Writing the Symptom: Lacan's Joycean Knot

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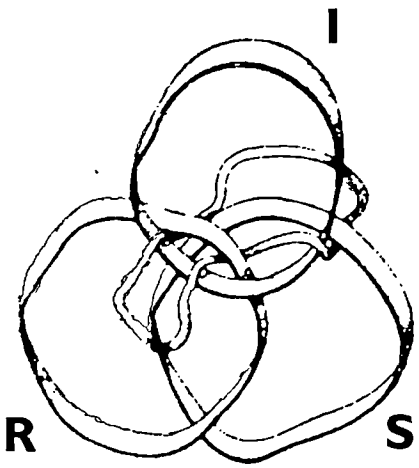

Abstract of the Thesis
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The thesis explores the encounter between psychoanalysis and literature in Lacan's reading of Joyce, and the new possibilities it opens for literary theory. In introduction, it considers how the publication of Lacan's work in English has obscured these possibilities, and contributed to certain misunderstandings of Lacan (for instance, around the term 'writing' as invoked by some Joycean critics). Part I sets out the question of the aesthetic in Freud (his readings of *Hamlet* and Michaelangelo's statue *Moses*), and traces its transformation in Lacan's earlier work, up to the introduction of anamorphosis. Part II returns to Lacan's introduction of the term 'subject' to psychoanalysis, in a representational economy governed by a specifically 'phallocentric' politics (the privileging of the Name-of-the-Father as the safeguard against psychosis); and charts the 'subversion' of this economy by writing—firstly in its contestation by Jacques Derrida in the name of an ungovernable *différance* of writing, and subsequently (in the 1970s) in Lacan's own elaboration of a 'writing' which is increasingly associated with a 'real' incommensurable with the subject's truth. The final avatar of this real is Lacan's Borromean knot, which the thesis presents in order to show how it provides the basis for the reading of Joyce as *sinthome*. Part III traces this reading, weaving it together with an account of the encounter between Joyce and psychoanalysis, both in the historical real and 'in theory' (chiefly, the encounter with Jung). The question of the author is reworked in terms of Lacan's notion of Joyce as a 'writing-being'; the 'death of the author' proposed by Roland Barthes is shown to elide precisely the central stake of Lacan's concept of writing: its non-metaphorical relation to the real. A translation of Lacan's seminar *Le Sinthome* (SXXIII, 1975–6) is given as an appendix to the thesis.

Abbreviations

References to Lacan's work use footnotes to give title, date and publication details, rather than a simple reference to the *Écrits* or Seminar volume.

References to Freud are to the *Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, edited and translated by James Strachey *et al*, London: Hogarth, 1953–74, abbreviated *SE* with volume number and date.

The following abbreviations are used to refer to Joyce's works:

P: *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, ed. Chester G. Anderson, New York: Viking, 1968.

U: *Ulysses*, ed. Hans Walter Gabler, London: Bodley Head, 1986.

FW: *Finnegans Wake*, London: Faber, 1939.

Translations

All translations of quotations from French texts are by the author unless otherwise noted.

Figures

* from *Scilicet* 6/7, pp. 49 and 57.

† from Pierre Skriabine, 'Clinique et Topologie', *La Cause Freudienne*, 1989, pp. 131 and 149.

‡ from Seminar *Le Sinthome* (18/11/75), *Ornicar?* 6, 1976

Intraduction: the question of writing

In your analytic discourse, you suppose the subject of the unconscious to know how to read. It is nothing but that, your story of the unconscious. Not only do you suppose it to know how to read, but you suppose it able to learn how to read.
— Jacques Lacan, 1973[1]

i) 'I shall speak of Joyce'

Joyce, c'est ce qui arrive lorsqu'on refuse une analyse—'Joyce is what happens when you refuse an analysis': this is Philippe Sollers' paraphrase of something he claims is 'suggested by Lacan in the English preface to the *Écrits*'.[2] Sollers is interviewing Shoshana Felman for *Tel Quel* in 1978, following the publication of her book *La Folie et la Chose littéraire*; he sees in this statement about Joyce a first outline of the differences between Lacan's approach to literature and the 'applied psychoanalysis' of Freud. If Freud had wondered whether or not Dostoevsky was a hysteric[3]—and even speculated about what might have been the results of an analysis for him—Lacan's turn to Joyce, for Sollers, embodies a desire to read literature as a movement *beyond* the discursive field of analysis. Although, certainly, Lacan's reading of Joyce raises clinical questions—around the diagnostic category of psychosis and its relation to the 'subject' of analysis—this is precisely, Sollers insists, in order to problematize the established interpretive protocols of psychoanalysis.

We will return to the narrative sketched out by Sollers in concluding the thesis, once we have given our own account of the psychoanalytic relation to literature established by Freud, its adoption and transformation by Lacan, and finally its place in the topological developments of the 1970s. Firstly, to begin to outline the field of our thesis and the central stakes of its argument, we should follow up the reference to the statement Sollers paraphrases: a statement by Lacan about Joyce in a preface to the English translation of the *Écrits*. As we will see, the relation between psychoanalysis and literature is peculiarly entangled in histories of publication and translation; and a consideration of the fate of Lacan's work in English can shed light on some of the ways it has been misunderstood—particularly so with regard to his work on Joyce.

A selected edition of Lacan's major collection of writings appeared in English in 1977, translated by Alan Sheridan; it was published by the Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-analysis, together with the first English translation (again, by Sheridan) of one of Lacan's seminars—Seminar XI, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-analysis*. It is in fact the latter text which includes the preface mentioned by Sollers. There, Lacan writes:

> I shall speak of Joyce, who has preoccupied me much this year, only to say that he is the simplest consequence of a refusal—such a mental refusal!—of a psychoanalysis,

[1] Seminar of 9th January 1973 (SXX), *Encore*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, Paris: Seuil, 1975, p. 38.

[2] 'La Chose Littéraire, sa Folie, son Pouvoir', entretien de Philippe Sollers avec Shoshana Felman, *Tel Quel* 81 (Autumn 1979), p. 41.

[3] In 'Dostoevsky and Parricide' (1928), *SE* XXI, pp. 173–94.

which, as a result, his work illustrates. But I have done no more than touch on this, in view of my embarrassment where art—an element in which Freud did not bathe without mishap—is concerned.[4]

The preface is dated 17th May 1976—thus from the middle of the seminar *Le Sinthome* (SXXIII), where Joyce becomes a central concern of Lacan's work. If Sollers was wrong to locate these comments in the English edition of the *Écrits*, perhaps the slip had its own logic: for it is indeed a question, in this 'mental refusal', of the 'function of the *écrit*', which Lacan had already presented in the 1972–3 seminar *Encore*.[5] It is writing—defined in 1976, as we will show, by Lacanian topology—which is at stake in this alleged Joycean *refus*, the rejection, 'of a psycho-analysis', of the 'transference' or 'legibility' which makes analysis possible.

The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-analysis, the seminar Lacan gave in 1964, was thus the first of his seminars to appear in English. This dense, challenging text was in one sense a singularly bad 'introduction' to Lacan's thought: it marked, as Jacques-Alain Miller recalls, precisely a *break* with the first ten years of his teaching, where the famous 'return to Freud' had been mapped out each week through careful readings of Freudian texts.[6] At the same time, as the foundation of a distinctively Lacanian orientation of psychoanalysis—it coincided with the establishment of the *École freudienne de Paris*, which the official Freudian body (the I.P.A.) refused to recognize—Seminar XI was perhaps an appropriate place to begin understanding how Lacan's thought, in transforming and re-inventing Freudian concepts, sought to carve out its own 'field' in the practice and theory of psychoanalysis.

The fundamental concepts of Lacan's title were the unconscious, repetition, the transference and the drive.[7] However, the seminar does not simply present these concepts in an evenly-balanced, symmetrical list: it sets them out with a particular 'bias', in accordance with the 'trajectory' of Lacan's teaching, as Pierre Skriabine puts it. Skriabine sees Seminar XI as an exemplary moment in 'the passage from an axiomatic of desire, which takes its point of departure from the Other, to an axiomatic of *jouissance* which is radically acephalic, autistic'.[8] Thus, by distinguishing between the Freudian unconscious as it had been re-theorized in Lacan's seminar during the 1950s—'the law of desire suspended in the Name-of-the-Father', in the compact formula Lacan gives in 1964[9]—and the drive, bound up with its 'accomplice' the *objet a* in fantasy, Seminar XI aimed 'beyond' the law of Freudian theory; in Miller's view, indeed, it marks the point where Lacanian thought begins to 'throw the Name-of-the-Father into question'.[10]

[4] Preface, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-analysis* (SXI), ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans Alan Sheridan, London: Hogarth Press & Institute of Psychoanalysis, 1977, p. ix.

[5] cf. the seminar of 9th January 1973 (SXX), *op. cit.*, pp. 29–38.

[6] Jacques-Alain Miller, 'Contexts and Concepts', *Reading Seminar XI: Lacan's Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, ed. Richard Feldstein, Bruce Fink & Maire Jaanus, New York: SUNY, 1995, pp. 5–6.

[7] Seminar of 15th January 1964 (SXI), *op. cit.*, p. 12.

[8] Pierre Skriabine, 'Clinique et topologie', *La cause freudienne*, 1989, p. 127.

[9] Seminar of 5th February 1964 (SXI), *op. cit.*, p. 48.

[10] J-A Miller, 'Contexts and Concepts', *Reading Seminar XI: Lacan's Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

As we will seek to show in this thesis, Lacan's turn to Joycean writing over a decade later in Seminar XXIII brings this jeopardization of the Name-of-the-Father to its logical conclusion. If at first sight it seems strange for Lacan to announce his intention to 'speak of Joyce' in a preface to Seminar XI, we could see in the discussion of *jouissance* in 1964 an early version of the problematic of *Joycesens* which emerges a decade later. The question of representing the real, which in Seminar XI is addressed through a reference to aesthetics (to Holbein's anamorphic painting, whose significance for Lacan we will explore), is given a final answer in the topological 'writing' which produces the Joycean *sinthome*.

ii) Traducing Lacanian Writing

If Lacan thus first emerges into English 'entangled' in Joycean writing, so to speak—referring his 'foundational' work in Seminar XI ahead to the key developments around writing in the 1970s—he had already associated the publication of that seminar (in France, three years before) with the name of Joyce and the problematic of the *écrit* it stood for. Lacan adds a postscript to the edition of Seminar XI published by Seuil in 1973, where he links the very presence of the written text to a certain blockage of reading or failure to 'transfer'. It is to Joyce that he turns for an instance of this lack-of-reading:

> ... après tout, l'écrit comme pas-à-lire, c'est Joyce qui l'introduit, je ferais mieux de dire: l'intraduit, car à faire du mot traite au-delà des langues, il ne se traduit qu'à peine, d'être partout également peu à lire.
>
> ... after all, the written as the not-to-be-read is introduced by Joyce—I'd do better to say intraduced (both introduced and not translated), because to deal with the word is to negotiate beyond languages, Joyce hardly translates himself at all, so that he is equally little-to-be-read everywhere.[11]

In Seminar XI, then—where the foundation of Lacan's school is marked by the opening of a gap between desire and drive—a certain *illegibility*, something *untranslatable*, is introduced to the field of psychoanalytic interpretation. A decade earlier, the 'law of desire', which Lacan had posited as the basis of the Freudian unconscious, had served as the guarantee that its 'letters' could be *read*—this was what Lacan set out to show in the famous Seminar on 'the Purloined Letter' in 1955, where Poe's story was held to illustrate the mechanism of unconscious repetition by making visible 'the supremacy of the signifier'.[12] By 1964, in contrast, it was to mark the *lack* in this consistent economy of representation, the point where its 'logic of signification' broke down, that Lacan brings in his concept of *objet a*—an object 'for which there is no idea', as he would put it later.[13] Our thesis will

[11] *Le Séminaire de Jacques Lacan*, Livre XI, 'Les quatres concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse', Paris: Seuil, 1973, p. 252; I quote Lacan in French here to bring out the *jeu de mots*, together with Colin MacCabe's translation (from *James Joyce and the Revolution of the Word*, London: Macmillan, 1979, p. 12).

[12] Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter', trans. J. Mehlman, in *The Purloined Poe: Lacan, Derrida and Psychoanalytic Reading*, ed. J. P. Muller and W. J. Richardson, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1988.

[13] 'La Troisième', *Lettres de l'école freudienne*, 16, 1975, p. 183.

trace how Lacan elaborates this paradoxical instance beyond representation, until it opens onto an engagement with the Joycean text where the essential legibility of the subject—and even the act of 'reading' itself—will be put in question.

This notion of writing as somehow constitutively incommensurable with *la traduction* takes on a certain irony in the context of the history of the translation and interpretation of Lacan's own work. His notoriously quirky French both resists translation and demands interpretive labour, amounting to a broad, though largely implicit, challenge to our habits of reading and comprehension. Here, the comments about an 'untraducible' Joyce interest us in particular because of the way we can relate them to the actual *practice* of interpreting Lacan (and Joyce).

If the broad church of Joyceans has tended to share Joyce's own well-known reservations about psychoanalysis, two ground-breaking studies in the 1970s—by Colin MacCabe and Margot Norris—sought to include a reference to Lacan in an approach to reading Joyce informed by new developments in literary theory.[14] This gesture, in the search for new resources of reading, had the paradoxical effect of effacing or glossing over the essential point Lacan was seeking to make about writing (for which the name of Joyce serves as an emblematic figure): the idea that it was *pas à lire*, could not be absorbed into the interpretive field of the psychoanalytic subject, however 'decentred' that field might be. The theoretical 'chiasmus' here entailed, on one side, the search by Joyceans for an exegetical 'heterology'—a way of breaking with a critical tradition lagging far behind the 'revolution of the word' embodied in the Joycean text—while, on the other, at around the same time (the mid-1970s), Lacan was seeking to reconceive writing as *autonomous*, irreducible to symbolic alienation or articulation in the 'discourse of the Other'.

Thus, while the 'decentred universe' in Norris' work could designate at once the Joycean text and the Lacanian unconscious, Lacan himself read in Joyce an exemplary showing-forth of the *défaut dans l'univers*, the lack in the consistent universe of signification which was mapped out in analysis.[15] Lacan was thus, in a certain paradox, 'traduced'—translated and betrayed—at the very point where he had posited 'intraduction'. The introduction of Lacanian theory to Joyce studies, its transference from the analytic 'scene of reading' to the domain of literary criticism, constituted in itself the 'traducement' or betrayal: for in Lacan's last definition it was the very movement of 'transfer', of metaphorical substitution, which writing 'foreclosed', rendered impossible.

'Perhaps more than any other writer of this century', comments Jean-Michel Rabaté, 'Joyce has forced criticism to acknowledge its theological nature'.[16] We might see one aspect of this 'theological' response at work in attempts to invoke Lacanian theory to dispel the enigma of the Joycean text, which contrast so sharply with Lacan's own view of Joyce as an enigmatic limit to theoretical mastery. This 'theological' dimension of criticism could be formulated (in terms our thesis will investigate) as the restoration of the Other, and the corresponding effacement of

[14]Colin MacCabe, *James Joyce and the Revolution of the Word*, *op. cit.*; Margot Norris, *The Decentred Universe of Finnegans Wake*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1976.

[15]The phrase '*le défaut dans l'univers*' is from Lacan's paper 'L'Étourdit', *Scilicet* 4, Paris: Seuil, 1973, p. 34.

[16]Jean-Michel Rabaté, *James Joyce, Authorized Reader*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1991, p. 1.

the *objet a* which marks the lack or inconsistency in signification. The irony of turning to Lacan for knowledge with which to *treat* (to deal with or write a treatise on) Joyce was that in Lacan's opinion Joyce's writing was essentially *intraitable*, bodied forth an unaccountable real beyond the universe of subjectivation.[17]

Our thesis will show how the logic of the 'transference' of literature into the domain of psychoanalysis, as it first emerges in Freud's discovery, is to radically exclude this 'untreatable' instance of writing that Lacan so much enjoys at the end of his teaching. However, this is in no sense to characterize this 'traducement' of literature as a specifically psychoanalytic error, a symptom of its myopic failure to construe the text correctly: as we have indicated, even those Joycean critics with an avowedly iconoclastic, innovative agenda can be seen to participate obliquely in the erasure of 'writing' as Lacan conceives it.

More recent work has 'traduced' Lacan's work on Joyce in a more direct way: proclaiming itself as 'the first book to make use of Lacan's writings and seminars on Joyce', Sheldon Brivic's *The Veil of Signs: Joyce, Lacan and Perception* (1991) is a manifestly 'theological' treatment of Joycean writing, its very chapter-headings ('The Author as Other') announcing its intention to use Lacanian knowledge to *efface* precisely what Lacan's teaching used to put that knowledge in question: the unaccountable real of the Joycean text.[18] Brivic pursues the project he began in 1980 with *Joyce between Jung and Freud*: to invoke psychoanalytic 'insights' in order to apply them to the 'mind' which gave birth to the Joycean text.[19] Our thesis will seek to show how Lacan's work on Joyce completely subverts the methods of such a 'freudful' variety of 'applied psychoanalysis'.

iii) Reading Backwards

One of the most overtly 'theological' readings of Joyce is that of Carl Jung. In Part III of our thesis we explore this reading, together with the overall 'diagnosis' of Joyce formulated by Jung and incorporated into his psychological theory. As we will see, Jung's article on *Ulysses* stands out as an exemplary moment in the history of efforts to *translate* Joyce—in the sense we have outlined: to make his writing fully legible. Nevertheless, from the theological mists of Jung's reading something emerges which might offer us a clue as to the problem of 'intraducing'—of working through or elaborating, without 'translating' and misrepresenting—Lacan's teaching around the *sinthome*.

Having failed to make much progress trying to read *Ulysses* in the conventional way, Jung announces that he '... started to read the book backwards': only an experimental reversal of reading practices allows Jung to attain any level of engagement with Joyce's text.[20] Here, Jung stumbles across an essential dimension of

[17] I take the term *intraitable* from Phillippe Lacoue-Labarthe's paper on *Antigone*, and the significance of the Greek tragedy for Lacanian ethics; *De l'éthique: à propos d'Antigone* in *Lacan Avec les Philosophes*, ed. Michel Deguy, Paris: Albin Michel, 1991, p. 27.

[18] Sheldon Brivic, *The Veil of Signs: Joyce, Lacan and Perception*, Chicago: University of Illinois, 1991.

[19] Sheldon Brivic, *Joyce Between Jung and Freud*, New York: Kennikat Press, 1980.

[20] '*Ulysses*: A Monologue' (1932), in *The Collected Works of C.G.Jung*, XV, London: Routledge, 1966, p. 111.

Joycean writing which is brought out by Lacan: the way it challenges our imaginary relation to *sens*, demanding that we take part in its reweaving of signifying texture as *jouis-sens*.

Lacan has to be 'read backwards' if we are to avoid 'traducing' his work on Joyce. As we have noted, there is a sense in which Lacanian theory first comes into English 'backwards': the 1976 preface is written in the last period of Lacan's teaching, when the new conception of writing has utterly transformed the theoretical field presented in Seminar XI (let alone that of the major *Écrits* from the 1950s, published simultaneously). The miscomprehension of this last period—implicit in MacCabe and Norris, explicit in Brivic—is bound up with a failure to take account of the radical shift of perspective it entails, its break with some of the key themes of the earlier work.

Slavoj Žižek has shown how reading Lacan 'backwards'—in the perspective of the late work, which seeks to alter the fundamental presuppositions of psychoanalytic theory and its teaching—would involve a radical change in our position as readers. 'All the effort of Lacan's last years is directed ... at breaking through [the] field of communication *qua* meaning', notes Žižek: thus, once Lacan has established the Other as the structure of symbolic exchange, where the real is 'alienated' into the domain of signifying difference,

> ... in *Seminar XX*, we stumble upon a certain One ... that is not one-among-the-others, that does not yet partake of the articulation proper to the order of the Other. This One is of course precisely the One of *jouis-sense*, of the signifier in so far as it is not yet enchained but rather freely floating, permeated with enjoyment: it is this enjoyment which prevents it from being articulated into a chain. To indicate the dimension of this One, Lacan coined the neologism *le sinthome*.[21]

The *sinthome* thus emerges as a real irreducible to a chain of signifiers, an opaque blur disfiguring the field of communication. As our thesis will seek to show, for Lacan to make this signifying *aporia* the starting-point for a reconceptualization of *subjectivity* was to 'hystericize', to throw into question dramatically, the entire body of psychoanalytic knowledge as it had been drawn up in his earlier work.

To read Lacan backwards is to start with perhaps the most ambitious moment of his teaching: its attempt to map out—to *write*, as Lacan tirelessly insists—a psychoanalytic structure beyond discourse, able to embody the real without recourse to signification. This is the endgame of the 'mathematical' formalisation which fascinated Lacan; our thesis will seek to assess its importance in Lacanian theory and trace its re-invention of the question of writing—and return that question to the Joycean text, to explore a new way of conceiving its author's 'cruelfiction' (*FW*, 192) without the certainties provided by a critical theology.

[21] Slavoj Žižek, *Looking Awry: An Introduction to Jacques Lacan through Popular Culture*, Cambridge, Mass: M.I.T., 1991, p. 132.

Thesis Summary: Writing the Symptom: Lacan's Joycean Knot

In Part I, the thesis sets out the question of the aesthetic in Freud by considering his reading of *Hamlet* and his encounter with Michealangelo's *Moses*. The 'solution' (*Lösung*) of the artistic enigma is for Freud a moment in which the aesthetic is 'identified'—given a name—and thus rendered compatible with the psychoanalytic account of subjectivity. However, this 'solution' also relates to another sense of identification, an aspect of the Freudian uncanny: thus psychoanalytic reading is 'implicated' in the artistic riddles it claims to solve. The thesis links this problematic to Lacan's readings of *Hamlet* and *Antigone*, where the figure of anamorphosis is used to rethink the psychoanalytic accounts of fantasy and sublimation. An approach to art where it is it not simply 'explained with the unconscious' emerges as Lacan's ultimate goal, whose realization the thesis sets out to show in the Joycean *sinthome*.

Part II of the thesis charts the predominantly philosophical status of the Lacanian subject up to the last period of Lacan's work. Firstly, the encounter between Lacan and Heidegger (in theory and in real life) is discussed in order to outline the manifestly anti-Heideggerian bias of Lacan's 'return to Descartes'; this leads us to trace Lacan's establishment of the subject in psychoanalysis, its basis in the *cogito* as a pure auto-enunciation; and how it appeared to conflict with the scientific project of structuralism (the 'mathematics of the signifier'). The thesis shows that Lacan's solution to this theoretical conflict was to develop *topology* as an account of 'the real of the subject's economy'.

Lacan's theory of the subject is shown to entail a distinct politics, which the thesis seeks to link to the fate of Lacanian 'topology' (which is synonymous with 'writing', for Lacan, by the 1970s). The concept of 'foreclosure' designates a breakdown of the subject's 'economy', which Lacan associates with a *crisis in paternity*; the 'mortification' of the maternal body by the Name-of-the-Father is posited as the only way to prevent the onset of psychosis. The thesis argues that *writing*—first in Derrida's critique of Lacan, then in a new sense developed by Lacan—comes to contest the 'phallogocentric' politics of the Lacanian subject. The purest form of this writing, for Lacan, is the topology of the Borromean knot—which the thesis situates in relation to Lacanian theory as it leads up to the reading of Joyce as a particular 'symptomatic' form of knot, in a reformulation of the Lacanian theory of psychosis and a new development in the psychoanalytic approach to art.

Part III of the thesis explores in detail Lacan's 'topological' reading of Joyce, interweaving it with an account of the historical encounter between Joyce and psychoanalysis (chiefly, his contact with Jung). Thus, the question of the 'real'—in historical narrative and in Lacanian 'writing'—is outlined as a new way to approach authorship (in contrast to the 'death of the author' proposed by Roland Barthes) and subjectivity.

I. Identifying Aesthetics: Psychoanalysis Before Art

We laymen have always been intensely curious to know ... from what sources that strange being, the creative writer, draws his material, and how he manages to make such an impression on us with it and to arouse in us emotions of which, perhaps, we had not even thought ourselves capable.
—Sigmund Freud, 1908[1]

... art is in its essence an origin [Ursprung]*: a distinctive way in which truth comes into being, that is, becomes historical.*
—Martin Heidegger, 1935[2]

i) A letter, a litter

IF PSYCHOANALYSIS begins with a letter—one in which Freud tells Fliess, on 15th October 1897, of his discovery of the Oedipus complex—its origin also marks its immediate involvement with literature. Freud finds the first 'response' to the discovery, the first confirmation of the new knowledge, in a literary text—in *the* literary text, in fact: Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. What Freud seems to begin as a casual afterthought ends in a full-blown theory of the art-work's *Ursprung*, one which will set the agenda for decades of 'applied' psychoanalysis:

> Fleetingly the thought passed through my head that the same thing might be at the bottom of *Hamlet* as well. I am not thinking of Shakespeare's conscious intention, but believe, rather, that a real event stimulated the poet to his representation, in that his unconscious understood the unconscious of his hero. How does Hamlet the hysteric justify his words 'Thus conscience doth make cowards of us all'? How does he explain his irresolution in avenging his father by the murder of his uncle—the same man who send his courtiers to their death without a scruple and who is positively precipitate in murdering Laertes? How better than through the torment he suffers from the obscure memory that he himself had contemplated the same deed against his father out of passion for his mother...[3]

'At the bottom' of *Hamlet* (underneath the stage, perhaps; lurking beneath the representational surface of the drama) Freud imagines another scene, closer to the truth (which might simply be *another play*: this time by Sophocles). This 'solution' to the 'riddle' of Shakespeare's tragedy is incorporated, carefully reformulated, in the foundational text of psychoanalysis, *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900). The central enigma of the play, which has baffled generations of critics, is, Freud writes, that it 'offers no reasons or motives for [Hamlet's] hesitations'.[4] This double

[1] *Der Dichter und das Phantasieren*, translated as 'Creative Writers and Day-dreaming', (1959), *SE* IX, p. 141.

[2] *Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes*, translated as 'The Origin of the Work of Art' in *Basic Writings*, tr. & ed. David Farrell Krell, San Francisco: Harper, 1977, p. 187.

[3] *The Complete Letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fliess*, translated and edited by J M Masson, Cambridge, Mass: Bellknap, 1985, p. 272–3. (Note the aptly 'Oedipal' Freudian slip—the substitution of Laertes for Polonius).

[4] *The Interpretation of Dreams* (*SE* IV–V), pp. 264–5.

lack—of dramatic coherence and of critical mastery—will be abolished by Freud's interpretation, now supported by some broad historical brush-strokes. Because of the 'secular advance of repression in the emotional life of mankind', a change has taken place in the representational position of fantasy:

> In [Sophocles'] *Oedipus*, the child's wishful phantasy that underlies it is brought into the open and realized as it would be in a dream. In *Hamlet* it remains repressed; and—just as in the case of a neurosis—we only learn of its existence from its inhibiting consequences. Strangely enough, the overwhelming effect produced by the more modern tragedy has turned out to be compatible with the fact that people have remained completely in the dark as to the hero's character.[5]

In an oneiric, golden Hellenic past, fantasy could be directly enacted, given public representation. If modern representation is incapable of such a bold *Realisierung*, Freud immediately marks this as a sign of repression; and in case there is any doubt here as to *who* represses (in other words, about the *subject* of this 'psychical' event), he adds: 'Here I have translated into conscious terms what was bound to remain unconscious in Hamlet's mind'.[6]

On the one hand, then, *Hamlet* seems to bear with it, in a strange transcultural historical transference, the *Oedipus* as its 'repressed' truth, whose 'obscure memory' exerts an inhibiting influence on the drama, stains the diegesis with quasi-symptomatic blurs. At the same time (and in the same gesture, as it were), Hamlet is supplied in Freud's *Ubersetzung* with an unconscious set of Oedipal fantasies of his own. What has left audiences and critics 'in the dark' over the centuries is the play's secret: that it conceals 'within' it another play, entitled not 'The Mousetrap', but *Oedipus Rex*. 'The conflict in *Hamlet* is so effectively concealed that it was left to me to unearth it', writes Freud in 1905,[7] as if to echo his earlier comment that the play 'has its roots in the same soil' as Sophocles' tragedy.[8] We will see how these metaphors—of buried secrets, occult truths lying beneath the 'skin' of representation—'root' Freud's reading of *Hamlet* in the metaphorical economy of Shakespeare's text itself; and with what consequences.

Before we begin a more detailed exploration of this—the way in which psychoanalytic reading remains embedded in the aesthetic 'soil' it investigates—it is worth pausing to consider Freud's own conception of the relation between the *interpretive* activity in analysis and in the criticism of art-works. In one sense, these analogous forms of 'riddle-solving' appear oddly indistinguishable. If Freud can open his paper on Jensen's novel *Gradiva* with the remark that it is 'a settled fact that the essential riddles of dreaming have been solved by the efforts of the author of the present work',[9] he will imply that a similarly decisive *Lösung* ('solution'; also the 'dissolution' of a symptom) has been effected in the case of *Hamlet*: its secret 'unearthed', the symptomatic critical perplexity surrounding it should immediately evaporate. In this sense, Freud sees psychoanalysis and the interpretation of art as entirely *compatible*, their interpretive continuity signaled by a shared vocabulary

[5] *Ibid*, pp. 266–7.
[6] *Ibid*, p. 268.
[7] 'Psychopathic Characters on the Stage'(1905–6), *SE* VII, p. 309.
[8] *The Interpretation of Dreams, op. cit.*, p. 266.
[9] 'Delusions and Dreams in Jensen's *Gradiva*' (1907), *SE* IX, p. 1.

(each faces its *Rätsel*, riddle or enigma, the opacity of which it strives to dissolve or solve through a 'pharmaceutical' *Lösung*).

If this continuity between analyst and critic is restated in a paper Freud wrote in 1914, it is simultaneously—and dramatically—suspended. This article, entitled 'The Moses of Michaelangelo', appeared in the journal *Imago* that year with the author's name substituted by ***.[10] Beneath this veil of anonymity, Freud writes the following extraordinary passage:

> Long before I had any opportunity of hearing about psycho-analysis, I learnt that a Russian art connoisseur, Ivan Lermonlieff, had caused a revolution in the art galleries of Europe by questioning the authorship of many pictures, showing how to distinguish copies from originals with certainty, and constructing hypothetical artists for those works whose former supposed authorship had been discredited. He achieved this by insisting that attention should be diverted from the general impression and main features of a picture, and by laying stress on the significance of minor details, of things like the drawing of the fingernails, of the lobe of an ear, of halos and such unconsidered trifles which the copyist neglects to imitate and yet which every artist executes in his own characteristic way [...] It seems to me that this method of inquiry is closely related to the technique of psycho-analysis. It, too, is accustomed to divine secret and concealed things from despised or unnoticed features, from the rubbish-heap, as it were, of our observations.[11]

The 'supposed authorship' of the critical or interpretive 'revolution' in question is itself soon 'discredited': Freud was later, he continues, 'greatly interested to learn that the Russian pseudonym concealed the identity of an Italian physician called Morelli' (*ibid*). Just as he finds in an art criticism which focuses on 'unconsidered trifles', a mirror-image of the methods of psychoanalysis, so Freud's own decision to remain anonymous, his refusal to give his *signature* to the article, seems to be doubled by the pseudo-signature of this Russian or Italian, this 'hypothetical' man Freud has only heard about, who is supposed (ironically enough) to know 'how to distinguish copies from originals'. In a letter to Freud, Karl Abraham has doubts about the strategy of anonymity, wondering, *à la* Morelli, whether the *style* of the writing itself might betray the master's hand: 'Don't you think that one will recognize the lion's claw?'[12]

The question of authorship—ultimately always a question of the *institutional* organization and control of knowledge—is one of the central stakes in the encounter between psychoanalysis and the aesthetic. A first approach to that question might be to wonder why Freud withholds his signature—effectively refusing to acknowledge this hypothetical 'layman's' work as an authorized psychoanalytic production—from the same text where he notes (in the quoted passage) how 'closely related' the two interpretive techniques are (so closely related, one is tempted to add, that like twins they were intertwined at birth). The gesture with which Freud seeks—like one of the copyists exposed by Morelli—to pass off his work as another's, sets up a curiously self-undoing effect in a text which argues that the authentic trace of an author is to be read only in stylistic traits, the 'rubbish-heap' of significant

[10] Peter Gay, *Freud: A Life for our Times*, London: Macmillan, 1988, p. 314.
[11] 'The Moses of Michaelangelo' (1914), *SE* XIII, p. 216.
[12] Gay, *ibid.*

details which subvert the closing authority of a signature. And if Freud's signature, the mark of 'the lion's claw' concealed by the asterisks, has finally only one meaning—*this is psychoanalysis, I authorize this*—Abraham's question could be rephrased as a question about the relation between psychoanalysis and aesthetics: what is it that allows us to distinguish 'copy' from 'original' here, where can the line be drawn between authentic analysis and its identical twin?

All of Freud's writings on aesthetics are responses to such a question; they are also, as I hope to show, a series of attempts to situate psychoanalysis in the *right position* before art, to take up a certain stance or posture which will allow the 'mastery' of an overwhelming encounter: in essence, an act of self-mastery.

ii) Hamlet's Secret Unearthed

'Some of the grandest and most overwhelming creations of art are still unsolved riddles to our understanding', writes Freud in 1914.[13] The contributions to literary or art criticism made possible, in Freud's view, by the discoveries of psychoanalysis are invariably announced as definitive solutions to age-old enigmas, as if Freud's intervention were provoked not so much by the art-work itself, as by the critical 'symptom', the interpretive difficulty. We will find, however, that the key stake in this intervention will emerge as the possibility of maintaining a distance between a theoretical discourse and its aesthetic object, of criticism freeing itself from the 'obscure memory' of the art-work before it.

Hamlet, then, constituted a riddle because of a central *gap* in its structure: the lack of 'reasons or motives' for Hamlet's famous hesitation to act; a lack which Freud's Oedipal narrative would do away with. We can begin to glimpse what this reading overlooks—how what it sees is caught up with a certain 'symptomatic' blindness—by comparing it with another view of the play, that of T. S. Eliot. Writing in 1919, Eliot passed his notorious judgement that *Hamlet* was an artistic 'failure'. The quality of 'artistic 'inevitability' ', which

> lies in ... complete adequacy of the external to the emotion ... is precisely what is deficient in *Hamlet*. Hamlet (the man) is dominated by an emotion which is inexpressible, because it is in *excess* of the facts as they appear. And the supposed identity of Hamlet with his author is genuine to this point: that Hamlet's bafflement at the absence of objective equivalent to his feelings is a prolongation of the bafflement of his creator in the face of his artistic problem.[14]

For Eliot, what is lacking is not some specific psychological content—'repressed' from the drama, unknown to the critics—but a proper aesthetic fit between the textual surface and the emotional diegesis. The inexpressible affective trauma which disfigures the play is precisely what resists analysis, what leads to the 'bafflement' of character and artist; *and of critic*, we would add. For Eliot's reading reminds us of what Freud somehow fails to see: that if *Hamlet* is a riddle, it is first of all so *in Hamlet's eyes*. ' 'Sblood, there is something in this more than natural, if philosophy could find it out' (II.ii.363–4)[15] mutters the prince: a *crisis of interpretation* is the

[13] *SE* XIII, p. 209.

[14] *Selected Prose of T. S. Eliot*, ed. Frank Kermode, London: Faber, 1975, p. 48.

[15] References are to the Arden edition, ed. Harold Jenkins, London: Methuen, 1982.

play's very 'subject'. Thus the 'prolongation' of the riddle from author to character hypothesized by Eliot could be extended to the audience, left 'in the dark', not because of a particular, contingent dramatic flaw (the playwright's failure to include in the text the required details about Hamlet's complex motivations) but because of the essentially opaque, 'inexpressible' quality of what confronts Hamlet.

So the first critic baffled by the play's 'excess'—the gap which opens in it between representation and an 'undiscovered country', an unnamable other—is Hamlet himself. The map of this undiscovered country supplied by Freud will blindly trace the outline of a topography already written in Shakespeare's play. To show this, we need to turn to the text of *Hamlet* itself.

At the opening of the play, Hamlet is faced by a flagrant breach of social protocol: his mother's failure to respect the full term of widow's mourning. Gertrude's 'o'erhasty marriage' is, writes critic R. M. Frye, 'in sixteenth-century terms ... utterly scandalous'.[16] Its effect, in Hamlet's first soliloquy, is the image of an ever-expanding, all-devouring feminine *jouissance*:

> Must I remember? Why she would hang on him
> As if increase of appetite had grown
> By what it fed on; and yet within a month—
> Let me not think on't—Frailty, thy name is woman. (I.ii.143–6)

Mourning, as Lacan will put it in one of his seminars on *Hamlet*, is a response to a 'hole in existence'.[17] If the death of the royal father tears a hole in the socio-symbolic fabric of the state, this is made far worse by the queen's flouting of her mourning duties: a traumatic gap opens up between social existence—the 'government' whose coherence depends on conventional forms, consistent symbolic protocols—and the particularity of individual existence: here, the recalcitrant self-sufficiency of an irresponsible enjoyment.

Hamlet's first response to, or defence against, the opening of this 'hole in existence' (his own existence, as prince and son, is at stake—as is shown by his sense of the danger of even allowing himself to acknowledge it, to admit the 'hole' into his memory: 'Let me not think on't') is the act of *naming*. His first task of the play is to find a name for both the dead father and the excessive life-force of the mother, to provide some symbolic forms which might begin to 'patch up' the trauma.

Freud, in 'Psychopathic Characters on the Stage' (1905–6), also sees the riddle of *Hamlet* as a matter of names: throughout the play, he writes, 'the impulse that is struggling into consciousness ... is never given a definite name';[18] thus by speaking that name, Freud will undo the riddle. If the first attempt at this is a formula so succinct as to sound almost banal—the epithet 'Hamlet the hysteric' appears as

[16] R. M. Frye, *The Renaissance Hamlet: Issues and Responses in 1600*, Princeton: P.U.P., 1984, p. 84.

[17] Seminar of 22 April 1959 (SVI); 'Desire and the Interpretation of Desire in *Hamlet*', tr. J. Hulbert, in *Literature and Psychoanalysis, The Question of Reading: Otherwise*, ed. Shoshana Felman, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982, p. 38.

[18] 'Psychopathic Characters on the Stage' *op. cit.*, p. 309.

vacuous, as clichéd, as 'Frailty thy name is woman'—Freud has to re-work, re-*write*, the act of naming *in exactly the same way as Hamlet*: by writing another play into the play we are watching.

Hamlet discovers early in the play that mere repetitive signifiers—'Words, words, words' (II.ii.192)—fail to do justice to the experiential wealth 'beneath' them, do not 'fit' the rich complexity of the things they name (something Eliot will express, in his terms, as the lack of 'artistic 'inevitability' '). The conventional misogyny ('Frailty, thy name...') with which Hamlet ends his search to express the scandal of his mother's behaviour is a last resort, uttered with a despairing irony, a sense of the gulf between the trite platitude and the unspeakable truth; likewise, he is unable to get away from empty formulas when called upon to name his dead father, to sum up the essential quality of his life: 'A was a man, take him for all in all' (I.ii.187).

If these rhetorical inadequacies point to the play's preoccupation with a discrepancy between the visible scene or surface of representation and some obscure 'depth' beyond it, this finds its fullest realization when the ghost of Hamlet's father appears. The ghost emerges 'in breach of', as an utter disruption of, the discursive space of the play (both metaphorically and 'in act', when it speaks from the 'cellarage' beneath the stage: the voice of royal authority emanating from the allegorical 'Hell' of the medieval mystery plays). Hamlet has to encounter it *away from* the court, outside the consistent socio-symbolic scene where its 'questionable shape', refusing to speak or be addressed, can only appear as a traumatic enigma. The ghost's initial warning to him indicates a radical incommensurabilty between its voice and what can be heard 'by ears of flesh and blood':

> ... But that I am forbid
> To tell the secrets of my prison-house,
> I could a tale unfold whose lightest word
> Would harrow up thy soul... (I.v.13–16)

The ghost's secret is an *ear-poisoning*: the metaphorical economy of Shakespeare's verse turns the uncanny tale—of the 'lazar-like' corrosion of '[a]ll my smooth body'—into a figure for the effect upon the play's signifying surface (and the 'body politic') of a traumatic 'secret', at once beyond it and secretly concealed within it.[19] The motif runs throughout the play in oppositions of the 'skin' of representation and a subjacent wealth—treasure or ulcer—'mining all within' (III.iv.150). Hamlet's immediate response is to dream of an absolute representational purity, freed from the mundanity of everyday discourse, which would be capable of writing down, *re-tracing*, the ghost's word:

> I'll wipe away all trivial fond records,
> All saws of books, all forms, all pressures past,
> That youth and observation copied there,

[19]For a discussion of 'the ear of the other' and the Derridean questions of the signature, naming and 'wounding' in the encounter between Shakespeare and psychoanalysis, see Nicholas Royle, 'The remains of psychoanalysis (ii): Shakespeare', in *After Derrida*, Manchester: M.U.P., 1995, pp. 85–123.

And thy commandment all alone shall live
Within the book and volume of my brain,
Unmix'd with baser matter. (I.v.99–104)

The worn formulas of convention—the only tools Hamlet could find in his vain efforts to symbolize his mother's *jouissance* or his father's finished life—are to be erased from his memory, to allow the pure inscription of the ghost's final 'Remember me!'. This desire for a *pure writing* suffers an ironic reversal as soon as it passes into action:

My tables. Meet it is I set it down
That one may smile, and smile, and be a villain—
At least I am sure it may be so in Denmark. [*Writes*]
So, uncle, there you are. (I.v.106–110)

For all the emotional intensity of its author, the note scribbled down remains mired in the banality of signifying convention (as the rhetorical simplicity of the phrase emphasizes: 'one may smile ... and be a villain'). Representation 'unmix'd with baser matter', signification pure enough to allow Hamlet to utter the name which will restore the symbolic consistency of the court (and the play) can only be envisaged in *Hamlet* as *the performance of a play.* This is made clear, in the famous 'Mousetrap' scene (III.ii), by Hamlet's 'directorial' remarks: his instructions to the players combine conventional wisdom about theatre ('to hold as 'twere the mirror up to nature'; III.ii.22) with a specific injunction to avoid the 'pitiful ambition' (III.ii.44) of actors who mar the overall effect of the drama by some personal intervention or emotional involvement (some 'pitiful' or *pathetic* element). Hamlet's 'solution' to the riddle of the play must be situated exclusively on the level of the signifier: it can have no truck with the 'poison' of any contingent, pathological depth.

During the performance of 'The Mousetrap', Hamlet's gleeful answer to Ophelia's question about the play's meaning—'The players cannot keep counsel: they'll tell all' (II.ii.137–8)—encapsulates the effect of *Hamlet*'s paradoxical *mise en abyme.* Whereas in Act I, the revelation of the ghost's secret caused a dramatic dislocation of symbolic space, Hamlet has now arranged for that secret to be represented, unveiled, centre-stage—in the royal presence, supposedly the guarantee of the consistency of the legal/political court. The players are fulfilling their duty as royal subjects by openly confessing the secret in court—a confession which has the paradoxical effect of driving its legal addressee, the King, offstage. The truth about the King has 'passed into act' in an open ('extant') play, emerged into the public socio-symbolic realm, where things can be named. Hamlet's triumphant naming of Claudius contrasts notably with the earlier attempts to 'set down' his criminal essence:

For thou dost know, O Damon dear,
    This realm dismantled was
Of Jove himself, and now reigns here
    A very, very—pajock. (III.ii.275–8)

By a kind of contract Hamlet has arranged beforehand, Horatio is to observe the effects of the play on the court. His first comment—to object that 'pajock' does not fit in the verse because it doesn't rhyme (III.ii.279)—is therefore, precisely, the point: something 'doesn't rhyme', just as 'something is rotten' in the state; there is a *symbolic* inconsistency at work in the court, now that it is ruled by a 'pajock' or patch-cock, 'a king of shreds and patches' (III.iv.103).[20] Claudius is nothing but the semblance of a king, a being of signifying convention: his subjective position is dependant on the *supposition*, the surface appearance, of social and representational consistency (metonymically figured in Horatio's demand for conventional rhyming couplets). 'The Mousetrap' is Hamlet's solution to the riddles of the play—the traumatic obscurities surrounding his father's death and his mother's desire—because it constitutes a *scene of representation* which allows him to take up a position of identification, makes space for the clear utterance of a decisive, definitive name ('pajock'). If his encounter with the ghost (in I.v) risked annihilating the very inscription of Hamlet's identity, re-staging that encounter, making visible and meaningful the ear-poisoning it embodied, restores the prince's position in socio-symbolic space. Hamlet thus accomplishes the task of avenging his father—*on the symbolic level* (the symbol being, as the Kojevean formula Lacan adopts has it, 'the murder of the thing').[21] The rest of Shakespeare's tragedy shows once again, with dark irony, how great a gulf may separate this level from that of 'flesh and blood'.

Is Freud's response to the riddle of *Hamlet* no more than an exact repetition or re-staging of Hamlet's? We have seen how their 'solutions' share a pre-occupation with naming, with finding the right signifier to unlock the mystery 'underlying' the play (which is, for both Hamlet and Freud, an *Urszene* of parental trauma, the 'inhibiting consequences' of which the 'extant' play *is*). If Freud's first attempt—simply labelling Hamlet a hysteric—seemed too abrupt, lacking a historical dimension, by *The Interpretation of Dreams* the term 'repression' will be used to offer a more authoritative-looking solution. What could be 'brought into the open' in *Oedipus Rex* 'remains repressed' in *Hamlet*, due to a neurotic modernity which somehow consigns fantasy to a kind of socio-cultural 'unconscious', the storehouse of that which can no longer be given open symbolic acknowledgement. Freud then briskly shifts from historical speculations to a conventional character-based approach—'I have translated into conscious terms what was bound to remain unconscious in Hamlet's mind' (as if the text of *Hamlet* were being read here—confirming Eliot's worst fears—as somehow identical with the subjectivity of its central character, as nothing but 'the book and volume of [Hamlet's] brain'). What this shift reveals is the true status of an 'Oedipal' *Hamlet*: the insertion by Freud of *another play*—the primal scene whose 'obscure memory', emanating from some mysteriously invisible site of 'repression', dominates the inhibited, hesitating, 'neurotic' drama we actually see. This play, grafted on to the pure supposition of 'Hamlet's mind', would

[20] cf. Harold Jenkins *Longer Notes* in the Arden edition of *Hamlet* (*op. cit.*, pp. 509–10).

[21] cf. *Écrits: A Selection*, tr. A. Sheridan, London: Tavistock, 1977, p. 104; for an account of Lacan's theoretical debt to the work of Alexandre Kojève, see Mikkel Borch-Jakobsen, 'Alibis of the Subject', in *The Emotional Tie*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993, pp. 155–75.

be a visible scene which could introduce coherence, representational and diegetic consistency: like 'The Mousetrap', the *Oedipus* reveals the truth masked by the symptomatic compromises in the 'manifest' scene which is its inauthentic copy.

Claiming to have 'unearthed' the play's secret, to have freed culture of its obsessive inability to understand *Hamlet*, Freud remains entirely caught in the signifying economy of Shakespeare's play. Freud's reading traces Hamlet's—the 'solution' to a traumatic encounter with what exceeds or eludes socio-symbolic representation (the 'lack in the Other' which, as we will see, is to be given a central place in Lacanian theory from the 1960s on)—while it remains blind to the paradoxes of this strange mirroring or repetition, its 'abyssal' structure of theory-within-theory, play-within-play.

iii) Maintaining Authority

To discover *why* Freud's reading of *Hamlet* repeats the essentials of the play's central reflexive 'solution' to the enigmas it opens up, to free our argument from its sense of uncanny or unconscious co-incidence, we need to turn to another of Freud's encounters with the aesthetic: one which shows more clearly the *positioning of authority* central to the encounter. The best way to approach this—and a good example of the 'intrication' of these questions—is to quote Jacques Lacan quoting *Hamlet* in his 1959 seminar. In question is the 'distance' a subject takes before the object of fantasy; Lacan finds this well illustrated by a scene from Shakespeare's play:

> ... [Ophelia] has the good fortune to be the first person Hamlet runs into after his unsettling encounter with the ghost, and she reports his behaviour in terms that are worth noting.
>
> > My lord, as I was sewing in my closet,
> > Lord Hamlet, with his doublet all unbraced,
> > No hat upon his head, his stockings fouled,
> > Ungartered, and down-gyvèd to his ankle,
> > Pale as his shirt, his knees knocking each other,
> > And with a look so piteous in purport
> > As if he had been loosèd out of hell
> > To speak of horrors—he comes before me.
> >
> > ... He took me by the wrist and held me hard
> > Then goes he to the length of all his arm,
> > And with his other hand thus o'er his brow
> > He falls to such perusal of my face
> > As a would draw it. Long stayed he so. (II.i.77–91)[22]

We will return to the complexities of Lacan's reading of *Hamlet* and its key place in the development of Lacanian theory; for now, we should simply note this invocation of the play as offering a *mise en scène* of the subject's relation to fantasy. Hamlet's posture is that of a spectator confronted by a traumatic, enigmatic object; the texture of his symbolic identifications having been 'unbraced' (like his doublet)

[22]Seminar of 15th April, 1959 (SVI); in Felman, ed., *op. cit.*, p. 21.

by the ghost's harrowing, inhuman voice, his encounter with Ophelia becomes a search to *position himself*, to take up a place within a structure of inter-subjective meaning. It is no accident that this search is compared in Shakespeare's verse to an *artistic* activity—'As a would draw it'—the attempt to trace out a form, introduce a minimal mark of representational difference which might serve to stave off the threat of obliteration.

Freud, in a letter to Edoardo Weiss in 1933, tells of a similar encounter:

> Every day for three lonely weeks of September 1913, I stood in the church in front of the statue [the *Moses* by Michaelangelo], studying it, measuring it and drawing it until there dawned on me that understanding which I expressed in my essay, though I only dared to do so anonymously.[23]

'The very interpretation of the figure is open to complete contradictions', comments an art historian quoted approvingly by Freud: like *Hamlet*, Michaelangelo's statue *Moses* is surrounded by a buzz of critical activity, symptom of a complete lack of interpretive consensus. For Freud, the 'inscrutable' statue emits a gaze of blinding mastery:

> How often have I mounted the steep steps from the unlovely Corso Cavour to the lonely piazza where the deserted church stands, and have essayed to support the angry scorn of the hero's glance![24]

Like the hero of a Western at high noon, Freud has to walk away from the everyday world to take up his position in the fateful encounter (again, the parallel is Hamlet's retreat from the scene of the court to face the ghost). 'No piece of statuary has ever made a stronger impression on me than this', says Freud; with the insistence of the *Trieb* circling its object, he returns to confront the enigma, to try once again to measure or trace out its 'inscrutable' meaning.

What is Freud's first interpretation of the statue's mysterious 'source of power' (located, like that of *Hamlet*, beyond what is immediately legible in the representational surface)?[25] In a gesture characteristic of all of his writings on art, and which goes beyond simple 'academic' convention, Freud identifies aesthetic power with the *mastery of an author*. Having listed the bewildering range of critical opinions about the *Moses*, he asks whether the lack of consensus can be due to the 'master-hand' having 'traced ... a vague or ambiguous script in the stone': [26] only the artist (together with a closed, 'intentional' psychical space) can be the origin of the fascinating enigma. Freud never takes the step of positing, as the cause of the symptomatic critical dissent, something irreducible to the narratives swirling around it; he simply adds one more narrative (but his is the *right* one, based on the 'cryptic' hermeneutic of a Morelli).

The *maintenance of mastery* is the theme of Freud's interpretation of Michaelangelo's statue. The 'master-hand' of the artist is to be salvaged, as the principle of a firmly centred meaning, from the vociferous 'crowd' of critics; likewise Freud's

[23] *Sigmund Freud as a Consultant. Recollections of a Pioneer in Psychoanalysis* (Letters from Freud to Edoardo Weiss), New York, 1970.

[24] 'The Moses of Michaelangelo' (1914), *op. cit.*, p. 211.

[25] *Ibid.*, p. 211.

[26] *Ibid.*, p. 213.

obsessive attention to the *hand* of the statue seeks to trace there the heroic safeguarding of authority against disruptive, centrifugal forces:

> Nor will [Moses] throw away the Tables so that they will break on the stones, for it is on their especial account that he has controlled his anger; it was to preserve them that he kept his passion in check. In giving way to his rage and indignation, he had to neglect the Tables, and the hand which upheld them was withdrawn. They began to slide down and were in danger of being broken. This brought him to himself.[27]

Hamlet also had recourse to his 'tables' (I.v.106) as a defence against the tearing-open of his symbolic world—they offered a surface for the inscription of a name, the first attempt to restore things to order, to salvage some representational consistency. Freud's Moses is caught between his 'mission'—to *maintain* God's law, to uphold its written surface in his hand—and the overwhelming affective disturbance which dislodges the Tables, loosens the grip on them and threatens (literally) to break the law. Moses comes to himself—assumes his identity, his self-mastery—in this moment when disruptive 'passion' almost undoes his grasp of the law: Freud imagines the statue's poise—a violent twisting movement suddenly frozen—as encapsulating the essence of a restoration of *logos*, the checking of 'infant' emotion (unspeakable, unrepresentable affect) by symbolic law.

Freud's 'solution' to the riddle of the statue is to *draw* it—or rather, to produce drawings which are 'emancipated... from the visual image of the statue' and represent 'an analysis of the motive forces behind it' (p. 228). Like the *Oedipus* in Freud's reading of *Hamlet*, these 'hypothetical' sketches reveal the repressed truth of the art-work, its invisible origin; they offer a dramatic narrative to account for the aesthetic enigma.

A very 'Freudian' approach to this interpretation of Freud's—one adopted by Ernest Jones in his biography—would be to re-inscribe the drama 'behind' *Moses* as a version of another 'unconscious' play, the struggle taking place around 1914 for authority in the psychoanalytic movement (principally the conflict between Freud and Jung). One could look for stylistic traits to support such a reading, perhaps finding a despairing 'unconscious' pun in 'the remnants of a terminated movement' Freud observes in the statue's posture. In Jones' view, it is 'pretty obvious' that Freud identifies with Moses as the law-giver confronted by the unruly crowd, caught between the maintenance of the law and an overwhelming experience of affect.[28]

Such a reading, by dispelling the enigma of Freud's obsessive fascination with Michaelangelo's statue, restores the psychological consistency of the master, and thus his authority; it restores Freud's *name*. As an author—even one who adopts the enigmatic mask of anonymity—he must be the site of 'motive forces' which can be accounted for, which make sense (which are *law-abiding*). What Jones, faithful to Freud, seeks to efface is any question of the *aesthetic* as a disturbance of the psychoanalytic narrative, an encroachment upon its—psychical or theoretical or political—space.

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[27] *Ibid.*, p. 229.

[28] 'The winter of 1913–14 ... was the worst time in the conflict with Jung. The *Moses* was written in the same month as the long essays in which Freud announced the seriousness of the divergences between his views and Jung's...', Ernest Jones, *Sigmund Freud: Life and Work*, Volume Two, London: Hogarth Press, 1955, pp. 366–7.

In his 1959 seminar, Lacan mocks interpretation of this kind, based on the 'pretty obvious', as 'the psychoanalytic wisdom of Polonius'. *C'est l'amour!* he hears Polonius cry in response to Ophelia's account of her traumatic encounter with Hamlet; a comic version, in Lacan's view, of the psychoanalytic hermeneutic which remains blind to the 'agency of the letter', prefers to deal with banal commonplaces—adolescent romance, rebellious disciples—rather than address the crucial question of the economy of signification.[29] Lacan's reading of *Hamlet* turns around his efforts to work out a theory of the relation of the subject to the 'object of fantasy': it offers no anecdotal account of the art-work to restore its full legibility, but rather invokes it as testifying to a fundamental opacity at the heart of our fantasmatic investments. The subject is *positioned* in the fantasy relation, held in place by fascination there, like Hamlet as he gazes over his shoulder at Ophelia. Lacan tries to capture this in his formula or 'matheme' for fantasy, $\$ \diamond a$, where the lozenge between the subject and *objet a* indicates a relation of 'conjunction-disjunction', a tensely balanced pulling to-and-fro.[30]

If for Lacan the Shakespearean text illustrates a relation of fantasy resistant to 'psychoanalytic wisdom' of the kind which would reduce it to a transparent, 'pretty obvious' meaning, the 1959 seminar does not, however, take the next step: to posit the *relation between psychoanalysis and aesthetics* as just such a relation of 'fantasy', of 'conjunction-disjunction'. Freud's desperate manoeuvring around Michaelangelo's statue stages his confrontation with an aesthetic trauma which seems to lie almost beyond the analytic gaze, at its outer limit (thus Freud's Hamlet-like hesitation about owning up to authorship: is this just inside—or just outside—psychoanalysis?). The aesthetic must be kept at *precisely the right distance* from psychoanalysis—near enough for the analytic subject to take up a position, elaborate a narrative; but not so near that distance collapses into uncanny doubling, loss of self-mastery. Psychoanalysis must be able to address questions of aesthetics, send out messages into the field of art, be recognized as a certain 'authority'—but its true authority, where it recognizes itself, must remain in place.

If Freud was able to establish his relation to *Hamlet* by doubling the play with *Oedipus* (and thus in a sense, as we have seen, himself 'unconsciously' doubling Hamlet), the essay on the *Moses* shows more vividly the reflexive logic of the Freudian narrative. The story of 'aesthetic' (bodily, affective) disturbance and its control by the firm hand of the law narrates nothing so much as the upheaval provoked in psychoanalytic discourse by the confrontation with the aesthetic, how the 'Tables' where it is inscribed begin to slip, then are returned—by the 'master hand' writing the essay—to their proper place. To introduce the drama of psychoanalytic politics is to be beguiled by the signified, to fail to follow Morelli's lead and confine one's attention to the surface of representation.

[29]Seminar of 15th April 1959; in Felman, ed., *op. cit.*, pp. 20–21. Jones' book, *Hamlet and Oedipus* (1949) may be the implicit target of Lacan's satire.

[30]See 'The subversion of the subject and the dialectic of desire in the Freudian unconscious' (1960), in *Écrits: A Selection*, *op. cit.*, pp. 313–4.

The paradox of 'Freudian aesthetics' (to use Lacan's phrase)[31] is that in order to assume a certain position before art—one which will mark a distance from the aesthetic, a refusal to plunge into the affective turmoil it embodies—Freud's discourse has to unconsciously or uncannily *mimic* the logic of the art-work in question. The art-works which interest Freud themselves represent the reflexive *mastery of the aesthetic*, the portrayal of a law-bearing interpretive centre struggling to maintain its self-identity, its semantic consistency, in the face of affective disruption. To *identify* with the author of the work—to take up an identical position, not 'psychologically', but through an uncanny inter-textual mirroring—is then to call into question the very gesture seeking support in such an identification, which would establish a definitive, regulating distance between subject (here, psychoanalysis) and traumatic object (art).

iv) Anamorphic Revelations

Why did we begin our reading of Freud's essay on 'The Moses of Michaelangelo' by framing it with Lacan's quotation from *Hamlet*? An illustration of how Lacan's work constantly re-works itself (constituting, as Slavoj Žižek writes, 'a succession of attempts to seize the same persistent traumatic kernel')[32] is that the clearest answer comes in 1960, a year after the seminars on *Hamlet*. In Seminar VII, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, Lacan introduces a specifically aesthetic motif to psychoanalytic theory:

> [An anamorphosis] is any kind of construction that is made in such a way that by means of an optical transposition a certain form that wasn't visible at first sight transforms itself into a readable image. The pleasure is found in seeing its emergence from an indecipherable form.[33]

Lacan's favourite example of anamorphosis is Holbein's great double portrait *The Ambassadors*: a pair of resplendent Tudor noblemen stand beside a table laden with emblems of Renaissance knowledge, while a strange, 'phallic' form dominates the foreground of the picture; this image only becomes 'readable'—as a skull, a token of *Vanitas*—from a specific, oblique point of view, from which the general field of 'meaning' in Holbein's picture, its elaborate text of allegorical references, recedes into a blur.

The anamorphic 'optical transposition'—in which an insignificant or illegible blur is transformed into a 'readable image'—captures precisely what is at stake in Freud's invocation of Morelli: the emergence of *symptomatic truth* through a shift of focus from 'the general impression and main features of a picture' onto stylistic details, which 'at first sight' were paid no attention. Moreover, Morelli's critical 'revolution' matches psychoanalysis, in Freud's view, as a decisive turning-point in the history of interpretation: just as what was previously invisible in the field of art criticism is now shown by Morelli to be the privileged trace of an author, so

[31] *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, SVII, ed. J-A Miller, tr. D. Porter, London: Routledge, 1992, p. 159.

[32] Slavoj Žižek, *The Metastases of Enjoyment: Six Essays on Woman and Causality*, London: Verso, 1994, p. 173.

[33] Seminar of 3rd February, 1960 (SVII), *op. cit.*, p. 135.

for Freud the re-positioning of authority in the encounter between psychoanalysis and art permanently alters the domain of aesthetics, ridding it forever of one of its riddles.

Hamlet's fascinated 'perusal' of Ophelia could be understood as the subject's desperate search for such an anamorphic transformation, a sudden epiphanic vision in which the enigma would dissolve, allow the subject to assume the right position from which to encounter the object in its truth, give it its proper name. If Freud's obsessive return to confront the *Moses* underlies a similarly fantasmatic relation, it is one which, as we have seen, finds its resolution, its *Lösung*, in the final reconfirmation of authorial mastery. To read *Hamlet* 'anamorphically'—as if it were a picture, say, by Shakespeare's contemporary, Holbein—might allow us to see more clearly the ambiguous place of Lacan's reading of the play, its Janus-faced position between very different moments of his teaching.

For Lacan, anamorphosis dramatizes a 'split', an incommensurability, in representation (as is emphasized particularly when he takes up the trope again in 1964).[34] In front of *The Ambassadors*, we see *either* a pair of well-dressed noblemen *or*, re-positioning ourselves, a death's head; there is no 'metalanguage' position, from which we could take in both images at once. What anamorphosis reveals is precisely the *illusory* nature of perspective: the moment when the blurred form becomes legible, when the spectator finds the right spot from which to master the only remaining obscurity in the visible field, co-incides with the obliteration of the 'background', the revelation that its apparent perspectival consistency was itself dependent on a particular viewpoint. It was no accident, Lacan thought, that it was at the very moment (circa 1600) when our modern illusion of perspective established itself, that the anamorphic 'trick' appeared.[35]

We have seen how in *Hamlet* there is an analogous divergence or incommensurability of scenes: the ghost can only be encountered away from the symbolic domain of the court, represented by the open, public space of the stage; its uncanny voice impinges upon the stage from below, threatening to disrupt the conventional space of the drama as well as the fictional consistency of the court. If Hamlet's first response to the ghost seems to entail the risk of jeopardizing, 'dismantling', the entire realm of signification ('I'll wipe away all trivial fond records... '; I.v.99), it is only *away* from that realm that a truthful, *real* scene can unfold (and thus Hamlet is only able authentically to 'encounter' Ophelia outside the court, off-stage: in the grave); until, that is, the performance of 'the Mousetrap', which we can thus situate precisely as the moment of anamorphic revelation. The transformation of the opaque blur of the ghost's story into a 'readable' text, an 'extant' play, simultaneously 'dismantles' the symbolic scene of the court, by driving the king off-stage.

In Seminar VI, Lacan sees in *Hamlet* 'the tragedy of desire', where the subject's fate is 'expressed in terms of a pure signifier'.[36] It is Hamlet's condition as a subject *unable to act*—prevented from realizing his desire, constantly 'at the hour of the Other', trapped in the defiles of signification—that is the focus of interest for Lacan in 1959. This required, of course, a very specific reading (even, we might say,

[34]cf. *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* (SXI), *op. cit.*, pp. 67–122.
[35]cf. Seminars of 3rd & 10th February 1960 (SVII), *op. cit.*, pp. 135–6, 140–2.
[36]Seminar of 15th April 1959 (SVI); in Felman, ed., *op. cit.*, pp. 11–12.

a heavily 'edited' version) of Shakespeare's play, one which places its theoretical emphasis upon Hamlet's brooding contemplation of the riddles confronting him, rather than the prince's 'solution' (the reflexive paradox of the play-within-a-play). As we have seen, Lacan picks out the scene of Hamlet's 'perusal' of Ophelia—in which Hamlet is shown as having 'lost the way of his desire', as caught up in a desperate search for a position *from which* to desire—as an illustration of the fantasmatic relation. But this conception of fantasy as an impasse—focusing on the subject's position as alienated in, thwarted by, the discourse of the Other—is by no means a definitive or conclusive one for Lacan. The shifting theorizations of fantasy in his thought can be traced as another 'version' of the Lacanian subject as it is constantly rewritten. These transformations are wrongly conceived as merely theoretical 'developments': a certain 'symptomatic' resistance to theory on the side of its 'object' can be traced in them.

