the analyst, case by case. The deconstruction of the symbolic and of meaning for the subject is what is at risk. Psychosis can result if the analyst does not carefully listen to hear the underlying structure. The beginning of the analysis is marked by the belief in the unconscious and the analyst as “The Subject Supposed to Know.” The end is marked by their fall. The analyst must be up to the job of offering interpretations that change the meaning in the symbolic for the subject; his very sense of who he has always thought he was. The real jouissance of the body becomes bearable along with some satisfaction with one’s life, when the analysand becomes aware of the symptom he constructed. Interpretation can open up a space for our analysands to find some breath of freedom. Let us look forward to The VIIth Congress of the NLS in Paris, France, an event to work toward with pleasure.
The NEL Miami was honored to welcome Alexandre Stevens this past March 29th, 2008. The seminar took place at the Sheraton Hotel in Miami Beach. Stevens is the director and founder of Le Courtil, an institution located in Belgium that offers treatment to autistic and psychotic children.

Alexandre Stevens shared very interesting and enlightening information on the clinic of autism and on the treatment of psychotic children in general. The question of the body and body image in psychosis was central to the discussion. He stated that disturbances of the body are quite common in cases of schizophrenia and autism. These disturbances are in the realm of distortions pertaining to body image, effect on the body caused by an image of the Other, an excess of the Other that is felt by the child as an intrusion. Self mutilation is also evidenced as another phenomenon bearing on a disturbance in the psychotic's body.

Stevens postulates that a child suffering from these disturbances of the body will engage in an attempt at repairing the problem. The child makes an effort to correct the disturbance by the addition of an object or by mechanical and machine-like behaviors. In autism the body has no boundaries; it is a body that knows no limits “a limitless body.” He offered very interesting examples of cases where the machine-phenomenon can be observed.

There was one case in particular, a boy treated at Le Courtil, that I found most fascinating and that clearly demonstrates the machine construction. The little boy listens to someone playing a piano. He approaches the piano player and says “play me piano,” putting his hands up in the air. The piano player responds “I am playing you the piano,” the little boy once again demands “play me piano” putting his hands up again. What the boy was really asking was to be played like a piano. Stevens argues that the boy wanted to become an instrument for the Other. His body as instrument or machine would be a prolongation of the body of the Other. There is a continuity of the two bodies, there is no limit; one body is an extension of the other body. The boy uses his body as a tool or instrument for the body of the Other. In doing so, he behaves and acts like “a machine for the Other.”

Alexandre Stevens also talked about the machine in Bettelheim’s case of Joey, and in Temple Grandin’s testimony. Grandin creates a machine for herself, a machine that she would put to use in her healing process. Stevens emphasized the importance of an invention by the subject in “the process of a cure.”

Stevens concluded his discussion on the question of the body by addressing the difference between autism and schizophrenia. He argues that there are two different types of disturbances; the disturbance of the image and a disturbance of enunciation.
The autistic subject is more likely to keep himself from enunciation, while the schizophrenic patient has more problems with body image. However, both phenomena may be involved, a disturbance of enunciation and body image. The two objects involved in the process are the voice and the gaze. Both objects pose two different modes of invasion.

In terms of structure, Stevens suggested that autism and schizophrenia are in a continuum. In other words, that the way out of autism is through schizophrenia.

The treatment in autism and psychosis was also discussed. Alexandre Stevens argues that the position of the psychoanalyst is to consider the subject's symptomatic production and not the deficit. This he states is the most important difference between the psychoanalytic clinic and psychiatry. The aim in psychiatry is to repair a deficit; in psychoanalysis the focus is on the subject's constructions. The mental deficiency is an invention of the subject and not a deficit. This is central to the treatment of psychosis and a different position of the psychoanalyst in the clinic, “it is a different type of ethics.”

The topic of brain dysfunctions and pathology was also addressed by Stevens. He stated there is no doubt that there are subjects with real brain dysfunctions, “real problems in the brain,” severe mental deficiencies that originate from a neurological impairment. Nevertheless, a child who suffers from a severe neurological problem is still “a subject.”

Throughout the seminar Alexandre Stevens placed great emphasis on the importance of treating each child as an individual. He talked about not making comparisons and treating each case on a one by one basis. Stevens suggested that clinicians working with these children must be inventive in context of the treatment if they are to facilitate the healing process. If one invention does not work then you must come up with another invention. He adds that you may also create specific rules for a child.

When Stevens spoke about the role of invention and creativity in the treatment, he mentioned the ideal situation being creating “one institution for each child.” I believe his words truly speak of the essence of the treatment, and express much about the dynamics of the clinic of autism. “I couldn't agree with him more.”
Log

Impressions of (a) in Buenos Aires 2008

Penny Georgiou

The Congress certainly made an impression; here are a few fragments:

One cannot omit to mention the event that poignantly greeted our arrival in Buenos Aires, where an ironic and pungent fume entered our lungs and dulled the sunshine. For two days, the wind blew in the direction of the capital city of this vivacious country, bringing exhalations of a forest fire 200 km away. The real of nature was making its mark in what began as a dispute between crop growers and government, insisting on taking its toll on all who inhabited the vicinity. The fire was still raging as we left almost two weeks later.

The presentations to the congress were translated into English, I believe for the first time. This could not fail to strike me, both in the additional effort of work that this required, even though there were few of us for whom it was necessary, and as part of the wider step that the WAP is now taking in the engagement with the English speaking world. This is both necessary and welcome. Necessary because psychoanalysis battles for it’s survival against ideologies conceived in English, and most welcome because the orientation of this school, this band of laborers, is a vital resource for our world of increasing disarray.

Among the translations were presented the live testimonies of the passé from the recent AE. The invocation of these subjects around the table made present their experience, with wit, with humor and with steadfast seriousness speaking for the sustained process that the analytic enterprise demands. This relation to time, this fidelity to time, as long as it takes, is one of the gifts that psychoanalysis brings to a world lost in the array of fast food and quick fixes.

Jacques Alain Miller’s proposal of the theme in Rome had taken the school through two years of preparation and then to Buenos Aires, where the Object a presided over our world of Psy during this Congress given to it's consideration. There it was duly posed, celebrated, and deposed as real, giving way to the new episode of the quest, taking its place among the other servants of the semblant.

It begs the question, if not there, then where is the real? I have a hunch but in psychoanalysis, we reap the harvest aprés coup, so let’s wait and see.
Log

Jacques-Alain Miller at the Coliseo Theater in Buenos Aires

Catherine Lazarus-Matet

Translated by Gonzalo Cabrera

On Saturday April 26th of 2008, the Coliseo Theater in Buenos Aires was the place for an unforgettable “one man show”. It was an exceptional moment for psychoanalysis. Located at 1125 on Marcelo T. de Alvear, the theater was inaugurated in 1905 with a circus show that was very well received. People admired the famous “king of clowns,” Mr. Frank Brown, who often had his shows there. He was well liked by both grownups and children. He was appreciated by intellectuals due to the quality of his scripts, his erudition and his fine sense of humor.

Later on, the Coliseo Theater turned into a Lyrical Theater where in 1920 a full opera was broadcast there for the first time in the world on radio. Clown, transmission … everything was therefore ready to receive a psychoanalyst, especially in Buenos Aires!

The Congress had concluded the day before, and the warm environment of the city, of the work gatherings, and the reception of our Argentinean friends did not make one want to leave. We knew that this event would gather us again one more time at 1:30pm for a Jacques-Alain Miller conference. We had reserved our seats and walked towards the place with a calm step.

When we got to the theater we were surprised to see a very long line of people, in which we searched in vain for familiar faces, waiting to get in. Perhaps it was a concert or a famous star who attracted this crowd of young people, but the very presence of our Argentinean colleagues at the beginning of the line made us realize who the star was and also that there would be many of us. The theater holds 1700 people and every seat was taken.

Jacques-Alain Miller, with Ricardo Seldes next to him, developed his thread of thought in Spanish from the title of his conference; “Jacques-Alain Miller’s Conference.” When asked by the organizers of the event for a title, to his final punctuation was “Lacan’s symptom”. We listened carefully, we laughed, and we did not realize how quickly the time passed. This does not begin to describe the four exciting hours of his talk; an hour of which was dedicated to answering the audience’s questions.