In 1967, Lacan writes in the résumé of the seminar *La logique du fantasme* that fantasy provides 'the subject's window onto the real'.[37] The fantasy object—*objet a*, in Lacan's terminology—comes to be conceived no longer—or not only—as a fluctuating imaginary mirage screening the enigma of the Other's desire, but now as an *anamorphic* revelation: the mark of a real irreducible to the law of the signifier.

This shift in the conception of fantasy, which can be marked as the hinge between two moments in Lacan's theory of the subject (or 'the two faces of the subject', as Bruce Fink would have it)[38] is matched by a corresponding transformation of the psychoanalytic relation to the aesthetic. We could begin to understand that transformation by comparing Lacan's reading of *Hamlet* in Seminar VI with his reading of Sophocles' *Antigone* the following year. Because, in Seminar VII, the engagement with the literary text is bound up with a new theorization of the psychoanalytic concept of sublimation (a concept famously left 'unfinished' by Freud), we need to situate briefly Lacan's refiguring of sublimation in order to grasp what emerges with *Antigone*.

v) Circumscribing the Real

'The lack of a coherent theory of sublimation remains one of the lacunae in psychoanalytic thought', comment Laplanche and Pontalis.[39] The theoretical obscurity of the term is given a certain 'legendary' quality by the rumour about its 'repression': Freud is supposed, for some unknown reason, to have destroyed the chapter which would have dealt with sublimation in the synoptic metapsychology he had planned in 1915.[40] What is certainly true is that *Sublimierung* constitutes, in psychoanalytic terms, a kind of *coincidentia oppositorum*, almost a paradox. For *how*, we might ask, putting the question at its most naive, is sexuality—elsewhere affirmed by Freud

[37] *La logique du fantasme* (SXIV), 1966–7, Résumé: Annuaire de l'EPHE; quoted in Armand Zaloszyc 'Contrariété et satisfaction' in *Une Touche de Réel*, Paris: Z'Editions, 1990, pp. 90–1

[38] Bruce Fink, *The Lacanian Subject: Between Language and Jouissance*, Princeton: P.U.P, 1995, pp. 140–1.

[39] *The Language of Psychoanalysis*, tr. D. Nicholson-Smith, London: Karnac 1973, p. 433.

[40] For a sceptical view of this rumour, see Jo Attié, 'Trait pervers et sublimation', in *Une Touche de Réel, op. cit.*, pp. 59–60; see also Peter Gay, *Freud: a Life for our Times, op. cit.*, pp. 372–4.

as essentially recalcitrant, at odds with any egoic interest—to be 'translated' into the 'higher' activities of artistic or intellectual pursuits? As a *Triebshicksal* ('drive destination'), sublimation seemed to entail for Freud the absence of repression, the notion that the drive could be fully absorbed, at once emerging and disappearing in some rarefied, symptom-free domain. The term owes more to chemistry, where it describes the direct transition from a solid to a gaseous state, than to aesthetics: Freud nowhere links sublimation to the Kantian category of the sublime.

Lacan's introduction of anamorphosis as a way of rethinking sublimation immediately sets a new agenda for the concept: one bearing on questions of aesthetics, as well as of the 'topography' of the subject. If for Lacan it is 'as a function of the problem of ethics that we have to judge sublimation',[41] this problem emerges as inseparable from a certain aesthetics. In his reading of Seminar VII, Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe pin-points this by coining the term *esthéthique*: Lacanian ethics can only emerge 'with the support of an aesthetic'.[42]

In Sophocles' play *Antigone*, the heroine's decision to defy Creon's edict and perform funeral rites for her brother Polynices marks her as an outlaw, one who does not recognize the authority of the *polis*. For Lacan, this defiance is the manifestation of a special kind of beauty or *lustre*: as in an anamorphosis, 'a marvellous illusion in the form of a beautiful image of the passion appears ... whereas something decomposed and disgusting spreads out around it'.[43] What shines forth is an irreducible self-sufficiency, a *jouissance* that 'knows itself', obeys its own law (Lacan notes how in the Sophoclean text the chiming epithets αὐτόγνωτος and αὐτόνομος make Antigone's 'self-knowledge' echo her 'autonomy');[44] compared with Antigone's blinding *éclat*, the mundane political laws embodied by Creon appear sordid, debased.

'A work of art always involves encircling the Thing', Lacan now states, as a reformulation of sublimation. *Das Ding*, a concept referred back to the origins of Freudian metapsychology in the 1895 *Project*, is an unimaginable 'prehistoric' object, an otherness irreducible to the symbolic universe of the subject. In terms of the history of Lacan's thought, it can be situated, so to speak, as a 'transitional object' between a conception of the *objet a* as imaginary (as fantasmatic mirage) and its re-conception as real (in the 1960s, from the seminar *Identification* onwards,[45] *objet a* is increasingly thought together with, as inseparable from, the lack in the Other, the incompleteness or inconsistency of the symbolic order).

If the artwork *fait le tour de la Chose*, circles round or entraps the pre-symbolic void of the real, this is doubly true of Sophocles' play: just as Antigone is 'encircled' by the socio-symbolic laws of the community, so the text raises her figure 'to the dignity of the Thing' (in Lacan's formulaic definition of sublimation).[46] The central place of the representational field, the 'vacuole' around which its discourse turns, is a place of *extimité*, of 'intimate exteriority': Antigone transcends the laws of signi-

[41] Seminar of 20th January, 1960 (SVII), *op. cit.*, p. 107.

[42] Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, 'De l'éthique: à propos d'Antigone', in *Lacan Avec les Philosophes*, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

[43] Seminar of 8th June, 1960 (SVII), *op. cit.*, p. 273.

[44] *Lacan Avec les Philosophes*, *op. cit.*, pp. 273, 282.

[45] *Identification* (SIX), 1961–2, unpublished.

[46] Seminar of 20th January 1960 (SVII),*op. cit.*, p. 112

fication, the 'symbolic castration' invoked elsewhere by Lacan as the sole guarantee of the subject's 'normalisation'.[47] Conversely, Hamlet's aim—which, as we have seen, finds a certain realization in his deployment of 'The Mousetrap'—is to integrate the extimate trauma (ear-poisoning, unspeakable *jouissance*) into the scene of open, 'extant' representation and so seal up the 'hole in existence', restore the consistency of his own position as subject; this could be 'translated' as an act of sublimation, in its Freudian definition: the absorption of sexuality—of the death-drive in its blind, 'infant' violence—into thè law-abiding domain of representation.

Lacan's comments on the 'fascinating image' of Antigone show the extent of his redefinition of sublimation, its distance from the Freudian conception of a translated or sublated sexuality:

> ... it is Antigone herself who fascinates us, Antigone in her unbearable splendour. She has a quality that both attracts us and startles us, in the sense of intimidates us; this terrible, self-willed victim disturbs us.[48]

Antigone's dazzling *éclat* shines forth, leaving us, like Hamlet confronting Ophelia, speechless. The position of the subject, the desire in representation which sustains it, is at risk: Lacan talks of 'the extinction or the tempering of desire through the effect of beauty', before fleetingly linking this to 'the disruption of any object on which Kant insists in *The Critique of Judgement*'.[49] Antigone's beauty is incompatible with desire: it is *sublime* (although Lacan uses the term 'beauty', *le Beau*, and never really discusses the Kantian sublime in Seminar VII, as Lacoue-Labarthe notes).[50] For Kant, the sublime phenomenon surpasses the powers of the human imagination, pushes representation to the point of breakdown, so that only by recognizing the inadequacy of its representational faculties in the face of such sublime grandeur, can reason recover any ideational hold. In Lacanian terms, Antigone is sublime because she incarnates a *jouissance* which has 'turned its back on the Other',[51] refused to yield up its 'autistic' enjoyment to the castrating law of the symbolic: she is irreducible to signification, *autonomos*, beyond symbolic 'alienation'.

There appears to be a stark shift of emphasis, then, between seminars VI and VII. If Lacan reads *Hamlet* as a 'tragedy of desire', perhaps overlooking the play's interrogation of its own representational economy in order more securely to outline the position of the desiring subject there, in *Antigone* 'the appearance of beauty intimidates and stops desire'.[52] The register of the drive—now conceived as

[47] Cf. 'The subversion of the subject and the dialectic of desire in the Freudian unconscious', in *Écrits: A Selection*, *op. cit.*, pp. 320–4.

[48] Seminar of 25th May 1960 (SVII), *op. cit.*, p. 247.

[49] *Ibid.*, p. 249.

[50] '... the Kantian analytic of the sublime (the examination of which Lacan endlessly defers, although he knows for certain that it is there that the secret of sublimation lies)', Phillippe Lacoue-Labarthe, 'De l'éthique: à propos d'Antigone', in *Lacan Avec les Philosophes*, *op. cit.*, pp. 33–4.

[51] 'In a sense, sublimation as first sketched out by Lacan relates to the signifier, in a sort of short-circuit of the structure of discourse: fundamentally, it turns its back on the Other, while it remains within the structure of language'. Jean-Robert Rabanel, 'Sublimation et jouissance', in *Une Touche de Réel*, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

[52] Seminar of 18th May 1960 (SVII), *op. cit.*, p. 238.

'ontological', *hors discours*—is privileged as the site of ethics (which is thus always *esthéthique*, bound up with bodily or aesthetic enjoyment). The 'law of desire' invoked by Lacan at the end of 'Subversion of the subject'[53]—which would entail the 'refusal' of *jouissance* in the interests of a consistent scene of representation where the subject could appear as a pure signifying effect, unhampered by any 'symptomatic' idiosyncrasies—seems to yield, as it were, to its antithesis: a 'law of drive', an ethic of enjoyment situated beyond social or symbolic norms, *beyond meaning*.

If this brisk theoretical re-orientation at the beginning of the 1960s marks the opening of a period in Lacan's teaching where it will be increasingly preoccupied by the goal of *cerner le réel*—defining, outlining, circumscribing the real—it also signals a radical change in the psychoanalytic relation to the aesthetic. We have seen how the Freudian approach to the creation and experience of art follows a logic encapsulated by the near synonyms *Uberträgung* and *Ubersetzung*: for the aesthetic to be 'translated' by Freudian theory, there has to be the 'transference' of a whole psychoanalytic scene of representation (which will allow the theorist to assume, identify with, a position of self-mastery). Likewise, sublimation, the 'blank chapter' in Freudian metapsychology, names the process by which the traumatic force of the aesthetic is supposed to be fully absorbed or translated by the psychoanalytic subject, somehow transformed into a component of authorial mastery.

With Lacan's reading of *Antigone*, the place of the aesthetic in psychoanalysis changes dramatically. The invocation of anamorphosis to figure the sublime image of the heroine, its quality as *immonde*, in excess of the field of worldly signification, also reflects upon the theoretical discourse framing the aesthetic instance. Just as a spectator, in assuming the position from which the anamorphic image becomes legible, forfeits the perspectival space in which it could have taken on a meaning, so there is no over-arching discursive space which could 'translate' the significance of Antigone: her passion is *intraitable*, in Lacoue-Labarthe's phrase,[54] in the same way that no 'trait' or signifying mark can be inscribed which would allow us to include the anamorphic image within a consistent perspective.

Antigone, then, is certainly not for Lacan the kind of illustration that *Hamlet* was for Freud (Shakespeare's play illustrated, we recall, 'the secular advance of repression'). The Greek tragedy offers no analogy or paradigmatic structure to psychoanalysis; it can only be termed an 'illustration' in an etymological sense of the term: it 'shines forth', displaying the *lustre* of the aesthetic Thing it encircles. If the sublime artwork, created *ex nihilo*, takes shape by outlining an irreducible void, Lacan will seek to trace its outlines and thus repeat, rewrite its circumscription of the real. Far from desiring to translate or transfer such writing to the scene of psychoanalysis (always, for Lacan, a *dit-mension*, the site of a speaking subject), the seminar will seek there what lies *beyond* that scene, what escapes the 'topic' of its subject.

The seminar on *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis* (1959–60) is often read as a turning-point in Lacanian theory. If the preoccupation with desire and significa-

[53] *Écrits: A Selection*, *op. cit.*, p. 324.
[54] *Lacan Avec les Philosophes*, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

tion, the privileging of the symbolic order which characterised Lacan's 'structuralist' period, seems to make way for a new problematic—that of *jouissance* conceived as particular, opaque, resistant to theorization—the question of the aesthetic is inevitably transformed. In Seminar VII, Lacan is careful to quote Sophocles' play in the original Greek: likewise, the artwork is no longer to be 'translated' by psychoanalysis, made to yield up a meaning to be purloined or re-positioned by theory. Sublimation, in its Lacanian definition, now marks the place of an untranslatable Thing, 'extimate' to the field of representation (which amounts to a precise reversal of the Freudian sense of the term—sublimation as full translation, the deployment of the sexual drive by an author-subject).

Lacan's remarks to an American audience in 1975 reveal how this non-Freudian notion of the aesthetic was bound up with a reconceptualization of some of the basic psychoanalytic categories. With characteristic *sangfroid*, Lacan states that 'to explain art with the unconscious seems to me to be highly suspect; but it is what analysts do. It seems to me more serious to explain art with the symptom'.[55]

The idea of disconnecting symptom from unconscious—unthinkable for classical psychoanalysis—is Lacan's radical solution to the problems raised by the psychoanalytic approach to aesthetics. The remainder of my thesis will seek to show how Lacan's reconception of the subject in psychoanalysis ended in a thought of the symptom inseparable from a certain *writing*; and to show that this *dénouement* offers us a new way to conceive the encounter between psychoanalysis and the aesthetic.

[55] Yale University seminar, 24/11/1975; Conférences et entretiens dans des universités nord-américaines, *Scilicet 6/7* (1976), p. 36.

II. Speaking the Truth: the Lacanian Subject

The truth is grounded in the fact that it speaks [ça parle].
—Jacques Lacan, 1965[1]

It is with a graphematics still to come, rather than with a linguistics dominated by an ancient phonologism, that psychoanalysis sees itself as destined to collaborate.
—Jacques Derrida, 1966[2]

Sink deep or touch not the Cartesian spring! (FW, *301)*

i) Translating the Logos: Lacan and Heidegger

IN FREUD, we have argued, the relation to the aesthetic is always mediated by an *Ubersetzung*, a movement of transfer or translation which safeguards the psychoanalytic *Topik* against disruption by the 'extimate', the traumatic; thus, psychoanalysis is able to incorporate its encounter with art into the body of its doctrine without altering the language in which it interprets the human psyche. We have seen this 'maintenance' of consistent law clearly enacted, re-presented, in Freud's 'identificatory' reading of Michaelangelo's *Moses* (where the Tables of the law, dislodged by an 'aesthetic' or bodily force, are finally held in place by the master's hand).

Lacan is famous—or notorious—for seeking to change the language of psychoanalysis, to re-invent Freud's discovery by introducing into it a *philosophical* vocabulary (and thus produce, according to the title of one American book, a 'philosophy of psychoanalysis'; one which can presumably be consigned to mere 'theoretical' scholasticism).[3] We might begin to examine this supposed transference by Lacan of a philosophical discourse to the scene of psychoanalysis—and explore how it might relate to questions of aesthetics in Lacan's thought—by examining his encounter ('in the real' of biographical events as well as 'in theory') with perhaps the most important figure in post-war French philosophy: Martin Heidegger.

In a seminar with an English-speaking audience in 1989, Jacques-Alain Miller is asked a question about Heidegger's influence on Lacan. Miller responds with an anecdote:

> An American Heideggerian came to see me some ten years ago, convinced that Lacan was a follower of Heidegger's. I disappointed him a great deal...[4]

The American's supposition was not, though, completely groundless; indeed, it might have been founded on several of Lacan's own statements. Heidegger seems

[1] 'Science and Truth', tr. Bruce Fink, *Newsletter of the Freudian Field* 3, 1989, p. 16.

[2] 'Freud and the Scene of Writing', in *Writing and Difference*, tr. Alan Bass, London: Routledge, 1978, p. 220.

[3] Ellie Ragland-Sullivan, *Jacques Lacan and the Philosophy of Psychoanalysis*, Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1986.

[4] 'An Introduction to Seminars I and II: Lacan's Orientation Prior to 1953 (III)', in *Reading Seminars I and II: Lacan's Return to Freud*, ed. R. Feldstein, B. Fink & M. Jaanus, New York: SUNY, 1996, p. 13.

to haunt the margins of Lacan's texts in the 1950s, either vaguely invoked as an inspiration—as in the parenthetical reference to the 'sovereign significance' of the philosopher's discourse in *l'Instance de la lettre*[5]—or 'paraphrased' in tropes which seem to echo a patently Heideggerian motif (such as the 'being-unto-death' invoked at the end of Seminar VII, which Miller's questioner mentions).

Élisabeth Roudinesco gives an account of the relations between the two men which seems to lend weight to this sense of a strangely oblique encounter, one characterized by an odd mixture of 'transferential' supposition and silence.[6] It was one of his analysands in the early 1950s, Jean Beaufret, who provided Lacan with his first chance to meet Heidegger, in a kind of transferential *ménage à trois*. Beaufret played a leading role amongst those Heideggerians who wished to dissociate the master's philosophy from the shadow of his involvement with Nazi Germany before the war, seeking to present a 'new' Heidegger, purged of his political errors, to the intellectual community in France. On entering analysis with Lacan, Beaufret was able to use his connection with Heidegger as a kind of transferential 'trap': maddened by Lacan's methodical silence during the analytic session, he let slip one day that 'Heidegger has been talking about you'. 'What did he tell you?' Lacan instantly demanded, thus revealing a lively 'transferential' interest in the philosopher's opinion, a flaw puncturing the smooth surface of the analytic silence.[7]

Through Beaufret, Lacan established contact with Heidegger and arranged to translate (with the help of a Germanist) a lecture given by the philosopher in 1944, entitled 'Logos', for publication in the first edition of *La Psychanalyse* (which appeared in 1956 as the organ of the newly-founded Société française de psychanalyse). Roudinesco notes two features of this translation which reveal certain 'editorial' decisions Lacan makes there: firstly, he chose to work with Heidegger's 1951 text, despite his knowledge that a second version, with substantial revisions, had appeared in 1954. The later text contained, alongside its commentary on a fragment of Heraclitus, a supplementary paragraph in which Heidegger re-iterated one of his core beliefs: that only the German language could offer hope of salvation from the degradation which had permeated Western culture, its estrangement from its vital *Ursprung* in pre-Socratic Greece. As well as the 'amputation' of this paragraph and the explicitly ideological position it emphasizes, Roudinesco points out another related aspect of Lacan's 'editing'. Where in the original text Heidegger plays on the homophony between the Greek verb *legein* and the German *Legen* to produce an etymological genealogy linking 'to speak', 'to read' and 'to gather'—and thus indicate the essential kinship of the languages and their philosophical potential—Lacan adds to this family the French *leguer* and *legs* ('to bequeath'; 'legacy'); thus, writes Roudinesco, 'reducing to nothing the Heideggerian claim about the supposed philosophical superiority of the German language'.[8]

[5] *Écrits: A Selection*, *op. cit.*, p. 175.

[6] 'Vibrant hommage de Jacques Lacan à Martin Heidegger', in *Lacan Avec les Philosophes*, *op. cit.*, pp. 225–36.

[7] *Ibid*, p. 229; It should be noted, of course, that Roudinesco's information, deriving from 'private sources' (presumably Beaufret himself, or someone close to him), might itself form part of the transferential 'circuit' here.

[8] *Ibid*, p. 231.

The semantic difference or 'errance' between *legein* and *leguer* lends Lacan's translation a curiously 'Joycean' note: the 'transcription' between languages allowing the signifier to scatter or 'disseminate' sense (as in *Finnegans Wake*, where, as Lacan will put it in Seminar XX, *le signifiant vient truffer le signifié*, the signifier 'riddles' the signified, packs the domain of meaning with the compact 'truffles' of linguistic matter).[9] This quasi-Joycean use of etymology, its deployment for carnivalesque semiotic dispersal, would seem to clash starkly with Heidegger's notion of etymology as a 'gathering' (and perhaps to correspond, rather, to his vision of the amnesic 'degradation' of the West).[10]

The translation of Heidegger by Lacan—a translation both literal and figurative, in the sense of conceptual or thematic 'transference'—serves as a support for specific moments in Lacanian theory, while at others it recedes or fades away. Roudinesco points to two instances, before and after the appearance of Lacan's version of 'Logos' in *La Psychanalyse*, showing how the reference to Heidegger changes with the altered status of the reference to linguistics in the 'return to Freud'. In 1953, the famous *Rapport de Rome* seemed shot through with a Heideggerian conception of truth as 'unveiling' (*alethia*, Heidegger's theme in 'Logos'); Saussure is invoked as testimony to the absolute power of language, the primordial significance of human *parole*.[11] But by 1957, Lacan has moved to a very different conception of language, as he adopts a structuralist methodology which aspires to a certain 'scientific' rigour: linguistic *structure* is now the site of truth, where it emerges, not in some originary revelation, but through impersonal, objective effects of combination and difference. In *L'Instance de la lettre*, Saussure is read alongside Jakobson to construct language as a symbolic *machine*, with no place for any 'ontology'.[12] It is as if, Roudinesco suggests, Lacan's homage in the later text to the 'sovereign significance' of Heidegger's word has, above all, a rhetorical function: to set up a clear *distance* between the philosopher's magisterial discourse, on the one hand, and a psychoanalytic 'science of the signifier', on the other.[13]

By 1964, Lacan is able to look back and suggest the absurdity of ever linking his ideas to those of Heidegger:

> ... for a time at least, I was thought to be obsessed with some kind of philosophy of language, even a Heideggerian one, whereas only a *propadeutic reference* was involved.[14]

[9]Seminar of 9th January 1973 (SXX), *op. cit.*, p. 37.

[10]Note that Samuel Beckett chooses exactly the same etymology—*lex*, *legere*—to show how 'every word expands with psychological inevitability' in Joyce's 'Work in Progress'; 'Dante... Bruno.Vico... Joyce', *Our Exagmination Round his Factification for Incamination of Work in Progress*, Paris: Shakespeare & Co, 1929, p. 11.

[11]'The function and field of speech and language in psychoanalysis', *Écrits: A Selection*, *op. cit.*, pp. 30–113; cf. especially pp. 102–4.

[12]'The agency of the letter in the unconscious; or reason since Freud', *Ibid*, pp. 146–75; cf. especially p. 175; see also Lacan's remarks on cybernetics in Seminar II, where he states that 'the symbolic world is the world of the machine': Seminar of 8th December 1954 (SII), *The Ego in Freud's Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis*, tr. Sylvana Tomaselli with notes by John Forrester, Cambridge: CUP, 1988; p. 47.

[13]*Lacan Avec les Philosophes*, *op. cit.*, p. 234.

[14]Seminar of 22nd January 1964 (SXI), *op. cit.*, p. 18.

So while the reference to Heidegger may have served the interests of his teaching, Lacan now claims, he never espoused the philosophical positions in question. Indeed, even a very cursory consideration of Heideggerian thought is enough to indicate its radical incommensurability with any possible 'philosophical reading of Freud'.

To start with, Heidegger's few comments about psychoanalysis are explicitly hostile. Freudian metapsychology, declared the philosopher in a seminar in 1966, amounts to 'a transference of neo-Kantian philosophy onto man'. With its founding gesture—the positing of an unconscious—psychoanalysis sought to secure a 'flawless' (*Lückenlosig*) causality in the field of human action, to produce an entirely comprehensible, *representational* 'soul'.[15] Freud was thus, in Heidegger's view, a typical instance of the degradation, the amnesic errancy of Western thought (which had begun with Plato): its 'forgetfulness of being', its enthrallment to the *idea*, the *Vorstellung* which could only re-present before a *subject* violently split off from an object. Any attempt to somehow re-invent Freud's legacy through an explicitly philosophical turn (one which would in fact come to make precisely the *subject* its cardinal signifier) must surely have seemed to Heidegger a hopeless dead-end; his few remarks about Lacan indicate a lack of interest, a failure of 'transference', which verges on a refusal even to acknowledge the psychoanalyst's existence.[16]

Throughout his lifetime, Heidegger's philosophy worked with determined consistency toward its ultimate aim: to renew the language of thinking by breaking out of the 'onto-theological' closure of Western metaphysics. If we could locate as the principal 'target' of this philosophical 'destruction' the *subject of representation*, Lacan's definition in 1964 of the psychoanalytic subject—one 'represented by a signifier ... for another signifier'[17]—clearly shows Lacan's move to introduce philosophical terms into psychoanalysis to have been emphatically anti-Heideggerian. If Lacan's 'logocentrism' (to adopt a term of Derrida's we will return to) is vividly illustrated by his choosing to translate a text by Heidegger entitled 'Logos', what will become clear by the time of the major 'structuralist' texts is that this centring of the human universe on a logic of the signifier is in no sense complementary to a Heideggerian view of language: it overlooks or elides precisely the 'ontological difference' essential to that view. For Lacan, analysis of language is always situated at an 'ontic' level, that of mere beings: the operation of the signifier is inevitably *mundane*, indissociable from the world of cultural exchange and the production of meaning.[18]

The stubborn privileging of the *subject* in Lacan's work—where it is always coupled with the Saussurian *signifier* in an inseparable 'doublet'—signals its debt to a metaphysical tradition Heidegger set out to think beyond, to 'exceed'. Jacques Derrida notes how in 1953 Lacan can be seen caught between irreconcilable philosophemes, striving to bring about an impossible 'translation' between Heideg-

[15] Martin Heidegger, *Zollikoner Seminare*, Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1987, p. 260.

[16] See Élisabeth Roudinesco, *Jacques Lacan: Esquisse d'une vie, histoire d'un système de pensée*, Paris: Fayard, 1993, pp. 305–6.

[17] 'Position de l'inconscient', *Écrits*, *op. cit.*, p. 835.

[18] For a clear and concise discussion of 'ontological difference' in Heidegger, see George Steiner, *Heidegger*, London: Fontana, 1992, pp. 80–84.

gerian *alethia* ('the birth of truth in speech') and the representational subject: this amounts to an attempt to 'resituate *Dasein* in the subject' (which, Derrida comments laconically, is rather 'surprising').[19]

What is shown by Lacan's strange 'transference' to Heidegger—the search for a philosophical confirmation of his attempt to re-think the unconscious as a *dit-mension*, a place where truth is spoken—is a certain opening of Lacanian theory onto a way of thinking about language other than that which, centred on a linguistic *subject*, it subsequently adopts. It was by engaging with *writing*—first of all 'empirically' in literary texts, subsequently in an effort to develop an instance, the 'letter', distinct from the signifier—that this theory eventually came to open again, exposing the 'subject' it had developed to a radical *mise en cause*. In 1975, just before Heidegger's death, Lacan travelled with Catherine Millot to visit the philosopher at Freiburg. For an hour, Lacan talked about his latest work with Borromean knots; Heidegger remained silent.[20]

ii) Return to Descartes: the Lacanian cogito

Did Lacan in fact, then, 'introduce' philosophy to psychoanalysis, reformulate Freud's discovery in philosophical terms? For Mikkel Borch-Jakobsen, 'even the most cursory reading of the *Écrits*' is enough to uncover a whole philosophical discourse—'dialectic', 'truth', 'being', in addition to the central pillar, 'subject'—supporting the edifice of Lacanian theory.[21] If, for Freud, 'the first shibboleth of psycho-analysis' had been the absolute resistance of philosophers to the very idea of anything psychical which was not reducible to consciousness,[22] Lacan is at once less naive about philosophy and more explicitly invested in it, argues Borch-Jakobsen; his conclusion is that Lacan's *Besetzung*, his stake in philosophy, finds its fullest realization in the *subject of representation*.[23]

Psychoanalysis is 'certainly not a philosophy', declares Lacan in 1974.[24] As we have already seen, Lacan was not, in any manifest or unequivocal sense, a Heideggerian; yet we might take the question with which Heidegger opens one of his seminars—*Was ist das—die Philosophie?*—as an appropriate starting-point for a consideration of the status of the 'philosophemes' in Lacanian thought.[25] 'What is this thing—philosophy?' asks Heidegger, refusing to allow the astonishment opened by the question to contract into any received or academic *doxa*. Lacan's confident distinction between psychoanalysis and philosophy comes very late in a career in which the two discourses have been constantly entangled, to form a rich theoretical hybrid which one would seek in vain to separate into 'philosophical' and 'analytic'

[19] Jacques Derrida, 'Le facteur de la verité', in *The Post Card: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond*, tr. Alan Bass, Chicago: UCP, 1987, p. 470.

[20] Élisabeth Roudinesco, in *Lacan Avec les Philosophes*, *op. cit.*, p. 235.

[21] 'The Alibis of the Subject', tr. Douglas Brick, in *The Emotional Tie*, *op. cit.*, p. 157

[22] *The Ego and the Id* (1923), *SE* IXX, p. 13

[23] See in particular Mikkel Borch-Jakobsen, *Lacan: the Absolute Master*, tr. Douglas Brick, Stanford: SUP, 1991.

[24] 'Freud à jamais', interview conducted by Emilia Granzatto in *Panorama*, November 21, 1974, p. 160.

[25] *What is Philosophy?* tr. W. Kluback & J. T. Wilde, New York: Twayne, 1958.

components. The famous 'return to Freud' announced in the *Rapport de Rome* is preceded, seven years before (in 1946), by the 'return to Descartes' Lacan invokes in *Propos sur la Causalité Psychique.*[26] Likewise, Lacan's constant re-writing of the Freudian 'ethic' *Wo Es War, soll Ich Werden* is matched by his re-workings of the Cartesian *cogito*: we might read the two enunciations side by side as the double inscription of the Lacanian subject.

Why does Lacan wish to use a term—*subject*—which is almost entirely absent from Freud's texts? Claude Conté gives us a first response:

> If Lacan introduces the term without fear of 'getting involved with philosophy', this is because what is in question is the speaking subject, the pure subject of the utterance; and this is what allowed him to rejoin the dialogue with philosophers Freud wished so strongly to avoid.[27]

The speaking subject, eventually to be given the name *parlêtre* ('speaking-being' written as a punning neologism), would thus be Lacan's 'alibi', his pretext for 'importing' the philosophical problem of the subject to the scene of analysis. As we will see, this equation of the subject and the 'punctual' act of speech will turn out to be *decisive*: it immediately *cuts out* the Lacanian subject, sharply delineating whatever potential 'dialogue' with philosophy it might entail.

The Lacanian subject has taken on its essential form by the mid 1960s, around the time of the foundation of the *École freudienne de Paris.* Our approach to it should begin by noting the traces it bears of the work of two thinkers Lacan admired, dubbing them his 'masters': the philosopher Alexandre Kojève and the historian of science Alexandre Koyré.[28] If these oddly similar names refer to very different theoretical projects—in one case, an idiosyncratic reading of Hegel, in the other, the epistemology of modern science—they nonetheless converge, at the most important point, in Lacan's theory of the subject: that of the *cut*, understood as constitutive of modernity, defining the modern subject. For Kojève, modernity was divided from antiquity by a radical *coupure* or 'epistemological break', indicating an absolute lack of synonymy between these historical moments.[29] As a historian, Koyré sought to locate this moment of historical rupture at the level of specific material events: in the emergence, with the work of Gallileo, of modern science as a mathematized and empirical system of thought.[30]

Lacan opens his seminar on 'The Object of Psychoanalysis' (SXII), in 1965, by adapting this notion of the 'cut' to the theory of the subject in psychoanalysis:

> Might I say that I established the status of the *subject* in psychoanalysis last year? I went so far as to develop a structure which accounts for the state of splitting or *Spaltung* at the point at which the psychoanalyst detects it in his praxis.[31]

[26] *Écrits*, *op. cit.*, p. 267;163.

[27] 'Lacan et la fonction du symbolisme', in *Lacan Avec les Philosophes*, *op. cit.*, p. 110.

[28] For a concise account of the theses of Kojève and Koyré, see Jean-Claude Milner, 'Lacan and the Ideal of Science', in *Lacan and the Human Sciences*, ed. Alexandre Leupin, University of Nebraska Press, 1991, pp. 27–42.

[29] cf. Milner, *ibid*, p. 28.

[30] *Ibid*, p. 29.

[31] 'Science and Truth', *op. cit.*, p. 4.

Invoking Koyré as his 'guide', Lacan goes on to locate the historical moment at which the subject emerges as 'an essential correlate of science', in 'the moment Descartes inaugurates, that goes by the name of *cogito*'.[32]

The modern subject, first articulated in the Cartesian *cogito ergo sum*, constitutes, Lacan adds, 'a division between knowledge and truth'. If the hyperbolic doubt of the Cartesian thinker encompasses the entire field of positive or substantial knowledge, only the 'punctual and vanishing' instance of its utterance—'I am thinking, therefore I am' (or in Lacan's version which emphasizes the spoken quality: 'I am thinking "therefore I am" ')[33]—can be the evanescent but indubitable site of the subject's truth, its basis as subject of science. Freud's discovery of the unconscious would have been unthinkable, Lacan contends, without this primordial split opening up the domain of modern science; thus, he is able claim in Seminar XI that 'Freud's method is Cartesian—in the sense that he sets out from the basis of the subject of certainty'.[34]

It is worth pausing over this claim, with its resituation of psychoanalysis within a rigidly-defined modernity, as part of a field whose epistemic foundations were established by Descartes. For Freud, the Cartesian *cogito* surely embodied in its purest form the philosophical *Verwerfung*, total rejection, of the unconscious—exemplifying the supreme self-assurance of a consciousness blind to its 'castrated' position as the play-thing of drives. On one level—at one *moment* of his theory—Lacan agrees with such a position, locating in the *cogito* a manifestation of the ego, an instance of pure *méconnaissance*; thus, the early paper on 'The Mirror Stage' begins by warning that psychoanalytic experience 'leads us to oppose any philosophy directly issuing from the *Cogito*'.[35] Understood as imaginary self-presence, the illusory centring of the subject by an 'omnipotent' ego, the Cartesian 'subject of certainty' could be nothing but an impediment to analytic work (the ego is 'structured exactly like a symptom', as Lacan puts it in Seminar I).[36]

However, a very different understanding of the *cogito* supports Lacan's theory of the subject, which begins in an effort to distinguish the 'I' of an utterance — the *Ich* in Freud's *Wo Es War*—from the 'orthopaedic' straight-jacket of the ego. This distinction is bound up with Lacan's use of structural linguistics to separate the operation of the signifier—effects of combination and difference at work on the 'surface' of language—from any semantic 'depth' or referential substance. In

[32] *Ibid.*, p. 5.

[33] *Ibid.*, p. 13 (The translation of the *cogito* is from Descartes, *Philosophical Writings* tr. J. Cottingham, Cambridge, 1986). Lacan's use of quotation marks in this version of the *cogito* also draws attention to the logical problem of 'mention' (which had been isolated by analytic philosophers such as Ryle), by which a linguistic 'object' is de-coupled from the logic of a statement, and thus set apart from its semantic or conceptual content; the punning description of the unconscious as a *dit-mension* comprises another oblique (and trans-linguistic) reference to 'mention', which fits in with Lacan's desire to theorize an unconscious 'logic' in cybernetic terms. Cf. Bruce Fink, 'The Nature of Unconscious Thought or Why No One Ever Reads Lacan's Postface to the 'Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter' ', in *Reading Seminars I and II*, *op. cit.*, pp. 173–90.

[34] Seminar of 29th January 1964 (SXI), *op. cit.*, p. 35.

[35] 'The mirror stage as formative of the function of the I as revealed in psychoanalytic experience' (1949), *Écrits: A Selection*, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

[36] Seminar of 13th January 1954 (SI), *Freud's Papers on Technique*, tr. with notes by John Forrester, ed. J-A Miller, Cambridge: CUP, 1988, p. 16.

'Science and Truth', this is developed through a critique of 'deviations' from Freud's teaching (such as Jung's), which aimed to 'incarnate' the subject, to 'reinstate a subject endowed with depths ... ie., a subject constituted by a relationship ... to knowledge'.[37] For Lacan, the subject has no other location than the 'punctual and vanishing' moment of signification; it is literally constituted by the flickering pulse of signifiers as they are combined and displaced in enunciation. Thus, any 'ego psychology', or hermeneutical approach to analysis, which would seek to explore layers of meaning in the analysand's speech or collaborate with the patient in his search for self-understanding, would constitute the abandonment of Freud's 'Cartesian' method: the obliteration of the subject as pure *Spaltung*, substanceless linguistic instance.[38]

The Lacanian *cogito* represents a subject split off from the ego, radically divorced from the sense-making realm of the imaginary; so that analysis sets up an *antinomy* between subject and ego: 'it is in the disintegration of the imaginary unity constituted by the ego that the subject finds the signifying material of his symptoms'.[39] This 'signifying material', however, is in no sense equivalent to the Cartesian *res cogitans*, as Lacan makes clear in Seminar XI:

> In effect, if anything is established by the *cogito*, it is the register of thought, in so far as it is extracted from an opposition to extension—a fragile status, but a sufficient status in the order of the signifying constitution. Let us say that it is by taking its place at the level of the enunciation that the *cogito* acquires its certainty.[40]

The subject can never constitute a *res extensa* or substantive body; Lacan reads the move whereby Descartes posits a 'thinking thing' as the basis of the *cogito* as a lapse from the precarious level of pure *énonciation* to the security of a metaphysical 'ground'. (As we are about to see, this characteristic of the Lacanian subject—its 'bodiless' verbal essence, split off from any *hypokeimenon* or substantial continuity—has a very precise philosophical paternity: that of Kojève).

As early as his first seminar, Lacan anticipates the later theorisation of the subject as radically non-ontological by stressing the need to think of a subject irreducible to any 'reality principle'. In psychoanalysis, he states in 1954,

> What is at stake is the realisation of the truth of the subject, like a dimension peculiar to it which must be detached in its distinctiveness [*originalité*] in relation to the very notion of reality... [41]

Just as the subject is distinct from the ego, so its auto-enunciation severs it from its environment, opening up the need to formulate, beyond the traditional opposition of *Innenwelt* and *Umwelt*, a specific, autonomous dimension of the speaking subject. Here, Lacan implicitly invokes the central theme of Kojève's work: the subject as *annéantisation*, a moment of the 'annihilating' force of language, where human

[37] 'Science and Truth', *op. cit.*, pp. 6–7.

[38] Slavoj Žižek notes that in his early work, *before* the structuralist formulation of the subject, Lacan adopted precisely the hermeneutic approach he was later to criticize; see 'Hegel with Lacan; or the Subject and its Cause', in *Reading Seminars I and II*, *op. cit.*, pp. 397–413.

[39] 'The Freudian thing' (1955), *Écrits: A Selection*, *op. cit.*, p. 137.

[40] Seminar of 22nd April 1964 (SXI), *op. cit.*, p. 140.

[41] Seminar of 20th January 1954 (SI), *op. cit.*, p. 21.

desire manifests itself as 'the revelation of an emptiness', the negation of the inert objectality of nature.[42] This 'para-Heideggerian'[43] view of language is referred to more directly in the 1953 *Rapport de Rome*:

> Thus the symbol manifests itself first of all as the murder of the thing, and this death constitutes in the subject the eternalization of his desire.[44]

This Kojevean tag—the symbol as 'murder of the thing'—will be given a prominent place in Lacan's theory of the subject: the subject carves out a space for itself—a space that *is* its 'self'—in the real; its self-representation is essentially an effect of negation.

If in this respect Lacanian theory drew on Heideggerian motifs, in another it was resolutely opposed to Heidegger's thought: in its insistence on the *representational* status of the subject. The introduction of a transcendent subject to psychoanalysis clearly raised immediate questions of theoretical consistency: how could this 'voidance' of nature, this constitutive negativity with its eternal desire, co-exist with a Freudian 'materialism', the privileging of the concrete stuff of libidinal bodies?

Lacan's adoption of a fully-fledged structuralism by the 1960s exacerbated this theoretical problem of the subject, presenting it in a more sharply paradoxical guise. Structuralism in its 'purest' form, as exemplified by the structural anthropology of Claude Lévi-Strauss, had no need of a theory of the subject. Indeed, it usually viewed any such theory with suspicion, as it sought to extend Saussurian linguistics to develop a *scientific* analysis of sign-systems, in opposition to the humanist existentialism of a Sartre (whose inspiration, of course, had been Heidegger). For Lacan to invoke 'the mathematics of the signifier' in 'Science and Truth' would seem to align his vision of psychoanalysis squarely with a semiological project like that of Lévi-Strauss; for there to be a place for the *subject* in such a methodology, it would have to be, Lacan deduces, 'a non-saturated but calculable subject', one reducible to the systematic logic of signification.[45] But how would it then be possible to retain anything of the philosophical sense of 'subject'—always, in the end, the mark of a certain transcendence or irreducibility?

The 'only index' he can find, Lacan claims, for the change in the status of the subject brought in by structuralism is a *topological* one. The 'generating sign of the Moebius strip' in the form of an 'internal eight' is invoked to show how in structuralism 'the subject is, as it were, internally excluded from its object'.[46] Here, as Joël Dor argues, the introduction of topology (or as Dor would prefer, 'topologery', a term he borrows from Juan-David Nasio to denote Lacan's transformation of mathematical symbols into stylistic motifs) serves a crucial function in Lacanian

[42] Alexandre Kojève, *Introduction to the reading of Hegel*, (1947) tr. James H. Nichols, Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 1969, p. 13. Lacan attended Kojève's lectures at the École des Hautes Études in the years leading up to World War Two, to hear expounded a theory of the human subject as, in essence, annihilation.

[43] In Mikkel Borch-Jakobsen's phrase, from 'The Alibis of the Subject', *op. cit.*, p. 168.

[44] 'The function and field of speech and language in psychoanalysis', *Écrits: A Selection*, *op. cit.*, p. 104.

[45] 'Science and Truth', *op. cit.*, pp. 10–11.

[46] *Ibid*, p. 10.

theory: it allows it the appearance of 'mathematization', while in fact it opens a *metaphorical* space: the space, precisely, of the subject.[47] Topology is brought in as a supplement to structuralism, to support the paradoxical notion that the subject somehow 'exceeds' the signifiers which nevertheless (according to a central thesis of Lacan's teaching) constitute it.

In the seminar which marks the beginning of the 'topologisation' of Lacan's teaching, *Identification* (SIX, 1961–2, unpublished), the *torus* emerges as the embodiment of 'certain properties related to the dynamics of the desiring subject and more generally to the function of the subject as such', as Dor puts it.[48] The topological figure could represent something of the subject only if understood *diachronically*, as embodying a certain 'scansion' to show the 'metonymic' logic of desire. Likewise, the Moebius strip, introduced in the same seminar, could only provide a 'monstration' of the subject if it was topologically transformed, by the act of cutting it, from a 'non-orientable' to an 'orientable' object.[49] Juan-David Nasio shows how this relates to the theory of the subject:

> ... it is not sufficient to represent the subject in space, we also need the act of cutting, of tracing a closed curve. The act of saying is of the same order, since the signifier determines and splits the subject in half: it represents it and makes it vanish.[50]

By supplementing the synchronic logic of the signifier with the temporal logic of the act (tracing, 'scanding', cutting), topology figured the 'ex-sistence' of the subject in the symbolic dimension where it appeared; (with 'ex-sistence', Lacan deployed an etymological trope which Heidegger had used to designate a debased, factitious 'existence' in contrast to authentic Being; as we will see, its use by Lacan varied with the changing emphases of his teaching, but in this context it underlines the *non-ontological* status of the subject).

If Lacan uses the term *aphanisis* (adapted, with a little irony, from Ernest Jones' work, where it designated the fading away of libido) to indicate the subject's relation to signification—disappearing the very moment it is represented, constantly 'fading'[51]—it was by deploying topological figures that he sought to give that subject a *mise en scène* beyond the semiological axes of structuralism. Responding to the questions of a group of philosophy students in 1966, Lacan insists that topology constitutes a privileged showing-forth of the structure of the subject, without which 'it is impossible to grasp anything of the real of its economy'.[52]

The idea that through topology Lacanian theory could bring within reach something beyond the logic of the signifier was to be given a new impetus in the 1970s, when Lacan's interest shifted from the topology of surfaces, with its dramatization

[47] Joël Dor, 'The Epistemological Status of Lacan's Mathematical Paradigms', in *Disseminating Lacan*, ed. David Pettigrew & François Raffoul, New York: SUNY, 1996, pp. 109–121.

[48] *Ibid*, p. 110.

[49] cf. Joël Dor, *Introduction à la lecture de Lacan, 2: La structure du sujet*, Paris: Denoël, 1992, pp. 129–138.

[50] Juan-David Nasio, 'The Concept of the Subject of the Unconscious', in *Disseminating Lacan*, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

[51] cf. Seminar of 3rd June 1964(SXI), *op. cit.*, pp. 216–29.

[52] Jacques Lacan, 'Réponses à des étudiants en philosophie sur l'objet de la psychanalyse', *Cahiers pour l'Analyse* 3, Paris: Seuil, 1966, p. 7.

of paradoxes resistant to the logic of discourse, to the very different topological field of knot-theory. With knots, as we will see, Lacanian theory sought to move outside the theoretical space in which it had situated the subject, into a domain explicitly declared to be *beyond metaphor*. In the strict terms Lacan set out to lend theoretical (and diagnostic) coherence to the field of analysis, the non-metaphorical space of knot-theory would fall within the logic of *foreclosure*. In order to approach these theoretical problematics, we need to turn to foreclosure, to explore this concept's key position in Lacan's theory of the subject.

iii) Foreclosure: Shaking the Rock of Gibraltar

'The unconscious is the discourse of the Other': Lacan's well-known formula of 1956 highlights one of the ostensible paradoxes at the heart of his work—the indissociability of the theory of the subject and the concept of the Other.[53] Jacques-Alain Miller has shown how Lacan's use of topology in the 1960s makes visible a crucial aspect of this 'other scene' of subjectivity. '[T]he place of the Other (which is the unconscious and discourse), for Lacan, has no depth', writes Miller; he is thus able to adapt the triple 's' of Lacan's formula for transference (*sujet supposé savoir*) in order to designate the subject as *sujet sans substance*: a pure being of surface, a subject lacking any intuitive essence or interiority.[54]

Foreclosure, the term developed by Lacan to account for the aetiological structure of psychosis, has a strange, double history: if its place in analytic theory was first to designate a *crisis in the Other* at the level of an individual's history, it would eventually lead to a *theoretical crisis*—the radical problematization of the *concept* of the Other—which we hope to show can be conceived as the *symptomatic return* of the 'substance' banished by the theory of the subject.

The notion of the Other is first introduced by Lacan in 1955, as part of a reconceptualizion of Freudian topography. *L'Autre* is distinguished—as the site of the authentic speech of the subject—from *l'autre*, the 'specular' other of the imaginary domain, an other confronted by the ego in a 'fundamentally alienated' identificatory relation.[55] By the time Lacan has begun to invoke the 'mathematics of the signifier' in 1965, the Other has developed into a principle of *representational consistency* denoting the mechanism of a symbolic machine, in which the subject is represented in a chain of signifiers, free from any trace of ontological particularity. As Lacan assembled this theoretical machine, finding its components in structural linguistics and the Kojevean subject-as-void, he simultaneously re-worked the Freudian distinction between neurosis and psychosis to formulate the notion of a primal moment (a *decision*) constitutive of an individual's relation to the Other. Slavoj Žižek gives a clear indication of how this theory of a 'decisive' moment situates Lacan in relation to the philosophical subject he wishes stubbornly to retain:

[53] 'Le Séminaire sur 'La Lettre Volée'', *Écrits*, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

[54] Jacques-Alain Miller, 'La Topologie dans l'ensemble de l'enseignement de Lacan', *Quarto* 2, September 1981, p. 16. For the concept of *sujet supposé savoir* see Seminar VIII (1960–1), *Le Transfert*, ed. J-A Miller, Paris: Seuil, 1991; or for a succinct account, see Dylan Evans, *Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*, London: Routledge, 1996, pp. 196–8.

[55] Seminar of 25th May 1955 (SII), *op. cit.*, pp. 235–47.

> Lacan ... insists that our 'being-in-the-world' is already the outcome of a certain primordial choice: the psychotic experience bears witness to the fact that it is quite possible not to choose the world—a psychotic subject is not 'in the world', it lacks the clearance [*Lichtung*] that opens up the world. (For that reason Lacan establishes a link between Heidegger's *Lichtung* and the Freudian *Bejahung*, the primordial 'Yes', the assertion of being, as opposed to the psychotic *Verwerfung*.) In short, 'subject' designates this primordial impossible-forced choice by means of which we choose (or not) to be 'in the world'—that is, to exist as the 'there' of being.[56]

'*Forclusion*' is the translation Lacan proposes in 1956 (in his third Seminar, *The Psychoses*) for Freud's term *Verwerfung*.[57] The adoption of the term comes at the end of a prolonged meditation on the 'discourse of the Other'—the linguistic modalities mediating the subject's existence—whose principal aim was to reconceive the different modes of 'negation' in Freudian theory by relating them to philosophical ways of thinking negativity, to provide the rigorous foundations of a subject of speech in psychoanalysis. In February 1954, Lacan turned to a philosopher for assistance in this exploration of language, inviting the leading Hegelian scholar Jean Hyppolite to give a presentation on Freud's 1925 text *Die Verneinung* ('Negation', *SE* XIX, 233–9).[58] Hyppolite's talk unearths the original German terms—*Bejahung*, *Vereinigung*, *Verwerfung* —from the French translation which had sometimes falsified them (obliterating, Hyppolite claims, the 'assymmetry' between different senses of negation for Freud by using the single term *négation*). Lacan is able to build on this to propose that *Bejahung*, 'affirmation' or 'yes-saying', constitutes 'the condition such that something exists for a subject', and that the absence of such an affirmative moment (which in concluding Seminar III he will term 'foreclosure') can be situated as the *Urszene* of psychosis. The case of the Wolf-man provides an example:

> There was no *Bejahung* for him, no realisation of the genital plane. There is no trace of this plane in the symbolic register. The only trace we have of it is the emergence, not at all in his history but really in the external world, of a minor hallucination.[59]

Because of the Wolf-man's *Verwerfung* 'it has always been for him as if the genital plane did not exist'. This radical failure of symbolization consigns the individual to an experience of *infancy* ('speechlessness'), the 'feeling of a catastrophe that is so inexpressible that he doesn't even dare to talk of it'. In the Wolf-man's hallucination, an encounter with 'a primitive ...non-symbolized real' takes the place of one mediated by the register of human discourse.

Foreclosure designates, then, a breakdown in the relation to the Other: the failure of the subject to assume its place as speaking-being, to play its part in a consistent scene of representation; in other words, the failure to *be* a subject, *stricto sensu*. Kojève's emphasis on the subject as a force of 'nihilation' could be combined

[56]'Taking Sides: A Self-Interview', in *The Metastases of Enjoyment: Six Essays on Woman and Causality*, *op. cit.*, p. 185.

[57]Seminar of 4th July 1956 (SIII), *The Psychoses*, ed. J-A Miller, tr. with notes Russell Grigg, London: Routledge, p. 321.

[58]'A spoken commentary on Freud's *Verneinung* by Jean Hyppolite', Appendix to Seminar I, *Freud's Papers on Technique*, *op. cit.*, pp. 289–97.

[59]Seminar of 10th February 1954 (SI), *Ibid*, p. 58.

with a close reading of the Freudian text to formulate the psychotic experience as a 'return in the real': in the absence of the symbolizing negativity of the subject, consciousness would be invaded by a crushing, meaningless presence—the psychotic symptom. The idea of a 'real' detached from any Freudian conception of 'reality'—'beyond the reality principle', as the title of a 1936 text already announces—will become the central focus of Lacan's later seminars; it can be seen *in nuce* in this early concern with the 'disintegrated' experience of the psychotic.

If foreclosure entails a linguistic catastrophe, for Lacan this must immediately constitute the collapse of any potential for social existence. Just as the infant Wolf-man is unable to give words to the traumatic hallucination and thus fails to implicate the other in a dialectic of discursive recognition, so the foreclosed horizon of the psychotic disables the opening of any 'intersubjectivity'. The Other is inseparably linguistic and social, as is clearly expressed in Lacan's 1964 formula where 'a signifier is that which represents a subject for another signifier'.[60]

As a good Freudian, Lacan aims to situate this defining moment of social existence—the opening of intersubjective recognition or its 'autistic' collapse—in the primal situation of the new-born child, whose *Hilflosigkeit*, 'helplessness', throws it necessarily upon the care of others, into a social tangle of desires and symptoms (as Freud had argued).[61] In this sense, foreclosure entailed not simply a breakdown of language, a child's failure to 'fit' its place as speaking subject properly, but a crisis in its relation to the immediate familial environment. In Seminar III, Lacan specifies this crisis as bearing upon the 'function' of the 'paternal metaphor': what is foreclosed, in the aetiology of psychosis, is the *Name-of-the-Father*.[62]

By thus linking it to paternity, Lacan sought to prevent the concept of foreclosure from being understood as a merely linguistic phenomenon, to embed it in the material situation of a child's first encounter with the Other (in its first realization as parental desire) and thus accord the concept a place in the structural determination of a subject's destiny. Reacting partly to the contemporary Kleinian privileging of the child-mother relation, Lacan wished to re-centre psychoanalysis on the figure of the father: the central question of Freud's work, declares Lacan in 1957, is 'What is it to be a father?'[63] Throughout his career, Lacan seeks to address this question by reformulating it in linguistic terms—as a question, that is, of *nomination*.

In its first development during the 1950s, the *Nom-du-Père* brought the Freudian Oedipal drama—the *Nom* of the father punning the *non* of the interdiction of incest—together with the Kojèvean subject of symbolic nihilation. As a synthesis of law and desire (as *manque-à-être*, 'lack-of-being'), the *Nom-du-Père* was the ideal, normalizing mediation of the child's relation to its mother's *jouissance*. In 'On a question preliminary to any possible treatment of psychosis', Lacan gave this starkly misogynistic scenario an 'algebraic' form:

[60]Seminar of 27th May 1964 (SXI), *op. cit.*, p. 207.

[61]cf. Freud, 'Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety' (1926), *SE* XX.

[62]Seminar of 27th June 1956 (SIII), *op. cit.*, p. 306.

[63]Seminar of 6th March 1957 (SIV), *La relation d'objet*, ed. J-A Miller, Paris: Seuil, 1994, pp. 204–5.

$$\frac{\text{Name-of-the-Father}}{\text{Desire of the Mother}} \cdot \frac{\text{Desire of the Mother}}{\text{Signified to the subject}} \rightarrow \text{Name-of-the-Father}\left(\frac{\text{O}}{\text{Phallus}}\right)$$

'Let us now try to conceive', Lacan continues,

> of a circumstance of the subjective position in which, to the appeal of the Name-of-the-Father responds, not the absence of the real father, for this absence is more than compatible with the presence of the signifier, but the inadequacy of the signifier itself.[64]

This formula and the circumstance of its breakdown form a densely-woven summary of Lacan's first response to Freud's 'Oedipal' question about paternity. It is worth tracing its strangely *literal* 'algebra' carefully. The *Nom-du-Père*, its conceptual status indicated by the hyphenation, is introduced *in ascendancy over* the 'Desire of the Mother', something non-conceptual which *dominates* (literally, sits on top of) the infant subject in search of some *signifié*, some semantic control; here, Lacan takes up the Freudian notion that adult sexuality presents the child with a *Rätsel*, a traumatic enigma—but situates this bewildering otherness firmly on the side of the mother. The 'result' of the 'paternal metaphor', its substitutive intervention, is a new 'sum' in which the Other (not a zero, as one might think on the basis of the English translation) is set 'over' something new—a capitalized Phallus—inside a parenthesis in turn dominated by the Name-of-the-Father (placed as if to 'multiply' what is in parenthesis).

The Name-of-the-Father, comments Serge André, 'allows the child to outline what the desire of the Mother means for him; it is as it is determined by the function of the phallus that this desire becomes legible to him, that its meaning becomes less obscure'.[65] We will explore further the importance and scope of the supposed 'legibility' introduced to the relation between adult and child; but the 'function' of the Name-of-the-Father is clearly that of a kind of hyperbolic signifier, linking up with the Phallus to provide 'a signifier of *jouissance*', as André puts it.[66] The Phallus is, as it were, the trump-card of the *Nom-du-Père*, a signifier with which it orients maternal desire away from an exclusive absorption in the child, rendering the Oedipal triangle consistent, non-psychotic; it is 'the signifier which does not have a signified', Lacan will remark much later in *Encore* (which might be as much as to say that it signifies *nothing*; an idea to which we will return).[67]

The foreclosure of the Name-of-the-Father entails, not the mere empirical absence of a father figure, but the *carence*, the absolute lack of the signifier. The deliberate ambiguity of Lacan's phrase here underlines the status of the *Nom-du-Père* as a 'Master signifier': the lack of this signifier constitutes the lack of *the* signifier, the breakdown of the entire 'battery of signifiers' in the Other. Bruce Fink's commentary is revealing:

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[64] 'On a question preliminary to any possible treatment of psychosis' (1957–8), *Écrits: A Selection*, *op. cit.*, p. 200.

[65] Serge André, 'Clinique et noeud borroméen', *Actes de l'école de la cause freudienne* 1982, p. 88 (my translation).

[66] *Ibid*, p. 89.

[67] Seminar of 13th March 1973 (SXX), *op. cit.*, p. 75.

> The Name-of-the-Father is thus our Rock of Gibraltar. Lacan says that it is a signifier, but it is quite clearly different from most, if not all, others. If one word in a language becomes antiquated or goes out of style, other related terms tend to take up the slack; in other words, their meanings broaden to include those of the word that has disappeared. The Name-of-the-Father, on the contrary, is neither fungible nor pronounceable.[68]

An imperial outpost of the Other in the wilds of maternal desire, the Name-of-the-Father erects a 'solid barrier' between mother and child, continues Fink, which in psychosis breaks down, allowing anarchic libidinal forces to 'overwhelm and invade' the subject. (Freud, of course, had situated castration as the irreducible 'rock' with which analysis ultimately collides; for Fink to seek to re-invent such a metaphor in an overtly imperialistic style, with recourse to what in *Ulysses* Stephen Dedalus dubs 'the brutish empire' (*U*, 485), raises political questions I hope to be able to return to).[69]

The phallic, monolithic connotations of the Name-of-the-Father in Fink's presentation is belied by the fate of the concept in the development of Lacan's work. If in 1957, Lacan's formula of the paternal metaphor includes a single, capitalized *Nom-du-Père*, perhaps recalling the Freudian *Urvater* in its non-fungible singularity, by 1963 he gives as the title for his seminar *Les noms du père*, thus seeming to reduce the erstwhile Name to the status of a *nom commun*. Only a single session of the *names of the father* was delivered before the seminar was interrupted by what Lacan was to call his 'excommunication' from the I.P.A., and the subsequent institutional crisis leading to the foundation of the *École freudienne de Paris* in 1964. (Lacan was to interpret this disruption of his teaching as an indication that the world was not ready for him to encroach further upon the prerogative of paternity).[70] He never resumed *Les noms du père*, but a decade later gave as the title for Seminar XXI, *Les non-dupes errent*, rewriting the 'lost' seminar as a comic pun: 'those who are not duped (who don't 'fall for it'), go astray'.[71] This was to suggest that a feature of psychosis was the refusal to be 'taken in' by the ruse of the *nom-du-père*, the failure to identify with the fictional structures which would have allowed the dimension of the subject's truth to open.

Serge André characterises the evolution of Lacan's teaching as in essence 'a progressive purification of the Name-of-the-Father'.[72] In effect, this amounts to the gradual dissociation of nomination and paternity, the increasing recognition that it is not so much the name of the *father* that has such crucial significance in an individual's destiny, but rather the *separation* it effects; the separation from a traumatic real (which will be marked, from 1960 onwards, as *objet a*) in which representation affords the subject a space, a position of identification. This shift is bound up with the changing conception of the Other in Lacan's work: if the 'Freudian' father of the 1950s provides the signifier of a 'complete', consistent Other,

[68] Bruce Fink, *The Lacanian Subject*, *op. cit.*, p. 74.

[69] Freud, 'Analysis Terminable and Interminable' (1937), *SE* XXIII, p. 27.

[70] cf. Serge André, 'Clinique et noeud borroméen', *op. cit.*, p. 88; and also Jacques Lacan, 'Excommunication', the introduction to Seminar XI, *op. cit.*, pp. 1–13.

[71] *Le Séminaire, Livre XXI* (1973–4), *Les non-dupes errent*, unpublished.

[72] André, 'Clinique et noeud borroméen', *op. cit.*, p. 88.

serving as the guarantee of a certain representational closure, in the 1960s Lacan will increasingly emphasize that the Other is 'barred' (*Autre* to be written as Ⱥ), lacking systemic coherence. By the time Lacan writes *les non-dupes errent* he has moved into a predominantly topological mode of teaching, aiming to theorise the various modalities of *suppléance*, the 'suppletion' or making-up-for this lacking or dysfunctional Other, the breakdown of its representational economy. By proposing variable, plural 'names of the father' in 1963, Lacan had already begun, in a sense, to undermine the theoretical coherence of the concept; what was there to differentiate a name of the father from another kind of *suppléance* that interested Lacan in the 1970s—the symptom?

Let us return to the quotation from Žižek, where foreclosure is figured as a refusal to say 'Yes' to existence and instantiate the *Lichtung* of the symbolic, human universe. The *spoken* dimension of this primordial *Bejahung* should be stressed, for here Žižek is invoking a specific aspect of Lacan's theory, the concept of the subject as *parlêtre*, 'speaking-being'. Another way of approaching foreclosure would be to think of it as the 'choice' (with no sense of voluntaristic 'agency') of *writing* over speech, the infant's refusal of the 'legibility' of desire introduced by the Name-of-the-Father, its preference of a particular kind of *jouissance* to the 'mortifying' universal dimension of the symbolic. This would be to invoke a peculiar sense of 'writing', one which in the last period of his work Lacan seeks to outline by inventing new forms of theory. The *écrit* is finally posited as an instance utterly distinct from the signifier, with a radically different 'function' in the signifying economy of the subject.[73]

But before we can begin to understand the special status accorded to the *letter* by Lacan in the 1970s, we first have to work through an earlier drama in which psychoanalysis engages with writing. If, as we have seen, Lacan put forward in the paternal metaphor the opening of the subject as a certain *legibility*, the space of a consistent logic of the signifier, it was in a famous reading of a literary text that he sought to establish that subject, provide its theoretical *mise en scène*. In this 'odyssey of the letter', as he called it,[74] Lacan's thought was to emerge onto a scene of philosophical (and political) contestation where it encountered a very different approach to language, in Jacques Derrida's critique. Avoiding too swift an invocation of 'influence', we will have to trace the emergence of a distinct sense of 'writing' in Lacan's work in the context of the 'exchange of letters' with Derrida, and more generally, of how it can be situated in relation to questions of 'writing' in deconstruction, with its critique of psychoanalysis. We will eventually find these differences at work *avant la lettre* in Joyce's writing.

iv) Undelivered Letters

Speaking at a conference organized ten years after Lacan's death, Jacques Derrida tells the following anecdote about his first meeting with Lacan, at Baltimore in 1966:

[73] 'The written is in no sense of the same register, of the same tobacco, so to speak, as the signifier', Seminar of 9th January 1973 (SXX), *op. cit.*, p. 31.

[74] Seminar of 27th April 1955 (SII), *op. cit.*, p. 204.

> ... the other worry Lacan confided in me concerned the binding of his *Écrits*, whose publication was imminent. Lacan was concerned, a little cross, I thought, with the people at Seuil who had advised him to have it all put together into a single great volume, more than 900 pages long, whose binding was in danger of being too weak, of giving way. 'Wait and see', he said to me, waving his hands, 'it won't hold'.[75]

Derrida's playfully literal interpretation of Lacan's definition of letter (at least, the one given in 1957 in *l'Instance de la lettre*—'By 'letter' I designate that material support that concrete discourse borrows from language'[76]) allows him to designate the opening article in Lacan's book, the Seminar on *La Lettre Volée*, as its true 'binding', that which was supposed to provide the 'material support' to hold the unwieldy tome together, offer its diverse writings a unifying principle or coherence.

The irony of Derrida's retrospective anecdote is, of course, that the whole tenor of his later critique of Lacan's Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter' had been precisely that *ça ne va pas tenir*: that the argument Lacan had constructed through his reading of Poe's story—his claim that it showed 'the decisive orientation which the subject receives from the itinerary of a signifier'[77]—did not 'hold together', that its ostensible coherence was unsustainable. The year after his encounter with Lacan in Baltimore, in 1967, Derrida laid the foundations for that critique with the publication of 'Freud and the Scene of Writing' (in *Writing and Difference*). Before we can grasp the stakes of Derrida's deconstruction of the 'phallogocentric' economy at work in Lacan's text, we need to follow the course (or the 'flight', *le vol*) of the Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter', from its first delivery in 1955 to its re-publication in the *Écrits*, and plot its significance within Lacanian theory.[78]

In the mid-1950s Lacan is attempting to develop a theory of the symbolic order, the site of subjectivization, as a register of pure syntax. Thus, he sought to link psychoanalysis to cybernetics, a 'conjectural science' which, he claimed in a 1955 lecture, 'clearly highlights ... the radical difference between the symbolic and the imaginary registers'.[79] This was to reconceive the unconscious as a *combinatoire*, a logical sequence of symbols (like the results of dice-rolling or rules in a game) producing automatic effects of signification, with no room for any depth or plenitude of meaning (the cybernetician, comments Lacan, constructs a system which cannot translate a *Gestalt*, is unable to comprehend the forms of the human imagination).[80] *La Lettre Volée*, Baudelaire's translation of the story by Poe, is read by Lacan as a *mise en scène* of such a symbolic machine in operation. 'Everything which could

[75] Jacques Derrida, 'Pour l'amour de Lacan', in *Lacan Avec les Philosophes*, *op. cit.*, p. 407.