We left light-hearted, happy, and serious.

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1 In Spanish the word for clown is payaso, but the text in Spanish uses the word in English.
If we throw a crystal to the floor, it breaks; but not into haphazard pieces. It comes apart along the lines of cleavage into fragments whose boundaries, though they were invisible, were predetermined by the crystal's structure. Mental patients are split and broken structures of the same kind.

Freud, *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*

**Phallic Jouissance**

The amazing, curt chapter, describing the aftermath of Anna and Vronsky's first sexual encounter, is one of the most horrific post-coital scenes ever written and key for an interpretation of her suicide.¹ The scene describes their passion as the enactment of a murder.

And he felt what a murderer must feel when he looks at the body he has deprived of life. This body deprived of life was their love, the first period of their love. There was something horrible and loathsome in his recollections of what had been paid for with this terrible price of shame… But, despite all the murderer’s horror before the murdered body, he had to cut this body into pieces and hide it, and he had to make use of what the murder had gained by his murder.

And as the murderer falls upon this body with animosity, as if with passion, drags it off and cuts it up, so he covered her face and shoulder with kisses. (my italics)

Rather than joyous and life-affirming, the sex act is traumatic and violent. Vronsky attacks Anna’s body with an aggressivity that Tolstoy, in an extended comparison, likens to an act of murder. He is a murderer and she is his victim. Sex is a criminal act. His lovemaking as if “cuts” her body “into pieces.” Figuratively, the scene anticipates the “cut up” body and self-mutilating act that are Anna’s literal destiny at the end. The brief chapter concludes with the account of a nightmare and the word “horror.”

Tolstoy’s use of the murder metaphor expresses the extreme violence of Vronsky’s long repressed desire. Over the course of a year, the sexual possession of Anna had become

for him his “one exclusive desire” in life, “replacing all former desires.” For Anna, the encounter “had been an impossible, horrible, but all the more enchanting dream of happiness.” (my italics) It is the meeting of a masculine “desire”, focused on an object, with a diffuse and undefined “dream of happiness”. The violent power of Vronsky’s desire catapults them both beyond what either had hitherto called reality. They are hurled into an unknown dimension, which binds their bodies and lives in new and unexpected ways. However, this is a Real knotted to the Symbolic, a Real gazed at and judged by the Symbolic. The lovers are in the Real, in a new, lawless domain foreign to them both, but they are at the same time in the Symbolic, the domain of law, and it is the Symbolic law that declares their act a murder. It is their internalized social Symbolic that characterizes their sexual experience, subjectively for them, as something “loathsome” and “horrible,” and that labels it a crime.

In the Borromean knot, Lacan situates sexuality or phallic jouissance ($J(\Phi)$) between the Symbolic and the Real.

By contrast, Feminine Jouissance ($S(\emptyset)$) or the jouissance of being, which is between the Real and the Imaginary, is also a satisfaction that engages the body, but in an asexual way. This asexual jouissance of being, grounded in the body, is what Lacan calls the soul. This soul’s desire, no matter whether it be feminine or masculine, is for that which is beyond sex.

The sexual encounter leaves Vronsky shaken and “trembling” and Anna humiliated, guilty, and ashamed: “she bent her once proud, gay, but now shame-stricken head… falling from the divan where she had been sitting to the floor at his feet; she would have fallen on the carpet if he had not held her.” (my italics) The encounter is her Fall, the

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3. “There is a jouissance of being.... If there is something that grounds being, it is assuredly the body....But being is the jouissance of the body as such, that is as asexual.” Jacques Lacan, *Seminar XX: On Feminine Sexuality, The Limits of Love and Knowledge 1972-1973*, trans. Bruce Fink (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1998), 70, 110, and 6.
horror of which she communicates to him. Tolstoy’s description intertwines their passionate reactions in a chiasm of negativity and guilt that grips them both and becomes part of their bond.

Initially, the intensity of phallic sexuality overwhelms Anna. It is foreign to her. Although she is a sensuous and warm woman, she is a stranger to passion and to the phallus. The phallic encounter that she experiences, which excludes her soul, was not part of her “dream of happiness”. What Vronsky claims is his happiness and bliss isn’t hers at all: “How can I not remember what is my very life? He says. For one moment of that happiness…” ‘What happiness?’ she said with loathing and horror.”¹ (my italics)

Whereas the phallic experience is synonymous for Vronsky with his “very life”, she characterizes it as horrible. It splits her being. A different kind of jouissance qualifies as “life itself” for Anna.

The shock effect of the sexual act and its power over Anna are signaled by her inability to speak of the experience. Momentarily, she is as if no longer knotted to the Symbolic. She loses access to language and thought. She does not want words. They are “imprecise” and deficient. Her new libidinal life is too complex for expression. Languageless holes open up in the Symbolic fabric,² exposing its impotency in the face of the Real. Where jouissance dominates over words, language grows pusillanimous.

For God’s sake, not a word, not a word more…. Not a word more,’ she repeated…. She felt that at that moment she could not put into words her feeling of shame, joy, and horror before this entry into a new life, and she did not want to speak of it, to trivialize this feeling with imprecise words. But later, too, the next day and the day after that, she not only found no words in which she could express all the complexity of these feelings, but was unable even to find thoughts in which she could reflect with herself on all that was in her soul. (150) (my italics)

Her soul, which is her living being, is no longer anchored to language or articulable. It is literally thus a lost soul, a soul adrift from words. This in turn makes words soulless. Later these soulless words come to strike her as empty, senseless, and unsatisfying: “It’s all words, words, words! she said, looking at him with hatred” (749). As her experience splits her modes of jouissance, her love for Vronsky also splits into love and hatred.

Her adultery jettisons her outside of society. It is a radical cut with her past and her past possessions: her good social standing and name, and her son. No bridging of her past and her new life seems possible. This also contributes to Anna’s refusal to confront her experience and to her postponement of thinking about or discussing it. Without the Symbolic support of social-legal sanction or that of an independent and satisfying feminine jouissance, the pact of phallic desire between Anna and Vronsky casts her into the Real of pure anxiety, where she feels terrified and alone.

¹ The reaction of disgust and horror qualify her at least by Freud’s definition as a hysteric: “I should without question consider a person hysterical in whom an occasion for sexual excitement elicited feelings that were preponderantly or exclusively unpleasurable; and I should do so whether or no the person were capable of producing somatic symptoms.” But this definition alone is not adequate for Anna. Freud, SE VII: 28.

The phallic encounter reorients her entire being and focuses her exclusively on Vronsky: “‘Everything is finished,’ she said. ‘I have nothing but you.’” For her, the new contract with phallic life means radical loss and reduction. She loses herself as a speaking subject and begins to feel more and more that she is only a passive object at the mercy of others, circumstances, and fate. In her haunting dream of the old peasant, “bent over some iron,” the part that causes her the maximum of terror is that the muzhik “pays no attention to her, but was doing this dreadful thing with the iron over her” (752). To the peasant in her nightmare, only her body exists, and it exists only as an object to which anything can be done, with indifference, such as taunting it with something as hard as an iron. The recurrent dream is further confirmation of her initial reaction to the sexual encounter as harsh and exacting and as lacking in tenderness.

The long-awaited sexual union destroys “the first period of their love.” For Anna this was the romantic, desire-induced fantasy as well as the maternal and feminine jouissance with which she had hitherto loved at once Vronsky and her son. It damages the main form of jouissance that had previously filled her emptiness: her love for her son. It becomes unbearable for her even to speak of him: “‘Yes,’ she went on, ‘I’ll become your mistress and ruin…everything.’ Again she was going to say ‘my son,’ but could not utter the word” (190). Anna’s son is for her a piece of her own being, a part of the domain of feminine jouissance and speechlessness, separated off from the Symbolic (see the Borromean knot). Her feelings for this child are beyond words. He is her soul. The pain of his possible loss remains a hole on the page as it is in her heart and life. This hole fills with anxiety about the continuity of Vronsky’s desire, and then with repressed hatred towards him, but above all it fills her with anxiety about her son. The fragile synthesis of body and soul that she had had when with her son is now about to be severed.

Vronsky is inscribed in her mind first of all as a son. On the train she and Vronsky’s mother spent a great deal of time discussing their sons: “Yes, the countess and I spent the whole time talking — I about my son, she about hers… and again a smile lit up her face, a tender smile addressed to him” (62) (my italics). A transference effect of tenderness to Vronsky as a son on Anna’s part is there from the start: 1 Anna has never known love except as love for a son. She “married without love or not knowing what love is” (427), and “to the first child, though of a man she did not love, had gone all the force of love that had not been satisfied” (538). Her relationship to this child is tender, warm, and sensuous: “Anna experienced almost a physical pleasure in the feeling of his closeness and caress” (107).

A tender, maternal feminine jouissance can be satisfied by very little: a smile, a touch, a glance, or a word. In such a love relationship, the body is used in a partial, fragmented way. Vronsky and Anna’s love affair begins with such small contacts, a touch of the eyes and of smiles. The first time Vronsky lays eyes on her, what he sees is that: “…a surplus of something so overflowed her being that it expressed itself beyond her will, now in the

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1 The very first time Vronsky sees her at the railroad station, “he felt a need to glance at her once more – not because she was very beautiful, not because of the elegance and modest grace that could be seen in her whole figure, but because there was something especially gentle and tender in the expression of her sweet-looking face as she stepped past him.” (61) [I, 18]. It is the tender and sweet-faced mother/woman, whom he never had, that he wants Anna to be. It is tragic and ironic therefore that Anna believes that he loves her primarily for her beauty and that she sterilizes herself to prevent further pregnancies and to keep her figure, whereas Vronsky loves her for her tender, feminine, and maternal way of loving. He also hopes to have another child with her.
brightness of her glance, now in her smile. She deliberately extinguished the light in her eyes, but it shone against her will in a barely noticeable smile.” (61). The drives escape through the orifices. Love makes do with the partial drives. The shift from this first, asexual love to extreme passion breaks, in a way that she is never again able to mend, the radiant but fragile, crystalline structure that Anna was when Vronsky first sees her.

In Anna Karenina, the sexual act as such is not directly represented, but the drives are. The novel is full of libidinal fragments. Tolstoy calls them “signs of joy.” Such signs are what Kitty sees between Anna and Vronsky, dancing at the ball:

Each time he spoke with Anna, her eyes flashed with a joyful light and a smile of happiness curved her red lips. She seemed to be struggling with herself to keep these signs of joy from showing, yet they appeared on her face of themselves. ‘But what about him?’ Kitty looked at him and was horrified. What portrayed itself so clearly to Kitty in the mirror of Anna’s face, she also saw in him. Where was his quiet, firm manner and carefree calm expression? No, now each time he addressed Anna, he bowed his head slightly, as if wishing to fall down before her, and in his glance, there were only obedience and fear. (81) (my italics)

Kitty is horrified because these signs of jouissance announce to her more clearly than words could that Anna and Vronsky have fallen in love and that she has lost Vronsky as her suitor.

In passion, Anna has to produce and give the sexual body whereas in her tenderness she did not. The new, alien body that Vronsky’s extreme and excessive passion evokes destabilizes her and begins to unknot her. It displaces her former body that had been the site of the nonsexual though sensuous bodily acts in which love showed itself. This asexual, though carnal body harbored her soul. The soul is love. She knows this when Dolly comes to visit and talks of her love for her children:

Anna felt sad. She knew that now with Dolly’s departure, there would be no one to stir up in her soul those feelings that had been aroused in her at this meeting. To stir up those feelings was painful for her; but she knew all the same that that was the best part of her soul and that it was quickly being overgrown in the life she lead. (642) (my italics)

The bewilderment and conflictedness that her new adulterous life brings on seeds her soul with a pain that becomes despair, then nihilism, and, finally, the idea of death: “And suddenly she understood what was in her soul. Yes, this was the thought which alone resolved everything. ‘Yes, to die’” (745). (my italics)

Signifiers are “the moorings that anchor [our] being,” as the early Lacan said, but signifiers alone are not enough. We need as well to moor in the jouissance of another.

1 This excess of energy, animation, and vitality or “fire,” which distinguishes her from the beginning from all other women, is quenched when she is with her husband: “not only was that animation which had simply burst from her eyes and smile when she was in Moscow gone from her face: on the contrary, the fire now seemed extinguished in her or hidden somewhere far away” (112).

human being to find our own jouissance.\(^1\) Signifiers give us a name and place in society. They map the reality for us and they fit us into this reality. But to anchor our being’s jouissance another embodied being is necessary. The body needs confirmation of its existence, substantiality, and jouissance from the concrete presence, touch, voice, and gaze of an other human. Only another body anchors our body. The encounter with the jouissance of an other being is as necessary to the awakening of our own forms of jouissance as is the encounter with language and images for our symbolic and imaginary life. For the human being in the feminine position (who may be either a man or a woman) a double mooring is necessary. When Anna is robbed of her jouissance of being, she clings desperately to Vronsky, tiring him with her demand to be desired. When Anna feels that Vronsky no longer looks or listens to her as she would want, with desire, and in the way that would give her significance in phallic reality, but rather with cold and cruel eyes, she feels unsupported in her existence and terrified. “‘I can see all his cold hatred of me,’ she thought, not listening to his words, but gazing with horror at the cold and cruel judge who looked out of his eyes” (748).

At the same time, the law and all symbolic supports fail her. Her own symbolic activities and fantasies fail her as well nor can her newborn daughter become a substitute for the son whom she has lost. As Anna continues to fall and to lose all her social and emotional bonds, sexual contact with Vronsky and his desire become her exclusive focus, her anguished point of concentration, her drug against fear and anxiety, and her one remaining, vital assurance of a link between herself and another human being. Sexual desire and anxiety go together nowhere more resolutely than in Anna Karenina.

The chapter that began with her “dream of happiness” ends with a nightmare in which she is the sexual partner of both her husband and Vronsky. In the nightmare, Anna acknowledges her immense, newfound satisfaction in phallic enjoyment. Even the first, undesired sexual union with a husband, whom she never loved, is now, retroactively, something that her unconscious can accept. In the dream all three are happy, and Anna is laughing. Consciously, she is horrified by this nightmare; unconsciously, she is satisfied, “content and happy.”

Still later, just before her death, Anna admits or perhaps condemns herself to believing that all she ever wanted was to be Vronsky’s mistress, “passionately [loving] only his caresses.” However, she adds that “by this desire I provoke his disgust, and he provokes my anger, and it cannot be otherwise” (763). She now ascribes the ambivalence and disgust that she felt towards her own sexuality to him, but for her disgust and sexuality are still allied. It is sex that made her indifferent at once to legitimacy, law, and love. Phallic enjoyment made her forget her love for Seryozha and prefer passion to love. It is sex that stands accused. With the character of Anna, Tolstoy grants sex the power of an addiction equal to any drug addiction that cannot be altered or defeated by reason, law, or even by great maternal love.

For a time Anna believes, mistakenly, that the continuation of her union with Vronsky depends on the continuation of his sexual desire for her as verified by the repetition of the sexual act. At the same time, each fleeting sexual encounter guarantees nothing for

\(^1\) I am reminded here of the final stanza of Emily Dickinson’s “Wild Nights”: “Rowing in Eden — / Ah, the Sea! / Might I but moor — Tonight / In Thee.”
her. It offers no safe harbor or refuge from anxiety. The first sexual act opened up a void, a fearful emptiness and a sense of isolation that nothing seems capable of closing. For Anna, therefore, sex becomes an intuitive experience of what Lacan called the fundamental lack of the sexual relationship. She grasps that the sexual encounters do not secure the relationship or given her the certitude of its continuity and necessity that she needs. Rather the encounter reveals an abyss between them that she was not aware of before because language and fantasy hid it. Sex is not a guarantee of union; words of assurance are also of not much use. The absence of a link is frightening, and to maintain it is exhausting: “‘And between me and Vronsky what new feeling will I think up? Is anything—not even happiness but just not torment—possible? No, nothing!’ ” (764).