[76] *Écrits: A Selection*, *op. cit.*, p. 147.

[77] Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter', tr. J. Mehlman, *The Purloined Poe: Lacan, Derrida and Psychoanalytic Reading*, ed. J.P.Muller and W.J.Richardson, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1988, p. 29.

[78] Lacan gave the seminar on 27th April 1955, wrote it up the following year, and first published it in Volume 2 of *La Psychanalyse* (P.U.F., 1957); it was then extensively re-written for its inclusion in the 1966 *Écrits*.

[79] 'Psychoanalysis and cybernetics; or, on the nature of language', lecture given at the Clinique de la Faculté de Medecine, 22nd June 1955; in Seminar II, *op. cit.*, p. 306.

[80] *Ibid*, p. 306; see also the article by Bruce Fink, 'The Nature of Unconscious Thought or Why No One Ever Reads Lacan's Postface to the 'Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter' ', in *Reading Seminars I and II*, *op. cit.*, pp. 173–90.

serve to define the characters as real—qualities, temperament, heredity, nobility—has nothing to do with the story'; so that its essential structure—the circulation of the eponymous letter—could be formalized by a psychoanalyst, written 'with small *alphas*, *betas*, *gammas*'.[81] The letter, circulating between the Queen, the Minister, and the detective Dupin, 'is ... synonymous with the original, radical subject', 'the symbol being displaced in its pure state' [82]—it realizes the unconscious as the 'insistence' of the signifier. Lacan re-writes the proverb *Verba volant, scripta manent* in a chiasmic *jeu de mots*:

> Has it occurred to you that a letter is precisely speech which flies [*vole*]? If a stolen letter is possible, it is because a letter is a fly-sheet [*feuille volante*]. It is *scripta* which *volant*, whereas speech, alas, remains. It remains even when no one remembers it any more.[83]

In his lecture on psychoanalysis and cybernetics, Lacan makes the same point by contrasting the symbolic order with the real operation of a machine: 'With a machine, whatever doesn't come on time simply falls by the wayside and makes no claim on anything. This is not true for man, the scansion is alive, and whatever doesn't come on time remains in suspense'.[84] The repressed unconscious corresponds to these suspended *paroles*, spoken words whose untimely utterance consigns them, perhaps permanently, to the scene of the Other.

The chiasmic reversal of the proverb highlights the curiously 'interchangeable' status of speech and writing. On the one hand, a letter *is* speech, but simply removed from the flawless consistency of the symbolic order by its materiality, its contingent fate as a piece of paper which can be stolen or fly away (Lacan plays on the double meaning of *voler*); at the same time, when speech remains 'in suspense' it is like a letter *en souffrance*, left undelivered at the Post Office. The letter, in 1955, is quite simply a *metaphor for the signifier*, although unlike the latter it is insufficiently detached from the real, the realm of chance in which an actual letter goes astray, 'wanders all by itself' away from the tightly-organized grid of the symbolic order.[85] In Lacan's idealized vision of the letter-as-signifier, the last shred of its materiality seems to dissolve into a virtual space of symbolic negativity:

> This letter, this speech addressed to the Queen by someone, ... to whom is it really addressed? As soon as it is speech, it may have several functions. It has the function of a certain pact, of a certain trust. ... There it is, disguised in a kind of presence-absence, there it is, but it isn't there, it only has value in relation to everything it threatens, to everything it violates, to everything it flouts, to everything it places in danger or suspense.[86]

The answer is that the letter is *addressed to the Other*. 'Speech is founded on the existence of the Other', as Lacan will announce a month after the seminar on 'The Purloined Letter'; in other words, the subject is an effect of symbolic

[81] Seminar of 27th April 1955 (SII), *op. cit.*, p. 205.
[82] *Ibid*, p. 196.
[83] *Ibid*, p. 198.
[84] 'Psychoanalysis and cybernetics', *op. cit.*pp. 307–8.
[85] Seminar of 27th April 1955 (SII), *op. cit.*, p. 198.
[86] *Ibid*

alienation, a non-ontological *Es* (where the Freudian 'id' is made to rhyme with the 'S' of the Saussurian signifier).[87] As the 'radical subject' in the story, the letter is a purely diacritical effect: it has no 'value' in itself, indeed it only exists at all as an element in a network of signifying relations.

By presenting the letter as a signifier, utterly devoid of any inherent substance or content, Lacan was able to sidestep all the 'psychobiographical' issues which had traditionally gone along with 'applications' of psychoanalysis to art (such as Marie Bonaparte's work on Poe, which Lacan cannot take seriously). This sense of the Other as essentially 'soulless', alien to human psychology, is given a new stress when the seminar is re-written for inclusion in the 1966 *Écrits*. 'The Purloined Letter', writes Lacan, illustrates the psychoanalytic discovery that

> the displacement of the signifier determines the subjects in their acts, in their destiny, in their refusals, in their blindness, in their end and in their fate, their innate gifts and social acquisitions notwithstanding, without regard for character or sex; and that, willingly or not, everything that might be considered the stuff of psychology ... will follow the path of the signifier.[88]

Because the letter is a signifier, we never learn about its contents, whether it is a love-letter or part of some political intrigue; its 'supremacy' over the subjects in the tale is a purely *formal* function, one determined by its *position*. The only letter Poe does allow us to read is a counterfeit, the copy inserted by Dupin in the place of visible-invisibility where the Minister has 'concealed' the letter he has purloined. At some future moment beyond the story, when the Minister might try to 'strike his blow' against the Queen by opening the letter to view, he will read the quotation from Crebillon's play *Atrée*: '... un dessein si funeste / S'il n'est digne d'Atrée, est digne de Thyeste'.[89] The rather cryptic allusion refers to the Minister's 'scheme' of blackmail going awry, falling on his own head with 'funereal' consequences. Lacan is able to read this, characteristically, as a pun—allowing him to refer to the Heideggerian questions which his work, especially around that time, seemed to address (the translation of 'Logos' appeared in 1956, we recall). Thus, the Minister's *dessein* indicates a particular, pathological state of his *Dasein*, its detachment 'from any inscription in any kind of order', the 'limit of madness' where an individual seeks to wrench himself free from the socio-symbolic network in order to give free vent to a deadly *jouissance*. We will see how this pun is given another destiny, a decade later, in the *Écrits*.

The publication of Lacan's major collection of his writings in 1966 was to become a significant turning-point in his teaching (as Derrida has argued).[90] It can be marked as a crucial moment in the 'destiny of the letter', to adopt the rhetoric of the 1955 seminar: a certain change in the status of the letter consequent on its transition from the spoken domain of the seminar (where speech was advanced as the *dit-mension* of the subject's truth) to a precarious fate beyond it, caught

[87] Seminar of 25th May 1955 (SII), *op. cit.*, pp. 244–6.

[88] Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter', *op. cit.*, pp. 43–4.

[89] Seminar of 27the April 1955 (SII), *op. cit.*, pp. 204–5.

[90] Jacques Derrida, 'Le Facteur de la Vérité', trans Alan Bass, in *The Post Card: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987, pp. 462–3; see also idem, 'Pour l'amour de Lacan', in *Lacan Avec les Philososphes*, *op. cit.*, p. 397.

up in the swirl of *feuilles volantes*, the flimsy sheets of paper which a publisher's binding might not be strong enough to prevent from flying away or falling into the wrong hands. If the seminar had already appeared in print (in 1957, in the second volume of *La Psychanalyse*) it had at least been in the journal of the S.F.P., over which Lacan retained editorial control and which was unlikely to be read outside psychoanalytic circles.

The sense of writing as object, its materiality as an *écrit*, posing a threat to the subject—a subject constituted in the immaterial purity of speech (in a phonocentrism which is perhaps too manifest, 'a little too self-evident', to be over-emphasized in Derrida's critique)[91]—is in the end an effect of Lacan's theoretical privileging of *separation*: the subject only comes to ex-sist through its separation from the register of the objectal real, as is shown in the Lacanian version of the *cogito*, 'I think where I am not'.[92] Only as distinct from the immediate being of the body could the Lacanian subject emerge, its fleeting utterance lending it a fragile, momentary coherence in the space of analytic listening. We could perhaps interpret Lacan's *ça ne va pas tenir* as a symptom of his anxiety about the fate of the *subject* 'out there' in the debased public domain of *poubellication* (where 'publication' is made a pun for 'chucking in the dust-bin').[93]

If the act of publication gives a new emphasis to the need to theorise different 'logics' in speech and writing, the re-writing of the Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter' in 1966 seemed to respond, in a certain prolepsis of the later work, by outlining a place for the 'letter' beyond the formal logic of the signifier:

> ... how could [the cops] have seized the letter? in what they turned between their fingers what did they hold but what *did not answer* to their description. 'A letter, a litter': in Joyce's circle they played on the homophony of the two words in English.[94]

The examination of the letter by the police is fruitless; the bit of paper does not correspond to the 'purloined letter' as *signifier* circulating between the subjects and articulating the structure of their desires. The 'litter' or shred of material support does not 'answer' to the Other: it eludes the symbolic network of subjectivization ('One is always responsible for one's position as subject', as Lacan states in 'Science and Truth').[95] The proleptic reference to Joyce—to the point, ten years later, when Lacan would turn to Joycean writing to extend his exploration of 'the letter' beyond the doublet signifier/subject—is characterized by a singular 'symptomatic' slip, one faithfully and silently reproduced by the editors of the English translation. A footnote refers Lacan's quotation to the collective pamphlet Joyce had prepared in 1929 (with the help of Beckett and others) as an introduction to *Finnegans Wake*,

[91] Lacan picks out this phrase from Poe's text as an indication of the paradoxically 'hidden' place of the letter in the visible domain of truth. cf. Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter', *op. cit.*, p. 38.

[92] 'The agency of the letter in the unconscious or reason since Freud', *Écrits: A Selection*, *op. cit.*, p. 166.

[93] cf. Seminar of 9th January 1973 (SXX), *op. cit.*, p. 29.

[94] Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter', *op. cit.*, p. 40; for the original erroneous foot-note, see *Écrits*, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

[95] 'Science and Truth', *op. cit.*, p. 7.

whose title already warned of the verbal experimentalism of his last text: *Our Exagmination Round his Factification for Incamination of Work in Progress.* In Lacan's text, however, the reference is erroneous or 'parapractic' in an intriguing sense: it 'corrects' the Wakean term 'Exagmination', as if it wished to perpetrate a *vol de la lettre*, allow the 'g' distinguishing Joyce's *litter* from the proper word 'examination' to vanish, fly away. The 'homophony' posited by Lacan between *letter* and *litter*—evoking a *spoken* English, even one with an Irish accent—is precisely what is disrupted by writing (as Lacan himself will later insist by linking writing to an 'equivocation' which undoes semantic closure).[96] The Lacanian 'slip', by stealing the stray letter, seems to return 'exagmination' to the Other as the scene of representational consistency—a scene where the subject is, precisely, 'examined', held responsible to the symbolic Law (the Other is 'the locus from which the question of [the subject's] existence can be put to him', in Lacan's 1958 formula).[97]

The emergence of the letter in Lacanian theory, as a 'remainder' of signification, an instance apart from or incommensurable with the logic of the signifier, is thus checked, *contained*, by the text published in 1966. Lacan adds a special prefatory note to explain his decision 'to give *La Lettre volée* the privilege of opening the series of texts, although this contravenes their diachronic order'.[98] It is clear that it is the seminar's illustration of *la vérité*—the privileged, quasi-Heideggerian domain of spoken Truth—which qualifies it as the 'binding' of the book, its synchronic structural 'spine':

> The reader must give the letter in question, beyond those who were once addressed by it, that which he will find as its last word: its destination. Namely, the message of Poe deciphered and returning from him, the reader, in that to read it, it says itself to be no more feigned than the truth when it inhabits fiction.[99]

It is as the *mise en scène* of truth that the seminar deserves its position as the privileged first word of Lacan's teaching. In a characteristic stylistic blend of convoluted rhetoric and dramatic bluntness, Lacan links this opening-of-truth to the last word of the text: the arrival of the letter at its destination. This last word returns or sums up the opening message, in a text whose construction seems almost rebus-like, as if one way to read it might be as a concrete 'shape' of writing, graphically spread across the space of the pages: we could thus read the opening phrase, *Notre recherche nous a mené à ce point...* together with the closing, *arrive toujours à destination*, to frame the seminar with the central notion of the circular closure of truth, the return of the letter to its proper place in the economy of signification.

Thus, 'The Purloined Letter' announces the destiny or destination of truth as a pure tautology: truth *is* destiny, the arrival of the letter at its destination. The pun which in 1955 Lacan had used to move from the *dessein si funeste* of the counterfeit letter to the question of Heideggerian *Dasein*, thus has to be extended

[96] cf. Jean-Guy Godin, 'Du symptôme à son épure: le sinthome', in *Joyce Avec Lacan*, ed. Jacques Aubert, Paris: Navarin, 1987, pp. 184–6.

[97] 'On a question preliminary to any possible treatment of psychosis' (1957–8), *Écrits: A Selection*, *op. cit.*, p. 194.

[98] *Ouverture de ce recueil*, *Écrits*, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

[99] *Ibid*, p. 10.

to include this teleological *destin*. The quotation from Crebillon appears twice in the 1966 version, first in its proper form as quoted above, and then at the end of the seminar, in a distorted form (like a Freudian joke): '... un *destin* si funeste / S'il n'est digne d'Atrée, est digne de Thyeste'.[100]

It is by putting in question this teleology of psychoanalytic truth that Derrida is able to formulate one of the opening moves in his reading of Lacan's *la Lettre volée*: 'What happens—and what is dispensed with—when a text ... puts truth on stage?'[101] If the question seems naive in the face of the intricate weave of word-play and rhetorical paradox in Lacan's seminar, Derrida's initial problem—as he explained retrospectively in the 1991 conference—was to know how to begin, *where* to begin, this critical reading which in his view had finally become necessary ('Le Facteur de la vérité' was not published until 1975, when, as we will see, Lacan's work had evolved to the point where a certain 'debate' with Derrida became possible; however, Lacan's remarks about Derrida have remained unpublished).

In what Derrida terms the 'chiasmus of the 1960s', there occurred a strange situation of 'crossed-wires' between psychoanalysis and philosophy in France:

> This was the form taken by the chiasmus: I found myself faced with a powerful philosophical, philosophizing reconstitution of psychoanalysis, which articulated, assumed and bound together with the gravest consequences all the figures which were elsewhere being subjected, not without resistance, to something like a genealogico-deconstructive interpretation.[102]

As early as 1967, Derrida had begun attempting to unpick the knot of psychoanalysis and philosophy, by clearly distinguishing his project, 'the deconstruction of logocentrism', from any psychoanalytic deployment of or intervention in philosophy.[103] 'Freud and the Scene of Writing' brought the resources of a critique inspired by the methods of Nietszche and Heidegger to bear on the text of Freud, seeking to separate from 'the metaphysical concepts and phrases ... condensed and sedimented' within it, a certain *resistance* to the logocentric closure of Western philosophy; a resistance articulated in its figural recourse to writing: 'through the insistence of his metaphoric investment [Freud] makes what we believe we know under the name writing enigmatic'.[104]

If Derrida's terms resemble those Lacan was developing ('insistence' was the translation proposed for Freud's *Zwang*, 'compulsion', in the Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter'), his essay points to another destiny for psychoanalysis than the one being powerfully enacted in Lacan's 'return to Freud': 'It is with a graphematics still to come, rather than with a linguistics dominated by an ancient phonologism, that psychoanalysis sees itself as destined to collaborate'.[105] There is no need for the sub-clause to contain Lacan's name for the target of the compact critical aside to be clear. The linguistics of Saussure, one of the fundamental references of Lacan's

[100] *Écrits*, *op. cit.*, p. 14; p. 40.
[101] 'Le Facteur de la Vérité', *op. cit.*, p. 414.
[102] 'Pour l'amour de Lacan', *op. cit.*, p. 409.
[103] 'Freud and the Scene of Writing', tr. Alan Bass, in *Writing and Difference*, London: Routledge, 1978, p. 196.
[104] *Ibid*, pp. 198–9.
[105] *Ibid*, p. 220.

work, was shown by Derrida to encapsulate the generalized 'censorship of the text' in Western thought, through its self-centring on the presence of the speaking subject ('phonocentrism') and, indissociably, on that of the unitary, consistent idea ('logocentrism').[106] For a project seeking a philosophical 'reconstitution' of psychoanalysis to turn to this tradition—to make it its *destination*—already seemed to Derrida to risk effacing or misunderstanding the opening of an 'enigmatic', yet-to-be-thought dimension of psychoanalysis.

'Le Facteur de la vérité': Derrida's title is an ironic *soubriquet* for Lacan, making him at once 'truth's postman', the one able to deliver the purloined letter to its truthful destination, and the 'truth-maker', the fabricator of something declared to be the truth (who resembles, perhaps, the one who deposits the counterfeit letter in Poe's story). The letter Lacan delivers is, for Derrida, an *idealized* one; even when he re-iterates Freud's insistent return to hieroglyphics, inscriptions or rebuses, Lacan always falls back on a concept of writing which is *relevé par la voix*, 'raised up' or 'spiritualized'—*aufheben*, in the language of Hegelian dialectics—by the speaking subject.[107] In a painstakingly close reading of Lacan's Seminar, Derrida seeks to set out how the 'staging' of truth in that text is complicit with a logocentric metaphysics which has *repressed*, censored or erased, the 'enigmatic', unthought force of writing.

'This would be easy to show', remarks Derrida. One of the real problems in his essay, and perhaps one of the reasons for the delay in its publication, is the *obviousness* of many of his points about Lacan: *of course* Lacan is complicit with Western philosophy, with his 'return to Descartes', his constant references to Hegel and Heidegger, and so on. What is most obvious, however, is precisely what is hardest to grasp or theorize ('to see', in its etymological derivation)—which is precisely the lesson Lacan reads in 'The Purloined Letter'. Derrida's reading, partly through recourse to Freudian texts, aims to make visible a possible destiny (or *destinerrance*, 'wandering-destiny') away from the epistemic traditions invoked by Lacan.

Indeed, the destiny of truth presented in an exemplary way by Lacan's Seminar is 'lost in the unfolding of the return to Freud', according to Derrida: it cannot be located in the Freudian text, it slips in from elsewhere. In fact, two kinds of *philosophical* truth-value, Derrida claims, are propped against each other in Lacan's thought, in a theoretical *étayage* ('propping', Freud's term for the relation of an instinct to a drive) which does nothing to hide their incommensurability: the concept of truth as *adequatio*, the 'circuit of adequation'; and the Heideggerian *alethia* or 'unveiling' of truth.[108] The truth which is unveiled is that of castration, which Lacan makes the sole guarantee of the proper circulation of signifiers, the guarantee that 'lack', the condition of the subject, is 'kept in place' (Derrida brings out the double sense of *manque à sa place*: both 'lack in place' and without an accent, 'lack

[106] Cf. Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, tr. Gayatri Spivak, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1976; also idem & Geoffrey Bennington, *Jacques Derrida*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993, pp. 23–42.

[107] 'Le Facteur de la Vérité', *op. cit.*, pp. 463–4.

[108] *Ibid.*

has its place).[109] Thus, Lacan solders logocentrism to a sexist iconography, producing a 'phallogocentric transcendentalism': the phallus—'the signifier intended to designate as a whole the effects of the signified', as Lacan puts it in 1958[110]—is the indispensable support of Lacanian theory, a principle of representational self-presence or 'indivisibility' without which its entire edifice would collapse.[111]

Derrida's argument, then, concludes that the supposed illustration of the 'supremacy of the signifier' in Lacan's Seminar in fact masks a 'psychoanalytico-transcendental semantics': the substitution of the enigmatic letter which is never read in Poe's story for a 'signifier' representing a speaking subject, in an economy of truth governed by the phallus. What Lacan proposes as the operation of the rigorous mechanism of signification is in fact, claims Derrida, that of a specific organization of *meanings*, with manifest, intricate philosophical and political implications.

But 'The Purloined Letter' finally eludes Lacan's attempt to 'decipher' its 'message' definitively (*decisively*: that is by *cutting* out a 'subject' from its textual materiality): it is clear, for Derrida, that the Seminar 'cannot *read* the story it tells itself'. Poe's tale, for instance, is framed by a structure of narration completely ignored by Lacan, a 'disseminal structure' which from the first word installs a textual 'drift' undoing any unity or centre, rendering its 'message' ultimately *undecidable* by catching it in an interminable play of significations (Who is the 'subject' of the text? Who signs it as its author, if its 'message' is precisely the subversion of human agency by the signifier?). Poe's writing exceeds, strays from, the interpretive 'formalisation' Lacan superimposes upon it, the letter remaining *en souffrance*, undelivered to the truth-destination.[112]

We can perhaps best grasp the antinomy between Lacan and Derrida as it emerges in the 'debate' over 'The Purloined Letter' in terms of their different views on the significance—or possibility—of a *decision*. If for Lacan the subject is given a 'decisive orientation' by the signifier,[113] cut out as a symbolic ex-sistence, we have seen that it is on the basis of a primordial *Bejahung* in which the subject *decides to be*—says 'Yes' to the call of the Other, to its 'interpellation' in the field of consistent representation guaranteed (at least in Lacan's early work) by the Name-of-the-Father.[114] Derrida would overturn this régime of signification and subjectivation by reversing its terms: where Lacan seeks to cut away the logic of the subject from its material textual 'ground', deconstructive interpretation shows how the uncanny framing of the text undoes or traverses any such 'decisive' reading; and if for Lacan the phallic 'master signifier' must retain a rock-like irreducibility as the transcendental condition of all signification, Derrida questions why any signifier (and why *that* signifier in particular) should be considered exempt from the 'divisibility' of semiosis, its endless play of difference.

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[109] *Ibid*, pp. 436–41.

[110] 'The Signification of the Phallus' (1958), in *Écrits: A Selection*, *op. cit.*, p. 285.

[111] 'Le Facteur de la Vérité', *op. cit.*, pp. 478–9.

[112] *Ibid*, pp. 483–96.

[113] Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter', *op. cit.*, p. 29.

[114] The concept of interpellation is developed by Louis Althusser in a theory of ideology drawing on Lacanian thought; cf. 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses', *Essays on Ideology*, London: Verso, 1984, pp. 44–57 and Slavoj Žižek's 'revision' of the concept in *The Metastases of Enjoyment: Six Essays on Woman and Causality*, *op. cit.*, pp. 58–62.

v) Rewriting the Letter: *Litura*

In opening his *Écrits* with the Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter, writes Serge Viderman, Lacan sought 'to show the scientific status of analysis by giving it, in a rigorous linguistics, a letter of introduction to the field of respectable knowledge'. Thus, continues Viderman,

> Lacan tries to link the 'Purloined Letter' to a signifier with only one natural locus, one rigorous trajectory, both determinate and able to be traced. Thus, he hoped to found the logic of the signifier by inscribing it in a transcendental topology. This project was pursued by Lacan with talent, but the very nature of the unconscious —its ambiguities, its multiple logics, the wavering of a space in which words spoken in one place find signification in another—rendered it either hopeless or capable of producing nothing but new illusions.[115]

If Derrida's critique aimed to deconstruct this 'topology', however, we have seen that it did so, not by invoking any psychoanalytic 'fact' such as an inherent quality of the unconscious, but by showing how effects of *signification* were falsified in the Lacanian reading, how what was advanced as the 'logic of the signifier' in fact entailed a highly idiosyncratic 'semantics'. Derrida—sharing, perhaps, Heidegger's unease with the term—never makes an 'attributive judgement' about the unconscious, which might then allow him, like Viderman, to locate it (*ça*) as the cause of the failure of representational logic or the breakdown of theoretical coherence. To make such a judgement would be, in a Lacanian perspective, to raise the question of the *real.*

In a seminar in 1976, Lacan mentions Derrida in precisely this context—that of how the 'writing' in the name of which deconstruction went to work might relate to psychoanalytic concepts—in particular, to the sense of 'writing' Lacan himself was then developing in his explorations of the topology of knots. For Derrida, claims Lacan, writing corresponds exclusively to a 'precipitation of the signifier'; restricted to the symbolic register, writing as *différance* should be sharply distinguished from what the same term now meant for Lacan (whose latest work, he claims, has 'changed the very meaning of writing'): an 'autonomous' instance, irreducible to any of the themes of deconstruction, any mere linguistic undecidability or logical *aporia.*[116] Without explicitly mentioning Derrida's recently-published *Le Facteur de la vérité*, Lacan clearly wishes to shift the phantom 'debate' from its terms of ten years before to the very different terms of his work in the mid-1970s with Borromean knots and Joycean writing. We will return to this re-scripting by Lacan of his confrontation with Derrida—which Lacan's heirs have decided to exclude from the official published *version établie* of the seminar—when we have explored further the trajectory of 'writing' from the early work to the Borromean knot.

What is foreclosed from the symbolic re-appears in the real, Lacan tells us in Seminar III.[117] The psychotic symptom is thus by definition something unassimilable to the symbolic order, something unheard of, *inédit* (the French for both 'unpublished' and 'original'): something non-interpretable. In his reading of *La*

[115]Serge Viderman, 'Un psychanalyste hégélien', in *Lacan Avec les Philosophes, op. cit.*, p. 325.
[116]Seminar of 11th March 1976 (SXXIII), *Le Sinthome*, unpublished (version P. G., p. 3).
[117]cf. Seminar of 11th April 1956 (SIII), *op. cit.*, pp. 190–1.

Lettre volée, Lacan stressed the incommensurability between the 'real' of the letter, the scrap of refuse handled by the police, and its negativity (or 'nullibiety') as signifier; and as we saw, the 'symptomatic' slip in the reference to Joyce—where the Wakean 'exagmination' became a detective-style 'examination'—offers a confirmation of the incompatibility of letter and litter, showing how the letter-as-signifier sought to absorb the last shred of materiality into its 'transcendental topology'. Lacan's erroneous footnote seems to return, as it were, from his future work (which in 1976 will present itself as, in one sense, a kind of footnote to the Joycean text) with the message that the 'logic of the signifier' he seeks to trace decisively at the opening of the *Écrits* is destined to remain a work-in-progress.

To write *Es* as 'S'—in other words, to reformulate the residual biologism of the Freudian unconscious (encapsulated in the 'id' of the second topography) in the rigorous terms of structural linguistics: such would be a concise formula for the ambition of the 'transcendental topology' of 1966.[118] If the real is thus 'foreclosed' (although no such inversion of the term is possible in Lacanian theory, we could deploy it to figure the 'hyperbolization' of the symbolic act or *Bejahung* founding the subject, whose effect we could imagine to be a pure 'bodiless' subject, a fully-spiritualized voice), it will make a powerful return as the 'letter' which—Lacan will insist in his later work—cannot be thought within the logic of the signifier.

In an article written in 1971 entitled *Lituraterre*, Lacan looks back to the Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter', declaring it to be 'a good account of what distinguishes the letter from the signifier it bears'.[119] If this article proposes a new sense of writing, one linked to the real—*litura*, a 'littoral' trace, the track or shore-line of *jouissance* across meaning—this leads on to no auto-critique or explicit revision of the earlier work, with its privileging of the (spoken) signifier as the subject's 'nihilation' of the real. There are simply two 'registers' of language, Lacan now announces, which correspond to the division of the subject: 'one of these registers can be satisfied by referring to writing, the other to speech'.[120] Although Lacan never explicitly retracts this notion—that of the peaceful cohabitation of these violently heterogeneous registers (which one of his inheritors will portray as the 'two faces of the subject')[121]—we hope to show that such a neat dualism is radically unsettled by the later work, which develops the idea of a writing *antagonistic* to the domain of the subject's truth, a writing which constitutes a 'subversion of the subject' (to adapt the title of one of Lacan's *écrits*).

Seminar III, *Les Psychoses*, which first establishes foreclosure as a theoretico-clinical term, forms part of Lacan's central project in the 1950s—to found a logic of the Other as site of the subject's constitution through *la parole*, the act of speech. Thus, Freud's work on the 'case' of Schreber, based of course entirely on a reading of Schreber's 'Memoirs of my Nervous Illness', is re-read as an exemplification of

[118] An ambition already outlined a decade before: 'The *Es* with which analysis is concerned is made of the signifier'., Seminar of 5th December 1956 (SIV), *La relation d'objet*, *op. cit.*, p. 49 (quoted in Dylan Evans, *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*, London: Routledge, 1996, p. 79).

[119] 'Lituraterre', *Littérature* 3, 1971, p. 4.

[120] *Ibid*, p. 9.

[121] Bruce Fink, *The Lacanian Subject*, *op. cit.*, pp. 72–9.

how the psychotic fails to relate to the Other in a foundational, attributive act of speech. Unlike his colleague Octave Mannoni, whose essay (published more than a decade later, in 1969) entitled *Schreber als Schreiber* ('Schreber as a Writer')[122] will pay special attention to the significance of the *écrit* for Schreber, Lacan does not dwell specifically on Schreber's text or accord to its textuality any privileged status in the structure of the psychosis. Twenty years later, though, addressing an American audience, he will draw a bold line between Freud's discovery of the unconscious—in its essential dimension, that of *speech*—from psychotic phenomena, which only entered the field of psychoanalysis through Freud *reading a text.*[123] By then, writing will have acquired a special importance in Lacan's understanding of psychosis, which will come to re-orient the conception of foreclosure and the diagnostic criteria it entails.

For Lacan to have overlooked writing as a specific linguistic instance in the mid-1950s is perhaps less surprising in the context of the 'phonocentric' view of language he shows in the Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter', where the scrap of written 'litter' is *relévé* by the speaking subject, freed from its materiality by being absorbed into the consistent scene of the Other. It nevertheless runs counter to a very powerful impetus in his work, evident from as early as his doctoral thesis in 1932 and returning as one of the major themes of the 1970s: the wish to ascribe to writing a special status in the psychical economy, one irreducible to a truth grounded in speech. As is already clear from the introduction of foreclosure in 1956, as a 'misfiring' of the speaking subject in the Other, this opening of a linguistic dimension beyond the logic of the signifier will be especially associated with psychosis.

Lacan's thesis, *De la psychose paranoïaque dans ses rapports avec la personnalité*, took him 'to the threshold of psychoanalysis', as he puts it in 1958; (he began his analysis with Rudolph Loewenstein as he was completing the thesis in 1932).[124] The distinction he later makes between Freud's teaching—as originating in, essentially based on, hysterical *speech*—and his own as the opening of a new chapter of psychoanalysis whose starting-point is psychotic *writing*, is already taking shape in the 1946 'Remarks on Psychical Causality'; there, Lacan claims that the patient whose case is discussed in his thesis first attracted his attention because of 'the burning signification of the writings she produced'.[125]

The patient was Marguerite Pantaine (she was given a literary name—Aimée—in Lacan's thesis), who had been detained at Sainte-Anne hospital after she had stabbed an actress in an episode of paranoiac delusion. Her *productions écrites* consisted of two novels dedicated to her phantasmatic 'guardian', the Prince of Wales, and some poems; by including quotations from these in his thesis, Lacan was able to combine the presentation of the psychiatric case with a 'literary analysis' which might have interested the Surrealist circles he was beginning to frequent (he had written two articles for the journal *Minotaure*). Thus, writes Roudinesco, Lacan was 'the first to effect a synthesis between the two major routes by which Freu-

[122] Octave Mannoni, 'Schreber als Schreiber', in *Clefs pour l'Imaginaire; ou l'Autre Scène*, Paris: Seuil, 1969; cf. especially pp. 79–86.

[123] Yale University, Kanzer Seminar, 24th November 1975, *Scilicet* 6/7, p. 10.

[124] cf. Élisabeth Roudinesco, *Jacques Lacan, op. cit.*, pp. 101–10.

[125] 'Propos sur la Causalité Psychique', *Écrits, op. cit.*, p. 168.

dianism came into France': the thesis argued for the establishment of a Freudian, psychogenic unconscious in psychiatry, at the same time as it offered a portrait of Aimée as a Surrealist heroine who, like the Papin sisters, embodied the ideal of a feminine passion rebelling against the constraints of bourgeois mediocrity.[126]

In the terms of Lacan's later formulations, the case of Aimée is characterized by a radical breakdown of the Other, the normalizing symbolic function which ensures a certain rationality in intersubjective communication. Marguerite Pantaine attacks the actress, she says, to defend her son from the woman's threats; messages come from nowhere, while others fail to reach their addressee, like the parcels of manuscripts returned unopened by Buckingham Palace. For Aimée, the consistent Other does not exist, does not 'hold' in her attempts to get across her message, take up her place as someone to be recognized and addressed.[127]

In the 1972–3 seminar *Encore*, Lacan outlines a change in the status of the Other within his theory, which in turn is bound up with the new conception of writing he had evoked in *Lituraterre*. If, as we recall, on the publication of the *Écrits* in 1966 he was worried that *ça ne va pas tenir*, he is now prepared to give an 'algebraic' form to a certain theoretical 'untenability': by introducing a 'barred' A in a new formula,

> I have added a dimension to this place of the A, by showing that as a place it does not hold, that there is a flaw, a hole, a loss. The object *a* comes to function in relation to this loss. This is something absolutely essential to the function of language.[128]

Objet a begins, from the 1960s on, to mark the point of this inconsistency in the Other, this paradoxical 'loss' where something emerges which is irreducible to the 'topology' of the Other: the 'remainder' of signification, that which the symbolic leaves in the wake of the nihilation constitutive of the subject.[129] Alan Sheridan, one of Lacan's English translators, notes that 'Lacan insists that '*objet petit* a' should remain untranslated, thus acquiring, as it were, the status of an algebraic sign'.[130] Lacan's *a* thus presents a striking *instance de la lettre*: the use of a letter to mark a certain limit to the domain of meaning, of what can be interpreted.

François Baudry relates the problematic of *a*—whereby something 'absolutely essential to the function of language' comes into play around a fault or gap in the symbolic order—to the question of writing in Lacan's work, by positing an 'equivalence' between object *a* and a theoretical trope Lacan introduces the year before *Encore*, and which he will eventually declare to be the 'purest' figure of writing in his work: the Borromean knot.[131] We will return to Baudry's hypothesis when we have explored the development of the knot in Lacanian theory.

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[126] Roudinesco, *Jacques Lacan*, *op. cit.*, p. 78; also cf.pp. 93–9; and see David Macey's excellent account of Lacan's involvement in the Surrealist cult of 'Convulsive Beauty' in *Lacan in Contexts*, London: Verso, 1988, pp. 44–74.

[127] cf. Roudinesco, *ibid*, pp. 69–70.

[128] Seminar of 9th January 1973 (SXX), *op. cit.*, p. 31.

[129] cf. Seminar of 4th March 1964 (SXI), *op. cit.*, pp. 103–4.

[130] 'Translator's Note', *Écrits: A Selection*, *op. cit.*, p. xi.

[131] François Baudry, 'Le noeud borroméen et l'objet a', in *Lacan Avec les Philosophes*, *op. cit.*, pp. 179–87; the Borromean knot first appears in the seminar ... *Ou Pire* (SXIX) (see below, p. 52).

If the Other does not hold together in psychosis, Lacan seems to indicate—as early as 1957 when he first strikes a 'bar' through the A—that it is no longer tenable either in the theory of psychoanalysis. We should pause, though, to consider the significance of this 'bar'. In *L'Instance de la lettre*, Lacan's appropriation (and inversion) of the 'Saussurian algorithm' posits a *barre* as the 'primordial distinction' between signifier and signified, that which separates the operation of the signifier, in the first instance, from any hermeneutics (Lacan's anagrammatical word-play with *barre* and *arbre* seeks to emphasize the arbitrary function of signification).[132] So here the 'bar' indicates or delimits the theoretical place of the psychoanalytic subject, severing it (*Es* as 'S') from any incarnation in the realm of meaning. The 'bar' Lacan invokes in Seminar XI appears to have shifted from this abstract designation of theoretical space to a *literal* place, the site of a *real inscription*:

> In my own vocabulary ... I symbolize the subject by the barred S [$\$$], in so far as it is constituted as secondary in relation to the signifier. In order to illustrate this, I will remind you that the thing may be presented in the simplest possible way by the single stroke [*trait unaire*]. The first signifier is the notch by which it is indicated, for example, that the subject has killed *one* animal, ... The subject himself is marked off by the single stroke, and first he marks himself as a tattoo, the first of signifiers.[133]

Sheridan's translation of *trait unaire* as 'single stroke' perhaps risks effacing the importance of this 'unitary trait' in Lacan's teaching; in particular, its place in what Pierre Skriabine describes as Lacan's transition 'from an axiomatic of the Other to an axiomatic of the One—in other words, of *jouissance*'.[134] The 'bar' which divides the subject is also the inscription first 'marking it off', that which first installs it in the field of signification. *Trait unaire* was the translation Lacan had proposed in the seminar on *Identification* (SIX, 1961–2) for *einziger Zug*, a phrase used by Freud in 'Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego' (1921).[135] A primal mark, inscribed as 'one', allows the subject to enter the field as an effect of the chain of signifiers: like the paradoxical number zero in Frege's definition, the unitary trait installs the economy of signification without itself 'counting' as a term within that economy.[136]

If the 'bar' in Lacan's quasi-algorithmic formulas first guarantees the symbolic instance of the subject by ruling out any imaginary misprision of it, by the 1960s it stands for the subject's *inscription*, in a primal moment of identification or 'fixation', in the real. Thus, the subject's very foundation, the anchorage which prevents its dissolution in the flow of signification, is posited as a moment of *writing*. Writing corresponds to a primary level of structure, of more weight in the subject's destiny than its subsequent experience as *parlêtre* as mapped out in analysis (Lacan's reversal, in the seminar on 'The Purloined Letter', of the proverbial *Verba volant, scripta manent* here seems to be undoing itself).

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[132]'The agency of the letter in the unconscious, or reason since Freud', *Écrits: A Selection*, *op. cit.*, pp. 149–55.

[133]Seminar of 22nd April 1964 (SXI), *op. cit.*, p. 141.

[134]Pierre Skriabine, 'Clinique et topologie', *op. cit.*, p. 127.

[135]SIX, *L'Identification* (1961–2), unpublished, version P. G., pp. 413–4; *SE* XVIII, p. 107.

[136]cf. Juan-David Nasio, 'The Concept of the Subject of the Unconscious' in *Disseminating Lacan*, *op. cit.*, pp. 30–1.

On the other hand—and seemingly paradoxically—writing emerges as a privileged figure in psychosis, as was already clear to Lacan in his doctoral thesis. As we have seen, Lacan understood psychosis as, in essence, a failure of symbolization: something could not be metaphorically translated into the domain of the Other, due to the originary lack of a key signifier, the Name-of-the-Father. But the increasing theoretical importance of the 'barred' Other, the lacking or inconsistent Other, inevitably shifted the status of this flaw in the symbolic from the level of an individual history to that of a 'generalized' condition of subjectivity.[137] If in the 1950s the Name-of-the-Father appears to be, in effect, the *name of the Other*, the guarantee of symbolic structure, the Other is subsequently declared to be *lacking a signifier*, unable to cohere or form a totalized set.[138] This lack or inconsistency is posited in 1973 as a matter of *jouissance*: 'a subject, as such, has little to do with *jouissance*'—due to the presence of something (in the real of the body, in the 'autistic' insistence of the drive) irreducible to symbolic mortification, incommensurable with the alienating ex-sistence of the Other.[139]

This coincidence in the figure of writing—between the real of the psychotic symptom and the *trait unaire* which provides the fundamental, pre-ontological basis of the subject—points to transformations in Lacan's view of psychosis, bound up with a larger reconceptualization of 'structure' in Lacanian theory. Does the structure which can be coherently theorized necessarily correspond exclusively to the *dit-mension* of the subject's truth? In other words, is the *jouissance* which is 'extimate' to the subject thus *ipso facto* beyond the reach of psychoanalytic concepts? Lacan responds, in his late work, to such questions by developing topology as a new mode of psychoanalytic theory.

The shift in Lacan's use of the Heideggerian trope 'ex-sistence' allows us to outline some of these changes. At the opening of the Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter', strategically located as we have seen to announce the 'transcendental topology' of the signifier (in Viderman's phrase), ex-sistence corresponds to the symbolic 'insistence' which determines the subject as *excentrique*, 'de-centred'; in other words, the term encapsulates the exteriority of an unconscious structured like a language. By 1975, Lacan's invocation of ex-sistence has taken on a more radical status: it now designates a property of the real, figuring its '*sistence* outside the symbolic and the imaginary', beyond both meaning and the subject's discursive lack-of-being.[140]

At both these moments of Lacan's work, ex-sistence marks something irreducible to the discursive space of traditional psychoanalytic teaching. We recall Nasio's observation that the topology of surfaces introduced in the 1960s supplemented spatial representation with the temporal logic needed to figure the *aphanisis* of the speaking subject; the more radical sense of ex-sistence, as the dimension of an irreducible real, will lead Lacan to a very different exploration of topology in the 1970s. Skriabine outlines this development:

[137]For the 'generalization' of foreclosure, see the second part of Pierre Skriabine's article 'Clinique et topologie', *op. cit.*, pp. 127–31.

[138]cf. 'The subversion of the subject and the dialectic of desire in the Freudian unconscious', *Écrits: A Selection*, *op. cit.*, p. 316.

[139]Seminar of 16th January 1973 (SXX), *op. cit.*, p. 48.

[140]Seminar of 16th December 1975 (SXXIII), *Le Sinthome*, *Ornicar?* 7, 1976, p. 3.

> ... Lacan's topology in the 1960s takes the Other as its point of departure, to end ... by bringing into effect the incompleteness of the Other, the structural position of lack in the Other; beginning with A, it ends with Ⱥ, while the topology of the 1970s, that of knots, is explicitly founded on Ⱥ.[141]

Writing, in its final definition for Lacan, is that which is founded on the barred Other, that which reaches a level inaccessible to discourse, beyond meaning. The letter, first deployed to figure the circulation of signifiers in the symbolic domain of truth, is declared in 1974 to be 'the only starting-point from which we can gain access to the real'.[142]

vi) Writing beyond discourse: the Borromean knot

If the foreclosure of the Name-of-the-Father designates the failure of a metaphorical function, this results in the blockage of the movement of symbolic substitution which produces the unconscious as a cluster of signifying chains. A psychotic, therefore—and here Lacan was upholding a long-established view in clinical psychoanalysis—was not caught up in the ciphering movement of the unconscious, or was so only in a very restricted or idiosyncratic sense. Thus, psychotic behaviour could not be interpreted according to the logic of the psychoanalytic symptom, 'resolved ... entirely in an analysis of language', as Lacan had put it—echoing Freud's sense of *Lösung*, the analytic resolution of the symptom—in 1953.[143] Was psychosis thus to be rigorously excluded from the *dit-mension* of analytic interpretation, banished to the outer darkness beyond analysis?

We have seen that the Lacanian subject is explicitly located in the philosophical tradition inaugurated by Descartes, in its reformulation of the *cogito* as the strictly linguistic enunciation of an existence, the subject's self-utterance. By making the *cogito* the equivalent of a primordial affirmation—the moment where the subject says 'Yes' to the Other, accepts its symbolic mediation, and thus avoids psychosis—Lacanian theory aligned itself with a specific historical understanding of Cartesian philosophy: as the moment when the modern subject is founded through the radical exclusion—or 'foreclosure', we might say—of madness. Such an interpretation is formulated in 1961 by Michel Foucault, who in *Madness and Civilization* claims that the work of Descartes announced the 'advent of a *ratio*' based on the constitutive exclusion of madness from the domain of the thinking subject.[144] If, for Lacan in 1957, the *cogito* can be re-written to provide a formula for the split subject's division between the symbolic and the real—'I think where I am not, therefore I am where I do not think'—such topography, the socio-symbolic organization of a modern subject, is what will break down in psychosis: the decisive *ergo* both linking and separating language and being simply fails to operate, is foreclosed.[145] We will

[141] Pierre Skriabine, 'Clinique et topologie', *op. cit.*, p. 119.

[142] 'La Troisième', *op. cit.*, p. 201.

[143] 'The function and field of speech and language in psychoanalysis', *Écrits: A Selection*, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

[144] Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, tr. Richard Howard, New York: Pantheon, 1965, p. 53

[145] 'The agency of the letter in the unconscious', *Écrits: A Selection*, *op. cit.*, p. 166.

return to this question of modernity and the subject when we have developed our interpretation of Lacan's last topology.

The phenomena of psychosis—exhilarating hallucinations or terrifying delusions—are thus *beyond metaphor*. They cannot be inserted into the symbolic machine of the Lacanian unconscious, incorporated into the chains of signification which give it interpretive coherence, constitute its subject. The *jouissance* 'expressed' in psychosis does not conform to the protocols of symbolic 'castration', the 'Law of desire' which Lacan had posited in 'The Subversion of the Subject' (1960) as the transcendental condition of the Other as zone of inter-subjectivity: madness bodies forth a traumatic real, resistant to any 'alienation' into subjective truth.[146]

Foreclosure, then, comprises the failure of the symbolic logic encapsulated in the *cogito*. Lacan articulates this in 1974, by completing the list of his reformulations of the *cogito* with a 'foreclosed' version. 'Je pense, donc se jouit', he declares in 'La Troisième', adding that 'this rejects the usual 'donc', the one which says 'je souis''.[147] The *contrepet* ('spoonerism') converts the Cartesian *sum*, the self-declaration of existence, into the impersonal, 'acephalic' manifestation of *jouissance* ('it enjoys' or 'there is enjoyment'); it marks the return in the real—in the materiality of language—of the foreclosed signifier (the existence which is 'sullied', *souillé*, by this materiality).

Lacan's self-mocking word-play should not blind us to the significance of the transformation at stake here: the very status of psychoanalytic theory and its subject is in question. If 'I think' corresponds, not to the opening in the real of the negative space constitutive of a subject but to the materialization of an unspeakable *jouissance*—in other words, if foreclosure is to be generalized, made the basis of all subjectivity—how are we to continue to think the subject according to a 'logic of the signifier'? For that matter, how are we to *think* (the subject) at all, if to say 'I think' is merely to become caught up in the inert, opaque density of enjoyment?

We cannot begin to understand Lacan's last topology—that of the Borromean knot—until we have grasped the special status of writing implied by this parodic 'foreclosure' of the *cogito*, and its relation to the earlier theorization of the unconscious. The idea that writing is *autonomous*, which as we have seen Lacan stresses in 1976, is not simply an extension of the structuralist formulations on the 'supremacy' of the signifier, in which the symbolic order was constructed as *automatic*, its chains of signification devoid of human agency. Indeed, the Saussurian signifier is, rather, strictly heteronomous, essentially determined by diacritical effects (by the Other, in Lacan's reformulation). The 'autonomy' of the *écrit*, that which distinguishes it radically from the signifier, lies in its *literal* status, its ex-sistence to the economy of metaphor.

The renewal of Lacan's interest in psychosis in his late work is bound up with this problematic of writing. In the case of 'radical foreclosure', the breakdown of the entire representational field in which the speaking subject is able to emerge, the psychotic symptom presents a unique instance of 'writing': the attempt to *organize* or 'shape' the traumatic real in some way, without recourse to the metaphorical

[146]cf. 'Subversion of the subject', *Écrits: A Selection*, *op. cit.*, p. 324.
[147]'La Troisième', *op. cit.*, p. 179.

dimension which provides for the non-psychotic subject an escape-route from 'autistic' collapse. The psychotic experience is *singular*, deprived of the socio-symbolic inheritance which governs the field of the Other, lays down the structural parameters of the unconscious; the symptomatic life of the psychotic thus has the potential to realize a radical originality.

Writing in this non-metaphorical dimension is closely related to the *act*, in the sense developed by Lacan in his seminar on *Anxiety* (SX, 1962–3). In the *passage à l'acte*, the subject of the unconscious, located in the signifying circuit of the Other, fails to operate: the act is a mute expression of *jouissance*, devoid of any potential intentionality or meaning.[148] Lacan's notion of the act, indeed, shares something of the ambiguity surrounding his deployment of the term 'writing': in one sense, 'passing to the act', as shown in a psychotic episode, entails the abolition of the symbolic register, the (possibly terrifying) turning away from the law of the Other; in another, the act is the site of the *ethical* dimension in psychoanalysis, as Lacan had brought out in his reading of *Antigone* in 1960. The *jouissance* of the heroine in Sophocles' play, we recall, was revealed as *autonomos*, had 'turned its back on the Other': the terrifying 'splendour' of her self-sacrifice carries reverberations of the self-loss in the *passage à l'acte*, which also emerges *ex nihilo*.[149]

Something emerges, Lacan implies, in both the phenomena of psychosis and the ethical act, which is irreducible to the logic of the signifier, cannot be incorporated into the theory of the subject. This 'impossible' instance, extimate to the field of representation, can nevertheless—this is Lacan's claim in *La Troisième*—be *written*; or rather it *is* writing, it co-incides with its non-metaphorical inscription.[150] This writing of the real, which is always traumatic, disruptive of symbolic structure, finds its fullest realization for Lacan in his explorations of the Borromean knot.

Lacan's interest in a dialogue between psychoanalysis and mathematics had begun in the 1950s. The mathematician Georges Guilbaud, a personal friend whom Lacan would contact for assistance with ideas or problems arising in the seminar, influenced him in particular by sharpening his appetite for, and comprehension of, topological figures. In a curious way, Guilbaud came to 'authorize' the introduction of the Borromean knot to the seminar. As Lacan puts it (in the seminar ... *Ou Pire*) on 9th February 1972:

> A strange thing—while I was puzzling yesterday evening over how I was going to present to you today my tetradic geometry, it chanced that, having dinner with a charming young lady who attends M. Guil-baud's classes, I was given something which fitted me like a ring to my finger; which I now wish to show you—as I learned yesterday night, it's nothing less than the coat-of-arms of the Borromi... [151]

[148] Seminar of 16th January 1963 (SX), *Angoisse*, unpublished (quoted in Dylan Evans, *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*, *op. cit.*, p. 137).

[149] cf. Seminars in May and June 1960 (SVII), *op. cit.*, pp. 243–87; (discussed on p. 16 above).

[150] cf. 'La Troisième', *op. cit.*, pp. 190–201.

[151] Seminar of 9th February 1972 (SXIX) ... *Ou Pire*, unpublished (Version P. G., p. 59).

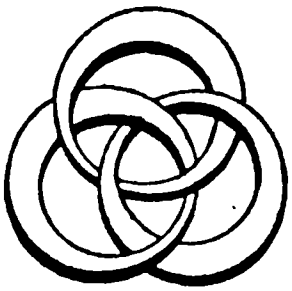

Figure 1: The Borromean Knot

The young mathematician had told Lacan about the heraldic crest of a Milanese family, devised in the sixteenth century to symbolize a triple alliance by showing three intertwined rings. The three branches of the family were inextricably linked by the coat-of-arms, so that if one ring were broken, the entire 'knot' would disintegrate.[152] Lacan's immediate gusto in embracing the figure perhaps came from his delight in the *coincidentia oppositorum* it embodied: its ostensible representational simplicity, the 'Borromean' quality of mutual interconnection, belying its mathematical complexity, its difficulty as a topological object. Later in Lacan's seminar, this 'antinomy' emerged as the troublesome discrepancy between the 'imaginary' dimension of the knot—its *mise à plat* or inscription on the blackboard—and its 'real', three-dimensional 'knottedness', which is beyond human imagination, can only be conceived mathematically.

'Mathematical formalisation is our goal, our ideal', Lacan told his seminar in 1973.[153] If this theoretical ambition was, as Élisabeth Roudinesco writes, 'a final attempt to save psychoanalysis from its origins in the occult and hypnotism'—to translate analytic 'knowledge' from its location in the shifting, aleatory dimension of speech to a place of clearly-defined, reliable formulae—its principal focus was the *teaching* of psychoanalysis. The aim of 'formalisation', concludes Roudinesco, was 'to differentiate [psychoanalytic] from academic knowledge in a society where this, according to Lacan, was beginning to replace religion'.[154]

The Borromean knot is thus the final avatar of the Lacanian *mathème* (the neologism coined in 1971 as a condensation of the Lévi-Straussian *mythème* and the Greek *mathema*, 'knowledge'; a matheme is 'that which is capable of integral transmission'). The fact that the topology of manifolds, of which knot theory is a sub-section, produces a necessarily counter-intuitive understanding of space, one alien to the meaning-hungry register of the imaginary, gave the Borromean knot a special privilege as a form of 'showing'.

[152]Although 'Borromean knot' is the term used here, due to its place in the vocabulary of Lacanian psychoanalysis, the figure is not, strictly speaking, a knot in topology (which defines a knot as the homeomorphism in three-dimensional space of a *single* circle). By 1976, Lacan was talking of *une chaînoeud borroméenne*, 'a Borromean chain-knot' (Seminar of 13th January 1976 (SXXIII), *Le Sinthome*, in *Ornicar?* 7, p. 17). Topologists refer to the figure as the 'Borromean rings'. See R.H.Crowell & R.H. Fox, *Introduction to Knot Theory*, New York: Springer,1963.

[153]Seminar of 15th May 1973 (SXX), *op. cit.*, p. 108.

[154]Élisabeth Roudinesco, *Jacques Lacan*, *op. cit.*, pp. 449–50.

The place of the knot in Lacan's thought is aptly illustrated by a moment during his 1974 television broadcast, where what we could term *the opening of a gap* between speech and writing occurs. Lacan is telling the watching public about 'the real', which

> ... allows us to unknot effectively that which makes up the symptom, which is a knot of signifiers. Knotting and un-knotting are not to be taken as metaphors here, but as knots which are articulated in the real to make up the chain of signifying material.[155]

The *mise à plat* of the Borromean knot appears on the television screen as Lacan is speaking, although it is never named as such. Likewise, in the text prepared by Jacques-Alain Miller shortly before the broadcast, the knot is set apart, positioned in the margin of the discourse 'proper'. Miller explains in a foreword to *Télévision* that the marginal annotations (couched in the 'mathemic' terms of Lacanian formalisation) were added by him *en guise de 'manuductio'* ('as a brief guide') after his request that Lacan should 'sift' (*cribler*), reduce to its essentials, what he wished to say.[156]

Whatever significance we may assign here to Miller's role (as 'formalising' scribe, introducing 'mathemic' effects into Lacan's discourse)[157], we cannot fail to note the different positions of speech and writing which emerge in this *mise en scène* of Lacanian theory. The Borromean knot occupies an *extimate* position in the text of *Télévision*: it appears *silently*, shown but not given a name, as though it entails something irreducible to the speaking voice (always, for Lacan, the *dit-mension* of the subject's truth).[158] It is not a metaphor, we are told—thus it is not caught up in the differential weave of the symbolic order; but rather indicates the *real* construction of signifying chains. 'These chains', Lacan continues, 'are not of *sens* ('meaning') but of *jouis-sens* ('enjoy-meaning')'. The untranslatable pun brings together Lacanian incompatibles—the opaque, 'autistic' substance of *jouissance* and the virtual domain of meaning; it is 'to be written in conformity with the equivocation which constitutes the law of the signifier'.[159] Equivocation (occluded by the speaking voice, rendered visible by a written text) encapsulates something of the real *matière signifiante* of language, something which is *shown*—silently and literally—by the Borromean knot.

What becomes visible in *Télévision*, in the dramatic collision of speech and writing, the gap which opens between Lacan's voice and the marginal *criblage*, is the spectacle of a thought dominated by the axiomatic of a linguistic subject (the symptom is still 'a knot of signifiers') striving to exceed itself, to extend its grasp beyond (its own) 'structuralist' formulas—as far as the real which, Lacan had de-

[155] *Télévision*, Paris: Seuil, 1974 , p. 22.

[156] *Ibid.*, *Avertissement.*

[157] Miller has recently commented on this role: 'When I published Lacan's *Television*, which reads like a highly contrived text with a great deal of difficult rhetoric, I included a number of schemas in the margins to indicate that Lacan's rhetoric constitutes a commentary of a very precise nature'. ('An Introduction to Seminars I and II' (III), in *Reading Seminars I and II: Lacan's Return to Freud*, *op. cit.*, p. 30).

[158] '... I have declared that truth is a *dit-mension*, the mention / mansion of speech'. Seminar of 8th May 1973 (SXX), *op. cit.*, p. 97.

[159] *Télévision*, *op. cit.*, p. 22 [my translation].

clared in *Lituraterre*, creates 'furrows' in the conceptual domain of theory.[160] The uncanny *monstration* ('showing') of the knot is something 'unspeakable', heterogeneous to the law of the signifier. For a clearer idea of what this 'showing' constitutes, we need to return to the *Urszene* of the Borromean knot—Lacan's enthusiastic discovery of it in 1972. To what clinical and theoretical problems does the knot first respond?

At its introduction in the 1971–2 seminar ... *Ou Pire*, the knot takes part in the *formalisation of speech.* Lacan takes the spoken phrase *je te demande de refuser ce que je t'offre, parce que c'est pas ça* ('I ask you to refuse what I offer you, because it's not that') as an 'enunciation of the impossible of the sexual relation' (to cite Serge André's formulation).[161] His first schematization of the phrase is a Tetrahedron, a four-sided figure inter-linking its pronouns and verbs; but the newly discovered knot is brought forward as a more perfect version, fitting Lacan 'like a ring to a finger'. Any two of the circles in the Borromean knot are only held together due to the position of the third, so that all three are simultaneously inter-connected—thus the knot embodies the inextricable verbs of the phrase, the impossibility of any binary *rapport* it figures. 'When I have spoken of the signifying chain,' comments Lacan, 'I have always implied that concatenation'. But more importantly, he continues,

> ... Demand, Refusal and Offer—it is clear that, in this knot which I have brought forward for you today, each takes on meaning only from the others; but what results from this knot ... is that it is the foundation, the root, of what belongs to the *objet a.* [162]

In later versions of the Borromean knot, *objet a* will be written in its central intersection, at a point of anamorphic *coinçage* ('wedging') between real, symbolic and imaginary.[163] But already, on its first appearance here, the knot designates something *beyond* the signifying chain, its signifying 'concatenation' somehow paradoxically evoking the absolute negativity of the *objet a* (an object 'for which there is no idea', as Lacan is to comment in 'La Troisième').[164] The inextricable verbs and pronouns of the phrase—'I ask you to refuse what I offer you'—are supplemented, crucially, by the final *c'est pas ça*, 'that's not it'. Lacan's next move is to link this impossibility of *rapport*, this 'objectal' stumbling block, to problems *in theory.* He begins by stating the uncanny proximity of signification and its unspeakable obverse:

> What I am leading you to is this—not how meaning arises, but how it is from a knot of meaning that the object arises, the object itself... namely the *objet a.*[165]

[160] 'Lituraterre', *op. cit.*, p. 7.

[161] Serge André, 'Clinique et noeud borroméen', *Actes de L'École de la cause freudienne*, February 1982, p. 90.

[162] Seminar of 9th February 1972 (SXIX), *op. cit.*, pp. 59–60.

[163] For Lacan's discussion of anamorphosis see Seminar XI, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, *op. cit.*, pp. 79–90; for an account of the 'extimate' place of *objet a* in the Borromean knot, see Pierre Skriabine, 'Clinique et Topologie', *op. cit.*, p. 127.

[164] 'La Troisième', *op. cit.*, p. 183.

[165] Seminar of 9th February 1972 (SXIX), *op. cit.*, p. 56.

He goes on to name Wittgenstein as a thinker who concluded that 'we should not speak about that which cannot be spoken' (the reference is to the concluding statement of the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*). 'It is', Lacan continues,

> ... precisely that which cannot be spoken of which is in question when I mark as the 'that's not it' the sole motivation of a demand such as 'to refuse what I offer you'.[166]

The *objet a*, as negative 'object' knotting together the three verbs, corresponds to the logical limit of language designated as a place of *silence*, of the non-theorizable, by Wittgenstein. It was Lacan's reading of Wittgenstein, writes Roudinesco, that was a key factor leading him to rethink the status of the discourse of psychoanalysis, seeking its basis no longer in the 'fluctuations' of *la parole* but instead in *monstration*, in a form of 'showing' which aimed beyond the logical limits of speech.[167] François Baudry has claimed, as we have seen, that in its status as the 'purest' topological instance of this non-metaphorical showing, the Borromean knot is *equivalent* to—even a *form* of—the *objet a*: the Lacanian definition of *a* as that which is 'abandoned by the signifier', argues Baudry, applies equally to the knot, the purest embodiment of *litura* to appear in Lacan's teaching.

From the moment of its introduction—as part of an attempt to inscribe, mark out the 'impossible' as that which prevents *rapport*—the Borromean knot figures something beyond the logic of a model, of metaphorical representation. It emerges as a paradoxical co-incidence of the inseparable verbs in a phrase and the invisible 'object' embodying the impossible relation it expresses. Lacan's response in 1975 to a sceptical question—'despite what you say, in the end the knot is a simple model'—is emphatic:

> It does not constitute a model in so far as it comprises something before which the imagination fails. And the mathematical approach to it in topology is inadequate.[168]

Unlike the topological surfaces of the 1960s, the Borromean knot—as real *nouage*, irreducible even to its topological *mise à plat*—offers no representational equivalence to or of the subject. It is strictly *identical* to structure, not some metaphorical 'guide' to it, to paraphrase a remark in 'L'Étourdit'.[169]

Lacan addresses the central paradox of the Borromean knot—its non-metaphorical, 'acephalic' essence—in his most concentrated elaboration of it, the *R.S.I.* seminar of 1974–5. Announcing the year's project—to try to think the real by first 'writing' the real, symbolic and imaginary as a Borromean knot—Lacan states the initial theoretical problem: that of finding the 'common measure' of three terms hitherto understood to be radically heterogeneous. [170]

If the knot's definition as 'Borromean'—its intrication completely undone if any one of its strands is severed—implies, as it were, the 'homogenization' of Lacan's categories, their reconception as components of something 'larger', an immediate question arises concerning the epistemic status of the knot itself. If there is not

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[166] *Ibid.*

[167] Élisabeth Roudinesco, *Jacques Lacan*, *op. cit.*, pp. 469–70.

[168] Seminar of 9th December 1975 (SXXIII), *op. cit.*, p. 19.

[169] 'L'Étourdit', *op. cit.*, p. 40

[170] Seminar of 10th December 1974 (SXXII), *R.S.I.*, in *Ornicar?* 2, p. 1

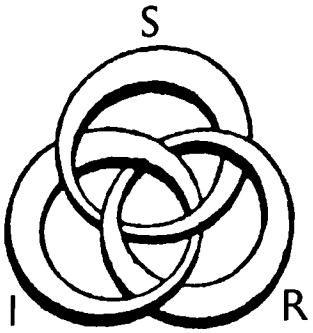

Figure 2: the Borromean knot R.S.I.

a fourth 'register', something beyond the real, the symbolic and the imaginary, in which category would the knot, and the theoretical discourse in which it is 'embedded', be situated?

In an opening session of the seminar *R.S.I.*, Lacan asks himself this question: 'Does [the Borromean knot] belong to the symbolic, the imaginary or the real?'. His response is characteristically defiant of expectations:

> In so far as it is supported by the number three, the Borromean knot is of the register of the imaginary.[171]

'The imaginary', he continues later in the session, 'always tends to reduce to a *mise à plat* ('two-dimensional figure')'[172]; so that the topological diagram, given *consistence* by its three rings, remains caught in a realm of *méconaissance* which the knot 'in itself', its mathematical *nodalité*, eludes.

Elsewhere in the same seminar, Lacan reserves a special place in the knot for the symbolic, in terms which recall the privilege (or 'ethic') formerly associated with the subject as site of desire, *manque à être*:

> ... the symbolic turns around an inviolate hole, without which the knot of three would not be Borromean—for that is the meaning of the Borromean knot: that the hole of the symbolic is inviolate.[173]

If the preservation of a 'symbolic' void at its heart is not, it seems, in conflict with the 'imaginary' *mise à plat* of the knot, both these aspects (the attributes, in former times, of the lacking subject and the deluded ego) seem to be radically challenged by Lacan's remarks on 17th December 1974:

> ... it seems to me that I have accounted for why the Borromean knot can be written, since it is a writing, a writing which supports a real. This already, in itself, indicates the following: that not only can the real be supported by a writing, but that there is no other perceptible idea of the real.[174]

[171] *Ibid*, p. 9.
[172] *Ibid.*, pp. 10–12.
[173] Seminar of 11th March 1975 (SXXII), *R.S.I.*, in *Ornicar?* 4, p. 8.
[174] Seminar of 17th December 1974 (SXXII), *R.S.I.*, in *Ornicar* 2, p. 2.