What remains powerfully present, in the outer world, is the severe and judgmental law as exercised for one, with great cruelty, by her husband turned religious fundamentalist, who forbids Anna her son. But in the inner world of her soul something even more cruel arises. Her superego comes like the ancient law of talion, in its most dreadful form, to exact repayment for murder with another murder. “The law of talion,” as Freud said, “lays it down that a murder can only be expiated by the sacrifice of another life: self-sacrifice points back to bloodguilt.”1 She knows that she has in a sense let both her husband and her son “drown.” She sacrificed them to save herself. But her initial, superabundant joy to find herself united with Vronsky in Italy enables her to repress her memory of that and her guilt:

The memory of her husband’s unhappiness did not poison her happiness.... The memory of the evil done to her husband called up in her a feeling akin to revulsion and similar to that experienced by a drowning man who has torn away another man clinging to him. That man drowned. Of course it was bad, but it was the only salvation, and it was better not to remember those dreadful details. (463-4)

But as this moment of supreme happiness fades, she herself begins as if to drown or to seek self-loss with morphine. The growing strength of her guilt and her anxiety finally force her to pay with her own life (and with the “murder” simultaneously of her copartner in crime) the debt of having sacrificed her husband, and above all, her son, as well as her original libidinal body for a happiness that didn’t come to be.

Anna’s Choice

The scientific and rational notion of the act, as Jacques-Alain Miller points out, is that it is for our self-preservation and self-satisfaction.2 An act is in our self-interests; we do what is pleasurable and useful for us. The telos of the act is self-development and self-fulfillment. (41) However, Lacan’s view of the act differs.3 He questions whether the act is always useful or in the subject’s interests. Suicide, obviously, is not. Thus, he searches for a concept of enjoyment that does not have to do only with self-satisfaction

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2 Jacques-Alain Miller, “Jacques Lacan: Bemerkungen über sein Konzept des Passage à l’acte,” Wo Es War, 7/8 (1989). This section of the essay draws extensively on Miller’s eminently lucid elaborations of Lacan’s ideas in Seminar X and adapts them to Anna’s act and acting out. Future references in the text are to this citation.
but with self-damage, not only utility but uselessness, not pleasure but pain, not self-fulfillment but self-expenditure and self-abdication. As Miller says, Lacan puts in doubt the entire idea that the subject wants its own good or happiness. (42)

Lacan distinguished the act from actions. The act is something that makes a radical break with what was; it produces something new, and causes change and mutation, whereas actions can continue, complete, or fill in what is or exists. The act is a fundamental transgression, a revolutionary change that produces a future different from the past. After an act, one is not the same as before. (48) The sex act was such an act for Anna, though it still allowed some inner resistance and ambivalence as her hesitations and her delirious return to her husband during her illness showed. Suicide alone, because it allows no return, is a definitive act. Hence, for Lacan, suicide is, the paradigmatic act. (44) It shows the act in its essential character of finality.

As Miller points out, Lacan also questions the ideal of a continuity and unity between the act and thought. For him, they form an antinomy. (45) The act is a rupture with thought, a way to escape thought. The nature of thought and words is equivocation, questioning, and doubt whereas that of the act is certitude. “The kernel of every act is a ‘No’ to the Symbolic” (44). It is a withdrawal from the ambivalence, duality, dialectics, and all the calculations and evaluations that are at the core of the world of words. The act overcomes these divisions, which lead to inhibitions, indecisiveness, or a total impasse and inability to act. Especially the rash act (as often in the case of the obsessional) can seemingly provide a passageway out.1 By contrast, even intolerable doubt because it is still within the Symbolic realm remains a defense against an irreversible act. What one must, however, seek to avoid above all in the state of anxiety is what Lacan calls an “appalling certainty” (d’affreuse certitude).2 Doubt enables us somehow to tolerate the Real of anxiety. As long as Anna doubts and is ambivalent she can avoid the irrevocable act.

With the forbidden sex act, Anna stepped out of the frames of her culture and its laws. Her act was a saying of “No” to this culture, which did not let her live and love:

They don’t know how he [her husband] has been stifling my life for eight years, stifling everything that was alive in me, that he never once even thought that I was a living woman who needed love….Didn’t I try as hard as I could to find a justification for my life? Didn’t I try to love him, and to love my son when it was no longer possible to love my husband? But the time has come, I’ve realized that I can no longer deceive myself, that I am alive, that I am not to blame if God has made me so that I must live and love. (292) (italics mine)

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1 The obsessional, characterized by chronic doubt, is particularly endangered by an over intense desire for solution, resolution, definiteness, clarity, and finality, even the absolute finality of death. The obsessional’s inhibitions, procrastinations, hesitancy, retardations, and constraints can alternate with or be suddenly interrupted by hastiness, over-impetuous action, and an urgency that reveals the pressure of the drive. Such hastiness characterizes Anna when she leaves for Italy. Such an antinomy of thoughts and acts also characterizes Levin. His philosophical doubts bring on a suicidal crisis, but an all-consuming work act, such as mowing with the peasants, allows him oblivion and mindlessness and grants him ecstasy.

The need for jouissance, the necessity of “I must live and love,” enables her acts. Her acts are a demand for more satisfaction, and she gets it. Because her acts emerge from the Real of need, they are indifferent to meaning and to the future. They are breakthroughs to a disconnected auto-enjoyment. She says “no” to her society again when she leaves for Italy with Vronsky. For a brief time there, she is “unpardonably happy and filled with the joy of life” (463). Vronsky is exclusively hers and she is completely satisfied. For once she has both life and love. Momentarily she is as if not split and she feels no emptiness.

Anna leaves for Italy postponing the critical decision about her divorce. What is odd is that she not only postpones, but that she categorically refuses it. Anna seeks definiteness and finality above all. Consciously, she wants an end to her uncertain and indecisive state. Yet, when it is offered to her by Karenin she “went abroad with Vronsky without obtaining a divorce and resolutely abandoning the idea” (435). Though it is often argued that social forces and the laws of her era were against her and largely responsible for her tragedy, it seems important to emphasize that there is this one, unique moment, when Anna could have had a divorce and her son. There is this one window of opportunity when Karenin agrees to declare himself the guilty party and to renounce his son. That would have allowed Anna to remarry under Russian law.

‘Yes, yes!’ he [Karenin] cried in a shrill voice, ‘I’ll take the disgrace upon myself, I’ll even give up my son, but… isn’t it better to let things be? However, do as you like…’. He felt grieved; he felt ashamed. But along with the grief and shame he experienced joy and tenderness before the loftiness of his humility. (432)

Oblonsky has brought Karenin to concede everything and to give his word. But when Anna hears of it, she says: “I cannot accept his magnanimity’… ‘I don’t want a divorce, it’s all the same to me now’ ” (435) Because of Karenin’s exceptional state of jouissance (for once in his life time), she has a unique opportunity to have everything she wants, and astonishingly, she rejects it all. She refuses for complex reasons. The seemingly ethically noble and selfless reasons having to do with her considerateness and identification with Karenin and his suffering and unhappiness:

‘It was inevitable that I would be this man’s unhappiness,’ she thought, ‘but I do not want to take advantage of that unhappiness. I, too, suffer and will suffer: I did a bad thing and therefore I do not want happiness, I do not want a divorce, and will suffer from my disgrace and my separation from my son.’ (464) (my italics)

This is the “one soothing reflection about her behavior” that had occurred to her and “the one reflection” that she remembered. (my italics) The “one” indicates its absoluteness, its source in her being, in her jouissance. However, what is seemingly “soothing” about it to her consciousness is that it puts an ethical, a just, and an altruistic interpretation and meaning on her refusal. Consciously, the suffering seems to be a just punishment for her bad behavior. But the refusal is an act, rooted as all true acts are in her jouissance. And unconsciously what appears to be soothing to her is that it gives her a cause for suffering. Suffering is the word she keeps repeating. What sounds loudly and repetitiously is her want to suffer, and not to have what she wants (“I do not want happiness, I do not want a divorce”). She asks to be deprived. It is a hysterical renunciation, a symptom which she does not seem to want to rid herself of and which
makes it impossible for her to act according to her desire and her more positive feminine jouissance.