This notion—to which Lacan most often returns—of the Borromean knot as the real *itself* written non-metaphorically raises problems for our understanding of how the 'inviolate' hole (the Kojevean subject) can nevertheless continue to ex-sist non-ontologically (ie. in the chain of signifiers) within it. How is this return of the subject—its symbolic 'nihilation' somehow now immanent to the structure of the knot [175]—to be reconciled with the 'demotion' of the symbolic to one of three elements? How can pure *évidement* 'cohere' in the same knot as the brute substance of *jouissance*? As Jean Allouch writes,

> ... to present a certain Borromean knotting of R, S and I as the support of the subject as such is to resituate the subject in relation to three types of consistence, and no longer only the symbolic—even if the symbolic was not alone. Henceforth the three consistences would be equivalent in the event of a subjectification... '[176]

One way of understanding or resolving the tension between the Lacanian subject, with its manifestly phonocentric character, and the real—as asemic writing, given priority in the 1970s—has been to articulate the changes introduced by the Borromean knot with the transformation in Lacan's thought of the *symptom.*

The psychoanalytic symptom, Lacan argued in 1955, cannot be separated from the discourse of analysis: it functions as a *signifier*, in contrast to the symptom conceived as 'natural index' in medicine.[177] As such, the psychoanalytic symptom is fully absorbed into the linguistic domain of the unconscious subject; Lacan describes it elsewhere as 'a metaphor in which flesh or function is taken as a signifying element'.[178] The brisk copula linking 'flesh or function' to the domain of signification is, of course, what Lacan comes to re-problematize, not by simply falling back upon a traditional figure of the body (as the site of some pre-discursive, 'aesthetic' particular) but in an attempt to re-think some of the fundamental assumptions of analysis, starting from a consideration of the psychotic experience of *jouis-sens*, the condition of the body in language beyond the supposition of the subject.

Psychoanalysis makes the unconscious speak, and thus unavoidably teaches it the rules of a syntax; at the end of his teaching, Lacan became fascinated with the idea that it might be possible—in forms of 'writing' which would no longer constitute simply new avenues of 'theory'—to bring within the reach of psychoanalytic thought the *real* of that which was sometimes brought forth in symbolic form—in the guise of the unconscious—by the analyst. Jacques-Alain Miller, discussing the last period of Lacan's teaching, presents analysis as a special process of intervention or fabrication:

> ... if the unconscious is structured like a *language*, it is not immediately *discourse* of the Other: it only becomes so through the artifice of the analytic experience. Where there was an always autistic *jouissance*, analysis causes effects of the signified to come about; it operates on the symptom by introducing into it a special effect of signification, known as the 'subject-supposed-to-know'; but in itself, the symptom means nothing to anyone: it is ciphering, it is *jouissance*, the pure *jouissance* of a writing-process.[179]

[175] cf. *L'Étourdit*, *op. cit.*, p. 40 for the assimilation of *trou* and *structure.*

[176] Jean Allouch, 'Tel 36 53 75', in *Esquisses Psychanalytiques* #15, Paris: CFRP 1991, p. 29.

[177] 'The Freudian Thing', *Écrits: A Selection*, *op. cit.*, p. 129.

[178] 'The agency of the letter in the unconscious', *Écrits: A Selection*, *op. cit.*, p. 166.

[179] J-A Miller, 'Préface', *Joyce Avec Lacan*, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

In this sense, the symptom became a new way for Lacan to think about the subject, away from the 'transcendental topology' of his earlier work. If the idea of the symptom as *écriture* is present, as Miller points out, from as early as 1957, we have seen that it is only in the last period of his teaching that Lacan seeks to re-invent the whole framework of subjectivity on the basis of writing.[180]

vii) Introducing the Sinthome: Writing-Being

> ... the instance of the knowledge [*savoir*] which Freud renews ... in the form of the unconscious is something which in no sense necessarily implies the real that I deploy.[181]

These remarks of Lacan's in 1976 remind us that no effort to produce a 'synchronous' reading of his work, one which sought to synthesize or reconcile its disparate moments, could ever succeed, as Žižek notes.[182] In his work with the topology of knots, Lacan declares, he is not necessarily seeking to extend or develop the key component of the Freudian discovery, its construction or renovation of a *knowledge* designated (paradoxically, it seems) as the unconscious. The primary aim of the famous 'return to Freud' announced in 1955 (in 'The Freudian Thing') had been, of course, to 'revitalize' that knowledge by wedding it to the scientific methodology of structural linguistics, combined with a rigorously-defined, 'calculable' subject.[183] The subject—as *parlêtre*, the evanescent but indubitable *dit-mension* of truth—was to provide the basis for the 'knowledge' which Freud's genius had stumbled on almost intuitively—to salvage that knowledge from any last trace of the mystical or hypnotic by definitively founding it as *modern*.

By stating that his explorations of knots in the mid-1970s do not *necessarily* form part of this attempt to revitalize psychoanalytic knowledge, Lacan raises a complex set of questions. If the Borromean knot is first introduced as an *essai de formalisation*, an attempt to ground some of the claims of the earlier theories at a 'mathemic' level (the level of transmissible formulae), it now appears as an *essai* in a more radical sense. Topological 'writing' *might*—this is the force of Lacan's 'not... necessarily'—return us to the question of the unconscious; but this would not be to clarify or reformulate Freudian knowledge, but to found it *in the real*—to discover it beyond metaphor, no longer mediated by symbolic exchange (and thus no longer theorizable 'knowledge'). The unconscious, Lacan tells an astonished audience in 1976, might be not 'structured like a language' but a *real* structure, an unthinkable, indubitable given. The Borromean knot is an assay or an attempt to show whether or not this is the case—but one with no epistemological safety-net ('I used to quote Picasso and say *I do not seek, I find*', remarks Lacan wistfully; 'Nowadays, I have more trouble finding my way').[184]

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[180] *Ibid.*; Miller's reference is to 'La psychanalyse et son enseignement', *Écrits*, *op. cit.*, p. 445.

[181] Seminar of 13th April 1976 (SXXIII), *Le Sinthome*, *Ornicar?* 10, p. 7.

[182] cf. Slavoj Žižek, *The Metastases of Enjoyment: Six Essays on Woman and Causality*, *op. cit.*, p. 173..

[183] *Écrits: A Selection*, *op. cit.*, p. 116.

[184] Seminar of 17th February 1976 (SXXIII), *Le Sinthome*, *Ornicar?* 10, 1977.

Any serious attempt to interpret Lacan must undertake a certain periodization of his teaching, of the kind set out by Philippe Julien, for instance.[185] There are of course different ways to approach this periodization, but it is broadly accepted that the three registers of Lacanian theory—the real, symbolic and imaginary which make up the Borromean knot in the seminar *R.S.I.*—are each given different 'priority' over three distinct phases of Lacan's teaching: the first (beginning in 1936 with the first article on 'The Mirror-Stage') focused on the theorization of the imaginary; the second (beginning, perhaps, in 1953 with the *Discours de Rome*) on that of the symbolic; and the third (encapsulated in the very title of *La Troisième* of 1974) on the exploration of the real as a theoretical *limit*, the point where psychoanalysis encounters the untheorizable.

Lacan himself was not prone to explicit reflections on the evolution of his work (and certainly not to publishing any he did make). We recall how in *Lituraterre* the concept of writing, whose introduction radically alters the crucial question of the 'letter' in psychoanalysis, is simply placed alongside *la parole* as a second 'register' of the subject (as if things had always been thus, and there had been no shift in emphasis).[186] This tendancy of Lacan's teaching to re-write its own history as it went along, to promote a certain idea of 'synchronicity', has different implications at the various points of his work. In moving from the very early work on the formation of the ego to the structuralist period centred on the speaking subject, one can assume a certain 'development' or continuity of ideas; there is even a 'syntactical' continuity proposed by Lacanian theory between imaginary forms and the symbolic 'punctuation' introduced in analysis (thus 'truth' is always reached via 'fiction'). The real *coupure* or 'epistemic break' comes between the structuralist period and the last phase, with its increasing preoccupation with the topology of the Borromean knot.

The theoretical problem of seeking to place side-by-side the letter as presented in *Lituraterre*—the 'littoral' trace or scar of *jouissance* across the field of meaning—and the letter invoked in *la Lettre volée*, the signifier constituting the subject in its unerring destination, does not lie simply in Lacan's desire to efface the historical truth of his thought, offering its disparate moments as if they formed part of the same insight or discovery. What is 'disavowed' in this juxtaposition of the two 'letters', the act of placing them alongside one another as the complementary 'registers' of the subject, is the theoretical *antagonism* between these moments of Lacan's teaching.

The subject, we recall reading in *Encore*, 'has little to do with *jouissance*'. In the context of Lacan's earlier formulations, such a statement must appear something of a rhetorical under-statement: as it was presented in 1960, the subject only acceded to existence by accepting the symbolic castration which entailed an absolute refusal of *jouissance*.[187] A discourse—the site where the Lacanian subject's desiring lack-of-being takes effect—always comprises a loss or sacrifice of the body's autonomous particularity, its submission to the mortifying 'cut' of the Other. How,

[185] P. Julien, 'Lacan, symptôme de Freud', *Esquisses psychanalytiques* #15, *op. cit.*, pp. 127–39.
[186] *Lituraterre*, *op. cit.*, p. 9 (cf. p. 45 above)
[187] 'Subversion of the subject', *Écrits: A Selection*, *op. cit.*, p. 324.

then, can speech, the essential dimension of the subject's desire, be 'complemented' by the *écrit* which threatens to *ruin* that dimension, to traverse it with an unspeakable *jouissance autistique*?

This returns us to Allouch's point about the 're-situation' of the subject. If the Borromean knot aims to show the intrication of real, symbolic and imaginary as a new way of thinking the subject, this amounts to a radical departure from Lacan's earlier concept of the subject as *aphanisis*, as a 'punctual', non-saturated instance in the register of speech. We could show this by taking up a remark of Lacan's in *La Troisième* where, in an uncharacteristic move, he refers his current work back to a former period of his teaching.

Lacan reminds the audience (gathered in Rome in 1974 to hear a second, parodic 'Rome Discourse' whose self-mocking title now comprises, not the *fonction et champ*, but the *fiction et chant* of language)[188] that although to write RSI as a Borromean knot might appear to be a new turn in his thought, it was not in fact the first time he had inter-linked the three terms.[189] A lecture entitled 'Le symbolique, l'imaginaire et le réel' had in fact, twenty years before, served as a preliminary outline of the conceptual field developed in the original *Discours de Rome*.[190]

Beyond the ostensible continuity of their terms (although the changed *order* of those terms does seem to imply a shift in 'priority', as Lacan occasionally hints), a comparison of these two texts reveals a series of stark contrasts. In 1953, symbolic, imaginary and real, the three 'essential registers of human reality,' are conceived by Lacan as 'sharply distinct' from one another.[191] The relation between the Imaginary and the symbolic—by implication, the essential relation in analysis—is one of *syntax*: the symbolic order intervenes in the disorderly cluster of imaginary formations, introducing 'mediation' (and thus allowing 'properly human relations' to be 'realized').[192] In other words, the theoretical relation operates *in favour of* the symbolic. As for the real, at this point it is barely distinguished from 'reality' (of the 'symbolically mediated' type present, say, in Freud). By ascribing theoretical (as well as 'existential') pre-eminence to the symbolic, Lacan's early paper constructs the relation between the three registers in accordance with the 'mathematics of the signifier' discussed in 'Science and Truth'.[193] The relation between the orders is one of *separation* and *difference*, with the real and the imaginary governed by the organisational force of the symbolic.

This privileging of the symbolic—and the concomitant 'ethical' privilege accorded to the subject as site of lawful or truthful mediation—is, to say the least, rendered problematic by the 'architecture' Lacan is working with by 1974. If the definition of the Borromean knot is that no one of its elements is detachable from—or has any priority over—the others, then its structuring principle cannot 'belong' to any single register. The intrication of the knot amounts to the abandonment of the

188 *La Troisième*, *op. cit.*, pp. 177–203; «L'Étourdit», *op. cit.*, p. 18.

189 *La Troisième*, *op. cit.*, p. 182.

190 «Le symbolique, l'imaginaire et le réel», lecture given at the Société française de psychanalyse on 8th July 1953, in *Bulletin de l'Association freudienne*, #1, 1982, pp. 4–13.

191 *Ibid.*, p. 5.

192 *Ibid.*, pp. 13–14.

193 'Science and Truth', *op. cit.*, p. 10; *Écrits*, *op. cit.*, p. 861.

neatly organized grid of boundaries and divisions installed by symbolic *evidement* ('voidance', clearing space'), its replacement by strange, paradoxical forms of continuity and coalescence.

How, then, can the Borromean knot correspond to a return to the question of subjectivation? If, during the seminar *R.S.I.*, Lacan seeks various ways to address this question—focusing, in turn, on the status of imaginary consistence, real ex-sistence and the 'hole' of the symbolic—it is given a different emphasis, the following year, in *Le Sinthome*. There, in an extraordinary diversion of topological 'writing' into the reading of (literal) writing, Lacan explicitly seeks to re-invent the psychoanalytic symptom as a different way to approach subjectivity.

Miller's remarks quoted above remind us that the interpretation of a symptom always involves a certain 'subjectivation' (in analysis, the effect of the special subject *supposé savoir* produced in transference): the introduction or supposition of the speaking subject as the opening of a signifying space within the mute, meaningless 'ciphering' of a 'writing-process'. To that extent, Lacan's 1957 definition of the symptom as a metaphor implies a prior interpretive process: for the symptom to be 'flesh or function taken as a signifying element', a whole operation of symbolic 'alienation' must already have taken effect.[194] By 1963, Lacan is prepared to acknowledge that a symptom—*any* symptom, not only the phenomena of psychosis—might fail to address the Other in this way, remaining a non-interpretable 'anamorphic' blur (and thus not the attribute of a subject, as it had been defined).[195]

The term 'symptom' thus changes its status. Having been first transferred from its medical origin to the realm of signification, the site of the subject 'supposed', put in place during analysis, the symptom now comes to designate something prior to that subjectivation: the illegible ciphering of *jouissance*. This writing-process, as Lacan figures it, is irreducible to the domain of subjective truth, turned away from the Other; but at the same time it is undeniably a trace or *signature* of a particular existence (which Lacan would doubtless have written ex-sistence to distinguish it from the immaterial symbolic existence of the speaking subject).

This is the sense for which Lacan invents a new term—*sinthome*—in 1975. 'An old way of writing what has more recently been written *symptôme*', the *sinthome* bears a relation to 'symptom' comparable to the relation between the two 'letters'—signifier and *litura*—in Lacan's work (which *Lituraterre*, as we have seen, sought to present as the two complementary 'registers' of the subject). If the analytic symptom can ultimately never be dissociated from the speech where the unconscious manifests itself, the *sinthome* forms part of a new vision of psychosis as the production of an asemic 'writing', *hors discours*.[196]

Sinthome, then, figures something that takes place outside discourse, something incommensurable with the auto-enunciation of the Cartesian subject that Lacan situates at the foundation of psychoanalysis. The absence or foreclosure of the symbolic existence of the *parlêtre*—in 1976 Lacan formulates a notion of 'radical foreclosure' which results in a psychotic 'autism', a total dereliction of signifying

[194]'The agency of the letter in the unconscious', *Écrits: A Selection*, *op. cit.*, p. 166.

[195]Seminar of 23rd January 1963 (SX), *Angoisse*, unpublished; (quoted in Dylan Evans, *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*, *op. cit.*, p. 189).

[196]Seminar of 18th November 1975 (SXXIII), *Le Sinthome*, *Ornicar?* 6, 1976, p. 3.

order—can (sometimes) give rise to the formation of a *sinthome*.[197] The 'case' explored at length by Lacan in 1975–6 is, of course, that of James Joyce.

Reading Joyce provides Lacan with an unique way to develop what he understands by 'writing', which became the most important stake in the last period of his teaching. Joyce is not a 'subject' for psychoanalysis: not simply because he did not lie on an analyst's couch (having specifically refused the financial aid to do so, much to Lacan's delight), but due to his being, Lacan claims, *désabonné à l'inconscient*, 'disinvested from the unconscious'.[198] We will seek to clarify this relation or non-relation between the Joycean *sinthome* and the knowledge 'renewed' by Freud as the unconscious, and explore how Lacan's work in the mid-1970s situates itself on a strange 'littoral' edge between psychoanalysis and somewhere beyond it, a place where its subject collapses, has to be re-invented through a new conception of writing.

Lacan's work on Joyce is unlike most (perhaps *all*) 'applications' of psychoanalytic theory to aesthetic questions. When Freud approaches literature, argues Sarah Kofman, it is to turn it into the 'infancy of psychoanalysis', thus partaking in 'the gesture of mastery which is symptomatic of philososphy, and a gesture Aristotle inaugurated by making myth the infancy of philosophy'.[199] If such an attempt to master the domain of literature is equally Aristotelean in its desire to locate *nous* as the 'essence' of art—and we could see Lacan's deployment of 'The Purloined Letter' as an extension of the same gesture, with the doublet signifier/subject merely standing in for the Aristotelean 'soul'—by the time Lacan comes to elaborate the *sinthome* in the Joycean text it is precisely in order to put in question the 'location' of the *nous* or psyche. What Joyce shows us the 'essence' of, for Lacan, is the symptom; this is what allows him to develop a version of subjectivity founded on writing.[200] We hope to show that this constitutes, if not the 'graphematics *à venir*' Derrida dreams of, an encounter between psychoanalysis and writing whose radical significance has yet to be fully understood.[201]

[197] cf. Seminar of 11th May 1976 (SXXIII), *Le Sinthome*, unpublished.

[198] The phrase is from Lacan's opening address to the 5th International James Joyce Symposium on 16th June 1975; published as 'Joyce le symptôme I' in *Joyce Avec Lacan*, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

[199] Sarah Kofman, *Freud and Fiction*, tr. Sarah Wykes, Polity: Cambridge, 1991, p. 8.

[200] 'Joyce le symptôme I', *op. cit.*, p. 25.

[201] 'Freud and the Scene of Writing', *Writing and Difference*, *op. cit.*, p. 220.

III. Raiding Joycesens

How am I to sign myself?
I won't sign anything at all, because I don't know what to sign myself.
—James Joyce to Nora Barnacle, 1904[1]

So why, pray, sign anything as long as every word, letter, penstroke, paperspace
is a perfect signature of its own? (FW *115)*

i) Ideareal Histories

IN HIS OPENING ADDRESS to the 5th International Joyce Symposium in Paris on 16th June 1975, Lacan returns to a familiar theme of his: that of human *destin.* The fabric of occurrences we weave as our destiny through speaking is nevertheless, Lacan states, essentially an effect of the fact that 'we are spoken' by others—particularly, he adds, by our families. He introduces his 'homage' to Joyce with an autobiographical anecdote re-woven as part of his own destiny: 'emerging from the sordid milieu' of a Catholic education,

> ...it happened that at the age of seventeen, due to the fact that I used to hang around at Adrienne Monnier's, I met Joyce. In the same way, I was present, at the age of twenty, at the first reading of the French translation which had come out of *Ulysses.*[2]

Adrienne Monnier's was La Maison des Amis des Livres, at 7, rue de l'Odéon, a bookshop and lending library frequented by writers as celebrated as Gide, Valéry and Claudel. Together with her friend Sylvia Beach, the owner of the nearby English bookshop Shakespeare & Co, Monnier played an important role in the destiny of Joyce's work, helping to organize the publication and translation of *Ulysses*, as well as enthusiastically promoting its author's following amongst the Parisian intelligentsia. In what Joyce would later describe as the 'opening of [his] Paris career', on the 7th December 1921, Monnier hosted an evening to launch *Ulysses*, two months before the book's publication on its author's fortieth birthday.[3] Valéry Larbaud, who was to play a central part in the efforts to translate Joyce's book into French, gave an introductory lecture, which was followed by some readings (an American actor, the aptly-named Jimmy Light, was coached by Joyce through readings from the 'Sirens' episode). Two hundred and fifty people crammed into Monnier's bookshop (among them, presumably, the twenty-year-old Jacques Lacan); as Ellmann writes, however, 'Joyce himself was hidden behind a screen, but was obliged, much against his will, to come forward afterwards in response to enthusiastic applause'.[4]

We will return shortly to the place of the *screen* in this account, and to the audience's demand to *see* Joyce, to have some evidence of this legendary character's

[1] *The Selected Letters of James Joyce*, ed Richard Ellmann, London: Faber, 1957, p. 25.
[2] 'Joyce le symptôme I', *op. cit.*, pp. 22–3.
[3] Jean-Michel Rabaté, 'Joyce the Parisian', in *The Cambridge Companion to James Joyce*, ed Derek Attridge, Cambridge, C.U.P., 1990, p. 90.
[4] Richard Ellmann, *James Joyce*, Oxford: O.U.P., 1959, p. 523.

real presence amongst them. First, we should pause to consider the significance of Lacan's anecdotal 'encounter' with Joyce, how the conventionally 'trivial' nature of the anecdote might be seen to belie its 'quadrivial' position in relation to the Lacanian category of the real.[5]

J'ai rencontré Joyce, declares Lacan to the Symposium. What historical status can we ascribe to this encounter? Regarding the date in 1921 at Adrienne Monnier's bookshop, we certainly have material evidence: Ellmann's biography, for instance, reproduces the card sent out by Monnier announcing the evening (and warning the public that they may be shocked by the *hardiesse d'expréssion* of some of the readings from Joyce).[6] Lacan, by his own testimony, was amongst the crowd which would not depart without seeing Joyce and thus 'encountering' him.

But what of the earlier encounter with Joyce, when Lacan was seventeen? According to Ellmann, during the year in question (April 1918 to the following April) Joyce was in Zurich, having moved there following the evacuation of Trieste by officials of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in the midst of the First World War; it was not until June 1920 that, persuaded by Ezra Pound, Joyce moved to Paris to begin the most famous period of his 'exile', finishing *Ulysses* there and writing most of *Finnegans Wake* as a celebrated 'paleoparisien' (*FW* 151).[7] It may, of course, seem highly plausible that Lacan's memory, reaching back almost sixty years, should have blurred the historical edges slightly, perhaps muddling the dates of two events in his youth. For his part, though, Joyce had a deeply superstitious conviction about the significance of dates: they were not the accidental properties of a subjective destiny, to be moved around between 'screen memories' or manipulated by wishful fantasy; but were, rather, inscribed in the *text* of history, marking our ineluctable involvement in the 'vicous cycles' (*FW* 134) of human fate. For Lacan to begin his remarks in 1975 with talk of the *trame*, weave or texture, of destiny, might suggest a similar sense of historical textuality: it was no mere accident, he seems to imply, that the encounter took place at that point in his history.

Here it is not a question of seeking to expose the fallibility of Lacan's memory, or how his capacity for self-invention could sometimes treat historical facts a little freely; but rather of tracing the 'encounter' as the mark of a certain *impossibility* in history. Responding to a question asked by a historian in his seminar at Yale in 1975, Lacan declares,

> Without a written document, you know that you're in a dream. What the historian demands is a text: a text or a bit of paper; at any rate, he must have somewhere, in an archive, something which certifies things, and whose lack makes history impossible ... That which cannot be certified in writing cannot be considered history.[8]

[5]Frank Budgen reports that Joyce's 'studied riposte' to the accusation that some aspects of his work were 'trivial' was that some were also 'quadrivial' (ie., located at a cross-roads); Frank Budgen, 'James Joyce', in *James Joyce: Two Decades of Criticism*, ed Seon Givens, New York, 1948, p. 24.

[6]Ellmann, *James Joyce*, *op. cit.*, Plate XXXIV.

[7]cf. Rabaté, 'Joyce the Parisian', *op. cit.*, p. 83.

[8]Yale University, Kanzer Seminar, 24th November 1975, *Scilicet* 6/7, *op. cit.*, p. 20; Lacan's questioner is Lucille Ritvo.

The questioner's response is to point to the historiography of oral traditions, new technologies of recording and so on; as we have seen, though, by 1975 what Lacan understands by 'writing' is not so much the simple act of tracing words onto paper as a certain primal moment of the subject's inscription, the *trait* which embodies the material support of its being.

In this perspective, then, Lacan's first encounter with Joyce takes place 'in a dream': outside the text of history. We have to take Lacan's word for it (as does Rabaté, who doesn't worry about the dates and locations);[9] for all we know, it *might* be true—it is, of course, *possible* that in 1918 Joyce did appear in Paris, and that Ellmann's biographical research is faulty or incomplete. The space of subjective experience (like the dream *en soi*, experienced when the dreamer is asleep) is not fully commensurable with that of historical evidence; it is a zone of supposition, of anecdote, of the uncertain. We could perhaps see this stated in another way in Lacan's 'barring' of the Other, from 1957 onwards: as Ⱥ, the Other is not total, it does not seal the subject into a seamless representational consistency, a scene of visibility with no blind spots. We will see how the problem of this 'dream', this indeterminable anamorphic stain which disfigures, renders illegible, the account of 'what really happened', is central to the 'encounter' between Joyce and psychoanalysis.

The primary task of biography, of course, is to tackle this problem of the 'dream', the existential irreducibility of an individual life to concrete data. The biographical narrative strives to absorb the lacunae in the historical evidence or clarify its areas of uncertainty, supplying the suppositions necessary to secure the semantic consistency, the plausibility, of its subject. Thus, for Lacan's biographer, Élisabeth Roudinesco, the young student's encounter with the legendary writer formed part of Lacan's own *roman familial* (his Freudian 'family romance'). At the time—whenever it was: let's say, around 1921—that Lacan first saw Joyce, he was, writes Roudinesco, 'in the midst of a serious crisis of depression [and] violently rejected the family universe and the Christian values in which he had been brought up'.[10] Lacan was approximately half Joyce's age, a fact which, combined with his youthful crisis concerning Catholicism and the relation to his father, must have given his 'identification' with Joyce's fictional universe an inevitable shape: the character of Stephen Dedalus. When in 1975 Lacan's return to Joyce's work 'plunges him once again into fantasmatic contemplation of his own history', as Roudinesco puts it,[11] it is no surprise that, as we shall see, the book which most interests him is *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man.*

As for Joyce himself, he could not have recognized this young man who would retrospectively claim to have encountered him. Indeed, the theatrical screen behind which he shelters might serve as an emblem for one of the strategies of Joyce's relation to his audience: to deny them a full view or 'portrait' of the legendary artist, to use concealment as a veil to further the myth of a figure beyond the everyday world, somehow transcending the mundane condition of history, impossible to really see.

[9] Rabaté, 'Joyce the Parisian', *op. cit.*, p. 97.
[10] Roudinesco, *Jacques Lacan*, *op. cit.*, p. 31.
[11] *Ibid*, p. 482.

The historical problem of Joyce's 'encounter' with psychoanalysis is bound up with the deployment of this self-fictionalizing screen, with the way it fostered effects of rumour, supposition and anecdote which remain beyond the domain of material evidence. Thus, the oft-raised question of Joyce's knowledge of Freudian doctrine and the extent to which it influenced his work remains a speculative one, usually referring to an anecdote (where Joyce is supposed to have 'disavowed' or dismissed, though always obliquely or cryptically, psychoanalysis).[12]

A very different set of questions is raised as soon as an encounter becomes part of a historical document, is 'certified in writing', as Lacan puts it in his Yale seminar. We can trace this transition—from the domain of the possible, let's say, to that of public evidence—in the curious relation between Joyce and a figure he bumped into 'in the real' of historical contingency: Carl Gustav Jung.

During his time in Trieste before the war, Joyce purchased a pamphlet by Jung entitled *Die Bedeutung des Vaters für das Shicksal des Einzelnen* ('The Significance of the Father in the Destiny of the Individual', 1909).[13] Written at the time when Jung was still an orthodox Freudian, the article used case-histories to build an argument about the predominance of the father in the aetiology of neurosis; we will see below how Jung's article can be linked to the question of paternity in Joyce, and Lacan's elaboration of it.

In Zurich, Joyce came into contact with Jung in a very different sense. His principle patroness at the time, Edith Rockerfeller McCormick, was a convinced Jungian; she attempted in 1919 to persuade Joyce—so he told his friend Claud Sykes—that he should enter analysis with Jung himself, at her expense. If Joyce's blunt refusal (the idea, he declared, was 'unthinkable') piqued Mrs McCormick into withdrawing her financial support, or if Jung advised her to do so, is not known (Ellmann writes of the rich American's 'caprices', her sudden changes of heart); but in October 1919 the bank in Zurich informed Joyce that his income had been cut off. Having first put the blame for this change of fortunes on his friend Ottocaro Weiss, who knew Jung, Joyce later came to suspect that Jung himself had had a hand in it. It was, for Joyce, another instance of what he was to describe, in a footnote to Herbert Gorman's biography in 1939, as the 'brusque and unexplained' transformation of 'admiration' into 'hostility' which had plagued his life as an artist.[14]

In psychoanalytic terms, the triangular relation of Joyce, McCormick and Jung clearly turns around the question of *transference*, which is always essentially a matter of speculation and supposition. 'It cannot be said that Joyce was *mordu par l'analyse* ('bitten' by, thought much of, analysis)', is Lacan's ironic remark to the 1975 Symposium;[15] the absolute lack of any transferential opening will be one of the preconditions Lacan will posit for the writing of the *sinthome*. It is easy to imagine how in the tense transferential scenario being played out between Jung and his analysand, with the special status which the giving and receiving of gifts could have assumed there, Joyce's indifference might have seemed worthy of punishment.

[12] Cf Ellmann, *James Joyce*, *op. cit.*, pp. 436, 472, 510.
[13] *Ibid*, p. 340.
[14] *Ibid*, pp. 467–9.
[15] 'Joyce le symptôme I', *op. cit.*, pp. 23–4.

Before the increased fame brought him by the publication of *Ulysses* in 1922, then, Joyce's contact with Jung had been of an entirely theoretical or speculative nature. Initially, he had read Jung's account of the figure of the father as understood in psychoanalysis; subsequently, he had become unhappily entangled 'in the real' of the transferential relation between Jung and McCormick, and felt he had been betrayed. It was not until September 1930, by the time he had immersed himself in the long struggle of 'Work in Progress', that Joyce received any indication that Jung had ever read his work or had any 'psychological' wisdom to impart about it.

Earlier in 1930, Jung had been approached by Daniel Brody, a publisher with the Zurich Rhein-Verlag, who was planning the launch of a literary review: he wondered if Jung would write an article about *Ulysses* for its first edition. Jung agreed; but the article he delivered a month later contained such harsh criticism of Joyce's work that Brody felt obliged to send a copy to Joyce. The response was characteristically enigmatic: Joyce sent Brody a telegram which simply quoted Frederick the Great's famous command, on seeing a political placard attacking him: *Niedrigerhängen* ('hang it lower').[16] Ellmann understands Joyce's telegram to have meant 'Ridicule it by making it public'; Brody could not immediately do so, however, for he had to abandon his planned review due to increasing political tensions in the region. Jung's article was not published until 1932, when it was used—in a substantially revised form—as the preface to a German translation of Stuart Gilbert's book on *Ulysses*, which Brody's press published as *Das Rätsel Ulysses*('The Riddle of *Ulysses*').[17]

Jung's article, '*Ulysses*: A Monologue', is an extraordinary moment in the relation between psychological theory and literature, and a crucial one in any consideration of a psychoanalytic approach to Joyce. By 1930, of course, Jung was no longer the enthusiastic young Freudian whom Joyce had read in 1909 endorsing the psychoanalytic account of sexuality and the human *Shicksal* ('destiny') it outlined; he was even able to include Freud in his condemnation of Joyce, styling them both the 'prophets of negation' thrown up by a benighted modernity.[18] Jung writes about *Ulysses* not as a psychoanalyst, but 'as a supposed authority on psychological matters', as he tells Joyce in a letter in 1932; it is in effect as a *psychiatrist* that Jung feels called upon to pass judgement on the work.[19] We will explore that judgement and how it might relate to Lacan's reading of Joyce below.

It was also as a psychiatrist that Jung entered Joyce's world again, shortly after the episode of his article on *Ulysses*. During the 1930s the mental troubles of Joyce's daughter Lucia rapidly worsened, her behaviour becoming increasingly unpredictable and even dangerous (in 1934, she set fire to her room in a Belgian asylum). Maria Jolas, a member of the close circle around Joyce, recommended that Lucia be transferred to the clinic where Jung worked; in September 1934, Joyce accepted this suggestion, writing to a friend, 'I wouldn't go to him, but maybe he can help her'. Recalling his earlier 'transferential' imbroglio with Jung, he felt

[16] cf. Appendix to '*Ulysses*: A Monologue' (1932), in *The Collected Works of C.G.Jung*, XV, London: Routledge, 1966, p. 132.

[17] Ellmann, *James Joyce*, *op. cit.*, p. 628.

[18] '*Ulysses*: A Monologue', *op. cit.*, p. 121.

[19] *Ibid*, p. 133

it necessary to state, with strange emphasis, that 'my daughter is not myself'.[20] We will return to this declaration when we have further explored the question of paternity in Joyce.

A second triangle involving Jung, his patient and Joyce developed during the next four months (before Lucia was moved yet again by her father), but this time with very different 'transferential' stakes. If, in 1919, Joyce had been caught up in some obscure 'trade-off' between McCormick and her analyst, Jung's major challenge in approaching Lucia was to be able to intervene at all in her relation to her father, to open a minimal space in which her desire could be caught in an *Uberträgung*, be 'translated' away from its fixated, obsessive investment. Jung's initial reports seemed to offer hope, and Joyce was encouraged enough to meet with him to discuss Lucia's case. Ellmann's account shows how the discussion soon turned to aesthetic speculation:

> When the psychologist pointed out schizoid elements in poems Lucia had written, Joyce, remembering Jung's comments on *Ulysses*, insisted they were anticipations of a new literature, and said his daughter was an innovator not yet understood. Jung granted that some of her portmanteau words and neologisms were remarkable, but said they were random; she and her father, he commented later, were like two people going to the bottom of a river, one falling and the other diving.[21]

Lucia embodied, in Joyce's view, a creativity yet to be recognized by history, too subtle to be deciphered by her contemporaries. Jung worked this into an elaboration of his own theories: there was, he decided, 'a kind of mystical identity or participation' between Joyce and his daughter. In a letter to Patricia Hutchins, Jung revealed how this fitted his model of the psyche:

> If you know anything of my Anima theory, Joyce and his daughter are a classical example of it. She was definitely his 'femme inspiratrice', which explains his obstinate reluctance to have her certified. His own Anima, ie., unconscious psyche, was so solidly identified with her that to have her certified would have been as much as an admission that he himself had a latent psychosis.[22]

The antinomy between existential potential and that which is 'certified' by the text of history—we might hear an uncanny pun linking the 'certification' or institutionalization of the psychotic to the written document which certifies history for Lacan—reappears in Jung's theoretical speculations. What is 'latent', not realized—'not yet understood', in Joyce's phrase—is the space of the *possible*, the imagination's infinite creative capacity, which *Finnegans Wake* will dub the 'immarginable' (the imaginable, that which cannot be confined within margins, that which is impossible to theorize or give marginal annotations) (*FW* 4).The 'mystical identity' of Joyce and his daughter would thus appear to be an almost 'dialectical' relation: if her father's writing is a realization of the 'new literature' that Lucia might have been able to produce, she is an embodiment of the psychosis which remains 'latent' in her father. Joyce's ' 'psychological' style', continues Jung,

[20] Ellmann, *James Joyce*, *op. cit.*, p. 676.

[21] *Ibid*, p. 679.

[22] Patricia Hutchins, *James Joyce's World*, pp. 184–5; quoted in Ellmann, *James Joyce*, *op. cit.*, p. 679.

> is definitely schizophrenic, with this difference, however, that the ordinary patient cannot help himself talking and thinking in such a way, while Joyce willed it and moreover developed it with all his creative forces, which incidentally explains why he himself did not go over the border. But his daughter did, because she was no genius like her father, but merely a victim of her disease. In any other time of the past Joyce's work would never have reached the printer, but in our blessed XXth century it is a message, though not yet understood.[23]

As we will see, Jung's fleeting 'diagnostic' aside (beyond its facile invocation of the traditional notion of 'genius') anticipates Lacan's elaboration of the *sinthome* as a new way to approach psychosis.

Only a permissive modernity, Jung concludes, has allowed Joyce's 'schizophrenic' style to become an actual message, visible in reality if not yet assimilable to the collective psyche. In the event, Lucia's fragile 'transferential' opening could not be sustained, and Jung handed her back to her father, declaring, Joyce wrote, that 'nobody could make any head of her but myself as she was a very exceptional case, and certainly not one for psychoanalytic treatment'.[24] Lucia remained non-interpretable, impossible to draw forth from the nebulous domain of the *anima inspiratrix* into the daylight world of the talking cure. 'To think that such a big fat materialistic Swiss man should try to get hold of my soul!', exclaimed Lucia, her expression clearly evoking the opposition we have outlined between pure 'immargibale' potential and grubby actuality.[25]

When Jung declares that Joyce's writing is a message yet to be understood, he seems to echo the language of Joyce's defence of his daughter, his claim that she was awaiting the interpretation of the future. This was no coincidence: we will argue that Lucia was in a real sense *bound up with* Joyce's writing, and that an equivalent *illegibility* is at the root of Jung's failure to 'get hold of' her soul and what he described as his errant wanderings 'in the labyrinth of *Ulysses*'.[26]

ii) Finding the Self: Jung as Elijah

Just as Jung's attempts to analyze Lucia soon became implicated in aesthetic questions, so his discussion of *Ulysses*, two years before, had slipped from literary criticism into the domain of clinical psychology. No doubt Brody's request that Jung should write on Joyce derived partly from the fact that he had had some personal contact with the legendary writer (in Zurich during the war, chiefly via Edith McCormick); but it was also due to Jung's broad ambition to produce a psychological theory which would be 'an object of public interest', which could be transferred from the narrowly clinical to the wider social and cultural spheres.[27]

[23] Hutchins, *James Joyce's World*, *ibid*; quoted in Ellmann, *James Joyce*, *op. cit.*, pp. 679–80.

[24] *Ibid*, p. 681.

[25] *Ibid*, p. 679.

[26] '*Ulysses*: A Monologue', *op. cit.*, p. 134; Ellmann implictly recognizes the equivalence here: 'A man who had so misconstrued *Ulysses* could scarcely be expected by Joyce to construe Lucia correctly'; *op. cit.*, p. 680.

[27] See the Introduction to Jung's lecture 'Psychology and Literature', which appeared, translated by Eugene Jolas, in *transition* in 1930; *The Collected Works of C.G.Jung*, XV, London: Routledge, 1966, pp. 84–5.

'*Ulysses*: A Monologue' is a strange document, whose ambivalence seems to be the result of two quite distinct moments of writing—which also correspond, perhaps, to two different attempts to read Joyce's work. The essay in its original form, which Brody sent to Joyce in 1930 (and which he answered with the 'regal' telegram) is lost; Jung rewrote it extensively for the preface to Gilbert's book (presumably Brody had informed him of Joyce's cryptic response). In 1932, Jung must have felt that the piece now showed sufficient respect for Joyce's literary achievement to allow him to strike a note of strained cordiality in a letter to the author. 'Ulysses', he tells Joyce,

> ...proved to be an exceedingly hard nut and it has forced my mind not only to most unusual efforts, but also to rather extravagant peregrinations (speaking from the standpoint of a scientist). Your book as a whole has given me no end of trouble and I was brooding over it for about three years until I succeeded to put myself into it. But I must tell you that I'm profoundly grateful...[28]

'To put myself into it': Jung's slightly awkward English gives a precise formula for the relation to the 'labyrinth' of *Ulysses* he establishes in his efforts to get through the book. The title he chooses—*ein Monolog*—seems especially apt: the 'extravagant peregrinations' of Jung's reading are, as it were, 'acted out' in the course of his essay, as though it were a dramatic monologue (and one which at times recalls the 'ranting' tone of a monologue by Beckett).

The first 'act' of the monologue might be largely what remains of Jung's original article, before the revisions: the essay begins as a savage polemic, its opening page denouncing *Ulysses* as a 'pitiless stream' of writing, with 'not a single blessed island where the long-suffering reader may come to rest'.[29] Jung's footnotes approvingly quote the extraordinary remarks of Ernst Curtius on Joyce's work, such as that it 'reproduces the stream of consciousness without filtering it either ethically or logically' (this concerning a book whose author was obliged to furnish 'schemas' to help readers to tackle its 'encyclopedia' of cultural references).[30]

If Jung relies on the critical authority of Curtius for this kind of literary judgement, however, the main focus of his essay is on his own state of mind as a reader. '*Ulysses* turns its back on me', he declares; and we are inevitably reminded that Jung had been treated to a similar gesture on the part of its author (in the episode of Joyce's rejection of McCormick's offer) which he may have found equally frustrating. The problem for Jung is that, like its author, the book (which is often playfully anthropomorphized in the article) just isn't *interested* in his interpretation:

> Yes, I admit I feel I have been made a fool of. The book would not meet me half way, nothing in it made the least attempt to be agreeable, and that always gives the reader an irritating sense of inferiority.[31]

'Surely', continues Jung, 'a book has a content, represents something; but I suspect that Joyce did not wish to 'represent' anything'. This idea of an aesthetic beyond representation—which might have struck more of an chord with responses

[28] Appendix to '*Ulysses*: A Monologue', *op. cit.*, p. 134.
[29] '*Ulysses*: A Monologue', *op. cit.*, p. 110.
[30] *Ibid*, p. 112; Curtius, *James Joyce und sein Ulysses*, p. 30.
[31] *Ibid*, p. 113.

to the 'Work in Progress' then being published by Eugene Jolas in *transition*, than amongst the readers of *Ulysses* who were still striving to assimilate the book's overwhelming semantic *summa*—is linked by Jung to a broader conception of modernism: Joyce's art is 'cubistic' in the deepest sense because it resolves the picture of reality into an immensely complex painting whose dominant note is the melancholy of abstract objectivity'.[32] So that while the 'portrait of the artist' in Joyce's early work maintained a certain figurative coherence which offered the reader a legible textual surface—invited him to meet it 'half way', in Jung's phrase—the later writing had embraced a cubist aesthetic which 'turned its back' on the 'picture of reality' where the reader felt at home, by refusing to endorse, re-present, its familiar self-evidence.

By situating his frustration as a reader of Joyce in the aesthetic context of modernism, with its turn away from an idea of the artwork as 'agreeable' to an audience (which will later be theorized by Roland Barthes as the turn from a 'readerly' to a 'writerly' aesthetic)[33], Jung's argument begins to detach itself from the sort of unthinking denunciation found in Curtius (for whom *Ulysses* is nothing less than 'a work of the Antichrist').[34] It nevertheless remains trapped by an insistent psychologization of the aesthetic: modernism corresponds for Jung to a special kind of affront to, or attack upon, the domain of the 'soul'; the 'abstract objectivity' of cubism is 'melancholy' only because it leaves the subject, with his craving for 'content', behind. Thus, in Joyce's writing, 'everything is desouled, every particle of warm blood has been chilled'.[35] The reader is not *engaged* by this writing: its icy stream rolls out before his eyes, not inviting him into its eddying textual currents or interesting him in the bits of flotsam, like the insignificant 'crumpled throwaway', which float past.

So the reader *gives up*. This is the end of the first 'act' of Jung's 'Monologue': the point where, overwhelmed by boredom, he falls asleep. Special mention is made of 'the magic words that sent me to sleep', with page reference, in a footnote. They occur in the 'Aeolus' episode, where Joyce divides the text up with newspaper-style headlines (suiting the chapter's setting in the offices of the *Freeman's Journal*); the words in question come under the headline 'A POLISHED PERIOD' and exemplify the 'divine afflatus' or windy rhetoric being parodied at this point in the book (*U* 115). For Jung to admit that he was left 'dizzy with sleep' by the awful long-winded bombast of the sentence perhaps confirms Joyce's remark that 'he seems to have read *Ulysses* from first to last without one smile': a book which laughs at its reader, makes a fool of him by turning its back on him, can hardly afford Jung any amusement.[36] But it is nevertheless surprising that Jung marks a line in 'Aeolus', barely a fifth of the way into the book, as the point where his first attempt to read *Ulysses* ran aground: the writing has *not yet* 'turned its back' on the reader by presenting him with any real interpretive challenge (nothing, at least, like the

[32] *Ibid*, p. 117.
[33] cf. Roland Barthes, *S/Z*, trans R.Miller, London: Cape, 1975, pp. 4–5.
[34] *Ulysses*: A Monologue', *op. cit.*, p. 110.
[35] *Ibid*, p. 114.
[36] Ellmann, *James Joyce*, *op. cit.*, p. 628.

exegetical problems he will encounter in the later episodes, notably in 'Circe'). It is not true, on this evidence, that Jung has read the book 'from first to last' at all.

It is worth looking a little closer at the moment in 'Aeolus', where Jung's 'narcotic' sentence occurs. It occurs in the episode which marks a significant turning-point in *Ulysses*, as Joyce's book is read by Hugh Kenner—where the centring of the narrative in Stephen's consciousness (which readers recall from the *Portrait*), combined with a broadly 'realist' background, gives way to the foregrounding of 'syntactic artifice' which takes over in the later episodes.[37] In the lines immediately preceding the 'polished period' we learn that one of the characters 'took out his matchbox thoughtfully and lit his cigar'; what follows presents the reader with an enigma:

> I have often thought since on looking back over that strange time that it was that small act, trivial in itself, the striking of that match, that determined the whole aftercourse of both our lives. *(U*, 115)

'Whose sentence?' asks Jeri Johnson in her notes, adding that it is 'certainly in the manner of the Charles Dickens of *David Copperfield* or *Great Expectations*'.[38] The enigmatic line might thus be read as the 'end of realism' in Joyce's art: the Aeolean winds of rhetoric, fanning the little spark of the real into a kind of parodic 'final cause', enact the comic displacement of the stable 'reality' supposed in the nineteenth-century novel by the stylistic extravagances of Modernism. Jung gives up reading *Ulysses*, we might say, at precisely the point where the book marks the transition from the Dickensian novel to fully-fledged Joycean writing.

Having awoken from his slumber, though, Jung feels able to begin another reading—which we might term the second 'act' of his 'Monologue'—in a more playful spirit: 'my views had undergone such a clarification', he writes, 'that I started to read the book backwards'.[39] The Joycean 'paleographers' who appear in the *Wake* will perhaps take Jung seriously when they indicate 'that the words which follow may be taken in any order desired' (*FW* 121): indeed, Jung's claim that 'the book ... has no back and no front, no top and no bottom' seems to be more of a prophecy of Joyce's last work—the ultimate 'open work', according to Umberto Eco—than a true description of *Ulysses*, with all its intricate structural patterns.[40]

To read backwards would be an appropriate way to approach 'an art in reverse', as Jung now characterizes Joycean writing. If *Ulysses* had previously scandalized the reader by turning its back on him, things get even worse when it reveals itself to be 'the backside of art' (punning the Latin *ars*, as it were). In the absence of any 'soul', the text sinks into a form of 'visceral thinking', extending its 'ganglionic rope-ladder' into a fetid, subterranean world of unmentionable goings-on.[41]

But if to read *Ulysses* in reverse means that Jung began with the famous 'Yes' at the end of 'Penelope', this might suggest the possibility of a certain *Bejahung*, or affirmative judgement, in a second moment of the reading. This returns us to

[37] cf. Hugh Kenner, '*Ulysses*', Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1980, pp. 61–5

[38] Jeri Johnson, Notes to 1922 edition of *Ulysses*, *op. cit.*, p. 815.

[39] '*Ulysses*: A Monologue', *op. cit.*, p. 111.

[40] '*Ulysses*: A Monologue', *ibid.*; Umberto Eco, *The Open Work* (1962), Harvard University Press, 1989.

[41] '*Ulysses*: A Monologue', pp. 115–7.

the letter Jung writes to Joyce in 1932, where he acknowledges that after years of infuriating 'peregrinations' in *Ulysses* he finally managed to 'put himself into it', to establish some kind of identificatory relation to it (which was also a self-recognition). In effect, the text of Joyce's that Jung does succeed in 'putting himself into' is of course *Finnegans Wake*, with its sardonic footnote invoking the 'law of the jungerl' (*FW* 268); but *Ulysses* offers him a portrait or mirror-image which might rescue the book's 'detachment of consciousness' from unrelenting negativism, restore some possibility of redemption:

> Whenever I read *Ulysses* there comes into my mind a Chinese picture ... of a yogi in meditation, with five human figures growing out of the top of his head and five more figures growing out of the top of each of *their* heads. This picture portrays the spiritual state of the yogi who is about to rid himself of his ego and to pass over into the more complete, more objective state of the self.[42]

This portrait of the artist as a jung man, as Joyce might have described it, is the other face of the 'abstract objectivity' which has 'desouled' the text, robbed it of empathic warmth. In so far as the writing has freed itself, in Jung's view, from any engagement in human interest, it embodies the possibility of a certain self-transcendence, where the loss of immediate identity is counterbalanced by a redemptive access to a higher level of being. Jung salvages this narrative of transcendent Eastern wisdom, with its glimmer of hope, from the 'drunken madhouse' of Joyce's text. This requires some carefully edited quotations (resembling the *Wake*'s 'quashed quotatoes' (*FW* 183). Jung turns first to the speech of Elijah in 'Circe', picking out in italics a single line: 'You have that something within, the higher self' (*U* 414). Whatever wisdom this might entail 'suffers an infernal distortion', Jung claims, in the toils of Joyce's text; it nevertheless harbours the 'secret' of *Ulysses*, of how the 'detachment of human consciousness' it embodies could potentially amount to an 'approximation to the divine'.[43] Although in Joyce the speech is clearly intended as a mockery of such 'wisdom'—the prophet speaks in the guise of a salesman, offering the crowd of listeners an unmissable chance to 'rub shoulders with a Jesus, a Gautama, an Ingersoll'—this in no way diminishes, for Jung, its significance as an indication of the book's ultimate message: its implicit lesson in the mystery of self-overcoming.

If Jung 'puts himself into' *Ulysses*, then, as the voice of Elijah, somehow dissociated from its ad-man's patter, his next attempt to locate evidence of 'the treasures of the spirit' in Joyce's book calls for still heavier editing. Further on in 'Circe', he comes across signs of 'Buddhist, Shivaist and ... Gnostic' teaching: he quotes the speech of Mananaun Maclir, the Irish god of the sea—but with all traces of its humour expunged from it. So while the sea-god appears in *Ulysses* holding a bicycle pump, and begins his speech with a mocking recital of the guttural sounds which AE had proposed were the primal elements of speech, in Jung's version we cut straight to 'White yoghin of the gods'.[44] Although the Joycean god mixes

[42] *Ibid*, p. 126.

[43] '*Ulysses*: A Monologue', *op. cit.*, p. 126.

[44] cf. Jeri Johnson's notes to her edition of the original 1922 text of *Ulysses*, Oxford: O.U.P., 1993, p. 933.

his Theosophy with advertising slogans ('I am the dreamery creamery butter'), Jung is not deterred: 'Glad tidings', he declares resolutely—'when the eternal signs have vanished from the heavens, the pig that hunts truffles finds them again in the earth'.[45] Even though this Joycean 'pig' is not seeking, in some quasi-Hegelian manner, to rediscover spiritual treasure in the form of its dialectal opposite—but rather to subvert, through Rabelesian pastiche, the celestial authority of 'eternal signs', Jung clings to his belief that the merest trace of the 'heavens' is enough to bring a redemptive glimmer to the dark chasm of Joyce's work.

This narrative of self-transcendence 'put into' *Ulysses* by Jung—which he serves with 'quotatoes' which if not quashed are at least washed and peeled—is important because it anticipates one of the foremost critical problems raised by modernist texts (and perhaps by Joyce's more than any other). The 'death of the author', in Roland Barthes' celebrated slogan of 1968, poses special difficulties for any 'psychological' approach to reading—including, as we shall see, Lacan's reading of Joyce.[46] If modernist writing effected an unprecedented 'detachment of consciousness', as Jung puts it—if it opens out into a multi-layered, many-voiced textuality—is it still useful or even possible to invoke the traditional category of 'author'? Jung's answer is that although the work may be no longer signed by an author—its familiar portrait of the artist shattering into indecipherable cubist 'objectivity'—we can at least re-inscribe this as a redemptive passage from the ego to the 'self', a higher moment of existence which can only identify itself as *outis* ('noman', in the self-designation of Homer's Odysseus). 'Nayman of Noland' is indeed one of the characters at the *Wake*; but we hope to show that the 'death of the author' can be radically reconceived if we relate it to the emergence of a very different problematic of self-loss and self-invention in Lacan.

In one respect, however, Jung's 'Monologue' offers a striking anticipation of Lacan's engagement with Joyce (although this was something never acknowledged—perhaps never realized—by Lacan). It is true that in Jung's initial consideration of the 'symptomatology' of Joyce's writing—whereby 'even the layman would have no difficulty in tracing the analogies between *Ulysses* and the schizophrenic mentality'—he outlines a position diametrically opposed to the one Lacan will construct around the Joycean 'symptom':

> The artist does not follow an individual impulse, but rather a current of collective life which arises not directly from consciousness but from the collective unconscious of the modern psyche.[47]

The 'collective' unconscious serves to differentiate art from the symptom by positing a transindividual psychical energy which, with its stock of socio-cultural images or 'archetypes', remains irreducible to any particular pathology. Recalling Freud's sense of sublimation as an assimilation or 'domestication' of libido, in such a view art is *aufheben*, 'raised up', from the intractable materiality of the body, into the purer domain of collective existence and cultural tradition. Although for Jung, then, on a first reading Joyce's work may *look* like a symptom of schizophrenia,

[45] '*Ulysses*: A Monologue', *op. cit.*, p. 129.

[46] Roland Barthes, 'The Death of the Author' (1968), in *The Rustle of Language*, trans Richard Howard, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984, pp. 49–55.

[47] '*Ulysses*: A Monologue', *op. cit.*, p. 117.

he finds its very status as art—as conscious, consistent representation—a sufficient guarantee that it is not truly 'pathological'. For Lacan, as we will see, Joyce's achievement was to have effected an unprecedented pursuit of 'individual impulse' through his art, which went as far as to displace any stable opposition, of the kind relied on by Jung, between 'individual' and 'collective'.

If, then, *Ulysses* is not simply to be discarded as the ravings of a lunatic, however Jung remains uncertain how to situate its 'shadow-picture of the mind and the world' in his psychology.[48] He admits that in Joyce he may have encountered a limit to his 'authority on psychological matters': if the writing is not a straightforward symptom of schizophrenia, its author may be an 'insane person of an uncommon sort'. 'But', continues Jung,

> ...the psychiatrist has no criteria for judging such a person. What seems to be mental abnormality may be a kind of mental health which is inconceivable to the average understanding; it may even be a disguise for superlative powers of mind.[49]

Lacan too will find in Joyce an 'insane person of an uncommon sort'. But if Jung places such 'abnormality' beyond the purview of psychological concepts, in some mysterious zone of 'genius', for Lacan it opens the way to a reconceptualization of psychosis and of the 'border' separating it from other structures (such as neurosis and perversion). If Jung would frame Joycean writing as an image of self-transcendence, Lacan will see it as the pretext for a new way of thinking the subject—where the predominance of *writing* will put into question the very instance of 'thinking' in psychoanalytic theory. Our first approach to the *sinthome* will explore Lacan's response to the 'detachment of consciousness' observed by Jung in the Joycean text, and the place he accords it in a reconceived approach to psychosis.

iii) Epiphany as 'crossexanimation'

We should first reconsider the significance of the two references to Joyce which we have already noted in Lacan's teaching, which occur before the 1975 Symposium where the figure of 'Joyce the Symptom' is first introduced. Both references entail a curious kind of theoretical equivocation, whereby the invocation of Joyce at once supports and obscurely challenges or unsettles the point Lacan is seeking to put across.

We recall that in the 1966 text of the Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter', Lacan included a quotation from the Joycean *Exagmination*—the paronomasia 'a letter, a litter'—in order to figure the double aspect of the letter in Poe's story, the fact that its function as signifier was accompanied by a 'material support', the *déchet* which 'did not answer' to the detectives' search. If the materiality of the letter, the linguistic *real* beyond its effects of intersubjective exchange, is thus posited by Lacan as irreducible to the Other, invisible to the examination which calls the subject to its representational consistency, we noted an unintended irony in the 'lapsus' of Lacan's footnote: the very 'materiality' of the Wakean 'exagmination' is erased by the mistaken use of a 'proper' word, as if the title were being returned

[48] *Ibid.*
[49] *Ibid.*

to the 'examination' of the Other. At the moment when literature—in the shape of Poe's story—is being invoked by Lacan as the supreme confirmation of a subject conceived as the effect of the signifier, his parenthetical reference to Joyce at once opens a space of equivocation or textual indeterminacy, something in writing which might exceed or resist the supposition of such a subject—and immediately closes down that space, reconfirming the supremacy of the 'letter' whose examination yields up the subject.

By 1973, Lacan's theoretical terms have shifted considerably. He now wishes to make, as one of the major themes of his seminar, a fundamental distinction between the 'function of writing' and that of the signifier. Joyce is mentioned in the context of a discussion of the limits of the 'readable':

> I would rather Joyce were not readable—it certainly cannot be translated into Chinese. What happens in Joyce? The signifier comes to 'riddle' [*truffer*] the signified. Due to the fact that signifiers are stacked together, intersect, are concertina'd—read *Finnegans Wake*—something emerges which as signified may seem enigmatic, but which clearly comes closest to what we analysts have to read, thanks to the analytic discourse —the lapsus. It is as a lapsus that it signifies something, in other words that it can be read in an infinite number of different ways. But that is precisely why it is read badly, read askew or not read at all. But is not this dimension of *being read* enough to show us that we are in the register of analytic discourse?[50]

The ostensible unreadability of the Joycean text here only masks its status—*au titre de lapsus*, 'under the heading of' a parapractic symptom—as a pure illustration of what is at stake in the discourse of the analyst. The disruption of stable or univocal meaning in the *Wake* is an effect of the signifier, now presented not simply as the unerring delivery of the subject's truth but as something *to be read*, an enigmatic provocation of the analytic labour through which that truth will emerge. Thus, the *Wake* would be 'a continuous lapsus', as Colin MacCabe will put it, a vast embodiment of the mechanism of a linguistic unconscious.[51]

Joyce's writing appears at these two moments of Lacan's teaching, then, in an ambiguous, even paradoxical, light. If, on the one hand, it serves as a privileged manifestation of the unconscious (until then, at least, always the site of a *subject* for Lacan)—its polysemic 'lapse not leashed'(*FW* 63) bodying forth an enigmatic ciphering which resembles the riddles of the analysand's speech—at the same time, it realizes in a pure form the writing whose 'function' Lacan wishes to distinguish from that of the signifier, with its unconscious subject.

We need to refer ahead to a seminar in 1976, which we have already touched on briefly, to shed some light on these tensions in the earlier work. Towards the end of the seminar *Le Sinthome* Lacan comes to claim, with characteristic hyperbole, that his recent work with the topology of Borromean knots has 'completely changed the meaning of writing'; this is true, of course, as regards his *own* use of the term. Writing, as redefined by the knot, is distinct from the writing which had emerged as the *leitmotif* of Derrida's thought—which is simply, Lacan now declares, a 'precipitation of the signifier', and as such something in the end 'modulated by

[50] Seminar of 9th January 1973 (SXX), *Encore*, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

[51] Colin MacCabe, *James Joyce and the Revolution of the Word*, *op. cit.*, p. 143.

the voice', part of the *dit-mension* of the subject.[52] On the one hand, there is a 'writing' which is simply a hyperbolic or frenzied instance of the *symbolic*; on the other, there is something quite distinct, an 'autonomous' writing which Lacan begins to link directly to the *real*.

If we relate this distinction back to the comments on Joyce in *Encore*, we could see in the 'riddling' of the domain of meaning by the signifier which Lacan reads in the *Wake*, a version of the 'Derridean' precipitation of symbolic difference (or *différance*). In other words, the infinite semiotic proliferation of the Joycean text—taken *au titre de lapsus*—would ultimately fall into the category of the subject, or the unconscious as effect of speech.

We can perhaps begin to unravel some of the confusions arising from different senses of the term 'writing' here. The emphatic distinction made in 1976 between a Derridean writing—the endless, undecidable play of the signifier—and a Lacanian variety, an autonomous instance not subject to the laws of the symbolic order, sheds new light on the old opposition of 'letter' and 'litter'; but this comes after a long period of mutual entanglement. It is difficult to map out this evolution of Lacanian theory because of the constant displacements of the sense and 'orientation' of its terminology.

The 1971 article *Lituraterre*, we recall, associated writing—as *litura*—with the particular modality of *jouissance*, an indecipherable trace scarring the cogitating self-presentation of the subject's utterance. *Litura* was nevertheless recuperated as a second 'register' of subjectivity, an anamorphic blot to be placed alongside the *dit-mension* of truth—somehow without 'foreclosing' it or rendering it illegible. This opening-and-closing in the theory of the subject—in which writing first emerges as something extimate, radically other to the topology of the subject before being resituated as its complement, a separate 'aspect' of its representational economy—can be linked to Lacan's comments on Joyce in 1973. What first appears as the intransigent opacity of the Joycean text, with its untranslatable or illegible riddles, is subsequently stated to be nothing but the effect of a particularly riotous *instance de la lettre*: it is the signifier, always ultimately a representation of the subject, which is the final cause of the textual enigma and its call for 'analytic' interpretation.

If the principal aim of the Borromean knot, in the guise it takes in the 1974–5 seminar *R.S.I.*, was to articulate the indissociability or 'intrication' of the three registers of Lacanian theory, we could see this precisely exemplified in these theoretical entanglements around 'writing'. Although the notion of the 'litter' as an instance of *jouissance* is implicit for Lacan from very early on in his work, it is a long time before he is willing to set up any rigid binary opposition between such a 'material' instance and the agency of the signifier. The portmanteau term which appears in *Télévision* next to the Borromean knot inscribed in the margin—*jouis-sens*—encapsulates this *nouage*, the 'knottedness' of these registers: the real of 'enjoyment' is bound up with the production of meaning, there is no way to separate them out (without simply falling back on some traditional metaphysical opposition).

[52] Seminar of 11th May 1976 (SXXIII), *Le Sinthome*, unpublished (version p. G.,p.2).

In its first definition as 'precipitation of the symbolic', then, writing can be invoked by psychoanalysis as a version of the same kind of signifying riddle it confronts every day in its attempts to interpret the subject which it 'supposes' in the speech of the analysand. Even *Finnegans Wake*, a text which maximizes the 'play' of the signifier, is finally something demanding to be read, soliciting analytic interpretation: writing is like a *symptom*, to be situated in—linked to a *subject* in—the symbolic order. In this sense, Lacan repeated an old Freudian gesture, which had been raised to a new power in his Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter': the translation or transference of the aesthetic instance into the conceptual matrix of psychoanalysis.

The radical change in Lacan's understanding of 'writing' brought about by the engagement with the topology of knots in *R.S.I.* inevitably recast the question of the relation between the psychoanalytic subject and the literary text. If there had still been a subject implicit in *jouis-sens*, Lacan now began to see writing not as a confirmation of 'the register of analytic discourse' but as a way to gain access to something 'foreclosed' from that register, to a *jouissance* beyond the subject. In 1975, Lacan's return to Joyce is entirely bound up with this new sense of writing: the text is no longer to be entitled 'lapsus', translated into analytic signifiers, but is to be read as indicative of the singular organization of an existence through the unique incidence of Joyce's art.

How could psychoanalysis read literature without recourse to its category of the subject? If the final 'justification' of the term 'subject' for Lacan is, as we have seen, that it designates a primordial decision to exist which fails to occur in psychosis, a first response to this question might be to invoke the psychoanalytic approach to psychosis, as an interpretive procedure which seeks to suspend any immediate reference to 'the signifier', 'the subject' and so on.

Psychosis is always, for the analyst, a challenge to established modes of understanding, and it is no surprise that Lacan's late work, with its radical *mise en cause* of the whole of psychoanalytic theory and methodology, attached a new importance to the psychotic experience as the privileged scene of an opaque, untranslatable 'real'. In this context, though, the turn to Joyce in 1975 did not seek merely to confirm the validity of diagnostic categories by pointing to psychotic phenomena which lay beyond the 'topic' of the psychoanalytic subject, but rather to isolate in Joyce's writing the foundation of a *new kind of subjectivity*, one which might be irreducible to the clinical criteria of analysis.

This new kind of 'subject' was the *sinthome*. If Lacan's renewed interest in Joyce focused on the question—an apparently outdated one after the 'death of the author'—of the *origins* of writing and its special 'symptomatic' function in a destiny, his attention consequently shifted from the conundrums of *Finnegans Wake* to their 'primal scene': Joyce's early work, in particular his youthful theory of the 'epiphany'. These first texts, Lacan proposed, manifested with special clarity—in its pure form, so to speak—a certain radically non-metaphorical relation to language, which was the key to Joyce's originality as a writer and to his singular kind of 'subjectivity'.