Her act of refusal also reveals her deep unconscious tie to and slavish imprisonment in her culture. She refuses, one could say, in order to enact judgment and the law upon herself. She both judges and punishes her act. Her haughty superego declares her an autonomous and self-responsible master. If he is noble, she will be more so and triumph over him. Her accent on “his magnanimity” suggests her antagonism to him and a readiness for competitive battle. Her narcissistic ego cannot bear to let him win. Her ethical heroism is that of a master, and therefore, suspect. As often in the case with heroism, there is a hidden pact with self-sacrifice and destruction.

That her ethical, noble, and altruistic superego and her ego may be supporting an unconscious will to suffer and to destroy herself is, of course, not evident to Anna. Her novel and overwhelming experience of freedom and satisfaction hide the very possibility of such a thought from her.

But however sincerely Anna wanted to suffer, she did not suffer. There was no disgrace…. Even her separation from her son, whom she loved, did not torment her at first. The little girl, his child, was so sweet and Anna had become so attached to her, once this little girl was all she had left, that she rarely remembered her son. (464)

Anna’s refusal is a questionable ethical heroism, a heroism of the sacrifice of her wants and needs that will destroy her though at the moment she is unaware of this. Her jouissance gives her a momentary, false sense of completion. For once in her life, she is at one with her being, her life and love.

Ethics has to do with the act. And the act has to do with one’s jouissance. At this moment of superabundant joy, Anna refuses more joy. Her state of jouissance disables her from asking for more. It is a state of disconnection, a state that obscures reality. Tolstoy, however, leaves us in no doubt that she is the agent of her own suffering. This self-deceiving and self-defeating renunciation that keeps her suffering is her choice, her own act. And it is not rational, not pragmatic, not in her self-interests, and not for her good or happiness.

One can readily agree with Michael Holquist’s general thesis that in Anna Karenina theological ideas about human behavior and our destiny are replaced by economic and sociological ideas and with his more specific argument that Anna’s suicide “is portrayed in terms of social forces that foreshadow Durkheim theses on suicide.”¹ But granted the alliance of the novel and modern realism, sociological and cultural realities are still not a sufficient elucidation of the act as Lacan defines it. As the early Lacan said, first, the human subject must be mapped in relation to the signifier or the meanings that she gives experience and not in relation to reality or the experiences themselves, which lack these meanings.² And second and actually more importantly as the late Lacan believed, the subject’s relation to the dire needs of her own, singular jouissance must be uncovered.

² Lacan, Seminar XX, 90.
The subject does not act without its deepest corporeal will. But this bodily will or drive is disconnected from everything exterior.

This deep corporeal will is, for the late Lacan, fundamentally a separated-off zone in subjectivity (see the capital “J” in the above diagram). It is a solitary, corporeal Jouissance, not in rapport with reality or desire. Whereas desire has to do with life (ϕ), Jouissance has to do with both life and death. Jouissance flows into all aspects of the structure of the Symbolic, Imaginary, and the Real, but in order both to support and to undermine them. To recapture this originary, unbroken Jouissance would mean the end of existence. Yet, total satisfaction on the level of being is exactly what jouissance aims for.

The subject is not simple a reaction; it is a structure and has beyond this structure a potential for the act, given by the energy of a body with its Jouissance. Anna Karenina is driven to death not only by social forces, the conditions of her historical reality, the evil of patriarchal men and their culture of desire, or bad luck, but also by the force of her own jouissance. Her jouissance determines Anna’s choices: to live in phallic reality, renouncing everything else, and to die.

**From Acting out to the passage à l’acte**

Lacan distinguishes acting out from passing to the act. As Miller states, acting out involves a fantasy scene, dialogue, and others, who are witnesses to what one is doing or who are looking at one. Acting out is a symbolic message, a challenge, or an appeal to the gaze, ear, or attention of the other.²

‘To die – and he will repent, pity, love and suffer for me!’ With a fixed smile of compassion for herself, she... vividly imagined from all sides his feelings after her death

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2. “*Acting out* est essentiellement quelque chose, dans la conduite du sujet, qui se montre. L’accent démonstratif de tout acting out, son orientation vers l’Autre, doit être relevé.” *L’angoisse*, 145.
(744) . . . . again she began to enjoy thinking of how he would suffer, repent, and love her memory when it was too late..... she vividly pictured to herself what he would feel..... “How could he have said those cruel words to her?’ he would say. ‘How could I have left the room without saying anything?’ (751-2)

Here, Anna draws pleasure from the fantasy of her own death. Her fantasy satisfies and fulfills her fundamental need to be the phallic object that is desired even if it is only after her own death. She “enjoys” seeing herself being loved and mourned by Vronsky. She knows she will make Vronsky suffer by making herself unavailable to him, by depriving him of the cause of his desire. She also enjoys her cruelty to him. In this fantasy, she is the master and the idea of her own death gives her control over him. Her suicide will be a victory. She has discovered a new source of power, more potent than her beauty. But this mastery requires her identification with death.

By contrast, as Miller points out, in the passage à l’acte, there is a radical separation from others and a withdrawal from reality. Others and the self are as if dead. The subject is alone with the “appalling certitude” of its anxiety. This anxiety coincides with an equally unbearable state of inner conflictedness. Some kind of oneness and undividedness becomes absolutely necessary. Thus, before the passage à l’acte, Anna works to convince herself that she has rational certitude. In her final hours, she makes a rational determination that only hatred exits: “Aren’t we all thrown into the world only to hate each other” (764). Hate, she determines, is the truth. The world is one of relentless egotism in which one person destroys the other for his or her own satisfaction. There is no love. No one loves anyone. Even her love for her son was false. “I also thought I loved him [Seryozha] and used to be moved by my own tenderness. But I did live without him, exchanged him for another love, and didn’t complain of the exchange as long as I was satisfied by that love.’ And with disgust she remembered what it was that she called ‘that love’ “ (764).

Anna argues that love fails because there is no love. There is only lovelessness. It is a categorical deduction, but indeed the simplest and seemingly most logical explanation for the failure of love. Her nihilistic despair now rejects all dialecticism and complexity. She needs the support of one general truth. Her tolerance for ambivalence or hainamoration, the word Lacan coined for the ineluctable conjunction of hatred (haine) and love¹ -- the representatives of the death and life forces -- is exhausted. “Then she thought ... how tormentingly she loved and hated him, and how terribly her heart was pounding” (765), but her demand for definiteness requires that she sever this conjunction of hatred and love and chose hatred as the truth.

In her final hours, she works to undo the binaries imposed on us by language and to make one part true and the other false. Thus, she seeks to convince herself that only hatred is left: “And where love stops, hatred begins” (763). It is one or the other. She rejects the idea of a conjunction of opposites. She has to find what is true and what is false. This way she can escape doubt and contradiction. She must also, in order to escape the ethical ambivalence of good and evil, endorse evil: “It’s all untrue, all a lie, all deceit, all evil” (767).

¹ Lacan, Seminar XX, 90-1.
Her efforts are accompanied by a radical de-erotization and de-aesthetization of the entire realistic scene around her as well as of everyone in the scene. There is no longer any beauty, only ugliness; no pleasure, only pain. She hates what she sees: "looking with revulsion at the people coming in and going out (they all disgusted her).... It was impossible not to hate such pathetically ugly people" (764, 766). As she continues to tear down the veils of the aesthetic and ethical that protect her, everyone begins to looks odious. She flees from these others as if they were "lepers" (767).

The note that comes from Vronsky at this moment is too brief and strikes her as too carelessly written to hold her. It doesn’t respond to her absolute need to speak to him or to her demand to see him at once. (756). At this critical moment, he does not provide her with the symbolic hold she needs or with his presence as an imaginary and reassuring ‘you.’ “‘No, I won’t let you torment me,’ she thought, addressing her threat not to him, not to herself, but to the one who made her suffer” (767). The “you” that forces her to suffer is, as she at this moment recognizes, beyond Vronsky or herself. It is the original “you” that is not incorporated as the similar, the likeness, or the familiar other human; it is the “you” that remains the stranger, the unfamiliar, that belongs to das Ding (the Thing), but that was once a part of our being.1 It is also the torment that the uncanny peasant doing something to her body with a phallic iron represents. It is the primary repressed or the Jouissance that Lacan wrote with a capital J.

To oppose this stranger she must apply her body. It is the only object she has left to say “no” with. At this moment of crisis, there is no more acting out. She exerts her last defense, her body, which Lacan once referred to as the vase of desires, to ward off a fear of life greater than her fear of death. She must break this vase. The imaginary desire for death that she had played with earlier must now become an act in the Real. To accomplish the act she must stay with the one truth that consciously justifies it: the truth of an evil and loveless humanity, and on another level, the truth of her anguish and suffering due to this. Anna’s last energies are aimed with hatred beyond Vronsky at the core of her suffering: a primal division so tied to life itself that it can only be extinguished together with the extinction of her own living being.

The act is always in relations to the fundamental hole of our being.2 She looks for the opening, the hole between the two wheels of the train. She misses the hole on the first try. Falling, escaping from the stage of the world is work, requiring exactitude. She must try again and let herself fall again.3 She throws herself into the hole to be rid of her body, but at the same time she does so in order to fill this anxiety-provoking hole with her own body, the only thing she has left to fill this hole with. “‘There!’ she said … there, right in the middle, and I’ll punish him and be rid of everybody and of myself” (768).

“Probably no one finds the mental energy required to kill himself,” as Freud noted, “unless, in the first place, in doing so he is at the same time killing an object with whom

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3. Ce laisser tomber est le corrélat essentiel du passage à l’acte…. Le sujet va dans la direction de s’évader de la scène. C’est ce qui nous permet de reconnaître le passage à l’acte dans sa valeur proper, et d’en distinguer ce qui est tout autre, vous le verrez, l’isavoir l’acting out.”: L’angoisse, 137.
he has identified himself, and, in the second place, is turning against himself a death-wish which had been directed at someone else."¹ Vronsky is the other against whom her death wish (and her desire to retain value and mastery in some form) is directed: “I shall punish him.” But the very fact that she knows that she can punish Vronsky by killing herself proves that she knows that he loves her and that her act is not centrally about the dread of the loss of his love. That dread is a displacement of another deeper dread of the loss of her son, with whom her identification is deeper than with Vronsky, and her dread of her own failure to love. It is the son whom she threw away for whom she now throws herself away. And as regards punishing Vronsky, she succeeds. She inflicts on him an utterly useless and irrevocable remorse. After her death, when Vronsky goes off to war, seemingly to let himself be killed, he “remembered only her triumphant, accomplished threat of totally unnecessary but ineffaceable regret” (781).

When her little red handbag blocks her first attempt to throw herself into the hole between the wheels of the train, she makes an even more determined effort the second time. The same enormous energy that enabled her to transgress against the marital laws of her society enables her now to make the final passage. The same, terrible vitality, which shaped itself into a love passion, shapes itself now into a will to break her body. Anna's suicide is an act in Lacan’s sense as was her sexual infidelity. She could have chosen some gentler form of death (e.g. taken an overdose of morphine), but she chooses a passionate and violent death, an act of death that mutilates and punishes her body, an act that is like a “murder” as had been her experience of the act of sex.

What makes this final scene of suicide more horrific is that even as Anna is in the very hole between the train wheels, she reflects: “Where am I? What am I doing? Why?” She wishes to rise, to throw herself back, but something huge and relentless struck her on the head and dragged her down” (768). In the very act, she is “horrified at what she was doing” and wants to pull back. The appalling rational certainty that she reasoned herself into is undone. Doubt returns. The “habitual gesture of making the sign of the cross” restores for a moment the structural supports of her Symbolic and Imaginary orders and that is why she sees, one last time, life “with all its bright past joys” (768). The human being has no access to certainty or to truth or to a final, unambivalent hatred or love of life, of others, or of herself. The suicidal being is to the end still fully entangled in language, and thus, in uncertainty and doubt. The act of suicide itself is, therefore, not a pure act or an act purely in the Real, but in part a symbolic gesture.

At the end, it is not the subject that acts but the object, the train, which is a large metaphor for destruction by sexual intercourse. It is not only that Anna as the object falls or that “the shadow of the object” falls on her,² the agent of death is the train, symbolizing sexual intercourse or traffic as Freud often reminded us. The form of suicide Anna chooses is another symbol for the sexual encounter she never named or symbolized. The subject names, the object acts.

All of history is not only “a misunderstanding of the body” (ein Misverständnis des Leibes), as Nietzsche said,³ but, more specifically, a misunderstanding and mishandling

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¹ Sigmund Freud, “A Case of Homosexuality in a Woman,” SE XVIII: 162.
of jouissance. In the couple Anna and Vronsky, we do not see “the humanization of sexuality” that Lacan spoke of in *Desire and its Interpretation*\(^1\) or any incorporation of feminine jouissance into the economy of phallic desire. We see instead the passage from phallic sexuality to the Real of flesh, anxiety, and death. Kitty and Levin, however, manage a de-dramatization of sexuality by their love for each other and their child. They modulate passionate desire and pass beyond it to love and a jouissance of being.

Sentinel

A Weekend on the Frontier: Some Reflections on Clinical Study Days 3

Thomas Svolos

The Members and friends of the World Association of Psychoanalysis in the United States gathered in Omaha, Nebraska, with our guest Jean-Pierre Klotz, for our annual meeting: our third Clinical Study Days, hosted by the Circle of the Lacanian Orientation of Omaha, with the support of the Division of Psychoanalysis of the Creighton University Department of Psychiatry.

The theme of the Study Days was "The Object of Psychoanalysis." The heart of the Study Days was the presentation and discussion of six cases by clinicians from across the United States: Pam Jespersen, Cristina Laurita, Fernando Schutt, Mercedes Acuna, Dinorah Otero, and Maria Lopez. The cases demonstrated varied ways in which the analyst may use this concept of the object a in clinical work—not only different registers or functions of the object, but also the limits of the use of the concept of the object a in some cases. We had cases and discussions relating to the object a as the natural object; the object outside of phenomenal representations; the logic of the object as such beyond the partial objects; and, the status of jouissance outside of the object a. The cases were preceded by a panoramic survey of the object in Lacan's own work by Maria-Cristina Aguirre, and were followed by a Panel that took up the role of the psychoanalyst as a "nomadic object" in the CPCT's, with contributions by Gary Marshall, Fernando Schutt, and Dinorah Otero. In addition to his sharp contributions in the discussion of the cases, J-P Klotz also contributed to the Study Days a talk comparing the Clinic of Identification with a Clinic of Satisfaction, a clinic more oriented to the object a. Alicia Arenas concluded the Study Days with a text introducing the theme of Clinical Study Days 4 on "Interpretation," a careful delineation of the stakes of interpretation today in the clinic of the semblant and sinthome, a text that will orient us in our work and studies as we prepare to discuss next year how we conduct our interventions today.

On Friday afternoon, preceding the Study Days itself, Pam Jespersen of the Circle for the Lacanian Orientation of Omaha (CLOO) organized a Patient Interview (presentation de malades) by J-P Klotz at Alegent Health's Immanuel Hospital. The precise and sensitive interview by J-P Klotz led to a vigorous discussion by a wide ranging audience that included both the WAP Members and various mental health clinicians from within the Alegent Health system. This was CLOO's third annual presentation at Alegent--Nebraska's largest mental health care system--and this event, together with CLOO's monthly Psychoanalytic Case Conference at Immanuel, and the teaching activities of CLOO members in the Creighton University School of Medicine, show that psychoanalysis has a place in the broader mental health field in the United States.

Friday evening, J-P Klotz gave a public lecture on "The New Objects as Viewed Through the Tube" at Omaha's Bemis Center for Contemporary Art. Drawing a large audience of
psychoanalysts, mental health clinicians, scholars, artists, writers, students, and an interested general public, J-P Klotz gave a stimulating talk demonstrating how some contemporary American television series have the same function in creating new objects for society today that modern art did a hundred years ago. The very engaged discussion was a testimony to the audience’s excitement of the encounter with the psychoanalyst, an encounter outside of the consulting room or our usual clinical settings.