As we have seen, the Borromean knot yielded, by 1975, the real structure of the three Lacanian registers (symbolic, imaginary and real). But what would happen,

Lacan asked his seminar on 11th May 1976, if there was an 'error' or *faute* (a term deliberately chosen to echo 'sin') in the knot? It would, of course, come undone—and the Joycean 'epiphany' testifies, for Lacan, to just such a disintegration: a quasi-hallucinatory encounter which entails the unknotting of RSI, and which the act of writing itself then 'makes up for', offers *suppléance*. Lacan refers to a moment in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* to illustrate this topological reading of the epiphany: the hero Stephen, having been beaten by Heron and his friends because of a disagreement (on the question of the literary merits of the 'heretic' Byron), experiences a sudden loss of feeling, as if 'some power was divesting him of that sudden-woven anger as easily as a fruit is divested of its soft ripe peel' (*P* 82–3).[53]

Lacan finds this image very striking: he reads it as a figure for the falling-away from the knot of the imaginary—the sense of the body as bounded, consistent—in the collision of the real and the symbolic, resulting in the complete evacuation of meaning. The imaginary does not 'hold' in the knot: Lacan translates the problematic of foreclosure into topological terms through the general notion of a 'fault' in the organization of RSI (a fault no longer restricted to the *nom-du-père*). Pierre Skriabine notes how the *sinthome* functions as *suppléance*, to 'make up for' the Joycean 'fault':

> It is now possible to locate the fault, to trace it on the knot of R, S and I, and it is there, at the point where it takes place, that Lacan situates—this is how he formulates matters in the case of Joyce—the ego as *sinthome*, as a corrective sewing-together.[54]

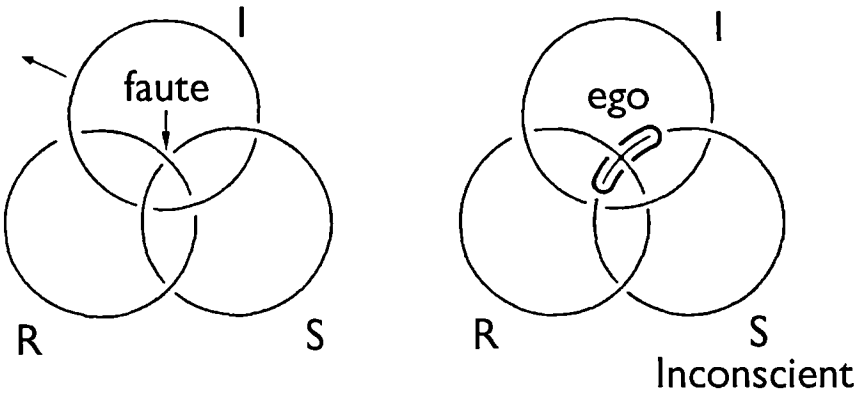

Figure 3: *Sinthome* as reconstitution of the knot

This return of the ego to Lacanian theory, as the agency of the Joycean artifice which reconstitutes the knot, seems an astonishing sequel to the well-known criticisms of ego-psychology made by Lacan earlier in his career. However, Lacan is careful to avoid invoking the *moi* (the standard French term for the 'ego' of

[53] *Ibid*, p. 7.

[54] Pierre Skriabine, 'Clinique et topologie', *op. cit.*, p. 131. The diagram on the left indicates the 'fault' in the knot which causes the imaginary to drop out; its restoration through the agency of the *sinthome* (marked as 'ego') corresponds to the re-opening of the unconscious in the subject (as Skriabine indicates in the bottom right-hand corner).

Freud's second topography), using instead the Latin term *ego*, together with the German *Ich*, to designate this agency of re-knotting: in the epiphany, the imaginary falls away in the evacuation of meaning, only to be tied back into the knot by a 'symptomatic' instance which is—somehow, this is the 'enigma' of Joyce—the site of artistic identification, of the writer's signature. Thus the *sinthome* is the fourth ring which holds the knot together, and the site of the 'I', of identification: for Joyce, 'writing is absolutely essential to the ego', as Lacan puts it.[55] In the absence of the psychological consistency offered by the imaginary, an identity or its semblance is forged in a continual writing-process.

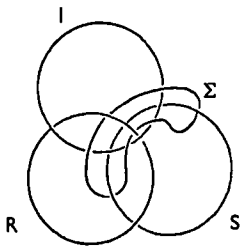

Figure 4: The Borromean knot including the *sinthome*

'By an epiphany', wrote Joyce in the early manuscript *Stephen Hero*, 'he meant a sudden spiritual manifestation, whether in the vulgarity of speech or of gesture or in a memorable phase of the mind itself'.[56] If Lacan at first associates it with the fanciful imagery of the *Portrait* (fruit 'divested of its soft ripe peel'), the epiphany in its original form, carefully 'recorded' by Joyce in a note-book, remains resolutely non-metaphorical, devoid of recognizable sense or emotional significance. Cathérine Millot notes, however, how this semantic evacuation can suddenly reverse to become an 'overdetermination' of meaning.[57] This reversal occurs vividly in one of the most dramatic of the epiphanies:

> Mrs Joyce—(*crimson, trembling, appears at the parlour door*) ... Jim! Joyce—(*at the piano*) ... Yes?
> Mrs Joyce—Do you know anything about the body? ..... What ought I do? There's some matter coming away from the hole in Georgie's stomach ... Did you ever hear of that happening?
> Joyce—(*surprised*) ... I don't know...
> Mrs Joyce—Ought I send for the doctor, do you think?
> Joyce—I don't know ..... What hole?
> Mrs Joyce—(*impatient*) ... The hole we all have ... here (*points*)
> Joyce—(*stands up*)[58]

The mother's voice calls the young Joyce from his artistic self-absorption into a crisis of interpretation provoked by bodily trauma (in question is Joyce's *vocation*: at one point, he seriously contemplated a career as a doctor, even enrolling to

[55] Seminar of 11th May 1976 (SXXIII), *Le Sinthome*, unpublished (version P. G., p. 5)
[56] Joyce, *Stephen Hero*, ed. T. Spencer, J. J. Slocum & H. Cahoon, London: Cape, 1969, p. 216.
[57] Cathérine Millot, 'Épiphanies', in *Joyce Avec Lacan*, *op. cit.*, p. 91.
[58] Epiphany 19, March 1902; in *Poems and Epiphanies*, ed. R. Ellman & A. W. Litz, New York: Viking, 1990.

study medicine in Paris).[59] 'The hole we all have ... here' evokes the desperate conjunction of the body's self-evidence, the fact that it constitutes an obviously shared condition of human existence, and the mysterious or unspeakable dimension of its 'real'. At the same time, the pure tautology of the mother's anguished gesture rebounds upon the Joycean text, so that the 'hole ... here' becomes the invisible and traumatic centre of the writing itself, where its 'matter' disappears like the umbilical vanishing-point of the Freudian dream. If the body contains a 'hole we all have', its imaginary consistency looming too large to be questioned or call for interpretation, we are equally immersed in the domain of signification, as embodied 'here', in this text. The bodily 'matter' which comes away from the traumatic hole corresponds, in a Lacanian reading of the epiphany, to the falling-away of the imaginary (and thus of any semantic 'matter') from the knot, its *suppléance* by the textual instance of the *sinthome*.

So the *sinthome*—as shown in its minimal, originary form in the epiphany—restores a certain coherence to the knot of real, symbolic and imaginary, prevents its psychotic unravelling. It reconstitutes as an artistic fiction the subject which has collapsed in 'radical foreclosure': like the hen in the Wakean 'storyaboot', the epiphany 'starts from scratch' (*FW* 336), inscribes a non-metaphorical *trait* as the tentative foundation of a subjectivity excluded from the Other, the field of consistent symbolic representation. If the Other is in essence for Lacan a domain of juridical *examination*, where the subject is called to account, made 'responsible', interpellated to a place in the symbolic order—in the epiphany quoted above the mother first hails 'Jim' before subjecting him to a cross-examination—the Joycean text *writes out* the failure or breakdown of this mechanism of subjection. Thus, what takes place in an epiphany is what will feature in the *Wake* as a 'crossexanimation': the psyche (or 'anima': we will return to the significance of this term, in both its Aristotelean and Jungian senses, for Joyce) is externalized, returns in the real of language as both the disfigurement of the signifier and the rupture of the bounded psychology of any individual speaker.[60]

We will seek to show that Lacan's approach to Joyce's work as an artistic response to the lack in the Other—where 'crossexanimation' calls forth an appropriately 'quadrivial' art—allows us to give a new sense to the tired formula of the 'death of the author'; and might also open the way to a return to the question raised in Jung's 'diagnostic' interpretation of *Ulysses*: how can Joyce's writing as *sinthome* be situated in relation to the general theorization of psychosis and the specific instance of Lucia Joyce's schizophrenia?

iv) 'Leave him to his Maker': Joycean père-version

Joyce is founded, according to Lacan, on an experience of foreclosure. 'Joyce' indicates here both a body of writing and a 'man of letters', in an ambiguity Lacan plays on and incorporates into his reading: the act of writing as *sinthome* is essentially an act of self-constitution, in which Joyce 'makes a name for himself', takes on a substantial existence in bookshops and (as an exam 'subject') in universities. How are

[59] Cf. Ellmann, *James Joyce*, *op. cit.*, pp. 106–9.
[60] *Ibid*, p. 87.

we to relate the topological reformulation of foreclosure—as the disintegration of the Borromean knot—together with the notion of *sinthome* as 'corrective' *raboutage* (re-suturing, sewing-back-together) to Lacan's earlier theories of psychosis which privileged paternity, situated the *nom-du-père* as the only protection against the psychotic collapse of the Other?

We should first consider the *vocational* status of the Joycean epiphany. Firstly, this vocation is *literal*: the 'vulgarity of speech' framed by the epiphany is almost always, writes Millot, 'taken from the mouths of women'.[61] Feminine speech *calls* the artist, with hallucinatory intensity, to the task of writing. The young Joyce weaves this into an elaborate aesthetic theory, seeking to restate in the Scholastic terms of Thomas Aquinas an amalgam of neo-Platonic and post-Romantic ideas about art: the epiphany corresponds to the Thomistic notion of *claritas*, the 'radiance' which illuminates an object when '[i]ts soul, its whatness, leaps to us from the vestment of its appearance'.[62]

If the epiphany thus forms part of the confirmation of an artistic identity, Joyce's self-recognition as 'man of letters', a second term he borrows from the church liturgy points to a quite different aspect of this self-theorization. Joyce only uses this term once, in a letter to his friend Constantine Curran. Having been asked by George Russel to write a story for a newspaper in 1904, he announces to Curran: 'I am writing a series of epicleti—ten—for a paper ... I call the series *Dubliners*...'[63] Joyce's reference is to *epiclesis*, a term used in the Eastern church for the invocation of the Holy Spirit during the Eucharist, at the moment of the consecration of bread and wine. If the artist will appear in the *Portrait* as 'a priest of the eternal imagination, transmuting the daily bread of experience into the radiant body of everliving life' (*P* 221), he has first to invoke the Paraclete—the one who intervenes, as the Greek name indicates—to assist in his self-transfiguration. Thus, as well as being a compulsive vocational act, Joyce's writing entails an *invocation*, a plea for transformative intervention from some higher power: from a father.

If we take these two liturgical terms as moments in Joyce's early attempts to nominate the *quidditas*, the 'soul' or 'whatness', of his art, we can begin to clarify the 'symptomatic' dimension of the first writings. On the one hand, as epiphany the text strains the verbal *jouissance* of feminine speech towards Joyce-sens, towards an autonomous artistic self-inscription; on the other—*at the same time*—the text is an epiclesis, a prayer to the Lord for a Eucharistic intervention—for the intervention, that is, of *metaphor*. In the face of an impossible maternal demand—'Do you know anything about the body?'—only an effect of metaphor, of signifying substitution, could give the subject any respite, allow it the slightest opening as a space of lack. In the absence of any signifier which might allow a response to the traumatic encounter, Joyce can only answer his mother's desperate act of pointing with an equally 'infant' gesture, a speechless self-presenting of the body.

Foreclosure, the key to the aetiology of psychosis, is for Lacan always a failure of metaphor. If the 'radical foreclosure' proposed in *Le Sinthome* introduced

[61] Cathérine Millot, 'Épiphanies', *op. cit.*, p. 92.

[62] *Stephen Hero*, *op. cit.*, p. 218; see Jacques Aubert, *The Aesthetics of James Joyce*, *op. cit.*, pp. 100–11 for Joyce's sources.

[63] *The Selected Letters of James Joyce*, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

a new way of understanding a figure which had first appeared in 1957, as part of the 'Borromean' imperative to think the subject as an intrication of real, symbolic and imaginary—the sense of foreclosure as a breakdown in the movement of metaphorical substitution is retained; indeed, it is amplified, raised to a new power, by the notion of a radically 'autistic' moment in which the possibility of meaning, at the interface of the symbolic and the imaginary, is overwhelmed, disabled by the crushing force of *jouissance*.[64]

Serge André's interpretation of the Borromean knot might enable us to link the reconception of foreclosure as 'unknotting' back to Lacan's earlier formulations on psychosis. André distinguishes between a 'Freudian' knot, the structure of 'Oedipal normality', in which real, symbolic and imaginary are knotted together by a fourth ring, the Name-of-the-Father; and a 'Lacanian' version, where a fault prevents the three registers from forming a Borromean knot until they are 'repaired' by a symptomatic fourth. In the first case, the infantile *père-version* (Lacan's punning redefinition of 'perversion' as a 'turning to the father', an appeal for the intervention of the paternal metaphor) has been met with success, has been answered; the symbolic order, in its first definition as a regime of normalization governed by paternal authority, has functioned to fix in place the subject, give consistency to its desiring unconscious. Conversely, the fault which undoes the knot that André designates as Lacanian would correspond to the foreclosure of the *nom-du-père*, the mis-firing or 'irresponsible' outcome of the child's *père-version*.[65]

Joyce's early work shows with particular clarity how his writing is bound up with the figure of the father and, indissociably, with the question of naming. A certain crisis around paternity is already legible in the note telling Curran about the 'epicleti': Joyce's signature is jokingly substituted by the initials S.D. (which is then repeated with a confirmatory 'sic'). As Curran knew, Joyce had adopted the pseudonym 'Stephen Daedalus' as his artistic signature: he was to write it beneath his first story, 'The Sisters', when it was published in 1904 in the *Irish Homestead*.[66] Joyce's self-invention as a literary character was coupled with the practical need to avoid recognition (the 'uncle' in the story, with his boastful talk of his youthful athleticism, is clearly a version of Joyce's father). The story's child narrator, fascinated by the priest's strange vocabulary, cites 'the word gnomon in the Euclid': the enigmatic term carries echoes of 'noman', the name Odysseus adopts to elude detection by the Cyclops, and which will return in *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*.[67] If the playful ruse deploys fiction to avert danger in the real, at the same time it is an act of self-authorization, the assumption of a certain power to re-set the limits between the sphere of creative imagination and the hard reality of the world.

[64]cf. Seminar of 16th March 1976 (SXXIII), *Le Sinthome*, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

[65]Serge André, 'Clinique et noeud borroméen', *op. cit.*, pp. 92–3.

[66]Ellmann, *James Joyce*, *op. cit.*, p. 164.

[67]Joyce, *Dubliners* (1914), ed Robert Scholes, London: Cape, 1967, p. 25; for the figure of *outis*, 'noman', in Joyce, see Maud Ellmann, 'Polytropic Man: Paternity, Identity and Naming in *The Odyssey* and *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*', in *James Joyce: New Perspectives*, ed Colin MacCabe, London: Harvester, 1982, pp. 73–104.

The character Stephen Dedalus 'himself', the central figure of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, functions as a literary embodiment of the Joycean crisis surrounding the Name-of-the-Father. One of the central episodes of this crisis is enacted (appropriately as we shall see) in an 'anatomy theatre'—in a scene which hinges around the inscription of Joyce's authorial pseudo-signature, S.D. Stephen has accompanied his father to Queen's College, Cork, to be presented with a kind of filial inheritance of the father's memories. The scene dramatizes the failure of this act of symbolic transmission:

> They passed into the anatomy theatre where Mr Dedalus, the porter aiding him, searched the desk for his initials. Stephen remained in the background, depressed more than ever by the darkness and silence of the theatre and by the air it wore of jaded and formal study. On the desk he read the word *Foetus* cut several times in the dark stained wood. The sudden legend startled his blood: he seemed to feel the absent students of the college about him and to shrink from their company. A vision of their life, which his father's words had been powerless to evoke, sprang up before him out of the word cut in the desk (*P* 90).

Joyce's 'theatre' constructs a precise topography. The father seeks 'his' initials, while the son remains 'in the background'. Simon Dedalus, interested only in rediscovering his own 'legend', cannot communicate any experience to his son: his impotent, onanistic speech turns back on itself, caught up in the circularity of its retrospection; while Stephen is suddenly trapped by an *inscription* which 'communicates' with hallucinatory force, on the level of the bodily real. If the father's speech evaporates, unheeded, the writing is 'cut'—permanently, ineradicably—into the material fabric of the anatomy theatre, as a cicatrice, the trace of an identity beyond ephemeral speech (like the scar which identifies Odysseus).[68] The father appears, briefly, as a possible refuge from the traumatic encounter:

> Stephen's name was called. He hurried down the steps of the theatre so as to be as far away from the vision as he could be and, peering closely at his father's initials, hid his flushed face (*P* 90).

Although Stephen seems to be hailed as a subject, it is nevertheless 'his father's initials'—S.D., but not the mark in turn of his *own* identity—that he is shown. Rather than confirming his symbolic inheritance, the encounter with the Name-of-the-Father merely serves as a pretext for the son to shrink away from the visible domain of identification, of the *Portrait* which would frame his identity as artist.

The 'sudden legend' of *Foetus* which has such an impact on Stephen is a 'poor trait of the artless', as the *Wake* will re-inscribe Joyce's title: its appearance disrupts the representational economy of the *Bildungsroman*, the measured self-presentation which that title seemed to promise.[69] Stephen's apprehension of the linguistic *real* embodied by writing is figured as an 'exanimation', the breach of boundaries between psyche and world:

> It shocked him to find in the outer world a trace of what he had deemed till then a brutish and individual malady of his own mind. His monstrous reveries came

[68] cf. Maud Ellmann's figure of the 'scarletter' in 'Polytropic Man', *op. cit.*, pp. 81–4.
[69] *Finnegans Wake*, *op. cit.*, p. 114.

> thronging into his memory. They too had sprung up before him, suddenly and furiously, out of mere words (*P* 90).

Stephen's traumatic relation to language is interwoven with the vacuous, self-addressed paternal voice, as Joyce's hero 'walked on at his father's side, listening to stories he had heard before' (*P* 91). The father's vague, complacent notion that he is giving his son a kind of 'birth' or initiation to manhood by passing on his wisdom ('When you kick out for yourself, Stephen...') is countered by the explicit evocation of *abortion* (or 'Abortisement' as it will be written in the *Wake* (*FW* 181)) in the hallucinatory inscription which 'stared upon him'. The *père-version*, which if answered would constitute the symbolic birth of the subject, results in its miscarriage, as Stephen is cast into a linguistic real he cannot master—where his self-recognition is overwhelmed, invaded by an inscription which seems to *name* him: '*Foetus*'. If Stephen's name is called by the father, it is the letters cut in the desk which 'interpellate' him—not to the representational consistency of a *parlêtre* but to an uncanny, 'exanimate' identification with the 'monstrous' substance of language itself.

The Name-of-the-Father, in Lacan's final formulations, is that which guarantees the normative organization of real, symbolic and imaginary: that which secures the fixity and rationality of psychical boundaries. To that extent, we could situate the paternal metaphor as the precondition of the representational frame of the 'Portrait', that which enables the auto-biographical consistency of the subject, secures its place in the Other. 'It is ... not for nothing', declares Lacan in Seminar XI, 'that we have referred to as picture the function in which the subject has to map himself as such'.[70]

If the scene in the anatomy theatre has Stephen hiding his face, seeking to avoid the gaze which would include him in the father's 'picture', later in the text Joyce again figures 'vocation' as a question of the portrait. Addressed by the director of Belvedere College about his possible religious 'calling', Stephen feels an incipient self-recognition:

> A flame began to flutter on Stephen's cheek as he heard in this proud address an echo of his own proud musings. How often had he seen himself as a priest wielding calmly and humbly the awful power of which angels and saints stood in reverence! (*P* 158)

Becoming a priest might enable Stephen to enter the frame of a portrait: assume a consistent place in the symbolic order, allow 'exanimation' to be gathered in as a pacifying alienation into ecclesiastical speech (where he again hears an 'echo' or trace of 'his own mind'), a full translation of his unruly linguistic existence to the calm, formulaic order of the church. But it is immediately clear that this portrait has to be set out in a special, idiosyncratic way:

> '...above all it had pleased him to fill the second place in those dim scenes of his imagining. He shrank from the dignity of celebrant because it displeased him to imagine that all the vague pomp should end in his own person or that the ritual should assign to him so clear and final an office' (*P* 158–9).

[70] Seminar of 4th March 1964 (SXI), *op. cit.*, p. 100.

In one sense, Stephen wishes to vanish into the background, to become part of a mechanism which will constrain or 'mortify' the particularity of his being. He needs a formulaic pattern to structure his existence: 'In vague sacrificial or sacramental acts alone his will seemed drawn to go forth to encounter reality'. On the train journey earlier with his father, Stephen has to mark 'the silent telegraph-poles passing his window swiftly every four seconds': only a formal rhythm enables him to recognize subjective experience, cut out its shape as his own 'reality'(*P* 87).

Stephen's eventual refusal to enter the 'chill and order' of the church—encapsulated in *Ulysses* by his desperate shout of '*Non serviam!*' during the phantasmagoria of 'Circe' (*U* 475)—is ultimately the effect of an 'instinct ... stronger than education or piety': the intransigence of the *drive*, the resistance of *jouissance* to 'mortification'. Even his adolescent attempts to subject his bodily existence to the rigours of ecclesiastical asceticism are transformed into opportunities for artistic self-invention: 'To mortify his smell was more difficult as he found in himself no instinctive repugnance to bad odours ... But it was to the mortification of touch he brought the most assiduous ingenuity of inventiveness'(*P* 151). If the church could provide a consistent representational structure in answer to Stephen's *père-version*, this would be at a high price: the sacrifice of his creative bodily and discursive energy, the *jouissance* which is ineluctably bound up with Joyce's *name*, with the presence of his 'legend'. This tangible, almost olfactory, 'real presence' could never be consistent with the 'clear and final' office of priesthood, as is already apparent in the sinful 'ingenuity' of Stephen's efforts to simulate self-negation.

Stephen, then, does not recognize himself in the book's 'portraits'—neither as the initials S.D., nor as 'the Reverend Stephen Dedalus, S.J.'. The 'pride of his spirit which had always made him conceive himself as a being apart in every order'(*P* 161) prevents him from uttering the decisive *Bejahung* which would mark his identification with one of these 'titles'. Joyce's phrasing, as so often, holds the key to the character's problem—here, that of naming: Stephen's pride makes him 'conceive himself', engender and give birth to his own identity as artist—as the author, precisely, of the *Portrait*. Having been caught in the uncanny gaze of the letters which 'stared upon him' and compelled his 'symptomatic' identification with *Foetus*, with a misbegotten linguistic 'object', Stephen can at last assume the 'I' of authorial mastery at the book's close (*P* 248).

It is this act—the signature of the Joycean work as a literary 'I'—which, for Lacan, provides a *suppléance* for the absent paternal metaphor, allows the knot to cohere. It is of course essential that the book does not include the signature 'Joyce'—that the 'old father, old artificer' invoked on its last page remains embedded in the fictional world of the artist: just as Joyce signs a 'real' letter with a fictional pseudonym, so the narrative 'I' who attains self-mastery and authorial power can only be a character, a literary screen or sham (like the Shem who in the *Wake* will be the protean semblance—the shemblance, as it were—of authorship). If the real father dooms Joyce's *père-version* to failure, leaving the artist stranded in an 'autistic' relation to language, the response can only be for Joyce to become a 'version of the father' by siring a *fictional* identity, transforming the infant 'foetus' into 'the artist as a young man', a consistent self-authorizing figure.

However, Joyce was also to become a *real* father. 'This was something not included in the plan', comments Lacan;[71] in the event, Joyce's daughter Lucia was to be caught up in the real of her father's 'symptom' in a kind of tragic, parodic *père-version* (which was already visible in the 'transferential' triangle with Jung, where Lucia soon moved into the background, as it were, during the search for the paternal signature). Joyce's relation to his daughter was, Lacan concludes, 'a prolongation of his symptom', which is to say that it constituted an 'extension' of the fundamental crisis of his existence, the *carence du père* (radical absence of the father).[72] As if in confirmation of Jung's 1909 remarks (read by Joyce, as we know) on 'the predominating influence of the father's character in a family, often lasting for centuries'—the radical foreclosure of the *nom-du-père* for Joyce returns, in Lacan's view, to determine Lucia's destiny.[73]

How can we situate this 'prolongation' of the Joycean symptom? We have characterized as the 'primal scene' of Joyce's writing an 'exanimation', the traumatic rupture of the psychical boundaries 'normally' maintained by the paternal metaphor; a rupture which the writing itself then 'sutured', offered *suppléance.* We can link this to a specific aspect of the 'symptomatic' relation between father and daughter picked out by Lacan: that Joyce thinks Lucia is *telepathic.* 'Something in the domain of speech is *imposed* on her', is Lacan's paraphrase of Joyce's 'defence' of his daughter: a precise description, Lacan thinks, of what took place in one of her father's 'epiphanies' (as we saw in Stephen's encounter with the monstrous *Foetus* in the anatomy theatre, Joyce's text embodies a powerful evocation of 'verbal hallucination').

It is as if Lucia forms an integral part of Joyce's artistic self-invention—not in any metaphorical sense, but in the *real.* Ellmann recounts Lucia's tragi-comic efforts to promote her father's 'legend', inscribe his name in the real of visible history: in 1935, she travels to Dublin on a makebelieve mission 'to mend the relations of Joyce and Ireland', and sends her father a telegram declaring 'You look like Bray Head'—he looms as large, in her imagination, as the mountains dominating the Irish skyline.[74] There is a direct continuity here with the writing of *Finnegans Wake* in which Joyce was then immersed, where he carves out a 'landshape' mapping the giant form of Finn MacCool onto the geography around Dublin (a 'topographical' aspect of the text traced out in John Bishop's reading).[75]

In this sense, Jung's theorization of the relation as one of 'mystical identity' had a core of truth in it: if to posit Lucia as Joyce's 'anima' was not to rely on a metaphorical cliché (of the 'artistic muse') but implied an uncanny *psychical continuity,* an 'intrication' of souls, then Jung's intuition touched on something real. At the same time, the notion here of psychical *continuity* is, of course, itself misleading: it implies a *consistency* in representation (recalling the portrait of the

[71] Seminar of 10th February 1976 (SXXIII), *Le Sinthome, op. cit.*, p. 10.

[72] Seminar of 17th February 1976 (SXXIII), *ibid*, p. 4.

[73] C.G.Jung, 'The Significance of the Father in the Destiny of the Individual' (1909), *Collected Works of C.G.Jung*, Vol IV, London: Routledge, 1961, p. 303.

[74] Ellmann, *James Joyce, op. cit.*, pp. 681–4.

[75] John Bishop, *Joyce's Book of the Dark: Finnegans Wake*, Madison: Wisconsin University, 1986, pp. 30–41; cf. especially the relief map on p. 34.

meditating yogi which appears in the middle of Jung's reading of *Ulysses*); the attempt to avoid or overturn this imaginary economy was precisely the central stake of Lacan's final topology.

The 'continuity' or entanglement of father and daughter is due not to telepathy, but to *telegraphy*: Lucia's desperate effort to identify with Joycean writing (itself, as *sinthome*, indissociable from her father's 'self', his constitutive artistic identification)—her attempts to promote or extend, to *participate in*, his artistic being elsewhere, on another scene. The 'exanimation' of Joycean foreclosure would correspond, in this sense, to the 'anima' or imaginary in the knot falling out, into the real, as Lucia—before it is bound back through the artifice of writing.

Jung had written in his 1909 article of 'the magic power of the parents to bind their children to themselves, often for the whole of their lives'.[76] For Joyce, the tragedy of Lucia's indissoluble bond to his existence may have seemed most acute in the contrast it formed with his own *escape*, endlessly dramatized by his writing (beginning with the Daedelan flight at the end of the *Portrait*), from the 'magic power' of his own father. A vivid instance of the way Stephen's father seeks to bind his son into a closed, 'symptomatic' circle comes, in the *Portrait*, in a conversation during the nostalgic trip to Cork: an old friend of Mr Dedalus embarrasses the boy by asking 'which were the prettier, the Dublin girls or the Cork girls'.

> —He's not that way built, said Mr Dedalus. Leave him alone. He's a level-headed thinking boy who doesn't bother his head about that kind of nonsense.
>
> —Then he's not his father's son, said the little old man.
>
> —I don't know, I'm sure, said Mr Dedalus, smiling complacently.
>
> —Your father, said the little old man to Stephen, was the boldest flirt in the city of Cork in his day. Do you know that?
>
> Stephen looked down and studied the tiled floor of the bar into which they had drifted.
>
> —Now don't be putting ideas into his head, said Mr Dedalus. Leave him to his Maker (*P* 94).

As in the anatomy theatre, Stephen's encounter with his father's 'legend' causes him to shrink back from the visible scene of identification (of 'I'-contact, as it were). Here, the possibility of Stephen being addressed as a subject of desire, of the potential opening of lack in his being, is 'structurally' foreclosed by the father—'He's not that way built'—as if the son's very existence is only fixed in place by a hyperbolic 'Oedipal' prohibition. The father speaks for, *in place of*, a son who is confined to infancy, to the 'level-headed' consistency of silence. 'Leave him to his Maker' provides a clear formula for the father's self-appointed 'authorship': Stephen is *his* creation, subject to his commentary—a commentary which jealously wards off the incursion of any 'ideas' from outside.

As we have seen, Joyce's 'solution' to the paternal 'symptom'—his response to the foreclosure which seeks to wall in his subjectivity, prevent him from assuming the position of speaking subject—is to 'identify' as a writing-being, by turning away

[76] Jung, 'The Significance of the Father in the Destiny of the Individual', *op. cit.*, p. 317.

from the scene of identification which is dominated by the father to an 'autistic' experience of language (literally beyond the reach of the paternal voice and its endless recital of clichés). Joyce thus becomes his own 'Maker', left to himself in a radical, 'autistic' sense, in the breakdown of the Other: for him, language surges forth in the real, becomes a *bodily* experience which can only be mastered in the 'exanimate' identification, the singular location of the 'I' in the (real: semiotic, somatic) *inscription* itself.

The 'vicous cycle', the historical repetition, of foreclosure has to be situated in relation to the Joycean *sinthome*. Lacan's Borromean topology allows us to trace a certain 'prolongation' of a circular or cyclical effect: if, in the *Portrait*, the empty speech of the 'foreclosed' father turns in on itself, with no opening to the Other, the 'selfpenned' letter of the Joycean 'Autist'(*FW* 434) embodies a *jouissance* outside symbolic alienation (as is indicated by the term 'autism', from the Greek *autos*, 'self-same'). The knot which Lacan proposes in his work on Joyce, writes Pierre Skriabine, 'corresponds to a sort of inflection, a renewal, of the status of the symbolic itself'.[77] This is to interpret the Joycean knot as the embodiment of a split between symbol and symptom in the field of language, in Jacques-Alain Miller's terms: the function of representation (of the signifier/subject doublet, that is) is supplemented by that of the *sinthome*, the radically illegible, 'autistic' trace of *jouissance*.[78] The location of Joyce's 'identity' in the *sinthome* makes it literally unrepeatable ('it can't be repeated!', yells the Wakean 'censor'(*FW* 179)), outside the symbolic 'universal' of the Lacanian subject: in short, *impossible to identify with*.

Finnegans Wake, where this unreadability attains its full 'paperspace', includes in one of its lists a verbal object which we could interpret as an indication of the impossible dimension of Joycean paternity: the 'hapaxle gomenon' (*FW* 116) encapsulates the *sinthome* as something unique, unrepeatable (a *hapax legomenon* is an expression in philology for 'a thing said once', an absolutely singular linguistic event); the slice of Joyce's 'penstroke' separates 'hapaxle'—an axle, the support of the cyclical motion of a wheel—from 'gomenon', an intriguing word in which the Greek *gomos* ('bolt', 'fixture') blends anagrammatically with a cluster of Joycean signifiers ('gnomon', 'noman', 'nemon') which echo throughout his work as versions of the 'nego' he first introduces in one of his earliest writings, 'A Portrait of the Artist'—the author as *outis*, 'nobodyatall'.[79] As 'hapaxle gomenon', Joyce's writing fixes in place the symptomatic ring which binds or bolts together the knot, its unique instance not forming part of any signifying chain which could represent the 'writer complexus' (*FW* 114) of a subject or an author.

Symbolic identification, the instantiation of the subject as an effect of unconscious desire, is for Lacan always caught up in, determined by, a *triangular* economy. The Name-of-the-Father intervenes as an effect of metaphorical substitution to open the diadic relation of mother and child to the Other, to prevent that relation folding in on itself and stalling the emergence of the subject. We could

[77] Pierre Skriabine, 'Clinique et topologie', *op. cit.*, p. 130.

[78] cf. Jacques-Alain Miller, Préface, *Joyce Avec Lacan*, *op. cit.*, pp. 10–12.

[79] Joyce, 'A Portrait of the Artist' (1904), *Poems and Shorter Writings*, *op. cit.*, p. 218; *Finnegans Wake*, *op. cit.*, p. 73.

revise our earlier discussion of the 'transferential' economy set up between Jung, Joyce and Lucia by situating the topology of the *sinthome* as a singular catastrophe or 'disarticulation' of the triangle (Oedipal, topological): the 'hapaxle gomenon' of Joyce embodies a *circularity*, a topology with 'Doublends Jined' (*FW* 20) like the textual stream of the *Wake*. Joyce's daughter Lucia is bound into this symptomatic 'cycle', completely absorbed by the flow of Joycean writing, closed off to any symbolic 'triangulation' (thus Jung's correct diagnosis that there was little possibility of *Uberträgung* in her case).

In the terms of Lacanian topology, Joyce's knot is not 'really' Borromean: it is not tied properly, to form a balanced, ordered interrelation of real, symbolic and imaginary, but is drastically 'skewed' by its reliance on the *sinthome* for coherence. The movement and 'play' of the Borromean knot, which for Lacan is the topological equivalent of the subject as a space of signifying displacement, is radically hampered by the 'prosthetic' fourth register in Joyce, which bolts in place the 'subject' as 'aspace of dumbillsilly' (*espèce d'imbécile*, as Lacan translates: a kind of 'idiot', doomed to symptomatic 'privacy' [Gk *idios*, 'private', 'own'], to remain 'dumb, ill, silly').[80] On the other hand, the special 'bias' of the Joycean knot enabled it to embody a level of *poesis*, a unique kind of aesthetic 'factification', which is foreclosed or primordially repressed from the topology of the *parlêtre*, the subject as speaking-being.

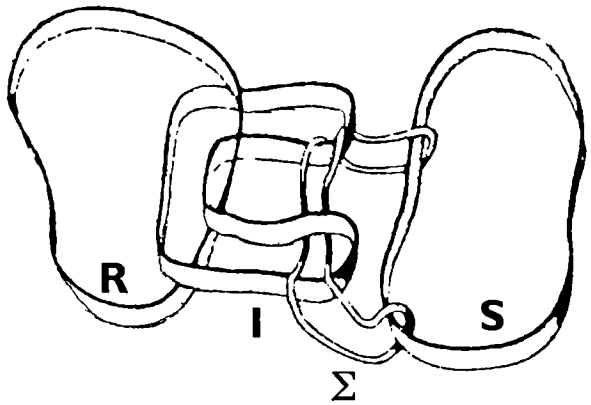

Figure 5: the *sinthome* prevents un-knotting

v) 'One eyegonblack': eye-trouble and 'I'-trouble

> Symbolic exchange is what links human beings to each other, that is, it is speech, and it makes it possible to identify the subject.[81]

Lacan's remarks of 1954, when read alongside the problematic of Joycean foreclosure he explores twenty years later, give a clear sense of the transformation, but also the underlying continuity, of his thought. Joyce's *sinthome* certainly 'links

[80] cf. 'Joyce le symptôme I', in *Joyce Avec Lacan*, *op. cit.*, p. 26.
[81] Seminar of 31st March 1954 (SI), *op. cit.*, p. 142.

human beings to each other', but in the case of Lucia, as we have seen, this bond is not the result of any socio-symbolic 'exchange', but of abortive subjectivation. To return to Lacan's early seminars is to gain a more sharply focused sense of what is at stake in the topological reading of Joyce, especially around its repositioning of the imaginary (in the ego's 'lapse' from the knot and its return as the *Ich* of the 'symptomatic' identification).

The imaginary, Lacan declares in Seminar I, is a *moment de virage* (a 'turning point'—like the 'swerving' or 'banking' on the corner of a race-track) in which the subject loses itself in a 'fundamental alienation'.[82] The subject of psychoanalysis is, of course, 'decentred' in relation to the ego, as Lacan insists the following year, 1955. But the 'ideal of analysis'—to put in place a subject 'beyond the imaginary'—'remains virtual': 'There is never a subject without an ego, a fully realised subject, but that in fact is what one must aim to obtain ... in analysis'.[83] If this anticipates the Borromean period in its emphasis on the indissociability of Lacan's theoretical registers, by 1964 the unavoidable *virage* of imaginary alienation will be figured as a kind of incurable 'blindness':

> Psychoanalysis regards the consciousness as irremediably limited, and institutes it as a principle, not only of idealization, but of *méconnaissance*, as—using a term that takes on new value by being referred to a visible domain—*scotoma*.[84]

The identificatory *Urbild* of the ego's genesis (the Mirror stage) sets up, Lacan asserted, the entire horizon of consciousness as a 'principle' of *scotomization* (an opthalmological term referring to retinal lesion which Charcot had borrowed for his description of hysterical 'blindness').[85] The 'geometrical dimension of vision'—at once ineluctable and 'scotomizing'—thus constitutes an economy of representation (of *self*-representation) which takes analysis on a *virage* into the fictions of the ego, its constitutive and symptomatic misrecognition. Lacan's work sets itself the task, constantly re-invented over the course of his teaching, of thinking beyond this 'geometry' (thus, ultimately, of thinking 'beyond' the limitations of consciousness: something which Lacan feels he has achieved with the introduction of the Borromean knot).[86]

The 'split between the eye and the gaze' which Lacan presents in Seminar XI, with reference to Holbein's anamorphic painting, is one version of this theoretical ideal. This 'split' in the field of representation coincided, argues Lacan, with the inaugural historical 'break' of modernity: 'at the very heart of the period in which the subject emerged and geometrical optics was an object of research',

> Holbein makes visible for us here something that is simply the subject as annihilated—annihilated in the form that is ... the imaged embodiment of the *minus-phi* of

[82]Seminar of 7th April 1954 (SI), *op. cit.*, p. 146.

[83]Seminar of 25th May 1955 (SII), *op. cit.*, p. 246.

[84]Seminar of 26th February 1964 (SXI), *op. cit.*, pp. 82–3.

[85]cf. Elisabeth Roudinesco, *La Bataille de cent ans: Histoire de la psychanalyse en France* (Vol.1, 1885–1939), Paris: Seuil, 1986, pp. 388ff.

[86]Cf. Lacan's seminar at Yale University on 24th November 1975: 'Borromean knots are not easy either to show or to demonstrate, because one absolutely cannot represent them to oneself'. *Scilicet* 6/7, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

castration, which for us, centres the whole organization of the desires through the framework of the fundamental drives.[87]

What is revealed is the representational incommensurability between the 'geometry' of consciousness and the absolute negativity of the Kojevean subject, the symbolic *annéantisation* which organizes the real, sets in place a topological 'framework'. The space beyond the perspectival *virage* of the imaginary can only be glimpsed obliquely in the anamorphic 'rip' of representation: by definition, the 'annihilated' subject is itself invisible, a space cut out of the field of signification (in its status as 'transcendental condition' of that field).

The introduction of the Borromean knot, of course, alters the position of the symbolic, in that it corresponds to the shift from a subject situated by the neat economy of castration to one caught up in a complex topological intrication, the unimaginable over—and under-crossings of *nodalité*. 'It is very difficult to think about knots—this is something most commonly done with the eyes closed', comments Lacan in 1975.[88] The visible scene of conscious *theoria* (Gk. 'spectacle') is a mere distraction from the task of thinking *borroméenement*, in a 'Borromean' manner. To this extent, Lacan's last topology is not an attempt to represent the subject, to restore it to consistent visibility: it claims to have dispensed with the fictional detours of 'truth' (the 'deception' which Lacan had set out in Seminar XI as the paradoxical dimension of truth), to have cut through the *virage* of egoic misrecognition to the real, non-metaphorical structure itself.[89]

The reformulation of foreclosure which was part of this re-writing of the subject entailed, as we have seen, a new problematic of *dénouement*, 'unknotting'. The Joycean epiphany thus constituted a foreclosure more radical than that corresponding to the psychotic breakdown of symbolic 'alienation': the 'fundamental alienation' of the imaginary, the constitutive 'geometry' of the conscious ego, is topologically excluded, unravelling the structural organization of the knot as it falls away. If Lacan's own topological 'writing' entails *une géométrie interdite à l'imaginaire*, an unimaginable geometry, there is clearly a rigorous equivalence intended here between theory and its 'object' (in accordance with the 1960 formula on the non-existence of a metalanguage).[90] Joyce's writing is *literally* a topological 'geometry' which, like Lacan's, does away with the alienation, the bounded psychology of the imaginary, becomes 'immarginable' (although Lacan is perplexed not to be able to find the slightest trace of the Borromean knot in Joyce's work).

'The ineluctable modality of the visible' (*U* 31), in the famous formulation made by Stephen Dedalus during his walk along the beach in *Ulysses*, is an enduring topic of Joyce's writing. If the *sinthome* is part of a topology which, Lacan claimed, could only be thought *les yeux fermés*—because it constitutes a break with the representational limits of the imaginary—we might seek to trace this in the endless preoccupation of the Joycean text with vision and blindness (which is also, as we shall see, bound up with Joyce's own 'real' symptomatic eye-trouble).

[87]Seminar of 26th February 1964 (SXI), *op. cit.*, pp. 88–89.
[88]Seminar of 9th December 1975 (SXXIII), *Le Sinthome*, *op. cit.*, p. 12.
[89]cf. Seminar of 22nd April 1964 (SXI), *op. cit.*, pp. 139–41.
[90]cf. Lacan, 'Subversion of the Subject', *Écrits: A Selection*, *op. cit.*, p. 311.

We have already noted how Joyce's early writing sets forth the question of vocation (figured by Lacan as one of *père-version*) in terms of the 'portrait', of a consistent subjective self-presentation 'framed' by the paternal metaphor. We can use an incident reported by Ellmann as a first gloss on the 'topology' of Joyce's youthful portrait. During the period when Joyce was first establishing his artistic 'calling', he sought the opinion of an established authority: contriving, with a great show of nonchalance, to encounter the well-known poet W.B.Yeats, Joyce read him some of the epiphanies. Yeats' judgement, expressed to friends later, is alleged to have been quite Swiftian: 'Such a colossal self-conceit with such a Lilliputian literary genius I never saw combined in one person'.[91]

The 'topology' of this Yeatsian 'portrait', its modernist flaunting of perspective, perhaps gives us a first glimpse of the re-orientation of the imaginary which will emerge in Joyce's writing. The best-known 'visual' passage in Joyce comes at the beginning of 'Proteus', the third episode of *Ulysses*. The *monologue intérieure* running through the mind of Stephen Dedalus as he walks along Sandymount Strand takes him back to the first trip he (and the real Joyce) had made to Paris, and to the philosophy he had read there: his thoughts drift from Aristotle ('Diaphane, adiaphane') to Berkeley, the 'good bishop of Cloyne' for whom the 'veil of space' was a pure product of the mind (which he took 'out of his shovel hat') (*U* 31–40). If Stephen rejects this idealism, conceiving the visible as somehow 'out there'—beyond the agency of the seeing subject—the visual field through which he moves is nevertheless drastically 'centred', *autoscopique* (to cite Merleau-Ponty's term). Stephen imagines 'Signatures of all things I am here to read': nature seems to offer him a 'readerly' text, signed by some consistent authorial presence.

Here, Joyce's mocking self-portrait sets up a discrepancy between a theoretical acknowledgement on the part of the character—of an ever-changing, 'protean' visuality, structured by an 'ineluctable' alterity—and the representational *consistence* of the scene: Stephen's 'brooding' gaze, together with his speculations 'thought through my eyes', maintains a narrowly-focused, 'egoic' narrative. The field of Stephen's vision is likewise littered with images of bodily containment—orifices, slits (the bottle 'stogged to its waist' in the sand; the corpse with its 'buttoned trouserfly'): like the rhythm which gives structure to the train-journey in the *Portrait*, the bounded objects on the beach provide the narrative 'eye' with 'a refuge from the gaze', to invoke the terms Lacan develops in Seminar XI—an identificatory structure which offers relief from scopic 'anonymity' or passivity. Stephen's gestures towards philosophy, too, form part of his efforts to 'button' or suture an imaginary field which he senses tearing open or slipping away: just as an 'avoidance of the function of the gaze' is at work, according to Lacan, in 'that form of vision which is satisfied with itself in imagining itself as consciousness', so 'the philosophical tradition represented by plenitude encountered by the subject in the mode of contemplation' fails to grasp the essential dimension of visuality: its topological incommensurability with the imaginary.[92]

[91] Ellmann, *James Joyce*, *op. cit.*, p. 101.

[92] Seminar of 19th February 1964 (SXI), *op. cit.*, p. 74.

If Stephen's experience of vision is structured by his efforts to theorize it as a centred, bounded 'modality' (a philosophical term for the logical classification of propositions), we are given a very different *Schauplatz* in 'Cyclops', the twelfth episode of *Ulysses*. To cut from Stephen's 'thought through my eyes' straight to the opening of the later episode is to recall Jung's description of Joyce's work as 'cubistic': 'Cyclops' begins with the outraged protest of its anonymous narrator against 'a bloody sweep' who 'came along and ... near drove his gear into my eye' (*U* 240). The assault on 'cycloptic' vision corresponds to the modernist shattering of representational 'geometry' into abruptly discontinuous perspectives and narrative voices (the Homeric Cyclops is, of course, *Polyphemos*, the 'many-voiced'). The 'I' of the narrative, appearing as a strained effort at egoic self-assertion (with its repetition of 'Ay, says I'), cuts a comic figure in this fragmented scene: shorn of the illusory visual and narrative control of 'Proteus', with its imagery of containment, its legible 'signatures', the narrative 'eye' is now buffeted by violent switches of perspective, flung into a representational 'anonymity', a 'blind' textuality whose author is *outis* ('noman', the pseudonym with which Odysseus beguiles the Cyclops).

If the narrator of 'Cyclops' embodies the outrage of the imaginary at being 'blinded' (one of the perennial figures of castration, of course, according to Freud), Stephen's theoretical musings in 'Proteus' aim to contain the outbreak of anxiety provoked by such a fracture of identity or loss of imaginary consistence. *Finnegans Wake* will add to these ambivalent pictures, with their mixed anguish and humour, a portrait of self-loss as black comedy:

> It would have diverted, if ever seen, the shuddersome spectacle of this semidemented zany amid the inspissated grime of his glaucous den making believe to read his usylessly unreadable Blue Book of Eccles, *édition de ténèbres*... (*FW* 179)

The portrait, like the whole of the *Wake*, is set in the dark. It can only be read in a make-believe *édition de ténèbres* (which is precisely not an 'edition' because it only puts forth darkness, unreadable obscurity); the spectator's imagination would have to be 'diverted' from the visible domain where things are readable, where signs have some representational function, to operate 'usylessly', if it is to enter the 'glaucous den' of the book. The modernist breakdown of the 'portrait' and its signifying economy (its legible, 'autoscopic' imaginary)—which in *Ulysses* first begins to impinge upon, to fray the edges of, Stephen's theoretical 'modality', before sweeping away the self-identity of the 'eye' in 'Cyclops'—is raised to a new power in the carnivalesque (but nonetheless 'shuddersome') 'spectacle' of *Finnegans Wake*.

Here, we could read the intricate pun 'usylessly unreadable' as a kind of Joycean *prescription* (as if this version of *Ulysses* could be written on the book's cover, in a direct address to the reading public). If the reader is thus warned by its title that the book is useless and unreadable, Joyce's *jeu de mots* also comprises, as Jacques Derrida notes in his *Mémoirs d'aveugle*, a pun on 'eye-less'. 'Use eye-lessly', the book's cover instructs its reader: with no expectation of a consistent economy of representation governed by an authorial 'I'.[93]

[93] Jacques Derrida, *Mémoirs d'aveugle: L'autoportrait et autres ruines*, Paris: Éditions de la Réunion des musées nationaux, 1990, p. 33.

Joyce's writing engages with, presents, embodies, a rupture of the 'geometry' or visuality organized in accordance with the imaginary limits of the ego's self-representation. For Lacan, however, this is not simply to be noted as a feature of the stylistic revolution accomplished by Joycean art, in a characteristically modernist break with traditional protocols of representation; rather, it constitutes the essential condition of the *sinthome*—in other words, of Joyce's very *existence*, his survival as a special kind of subject. How are we to link the 'eye-less' economy of Joyce's writing to the symptomatic *real* of Joycean biography?

Joyce suffered from real eye-trouble, which towards the end of his life became very severe. An inflammation of his left iris and a glaucoma grew worse over time, despite numerous painful operations; he eventually lost all sight in one eye (and became effectively blind in both). A Lacanian analyst, Jean Guir, has linked this eye-trouble to the theory of the Joycean *sinthome*:

> Joyce was physically well when he was writing, anchoring his ideal ego (I) in the words and rhythms that carried him along as a subject ... When he was not writing, he suffered from a severe glaucoma that disappeared spontaneously once he took up the pen again.[94]

The 'glaucous den' of *Finnegans Wake* would thus be a scene where literary and 'psychosomatic' modes of blindness are strangely knotted together. In Guir's view, the structural rhythm of the *sinthome* salvages a certain topological coherence by 'anchoring' the imaginary as an instance of writing, so that the interruption of this effect of 'metaphor' would result in the 'shipwreck' of the subject, as it were, in a traumatic storm of *jouissance*: the outbreak of the symptomatic real, with the 'lapse' of the ego corresponding to a real 'foreclosure' of the visible field where it was installed. If Joyce's glaucoma disappears in 'One eyegonblack' (the Wakean translation of the German *ein Augenblick*, an 'eye-blink')(*FW* 16) once his pen is in his hand, this would only confirm the *scriptural* status of his blindness, its intransigent, unceasing writing as *sinthome* or symptom.

Does the 'literary' status of a symptom—the fact that its incidence on the body is bound up with the rhythms of artistic creation—displace or subvert the distinction between the body as 'imaginary' and as 'real'? How can we situate Lacan's hypothesis about Joyce—of an existence structurally wedded to the production of a written text—in relation to the complex questions of authorship raised by Joyce's work, and the broader aesthetic context of modernism in which they emerge?

vi) Portrait of the Autist

Let us return to the position of the *sinthome* within the 'algebra of letters' of Lacanian topology.[95] In his seminar of 16th December 1975, Lacan outlines this position with a simple schema: [96]

[94] Jean Guir, *Psychosomatique et cancer*, Paris: Points Hors Ligne, 1983, p. 17.

[95] The phrase *algèbre littérale*, which I translate here as 'algebra of letters', is from *L'Étourdit*, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

[96] Seminar of 16th December 1975 (SXXIII), *Le Sinthome*, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

R	S	I
S	I	R
I	R	S

sinthome

The line (or 'bar') in Lacan's schemas always has a decisive significance: here, a line separates the *sinthome*, the 'fourth element' in the knot, from the Borromean *combinatoire* of R, S and I—thus indicating the improper or 'extimate' place of the *suppléance* in the knot, its exteriority to the intricate Borromean mesh. The *sinthome* is a 'litter' in an algebra of letters: it cannot be fully absorbed into the economy of signification; it retains, bears the weight of, a symptomatic particularity irreducible to theoretical 'alienation'.

We can use this schema to begin an attempt to draw together the different strands in our reading of Lacan's Joycean knot. The status of the *sinthome*, we recall, is not that of a mere predicate, an attribute of 'Joyce the subject', something he *has*: it is, rather, the site of a special kind of identification, of an 'I' which inscribes itself in a 'selfpenned' literary signature. In other words, Joyce *is* the *sinthome*, as Lacan already insisted in his address to the 1975 Symposium: the fourth 'element' is the *title* of the knot (as the schema seems to indicate by placing it below the line, outside the 'picture'), so that one of the knot's components coincides paradoxically with the entire knot, the essential *identity* of its 'knottedness'.

If the Freudian knot, in Serge André's classification, is kept together by the Name-of-the-Father (situated in the unconscious space of the subject: of *Es* written as 'S'), the Joycean knot is not guarantied by such a decisive instance of metaphorical closure. The 'split between symbol and symptom' which marks a redefined symbolic order is part of a general topological re-orientation, whose effect is to displace the fundamental principles of the Freudian *Topik*: the act which embodies Joyce's response to 'radical foreclosure', according to Lacan, through which the lapsed 'I' is recuperated in the *sinthomatique* instance of writing, is a *conscious* act: the artistic self-creation of an *Ich* which 'turns its back on' the Other. The Joycean knot, then, is not secured by the heteronomous signifying instance of the unconscious subject, but founded on a self-constitutive writing, an *auto-graphy*. In the opening session of *Le Sinthome*, Lacan provides a topological *mise à plat* which gives a sense of how the Borromean knot is re-oriented according to 'the duplicity of symbol and symptom':[97]

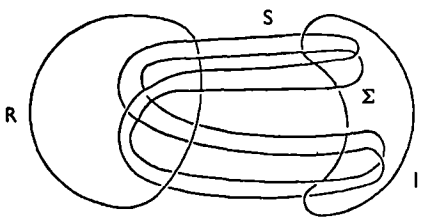

Figure 6: the split between symbol and symptom

[97]Seminar of 18th November 1975 (SXXIII), *Le Sinthome*, in *Joyce Avec Lacan*, *op. cit.*, pp. 45–7. Diagram from *Scilicet* 6/7, p. 57.

This returns us to a familiar notion in psychoanalysis: the idea that psychosis is a condition outside (or at least in a radically singular position: on the edge of) the economy of repression which sets in place the representational consistency of the unconscious. If Joyce is *désabonné à l'inconscient*, has 'cancelled his subscription' to the unconscious, this is because for Lacan his very *existence* is a 'symptom': an attempt to write a 'selfpenned letter', beyond symbolic alienation, to body forth the real of which only faint echoes ever reach the surface of analytic speech. It was no surprise, Lacan thought, that this existence culminated in an effort to write a 'book of the dark', an *édition de ténèbres* where the dream itself—the 'royal road' which had led Freud to the unconscious—would wind forth on 'the broadest way immarginable'(*FW* 489).

The Freudian term *Verdrängung* ('repression') marked, for Lacan, the place where the signifier inscribed a 'hole' (*trou*) in the real. This was the instance of the symbolic register in the 'ideal' Borromean knot: to support the *evidement* which corresponds to the subject's lack-of-being, to allow desire to take place as a consistent 'nihilation'. The 'impropriety' of the Joycean knot found its topological index in a modification of this symbolic function: '[I]n the articulation of the symptom to the symbol, there is only a false hole'.[98] The split in the symbolic order opens up a space of *trompe l'oeil* in the topology of the knot, where the *sinthome* emerges as a 'sham' symbol (as a 'Shemptôme', Lacan jokes in *Joyce le symptôme*) which only *seems* to offer support to a subjective *annéantisation*, the symbolic abolition of the real.[99]

The place of the *faux trou* thus introduced to the knot is radically ambiguous: on the one hand, its function is to stand in for the absent paternal metaphor, which would have opened a genuine 'hole' or subjectivation in the real; it thus serves to keep the knot together, to salvage a certain coherence by binding back in the 'foreclosed' imaginary. At the same time, it *fails* to properly mortify the real, to install an *Urverdrängung* which would fix in place a symbolic règime (governed by a 'Rock of Gibraltar', in Fink's phrase) to regulate the unruly domain of *jouissance*.

So the *sinthome* achieves its 'shemblance' of subjectivity without fully sacrificing its *jouissance*, undergoing the 'symbolic castration' which Lacan had posited as the indispensable precondition of the speaking-being. This was not to imagine Joyce as some sublime mythical figure, like the Freudian *Urvater*, capable of transcending any subjection to the symbolic order—but to conceive his work as a paradoxical combination of different linguistic destinies: the failure, on the one hand, of the paternal metaphor (making for the opaque, illegible quality of the symptom); and on the other, the 'pursuit' or self-willed adoption of that failure, of the 'autistic' experience of language it leaves behind, which Joyce takes as an epiphany or revelation of his artistic vocation. The 'selfpenned letter' of Joyce's art would thus be 'opened by mistake': its primal scene entailing a radical *faute* in the knot, it avoids psychotic unravelling by adopting the *faux trou*, the 'sham' symbol, as its self-designated truth, the basis for its own kind of subjectivity.

[98]Seminar of 18th November 1975 (SXXIII), *Le Sinthome*, *op. cit.*, p. 8.
[99]'Joyce le symptôme I', in *Joyce Avec Lacan*, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

The question of inadequate symbolic mortification—of the failure of the symbol to function properly, according to the 1953 formula, as 'the murder of the Thing'—provides us with a way of linking Lacan's topological reading of Joyce to the 'death of the author' made famous by Roland Barthes: to the issue, that is, of the representational position of the subject in the aesthetic field opened up by modernism. How can we situate Lacan's notion of Joycean writing as a special symptomatic self-constitution—which we might see dramatized in *Finnegans Wake* as the identification with a 'polyphemous' textuality whose publication will make its author's name and thus make him 'Whòlyphamous' (*FW* 73)—in relation to the general problematic outlined by Barthes of the *dissolution* of authorial presence in the polysemic modernist text?

'The modern *scriptor*', declares Barthes,

> having buried the author, can therefore no longer believe ... that his hand is slower than his passion ...; for him, on the contrary, his hand, detached from any voice ... traces a field without origin —or at least with no origin but language itself, ie., the very thing which ceaselessly calls any origin into question.[100]

As we shall see, what 'buries the author' in Lacan's view is not the depthless field of the Other—the alienating, inhuman structures of the symbolic order—but the traumatic real which is held at bay, given organization, by precisely those structures.

If the 'death of the author' means nothing more than the prevalence of the signifying unconscious over the illusory forms of the ego, Lacan would of course recognize in this the principle theme of his work in the 1950s. By the 1970s, however, Lacan had begun to insist on maintaining a sharp theoretical distinction between the logic of speech and that of writing, and thus would have rejected Barthes' notion of the *text* as 'a field without origin'. Such an idea of writing would be simply another version of the 'precipitation of the signifier' Lacan ascribes to Derrida in 1976: the hyperbolization of the symbolic function, at the expense of the *real* dimension of writing, its irreducibility to mere semiotic difference.

Thus, Barthes' claim that 'the writer can only imitate an ever anterior, never original gesture', his dispersal of authorial presence into an endless proliferation and deferral of *signifiance*, would amount to a mere acknowledgement, in Lacan's view, of the position of the subject caught up in the endless ciphering of a linguistic unconscious. Freud had given this 'field without origin' a name with the term *Weiderholungszwang*, 'repetition compulsion', whose principle Lacan had located, as early as the Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter', in 'the *insistence* of the signifying chain'.[101] Writing, in its redefinition as the 'littoral' trace of *jouissance* in the field of meaning, constituted for Lacan precisely the *disruption* of this well-oiled economy of signifying repetition—the emergence of an 'originality', an uncanny anomaly or anamorphic blot which de-rails the endless substitution of signifiers.

How can we link these questions to Joyce's theories of the artist and his relation to his work? For Barthes, the 'death of the author' indicates a decisive historical break between an illusory 'centred' subjective agency and a modernist 'scriptor',

[100] Roland Barthes, 'The Death of the Author', *op. cit.*, p. 52.

[101] 'The Death of the Author', *op. cit.*, p. 53; *Écrits*, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

the pure instance of liberated *style* realized in twentieth-century art. Jean-Michel Rabaté notes how in Joyce these questions turn around the ambiguity of 'subject', so that the Joycean problem of the 'author' should be understood as bound up with a central modernist aesthetic ideal—the attempt to produce an artwork whose style, honed to an extreme density or purity, completely eclipses its 'content' (thus to write 'a book about nothing', as Flaubert puts it).[102]

As we have indicated, this question of the erasure of the 'subject' in writing can be understood in Lacanian terms as a failure or refusal of symbolic mortification. If we return to the moment in the *Portrait* when Stephen is musing about his vocation, we can locate a crucial feature of Joycean writing here: its resistance to a certain effect of *decision*. In the 'dim scenes' of Stephen's imagination, where he pictures himself as part of an ecclesiastical ritual combining a 'semblance of reality' with an aesthetic 'distance' from the real world, he shrinks back from the 'clear and final ... office' of the priest who celebrates Mass because 'it displeased him to imagine that all the vague pomp should end in his person'(*P* 158–9). The 'clear and final' position of celebrant would embody the closing punctuation in the aesthetic ritual, its decisive act: like the Freudian *Lösung* of an artistic or symptomatic 'riddle', the final situation or identification of the subject would close down the proliferating substance of *jouissance*, install a mortifying effect of signification.

Stephen's self-proclaimed calling as an artist is initially framed as a deliberate refusal to be subject to the degrading mechanism of symbolic identification. Joyce's earliest artistic 'manifesto', 'A Portrait of the Artist', written in 1904, makes a clear distinction between a worldly scene which 'recognises its acquaintance chiefly by the characters of beard and inches' and the solitary band of true artists for whom 'a portrait is not an indentificative paper but rather the curve of an emotion'.[103] The being of the artist is incommensurable with the mundane sphere of socio-symbolic evidence, of the historically 'certified': his portrait is not a 'clear and final' certificate of identity but the stream or trace of some aesthetic particularity: something demanding endless interpretation.

It is thus as a *refusal of symbolic mortification*, a refusal to allow the aesthetic 'Thing' to be murdered or finished off by an act of interpretation, that Joyce's writing first imagines itself. It soon became apparent, of course, that this *fin de siècle*, quasi-Symbolist notion of the sanctity of art was hopelessly idealist; in particular from the moment when Joyce began to try to get his work published. In a letter to his brother Stanislaus, written during his long and anguished struggle to see *Dubliners* in print, Joyce reports the suspicious questions asked by a publisher about his text:

> He asked me very narrowly, was there sodomy also in 'The Sisters' and what was 'simony' and if the priest was suspended only for the breaking of the chalice. He asked me also was there more in 'The Dead' than appeared.[104]

[102] Jean-Michel Rabaté, *James Joyce, Authorized Reader* (1984), Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1991, pp. 3–6.

[103] 'A Portrait of the Artist', *op. cit.*, p. 211.

[104] *The Letters of James Joyce* Vol 2, ed Richard Ellmann, New York: Viking 1966, pp. 305–6.

The publisher thus reads Joyce's book precisely as an 'identificative paper', entirely continuous with the everyday realm of event and supposition. Both 'sodomy' and 'simony' seem to him to echo a similar kind of obscure sinfulness which might be lurking in some recess at the back of the text. The possibility of there being 'more' in a story 'than appeared', a sort of anamorphic distortion suggesting something beyond the immediately legible surface, emerges as an ironic consequence of Joyce's artistic refusal of any 'clear and final' subject-position: *of course there is* 'more in 'The Dead' than appeared'—not some further 'fact' whose revelation would dispel the publisher's doubts, however, but the irreducible signature of Joyce's existence as 'man of letters'.

In one sense, this 'narrow' reading of *Dubliners* by the publisher resembles psychoanalytic reading, of the kind we saw exemplified in Freud's interpretation of *Hamlet*. Freud, we recall, claimed to have 'translated into conscious terms what was bound to remain unconscious in Hamlet's mind': the suspicion of something 'more than appeared' in the text itself, some obscure secret beyond its representational surface, was answered by supplying the play with a signifying *finality*: a set of specifically 'Oedipal' fantasies grafted on to a character's supposed 'mind'. If Joyce's publisher wishes to deal only with a *fully legible* text, one freed from any anamorphic blur which might suggest something occult or dubious, we were able to trace the same desire in Freud's reading of *Hamlet* as an uncanny repetition of the play's abyssal 'Mousetrap': the attempt to dispel obscurity through the staging of truth, to make the play fully 'extant' in a decisive moment of examination or revelation.