After the Study Days proper, the Members and guests at the Study Days held a Conversation on Lacanian psychoanalysis in the United States, with a wide ranging discussion on how we will want to expand the scope of our own interactions together across the wide range of sites in the United States; how we can respond to the increasing demands we are receiving for exposure to and teaching in psychoanalysis; how we might address the issue of formation of psychoanalysts in the United States; and, how we can increase the opportunities for people to have encounters with the psychoanalyst, not just in the mental health field, but in society in general.

Participants took their meals and social time in various restaurants and cafes in the Old Market district of Omaha. Omaha's oldest neighborhood has a cobblestoned charm that never ceases to surprise visitors who do not expect to find such a thing in an old frontier town. Omaha's weather over the weekend also provided a dramatic backdrop for our meetings: at times cool and dry, at times hot and muggy; sunny, and then ominously cloudy; the wind alternatively gentle and fierce. The weekend nonetheless remained dry, until a fierce and brief Great Plains storm in the middle of the night on Saturday dropped 6 centimeters of rain in less than an hour and also a tornado about a hundred city blocks west of the meeting site. (This was Omaha's first tornado in over thirty years, down for 7 minutes over a path several kilometers long. Many houses and buildings were destroyed or damaged, but fortunately no one was killed or seriously injured.)

This was a seminal event for the Lacanian orientation in the United States: the precise and vigorous discussion of the object over the Study Days was a testimony to the elaboration at a national level of work in the manner of the School, consolidating clinical work and careful study and preparation across various sites of the WAP in the United States and also opening up new questions and considerations for us in our use of the object a in our practice. The two-fold nature of this type of work--a distillation of the savoir-faire in the discussion of cases, and the remainders of this process: the holes: the new questions and unforeseen limits reached in the various discussions--is part of the power of the transmission of psychoanalysis in the Lacanian orientation. Thanks to the work of our presenters, discussants, and guest J-P Klotz, we were able to get a sense of that transmission of psychoanalysis in Omaha this past weekend.
Sentinel

Closing Remarks
Clinical Study Days 3, in Omaha, Nebraska, June 8, 2008

ON INTERPRETATION

By Alicia Arenas

“Interpretation in Psychoanalysis” will be the subject for the fourth annual Clinical Study Days, to be held in 2009, in New York, under the coordination of Maria Cristina Aguirre and the W.A.P. Ad Hoc Committee for the U. S.

The subject for Clinical Study Days number four (CSD4) will be Interpretation. This topic is also the topic for next Congress of the W.A.P., to be held in Paris, in 2010, with the title “Semblants and Sinthomes”.

This title refers to two aspects of the clinic of today and is grounded in the last teachings of Lacan. It refers to the clinic of the Real, a moment in Lacan’s teachings where for him there is not a discourse that is not a “semblant”. It affects, of course, the Analytic Discourse as well.

The second aspect of the clinic of today is the Sinthome, which indicates a new relationship between Imaginary, Symbolic and Real. These three registers can be woven together in unique ways, wherein what becomes important is the way in which each speaking being sustains himself in his relation to life.

From this perspective, the subject of interpretation must be understood as the passage from a clinic of the Other to a clinic of the Real. It necessarily implies many new questions: What is the place of the analyst? Is it still the place of the Subject Supposed to Know, which is more likely to bring about the cause of desire?. Or, is it the place of the “semblant” of the object, more linked to an object of jouissance?. Can we say that we still work with language and words?.
“interpretation” the same as saying the “act of the analyst”? Do we really interpret anything? What is the new relationship of “interpretation” to the notions of repression, resistance, or defense?

Throughout his teachings, Lacan used different types of interpretation, depending to which dimension he wanted to reach. He used the “punctuation” as a way for the analyst to underline a word or a sentence, focusing the attention of the analysand on it. What will be the opposite of the “cut”, a stopping of signification that produces an impediment of the immediate S2 effect. It can also be done through the “equivocal” and the “enigma”, as different ways of stopping meaning, or, creating new meanings. There is also the “quotation”, which the analyst takes directly from the discourse of the Other in the words of the analysand. Even though these are the more frequently mentioned, there is not an established limitation of the analyst’s possible interventions, with the previous consideration of the effects he is looking for.

In L’Etourdit, Lacan differentiates the “saying”, from the “said”, establishing that the analyst’s interpretation is usually not a “said”, but a “saying”, which has solidarity with the linguistic notions of statement and enunciation, the “saying” (or to say) at the level of the enunciation, as the possible deciphering of the truth, the repressed truth, the covered truth, and the statement being at the level of the signified, the “said”. It is a way to establish that the analyst’s intervention does not have a specific meaning. Rather, the analyst only situates something that is already there in the discourse of the analysand. The analyst’s intervention adds or subtracts meaning using the elements of the analysand’s discourse.

In Freud’s article Constructions in psychoanalysis, he says that the task of a construction is to produce a “conviction (or effect) of truth” which has the same effect as recovering a memory. Patients did not want to know about the truth of the unconscious, so, they resisted, and the analyst’s interventions went in the direction of revealing this truth.
There are other examples of interpretations in Freud’s works, there is one in the case of the “Rat man” when Freud says to the patient that his father “forbid him to choose the woman he loves”. This interpretation, a modality of construction, as it never actually happened, nonetheless produced a “conviction (or effect) of truth” that provoked a change of the subject’s position on the matter involved. Lacan calls this intervention an “inexact but truthful” interpretation, where truth is clearly differentiated from reality. It is truth at the symbolic level, where a subjective “psychic reality” is present.

The developments in relation to interpretation, in Freud and Lacan, had to do with different ways to work with resistance, which Lacan situated at the level of the id and the superego, and involved working with a resistance that is present in the discourse (as Freud explains in his example of his Signorelli’s episode). Towards this objective, Lacan developed the notion of an unconscious “structured as a language”, as an operational tool, able to register the “effects of truth”.

J.A. Miller in his March 19, 2008 course entitled: “The Interpretation of Psychoanalysis” describes it as follows:

“Lacan’s critique of the theory of the analysis of the resistances was accompanied by his work on language and linguistics, and based on the power of words and its efficacy toward the drives. His notion of the subject of the unconscious situates a point where a docility to interpretation occurs, as the notion of subject is precisely a variable to which an interpretation gives its value, (a new value is added, or substituted, each time there is new reading of the history) . In this way, Lacan erases the notion of the ego and situates the notion of the subject in a primary place. It implies the primacy of the Symbolic Order.

The way this primacy proved to be useful in analysis, was through the creation of a “psychoanalytical knowledge”, (“savoir”), a specific form of knowledge created
in the analytic experience. The place of the Subject Supposed to Know made the analyst responsible for the production this new knowledge through the operation of the Tuche, as opposed to the Automaton, which is the repetition of the history, the same old history, full of certainties, therefore, closed to any new knowledge.

By way of the different types of interpretations and interventions, the Tuche is the way to make the real to emerge, throughout the symbolic work, bringing about new readings of the past and having a direct effect in the drive’s repetition.

Through this operation, the interventions of the Subject Supposed to Know produce effects over the jouissance while going across the signifiers linked to the Fundamental Fantasy. That is, the way the analysand maintains his defense, and, within it, his jouissance.

With time, Lacan realized that even though he worked with the “sayings”, which provided new meanings to the subject’s convictions, the “crossing over” the Fundamental Fantasy had a result that wasn’t more than a story made of language; a reinterpretation of the old history, but always a story that gave the symbolic a place of reality as Realitat (Psychic Reality). For the Lacan of the 1970s, already confronted with a new form of the Real, the Wirtlichkeit, meaningless and raw, Realitat had to be called a “lying truth”.