The critical appeal to a 'final cause' of signification behind the surface of the text was, of course, the main target of Barthes' polemic in 'The Death of the Author'. The 'psyche' invoked by Freudian interpretation was for Barthes just another 'hypostasis' of the Author, a way of perpetuating his pre-modernist tyranny in a more subtle guise.[105] There is *nothing more* in the text than appears, Barthes insists: the scene 'beyond' it, with all its metaphysical baggage ('society, history ... freedom') ultimately the property of the defunct Author, is simply a trick of perspective, an ideological ruse to divert the reader from an engagement with the pure signifying surface of writing. However, it is significant that in Barthes' article the 'clear and final office' (to return to Joyce's phrase for the decisive symbolic instance) which is denied to the Author is not itself abolished, lost in the unmasterable dissemination of textuality: it is simply transferred to the reader—who is now, Barthes declares, born as a new authority of signification.[106]

We saw how Lacan took up the reading of *Hamlet* in an attempt to reconceive the psychoanalytic account of fantasy—focusing first on the prince's relation to Ophelia—and were able to clarify this by referring it to the problematic of anamorphosis which Lacan introduced a year later, in Seminar VII. Thus, in turn, the ghost of Hamlet's father could be read as a Shakespearian version of the anamorphic blur, its 'questionable shape' disfiguring the scene of signification, threatening to 'dismantle' the representational space of the subject; which is what in effect takes

[105] Barthes, 'The Death of the Author', *op. cit.*, p. 53.
[106] *Ibid*, p. 55.

place with the performance of 'The Mousetrap', where the socio-symbolic organization of the royal court is unravelled by the ghostly revelation.

In 'The Death of the Author', Barthes effectively wishes to abolish, to 'exorcize', this anamorphic ghost from the scene of critical interpretation. What he seeks to hand over at the close of his article to the newly-authorized reader is a text purged of any trace of the real—purged, that is, not only of the kind of naive realism shown by the Dublin publisher, but of *anything* irreducible to the free play of the signifier. The 'undiscovered country' of Hamlet's soliloquy cannot correspond, in Barthes' view, to any aspect of the text but an imaginary one, something conjured up by an effect of *trompe l'oeil* which beguiles us, makes us overlook the pure surface of writing.

Lacan's seminars on *Hamlet* mark the last point in his work where we might be able to detect there any echo of the thesis of the 'death of the author'. (Shakespeare's play was seen by Lacan in 1959 to dramatize, we recall, the subject's fate 'expressed in terms of a pure signifier'). The introduction of anamorphosis in 1960 begins the process of framing the aesthetic instance as set apart from, topologically incommensurable with, the economy of subjectivation—a process which culminates in the Joycean *sinthome*. For Lacan, Joyce's writing is 'founded on the void' (like the world, in Stephen's declaration in 'Scylla and Charybdis') (*U* 170): in other words, it begins 'from scratch' as an attempt to salvage a 'foreclosed' subjectivity.

The signifier, in Lacan's very 'Kojevean' statement of 1956, 'materializes the agency of death [*l'instance de la mort*]'.[107] Foreclosure is, of course, the failure of this *instance*, whereby something *refuses to die*: thus, the psychotic encounters, suffers from, a real which imposes itself from beyond the domain of signification and subjectivation. This predicament is subsequently 'generalized' by Lacan with the matheme $S(\not{A})$, which posits a certain inherent or structural deficiency in the symbolic order, a *défaut dans l'univers* in Lacan's phrase from *L'Étourdit*.[108]

The anamorphic ghost which appears in *Hamlet* constituted a 'hole in existence' which jeopardized the whole system of signifiers, according to Lacan's reading of 1959.[109] We saw how Shakespeare dramatized Hamlet's attempts to patch up this hole, restore the symbolic consistency of the Other, which eventually lead to 'The Mousetrap', the symbolic 'murder' of the ghostly Thing (to invoke Lacan's term from Seminar VII). After the players' performance has driven Claudius and his semblance of royalty off-stage, Hamlet feels he has acheived a decisive 'solution' (like a Freudian *Lösung*) to the riddles of the play, dispelled its obscurity, made it fully *legible*.

In *Ulysses*, Stephen Dedalus sees himself adopting the role of Shakespeare's prince, donning a 'Hamlet hat' and imagining Sandymount as Elsinore (*U* 40); likewise, he has his own encounter with an uncanny, spectral Thing. Indeed, the first 'hole in existence' he confronts comes in the 'verbal hallucination' which overwhelms him in the anatomy theatre of the *Portrait*—the inscription *Foetus* which 'startled his blood'—opening a traumatic 'unworldly' space before which the metaphorical

[107] Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter', *Écrits*, *op. cit.*, p. 24; *The Purloined Poe*, *op. cit.*, p. 38.
[108] *L'Étourdit*, *op. cit.*, p. 34; for Pierre Skriabine, this 'lack in the universe' is the fundamental principle of Lacanian topology (cf. 'Clinique et Topologie', *op. cit.*, pp. 119–20).
[109] Seminar of 22nd April 1959 (SVI), 'Desire and the Interpretation of Desire in *Hamlet*', *op. cit.*, p. 38

effect of subjectivity buckles, breaks down. Similarly, in *Ulysses*, the ghost of Stephen's mother appears as an extimate hole or defect in the field of symbolic existence—she is even, when she finally emerges in the monstrous, phantasmatic real of 'Circe', taxed by her son with embodying the 'lack in the Other' in a very literal sense: with harbouring its missing signifier, the mysterious 'word known to all men', which she refuses to utter (*U* 474).

Like Hamlet, then, Stephen encounters a ghost; and the writing which constitutes his response to that encounter entails, in the first instance, a *spectral* aesthetics. 'He will have it that *Hamlet* is a ghoststory', as John Eglinton says wearily in 'Scylla and Charybdis', the episode of *Ulysses* where Stephen expounds his theory of the play. Having come across Nicholas Rowe's anecdote according to which Shakespeare himself took the part of the ghost on the opening night of the first production, Stephen deduces that the ghost is the mark in the text of the authorial presence, and that *Hamlet* should thus be read as a quasi-autobiographical treatment of betrayal and feminine infidelity, filled with the details of a troubled family life (*U* 154–6). At first sight, perhaps, Stephen's theory of *Hamlet* recalls the naive realism Joyce encountered in his publisher: a desire to resolve the literary enigma by referring it to, 'dissolving' it in, the hard facts of everyday reality, so that the possibility of 'something more than appeared' in the text can be ruled out, the loose ends of the narrative tied up.

However, in this self-mocking 'theory' Joyce outlines a tension which is related to a fundamental ambiguity of his work (one especially manifest in his early writings), which Jacques Aubert goes so far as to dub 'Joyce's paradox': that is, the combination in Joycean writing of modernist innovation and a turn to established authorities, what we might term a theoretical *père-version*.[110] Stephen's theory, by treating *Hamlet* as a 'ghoststory', constitutes both an attempt to solve the riddle or unearth the secret of the play (worthy, indeed, of Freud with his decisive *Lösung*); and at the same time, a re-invention of the author as a ghostly *real*, something 'out of joint' with the play's symbolic universe, an anamorphic blur disfiguring its textual surface. We might re-read the Homeric title of Joyce's episode, 'Scylla and Charybdis', as a version of this 'paradox'—with the rock-like biographical real on one side, to which Stephen wishes to steer his reading and thus establish his name as an 'authority' on Shakespeare, and on the other the textual whirlpool swirling around the traumatic Thing, the real as absolute, unmasterable void.

In a broader sense, Stephen's 'spectral' aesthetics embody a similar kind of *coincidentia oppositorum*. The epiphany marks an intensely private, 'spiritual' moment in which something is revealed—the *quidditas* or essence of an object suddenly appears, as in the optical transposition of anamorphosis, to provide an overwhelming, unequivocal confirmation of Joyce's artistic destiny. However, when the anamorphic image emerges—as when, for Lacan in Seminar VII, the sublime *lustre* of Antigone shines forth with blinding intensity—the field of everyday, mundane representations appears 'decomposed', is rendered illegible. In the same way, the pure eidetic self-revelation of the epiphany appears to coincide with an apparently insignificant textual 'scrap', the record of some trivial, random occurence of speech or thought.

[110] Jacques Aubert, *The Aesthetics of James Joyce*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1992, p. 112.

If, as Aubert shows, Joyce approached his readings in philosophy with a predominantly 'psychological' bias—when Stephen muses that the soul 'is in a manner all that is' (*U* 21) he echoes Aristotle's *De anima* with its definition of 'soul' as a harmonious synthesis of form and matter—it is precisely such an imaginary aesthetics which is undone, dispersed, by the Joycean text.[111]

Ulysses gives a clear index of this 'fall'—from the plenitude and harmony of the *anima* (its aesthetic *consonantia* and *integritas*, in the terms Joyce borrows from Aquinas) to the uncontrollable materiality of the text—in a charcteristically Joycean form: the telegram which Stephen receives in Paris, stating '—Nother dying come home father' (*U* 35). The terrible directness of the father's message, with its blunt imperative, is opened by the French telegraphist's error to a darkly comic polysemy.

Joyce himself, of course, was to endure a long history of real printer's errors (including, ironically, the 'correction' of this telegram in the unlimited edition finally produced by Bodley Head in 1937);[112] a history which he takes up and incorporates into the 'telegraphy'—'writing at a distance'—of *Finnegans Wake*. The very substance of Joyce's last text becomes essentially unreliable, an error-ridden 'litter': 'For that (the rapt one warns) is what papyr is meed of, made of, hides and hints and misses in prints' (*FW* 20). Comically enacting what it is talking about as it goes along, the Wakean 'lapse' is not 'leashed' to the psychical space of any subject: its all-pervasive *lapsus calami* returns us to the 'autistic' moment we first encountered in the *Portrait*—in the 'primal scene', as it were, of the Joycean 'lapse': the dreamlike moment in the anatomy theatre where Stephen 'identifies' with the inscribed 'foetus', with the unborn, the asymbolic: 'O foetal sleep! Ah, fatal slip!' (*FW* 563).

If a Lacanian might be tempted to read 'Nother dying' as a direct reference to lack in the Other, Joycean 'telegraphy' inscribes the lack of any originary meaning or final closure in its very textuality. Beyond any semantic content, the writing embodies in itself, 'tautaulogically', the aleatory dimension of signification: its inescapable dimension of *tuché*, endlessly diverting and disfiguring the course or destiny of a letter.[113]

Here, Joycean writing constitutes, again, an 'exanimation'—the transition from a consistent imaginary to the real, 'autistic' stuff of language where semantic 'matter' is unravelled, disseminated. Aubert traces Joyce's 'spectral' theories of beauty back to an Augustinian *cogito*, a precursor of the Cartesian foundation of the modern subject;[114] *Finnegans Wake* will write the *cogito* 'telegraphically' (according to the '*rotary processus*' named in the margin alongside) as 'cog it out, here goes a sum' (*FW* 304). Any cogitation has to be 'out', beyond the sealed perfection of the *anima*, in an alienating domain where the momentous 'dialectical' *ergo* becomes a jokey colloquialism ('here goes!'), and the unshakeable certainty of *sum* is some-

[111] cf. Aubert, *ibid*, pp. 85–8.

[112] See Jeri Johnson's account of the Composition and Publication History of *Ulysses* in the introduction to the 1922 edition, *op. cit.*, pp. xlii–xlviii; for the 'amended' telegram, see *Ulysses*, London: Bodley Head, 1937, p. 38.

[113] For Lacan's interpretation of Aristotle's *tuché*, cf. seminar of 12th February 1964 (SXI), *op. cit.*, pp. 52–64.

[114] Aubert, *ibid*, p. 88.

thing to 'have a go at', a tricky little mathematical exercise like the one Stephen helps his pupil to 'cog out' after his class (*U* 23–4).

As we outlined in our reading of the epiphany, 'crossexanimation' entails the rupture of borders between speakers, the erasure of the decisive 'cut' which Lacan posited as the principle of the *cogito*, its division of being and signification. The text thus embodies a 'metempsychosis', the 'transmigration of souls' defined by Leopold Bloom—or even a 'met him pike hoses', in Molly's version (*U* 52–3): the dissolution of subjective distinctions corresponds to Wakean 'hearasay' (*FW* 263)—the collapse of the difference between written text and speaking voice, the obliteration of the definitive line separating feminine gossip from authorial or paternal signature (here, 'crossexanimation' could also be read as the opening of another kind of Lacanian interpretation, like that of Annie Tardits, which would focus on the instance of writing 'across-sex').[115]

The Joycean signature, which for Lacan is literally a *sum*—both an inscription of identity and the solution of a topological problem—is thus caught up in the 'telegraphy' of the text—like Bloom's name when it appears in 'Eumaeus', amidst the 'nonsensical howlers of misprints' in a newspaper report, as 'L. Boom' (*U* 529). If the author's name is unique, unrepeatable, that of *noman*—like the Euclidian *gnomon*, an element missing from the visible frame—it will be paradoxically included in the *Wake* in the repetetive paranomasia of a signifying chain: 'First you were Nomad, next you were Namar, now you're Numah and it's soon you'll be Nomon' (*FW* 374). If we follow Jean-Guy Godin's reading, this returns us to the distinction Lacan makes in 1976 between two kinds of 'writing': the *trait unaire* which is situated in the real as the decisive foundation of identity, and the movement of signifiers through which analysis operates to construct its effects of truth. In Joyce's case, Godin writes, 'beginning with the lack of the *trait*, the writing constantly aims to inscribe it...'; the *sinthome* will never undo the originary fault in the knot, but can only ceaselessly renew its *suppléance*.[116]

The central irony of Joyce's work, in the Lacanian reading we have outlined, is that it realizes both a literary artifice of self-constitution and an unparalleled break with the representational economy of identity (whose literary avatar is the figure of the author). The 'identification' with the *sinthome*—as our recourse to the inverted commas Joyce banished from his writing already indicates—forms part of a *crisis* of the imaginary, in Lacan's hypothesis: the 'I' which forms the basis, the minimal precondition, of the subject is only able to emerge for Joyce as an act of writing, of tracing out a singular relation to language outside the symbolic field of subjectivation. The signature, the Joycean 'sum', is thus a *forgery*: it makes up the 'I' as a fictional character, a literary screen or pseudonym.

Finnegans Wake is of course thronged with fabricators and forgers, among them the notorious 'Jim the Penman'; and one of the text's major motifs is provided by one Richard Piggott, who had become infamous in Ireland for attempting to implicate Parnell in the Phoenix Park murders of 1882 through a series of forged letters. The fatal flaw which led to the exposure of Piggott's forgery was that he had misspelt 'hesitancy' as 'hesitency' in one of the letters: this allowed him to be trapped

[115]cf. Annie Tardits, 'L'appensé, le renard et l'hérésie', in *Joyce Avec Lacan*, *op. cit.*, pp. 107–58.
[116]Jean-Guy Godin, 'Du symptôme à son épure: le sinthome', in *Joyce Avec Lacan*, *op. cit.*, p. 186.

in court by Parnell's defence.[117] '[T]he spell of hesitency' reverberates throughout the *Wake*, in a 'hazeydency' of proliferating textual error—beginning with an error which was exposed as evidence of lawbreaking in a juridical examination, the supreme *mise en scène* of the gaze of the Other—which unravels any semantic or spatio-temporal consistency, ending as a question—'Hasitatense?'—addressed to the text itself (*FW* 97, 296, 305).

If this question suspends the Wakean narrative in perpetual 'hesitancy' (if it has no tense, when did its 'spell' elapse?) another Piggottian mis-spelling—'hasitense?'—gives us a question addressed to the 'Autist' himself, whose 'poor trait' is being hung—suspended—in a 'notional gullery' (not a National Gallery) (*FW* 57). The *Wake* enacts a final version of Joyce's originary refusal to offer his writing as an 'identificative paper', a document or piece of evidence to be referred to a transcendent author-god: in this 'hesitation' (this 'sticking', as etymology indicates—the word derives from Latin *haerere*, 'to stick', also the root of 'inherent') the text puts in question its own relation to 'being'—'has it *ens* [Gk. being]?' In other words, the fictive self-making of the Joycean *sinthome* is at the same time a suspension of subjective being in the endlessly *potential* zone of the text, a kind of ontological 'hasitence'.

Joyce craved an other—one possessed of an 'ideal insomnia', dwelling in the timeless 'hasitatense' of an eternal 'slip'—who could participate in the textual maieutic set up in his writing: the 'slow and dark birth' of the literary 'soul', as Stephen puts it in the *Portrait* (*P* 203). Thus, the *sinthome* both demands and resists interpretation: if the Joycean letter is carefully folded to prevent its being opened by a hasty or excessively 'decisive' reading, it nonetheless *requires reading*—the text can only 'exist', realize 'itself' (a 'self' which for Lacan is strictly identical with its author) in the movement and creative intervention of a reading. One of the strangest, most paradoxical threads of *Finnegans Wake* is its worry about not being read, or not properly arriving at its destination—a destination it 'presents' as simultaneously caught up in, inherently part of the 'spell of hesitency'. 'Has any fellow,' asks the text, considering some of the various ways it might be misread, '...ever looked sufficiently longly at a quite everydaylooking stamped addressed envelope?' (*FW* 109).

Joyce's writing, declares Samuel Beckett in *Our Exagmination* 'is not *about* something; *it is that something itself*'; thus, the *Work in Progress* is 'not to be read—or rather it is not only to be read'.[118] The work would require a radical alteration of our reading 'habits'—indeed, it would entail their 'retaling' or 'retailoring' to suit its singular 'fashionaping' ('fascinating' shaping or fashioning, and 'fashion-aping') of language.[119] The words of this Joycean 'factification', comments Beckett, 'are alive': immune to the mortifying 'cut' of Lacan's symbolic order, the text embodies an aesthetic instance 'not yet understood', in Jung's phrase—*essentially* 'hesitant', always 'in progress'.

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[117]Cf. Roland McHugh, *Annotations to* Finnegans Wake, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1980, p. ix; also James S.Atherton, *The Books at the Wake*, New York: Viking, 1960, p. 110.

[118]Samuel Beckett, 'Dante ... Bruno. Vico ... Joyce', in *Our Exagmination Round his Factification for Incamination of Work in Progress*, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

[119]See John Bishop's chapter on 'How to Find a Good Tailor', *Joyce's Book of the Dark: Finnegans Wake*, *op. cit.*, pp. 126–30.

iv. Dénouements

i) From Application to Implication

> I am not attempting a philosophy of art. I am already too busy with the consequences of my practice, which is absolutely punctiform—it is only at a limited number of specific points that it touches on the domain of art. Freud tries to get involved in something quite different and to see art as a sort of testimony to the unconscious.[1]

LACAN'S REMARKS of 1975 come in an exchange with historian Edward Casey during a seminar at Yale. Casey wants to know how a psychoanalyst famous for promoting a vision of the human subject founded on linguistic structure would approach the question of 'the imaginary and the non-datable' in history. Lacan responds by contrasting his own 'punctiform' version of psychoanalysis with the 'wild' variety which occasionally emerges in Freud. If Freud's assumption of a general continuity between analysis and the cultural field allowed him to interpret art as a variety of symptom (as a 'testimony to the unconscious'), Lacan seeks to shift the terms of this *Ubersetzung*: he posits specific, *real* points of contact or exchange, as opposed to the 'global', *fantasmatic* equivalencies dreamt by Freud.

The transformation of the psychoanalytic relation to the aesthetic between Freud and Lacan is the starting-point of Phillipe Sollers' interview with Shoshana Felman for *Tel Quel* in 1978. Freud's notion of an 'applied psychoanalysis', according to Felman, is bound up with the limitations of his approach to literature:

> 'Application' implies a relation of *exteriority* between the field of application and the applied science. Likewise, the method of application implies a *one-way* movement of information: it is assumed that there is a knowledge given in advance, a possession which will be used to illuminate a hitherto unknown field. A bridge is thus cast from the known to the unknown, but ultimately all one does in this unknown filed is *rediscover*, reconfirm what was already known: one *discovers* nothing new.[2]

With Lacan, Felman continues, things change. She cites the famous example of the Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter', where the text of Poe is used by Lacan to *re-interpret* Freudian concepts: the literary 'thing'—*la chose littéraire*, in Felman's title, echoing Lacan's *la chose freudienne* with its etymological pun on the Latin *causa*, 'cause'—is taken as the embodiment of a *knowledge*, one which might enter into a certain 'exchange' with psychoanalytic knowledge. Thus, for Felman, 'what Lacan does (without theorizing it, without explicitly thematizing the very meaning of his act) is something which, rather than an application, is of the order of an *implication* of psychoanalysis'.

If, in the first instance, we accept this narrative—the transition from theoretical 'application' to textual 'implication'—we are immediately struck by the contrast between Felman's terms and those used by Lacan himself in 1975. For Lacan,

[1] Yale University, Kanzer Seminar, Conférences et entretiens dans des universités nord-américaines, *Scilicet* 6/7, p. 21.

[2] 'La Chose Littéraire, sa Folie, son Pouvoir', entretien de Philippe Sollers et Shoshana Felman, *Tel Quel* 81 (Autumn 1979), p. 38.

Freud's attempts to 'get involved' (*s'engager*) in the criticism of art were unfortunate because they were *too* 'implicated' in the non-analytic field, so that they effectively blurred the line between psychoanalysis and other forms of interpretation. Lacanian psychoanalysis, by contrast, would remain 'punctiform', focused on authentic analytic questions—which might, indeed, 'touch on' the domain of aesthetics at specific points, but would not spread out, 'globally', under the vague imperialistic banner of analogy.

Thus, Lacan rejects the 'transference' of psychoanalytic knowledge into other interpretive spheres, seeing Freud's wish to 'get involved' with the criticism of artworks as a distraction from genuine Freudian theory (we recall how in his seminar on *Hamlet* Lacan had ridiculed 'the psychoanalytic wisdom of Polonius'). This forms part of the essence of Felman's claim: that Lacan's rejection of Freudian 'application' went together with a desire to re-invent psychoanalytic knowledge as a kind of *textuality*, to situate the Freudian discovery in the field of language—in one sense, therefore, *on the same plane* as the literary text. Whereas the notion of 'applied psychoanalysis' entailed a false scientistic distinction between a theoretical domain and the 'material' beyond it, in Felman's view Lacan's re-orientation of Freud erases any such distinction, folding psychoanalytic theory back into the general field of linguistic phenomena.

Can we find support for this narrative, of a move from 'application' to 'implication', in the readings we have explored in this thesis? In Part I, we focused on the importance of the *author* in Freud's approach to the aesthetic: 'Applied psychoanalysis', comments Felman, '... always ends up with the unconscious of the *author*'.[3] However, we discovered that in Freud's reading of *Hamlet* the question of 'the unconscious of the author' was not posed merely as a speculation about the biographical details 'behind' the Shakespearean text (of the kind imagined by Stephen Dedalus in 'Scylla and Charybdis'); rather, the 'author' emerges as a special figure of subjectivity in Freud's writing—the one who *solves a riddle* and thus ensures, maintains, the opening of unconscious desire. When Lacan in 1959 characterizes prince Hamlet as one who has 'lost the way of his desire', we can already begin to make out a Lacanian sense of the aesthetic as a field *apart from* the Freudian topic of the unconscious (a sense which will be fully realized in the reading of the Joycean *sinthome*).

The Freudian author provides a *Lösung*, a solution to the aesthetic riddle and a 'dissolution' of its traumatic textuality. Just as Hamlet uses 'the Mousetrap' to make 'extant' the unspeakable secrets of the 'ghoststory'—to convert the enigmatic and uncanny voice into a *readable* text—so Freud dispels the obscurity of Shakespeare's play by deploying the legible scenario of Oedipus (himself in turn, of course, the archetypal riddle-solver).

In this sense, however, Freudian reading is also *implicated* in its textual 'object'. We were able to grasp this implication most forcefully in Freud's encounter with Michaelangelo's *Moses*—an uncanny encounter which Ernest Jones' biography restored to legibility by linking it, on the basis of a 'pretty obvious' analogy, to the contemporaneous power-struggles in the psychoanalytic movement. The dimension

[3] *Ibid*, p. 39.

of the uncanny here hinges on the unmasterable ambiguity of the 'identification' at stake in Freud's interpretation: on the one hand, the aesthetic enigma is 'identified', given its proper name, and thus resolved by, returned to the mastery of, an author; on the other, this very gesture of 'authority'—the restoration of legality and legibility—is also an uncanny *identification with* the enigmatic text (as if the interpretation were caught in the circular paradox of seeking to 'resolve' the riddle of its own relation to, implication in, the aesthetic experience).

This uncanny ambiguity in the psychoanalytic relation to art is encapsulated by the figure of another legendary riddle-solver mentioned by Freud in the essay on the *Moses*: Morelli. Shifting, like Odysseus, between different names, this mysterious character nonetheless accomplished an interpretive 'revolution' in the field of art by showing 'how to distinguish copies from originals', establishing a new—more authoritative—framework for addressing the question of authorship. If Freud identifies with Morelli as a purveyor of *authority*—one who resolves aesthetic enigmas by decisively identifying the author—he is simultaneously caught up or 'implicated' in an identification with 'Lermonlieff', the pseudonym which 'concealed the identity' of Morelli: by withholding his own authorial signature, Freud leaves his text in an enigmatic zone, a place where fraudulent copies cannot be distinguished from authentic originals.

In Freud, the authorial signature is bound up with the question of the *institution*, of the political organization of knowledge. Even when Freud's 'understanding' of Michaelangelo's statue 'dawned' on him, as he tells Edoardo Weiss in a letter, he did not dare to sign the article: even at the moment when his masterly 'solution' of the enigma revealed itself—when he identifies the very instance of authorship as the maintenance of authority—Freud does not dare to cross the line dividing his own field from that of academic knowledge, art history or criticism. To sign would be to jeopardize the very position of balance, of *maintenance*, Freud sees dramatized in the statue: in identifying the author of the article as 'Freud'—psychoanalytic authority in person—the signature would threaten to undermine that authority, to break its law-giving Tables by exposing them to the vociferous crowd of critics.

At this moment of Freud's work, then, identification emerges as a paradox: the author is situated as the one who provides the *Lösung*, solves the riddle and thus maintains a certain interpretive law; and, simultaneously, authorial identity is suspended—as if it were part of the aesthetic riddle itself—to prevent it being read and thus drawn into a field where its authority is open to question. The very gesture which aims to safeguard Freudian authority by screening it off from the realm of aesthetics—the asterisks which conceal the name, functioning like an anamorphic blot in the field of legibility—at the same time *implicates* it in the domain of artifice, of enigmatic artistry.

This paradox of authorial signature and identification is closely related to the question of the Name-of-the-Father developed by Lacan. The intervention of the paternal metaphor, we recall, was proposed in 1956 as the incidence of a certain *legibility* in the child's relation to adult sexuality, whereby the Phallus came to function as a 'signifier of *jouissance*' (in Serge André's reading). If the Freudian author is a riddle-solver, one who subjects the enigmatic shape-shifting aesthetic to the law of a symbolic regime—to the force of *political* organization—he is non-

etheless unable to extricate himself from the aesthetic, to undo fully the riddle of his relation to it.

By writing the *sinthome* as a signifier of Joycesens, Lacan returns to the Freudian problematic of the aesthetic 'riddle'. Indeed, a special significance is accorded to riddles in the Lacanian account of Joycean authorship. In his seminar of 13th January 1976, Lacan quotes the riddle which Stephen gives his class in *Ulysses*:

> —This is the riddle, Stephen said:
>
> *The cock crew,*
> *The sky was blue:*
> *The bells in heaven*
> *Were striking eleven.*
> *'Tis time for this poor soul*
> *To go to heaven.*
>
> What is that?
>
> —What, sir?
>
> —Again, sir. We didn't hear.
>
> Their eyes grew bigger as the lines were repeated. After a silence Cochrane said:
>
> —What is it, sir? We give it up.
>
> Stephen, his throat itching, answered:
>
> —The fox burying his grandmother under a hollybush (*U*, 22).

'Stephen', declares Lacan, 'is Joyce in so far as he deciphers his own riddle [*énigme*]'.[4] Yet the character emerges here as precisely a refusal to provide a 'Freudian' solution, a decisive *Lösung* which would make the riddle 'extant', fully legible. Hélène Cixous interprets Stephen's riddle as a special kind of *abrogation* of authority: if, she writes, 'the very genre of the riddle ... assumes as a fundamental convention that there should be a solution somewhere, the one who asks being in theory the one who possesses the knowledge', Stephen's answer 'reveals not a positive knowledge, but the gap in knowledge'. For Cixous, this amounts to 'the author abandoning his rights over language', to Joyce staging his own refusal to be identified as a Freudian 'author': the site of a final, transcendent legibility.[5]

This Joycean refusal—the 'gap in knowledge' which takes the place of the authorial 'solution'—returns us to the relation between the *Nom-du-Père* and the *nom d'auteur*. Jacques Aubert shows, in his presentation during Lacan's seminar *Le Sinthome*, how the Joycean text deliberately involves authorship in 'a game of hide-and-seek with the names of the father': just as the *sinthome* produces an 'improper' knot whose structure is not truly Borromean, so the name of the author in Joyce is fully caught up in writing, played out at different levels, along disparate strands, of the 'symptomatic' text.[6] It is this authorial 'hesitance' or 'hasitence'

[4]Seminar of 13th January 1976 (SXXIII), *Le Sinthome*, *op.cit.*, p. 14.

[5]Hélène Cixous, 'Joyce: the (r)use of writing', in *Post-Structuralist Joyce*, ed. Derek Attridge & Daniel Ferrer, Cambridge: C.U.P., 1984, p. 20.

[6]Intervention de Jacques Aubert, Seminar of 20th January 1976 (SXXIII), *Joyce Avec Lacan*, *op.cit.*, pp. 54–60.

which, once again, reminds us that Joyce is an *improper subject* for psychoanalysis: that it was only in so far as the Joycean text embodied a certain *gap in Freudian knowledge* that Lacan chose to read it as a way of elaborating the *sinthome*.

'Joyce is what happens when you refuse analysis', comments Philippe Sollers in a rough paraphrase of Lacan.[7] How, then, did psychoanalysis seek to 'implicate' itself, knot itself together with, this moment where *la chose littéraire* turned away from it so decisively? We need to return to our readings of Lacan's general engagement with 'the letter' to attempt a final interpretation of this paradoxical *dénouement*.

ii) French Triangles

> It is not only psychoanalysis which has tried to think about the madness in the literary thing. ... [Y]ou have a kind of triangle, one of its three points being philosophical discourse, which fights on two fronts, as it were—in relation to literature and also to psychoanalysis; then analytic discourse, which is obliged to *differentiate* itself from philosophy in the traditional sense, although it remains constantly racked by the question of literature; and finally literature, the third point, which is interpellated at once by philosophy and by analytic discourse.[8]

Philippe Sollers gives this sketch of the theoretical 'scene' in post-war France during his interview with Shoshana Felman. By pointing to this antagonistic triangle of discourses, Sollers reminds us that the stakes of Lacan's engagement with literature were radically different from those of the 'applied psychoanalysis' which interested Freud. If Lacan sought in certain explicit statements to echo Freud by drawing a bold line separating psychoanalysis from philosophy, we have noted (in Part II of the thesis) the massive and scarcely-veiled presence of philosophical elements in his thought, encapsulated by the 'Cartesian-Kantian problematic of the subject qua pure, substanceless 'I think', in Slavoj Žižek's formulation.[9] Thus if literature, as the third point in Sollers' triangle, is 'interpellated' by Lacanian theory, this is so firstly according to the literal sense of this Althusserian term—in the interests, that is, of producing a consistent *subject*.

For literature to constitute a *mise en scène* of psychoanalytic truth, in Lacan's view, it had to be approached without any recourse to the semantic or the anecdotal. Freud, by taking art to be a 'testimony of the unconscious', as Lacan put it in 1975, had failed to cut away truth from knowledge, the subject as 'nihilating' instance from the positive contents of some supposed authorial fantasy—and thus obscured the mechanism of signification (the true matrix of the unconscious). In this sense, Lacan's *sujet sans substance* entailed a certain radicalization of the Freudian *Lösung*, the analytic 'dissolution' of an aesthetic riddle: the very 'logic of the signifier' was now the site of truth, a truth which was thus inherently incompatible with—emerged as a 'nihilation' of—any particular contents in the artistic material.

We saw how the Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter' attempted to isolate the essential 'logic' of the Lacanian subject by cutting it away from both the semantic

[7] 'La Chose Littéraire, sa Folie, son Pouvoir', *op.cit.*, p. 41.

[8] *Ibid*, pp. 43–4.

[9] Slavoj Žižek, *Tarrying with the Negative*, London: Verso, 1993, p. 12.

level of Poe's text (its characterization, incidental description, and so on) and that of the 'litter', the signifier's 'material support' in the substance of writing itself. One of the claims advanced in Derrida's critique of the seminar was that this decisive double 'cut' was theoretically incoherent—that, firstly, any 'separation' of signifier from textual 'support' was simply an *idealization of the letter*, which recalled the most overtly 'phonocentric' manoeuvres of philosophy; and secondly, that no 'logic of the signifier' could ever be put forward in a pure form, somehow divorced from meaning. This second point led on to Derrida's observation that Lacan's dimension of 'truth' is in fact, manifestly, a 'psychoanalytico-transendental semantics': its 'phallogocentric' economy of representation embodying a philosophical and political *dispositif* at once peculiarly idiosyncratic and profoundly embedded in some of the oldest, most widely dominant discursive règimes of Western thought.

The political implications of Lacan's theory of the subject are, inevitably, multiple and intricate. For Mikkel Borch-Jakobsen, however, the rhetorical complexity of Lacan's thought masks an underlying logic whose political consequences are unequivocal. The 'surreptitious restoration of the subject' as a force of unitary self-representation in psychoanalysis is indissociable, argues Borch-Jakobsen, from a politics which is made fully explicit in Freud's 1921 *Massenpsychologie* ('Group Psychology'): there, Freud 'did not so much analyze... totalitarian fantasy as subscribe to it'.[10] The very instance of the subject—which Lacan, of course, is the first to give official currency in psychoanalysis—comprises, for Borch-Jakobsen, a *politics of identity* which is imbricated with the historical traumas of modernity.

In adopting this position, it could be argued, Borch-Jakobsen himself runs the risk of 'totalizing', reducing to a single 'logic', the complex weave of Lacan's thought across its different phases and theoretical modes.[11] As we have sought to show in this thesis, elements of that thought can be seen to open perspectives or offer possibilities away from the 'empire' of the Lacanian subject, its 'phallogocentric' closure: a new kind of subjectivity, not predicated on 'symbolic castration' and the 'mortification' of the body, begins to become visible at the end of Lacan's career as part of a new approach to writing.

Nonetheless, for Bruce Fink to jovially dub the Name-of-the-Father 'our Rock of Gibraltar' is perhaps indicative of certain political investments inherent (or inherited) in Lacanian psychoanalysis. A clear example is the theatrical ensemble of the 'paternal metaphor' drawn up by Lacan in the late 1950s, where the Phallus is unveiled as the signifier of the overall 'effects of the signified'—of meaning itself, in other words—to be marshalled against the rebellious indigenous forces of the maternal body. Indeed, the Phallus appears as the most obviously *ideological* signifier of this political scenario, its coincidence of pure asemic vacuity and ultimate meaningfulness recalling the tried-and-tested manoeuvres of totalitarian discourse.

In what sense, then, does Lacan's engagement with writing—which reaches its final 'destination' in *Le Sinthome*—unsettle or contest this political theatre?

[10] Mikkel Borch-Jakobsen, 'The Freudian Subject, from Politics to Ethics', in *Who Comes After the Subject?* ed. Eduardo Cadava, Peter Connor & Jean-Luc Nancy, New York: Routledge, 1991, p. 69.

[11] For instance, in *Lacan: the Absolute Master*, Borch-Jakobsen pays almost no attention to the most important motif of the last decade of Lacan's work—the Borromean knot.

His comments in 1966, justifying the recourse to non-discursive elements in his teaching, point to a fundamental *theoretical* split in the Lacanian subject: without topology, he tells the audience of philosophy students, 'it is impossible to grasp anything of the real of [the subject's] economy'.[12] If the subject is defined as *parlêtre*, 'speaking-being', a certain level of its 'economy' is nevertheless *unspeakable*, can only be attained through topological 'writing'. The real—ultimately identical to the 'writing' which can non-metaphorically represent it—is thus the name Lacan gives to the limit, the non-totality of the *dit-mension* of spoken truth.

Writing, then, comes to function where the Other does not 'hold', where symbolic mortification fails. Having first been invoked (or 'interpellated', in the term Sollers uses: 'called to subjectivation') by Lacan in the 1950s to stage analytic truth as an 'odyssey of the letter', writing is finally called in to name precisely what fails to appear in that *mise en scène*. The term 'writing', of course, does not emerge unscathed—semantically consistent—from this change of fortunes. Poe's text, as read in Lacan's seminar, is in no sense an *écrit* defined as a non-metaphorical 'monstration' of the psychical real. If its 'litteral' character is fleetingly mentioned, this does nothing to disqualify the story from serving as a pure illustration of the essential dimension of the Lacanian subject: the metaphorical circulation of the signifier. As we saw, in the 1971 article *Lituraterre* Lacan sought to present the two 'sides' of the letter, signifier and *litura*, as merely complementary aspects of the subject's linguistic fate; however, he makes it clear elsewhere—notably a year later in the seminar *Encore*—that the *écrit* can never 'cohabit' with the signifier in the field of the subject's truth.

Lacan rediscovers Joyce in 1975 as the incarnation of this linguistic instance which is impossible to re-absorb or 'interpellate' into a theory of the subject. If Shoshana Felman's claim that 'it is literature which *names* the conceptual body of psychoanalysis' finds confirmation here, this could only be through a certain paradox: Lacan gives Joyce the name *sinthome* in a deliberate effort to 'traumatize' the 'conceptual body' inherited from Freud and elaborated over the course of his own teaching.[13]

iii) The first riddle of the universe: the ethical real

> If what I am saying necessitates not—as is said—a model, but the task of articulating topologically the discourse [of psychoanalysis] itself, this springs from the lack [*défaut*] in the universe—with the condition that what I say does not in turn offer to repair it [*le suppléer*]. Jacques Lacan, 1973 [14]

Let us return to Lacan's remarks about history at Yale in 1975. 'That which cannot be certified by writing [*par l'écrit*] cannot be considered history', he declares. The apparent clarity of Lacan's position here masks potential ambiguities stemming from his idiosyncratic use of certain terms (here, the term 'writing'): does Lacan's claim that the lack of a historical document 'makes history impossible' amount

[12] 'Réponses à des étudiants en philosophie sur l'objet de la psychanalyse', *Cahiers pour l'Analyse* 3, *op.cit.*, p. 7; for discussion of topological 'monstration', see above p. 55

[13] 'La Chose Littéraire, sa Folie, son Pouvoir', *op.cit.*, p. 39.

[14] *L'Étourdit*, *op.cit.*, pp. 33–4.

merely to a commonsense insistence on the archival basis of history; or is it, rather, a singular attempt to privilege the *écrit* as the ontological support of the subject, to posit a primal moment of inscription as the precondition of all human history? It is not clear whether Lacan is dismissing the 'dream' of elements irreducible to a written text—the oral, the imaginary, the non-datable—in favour of the linguistic protocols of the *symbolic* (as his audience seems to expect from someone who has redefined the unconscious as a linguistic structure); or whether his insistence on writing does not rather aim to support the *real* as the very opening of possible history.

Joel Fineman has brought Lacan's categories to bear on these and related historiographical questions. Defining the *anecdote* as 'the literary form or genre that uniquely refers to the real', Fineman identifies it as the only 'genuinely historical opening'—at once 'extimate' to the teleological narrative of history and its causal precondition:

> The anecdote produces the effect of the real, the occurrence of contingency, by establishing an event as an event within and yet without the framing context of historical successivity, i.e., it does so only in so far as its narration both comprises and refracts the narration it reports.[15]

Thus the anecdote—that which is 'unpublished', according to etymology—is what 'uniquely *lets history happen*', for Fineman. If an anecdote provides the spark of contingency—the fact that a particular event *took place*—necessary to set in motion a historical narrative, at the same time it has a traumatic effect on the smooth 'whole' of that narrative, so that the anecdote is 'characteristically and ahistorically plugged up', as Fineman puts it, by the teleological discourse which frames it.[16]

In Part III of the thesis, we traced the outlines of the relation between Joyce and psychoanalysis in a series of 'anecdotal' encounters: moments where what emerges is both the mark of the 'real' in history and something impossible to account for, irreducible to historical narration. The encounter between Joyce and Jung has a particular importance here: it is at once fraught with 'anecdotal' effects (rumour, hearsay, supposition) and an exemplary instance of the psychoanalytic struggle to 'interpellate' literature, to bring it under theoretical mastery. If the central gesture of Freudian 'aesthetics' was an effort to situate art in the mastery of an author—thus rendering it legible for, commensurable with, the psychoanalytic subject—Jung repeats the essence of this gesture, in a subtly altered form. His double attempt to decipher Joyce—both the text of *Ulysses* and Lucia's psychosis, implicated in the same 'knot'—brings Jung up against the limit of his 'authority on psychological matters': having failed to generate any transferential interest in Lucia, he has literally to hand her back to her father; and himself experiences the other end of the same failure of *Uberträgung* when he falls asleep reading *Ulysses*. When Joycean writing does eventually become legible to Jung, however, when he

[15] Joel Fineman, 'The History of the Anecdote: Fiction and Fiction', in *The Subjectivity Effect in Western Literary Tradition: essays towards the release of Shakespeare's Will*, Cambridge, Mass: M.I.T., 1991, p. 72.

[16] *Ibid.*

'succeeded to put [himself] into it', we might read his 'solution'—to find himself in *Ulysses* as Elijah, a mystical spirit of self-transcendence—as another version, a 'transference', of Freud's narrative of self-mastery.

The question of the 'interpellation' of the aesthetic in psychoanalysis, of the attempt to *invoke* literature, can be related to the problem of *vocation* as we have traced it in Joyce's early writing. The Joycean artist is first introduced as a 'nego', a deliberate refusal to compromise the purity of the aesthetic *quidditas* by offering art as an 'identificative paper', partaking in a facile, mundane legibility. We sought to rethink this Joycean 'aestheticism' by linking it to Lacan's notion of a foreclosed imaginary (in 'radical foreclosure'), to posit a 'primal scene' of Joyce's writing—or rather, a primal destruction of 'scene'—in the 'autistic' act of turning-away from identification, towards a phantasmatic verbal 'hallucination'. Thus, the Lacanian 'dream' or anecdotal real which tears open the text of history is at the heart of the Joycean 'thing', the 'immarginable' aesthetic potential which first discloses itself in the epiphany as an overwhelming, unquestionable artistic vocation. Stephen's rejection of the 'clear and final office' of priestly authority corresponds to a refusal to offer up this 'thing' to the Other, where the domain of symbolic identification is ruined by the narcissistic tyranny of the Joycean father.

For all Lacan's dismissal of Freud's 'involvements' with literature, his own turn to Joyce at the end of his career—in sharp contrast to the Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter'—raises some very 'Freudian' questions, around authorship and the *Ursprung* of art. If Freud had been misguided in seeking to transfer the unconscious—psychoanalytic *truth*, in other words—away from its essential domain of analytic speech, for Lacan this move beyond analysis now appeared the ideal way to engage with the *limits* of that truth. The symbolic order, which Lacan had made the central stake in his redefinition of the truth of Freud's discovery, was not to take on the features of a 'discourse of the Master'—dissimulating its structural lack, its non-totality.[17] Thus, the increasing importance of 'writing' in the 1970s, with the Borromean knot the purest form, Lacan thought, of this response to the impossibility of 'saying it all', of producing an all-inclusive discourse of truth.

The question of the *Ursprung* returns us to the problem of the primal *trait*, the writing at the origin of the subject and its history. The notion of 'generalized foreclosure', which certain followers of Lacan have taken as the principle of the last phase of his teaching (centred on the topology of knots)[18] would posit a non-metaphorical *writing* as the fundamental structure of the subject. Thus, the crucial opposition between a substanceless *dit-mension* of subjectivity—installed, essentially governed, by the Name-of-the-Father—and the phenomena of psychosis in which the real 'wrote itself' beyond metaphor, appeared to break down.

It was to address the problem of this theoretical breakdown that Lacan introduced the figure of the *sinthome*. The lack in the Other—not the result of a contingent individual fate ('foreclosure'), but an irreparable given, a structural deficit in signification—was the starting-point for the topological writing in which

[17]cf. the chapter entitled 'L'impuissance de la vérité', in the seminar *L'envers de la psychanalyse* (SXVII,1969–70), ed J-A Miller, Paris: Seuil, 1991, pp. 191–208.

[18]Pierre Skriabine adopts the notion of a 'generalized' foreclosure; see 'Clinique et Topologie', *op.cit.*, pp. 127–31.

Lacan aimed to present the real, figure its structure non-discursively. The revolutionary aspect of this for Lacanian theory was the attempt to conceive this 'writing' as the basis of a *subject*: a 'writing-being', one not securely fixed in an unconscious existence by primordial repression—and thus living in the midst of the asymbolic ex-sistence of an *écriture*. Such a being would somehow *participate* in the moment of inscription which for the speaking-being is permanently consigned to a prehistoric void.

We recall Jung's comment at the end of his reading of *Ulysses*, that 'superlative powers of mind' may be disguised as 'mental abnormality' in certain subjects. With the *sinthome*, the Lacanian privileging of psychotic experience—as a 'royal road' to the theorization of the real—is taken to a new level: Joyce, says Lacan, gives us *un petit soupçon*, 'a little taste', of the linguistic 'cancer' which afflicts us, but which 'a so-called normal man is not aware of'.[19] If we are most radically implicated in language in a way inaccessible to the truth of the subject, only a 'mental abnormality' could enable that implication to be bodied forth, realized in a textual 'intraduction'—a singular event where language coalesces with *jouissance*.

It is this paradoxical coalescence of the symbolic and the real which prevents the *sinthome* from ever being decisively interpreted, bound into another chain of signifiers. In the same way, when Joyce defended his daughter Lucia against psychiatric knowledge, he stressed that she was 'an innovator not yet understood': she embodied an engagement with language which could not be 'translated', which was in excess of the symbolic order. If Jung had betrayed his idealism in speaking of the 'mystical identity' of father and daughter, the symptom knotting them together was precisely the 'intraduction' of Joycean writing.

The final support of the subject, for Lacan, is *ethical*. In Seminar VII (1959–60), an ethical position was outlined as full subjection to the Law of the symbolic: the desire of the analyst emerged as in a *pure* desire, purged of all pathological investments in its allegiance to the signifier.[20] As Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe notes, this 'ethic' is of course an *esthétique*, 'supported by' an aesthetic instance in the form of Sophocles' *Antigone*. We could frame Lacan's reading of Joyce in *Le Sinthome* as a second *esthétique*, now based not on the transcendental purity of the speaking subject but on the 'fault in the universe', where the logic of signification gives way to a moment of absolute singularity, an unrepeatable *hapax*. Lacan's last version of the subject is situated at the point where the Other fails to function, the symbolic Law cannot be sutained: the *sinthome* entails, in place of an ethic of pure desire, one of aesthetic self-invention.

[19]Seminar of 17th February 1976 (SXXIII), *Le Sinthome*, *Ornicar?* 8 (1976).
[20]cf. Seminar of June 22nd 1960 (SVII), *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, *op.cit.*, pp. 300–1.

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Appendix: *Le Sinthome*

Jacques Lacan's Seminar XXIII, 1975–6.
Translated from the texte établi *ed. J-A Miller,* Ornicar? *6–11, 1976–7.*
All footnotes and notes in brackets are by the translator.

1) 18th November 1975

Sinthome is an old way of spelling what has more recently been spelt *symptom.*

This orthographic modification clearly marks the date at which Greek was injected into French, into my language. Likewise, in the first chapter of *Ulysses*, Joyce expresses the wish that we should *hellenize*, that we should inject the hellenic language into something—one is not sure into what, since it is not Gaelic; even though Ireland is the subject, Joyce had to write in English. Joyce wrote in English in such a way that—as someone who is, I hope, in this audience—Philip Sollers—has remarked in *Tel Quel*—the English language no longer exists.

To be sure, it already had little consistency—which is not to say that it is easy to write in that language. But the series of Joyce's works added something which Sollers thinks should be written *l'élangues*, by which I suppose he aims to indicate something like elation[1]; that elation said to be constitutive of whatever *sinthome* we in psychiatry give the name mania, which is certainly what Joyce's last work, *Finnegans Wake*, resembles—which he held back for so long to attract public attention. At the request of Jacques Aubert, present (and also *pressant*) here today, I was hauled up to inaugurate a Joyce symposium. That's why I've allowed myself to be diverted from the title I had planned for this seminar, which I announced last year as *4,5,6.* I'm sticking to 4—and a good thing too, for 4, 5, 6 would surely have been too much for me. Which is not to say that the 4 at issue is any less of a burden, for I am Freud's heir—despite myself—because I have set forth over time what could be extracted logically from the babble of those he called his group, that clique which frequented the Vienna meetings. Not one of them can be said to have followed the path I describe as logical.

*

Nature, I would say, to be brief, is distinguished by not being one. Thus the logical procedure for approaching it—to term *nature* that which one excludes in the very act of taking interest in something, that something being distinguished by bearing a name. By this procedure, nature only risks being characterized as a hodgepodge of what lies outside nature [*hors-nature*].

The advantage of this last proposition is the following: if you find that what bears a name is in conflict with what seems to be a law of nature—that, for instance, in man there is no natural (this 'natural' with every possible reservation) sexual relation—you have to conclude logically that this is not a privilege of man.

[1] Sollers' neologism plays on *leslangues*, the plural of Lacan's *lalangue*, and *élan* ('speed', 'surge'). cf. Philippe Sollers, 'Joyce & Co', in *In the Wake of the Wake*, ed David Hayman and Elliott Anderson, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1978.

Don't however conclude that there's nothing natural about sex. Rather, try to see how it is in question in each case, from bacteria to birds—I've already referred to both—because they have names. Let us note in passing that in so-called divine creation—divine only in that it is a matter of naming—bacteria is not named. Nor is it named when God, fooling around with what is supposed to be the first man, suggests that he begin by saying the name of each little creature.

We have no clue about this first blunder unless we conclude that Adam was, as his name indicates—I refer to the function of the index in Pierce—that Adam was, in the joke made by Joyce, a *Madam*, and that he named the creatures in her language. This can be safely assumed, because she whom I would call *Evie*[2]—the Mother of the living, that's what it means in Hebrew, if Hebrew can be termed a language—spoke this language straight away, since after the supposed naming by Adam, she was the first person to make use of it: to speak to the serpent.

So-called 'divine' creation is thus copied by chitchat, by the speaking-being [*parlêtre*], with which Evie makes the serpent into what you must forgive me for calling the *serre-fesse* ['scared stiff'], later termed flaw or even phallus, since it is certainly a requisite necessary for going-astray, for sin. Original sin—my *sinthome* has the advantage of beginning with that, the English *sin*. Thus the necessity that the flaw never ceases, but always grows, unless it submits to the *cease* of castration as possibility.

This possibility, as I have previously put it, is what ceases to write; but one must add the comma which I myself omitted. It is what ceases—comma—to write. Or rather would cease to go the right way if that discourse I have evoked, which would not be a semblance, were to at last arrive.

Is it impossible for truth to become a product of *savoir-faire*? No; but then it will be only half-said, embodied in the signifier S_1, where there must be at least two. So Eve, the unique Woman, mythical in the sense that the myth makes her one of a kind, the only Woman to have been possessed by the taste of the fruit of the forbidden tree, the tree of Knowledge—Evie is therefore not mortal, no more than Socrates. *The* woman in question is another name of God, which is why she doesn't exist.

One observes the cunning side of Aristotle, who does not wish the singular to play a role in his logic. But in opposition to what he claims in that logic, it must be said that Socrates is not a man, for he is willing to die in order that the city should live—he is willing, it's a fact. Moreover, on that occasion he does not wish to hear his wife; thus my formula, which I pick out for your use, so to speak, drawing on the μὴ πάντες, which I picked out from the *Organon* where my daughter marked it as the opposition in Aristotle to the universal of the pas—the woman is not all except in the form whose equivocation gives its *piquant* to our language [*lalangue nôtre*], in the form of the *mais pas ça* ['but not that'], as one says *tout mais pas ça*. It was certainly the position of Socrates, the *mais pas ça*, and it's what I'm introducing under this year's title as the *sinthome*.

In the present instance—in the in(si)stance of the letter such as it is at present sketched out (and don't expect any better, as I've said; that which will be most

[2] *l'Evie*—punning in French on *les vies*, 'lives'.

effective will do nothing but displace the *sinthome*, or rather multiply it)—in the present instance, we have the *sinthomaquinas*. As you know, Joyce had a thing or two to say about this saintly man. One should state things clearly: as far as philosophy goes, it has never been bettered. That is not even the whole truth. This does not prevent the fact—consult Jacques Aubert's book on this—that Joyce does not figure things out very well concerning that which he values highly, and which he calls beauty.

In *sinthomaquinas* there is something termed *claritas*, for which Joyce substitutes something like the splendour of Being—this is the weak point at issue. Is this a personal weakness? I do not find the splendour of Being very striking. In this respect Joyce displaces the *saint homme* from my *madaquinisme*, and thus, contrary to what appears at first glance, given his detachment from politics, produces what I would call *sint'home rule*.

Despite the way Joyce gnashed his teeth about Home Rule—which the *Freeman's Journal* depicted rising like a sun behind the Bank of Ireland, which happened to be in the north-west, rather an odd position for the sun to rise in—it is nevertheless sint'Home Rule, *sinthome à roulettes* ['on wheels', 'like clockwork'] which Joyce brings together. These two terms could be given different names. I use these names because of the two slopes they offered to Joyce's art, which will be our concern this year, in accordance with what I said a moment ago—introducing the *sinthome* and giving it a name which suits him, and displacing its orthography, for the two spellings are important to him.

But it is a fact that he makes a choice. In doing so, he is like me a heretic, for *haeresis* is exactly what defines the heretic. One must choose the way by which truth is to be grasped, although once the choice has been made there is nothing to prevent someone from subjecting it to confirmation, in other words from being a thorough-going heretic—that is to say, having recognized the nature of the *sinthome*, not depriving oneself of the logical use of it, until it reaches its real, beyond which it has no wish to go.

He did this close-up, for there could be no worse point of departure—born in Dublin with a boozing, practically good-for-nothing father, in other words a fanatic with two families—for it is always thus for a son from two families, when one thinks oneself masculine because one has a little prick. Naturally (excuse my use of this word), it takes more than that. But since his prick was a bit limp, so to speak, his art supplemented his phallic equipment, and that's always the way. The phallus is the conjunction of this parasite, the little prick in question, and the function of language [*parole*]. And it is thus that Joyce's art is the true guarantee of his phallus. Beyond that, let us say that he was a poor heir, and even a poor heir-etic.

There are no Joyceans to enjoy his heresy outside the University. He himself deliberately desired it, that this crowd should be interested in him, and the best is that he succeeded beyond all measure. It still goes on, and it always will. He wished it to last three hundred years, he said as much—*I want academics to be kept busy with me for three hundred years*[3]—and he will have his wish, so long as God

[3] 'I've put in so many enigmas and puzzles that it will keep the professors busy for centuries arguing over what I meant, and that's the only way of insuring one's immortality'; Ellman, *James*

doesn't atomize us.

This heir [...] is conceived as a hero, as is shown by the title he expressly gave to the text which he reworked into *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*: *Stephen Hero.* [Text recommended by Lacan]

A *portrait of the artist*—the stress should be placed on the *the*, which in English is not of course quite our own definite article, but one can have confidence in Joyce—if he says *the*, it is because he thinks that of artists he is the only one, that there he is singular.

As a young man is very suspicious. That is translated into French as *comme*, in other words it's a question of *comment* ['how']. French is indicative of this—when one says 'as' making use of an adverb, when one says *réelment*, *mentalement*, *héroïquement* [really, mentally, heroically], one is lying [*on ment*]. A lie is indicated in all adverbs, and not by accident. When we interpret we should pay attention to this. Somebody not too far from me made the remark that not only does the tongue designate the instrument of speech, but that it also carries the taste-buds. I replied to her that this is not for nothing—*ce qu'on dit ment.*[4] You have the goodness to laugh, but it's not funny. In the end we have only that as a weapon against the symptom—equivocation.

It happens that I allow myself the luxury of supervising [*contrôler*], as it is termed, a certain number of people who authorize themselves, in my formula, to be analysts. There are two stages. At stage one, they are like the rhinoceros, they do more or less anything at all and I always approve them—they are effectively always right. Stage two consists of bringing into play that equivocation which could free one from the *sinthome.* For interpretation operates solely by equivocation.

There must be something in the signifier which resonates. It is surprising that this has been in no way apparent to the English philosophers. I call them philosophers because they are not psychoanalysts—they have a rock-solid belief that language has no effect. They imagine that there are drives and so on, when they don't translate *drive* [*pulsion*] as *instinct*,[5] for they don't know what a drive is: the echo in the body of the fact that there is speech [*dire*]; but for this speech to resonate—for it to consonate, to use a word of *sinthomaquinas*—the body must be sensitive to it. It is, that's a fact.

It is because the body has several orifices, of which the most important is the ear—because it has no stop-gap—that what I have called the voice has a response in the body. The trouble is, to be sure, that it is not only the ear. The gaze is a vigorous competitor.

More geometrico—due to the form so dear to Plato, the individual presents himself as he is fucked, as a body, and this body has a power of captivation which is such that to a certain extent it is the blind one should envy. How could a blind man, if he can manage braille, read Euclid? The astonishing thing is that form gives nothing but the sack, or if you like the bubble. It is something which inflates, and whose effects I have already described in discussing the obsessional, who is more

Joyce, *op. cit.*, p. 521

[4]'what is said, lies'; pun on *ce condiment.*

[5]See seminar of 16th March 1976 (number 8 in my translation; p. 169 below), for another reflection on the translation of Freud's *Trieb*, this time preferring *dérive* to *pulsion.*

keen on it than most. The obsessional, I've said somewhere, is of the same order as the frog who wants to make himself as big as the bull—the effects are known from a fable. It is particularly difficult, we know, to tear the obsessional from the power [*emprise*] of the gaze.

The sack, such as it figures in set-theory as founded by Cantor, manifests itself in (indeed—is shown in, if all showing is taken as a demonstration of the imaginary it implies), and should be given the connotation of, the ambiguity of 1 and 0—the only adequate supports of what is confined by the empty set featuring in this theory. Thus our writing S index 1. It does not constitute one, but it indexes it as an empty sack unable to contain anything.

An empty sack is nonetheless a sack, albeit one which can only be imagined as a skin, in terms of the existence and consistence of the body. This ex-istence and consistence should be held to be real, since the real is what holds them—thus the word *Begriff*, which means precisely that.

The imaginary here demonstrates its homogeneity with the real. This homogeneity only holds because the number is binary, 1 or 0, ie. it only figures 2 because 1 is not 0, because it ex-ists at zero but does not consist in it. Thus Cantor's theory should set out from the couple, but in that case the set makes a third. There is no bridge between the first set and the rest.

This is why the symbol falling back into the imaginary has the index 2. Indexing the couple, it introduces division into the subject whatever is thus said as fact. The fact remains suspended by the enigma of *énonciation*, which is nothing but the closing-in upon itself of fact—the fact of fact, as one might write it, or the making [*le faîte*] of fact, or the fact of 'things made', as it is said, the same in fact, equivalent in equivocality, and as such the limit of speech.

What is incredible is that although men saw very well that the symbol could be nothing but a broken fragment, for all time, they didn't see that this constitutes the unity and the reciprocity of the signifier and the signified—and consequently that the originary signified is without meaning, that it is a mere sign of the choice between two signifiers (and thus not arbitrary in relation to their choice).

There can be no *umpire*, to say it in English as Joyce writes it, without talking about empire, about the *imperium* on the body, of which all bear the mark from the beginning. Here the 1 confirms its detachment from the 2. 3 can only be reached by an imaginary forcing, which imposes the idea that the one wishes to interfere with the other, without being linked to anything.

For the condition to be expressly posited that starting with three rings a chain is produced, such that a break in any one ring renders the two others free from each other, it had to be observed that this was already inscribed in the Borromean coat-of-arms. The knot thus termed 'Borromean' was already there, without anyone noticing its significance.

It is wrong to think that this knot is a norm for the interrelation of the three functions which exist one-to-another in their exercise solely in the being who thus thinks of himself as man. It is not the break between symbolic, imaginary and real which defines perversion, but that they are already distinct.

The Borromean link must, then, be thought of as tetradic. The fourth term, it happens, is the *sinthome*. It is just as surely the Father, in as much as *perversion*

means nothing other than 'turning to the father' [*version vers le père*], and that, in short, the Father is a symptom, or if you prefer, a *sinthome*. The ex-istence of the symptom is implied by the very position, which supposes this enigmatic link between the imaginary, the symbolic and the real.

If you find somewhere the drawing which schematizes the interrelation of the imaginary, the symbolic and the real such that each is separate from the others—you have already, in the previous figurations by which I set out their relations, the possibility of their interlinking—by what? By the *sinthome*. You must see this: it is the folding back of the big S, that is to say that which maintains the consistence of the symbolic, folding it back in the following manner [Figures].

If this diagram is correct—I mean that, sliding under the real, it [S] will clearly also be under the imaginary, and will have to go over the *sinthomatique*—we have the following position: starting from four the result is this [Figure].

You have the following interrelation: here, for instance, the imaginary, the real, the *sinthome*, which I'm going to represent with a S, and the symbolic. Each one of them is expressly interchangeable. 1 to 2 can be turned around into 2 to 1, 3 to 4 likewise into 4 to 3, in a manner which I hope appears simple. But thus we find ourselves in the following situation: for 1 to 2, indeed for 2 to 1, to have in its *milieu*, so to speak, the S and the S, must mean that the *sinthome* and the symbol are positioned in such a way that there are four of them, as you see here, caught in the big R, and here, the I is included in a certain way by passing above the symbol and beneath the symptom. The link, which I have expressed here by the opposition of R to I, always appears in this form. In other words: the pair symbol and symptom emerge so that one of the terms encompasses them both, while the other slides, let's say, over that which is above and under that which is beneath. This is the diagram which you regularly end with in an attempt to make a Borromean knot *à quatre*.

The Oedipus Complex is this kind of symptom. It is entirely maintained by the fact that the Name-of-the-Father is also the Father of the name—which makes the symptom no less necessary.

This other in question is that which in Joyce emerges because he is, to put it briefly, burdened by a father. It turns out in *Ulysses* that Joyce has to support the father's subsistence. Through his art—art is always something which from ancient days comes to us as the product of the artisan—Joyce not only enables his family to subsist, but illustrates it, and at the same time illustrates what he calls *my country*, 'the uncreated conscience of my race'. Thus ends the *Portrait of the Artist*, and he gives himself this mission.

In this sense, I announce what will be this year my interrogation concerning art—how is artifice able to target expressly, so to speak, what first appears as symptom?—how can art, the artisan, deploy that which the symptom imposes, in other words what I have figured in my two tetrads as 'truth'?

Where is it, truth? On this occasion, I said that it is somewhere in the discourse of the Master, as it is supposed in the subject who, divided, is still the subject of fantasy. Contrary to what I had stated before, it is at the level of truth that we can consider the half-said [*mi-dit*]. Effectively, the subject in this state can only represent itself in the signifier index 1, while the signifier index 2 represents

itself—to put it in the terms I have just been using—in the duplicity of symbol and symptom. S_2 is where the artistry is, in that through the joining of two signifiers it is able to produce the *objet a* , which I illustrated by the relation of the ear to the eye, indeed, by evoking the stop-gap.

It is to the extent that the discourse of the Master predominates that the S_2 is divided. This is the division of symbol and symptom. But it is, as it were, mirrored by the subject's division. And it is the insistence of the subject, albeit that which a signifier represents for another signifier, which obliges us to show that it is in the symptom that one of these two signifiers in the symbolic finds its support. In this sense, it could be said that in the articulation of the symptom and the symbol there is only a false hole.

Supposing the consistence of any one of these functions, symbolic, imaginary and real, as forming a circle is to suppose a hole. But concerning the symbol and the symptom, it is the folding of the totality, the interlinking of these two circles, which creates the hole.

To produce a true hole, as Soury has clearly shown, it must be framed by something resembling a bubble, a torus, so that each one of these holes is outlined by something which holds them together, for us to have something which could be termed a true hole. That is to say, one has to imagine if these holes are to subsist, maintain themselves.

If we simply suppose a straight line here—it will fulfil the same function so long as it is infinite.

We shall have to come back to the definition of the infinite, as well as that of the straight line—in what does it subsist, how is it related to a circle. I must certainly come back to the circle—which has a function well known to the police, that of allowing circulation [*circuler*, 'traffic'], and the police have a support for this which is not new-fangled. Hegel saw very clearly what was its function, and he saw it in a form utterly different to the one in question. For the police, it is quite simply a matter of the turning-around continuing.

The addition of an infinite straight line to the false hole transforms it into a hole of borromean subsistence—I wish to end on this point for today.

2) 9th December 1975

There are too many of you for me to hope to get from you what I got from the public in the United States, where I've just been. I was there for a packed fortnight, and was able to notice a certain amount of things—namely, if I understood properly, a certain lassitude, principally felt by analysts. I can only say I was very well looked after, but that's not saying much. I was sucked up into a sort of whirlwind there, which can only find a guarantee in what I am bringing to light with my knot.

*

You have been able to follow each step of the way by which I have come to use the functions of the knot to express what I had first advanced as the triplicity of the symbolic, the imaginary and the real. The knot is tied in the spirit of a modern *mos geometricus*. We are in fact always captivated from the outset by a geometry, which I described last time as comparable to the sack, in other words to the surface, and it is very difficult—something which happens most often when your eyes are shut—to think about knots.

Analysis is, in essence, the reduction of initiation to its reality. The reality of initiation is that properly speaking there is no initiation. Every subject sets this up, that it was always there and was never anything but a supposition. Nevertheless, experience shows us that this supposition is always set up ambiguously, in as much as the subject is as such not only double, but divided.

What must be accounted for is the real of that division. How did Freud, a bourgeois, and one stuffed with middle-class prejudices, attain the force proper to what he had to say, his aim to speak the truth about man? For my part, I have added this correction, which has not been without difficulties for me—that no truth can be spoken; like the subject which it comprises, it can only be half-spoken (*mi-dire*).

My point of departure is to show man what Writing puts forth, not as an aid *for* him, but as one *against* him. I am trying to situate myself in this condition. And thus I have been led, and in a manner worth remarking, to the knot, to a geometry barred from the imaginary, or at least one which can only be imagined across all sorts of resistances. This barrier is properly speaking what the knot, in so far as it is borromean, constitutes.

*

One of the things which struck me most when I was in America, was my encounter—completely intentional on my part—with Chomsky. I was, properly speaking, flabbergasted. I told him as much. What flabbergasted me was the notion of language which, I realized, he held. I can't say that it can in any way be refuted, as it's the commonest notion. His affirmation of it directly to me gave me an immediate sense of the full distance which separates me from him. This notion—a common notion then, and one which seems to me precarious—starts out from a conception of the body as provided with organs. In this conception, the organ is a tool, a tool for gripping, for apprehension, and there is no reason in principle

why this tool should not apprehend itself as such. Chomsky is thus easily able to consider language as determined by some genetic fact. In other words language, he said to my face, is itself an organ.

That one should be able to turn language back upon itself as an organ, I find very striking. How could its operations be accounted for, in the end, if one refused to conceive language as making a hole in the real? It is not only difficult, it is downright impossible. I cannot see how any method of observation could engage with language without admitting as a principal truth that language emerges as making a hole in what can be situated as the real. Language's hold on the real operates through the function of the hole.

It is hard for me to bring home to you the full weight of this conviction. If it seems to me unavoidable, this is because there is no truth as such possible but by voiding this real.

When the genetic real, to use Chomsky's words, is approached in terms of signs or messages emitted by the molecular gene, reducing it to the double helix which brought fame to Crick and Watson—when the real is thus subtilized, in fact a veil is drawn over that which has effects in language. For language is not in itself a message. It can only sustain itself through the function of the hole in the real. To approach it, we have the pathway offered by our modern *mos geometricus*, that is to say the concrete result of the effects proper to language—the knot in which I have faith, and which is entirely based on the equivalence of an infinite line and a circle.

*

This schema shows a borromean knot just as well as my standard drawing. Hence it is equally true that this [reference to figure], in which the pair of so-called infinite lines has been substituted by a circle, also shows it.

This figure is the edge of the exigency proper to the knot. It is answered by this extremely simple arrangement of three infinite lines in parallel. Where should we place the infinity point [*le point à l'infini*] on each line so that their concentricity, as we might call it, is not impeded? Let's put them here, for instance. We could just as well invert their positions so that the first line envelopes the others instead of being enveloped by them—the characteristic of the infinity point is that it cannot be placed, so to speak, on any given side.

But starting from number 3, the following is required [reference to figure]. Each one of these three lines completed by their infinity points must be enveloped by another and must envelope a third. This is what properly speaking constitutes the borromean knot as such.

In this respect this diagram is exemplary; you normally see it in the form of the armillary sphere, in which the blue circle is held back by the circle here coloured green, while the red circle likewise revolves and is held back. Whereas if the blue circle envelopes the green circle, it cannot be held back.

Here, even my hesitations are significant. They manifest the awkwardness [*la maladresse*] with which the borromean knot, the essential knot, is handled.

The triplicity which the knot allows to be illustrated results from a consistence which is only feigned by the imaginary, a foundational hole which emerges in the symbolic, and an ex-istence which belongs to the real, as its fundamental characteristic. This method offers no hope of breaking the constitutive knot of the symbolic, the imaginary and the real. This refusal amounts to a virtue, for it is thus that our analytic grasp of the knot is the negative of religion.

We do not believe in the object as such. And we deny that the object can be held by any organ thus conceived, as tool, separate tool—in other words, itself object. In Chomsky's conception the object is approached by another object. By contrast, it is as a restitution of the subject divided by the operations of language that analysis circulates. It thus puts science as such in question, to the extent that science makes an object into a subject, whereas the subject is in itself divided.

We do not believe in the object, but we observe desire. From this observation of desire we infer that the cause is objectal [*objectivée*]. The desire for knowledge encounters obstacles. As an embodiment of this obstacle I have invented the knot.

The knot must come undone. The knot is the only support conceivable for a relation between something and something else. If on the one hand the knot is abstract, it must at the same time be conceived as concrete.

This American ordeal, which is the reason I'm so weary today, has certainly been worthwhile, because I was able with these diagrams to create some agitation, some emotion. The sensed as mental, the senti-mental, is idiotic, because always by some device reducible to the imaginary. The imagination of consistence immediately extends to the impossibility of rupture [*cassure*], but it is in this that rupture can always be the real, the real as impossible, which is no less compatible with the said imagination, and even constitutes it.

In no way am I hoping to escape from what I have called the idiocy of this debate. Like anyone else, I only escape from it in the measure of my means, in other words by marking time, confident of no verifiable progress other than in the long term. In a fabulatory manner I propose that the real, as I think it in my *pan-se*,[6] is comprised really—the real effectively lying[7]—of the hole which subsists in that its consistence is nothing more than the totality of the knot which ties it together with the symbolic and the imaginary. The knot which may be termed borromean cannot be cut without dissolving the myth it offers of the subject, as *non-supposé*, in other words the subject as real, no more varied than each body which can be given the sign speaking-being [*parlêtre*]. Only due to this knot can this body be given a status that is respectable, in the everyday sense of the word.

After that exhausting attempt, which has done me in, I expect from you what I got more easily in America than anywhere else—that is, for someone to ask me a question.

Next time I will start by approaching this—that in his art Joyce, in a privileged manner, aimed at the fourth term of the knot. How can art aim, in an expressly divinatory mode, to embody in its consistence, and equally in its ex-istence, the

[6] Playing between *pensée* (thought) and *panser* (to dress, bandage), Lacan's pun is untranslatable (except perhaps in a roundabout way, 'which I a-dress in my thought').

[7] *réellement—le réel mentant*—cf. seminar of 18th November 1975 for this trope.

fourth essential term of the knot, how can it aim to render it as such, to the point of approaching it as closely as possible? We will begin with that.

So now I'm waiting to hear a voice, anyone's.

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MR X—It's a somewhat historical question. Who led you to believe that you would get something you would find useful from Chomsky? It is something that would never have occurred to me.

DR LACAN—One always suffers from this kind of weakness, remnants of hope. Since Chomsky is a linguist, I was hoping to find in him a point of contact with what I have shown about the symbolic, that is, that it always has something to do with holes, even when these are false holes. For instance, it is impossible not to describe as 'false hole' the totality formed by the symptom and the symbolic. But from another angle, the symptom subsists to the extent that it is hooked onto language, at least if we believe that we can modify something by interpretive handling, in other words by playing on the meaning. This assimilation in Chomsky is in my view in the order of the symptom, that is, it confounds the symptom and the real. It is precisely that which I found flabbergasting,

MR X—Perhaps it's an idle question ... [*une question oisive*]

DR LACAN—trivial? [*oiseuse*]

MR X—Thank you. As I'm American ...

DR LACAN—You are American? Once more I see that it is only an American who will question me. I can't say how overwhelmed I was in America by people who showed me in their ways that my discourse had not been in vain.

[.....]

MR Y—There is something I'm having difficulty getting hold of in your discourse —that you talk for an hour and a half and then wish for a more direct contact with somebody. I wonder if, in a more general sense, you don't speak in your theory about language without considering the part which the body, too, plays in exchange. There are moments where the organ can enable a very direct grasp of the real, without discourse. Is there not an alternation between the two in the life of a subject? It's a matter of the disembodiment of discourse from the body. At times, you have no need of language, no need of using language to make a hole in the real, because that hole doesn't exist due to a direct physical engagement with the real—I mean in love and *jouissance*.

DR LACAN—It is nevertheless very difficult not to consider the real at that moment as a third. What I am able to seek as a response has to do with a call [*appel*] to the real, not as linked to the body, but as different. At a distance from the body, there is the possibility of something I termed last time resonance or consonance. And it is at the level of the real that this consonance is situated. In relation to its poles, the body and language, the real is what harmonizes [*fait accord*].

MR Z—You said a moment ago that Chomsky made language into an organ, and you said that you found this flabbergasting. I was wondering if this might be because what you, for your part, make into an organ is the libido—I refer to the

myth of the *lamelle*. And I wonder if this is not the way in which the question of art should be addressed here...

DR LACAN—The libido, as its name indicates, cannot but participate in the hole, just like the other modes in which the real appears. It is thus that I am trying to link up with the function of art; it is implied by what is left blank as the fourth term when I say that art can even reach the symptom. This is what I am going to try to give substance. Your reference to the myth of the *lamelle* is to the point. You're on the right track there.

MR A—When you speak of libido in this text, you note that it is distinguished by a coming-and-going movement. Now, this image seems to me to function like that of the chord, which is caught in a phenomenon of resonance and which undulates, in other words dips and rises, which makes an antinode and knots.

DR LACAN—It is no accident that the metaphor of a chord comes from knots. What I am trying to do is to find what this metaphor refers to. If there are antinodes and knots in a vibrating chord, it is in as much as knots are being referred to. The use of language always goes beyond what is actually said, but the bearing of metaphor as such is always reduced—reduced to metonymy.

MR B—When you move from the borromean knot *à trois* to the knot *à quatre* with the symptom, the borromean knot as such disappears.

DR LACAN—Quite right—it's no longer a knot, because the three terms are only held together by the symptom.

MR B—From this point of view, the hope of a cure in analysis seems to pose a problem...

DR LACAN—There is no radical reduction of the fourth term. Freud was somehow able to propose an *Urverdrängung*, a repression which is never undone. It is in the very nature of the symbolic to comprise a hole.

MR B—Isn't this knot, despite what you say, simply a model?

DR LACAN—It does not constitute a model in that it comprises something before which the imagination fails. And its mathematical approach in topology is insufficient.

Let me tell you about my experiences this holiday. This (fig 9) constitutes a knot—not a knot *à deux*, since there is only one cord, but a knot known as a trefoil, which is the simplest of knots. It's the same as this one (fig 8), even though they look different. I have discovered that with this knot it is easy to demonstrate the existence of a borromean knot. It is sufficient to think that, on this double surface without which we would not know how to write anything concerning knots, on an underlying surface, then, you place the same knot. It is very easy to pass an identical knot at each stage *under* the underlying knot and *over* the knot lying above, and thus to produce a borromean knot.

Is it possible with this knot *à trois* to produce a borromean knot *à quatre*? I spent about two months doing my head in, without successfully demonstrating that there is a way of tying four trefoil knots in a borromean manner. That proves nothing. It doesn't prove that this knot doesn't exist. Last night it was still all I could think about. The worst is that I haven't found the demonstrative reason for its non-existence—it's simply that I've failed. If I could show that it cannot exist, why it is impossible, a real would be guarantied. To tell you what I think, it's that

it does exist—I mean that it is not there that we come up against a real. I don't despair of finding it, but the fact is there's nothing I can do. From the moment of its proof [*démontré*], it would be easy to show [*montrer*] you it, but I can show you no such thing. The relation of showing to proving is one of sharp separation.

Ms X—You said just now that in Chomsky's view language would be an organ, and that if so it would no longer be possible to understand its operations [*maniement*]. Is it the word *main* [hand]...?

Dr Lacan —What I am claiming is that, despite the existence of handshakes, one hand does not know what the other is doing in the act of shaking hands.

3) 16th December 1975

If analysis was taken as seriously as I take the preparation of my seminar, it would be so much the better, and would surely have better results. For this, one would need in analysis the senti-ment (in the sense I spoke of the other day) of an absolute risk.

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I told you the other day that I had made a discovery concerning triple knots, which I draw like this and which can be obtained from the borromean knot—that they can be made into a triple borromean knot, and that I struggled for two months to try to produce a knot which would tie them together *à quatre*. I also told you that the fact that I couldn't do it didn't prove anything, apart from my clumsiness—and that I was sure it must exist.

That same evening, to my delighted surprise, there appeared on my doorstep the man called Thomé, who came to bring me the fruits of his collaboration with Soury: the proof that a borromean knot consisting of four triple knots does indeed exist—which certainly justifies my obstinacy, but makes my incapacity no less deplorable.

Nevertheless, I welcomed the news with feelings untainted by regrets for my impotence. My feelings were of pure and simple enthusiasm, and I think I was able to show them some of this when I saw them a few evenings later. They haven't been able to give me an account of how they came to find it.

On the blackboard I have reproduced their discovery, textually: my drawing takes a slightly different route, so that you can see perhaps a little better how it's done. I would like to commemorate this little event—which, besides, I consider not so little—and I'm going to tell you the reasons for my research.

What is the support of this research? Not what Sarah Kofman speaks of in her remarkable article *Vautour Rouge* ('red vulture'), in which she refers to the *elixirs du diable* Freud celebrates. But I recommend that you read the collection entitled *Mimesis* which contains this article, which I think is worth reading. For my part, I've only read the first, third and fifth articles; due to the preparation of this seminar, I've had other things to worry about. The first article—about Wittgenstein and, so to speak, the noise made by his teaching—is the only one, to tell the truth, that I've read right through.

I should say that the geometry of knots—a specific, original geometry—exorcises the so-called 'uncanny', which is unquestionably bound up with the imaginary. But that there should be something which allows it to be exorcised is certainly in itself strange...

The resistance experienced by the imagination to thinking anything concerning this new geometry, is something which strikes me because I have experienced it. It is certainly not pure chance that Soury and Thomé were fascinated by the conjunction of imaginary, symbolic and real which was emerging in my teaching, that they were quite especially attracted by the things I dream up. Let's say that they are gifted in that line of things. The strange thing is—here I let myself betray their confidences—that they make progress, they tell me, by discussing it together.

Thinking is certainly not usually done *à deux*. The fact is, they manage it, and for a long time they have been producing things about the borromean knot which seem to me more than interesting—indeed, an achievement. This discovery is certainly not the crowning glory, they will make more.

I will not add what Soury has told me of his thoughts about teaching. In this matter, I think that by following my example, which I described a moment ago, he will certainly manage as well as I am able to; that is, in the same risky fashion. But that dialogue should prove fertile, especially in this field, is a confirmation of my need of it. For the two months I spent relentlessly looking for the fourth triple knot and the way it could form a borromean knot with the three others, I was alone in this search, I mean in this hopeful thinking-through. It is time for me to talk of the significance this research has for me.

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This research is extremely significant to me for the following reason. The three circles of the borromean knot are all three, as circles, equivalent—I mean that they are constituted by something which is reproduced across the three.

I situate the support of consistence in the imaginary. Likewise, I make the essential constituent of the symbolic the hole. And I make the real the support of what I term ex-sistence, in this sense: in its *sistence* outside of the imaginary and the symbolic, it knocks up against them, its play is something precisely in the order of limitation; the two others, from the moment when it is tied into a borromean knot with them, offer it resistance. In other words, the real only has ex-sistence—in rather an astonishing formulation of mine—in its encounter with the limits of the symbolic and the imaginary.

To be sure, as much should be said of the two others—for example, it is to the extent that it ex-sists in the real that the imaginary also encounters conflict, which is here better felt. Why then do I place this ex-sistence precisely where it can appear most paradoxical? Because I have to redistribute these three modes, and it is exactly this ex-sistence which supports the thinking of the real.

But what is the result of this?—if not, that these three terms should be conceived as linked to each other. If they are so analogous, to use this term, could one not suppose that this is due to a certain continuity? And thus we are led directly to tie the triple knot. Starting from the inter-balancing, inter-leaving of the three, it is not a great step to link up the points and make their arrangement one of continuity.

But what is the result if what is of the order of subject, in as much as the subject is always merely *supposé*, finds in the end its support in this knot? Is the triple knot tied into a borromean knot enough? My question concerns this point.

In the diagram of a borromean chain, does it not seem that the minimum is always constituted by a quadruple knot? Pull on the green cord and you will see that the black cord, here knotted to the red cord, is pulled by the blue cord, giving the perceived form of a borromean chain. It seems that the least one can expect from the borromean chain is this relation of one to three others. And if we suppose that the triple knots link up with one another in borromean knots, we will get to this—that a fourth will always be propped upon [*prendra appui*] three supports, which we will call here subjective—in other words, personal. You remember how I

introduced this fourth element. Each of the three others are supposed to constitute something of the personal. In respect of these three, the fourth will be what this year I am terming the *sinthome.*

R	S	I
S	I	R
I	R	S

sinthome

There is a reason why I have written in a certain order RSI, SIR, IRS. Likewise Soury and Thomé have highlighted, as I mentioned last year, that in relation to the borromean knot there are two different types from the moment when it is given an orientation and colours.

What does this difference put in place [*que suppose-t-elle*]? Not that the identity of either is marked by an initial letter. The distinction between them which has effects in their orientation can only be traced in the way in which their difference is marked by colour—not the difference of one from another, but, as it were, their absolute difference, difference common to all three. It is to the extent that something which is one marks as such the difference between all three and not that between any two, that the distinction between the two structures of the borromean knot appears.

Which is the true one? Which is true in respect of the way the imaginary, the symbolic and the real are knotted together into the support of the subject? This is the question which should be posed. One should refer back to my preceding comments on the duality of the borromean knot to gauge its importance, for I have only been able to touch on it for a moment today. What is remarkable is that the triple knot shows no trace of this difference. There is only one kind of this triple knot, in which the imaginary, the symbolic and the real are in continuity, and which is thus an homogenization of the borromean knot. Check this yourself.

However, it is well known that there are two triple knots, depending on whether the knot turns to the left or to the right. What, then, is the link between the two types of borromean knot and the two types of triple knot? Whatever it is, if the triple knot is really the support of all kinds of subject, how can it be put in question? How can it be put in question such that it really concerns a subject?

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There was a time when my progress took a certain route, before I got onto that of analysis, which is witnessed by my thesis—paranoiac psychosis and its relation, as I put it, to the personality. If I have been opposed to the republication of this book for so long, this is due to something simple: there is no relation between paranoiac psychosis and the personality. Because it's the same thing. In so far as a subject makes a triple knot of the imaginary, the symbolic and the real, its only support is their continuity; all three have one and the same consistence. And this is what paranoiac psychosis consists of.

To understand correctly what I'm proposing today, one could deduce the following: a fourth term could be knotted as a symptom to the paranoiac three, a term

which would be situated as personality, distinct from the three prior personalities, and their symptom.

Is this to say that this too would be paranoiac? Nothing indicates this when it is a matter of a borromean chain made up of an indefinite number of triple knots. Such a chain no longer constitutes a paranoia, if only because it is common. The possible terminal *flocculation*[8] of fourth terms in this braid, this tress of subjectivity, allows us to suppose that there are certain chosen points in the totality of the texture which function as the term[9] of this quadruple knot. And this is exactly what the *sinthome* consists in—not in so far as it is personality, but that in relation to the three others it specifies itself as *sinthome* and neurotic.

Here we are given an insight into the nature of the unconscious. There is a term which is particularly connected to it which has a privileged relation to the *sinthome*. In this set of four, you see two couples are formed, red-green and blue-red. I read that as a link between the *sinthome* and the unconscious, and between the imaginary and the real. That is where the *sinthome* emerges.

These are difficult things I wanted to propose to you today. To complement this, I should certainly speak of why I have now opened up the triple knot, and am not giving it the usual circular form. I have already noted the field of J$\not$A. This is *jouissance*, and it is not that of the Other, because there is no Other of the Other; in the symbolic, site of the Other as such, there are no oppositions.

The *jouissance* of the Other of the Other is impossible for the simple reason that no such instance exists. All that remains, then, is what is produced in the field of the intersection of the circle of the symbolic and the circle of the imaginary: meaning.

Elsewhere there is so-called phallic *jouissance*, to be distinguished from any *jouissance* of the penis. The *jouissance* of the double, of the specular image or imaginary body, is the support of a certain number of *béances* ['gaps/abeyances'], which constitute its different objects. By contrast, the *jouissance* of the phallus, JΦ, is located at the conjunction of the symbolic and the real, and is experienced as a parasite by the subject supported by the speaking-being [*parlêtre*], in the sense of what I designate as the unconscious. I mark it in balance over against meaning. This is the site consciously designated as power by the speaking-being.

The similarity is that the three rings participate in the imaginary on the level of consistence, in the symbolic as hole, and in the real as ex-sistent to these. The three rings imitate one another.

The fact that they do not imitate each other in a simple way makes this so much more difficult. In fact they make up a triple knot. Thus, after making the discovery that triple knots can be tied into triple borromean knots, I took care to note that if they are kept unconstrained, a triple knot exists whose plays extends across its full texture; a knot which is well and truly a fourth term, and which is called *sinthome*.

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[8]Lacan's metaphor refers to the idea of a subjective *tresse* (plait, braid), in which certain strands cluster into tufts or clumps; under 'flocculate', Chambers has 'to aggregate in tufts, flakes or cloudy masses'. For more on Lacanian *flocculation*, see SVII, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, *op. cit.*, p. 102.

[9]*se trouvent le terme* implies 'set a limit, almost 'function as a terminus' (cf *terminale* two lines above)

4) 13th January 1976

One's responsibility only goes as far as one's *savoir-faire.*

What is *savoir-faire*? Let's say it is what gives a remarkable value to one's art. Why remarkable? Because there is no Other of the Other to pass the final judgement. This means that there is something we cannot enjoy. Let us call it the *jouissance* of God, including in this the sense of sexual *jouissance.*

Supposing that he exists, does our image of God indicate that he enjoys his creation? To answer that he doesn't exist is to deal too briskly with the question, if we take on the burden of a thought whose essence is to take its place in this reality—a first approximation of the word *real* which has a different meaning in my vocabulary—in this limited reality which testifies to the ex-sistence of sex.

These are the first truths I bring you this new year...

The very first outline of what is called thought, everything which produces meaning from the moment of its first appearance, comprises a reference to, a gravitation towards, the sexual act—however little that act is in evidence. The very word *act* implies the polarity active/passive, which is already to get caught in a false sense. This is how knowledge is described, with the following ambiguity—that what is active is that which we know, but because of the effort we make to know, it is ourselves we imagine to be active.

So knowledge, from the outset, reveals its true nature—its deceptiveness. This is why, from the outset, everything should be reconsidered in terms of the opaqueness of the sexual. I use the word 'opaqueness' because we do not see in the sexual any relation, founded on anything at all. This implies, following the movement of thought, that there is no responsibility—in the sense where 'responsibility' means non-response side by side with response—there is no responsibility other than sexual responsibility, something in the end everyone feels.

What I have termed *savoir-faire* goes far beyond this, adding artifice, which we ascribe to God—absolutely gratuitously, as Joyce insists, because this is a point which tickled (what we describe as) his thought. God is not the author of this thing we call the universe. What we impute to God is the business of the artist. The first model for this, as is well known, is the potter, who is said to have moulded (with what, though?) this thing called, not by accident, the universe—which means only one thing, that there is One.

There is One, but we do not know where. It is more than unlikely that this One constitutes the universe. The real—that is, impossible—Other of the Other, is our idea of artifice, in that it is an activity which escapes us, in other words which far exceeds the enjoyment [*jouissance*] we can have of it. This absolutely slender *jouissance* is what we call spirit [*l'esprit*].

All of this implies a notion of the real which we must distinguish from the symbolic and the imaginary. The only trouble is that in this process the real is given meaning, whereas in fact the real is founded to the extent that there is no meaning, that it excludes meaning, or, more precisely, that it is deposited in this exclusion.

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There you are. I tell you this as I think it, for your knowledge. The form most devoid of meaning, but which is nevertheless imagined, is consistence. Bear in mind this: that nothing forces us to imagine consistence.

I have here a book by Robert M. Adams, called *Surface and Symbol*, whose sub-title indicates what is at issue—*The consistency of James Joyce's* Ulysses. This is a kind of presentiment of the distinction between the imaginary and the symbolic. Thus there is a chapter which places a question-mark after *Surface or Symbol*, surface *or* symbol.

What does consistence mean? It means what holds things together, and this is certainly why it is symbolised here by the surface. Our only idea of consistence, poor souls that we are, is what makes a bag or a cloth. We even feel the body as merely skin holding in its bag a heap of organs.

To put it in other terms, this consistence reveals the cord. But the imagination's powers of abstraction are so weak that it excludes from this cord, the residue of consistence, the knot.

It is on this point that I wish to add the only grain of salt I would perhaps accept responsibility for—the knot is the only thing which ex-sists, properly speaking, in the cord. It is not without hidden reason that I have had to provide you with access to this knot by starting with the chain, whose elements are distinct. These elements have their consistence in the form of the cord—or rather line, which we must suppose to be infinite so that the knot doesn't come undone, or rope-loop, in other words a cord which is tied together, or more exactly is spliced together. The knot does not constitute the consistence, it ex-sists in the cord element, the consistent cord.

So a knot can be tied. If I have taken the path of stitching-together the elements, this is because I thought it more didactic, given the mentality proper to the speaking-being [*parlêtre*], *senti-mentality*, because he feels it [*il la sent*], he feels the burden. It is also the *ment*ality in so far as he lies [*il ment*]. It is a fact that he lies. What is a fact? It is precisely he who makes it [*le fait*]. There is no fact without the fact that the speaking-being says so. There are no facts other than those the speaking-being recognises as such by speaking about them. There is no fact without artifice, and it is a fact that he lies, in other words that he accords recognition to false facts; because he has mentality, in other words self-love [*amour-propre*]. This is the principle of imagination. He adores his body. He adores it because he thinks he possesses it. In reality he does not. But his body is his only—mental, of course—consistence. His body is always buggering off. It's already fairly miraculous that it subsists for a time, for the time of this consummation which in fact—due to the fact of its being said—is inexorable, because nothing can be done, it cannot be reduced. It is an observed fact even in animals that the body does not evaporate, it is consistent. And this is what is disagreeable to the mentality, entirely because it believes it has a body to adore. This is the root of the imaginary. I think this—*p-a-n-s-e*—[10] in other words, I make a bandage of it, thus I clean it [*l'essuie*]. That's what this comes down to. It is the sexual which lies [*ment*] in this due to too much talk about itself, without the above-mentioned imaginary

[10] Punning on *panser*, 'to dress (a wound)'.

abstraction, which boils down to consistence. What is concrete, all that we know, is always sexual adoration, that is to say, misunderstanding [*méprise*], in other words contempt [*mépris*]. The object of adoration is supposed, except in the case of God, to have no mentality at all, which is only true of the body considered as such—I mean adored, because that is the only relation of the speaking-being to his body; so that it is always suspicious when he adores another body, for this entails the same contempt, a true contempt, because it is a question of truth. What is truth (as someone else said)? What is it, to say—as, when I started my bullshitting, they reproached me for not saying—the truth about truth? It is to do no more than I have effectively done—to follow the trace of the real, the real which only consists and ex-sists in the knot.

Haste has a function—I must go hastily. Naturally I won't get to the end, although I haven't dawdled. But tying the knot carelessly simply means going a bit fast.

Let us stick to the principle that there is no sexual relation, which I was led to by hysteria, in so far as it is, as Freud saw, the final perceptible reality concerning the sexual relation, precisely the final usteron. From this Freud learned the *b-a-ba*, which didn't stop him from posing the question *WwdW—Was will das Weib?* This was a mistake. He thought that there was *das Weib*; there is only *ein Weib*.

$$\frac{\text{WwdW}}{\text{WweW}}$$

*

Anyway, now I'm going to give you a little bit to get your teeth into. I would like to illustrate this with something which supports it, and which is certainly what is in question. I have already spoken at one point about enigma [*énigme*, also 'riddle'], which I write Ee. It's a matter of *énonciation* and *énoncé*. An enigma is an *énonciation* whose *énoncé* cannot be located.

You will find in R. M. Adams' book something of value—that, in the opening chapters of *Ulysses*, when he goes to teach at Trinity College[11] in front of that diminutive nation which makes up a class, Stephen—in other words Joyce as he imagines himself (and who, since he's not a fool, he's not in love with—on the contrary, he need only mention Stephen and he starts giggling, which is not very far from my position when I talk, at least about what I'm chattering on about to you)...

What does the enigma consist in? In an art which I would term between-the-lines, to refer to the cord. It is not clear why lines which are written should not be knotted by a second cord.

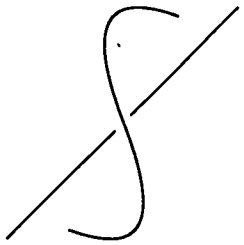
Writing: it's an interest of mine. A certain Février has done a history of it, another, Guelb, has theorised it. For my part, I only think historically—it is through little bits of writing that we have entered into the real—that is, ceased to

[11] Actually, Stephen doesn't teach at Trinity, but at a rather less exalted academy—the village Boys' School at Dalkey; *Ulysses*, *op. cit.*, p. 20ff.

imagine. The writing of little letters, little mathematical letters, is what supports the real.

But how on earth does it do this?, I wondered. Truly, I said to myself, it must be that writing always has something to do with the way we write the knot.

A knot is commonly written like this:



This already gives us an S, in other words something which has a considerable relation to the instance of the letter as I maintain it. And this gives us a likely basis for beauty—if Hogarth is to be believed, beauty was always a matter of this double inflection. Bullshit, of course, but in the end, at least this would imply that beauty is connected to something other than the obscene, in other words the real. There would be, in sum, nothing but beautiful writing—why not?

Let's get back to Stephen, who also starts with an S. Stephen is Joyce as he solves his own riddle [*il déchiffre sa propre énigme*]. He doesn't get very far because he believes in all his symptoms. This is very striking. He begins with—well, he began long before that, he scribbled some little bits, even some poems. His poems are not what he did best. He believes in the *uncreated conscience of my race*—that is the ending of the *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, and it's clear that it doesn't go very far. The end is better—*Old father, old artificer, stand me now and ever in good stead.* It is to his father that he addresses this prayer—his father whose precise characteristic is to be an unworthy, lacking father, and who Stephen is to search for throughout *Ulysses*, in settings where he has no chance of finding him. There is clearly a father somewhere—Bloom, a father in search of a son, but Stephen places one in opposition to him—but not much of one, I would say, having had so much father I was sick of him. It is peculiar that, throughout the novel, there is a gravitational attraction between the thoughts of Bloom and Stephen. Adams, whose name sounds more Jewish than Bloom, is very struck by the way Joyce attributes to Bloom a knowledge of Shakespeare which is manifestly unlikely, and which, moreover, is not necessarily favourable, like claiming that Shakespeare had relations with a certain herbalist who lived near him in London. For such a thing to occur to Bloom goes beyond what can rightly be imputed to him. This knowledge belongs to Stephen. The entire *Surface or Symbol* chapter talks of nothing but this. It culminates at the point in the text of *Ulysses* where Blephen and Stoom meet, which shows that they are not only made of the same signifier, but truly of the same material.

Ulysses bears witness to the way Joyce remains rooted in his father, even as he denies him—and this is exactly his symptom. I have said that Joyce was himself

the symptom. His whole oeuvre is one long testimony to this. *Exiles* is an approach to what is for him the central symptom, that of the lack of the sexual relation. The form taken by this lack is not arbitrary, but it must take one—for Joyce, this is what binds him to his wife, the so-called Nora, during whose reign he dreams up *Exiles*.[12] There could be no better term to express non-relation than *exile*. Non-relation means that there is no reason why he should take a woman, among others, to be his. A woman among others is also one who has a relation to some other man, and this 'some other man' is the character he imagines, and for whom he opens the choice of 'a woman' in question, who as it happens is none other than Nora.

Concerning *the uncreated conscience of my race* he invokes the supreme *artificer* who would be his father. But it is he who is the *artificer*, he's the one who knows what he has to do. However, he believes that there is a race which has an uncreated conscience, which is a great illusion. He also believes that there is a *book of himself*—the idea of making oneself into a book! The idea could only occur to a damn stunted poet. Why doesn't he say, instead, that he's a knot?

Let's get to *Ulysses*. A certain Chechner, who because he has read lots of books about analysis thinks that he's an analyst—it's an illusion that is fairly widespread, especially amongst analysts—has wished to analyse *Ulysses*. The effect this creates is absolutely terrifying, it truly gives the idea that the novelist's imagination, I mean the imagination which reigns over *Ulysses*, is to be thrown in the dustbin. Unlike *Surface and Symbol*, this analysis of *Ulysses* wishes to be exhaustive—naturally, because one can't stop when one analyses a book. Freud, all the same, only wrote some articles of this type, and moreover, he didn't, properly speaking, analyse the novel, with the exception of Dostoyevsky. He made nothing but a little allusion concerning Ibsen. He restrained himself!

Here is what our beloved Joyce, in the guise of Stephen, proposes to his pupils as a riddle [*énigme*]. It's an *énonciation*:

> *The cock crew*
> *The sky was blue*
> *The bells in heaven*
> *Were striking eleven*
> *'Tis time for this poor soul*
> *To go to heaven. (U, 22)*

I'll tell you what the answer was. After the whole class gives up, Joyce provides it—*The fox burying his grandmother under the bush.* This seems to amount to nothing, but beside the coherence of the *énonciation*—note that it's in verse, it's a poem, a consistent artefact—next to this, this little *fox* burying his grandmother under a bush is truly a wretched thing. What echo can that have for—I won't say for everyone in this room, but for those who are analysts? Analysis is that—the answer to a riddle; and an answer, it must be said, which is quite exceptionally stupid.

[12]Lacan's parenthetical comment—'the translation is *Les Exilés*, but it could just as well mean *Les Exils*'—perhaps suggests two senses of *exiler*: 'banishment' or 'self-imposed exile'.

This is why one must hold on to the cord. If one has no notion of where the cord ends up—that is, in the knot of the sexual non-relation—one runs the risk of talking rubbish. Meaning is the result of an intersection between the imaginary and the symbolic. And if we hold that there is no Other of the Other, at least no *jouissance* of the Other of the Other, we must make a stitch [*suture*] or splice [*épissure*] between the imaginary and the symbolic: unconscious knowledge. All this to obtain a meaning—which is the object of the analyst's response to what the analysand reveals over time about his symptom.

In making this splice, at the same time we make another between what constitutes the symptom and the real. In some manner, we teach the analysand to splice together his symptom and the parasitic real of *jouissance*. This is what characterises our procedure. To render this *jouissance* possible is the same thing as what I would write as *J'ouis sens* ['I hear sense'], to hear a meaning. Analysis is a matter of *suture* and splicing.

But it must be said that we ought to consider the orders [*instances*] as in reality separate. Imaginary, symbolic and real do not intermingle. Finding a meaning entails a knowledge of the knot, and sewing it up with artifice. Tying a knot, with what I would term a borromean chain-knot, is this not an abuse? Leaving that question hanging, I must leave you.

I have not left any time for dear Jacques Aubert, who I had planned to give the floor for the rest of the session, to speak to you now; but next time he will talk to you about the Bloom in question—that is, about someone who is not badly qualified to get the hang of analysis, since he's a Jew—about Bloom and how he feels suspended between the sexes, which makes him wonder if he's a father or a mother. Regarding his wife, he feels maternal, he thinks he carries her in his belly. This really is the worst aberration one can experience vis-à-vis somebody one loves. But why not? Love must be explained, and explaining it as a kind of madness is the first thing which comes within reach.

5) 20th January 1976

You must be thinking that, when it comes to Joyce, I'm a fish out of water [lit 'like a fish with an apple']. This is obviously linked to my lack of practice, to my inexperience of the language he writes in. It is not that I'm totally ignorant of English, but rather that he writes with such peculiar subtlety in English, that he disarticulates it. You would be wrong to think this only begins with *Finnegans Wake*. Long before *Finnegans Wake*, he has a peculiar way of breaking up phrases, notably in *Ulysses*; indeed, it's a process aiming to give language another use—and one which is far from being ordinary. This is part of his *savoir-faire*. And on this question, I have already quoted Sollers' article, whose pertinence you would do well to sample.

So this morning I'm going to allow someone to speak whose practical experience, not only of the English language, but of Joyce in particular, is far superior to mine. This is Jacques Aubert, and I'm going to let him speak straight away, since he has kindly offered to take over from me. I will listen to him with the full knowledge I have gathered of his experience of Joyce; I will listen to him, and hope that my comments—brief as they will be, I don't ask him to abridge things, far from it—the brief comments I will add will be made with all the respect I owe him for having introduced me to what I have called Joyce-the-symptom.

*

JACQUES AUBERT—Last June, Dr Lacan announced that Joyce was to feature on the path of his work. My presence here today in no way indicates that I feature on that royal road. Let me say immediately that I am, rather, on its verges; and you know why these are generally signposted: so what you are going to hear will be a roadmender's words![13]

I must thank Jacques Lacan for inviting me to produce some work; it is shoddy, not at all well tied-up, and not very articulate concerning knots. From another perspective, I would like to indicate that what I am going to say starts out from a sense I had of something that was threading through the text, certain of Joyce's texts at certain points—something woven in by Joyce. And this awareness of the thread leads me, precisely, to insist that this is not, as it might otherwise have been, a definitive statement.

To situate what happened to be my point of departure, I should specify—putting it in a very didactic way—that it was a little bit of 'Circe', part of an exchange from the episode in *Ulysses* which was given the name 'Circe' *a posteriori*, and described as the hallucinatory episode, whose art would be magic and whose category hallucination (according to a schema drawn up by Joyce for some friends).

Elements from preceding chapters, whose status cannot yet be determined, reappear—real or fictional characters, objects, or signifiers. But what is interesting too, is the manner of this return, the way it is manifestly connected with speech [*la parole*], with a speaking. From the beginning one is made aware of this—since the

[13] *Ce sont donc des propos à* la can*tonnier*—Aubert re-plays one of Lacan's jokes, punning on his name by claiming to speak *à* la can*tonnade* ('to everyone in general')

first two characters, one might say, are the Call and the Answer,[14] clearly indicating a dimension developed in the form of the chapter, in the ostensibly dramatic style—the dimension of speech [*la parole*], and of the kind of institutions/ locations which generate it [*instaurations de lieux d'où ça parle*].

What is important is that *it speaks* [*ça parle*], in all possible senses [*sens*], and that everything can be impersonated there (to take up a term that we will encounter shortly); everything can *personate* in this text, give rise to voice-effects across a mask.

I think I've isolated one of these functions—a detail of one of these functions or its mode of functioning—at the beginning of the chapter, in an exchange between Bloom and Rudolph (who is supposed to be his father and has been dead for eighteen years). I will read you the brief exchange in question.

Rudolph first appears as an elder of Zion. He has the appearance, according to the stage-directions, of an elder of Zion. And after various reproaches to his son, he says this:

> What you making down this place? Have you no soul? [a native of Hungary, he is supposed not to be able to manage English] (with feeble vulture talons he feels the silent face of Bloom) Are you not my son Leopold, the grandson of Leopold? Are you not my dear son Leopold who left the house of his father and left the god of his fathers Abraham and Jacob? (*U*, 357–8)

At first glance, what is happening here, the reader of *Ulysses* thinks, is something described several times by Bloom himself with the expression *retrospective arrangement*; the term recurs often enough in Bloom's thoughts throughout the text. The reader cannot fail to be aware of this retrospective arrangement, nor that it is arranged in relation to a favourite quotation of the father, from a literary text which it would seem had a certain effect on him. This text is on page 62 in the Gabler edition:

> Nathan's voice! His son's voice! I hear the voice of Nathan who left his father to die of grief and misery in my arms, who left the house of his father and left the God of his father.

One sees here that what returns does so with a subtle difference. But before outlining that difference, I would like to point to the effects this return-with-difference has on Bloom. What is his reply, in the 'Circe' episode? This:

> Bloom (with precaution): I suppose so, father. Mosenthal. all that's left of him.

Precaution—this is certainly a quality of Bloom, who is described as *prudent* throughout *Ulysses*. *The prudent one* is an aspect of Ulysses (but Ulysses is not merely that). He is described several times, in slightly Masonic terms, as *the prudent member*. The prudent member says *I suppose so*, I sous-pose so,[15] I suppose something to reply to the question 'Are you not my son?'; 'I sous-pose something of the kind', which in principle connects back to what the father said, but which suddenly,

[14] Cf *Ulysses*, *op. cit.*, p. 350.

[15] Literally, 'under-put'; Aubert puns on *supposer* by introducing *sous* as its first syllable. This is then (see below) expanded into a play between *suppôt* ('underling') and *sous-pot (-peau?)* ('under-pot/-skin').

as soon as one is following the text, appears as another figure, for we immediately have this moment of arrest marked by what the Anglo-saxons call a *period*, something which marks finality, a point not of suspension but of closure, and beyond which *Mosenthal* appears, a new sentence, once again marked by a period.

It is precisely around this proper name that something relating to the declared sous-position is simultaneously articulated and disarticulated. What, then, is this supposition, this function of sub-pot/peau [see note 15] of Mosenthal?

Here, in this context, the function of this signifier is to refer the father's words back to the author of a text, the text which has just been evoked by the father. But in its abruptness the signifier obscures more than it illuminates, and the reader is led to isolate it, search for the thoughts it connects back to, the displacements it is implicated in.

One of these displacements is obvious: in the first text, from the 'Lotus Eaters' (*U*, 62) the name in question, that of the author, features before the quotation; here, it is in the position of signature, and also in the position of a response. It's very charming, particularly so because it is about Moses. But if one calls to mind—as one always does, because one spends one's time re-reading—the place Mosenthal held in the first text, one realizes that there it was a displaced response to a question about the existence of the true name; a question which itself could only be formulated with eloquent vacillation. I must note here another phrase which is precisely the question to which Mosenthal is supposed to be the answer:

> What is this the right name is? By Mosenthal it is. Rachel is it? No.

For good measure I've included what follows, which maybe also has a certain interest. Mosenthal, even if a German-speaker who knows slang understands something else, without the *tréma* is the name of the author of a play whose original German title Bloom is trying to remember, to re-translate. In fact, it's a woman's name, a Jewish name which had not been kept in English. It's a curious thing—that a melodrama whose German title was *Deborah* was translated into English under the name *Leah*; and this is what Bloom is trying to recall. He's therefore trying to translate back to the original title (which is a woman's name), and this takes the form of the search. One can clearly observe the game of hide-and-seek between the author's name and that of his creation at the level of art, which brings into play at once being—note the insistence of *is*—and the problematic of sexuality, a patronymic supplanting a maiden-name.

Here, the reader, whom of course nothing in *Ulysses* has escaped, says that this reminds him of something else, which has a connection with Bloom himself.

I'll give you the first passage (I'm sorry to do this in little pieces, but I'm simply following the steps I went through) and its context:

> Mr Bloom stood at the corner, his eyes wandering over the multicoloured hoardings. Cantrell and Cochrane's Ginger Ale (Aromatic). Clery's Summer Sale. No, he's going on straight. [someone he's just been talking to, and who he thinks might be observing him] Hello. *Leah* tonight: [the play in question] Mrs Bandmann Palmer. Like to see her again in that. *Hamlet* she played last night. Male impersonator. [and here begins a little passage on the problematic of the sexes. *Male impersonator*—an actress who has taken the male *persona* or mask. But this could just as well apply

to one of the plays *Hamlet*, as the other, *Leah*; this is what everything turns on]. Perhaps he was a woman. Why Ophelia committed suicide... (*U*, 62).

So at one level there is the fact that the role of Hamlet was very often played by women. And an Anglo-Saxon critic had taken it into his head to analyze Hamlet precisely in terms of cross-dressing [*travesti*], by in a sense taking it seriously, and saying: Ophelia committed suicide because she realized that Hamlet was in fact a woman. I do not refer to this critique at random, to show my Shakespearean and Joycean knowledge, but simply because its implications re-appear elsewhere in *Ulysses*. 'Why Ophelia committed suicide'.[16] What do we read next?

> ... Poor papa! How in used to talk of Kate Bateman in that. Outside the Adelphi in London waited all the afternoon to get in. Year before I was born that was: sixtyfive. And Ristori in Vienna. What is this the right name is? By Mosenthal it is. *Rachel* is it? No. The scene he was always talking about where the old blind Abraham recognises the voice and puts his fingers on his face.
>
> —Nathan's voice! His son's voice! I hear the voice of Nathan who left his father to die of grief and misery in my arms, who left the house of his father and left the God of his father.
>
> Every word is so deep, Leopold.
>
> Poor papa! Poor man! I'm glad I didn't go into the room to look at his face. That day! O, dear! O, dear! Ffoo! Well, perhaps it was best for him (*U*,62)

In this passage, then, a whole series of questions are in play. Questions of existence—of being and names, of existence and suicide; the question of the name (which I am going to come back to), the name which in fact—as well as the name of the father, of his father—is that of the central character in the play; and finally the question of personating sex, the cause of per-sonation.

Behind the question of the name is the suicide of the father, another of whose characteristics is precisely to have changed his name: we see this in another passage, where it is presented in a manner which is itself curious.

In a pub, some regulars are talking about Bloom. 'He's a perverted jew' says one of them, 'from a place in Hungary and it was he drew up all the plans according to the Hungarian system [Sinn Fein's political plans] [.....] He changed [his name] by deedpoll, the father did'.[17]

It seems, then, that the father has changed his name, in a way which is rather interesting: according to a legal formula, *deed poll—deed*, or act (in all senses of the term); *poll* evokes or describes the act from the point of view of the document, a document which is 'polled' (evenly cut). And this *poll* which describes what has been cut in fact describes something beheaded, headless (a *pollard* is a tree which has been 'decapitated' and has grown back): *poll* in fact means 'crown' 'top of) head' The *deed poll* only consists of one section, which is why it is 'by decree',

[16]Aubert contrasts Valéry Larbaud's translation—*Est-ce pour ça qu'Ophélie s'est suicidée?*—with the original English text of *Ulysses* (1922)—*Why Ophelia committed suicide?*—to suggest that semantic possibilities are erased in translation. Gabler's 1984 edition omits the final question-mark (perhaps making Bloom's thought into a less curious, more melancholy reflection?).

[17]cf. *Ulysses*, *op. cit.*, p. 276. Aubert has 'polled'(or 'indented') the quotation from 'Cyclops' somewhat; but see below.

and it is opposed to an *indenture*, an act divided in two—each part, precisely, indented—to be entrusted to two parties.

This is how, Joyce tells us, the father changed his name. But which name did he change?

> —Isn't he a cousin of Bloom the dentist? says Jack Power.
>
> —Not at all, says Martin. Only namesakes. His name was Virag, the father's name that poisoned himself (*U*, 276).

There could be a play on the genitive and the name of the father here, which would allow another reading—that it is the *name* which has poisoned itself...

Virag re-appears; he is invoked in several places in *Ulysses*. He re-appears in *Circe*, first as a Virago, that is, the name which in the Vulgate, the translation of the Bible by Saint Jerome, serves to designate the woman from Adam's point of view. In *Genesis*, man is told to name woman: 'You will name her woman (Virago)'; although she is a woman, she is a little bit of man (*vir*).

Having got thus far in my imaginings, groping around between the lines of *Ulysses*, I would like to isolate, in amongst this interlacing, what appears as a gap [*trou*]. It is tempting, for interpretation, to make use of a schema involving the suicide, the name-changing and Bloom's refusal to see the face of his dead father. It would be very apt for all this to re-appear in *Circe*, in hallucination. But even if there is some truth in this, it is perhaps not sufficient to put the text to work, for example, to account for the 'Poor papa! Poor man!' passage: in the first passage, after 'Every word is so deep, Leopold', with the father's comments on the play, he says 'Poor papa! Poor man!', which was perhaps not very kind concerning what the father had said. 'I'm glad I didn't go into the room to look at his face. That day! O, dear!... Well, perhaps it was for the best for him'. In short, there is a whole range of things which must be accounted for, and above all, effects produced in the dramatic redistribution which is *Circe*. For it holds together, it works, and things take place right up alongside what looks like a gap. Joyce's handiwork consists in, among other things, exactly this moving around of what looks like a gap, in order to allow certain effects.

For instance, in the quotation I have given, the voice of the son is not mentioned, nor is the death of the father. But on the other hand an effect is produced by this filial voice, displaced in answer—but a filial voice precisely bearing a certain *savoir-faire* about the signifier. This precaution, this talent for supposing, for sous-posing [cf note 15], can be seen to propagate itself according to a logic which is completely eloquent. I have mentioned the eloquence of Mosenthal, the rhetoric of the periods: *Mosenthal. All that's left of him.*

In 'Circe', Rudolph's question is: *Are you not my dear son Leopold who left the house of his father and left the god of his fathers, Abraham and Jacob?—All that's left of him*, all that remains of him, all of him that's been abandoned—but also 'everything on the left of him'. If one recalls what the Credo indicates about the respective places of the Father and the Son, on high, this says lots about their relationship. Everything that remains of him, a name, an author's name; everything on his left, thus something which is not in any case a true son. Let us pause there...

What is certain is that this gives Bloom pleasure, and that this is understood. And how can this be seen? Because the father is far from happy. The reply which follows begins with:

Rudolph: (severely) One night they bring you home drunk etc: please, no out-of-place humour, let's talk about your transgressions. Bloom is jubilant—he has prudently said what he had to say, and he makes everyone happy.

But in this series of effects, some of which have just been listed, there is a sort of cascade: another effect emerges, which is in a sense structural in relation to the others, a sort of result of the effects which precede it. The interaction with the father seems to slide into an engagement with the mother. This father who is challenged in different ways leads to a mother on the side of the imaginary.

Rudolph, then, refers to the transgression of the son, who came home drunk, having spent his money, and who also came back covered with mud. *Nice spectacles for your poor mother!* It's not me, it's her, who's unhappy!

But the way this happens, how things are referred back to the mother through the mud, is quite funny: those of you who have read the *Portrait* in English may have noticed that *mud* is also a familiar form for *mother*, and which is associated with a pantomime (*P*, 67). It's a little, lightweight playlet, of the epiphanic kind (I use the term slightly provocatively); Joyce has placed, in the opening chapters of the *Portrait*, a series of little playlets, where the child, Stephen, is finding his way about Dublin, starting from a certain number of points—scenes, places, houses. He is sitting in a house (the scene generally starts like that), on a chair, in the kitchen of his aunt, who is reading the evening paper, and admiring the picture of an actress, *the beautiful Mabel Hunter.*

> A ringletted girl stood on tiptoe to peer at the picture and said softly:
>
> —What is she in, mud?
>
> —In a pantomime, love (*P*, 67)

Now, the passage in 'Circe' I was discussing a moment ago slides through the mud, since this signifier returns three or four times in the passage, slides through the mud to where the mother emerges: *Nice spectacles for your mother*, says Rudolph, and Bloom says *Mamma!* because she suddenly begins to appear. (As soon as certain words, certain signifiers are introduced in *Circe*, the object surfaces, so to speak). And how does she appear? *In pantomime dame's stringed mobcap, widow Twankey's crinoline and bustle*, and following the pattern of English pantomime, that is, a man disguised as a woman (the pantomime plays referred to are performed particularly at Christmas, and imply an overturning of dress-codes, a generalized cross-dressing: pantomime).

Feminine clothing, then. But there is another echo here, for from the beginning of *Ulysses* the mother has been invoked in connection with pantomime. After evoking his dead mother, Stephen says:

> 'Where now? Her secrets: old featherfans, tasselled dancecards, powdered with musk, a gaud of amber beads in her locked drawer. A birdcage hung in the sunny window of her house when she was a girl. She heard old Royce sing in the pantomime of *Turko the Terrible* and laughed with others when he sang:

I am the boy
That can enjoy
Invisibility.

Phantasmal mirth, folded away: muskperfumed' (*U*, 8–9).

A fantasmatic ensemble appears, linked to the mother, via Stephen, with a radical ambiguity: what was she laughing at? At old Royce singing, at what he said, at his funny voice, God knows what else.

So this problematic mother is dressed exactly like the pantomime mother of Aladin, Widow Twankey. Widow Twankey's outfit is that of Aladin's mother in pantomime, a mother who clearly has no idea what her son has been doing, apart from that if you rub the lamp the Genie inside speaks...

I'll stop on that point, to pass on to another aspect of the way the text works.

Ellen Bloom, who has just appeared, is not at all like the father, on the side of the sages of Zion, but gives the impression rather of being on the side of the Roman, Catholic and Apostolic religion, for what does she say when she sees him all covered in mud? *O blessed Redeemer, what have they done to him! ... Sacred Heart of Mary, where were you at all at all?*(*U*, 358). This is, besides, rather curious, for one would expect it to be the Sacred Heart of Jesus—a way of indicating her narcissistic relation to religion; she is clearly catholic in the particular nineteenth-century manner, and this is an aspect which should be highlighted as soon as one speaks of Joyce, even if one has to look at the minor texts, *Stephen Hero*, *Dubliners*.

I would like to show this first in connection with the epiphany. The term 'epiphany' refers to fairly diverse things. Joyce only defined it in one place, in *Stephen Hero*. And what he said has certainly been cheerfully distorted. Here is the definition: 'By an epiphany he meant a sudden spiritual manifestation, whether in the vulgarity of speech or of gesture or in a memorable phase of the mind itself'.[18] The definition is polished, didactic and *thomas-aquinasante*. But it occurs in a text which in two pages takes us from a dialogue with the mother, where she reproaches Stephen for his unbelief, continually invoking 'the priests'. Stephen at once breaks with her on this topic and in another sense skirts round the problem; his discourse slides to the relation between women and priests, and then on to the beloved; and suddenly he says that he is wandering the streets, and that a Dublin scene moves him—'a trivial incident set him composing some ardent verses'.[19] Then nothing more about the poem, but he reports the dialogue he has overheard, between a young lady and a youth, and one of the rare words which appear is the word *chapel*: apart from that there is practically nothing but points of suspension in the dialogue.

This dialogue of nothing, then, on the one hand makes him write a poem, on the other, is baptised 'epiphany', and given a learned definition in the lines which follow. This is what he wanted to do, he adds—to record these scenes, these realist playlets of such eloquence. There is thus a sort of doubling of experience (let's say, to simplify, into a realist aspect and an aspect which is in some way 'poetic'), and a

[18] *Stephen Hero*, *op. cit.*, p. 216.
[19] *Ibid.*

kind of liquidation or censure of the poetic, in the text of *Stephen Hero*. Now, the title of the elided poem is 'The Villanelle of the Temptress', and it emerges precisely from a discourse which involves the mother and her relation to the priests.

This relation which I've roughly defined as an imaginary relation to religion appears in different guises in the *Portrait of the Artist*. For instance, in the sermons on Hell, which are interminable (at once Kantian and very sadistic) and aim to represent in detail the horrible torments of Hell, to give an idea *in presentia* of Hell. Or, in another manner, in the figure of the confessor, who listens but also answers. What does he say in answer? this is precisely the central question of Stephen's Easter mass, which should precede the confession of his sins. But for Joyce, this function is connected to that of the artist. Here I would point to two texts, one at the beginning of *Stephen Hero*, where Stephen says that in writing his poems he was able to fulfil the double function of confessor and confessing subject. The other passage comes at the end of *Portait of the Artist*; it's the moment when, mortified to see the beloved hold her ear up with a smile, to a handsome young priest, he says that for his part he has given up the priesthood, that the matter is settled, it's not for him. He adds something like: 'To think that women place their trust in fellows like that, and tell them secrets in the shadows, while I...' (*P*, 220–1). He wishes to intervene before women gave birth to another of their race, thinking that what would take place, the effects of his words, would lead to some improvement of what he considers a deplorable race. This bears a relation to the famous *uncreated conscience of my race* spoken of on the last page: it passes through the ear (the well-known conception through the ear...), which is found elsewhere in 'Circe'—

LACAN: —and to which great importance was ascribed by Jones; Jones, Freud's pupil.

—Another essential point about this imaginary dimension of religion is highlighted in the famous passage in *Ulysses* which opposes the problematic, trinitary conception of theology by opposition to an 'Italian' *madonisante* conception, which fills all gaps with an image of the Virgin Mary: in the end, he seems to say, the catholic church didn't do badly, placing the incertitude of the void at the foundation of everything.[20] It seems to me that the names of the father are in play on multiple levels in the working of these passages.

But in 'Circe', as in the whole of *Ulysses*, things move around, artifice is created, when the names of the father are caught up in a game of hide-and-seek; in other words, that alongside what looks like a gap, we have the displacement of the gap, the displacement of the name of the father.

We have already picked out in passing, from the disorder, Abraham, Jacob, Virag, and Dedalus—and there is another one, which is quite funny. In a central episode, 'Cyclops', we meet a certain J. J., whom, if one has a good memory, one recalls having met in an earlier episode under the name J. J. O'Molloy, that is, 'descendant of Molloy', J. J., son of Molloy.

[20] Aubert paraphrases a passage in 'Scylla and Charybdis' (*U*,170) on the 'mystical estate' of fatherhood as foundation of the church (thus 'founded, like the world..... upon the void').

His situation is rather curious: he is, in principle, a lawyer, but a lawyer who is—I wouldn't say absolutely in decline—but well on the way to it. *Practice dwindling*, we are told.[21] And his practice is on the wane because he gambles. In some way gaming has replaced practice.

This could evidently be elaborated on. I would simply like to point to the function of this perfectly false father whose initials are at once those of James Joyce and John Joyce, his father. Moreover it is striking that what J. J. O'Molloy talks about is other fathers. In a passage which links back to the riddle quoted in the last seminar by Dr Lacan (the episode is 'Aeolus', which takes place in a newspaper office), it is he who turns to Stephen to give him a nice bit of rhetoric, which is also interesting. We have learnt that O'Molloy, after turning to gambling, has done literary work for the newspapers. Note, by the way, that this brings to mind 'The Dead', the last story in *Dubliners*, where the hero, Gabriel Conroy, writes reports and other things for newspapers (this appears in a different manner in *Exiles*). What sort of literature? Is it literature which remains, deserves to survive? Gabriel asks himself that, and we will see he's not the only one.

So O'Molloy, J. J., tells us that he turns to Stephen, in the editorial office, and offers him a beautiful specimen of legal eloquence.

> J. J. O'Molloy turned to Stephen and said quietly and slowly:
>
> —One of the most polished periods I think I ever listened to in my life fell from the lips of Seymour Bushe. It was in that case of fratricide, the Childs murder case. Bushe defended him.
>
> *And in the porches of mine ear did pour.* [interpolation from *Hamlet*]
>
> By the way how did he find that out? He died in his sleep. Or the other story, beast with two backs? [Stephen's thoughts]
>
> —What was that? the professor asked.
>
> [one of the headlines dividing up the newspaper office episode]
>
> ITALIA, MAGISTRA ARTIUM
>
> —He spoke on the law of evidence, J. J. O'Molloy said, of Roman justice as contrasted with the earlier Mosaic code, the *lex talionis.* and he cited the Moses of Michaelangelo in the vatican. [the law of bearing-witness, not only bearing witness before the law]
>
> —Ha.
>
> —A few wellchosen words, Lenehan prefaced. [.....]
>
> J. J. O.Molloy resumed, moulding his words:
>
> —He said of it: *that stony effigy in frozen music, horned and terrible, of the human form divine, that eternal symbol of wisdom and of prophecy which, if aught that the imagination or the hand of sculptor has wrought in marble of soultransfigured and soultransfiguring deserves to live, deserves to live.* (*U*, 114–5).

So O'Molloy starts by making himself an echo-chamber for legal knowledge, setting out the laws relating to *evidence* (also bearing witness), then has Bushe (bush) speak, making him bear rhetorical witness to art as the foundation of the right to exist (*deserves to live*), and the foundation of the right to exist of the work

[21] *Ulysses,op. cit.*, p. 103

of art. One sees the resonance this has for the literature of newspapers: art is the legal basis of the bearer of the law, Moses, because it will remain, as the Vatican Moses (which is the name we give it, 'the Vatican Moses'): which is not without interest when one bears in mind what the Vatican represents in *Ulysses*...

And this *deserves to live* that is so insistent (rhetorical repetition) is marked, countersigned by its effects on the period's addressee, Stephen; J. J. O'Molloy has turned towards him, and this happens: 'Stephen, his blood wooed by grace of language and gesture, blushed' (*U*, 115). Oddly enough, this blush of Stephen's is one of a series across other texts of Joyce. I am thinking in particular of the passage in the *Portrait* which may have struck you, when during a trip to Cork with his father, Stephen visits a classroom in the medical school where his father studied for a while. The father looks for his initials. Stephen clearly does not notice that these are also his initials (Simon Dedalus, also S.D.). But what he comes across is the word 'Foetus', and this has a tremendous effect on him. He blushes, pales, etc. Again, one finds in relation to the initials (but a different relation) the 'right to exist'. I would add that this series could include another passage, from *Dubliners*—again in the story I mentioned a moment ago, 'The Dead' (the title does not necessarily indicate the plural). Gabriel Conroy is to make a speech, the traditional speech of the family reunion; he is always around to write things for the newspaper or make little speeches like this. And at table they have just been discussing artists whose names have been forgotten, and those who have left nothing but a name which is fraught with difficulties.'His name, said Aunt Kate, was Parkinson. I heard him when he was in his prime and I think he had then the purest tenor voice that was ever put into a man's throat'.[22] And this is what Gabriel talks about in his speech, finishing one of his sentences on two things: an echo of a song entitled *Love's old sweet song*, which ends by evoking a lost paradise; and a quotation of Milton (but not from *Paradise Lost*), which says more or less this: 'I would like to be able to leave to future centuries an *oeuvre* which they will not willingly let die'.[23] These questions, then—of the right to existence, of the right to creation, of validity and also of certainty—are knotted together in Joyce's discourse.

One more thing about the *bush*. The eloquent Bushe who talks of Moses, also talks of a *Holy Bush*, the one in the Bible; God says to Moses that the ground he walks on before the Burning Bush is *Holy*, a *Holy Bush* which shows itself to have a certain relation to the *fox*. For when J. J. O'Molloy re-appears in *Circe*, he '*assumes the ... foxy moustache and proboscidal eloquence of Seymour Bushe*' (*ibid*, p. 379); a fox is seen more than once in the *Portrait*: it appears there, of course, because 'Fox' is one of the pseudonyms of Parnell, linked to his faults. But it is also, very specifically, a kind of signifier of dissimulation: *He was not foxing*, says young Stephen when he is in the infirmary and he's afraid of being accused of skiving off. And then, a little later, when he comes to renounce holy orders, he imagines a visiting card with 'The Reverend Stephen Dedalus,S.J.', and tries to picture the face which would be on it—and one of the things he calls to mind

[22] *Dubliners*, *op. cit.*, p. 174

[23] Not quite what Gabriel says; but see *ibid*, p. 177.

is, ah yes, the face of a Jesuit, called by some *Lantern Jaws*, and by others *Foxy Campbell.*

There is thus a *bush-fox* series. But there is also an effect of wordplay which functions around Molloy, Molly, and which links up with *holy.* We have *holly, holy, Molly, Molloy*—and another word which is not present in *Ulysses*, but which Joyce mentions; I rather take this from his pocket, or rather, from a letter—but he did, after all, write his letters. There, he gives us the name of something supposed to play a role in 'Circe', namely a plant, a kind of garlic, which Hermes gave to Ulysses so that he could escape from Circe's clutches; and its name is *moly.* Strangely enough, the only difference between the two—between *moly* and Molly—is phonetic. Molly is 'pronounced' in *Ulysses* with a simple vowel, and *moly* with a diphthong, or a 'ditongue', as it was once written, and the ditongue (*di-tongue?*) produces consonance; at the moment the ditongue becomes a simple vowel, there is a doubling of the consonant, producing double consonance, which appears in *Ulysses* in the form of Molly...

About *moly* he says some curious things. Dr Lacan will analyse one of them, I think; I will be content to point to the other. It is, he says, 'the gift of Hermes, god of public highways, and its invisible influence (prayer, chance, agility, presence of mind, power of recovery) saves you if an accident happens'. So it's something which confirms the prudent role of Bloom. He is the Prudent Member. He answers quite well to the definition one finds in a note in Lalande (which is quite deceptive concerning prudence, doubtless because it is Saint Thomas who speaks of it). A little note, without an author's name, says: 'Prudence: aptitude in choosing the means to obtain the greatest well-being for the self'. And this is how one gets by, Bloom seems to say.

The second thing I would like to stress is the continual question of certainty, and the way in which it can be established.

Certainty re-appears concerning precisely the famous Virag, about whom I have more to say ... I broke off in the famous quotation where they were talking about, where O'Molloy was holding forth about Virag.[24] Page 275 in *Ulysses.*

> His name was Virag, the father's name that poisoned himself. He changed it by deedpoll, the father did.
>
> —That's the new Messiah for Ireland! says the citizen. Island of saints and sages!
>
> —Well, they're still waiting for their redeemer, says Martin. For that matter so are we.
>
> —Yes, says J. J., and every male that's born they think it may be their Messiah. And every jew is in a tall state of excitement, I believe, till he knows if he's a father or a mother (*U*, 275–6).