In Seminar XX, Lacan clearly states that language is nothing but an “elucubration of knowledge” in relation with what he calls lalangue, signifiers out of the laws of language, out of the signifier’s chain and the symbolic, which have complicated effects over the body. It was the moment when he dropped the notion of “resistance” to use the old Freudian word of “defense” instead, situating the intervention of the analyst more as an annoyance, a bothersome intervention over the defense, whose effect is not a deciphering of the truth but more a confrontation with the Real itself.
It is also the moment he stops using the notion of subject, and instead uses the term “speaking being”, which, more than language, involves the body and the jouissance of the body. Here, he also substitutes the word signifier with the word “letter”, which is a combination of signifier and object, related not to language anymore, but to lalangue. All this is out of the field of the Subject Supposed to Know.

Thus, we have to accept that interpretation works in the analytical experience in more than one register. There is the interpretation of the unconscious itself as a machine of interpretation, the Symbolic unconscious, where there is always a new possible meaning left and where the analyst’s interventions are directed to produce new subjective positions. But there is also the field of the Real – Lacan mentioned a Real unconscious at least once- where the speaking being is left alone with the repetition of his autistic jouissance.

When we are at this dimension, even if words are used, the interventions of the analyst cannot come anymore from the field of language, or, from the Discourse of the Other. The word “interpretation” loses its usual context and instead we should talk of “the act of the analyst”, which doesn’t come from the symbolic. The symbolic is always on the side of the thinking being whereas the Real is on the side of the act, and the act isn’t the product of an elaboration of thoughts, or an elaboration in the level of the signifiers. That is why the only thing in the Analytic Discourse that isn’t a “semblant” is the act of the analyst.

In seminar XXIII, The Symptom, Lacan says: “The hypothesis of the unconscious is only sustainable if we suppose the Name of the Father, who is certainly God. That is why, if psychoanalysis prospers, it proves that it is possible to do without the father, on the condition of using it”.

Lacan also makes a distinction between the “elucubration of the unconscious” and the “reality of the unconscious” in the sense of the consistency of the body
and the Real of the symbolic, lalangue, as elements of this “reality of the unconscious”.

That is why the new clinic he proposes has to do with Joyce’s solution, which gave him the orientation of a new perspective not based on truth, meaning, or deciphering, not even in transference, but rather where the Sinthome is the way to name the perspective of a cure that deals with unchained signifiers, holes of knowledge and erogenous body zones.

This Lacanian 360 degree turning point at the end of his teachings requires a new place of the analyst that allows the presence of the symptomatic jouissance in analysis in a way to make possible for the speaking being to use it, instead of being used by it. The complex structure of the analytic device is now the place where a symptom can be transformed in a sinthome, where the analyst itself is to be used as one of the objects of the world, may be as a new gadget, for the analysand to get to learn “how to do with it”, “how to use” this object of jouissance, out of the symptomatic repetition.

Nevertheless, it will be too extreme to say that this very last teaching completely denies the former uses of interpretation. Rather, it makes us redefine them in order not to be hypnotized by the production of meaning. Miller alerts us to take carefully this “devaluation of knowledge”, as it is necessary to well understand its scope.

Even though we validate the “therapeutic effects” in analysis, which many times can be reached without a necessary gain in knowledge, it is something that pure psychoanalysis lends to applied psychoanalysis, but for the ones who are going to occupy the place of the analyst, it is necessary to be able to deeply experience and acknowledge the “lying truth” that sustains their own Fundamental Fantasy, to be able to occupy a place that should be empty of it. To be aware of the value of the semblant teaches us to not believe in words as a representation of the
truth, and, at the same time, to learn how to use them as a tool to point out the horizon of the impossible.

In “The Moment of Conclusion,” one of his last seminars, Lacan asks the following:

“How necessary is it to be inspired by something on the order of poetry to make an intervention as a psychoanalyst?”

We have one year up until the next CSD to figure out some of the possible answers to this question.

Thank you.
BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA

Townsend Center Working Group on Psychoanalysis and Literature

This group is inactive during the summer months.

Contact: Noa Farchi; Noa.farchi@gmail.com

HOUSTON, TEXAS

Houston Freudian Field Library

- Open Reading
- Bi-weekly Wednesdays
- 12026 Canterhurst Way
- Houston, Texas, 77065

Contact: Caren Navarro Nino; CarmenNavarro11@yahoo.es

Fax: +281-897-8295

- Readings on Psychoanalysis; Cultural and Clinical Connections
- English and Spanish
- Fairbanks Center, Lone Star College
- Room 201, Diagonal 209
- 14955 North Freeway,
- Houston, TX

Carmen Navarro Nino, Marianela Bermudez, and Luis Nino

- Houston Reading Circle 2008
- Jacques-Alain Miller’s Paris Seminar, 2004-2005
- “Pieces detaches”
- 12026 Canterhurst Way
- Houston
1-2:30 PM
Weekly on Wednesdays
Carmen Navarro Nino, Marianela Bemudez

- The Identification from Freud to Lacan
Readings from Lacan’s Seminars III, X, and XI. Selected readings of Freud
Mercedes Acuna, mecheacuna@yahoo.com.ar

**MIAMI, FLORIDA**

**NEL Florida**

- Seminar: “The Object a in the Lacanian Psychoanalytic Clinic”
This activity has two parts; one consists of reading texts by different members of the school and then case presentations.

4343 West Falger Street, Suite 352
Miami, FL. 33134
Alicia Arenas; Nelflorida@aol.com

- Study Group on Autism
Alicia Arenas

- Study Group on Adolescence
Juan Felipe Arrango: Nelflorida@aol.com

- Reading Group on Miller’s Paris Course VIII
Alicia Arenas and Juan Felipe Arango; Nelforida@aol.com

- Cinema Forum
A place for the community to get exposed to the presence of the Lacanian School in the Miami area; movies and then discussion follows.

Liliana Kruszel and Amilcar Gomez

- 2008 Summer Course: “The Objects that Consume Us”
This activity is organized by The Florida Center for teaching and research in psychoanalysis.
Alicia Arenas, Karina Tenenbaum, Fernando Schutt, Juan Felipe Arango, Liliana Kruszel, Isolada Alvarez, Amilcar Gomez

Alicia Arenas: Nelflorida@aol.com
NEW YORK


- The Concept of Semblant in Lacan’s Teachings


Bi-weekly, Wednesdays at 8:30 PM

Barnard College

Maria Cristina Aguirre, nyflag@yahoo.ca

- The Lacanian Interpretation in Clinical Cases

We will review clinical cases from the psychoanalytic literature and also from clinicians participating in the seminar to elucidate, clarify, and differentiate what we call the Lacanian interpretation. Is there specificity or all interpretations the same?

Bi-weekly, Wednesdays at 8:30PM.

Barnard College

Maria Cristina Aguirre, nyflag@yahoo.ca

- XV International Seminar of the Freudian Field

“The Clinic of Happiness”

Alexandre Stevens, Psychoanalyst

Today civilization demands and forces the subject to be happy by any means. We will examine the consequences of this demand.

Maria Cristina Aguirre, nyflag@yahoo.ca

New York

October 24-25, 2008

OMAHA, NEBRASKA

The Circle for the Lacanian Orientation of Omaha

- Concepts of Psychosis from Psychiatry and Psychoanalysis

This weekly seminar is a careful review of the subject of psychosis from psychiatric literature, including Freud and Lacan. Lacan’s work is reviewed briefly from the 1930’s but emphasis is on Seminar XVII in preparation for the Paris English Seminar.
Psychoanalytic Case Conference

Monthly clinicians from Alegent Psychiatric Associates meet to discuss one single case. The case respondents are Pam Jespersen and Tom Svolos and then opened up for all to discuss.

Fourth Thursday of the month, 12-1 PM

Pam Jespersen, pjespers@alegent.org

Lacanian Psychoanalysis: “A Course”

Clinicians from Alegent Psychiatric Associates have asked for a monthly clinical course to discuss Lacanian Psychoanalysis. Readings will be from the works of Freud, Lacan, Miller, and other members of the World Association of Psychoanalysis.

Second Thursday of the month, 12-1 PM

A Panel Discussion on the place of the psychoanalyst’s interaction with the world of art.

The Bemis Center for Contemporary Art

June 27, 2008

1-2 PM

Tom Svolos, tsvolos@radiks.net