I would simply highlight what appears, perhaps, beyond the humour, which is one of the effects of the 'Cyclops' passage. Bar-room humour, but which is nonetheless humorous. This humour could, besides, be linked up with other problems around anti-semitism in Joyce, but I do not have time to go into this here. The imaginary identification raises another question: the problematic of the Messiah,

[24]Martin Cunningham, not J. J. O'Molloy, is telling the company about Bloom's father.

and beyond it, that of succession. The problem of the king's word as the foundation of legitimacy, the word which even if the mother's belly has lied, allows things to be set right by legitimation. Legitimation, in other words the possibility of bearing the mark of the king, the crown, *stephanos*; or again, of bearing that other mark which appears in *Circe*, with Virag, the grandfather who falls down the chimney, labelled *basilicogrammate*, with the king's *gramme*. The problematic of legitimacy which shows itself to be that of legitimation takes a form here, perhaps, in the imaginary dimension, and its recuperation.

As for the use Joyce makes of certainty, it seems to me that he brings it into play in relation to effects of voice. Even if what they say is disputed, spoken words, the words of a father, have effects, it seems to be suggested, in 'personation', in what is behind personation, perhaps in phonetics, and for instance in whatever 'deserves to live', in melody. Perhaps due precisely to this something which has effects on the mother, through melody. The *phantasmal mirth* of the mother, evoked at the beginning of *Ulysses* (*U*, 9), specifically concerns the pantomime, and old Royce (Roi-Joyce) who sang in it. Something occurs through melody; and not only melody as sentimentality. Of course, Irish culture at the turn of the century was filled with melodies, above all those of Thomas Moore, which Joyce calls *Moore's maladies* in *Finnegans Wake*. This was where Joyce's father, John Joyce, excelled. And for his son, something different took place, was posed, in this art of the voice, of phonetics.

In brief, if certainty about what he makes is always related to the mirror, to effects of mirroring which must be listed, it also has to do with the voice-effects of the signifier. I would recall 'The Dead', with which Joyce tied up *Dubliners*, at a crucial moment in his poetic production, a moment when things, in a way, came unblocked; his dominant idea for 'The Dead' came to him when his brother had spoken to him of a particular interpretation of one of Moore's melodies, about ghosts and their dialogue with the living. Stanislaus had said to him: the man who sang that sang it in an interesting way, in a way which really said something. And one of the story's centres is the moment when the hero's wife is rooted to the spot, frozen like the other Moses, as she hears a man's hoarse voice singing a melody.[25] And what effect does this have on the hero? It symbolizes a woman, he says. He sees her at this moment, and asks himself: 'what is a woman standing on the stairs in the shadow, listening to distant music, a symbol of'. He describes her in vaguely realist terms, but at the same time says: what does that symbolise? It symbolises a certain way of listening, amongst other things.

This certainty, and the problems of certainty in the way its foundation related to the effects of voice on the signifier, Joyce wished to codify into rules in an aesthetic science. But fairly quickly, he realized that it was not all that linked to science, and that it was, precisely, a *savoir-faire* linked to a practice of the signifier. What I find comes to mind very strongly here—across and beyond what Aristotle said about *praxis* in the *Poetics*, which Joyce found so striking—is Lacan's definition: 'A concerted action by man which puts into effect the treatment of the real by the symbolic'. This question of action [*la mesure*] can be clearly seen at work in 'Circe', at the moment when Bloom is seen entering the brothel by Stephen,

[25] *Dubliners*, *op. cit.*, p. 183

as he turns round (*U*, 353); and as if by chance there is also a quotation from the Apocalyose. No doubt it would be best for me to stop before my discourse becomes too apocalyptic...

*

LACAN—I would like to say a word in conclusion. I thank Jacques Aubert for getting his feet wet, for it is clear that, to make use of the term used by the author of *Surface and Symbol* to pin down Joyce's art, it is a matter of *inconceivably private jokes*. In the same text there appears a word I had to look up in the dictionary, *eftsooneries* (I don't know if the word is common); *eftsooneries* are things put off for a while. That's what it all comes down to; not only are things put off for a while, but the effect they have is most often disconcerting.

Obviously, all this does not go without founding something to which I am trying to give a consistence in the knot. What is this sliding of Joyce's, which I have realized I was referring to in my seminar *Encore*? Dumbstruck, I asked Jacques Aubert if that was why he'd asked me to speak about Joyce; he told me that at that point the seminar *Encore* had not yet been published, so that it cannot be this which led him to offer me this hole which I won't risk myself in, no doubt by some prudence such as he has defined it; but the hole of the knot nonetheless begs the question.

I have of course realized that the knot rightly termed Borromean, which is actually a chain rather than a knot, cannot be sketched in its doubleness, I mean there are not two, unless the circles, the loops of thread, are coloured; but I owe this comment to Soury and Thomé—that if they aren't coloured, in other words if nothing distinguishes one loop from another, there is no distinction either between the knots. You will say that in the diagram [*mise à plat*] there is one which turns to the right, and another to the left; but that's exactly what constitutes the problematization of the diagram. The diagram implies a specified point of view, and it is doubtless not an accident that the notions of left and right can in no way be translated into the symbolic.

The knot only comes into existence beyond the triple relation. How is it that this triple relation has such a privileged position? It is exactly there that I would like to push myself to resolve the question.

There is something there which should relate to Jacques Aubert's isolation of phonetic effects, precisely in the way they support the signifier. But this is the sharp edge on which I am left in suspense, namely the point at which signification, in so far as it is written, is distinct from simple effects of phonetics, is what transmits the proper function of the name; and we will start with the proper name, I hope, next time we meet.

6) 10th February 1976: The entanglements of truth [*Les embrouilles du vrai*]

It is not going well, and I'll tell you why. I spend my time trying to soak up the enormous literature—for all Joyce's loathing of this term, it's nevertheless what he brought about, and willingly so—the enormous blather around his work.

How does this come about? Jacques Aubert, who is down there in the front row, from time to time sends me from Lyons a list of supplementary authors to read. He is not innocent in this matter (but who is innocent?), having himself produced things on Joyce. Why, then, am I engaged in this work of soaking-up? Because I began it, for sure. But I am trying, as one does for all reflection, to ask myself why I began.

The question is worth asking—at what point is one mad? Was Joyce mad? Not being able to give an answer today does not prevent me from beginning to orient myself according to the distinction I have proposed to you, between the true and the real. In Freud—it is clear this is how he organised things—the true is what gives pleasure, and this is just what distinguishes it from the real, which does not necessarily give pleasure.

This is obviously a point where I am twisting something in Freud. I make the observation that enjoyment [*jouissance*] is the real. This leads me into tremendous difficulties. Why? Firstly, because *jouissance* which is real comprises masochism. Masochism is the major form of enjoyment given by the real. Freud discovered this, he did not immediately expect it. Once you have entered it, you are dragged into this route.

For my part, I began by writing *Ecrits inspirés*, which is why I should not be too astonished to find myself confronting Joyce, and this is why I dare to ask the question—was Joyce mad? What was it that inspired his writings?

Joyce left an enormous quantity of notes, scribblings, *scribbledehobble*—this is the title given to one of Joyce's manuscripts[26], published by a certain Connolly, whom I knew once (is he still alive?).

It is no accident that he left his notes and drafts in this state, *scribbled*, he had to watch over them, and even encouraged those known as researchers to look through them. He wrote a vast number of letters. There are three great thick volumes. Amongst these letters, there are some verging on the unpublishable—which as you know, does not in the end stop someone publishing them. The priceless Richard Ellmann has brought out a last edition, *Selected Letters*[27], containing a certain number of letters which had been thought unpublishable in the first volume.

I confess, I can't find my way round this jumble. I get hold of a few little threads of course. I get a certain idea of his affair with Nora, based on my practice, I mean on the confidences I receive, since I have dealings with people for whom I arrange things so that speaking the truth gives them pleasure. Everyone says—well, everyone!—Freud says that if I can do this, it is because they love me, and they love me thanks to what I have tried to pinpoint as the transference, that is, that they think I know. It is obvious that I don't know everything, and in particular, I

[26] Connolly, Thomas E., ed., *James Joyce's Scribbledehobble: The Ur-Workbook for 'Finnegans Wake'*, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1961.

[27] *Selected Letters of James Joyce*, ed., Richard Ellmann, *op. cit.*

don't know, when I read Joyce—for that's what's frightful, I am reduced to having to read him!—what he believed about himself. It is absolutely sure that I haven't analysed him—and I regret it. But anyway, he was clearly not very disposed to it. The names Tweedledum and Tweedledee, came naturally to his pen to designate Freud and Jung respectively—which does not show that he was inclined to analysis.

Read, in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, the chat he reports he has with a certain Cranly, his friend. He does not dare to state what it is he is entering into. Cranly presses him, harasses him, pesters him, to know if he will draw any conclusion from the fact that he says he has lost his faith, the faith in the teachings of the church which have been his education. It is clear that he does not dare to free himself from those teachings, because they are quite simply the armature of his thought. He plainly will not take the step of affirming that he no longer believes, he recoils from the cascade of consequences which would follow the act of rejecting the whole huge apparatus which remains his support. Cranly invokes him, urges him to take the step, and Stephen does not take it.

The question is the following: he writes that, and what he writes is the consequence of what he is—but to what point does this go? How far did this go, whose tricks—silence, exile and cunning—he gives, a means of navigation. I put the question to Jacques Aubert—is there not some trace in his writings of his making himself what he calls in his language a *redeemer*? Does he go so far as to substitute himself for what he manifestly has faith in—this redeemer, the true redeemer whom the priests tell him about in their twaddle (which in my opinion is what it is). Did he think he was the redeemer? I don't see why I shouldn't ask Jacques Aubert, his feeling for these things is as good as mine, since we're reduced to feeling [*sentiment*]—we are because Joyce has not spoken to us, he has written, and when one writes one can access the real, but never the true. Well, Jacques Aubert?

AUBERT—There are traces, yes.

LACAN—That's why I'm asking the question, because there are traces.

AUBERT—In *Stephen Hero*, for instance, there are very clear traces of that.

LACAN—The annoying thing is, it's never clear. In the *Portrait of the Artist*, it is not the Redeemer, but God himself, who is artificer, artist.

AUBERT—If I remember correctly, the passages in which he describes the appeal of a false Christ, are equally those where he speaks of *enigma of manner*. This seems to correspond to the well—known period when he was fascinated by Franciscanism, in its two aspects, one concerning the imitation of Christ (we are all near to the Son, we imitate him) and the other poetry, the Little Flowers. And one of the texts which he looks through in *Stephen Hero* is not a theological, but a poetic text, by Jacopone da Todi.

LACAN—Yes, exactly. But how can the extent of his belief be determined? What kind of physics should be used? This is where I place my hope in my knots, with which I operate, for lack of any other recourse. I didn't get there straight away, but they provide me with things—things which tie things up for me, I should certainly say.

Knots have a dynamics, which has no use [*ne sert à rien*], but rather binds together [*serre*]. What can this bind together? Something one supposes to be stuck

in these knots. Only, if one thinks that these knots are all that is real, how can there be space for something to be bound in? That there is, is certainly supposed by the fact that I place a point there, and it is not unthinkable to see the reduced notation of a cord, passing in there and out the other side.

Topology is based on this: that at the very least, without counting whatever else there is, there is the torus. My good friends Soury and Thomé have resolved the relations of the Borromean knot and the torus. The infinite line, if made to pass through here, makes the false hole into a true hole, in other words something representable in a diagram.

In fact, the diagram still poses a question. In what way is it appropriate? All we can say is that it is demanded by knots, as an artifice of representation, which is only a perspective, since we must supplement this supposed continuity at the moment when the infinite line is thought to emerge from the hole. What is the function of this hole? That of a ring. But a ring is not, like the line of a circle, a pure abstraction. We must give a body to the circle, in other words give it consistence, it must be imagined as having some kind of physical support, for it to become thinkable. Effectively, nothing thinks but the body.

Let us return now to the path of Joyce.

What is Joyce's relation to Nora? Oddly enough, I'd say it is a sexual relation, even though I say there's no such thing. But it's a funny kind of sexual relation.

Something one seldom thinks of is to turn the left-hand glove inside out, and put it on the right hand. This can be found lying around in Kant. But anyway, who reads Kant? It is very pertinent in Kant, but there is one thing he didn't think of, perhaps because in his day gloves didn't have buttons, which is that once the glove is inside out, the button is on the inside. Apart from this, the comparison would be completely satisfying. Well then, Joyce's inside-out glove is Nora—that is his way of thinking that she fits him like a glove.

For Joyce, there is only one woman, she is always modelled the same, and he only puts on his glove with the most intense revulsion. It is palpably only with the greatest of depreciations that he makes Nora into a chosen woman. Not only must she fit him like a glove, but she must be tight as a glove. She has absolutely no use. And when they are in Trieste it even gets to a point where every time she drops a sprog—I have to use these terms—there is a scene. It had no place in the programme. Things between Jim (as he is called when one writes about him in a matey way, because his wife wrote to him under this name) and Nora start going badly as soon as there is a kid. Each time, there is a scene.

The button may well have something to do with the name of an organ. The clitoris is certainly the dark point in this business, metaphorical or not. This has, besides, some echoes in the behaviour which is not observed enough of what is known as a woman. It is very curious that a woman is so interested in, precisely, dark points. The first thing she does to her boy is to take the dark bits off him—it's a metaphoric expression of her wish that her own dark point should not take up so much space. It's always the button of the inside-out glove. There are women who sometimes have to go in for de-lousing, like monkeys, but one shouldn't muddle things up—squidging a bug and extracting a dark point are not the same thing.

Let's carry on with our journey. Imagining oneself to be the redeemer, at any rate in our tradition, is the prototype of what I write as *père-version.*[28] It is to the extent to which there is a relation of the son to the father, and since a long time ago, that the barmy idea of the redeemer has emerged.

Freud tried to free himself from this sadomasochism, the only point where there is a supposed relation between sadism and masochism—sadism is for the father, masochism for the son—although these terms have strictly no relation between each other. To imagine that sadomasochism is explained by a polarity, one must really think an infinite line penetrates the torus, and believe in active and passive. Freud clearly saw something which is much more ancient than this Christian mythology, castration. The phallus is passed on from father to son, and it comprises something which nullifies the father's phallus, before the son has the right to carry it. It is essentially this symbolic transmission which is referred to in the idea of castration.

This is what has led me to pose the question of the relations between the symbolic and the real. These are highly ambiguous, at least in Freud. And this is where the question of the critique of the true is raised. What is the true, if not the true real? And how can one distinguish—if not by using some metaphysical term, Heidegger's *Echt*—the true from the false real? For *Echt* is after all on the side of the real. There, Heidegger's metaphysics comes to a stop—in this little bit about *Echt* he confesses, if I can put it thus, his defeat.

The real is situated in the entanglements of the true, and this is what led me to the idea of the knot; which results from this—the true is interpenetrated, due to the fact that its use creates meaning out of everything; and this because it slides, it is sucked up by the image of the bodily hole which emits it, namely the sucking mouth.

There is a dynamics of the gaze which is centrifugal, that is, which starts from the seeing eye, but also a dynamics of the blind spot—it starts from the moment of seeing, and takes it as a support. In fact, the eye sees instantaneously—this is what is called intuition, which redoubles what is termed space in the image. There is no real space. It is a purely verbal construction, which has been spelt out in three dimensions according to the so-called laws of geometry, which are those of the ball or the balloon imagined in kinaesthetics, in other words oral-anally.

The object I have termed *a* is in fact one and the same object. I have given it back the name object because it is *ob*, an obstacle to the expansion of the concentric, that is, engulfing, imaginary. *Conceivable* means *can be grasped in the hand*—it is the notion of *Begriff*—like a weapon. And, to invoke some Germans who weren't stupid, this weapon, far from being an extension of the arm, is from the beginning a weapon to be thrown. We didn't wait for bullets to throw the boomerang.

What appears from all this is that, in sum, all that subsists in the sexual relation is the geometry to which what we said about the glove made reference.

This is all that the human species has left to support this relation, and is why it is from the beginning involved in the business of inflating [*soufflure*, lit. 'blowing up', (e.g. balloons)], in which it has made the solid more or less fit. Nevertheless, we should differentiate between the outline of this solid and the solid itself. Now,

[28]Lacan's pun makes *perversion* into a 'turning to the father'.

what has the most consistence in this inflated, concentric sphere, is the cord—the cord which makes a circle, which turns round into a loop, unique in that it is part of the diagram.

What proves, after all, that the spiral is not more real than the ring? In which case nothing indicates that to join itself up, it has to make a knot, if it is not the falsely named Borromean knot, that is, a chain-knot [*chaînoeud*] which naturally produces the trefoil knot, which derives from the splices of the *noeud bo.*

What is no less striking is that when it is reversed like this (reference to figure), it does not produce a trefoil knot.

It was immediately shrewdly observed that if you change something here in the passage underneath on this side of the knot, the entire knot is undone.

The question I raise at the end of this little chat, is about whether or not Joyce was mad. Why should he not have been? It's not a privilege. In most people, the symbolic, the imaginary and the real are entangled to the point where they are continuous, one to another, if it is true that there is no procedure to distinguish them in the so-called Borromean knot—for the Borromean knot is not a knot, it is a chain. Each of its loops is in continuity with the next in a non-differentiated way, and at the same time this is not a privilege only available to the mad.

This, purely and simply a ring, when folded produces this 8. We can provide a remedy for this schema by adding a loop to it, thanks to which the trefoil knot will not come unravelled. Does the case of Joyce not amount to a way of making up for this unknotting? Is Joyce's desire to be an artist who would occupy everyone, or anyway as many people as possible, not an exact compensation for the fact that his father had never been a father for him?

Not only did the latter teach him nothing, but he neglected just about everything, except for falling back on the good Jesuit fathers, the diplomatic church—the word *diplomatic* is from the text of *Stephen Hero*, but in the *Portrait of the Artist* too, the father speaks of the church as a very good institution, and the word *diplomatic* is likewise foregrounded.

Was it not in compensation for this paternal abdication, this *Verwefung* in fact, that Joyce felt himself imperiously called—this is the very word, resulting from a mass of things in his text—to valorize his proper name at the father's expense? It was this name which he wished to be paid homage, the homage he had himself refused to pay to anyone. The proper name makes every effort here to be greater than the master-signifier.

A fiction which has been spread forever through history is that this subject had two names which were proper to him. That Joyce was called James too, is only followed on by the use of the nickname Dedalus. That in this way they can be heaped up in piles leads to only one conclusion—bringing the proper name back to the status of the common noun [*nom commun*].

That's where I've got to at this point. You must have had your fill [*votre claque*] even your *jaclaque*, since I would also add an *han*![29] which would express my relief at having got through this lot today. Thus, I reduce my proper name to the commonest noun.

[29] Joking about the audience having 'had it up to here', *vous devez en avoir votre claque*, Lacan invents another pun on his name, by adding a *han*.

7) 17th February 1976: Imposed words

I had put some hope—don't think this is some *coquetterie* or titillation—in the fact that it was the holidays. Lots of people go away. At least in my clientele, this is striking. But not here. I see the doors are still bursting as ever, despite my hopes for a smaller audience, in return for which I was hoping to become confidential, to speak in a slightly more intimate manner. All the same, it would be nice if I could get some response, some collaboration, some interest.

But it seems to me difficult to take an interest in what is becoming a (re)search [*recherche*]. I mean that I am beginning to do what the word *recherche* implies—to turn round and round. At one time, when I was a bit strident, I used to say, like Picasso, *I don't search, I find.* Nowadays I have more trouble clearing my path.

The Borromean knot is no such thing; it is contradicted by its name, which like all names reflects a meaning; its meaning allows the location of meaning somewhere within the Borromean chain.

If we term this element of the chain the imaginary, this the real and that one the symbolic, meaning will be there (reference to figure). We can have no hope of placing it anywhere else, because every thought we have is imagined, in the end. Only we don't think without words, contrary to what has been advanced by certain psychologists, those of the school of Würzburg.

Last time, I remarked that a single fault anywhere in the triple knot was enough to reduce it to a simple ring. This does not happen automatically. For instance, take the quintuple knot. As there is a well-known quadruple knot known as Listing's knot, I've crazily named this one: Lacan's knot. If you make a mistake at either of these two points, the whole thing comes apart and one is left with a ring, as in the case of the triple knot. If, on the other hand, you go wrong at one of these three points, it remains a knot, a triple knot. So it does not follow, then, that an error at one point in a knot automatically dissolves the knot.

What I have defined for the first time as a *sinthome* is what allows the symbolic, the imaginary and the real to be held together, although no one is any longer linked to another, due to two faults. This does not make a triple knot, but it looks like one.

What I proposed very gently last time was that Joyce has a symptom whose origin is this: that his father was lacking, radically lacking—he speaks of nothing but this. I centred things around the proper name, and in my opinion it was by wanting to make a name for himself that Joyce compensated for the lacking father. I said this, because I was unable to say better, and I will try to articulate it in a clearer fashion. At any rate, Joyce's art is so particular that the term *sinthome* is very fitting for it.

It happens that last Friday, at my presentation of what is generally known as a 'case', I examined a case (of madness, certainly) which began with the sinthome *paroles imposées* ['imposed words']. This, at least, was the articulation given by the patient himself, and it seems to me the most sensible kind of articulation I could describe as Lacanian. How is it that we do not all feel that the words on which we are dependant are, in a sense, imposed on us? It's true that a so-called 'sick' man sometimes sees more than what we call a normal person. Language [*la parole*] is

a parasite; it is a veneer; it is the form of cancer which afflicts the human being. Why does the so-called normal man not notice this? There are some who go as far as *feeling* it, and Joyce gives us a taste of it.

Last time, I didn't mention his daughter Lucia (he gave his children Italian names), with the aim of not getting into storytelling. Well, she's still alive—in England, in a hospital, because she is what is usually termed a schizophrenic.

The case I was presenting had suffered a deterioration. Having had the experience, which for my part I think sensible, of words being imposed on him, he also had the feeling that he was affected by what he called *telepathy*—by which he meant, not that he was aware of what others were thinking, but that everybody else was aware of *his* thoughts, and in particular his reflections concerning the above-mentioned imposed words.

For instance, he heard *sale assassinat politique* ['dirty political assassination'] which he made the equivalent of *sale assistanat politique* ['dirty political assistantship']. The signifier can be clearly seen reduced here to what it is—equivocation, a twisting of speech. But in response to *sale assistanat* or *sale assassinat*, he said something to himself which started with a 'but...', and which were his thoughts on this subject. And what filled him with panic was the thought that any reflection he made in addition to what he thought of as imposed words, was known by everybody else.

He was, then, as he put it, a *telepathic emitter*, in other words he no longer had any secrets, and this was what had led him to attempt to end it all, which was another reason for him being there, and for my having to be concerned with him.

My reason for speaking to you today about Joyce's daughter Lucia is that Joyce, who fiercely defended the daughter, labelled schizophrenic, against the control of the doctors, had only one thing to say about her: my daughter is telepathic. In the letters he writes about this, he states that she is far more intelligent than everyone else, that she informs him in a way that is *miraculous*—this is the word he implies—about everything that happens to a certain number of people, and that these people have no secrets from her. It's very striking. Not that I think that Lucia was in reality telepathic; but Joyce attributes this quality to her on the basis of certain signs, declarations which he understands in a special way. To defend his daughter, he attributes to her something which is an extension of what I will call, for the moment, his own symptom—namely that something was imposed on him at the locus of speech [*à l'endroit de la parole*].

In fact, in the continuing progress of his art—namely, that speech [*parole*] which comes to be written, to be broken, dislocated, so that in the end to read him seems an encounter with a continuing progress, from his first efforts in the critical essays, then in the *Portrait of the Artist* and in *Ulysses*, concluding with *Finnegans Wake*—it is hard not to see that a certain relation to language [*la parole*] is increasingly imposed on him, to the point where he ends up breaking or dissolving language itself, by decomposing it, going beyond phonetic identity.

Doubtless there is a reflection here concerning writing. It is through the intermediary of writing that language [*la parole*] breaks up at the moment of imposing itself as such, in a deformation which is always ambiguous—is it a matter of break-

ing free from the verbal parasite [*parasite parolier*], or, rather, of being invaded by its phonemic qualities, by the polyphony of language [*la parole*]?

At all events, the fact that Joyce declares Lucia to be telepathic seems to me, because of this patient whose case I considered, certainly indicative of something Joyce bears witness to at the same moment: the absence [*carence*] of the father.

My supposition is that what I am supporting with the *sinthome*—which is shown here as a loop of string—is produced at the very place where an error occurs in the knot's layout.

Now, the slip [*lapsus*] is certainly the foundation, in part, of the notion of the unconscious. The joke is to be put under the same heading—it is not unthinkable that it derives from a slip. This is at least how Freud himself constructs it, as a short-circuit, an economy in relation to pleasure, to satisfaction.

So the *sinthome* is situated at the place where the knot slips, where there is a *lapsus* of the knot.

A knot is something which fails. Likewise, it is due to the consistence of the unconscious that there are heaps of failures. But is error [*la faute*], which is made into sin by the conscience, of the order of a *lapsus*? The word's ambiguity allows the passage from one meaning to the other. This original sin which Joyce makes so much of—does it contain something of the *lapsus*?

This is to conjure up a whole *imbroglio*. But we are caught up in it, in the knot, and by the same token in an entanglement [*embrouille*]. The *lapsus* occurs at a single point; but its consequences can be seen at two other points. There is thus an ambiguity concerning the way to correct it. What is left of the triple knot's basic structure differs, according to whether the *sinthome* is positioned where the *lapsus* occurs, or at the other two points in the knot.

What is extraordinary is that things have something in common in the way they form knots, which is shown here by a certain direction or orientation—let's say by the fact that compensation turns to the right. But it remains that the result of compensation with the *sinthome* is different from what happens here and there (reference to figure) (...).

The red 8 with the green ring is strictly equivalent to its inverse. Take one, and you will easily get the other form. There is thus a strict equivalence. Now, after the path I've opened about the sexual relation, it is not hard to suggest that when there is equivalence, there is no relation. If we uphold the present equivalence—the fact that in both sexes there has been a failure, a failure of the knot—the result is that the two sexes are equivalent. Nevertheless, if the error is put right at the place where it occurred, the two sexes (here symbolised by two colours) are no longer equivalent. For if here you see what corresponds to what I have just termed equivalence, what then corresponds is this (reference to figure), which is far from being equivalent.

If one colour here can be replaced by the other there—there can be no equivalence. The green cord will never be able to cross the outer band of the red double 8.

At the level of the *sinthome* there is thus no equivalence in the relations between green and red; there is no sexual equivalence—in other words there is a relation. Effectively, if we say that non-relation is a function of equivalence, it is to the extent

that there is no equivalence that the relation is structured. There is no relation except where there is *sinthome*. It is the *sinthome* which supports the other sex. I would go so far as to say that the *sinthome* is the sex which I don't belong to, that is, a woman. A woman is a *sinthome* for every man. Another name must be found for whatever man is for a woman, as the *sinthome* is characterised by non-equivalence. Man is anything you like for a woman, an affliction worse than a *sinthome*, a devastation even.

That there should be no equivalence is the only basis for what is known as the sexual relation in the human speaking-being [*parlêtre*]. Is this not what we see demonstrated by what is termed clinical work, that is, in bed? When we see human beings in bed, and not only in hospital beds, it is there, anyway, that we can get an idea about this oft-mentioned relation.

Everything I hear on another bed, the famous couch where people tell me all about it, shows that there is a slender link, to be defined, between the *sinthome* and the real of the unconscious—if the unconscious is indeed real.

How can we know if the unconscious is real or imaginary? It takes part in an ambiguity between the two. But thanks to Freud, we are involved in it, and this on the basis of *sinthome*. Henceforth, we have to do with the *sinthome* in the sexual relation, which Freud held to be natural (which is meaningless).

8) 16th March 1976

My only excuse—the truth is, I need an excuse, at least in my own eyes—my only excuse for telling you something today is that it is going to be meaningful. In exchange for this I will not achieve what I want.

What I want is to give you a bit of real [*un bout de réel*]. I come down to thinking that something meaningful could function provisionally. But this provisionality is fragile. I mean that I'm not sure how long it will be able to function.

These days, I'm very preoccupied with Joyce. Joyce is stimulating. This is what is suggested by him—but it remains only a suggestion, an easy way of presenting him; in exchange for which, and this is certainly his importance, everyone breaks a tooth there—even my friend Jacques Aubert, who in this is one of the most distinguished, and before whom I feel unworthy.

Jacques Aubert cannot—no more than anyone else, no more than a certain Adams, who has produced masterpieces in this genre—manage an easy way of presenting him. I am going to show you what this is linked to, perhaps, in a moment.

I, too, have dreamt of this easy way of presenting him. I dreamt about it last night. Obviously [*évidemment*]—*évidement* as one says[30]—you are my public, but I'm not an actor. What I told you about was the way in which (not being an actor—I'd call it a pen-pusher [*scribouillard*], rather) I judged characters other than my own, in which obviously I departed from my own. Or rather, I had no rôle. It was something in the genre of the psychodrama—which is an interpretation.

That Joyce caused me to dream of functioning in this way must have a value. A value which is moreover not easy to define, since anyone can be subject to this suggestion, that there should be a Joyce who can be managed. The suggestion is based on the fact that psychoanalysis exists, and many folk go charging off down that path. But it is not, all the same, because I am a psychoanalyst, and by that token too interested, that I must refuse to envisage this today.

There is an objectivity about this. Joyce is an *affreud*. And he is an *ajoyce*.[31] All objects—except the object I term *a*, which is an absolute—are linked to a relation. The tedious thing is, there is language, and relations are expressed there by epithets. Epithets force one to 'yes or no'. A certain Charles Sanders Pierce has based his logic on this, which because of the emphasis he placed on the relation, led him to a trinitary logic.

It is absolutely the same path that I follow, except that I call the things in question by their names—symbolic, imaginary and real, in the right order. For to be forced to 'yes or no' is to be forced to the couple; there is a relation between language and sex—a relation which is certainly not yet completely defined, but which I have, so to speak, broached.

There, you see that! I realize that by using the word *broach* I have used a metaphor—and what does it mean, this metaphor? I can speak of metaphors in a

[30]Lacan puns on *évidement*, 'scooping-out', 'hollowing-out'.

[31]Tri-lingual punning: *affreux* in French means 'horrible', 'frightful'; Freud's name is a rough 'translation' in German of Joyce (*freude*, 'joy'); the prefix *a*—seems to imply negation (as in 'James Joyless', one of Joyce's versions of his name).

general sense. But what this one means, I will leave you the trouble of discovering. Metaphor indicates only this: the sexual relation. Except that it proves in fact—from the fact that it exists—what the sexual relation is: mistaking a bladder for a lantern.[32] This is the best way to express a confusion—a bladder can be made into a lantern provided a flame is placed inside it, but so long as there is no flame, it is not a lantern.

Where does the flame come from? The flame is the real. The real sets fire to everything. But it is a cold flame. The fire which burns is a mask, as it were, of the real. The real is to be sought on the other side, on the side of the absolute zero. It has, all the same, been reached. There is no limit to the high temperatures that can be imagined, no limit that can for the moment be imagined. The only thing belonging to the real is the lower limit. It is this that I term something which can be orientated. Because that is what the real is.

There is an orientation. But this orientation is not a meaning [*sens*]. What does this mean? It means that I am taking up what I said last time, by suggesting that meaning is perhaps orientation, but orientation is not meaning, because it excludes the sole fact in which meaning consists: the copulation of the symbolic and the imaginary.

The orientation of the real, in my formula, forecloses meaning. I say this because last night I was asked whether there were other kinds of foreclosure than the one which results from the foreclosure of the Name-of-the-Father. Without doubt, foreclosure is to some extent more radical, since the Name-of-the-Father is, in the end, something quite light-weight. But it can certainly function there, in place of the foreclosure of meaning by the orientation of the real, which we have not yet reached. We must break through into a new imaginary in relation to meaning. This is what I'm trying to establish with my language.

This language has the advantage of laying a wager on psychoanalysis, in that I'm trying to set it up as discourse—that is, as the most realistic pretence [*le semblant le plus vraisemblable*]. In sum, psychoanalysis is an example, nothing more, of a short-circuit which passes through meaning—as I defined it a minute ago: the copulation of language (as it is with this that I support the unconscious) with our bodies.

I should tell you that in the meantime, I've got together with Jacques Aubert somewhere, without you being invited, and there I made a few reflections on what the English call the *ego* and the Germans the *Ich*.

The *ego* is a thing which I've been thinking about with a knot, a knot which was thought up by a mathematician by the name of Milnor. He has invented an idea of a chain: *link* (reference to figure).

This is a knot. You must see that it's knotted. But supposing, says Milnor, you allow that in any chain, a particular element can traverse itself, you will then have this, which immediately shows you that what went *under* here, in the centre, goes *over* there—there is no longer a knot, a *link*.

[32]... *prendre une vessie pour une lanterne* is a proverbial French expression for error, something like, in English, 'to think the moon is made of green cheese'.

I propose to your sharp intellects the following observation: if you double each of the elements in the first knot—so that instead of having one here, you have two going in the same direction—it is (however unlikely this may seem to you—I hope you will check this, I haven't brought my drawings, and I won't risk showing you how this wriggles about) radically impossible to separate the four elements.

In the light of this, what does my argument mean—in the seminar *Encore*, it would seem (because, of course, I never read the seminar; it is others who read it)—against the equivalence proposed by some people—I've completely forgotten who—between $\mathcal{S}$ and the function Φ—I don't say the little ϕ, but the big Φ, which is a function *such* that there exists an x for which that function is negative: $\exists x.\Phi x$

Of course, the ideal state of the matheme is that everything corresponds. Indeed, this is exaggerated by the matheme for the real, for, contrary to what one imagines (I don't know why), it is not the end of the real. As I said a moment ago, we can only get hold of bits of real (*bouts de réel*).

The real, that which is in question in what is called my thought, is always a bit, a core—around which, certainly, thought embroiders, but which is its cicatrice. This real is not, as such, linked to anything. This, at least, is how I conceive of the real and its little moments of historical emergence.

There was, one day, a certain Newton, who found a bit of real. This was bloody frightening only for those who were thinkers, in particular one Kant. One could say that Newton caused an illness. And moreover everyone, all the thinking beings of the time, caused one, each in their own way. It rained down on not only men, but also on women. Mme du Châtelet wrote a whole book on the *Newtonian System*, which is utter rubbish. It is extraordinary, all the same, that when a bit of real is reached, it has such an effect. But this should be the starting-point. It is the very sign that the core has been reached.

I am trying to give you a bit of real, concerning this in which, in the skin of which, we exist—in other words the skin of that implausible history, the human species. And I say to you that there is no sexual relation. But it's embroidery. It is embroidery because I take part in 'yes or no'. From the moment I say *there is no*, it is already very likely not to be truly a bit of real, because the cicatrice of the real is that it is linked to nothing.

One only recognizes oneself in what one has. One never recognizes oneself—this is implied by what I advance, and by the fact recognized by Freud that there is an unconscious—in what one is. This is the first step of psychoanalysis.

What one is is of the order, when one is a man, of copulation—that is, of what redirects so-called copulation into the equally, and significantly, so-called copula constituted by the verb *to be*. In its inflection by the copula, language is proved to be a twisting path which is completely obscure. *Obscure* is only a metaphor there, because if we had a bit of real, we would know that the light is no more obscure than the shadows, and vice versa.

The metaphor *copula* is not in itself a proof. It is the way the unconscious proceeds. It gives only traces, and traces which not only efface themselves, but which any use of discourse tends to efface, analytic discourse included. You yourselves will only think of erasing the traces of my discourse, because it is I who began by giving the discourse its status: starting from the disguising [*faire semblant*] of the

objet a. Man takes up the place of the filth that he is, at least in the eyes of a psychoanalyst, who has good reason to know it, as he takes up that place himself. This decided filth must be passed through, so that something in the order of the real may perhaps be found [*retrouver*].

You see, I use the word *(re)find* [*retrouver*]. *(Re)find* is already a slippage, as if everything it concerns had already been found. This is the trap of history. History is the greatest of fantasies. Behind history, the factual history historians are interested in, there is myth, and myth is always captivating.

The proof is Joyce, who having borne careful witness to the *sinthome* of Dublin, being only inspired by what is his own, does not fail to do something fabulous: to fall into the myth of Vico which sustains *Finnegans Wake*. The only thing which protects it is that *Finnegans Wake* is presented as a dream, and, moreover, portrays Vico as a dream as well. In the end, so are the babblings of Mme Blavatsky, the Mahanvantara and everything which comes with it, the idea of a rhythm which I myself relapsed into with my *retrouver* above. We do not refind, or rather we only ever turn in circles. We find.

The one advantage of this *retrouver* is to highlight my point: that no progress is known, that we turn in circles. But there is perhaps another explanation, that there is no progress but marked by death, which Freud underlines by *triebing* death, by making it into a *Trieb* ['drive'], which is translated in French (I don't know why) by *pulsion*—what about the word *dérive*?[33] The death-drive is the real in so far as it can only be thought of as impossible—that is to say, that every time it peeps round the corner it is unthinkable.

We cannot hope to approach that impossibility, because it is unthinkable; it is death, of which the foundation of the real is that it cannot be thought. What is incredible is that Joyce, who had the greatest contempt for history (although in fact his contempt was futile)—he described history as a nightmare,[34] which unleashes against us the great evils he stresses cause us so much harm—could find in the end only this solution: to write *Finnegans Wake*, albeit as a dream, which like every dream is a nightmare, even if it be a mild nightmare. Except that he says—and this is how *Finnegans Wake* is made—that the dreamer is no particular character, it is the dream itself. In this, Joyce slides towards Jung, towards the collective unconscious. There is no better proof that the collective unconscious is a *sinthome* than Joyce, for one cannot say that, in his imagination, *Finnegans Wake* does not form part of this *sinthome*.

The sign of my entanglement is indeed Joyce, in that what he advances in a singular artistic manner—he knows how to—is the *sinthome*, such that there is no way it can be analysed.

I said this recently—a rock-solid catholic like Joyce, who could never say that he wasn't well brought up by the Jesuits, a true catholic (but of course there are

[33] As a translation for the Freudian *Trieb*, Lacan looks to the English term *drive* (itself avoided by Strachey, who notoriously prefers *instinct* in the Standard Edition), which, subjected to a Joycean 'pun', becomes *dérive* ('drift'). This idea had appeared a long time before—for instance, on January 13th1960 (SVII), in the seminar *L'Ethique de la Psychanalyse*, *op. cit.*, p. 90.

[34] 'History, Stephen said, is a nightmare from which I am trying to awake.' *Ulysses*, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

no true catholics here, you lot weren't brought up by the Jesuits)—can a catholic be analysed?

On this question someone (Jacques-Alain Miller, of course, who did not waste the chance) reminded me that I had said the same thing about the Japanese. I stick to it. It is not for the same reason. Since that evening at Jacques Aubert's you weren't invited to, I've seen a Japanese film. It was in a little cinema, you couldn't have been invited to this either, and anyway I would not have wished to give you bad ideas. I was, properly speaking, flabbergasted, because it was feminine eroticism. From this, I've begun to understand the power of the Japanese. Feminine eroticism seems to be taken to its extreme there, and this extreme is nether more nor less than the fantasy of killing the man. But even that is not enough. After he has been killed, one must go further. After—why after? That is what is in doubt. The Japanese woman in question, who, it should be said, is the mistress of his partner, cuts his cock off. One wonders why she didn't cut it off before. Because it's a fantasy, nothing else—I don't know how it happens after death, but there is a lot of blood in the film, I would prefer the erectile tissue to be staunched, but after all I know nothing about it, this is something which I said a moment ago was in doubt. Here, one clearly sees that castration is not a fantasy. It is not so easy to situate its function in analysis, as it can be fantasmatized [*fantasmatisée*].

At which point I come back to my capital Φ, which could also be the first letter of the word *fantasy*. This letter situates the relations of what I will term a *phunction* of phonation. Here, contrary to what is thought, is the essence of Φ, a phunction of phonation which is found substituting the male, said to be man, as such. The signifier which I have only been able to support with a complicated letter of mathematical notation, S(Ⱥ), is something else entirely. It is not this with which man makes love. In the end, man makes love with his unconscious, and nothing more. The woman's fantasy, if this is what the film shows us, is certainly something which completely prevents the encounter. The intermediary—in other words the instrument one uses for copulation—is, obviously, chucked in the bin. This is not of the same order as what is at stake in my S(Ⱥ), which records that there is no Other, apart from where there is supplying [*suppléance*], that is, the Other as the site of the unconscious, that which I've said is how man makes love, in another sense of the word *with*—that is the partner.

I am sorry to have found nothing but the bar for our purpose. There is one bar which any woman knows how to cross, the bar between the signifier and the signified, as the film I've just referred to showed you. But there is another bar, which I place over the Φ. I regret, moreover, not having made it in the same way as the other, for like that it would have been more exemplary. It says: there is no Other which would respond as a partner—the whole necessity of the human race being that there should be an Other of the Other. This is what is generally called God, but which analysis unveils as, quite simply, *The* woman.

The only thing which allows her to be called *The*—since I've told you that *The* woman does not exist (and I have more and more reasons to believe so, especially after seeing that film)—is that, like God, she is fecund [*pondeuse*, 'produces children']. Only, the progress which analysis leads us to make, is to perceive again that the myth of *The* makes everything emerge from a single mother, namely Eve;

there are only particular women who are fecund. Concerning which I recalled, in the seminar *Encore* it seems, the meaning of that complicated letter, the signifier of this: there is no Other of the Other.

There you are. Everything I tell you there is nothing but meaningful, and therefore full of risks of going-astray, as all history proves. This is all that has ever been done. If I run the same risks, it is really rather to prepare you for what else I could tell you, in an attempt to produce a *folisophy* less sinister than that of the *Book* said to be *of Wisdom* of the Bible. I recommend you to read it. It is sober, and of an excellent tone. Catholics rarely read it. It could even be said that Catholicism has consisted over the centuries in preventing its followers from reading the Bible. But in order to found wisdom on lack, which is the only way to found it, it's really not bad at all, it's amazing.

Will I ever be able to tell you—this must not only be a dream—what would be called a bit of real [*bout de réel*], in the true sense of the word *bout* I specified a while ago?

For the moment, it could be said that Freud himself produced only things that were meaningful, and that this deprives me of all hope. It is not, for all that, a reason not that I should just hope to do it, but that I should not really achieve it one day.

9) 13th April 1976: The Real is without law

I should like today, since I have occasion—it's my birthday—to be able to verify whether or not I know what I talk about.

Speech aims, despite everything, to be understood. I would like to verify whether I am not content to talk for my own sake—as everyone does, of course, if the unconscious has a meaning (I say again: *if the unconscious has a meaning*).

I would have liked someone to write something which would justify this labour I have been putting myself through for around twenty-two years, a little more; for someone to invent something which could be of use to me. I am convinced that this is possible. Today, I ask you to ask me a question which pays me back.

I have invented what is written as the real.

Naturally, it is not enough to write it *real*, because quite a few folk have done this before me. I have written this real in the form of the borromean knot which is a chain. One of its three minimum elements I call real.

These three elements chained together produce metaphor. This is nothing more than a metaphor of the chain. How can something which is nothing but number produce metaphor?

This metaphor is called the figure [*le chiffre*]. There are a certain number of ways to keep track of figures, The simplest is what I have termed the unary trait [*trait unaire*]. Marking traits or points is enough to indicate a number.

Energetics is nothing but the manipulation of a certain number of numbers, from which one isolates a constant number. Freud, taking his reference from science such as it was conceived in his time, only produced from it a metaphor, which he was not even able to maintain in a realistic manner. The notion of a constant, for instance, linking stimulus to response, is impossible to uphold. The idea of an energetics of the psyche has also never been given a true foundation.

In the metaphor of the Borromean chain, I claim to have invented something. What does it mean to invent something? Is it an idea, this idea of the real? It is not an idea which is sustainable.

What is an idea? Reduced to its analytic value at least, an idea is what comes to you when you are on the couch. But whether one is lying on a couch or standing upright, the chain-effect which is obtained by writing cannot be thought, cannot be imagined, easily—at least in my experience. One does better to break off from it beforehand, if one wishes to succeed in giving it written form—which you have been able to witness a hundred times, in the slips of my pen as I have tried to produce a writing to symbolize that chain.

I consider that having articulated the real in question in the form of a writing has what is generally called a traumatic value.

Not that it has been my aim to traumatize anybody, certainly not my audience, for whom I have no reason to wish this. Let's say that it is a forcing. The forcing of a new writing which, through metaphor, has a bearing which must certainly be termed symbolic; the forcing of ideas which are not the kind that bloom spontaneously, simply due to the production of meaning—that is, due to the imaginary.

This renders palpable, brings to the hand's grasp—but in a completely illusory manner—what reminiscence may be. Concerning something which has the function

of an idea without being one, one imagines it is due to reminiscence, so to speak. In this, reminiscence is distinct from memory [*la remémoration*]. Freud distinguished these two functions, and it must be said that he had a sense for distinctions. But memory is evidently something he forced, due to the term *impression*. His supposition was that things imprinted themselves on the nervous system. Why provide them with letters? There is no reason for an impression to be represented by a letter. There is a world of difference between a letter and a phonological symbol.

I have, in a sense, given the networks of the *Project* a new, more rigorous form; I have made them into something which, instead of being simply woven together, form a chain. But it is not easy to integrate them into what is already there, which is called knowledge.

Effectively, I have attempted to be rigorous by revealing that what is upheld by Freud as the unconscious always supposes a knowledge, and it is a spoken knowledge. The minimal supposition allowing the unconscious to be interpreted is that it should be reducible to a knowledge.

Following this, it is clear that this knowledge requires at least two supports, which one calls terms, symbolizing them with letters; thus the way I write knowledge as supported by S—not squared, but S supposed to be number 2, S_2. The supporting function of S index 1—S_1—is to represent a subject as such, to represent it truly. *Truly* means, in this instance, *in conformity with reality*. The true is speech which conforms to reality, which in this instance is what functions, what functions truly.

Only, what functions truly has nothing to do with what I indicate as the real. It is a precarious supposition that my real—I must indeed refer to it in my name—conditions reality—for instance, the reality of your listening. There is a gulf there, which we are far from confident of crossing. In different terms: the instance of knowledge revived—I mean, renewed—by Freud in the form of the unconscious, does not in any way necessarily suppose the real which I employ.

I have got lots of Freudian things going, I've even entitled one of the things I've written 'The Freudian Thing'—but in what I term the real, I have invented something which imposed itself on me.

To the imaginary and the symbolic, that is, to things which are quite alien to each other, the real brings the element which is able to hold them together. This is something which I can say I consider nothing more than my symptom. It is my own way of taking what Freud dreamed up to the second degree—of taking the symptom itself to the second degree. If Freud really made a discovery, and supposing that it is true, it could be said that the real is my symptomatic response to it. But to reduce it to something symptomatic is at the same time to reduce all invention to a symptom.

Let's move on to something else. From the moment when one has a memory, does one have a memory? By saying one has it, does one do more than imagine that one has it, that it is at one's disposal? I would prefer to say 'at one's *dire*-sposal', ie., that it has to be said [*on a à dire*].

Here, the English language has all sorts of resources. 'I have to tell'—the translation, *j'ai à dire* is, moreover, an anglicism. But that not only 'have', but 'ought' can be said—'I ought to tell' causes the slippage. *J'ai à dire* becomes *je dois*

dire. In this language, one can put the accent on the verb, and say 'I do make'—I insist that this 'making' is only fabrication. One can also separate negation and say 'I don't', *je m'abstiens de faire.* 'I don't talk', *je ne choisis pas de parler.* Don't talk what? In Joyce's case, it's Gaelic.

This implies that one chooses to speak the language which one actually speaks. In fact, one only imagines having chosen it. And what resolves the question is that, in the end, one creates this language. One creates a language to the extent that at each moment, one gives it meaning. At each moment one gives the language which one speaks a little prod, without which it would not be living. It is only living in so far as it creates itself at every instant. This is why there is no collective unconscious, only particular unconsciouses.

It is a question for me, then, of knowing whether or not I know what I say to be true. It is for each of you here to tell me how you understand it. It is not certain that what I say about the real is any more than blathering on. To say that the real is a symptom does not prevent this also being the case for energetics, which I mentioned a moment ago. The privilege of energetics is that, providing that one's manipulations of it conform to a certain mathematical teaching, one always deals with a constant number. But one realizes that this is a pre-established requirement—the constant must be obtained, and this is what constitutes energetics. The thing which allows the constant to be obtained is supposed to be in conformity with reality. But I make a distinction between the supposed real of that organ—which has nothing to do with a bodily organ, and by which the imaginary and the symbolic are knotted together—and what functions as the foundation of the science of reality.

In this knot on the board, I show a field distinct from the real, which is that of meaning. In this respect, one could say that the real both has, and does not have, a meaning. That the real has no meaning is what is illustrated by this—with meaning here, and the real there, in distinct fields. Meaning is the Other of the real. As for the symbolic, its quality is to be particularized as hole—but the true hole is here, where it is shown that there is no Other of the Other. In the place of the Other of the Other, there is no order of existence.

To sum up, what Freud dreamed up is antipathetic to energetics. And the only concept which can fill the place of so-called energetics is that which I have put forward with the term *real.*

Questions & Answers

I will read you what people have had the goodness to write to me, which is no worse after what I've said—that the real is linked to writing.

¶ *If psychoanalysis,* the question is put to me, *is a symptom*—I never said that psychoanalysis was a symptom—*is not what you are doing, with your knot and your mathemes, deciphering it, with the consequence of dissolving its signification?* I do not think that psychoanalysis is a symptom. I think that psychoanalysis is a practice whose efficacy, despite everything tangible, implies my knot-making. I am not sure that the distinction between the real and reality is caught up with the value I give to the term real. As the real is stripped of meaning, I'm not sure that

the meaning of this real couldn't be illuminated by being thought of as no less than a symptom.

To the question which I am asked, I respond—if I support the unconscious with this rough topology, this is because I think I can state with certainty—because my practice comprises it—that the function of the unconscious is not without reference to the body, and this is why the function of the real can be differentiated from it.

¶ *If, according to Genesis in André Chouraki's translation, God creates for man a help against him, what is the psychoanalyst a help against?* I think that the psychoanalyst can, effectively, only conceive of himself as a symptom. It is not psychoanalysis which is a symptom, it is the psychoanalyst. Psychoanalysis is, in the end, a help which one could describe, in the terms of *Genesis*, as a turning-back. That the Other of the Other, that little hole, can provide a help—it is in this that the hypothesis of the unconscious finds its support. The hypothesis of the unconscious, as Freud stresses, can only be sustained by supposing the Name-of-the-Father. To suppose the Name-of-the-Father is God. In this psychoanalysis, when it succeeds, proves that the Name-of-the-Father can just as well be by-passed, as long as use is made of it.

¶ *Is not every speech-act, the* coup de force *of a particular unconscious, a collectivization of the unconscious?* If every speech-act is the *coup de force* of a particular unconscious, it is quite clear that every speech-act can hope to say something, and this saying gives onto something theorised, theory being the support of all kinds of revolution—a theory of contradiction. One can *say* things which are very diverse, contradicting each other, and that from that a reality emerges which is presumed to be revolutionary. But this is what has never been proved. It is not because there is contradictory bustling-around that nothing has ever come out of it constituting a reality. One can only hope.

¶ *What limits do you set to the domain of metaphor?*—This is a very good question. It is not because the straight line is infinite that it has no limits. For, the question continues—*is it infinite*, the domain of metaphor, *like the straight line, for instance?* The status of the straight line certainly deserves reflection. The fact that a line which is cut is finite as it has limits does not imply that an infinite line has no limits. It is not because the finite has limits that a line which has what is called an infinite point, ie., which forms a circle, is enough to provide a metaphor of the infinite. The straight line is, actually, not straight. The ray of light seems to offer such an image, but according to the latest news from Einstein, it is flexible, it curves. How can a straight line which sometimes bends be conceived? My question about the real implies that one can ask this. Lenin expressly declared that a straight line could be bent, and he captured it in a metaphor—a baton, which is roughly an image of a straight line, can be bent, and at the same time can be straightened out. What could be the definition of the straight line outside the support of what is called, at close range, the ray of light? There is none other than what is termed the shortest path from one point to another. But how can the shortest route from one point to another be known?

¶ *I always expect you to play on ambiguities. You have said: There is a one. You have spoken to us of the real as impossible, you do not rely on a possible. Concerning Joyce, you speak of imposed words. You do not rely on the Name-of-the-Father as One posited* [Un posé]. I don't set any special store by sacred ambiguities. It seems to me that I demystify them. There is a One, and it is certain that this One is a heavy load for me. I can only do things with it—since, as everyone knows, the One is not a number. I speak of the real as impossible to the extent that I think, precisely, that the real—if it's my symptom, tell me—must be said to be without law. The true real implies the absence of law. The real has no order. This is what I mean when I say that the only thing I will perhaps one day be able to articulate before you is something concerning what I've called a bit of real.

¶ *What do you think of the contradictory bustling-around which has been going on in China for several years?* I am waiting, but without any hope.

¶ *The point is defined as the intersection of three planes. Can this be said to be real? Writing, inscribing, as an alignment points—are they real in your sense?* There is no common point between everything in the chain which is consistent—it certainly excludes the point of the real. That a figuration of the real can only be maintained by the hypothesis that there is no common point, no connection, no Y in writing, implies that the real does not comprise the point as such.

¶ *Does the constant number you speak of have a relation to the phallus, or the phallic function?* I think—in so far as my thought is something more than a symptom—that the phallus can absolutely not be a sufficient support for what Freud conceived as energetics. What is striking is that he himself never saw this.

Someone has written to me in Japanese. I would like the person who sent me this text to translate it for me.

¶ *Are you an anarchist?* Certainly not.

¶ *What can be the status of a response made to something dreamed up, based on which it would define itself as a symptom?* It was a question, in my comments of a moment ago, of the dreaming-up of the unconscious. You have certainly perceived that I had to lower the symptom a notch to think of it as homogeneous to the dreaming-up of the unconscious, and that it presents itself as knotted together with it. I reduced the symptom in response, not to the dreaming-up of the unconscious, but to the reality of the unconscious. Certainly, even in this form it implies a third term to keep these two loops of thread separate. This third term could be anything. But if the symptom is considered as the equivalent to the real, this third term could only be, in this case, the imaginary. After all, one could produce a theory of Freud by making this imaginary, namely the body, into what keeps separate the whole constituted by the knotting-together of the symptom and the symbolic.

¶ *Is your bent cigar a symptom of your real?* Certainly. My bent cigar has the closest relation to the question I raised about the straight line, which is likewise bent.

10) 11th May 1976: Le Sinthome

[not published in *Ornicar?*]

Last time, I confessed to you that a strike would have suited me very well; because I had no desire to tell you anything, being myself uneasy. It would be very easy for me to find another excuse—that the mike isn't working, for instance—not that this time I do not have something to say to you. But it is certainly true that last time I was too tangled up with my knots and Joyce to have the least wish to talk to you. I was uneasy. Now I am slightly less so, because I think I've found some things, in the end some transmissible things. I have been rather active, clearly—I mean that it provokes me, this difficulty, so that I spend every weekend desperately trying to work out something which won't go. What won't go is the fact, having found what is called, in the end, the Borromean knot, I am trying to force things, because Joyce had absolutely no conception of the Borromean knot. Not that he didn't make use of the circle and the cross. They talk of nothing else, in fact, and someone called Clive Hart, an eminent scholar who has devoted himself to commentary on Joyce, makes a great deal of this use of the circle and the cross in the book he has entitled 'Structure in James Joyce', and particularly concerning *Finnegans Wake.*

The first thing I can tell you, then, is this: I wish that the expression '**it** must be done', in current usage, had not been so over used, as it fits so naturally the fabrication of the knot: it must be done. What does that mean? It comes down to writing it. What is striking, curious, is that this knot which I describe as Borromean—you should know why—is a support for thinking. I will allow myself to illustrate this with a term which I must write:'support for un-thinking' [*appui à l'appensée*], allowing *la pensée* to be written differently. It is a support for thinking which justifies the writing I have just put on that little piece of white paper for you, it is a support for thinking, for 'un-thinking'. But it is curious that this 'support' is necessary, that it has to be written to get anything from it, because it is quite apparent that it is not easy to represent this chain—for it is a chain, not a knot, in reality—it is not easy to see how this Borromean chain only functions in thinking (now cutting *la* from *pensée*). It is not easy, even at the simplest level, and this indicates what the knot brings with it. It must be written to see how it functions, this *noeud bo.* Which makes one think of something mentioned somewhere in Joyce, 'on Mount Nebo the law was given to us'.

A writing is thus an act [*un faire*] which provides a support for thinking. Properly speaking, the *noeud bo* in question completely changes the meaning of writing. It gives writing an autonomy, and an autonomy which is all the more remarkable in that there is another writing, which is what Derrida has emphasised, namely the result of what could be termed a precipitation of the signifier. Derrida has laid emphasis on this, but it is quite clear that I showed him the way, for the fact that I found no other means of supporting the signifier than writing it 'S' is already a sufficient indication. But what remains is that the signifier, in other words what is modulated in the voice, has nothing to do with writing. This, in any case, is what is perfectly demonstrated by my *noeud bo.* It changes the meaning of writing, it shows that there is something to which signifiers can be attached—and how can these signifiers be attached? Through the intermediary of what I term

dit-mension—in my way of writing it: the mention of speech. The advantage of that way of writing it is that 'mention' can be extended to *mensonge* ['lie'], thus indicating that what is said is not necessarily true.

In other words, the speech [*dit*] which results from what is called philosophy is not without a certain lack, a lack which I am trying—trying—to fill [*suppléer*] with recourse to what can only be written in the *noeud bo*, what can only be written for something to be taken from it. It is no less true that what there is of *filia* in philosophy can take on a significance: that of time as it is thought. And what I put forward is that writing in this instance changes the meaning, the mode of what is at stake—and what is at stake is this *filia* of wisdom. What is wisdom? It is what is not very easy to support other than with the writing of the *noeud bo* itself. So that in the end—forgive my infatuation—what I am doing, what I am trying to do with my knot, is nothing less than the first philosophy which, it seems to me, can be supported. This is simply the introduction of these *noeud bo*s, of the idea that they support a bone [*os*], a bone which is as it were a sufficient indication of something I'll term *os-bjet*, which is certainly what characterises the letter which I link to it, the letter *a*. And if I reduce this *os-bjet* to *a*, it is precisely in order to mark the fact that the letter here is nothing less than a testimony to the intrusion of a writing as other—as 'other' with, precisely, a small *a*. The writing in question comes from somewhere other than the signifier.

My interest in this business of writing does not date from yesterday—the first time I put it forward was when I spoke about the unitary trait, the *einziger Zug* in Freud. I have given this unitary trait another support through the Borromean knot, which I haven't yet shown you—in my notes I have written it DI (*droite infinie*, 'straight line'). The straight line in question—it is not the first time you've heard me talk of it—is something I characterize as equivalent to the circle. By combining two straight lines and a circle, you have the essentials of the Borromean knot. Why does the straight line have this quality? Because it is the best illustration of the hole. Topology shows us that there is a hole in the middle of a circle, and one even starts trying to imagine what its centre would be, which extends to all sorts of expressions (the nervous centre, for instance, which no-one knows the exact meaning of). The straight line has the quality of having the hole all around it. It is the simplest support of the hole.

So what does this give us as a reference to analytic practice? That man, and not God, is made up of a trinity of what we'll call elements. What is an element? An element is that which makes One, in other words the unitary trait; that which makes One, and which, because of this, sets in motion substitution. The characteristic of an element is that it goes into a combinatory. Thus, Real, Imaginary and Symbolic—which after all amounts, it seems to me, to the other triad which, according to Aristotle, goes to make up man: νοῦς, ψυχή, σῶμα (or will, intelligence and affectivity). What I am trying to introduce with this writing is nothing less than what I'll call a logic of the sack and the cord; because there is obviously a sack whose myth, as it were, consists in the sphere. But nobody, it seems, has sufficiently considered the consequences of the introduction of the cord, that the cord proves that a sack is not closed unless it is tied, and that in every

sphere we must imagine something, which is of course at every point of the sphere and which knots it, making it something one can blow into, knots it with a cord.

People write their childhood memories. This has consequences: it is the passage from one writing to another. I will speak to you in a moment about Joyce's childhood memories, because I clearly have to show how this so-called logic of sack and cord is something which can help us to understand how Joyce functioned as a writer.

Psychoanalysis is something different. Psychoanalysis goes through a certain number of utterances. No-one says that psychoanalysis puts one on the path to writing. This is exactly what I'm trying to set before you with my language: that it's worth looking long and hard when someone turns up asking, in the name of some inhibition, to be put in the position of writing. For my part, I think carefully when I'm asked that (it happens to me as to everyone), because it's not at all clear that it can be achieved with psychoanalysis. This calls, properly speaking, for an investigation into what it means to write. And what I am going to suggest to you today concerns, very precisely, Joyce. It came to me all at once, as a whole [*dans la boule*]—a *boule* which here is far from being spherical as it is attached to everything we know—that with Joyce something happened—in a way which I think I can account for—so that what is generally called the *ego* played a quite different role to the simple role it plays for the everyday mortal. With him, the *ego* fulfilled a function which I can only account for with my mode of writing.

What put me on the track of this is worth indicating. It is that writing is absolutely essential to his *ego*, which he illustrated when [...] someone went to see him and asked him something about a picture, the reproduction of a view of the town Cork. Joyce, who knew how to catch people out, answered that it was Cork; to which the chap said, 'Yes, I know, it's obviously the main square in Cork, I recognize it—but what is that around it?' To which Joyce replied, 'cork'.[35] This is given as an illustration of the fact that in Joyce, in what he writes, there's always more—you only have to read the little schema of *Ulysses* he gave to Stuart Gilbert (and a rather different one he gave to Linati and Valéry Larbaud). Every single thing he brings together, everything he narrates to make up the work of art that is *Ulysses*, is in a relation of homonymy, at least, with the way it is framed. That each chapter of *Ulysses* is given as support a certain mode of framing, termed for instance 'dialectical', 'rhetorical', theological', is for him linked to the very materiality of what he narrates. And, of course, this does not fail to suggest my little rings, which are also the support of a certain framing.

In question is the following: the consequences of an error [*faute*] not entirely caused by chance. For psychoanalysis teaches us that an error is never the result of chance, that behind every slip there is a signifying finality—in other words that the error aims, if there is an unconscious, to express something; not simply something that the subject knows, because the subject is situated in the division, the relation of one signifier to another, that is the life of language, which is something completely different to what is simply called life, for what signifies death for the somatic subject

[35]cf. Ellmann, *James Joyce*, *op. cit.*, p. 551.

has its place in drives, which have to do with what I have just called the 'life of language'

The drives in question have to do with the relation to the body, and the relation to the body is not in anyone a simple relation. Not only does the body have holes, this is even, so says Freud, what should have put mankind on the track of these abstract holes which concern the utterance of anything at all. The something, briefly, which is suggested by this reference, is what one should try to extricate from an essentially muddled idea, that of eternity. It is an idea which is connected to nothing but thought time, *filia*, which I mentioned just now. One thinks, and sometimes one even talks wildly, about an eternal love. One has truly no idea what one says! Is it the other life, as it were, that is understood by that? You see how everything gets involved, and where this idea of eternity, which nobody knows the meaning of, leads you!

As for Joyce, I'd like to read you something here—but in fact you know it is available, you can read it in French, *A Portrait of the Arist as a Young Man.*[36] There Joyce tells us this: for some reason—connected with Tennyson, Byron, some poet anyway—his friends tie him up against a fence and give him a beating. The friend leading the gang was called Heron—not an indifferent term, this *eron*—who beats him, helped by the others; and afterwards Joyce wonders why, now the thing is over, he has nothing against him. Joyce expresses himself—as should be expected from him—very aptly: I mean that he metaphorizes nothing less than his relation to his body. He observes that the whole affair has emptied out; he expresses this by saying that it's like a fruit being peeled. What does this tell us? It indicates something which is so imperfect for all human beings, the relation to the body—who is there who knows what goes on in his body? This is clearly something extraordinarily suggestive and it is even, for some people, what gives meaning to the unconscious. But if there is one thing that I have carefully articulated from the beginning, it is precisely that the unconscious has nothing to do with the fact of one's ignorance about many things concerning one's own body, and that what one knows is of a quite different nature. One knows things to do with the signifier. The ancient notion of the unconscious as *Unbekannte* was precisely something supported by our ignorance of what went on in our bodies; but the Freudian unconscious—this is something worth stressing here—is exactly what I have said, namely the relation that exists between a body which is foreign to us and something which is a circle, or rather a straight line (they are equivalent), which *is* the unconscious.

What meaning can we give to that which Joyce bears witness to, in other words not simply the relation to his body but, as it were, the psychology of that relation (for, after all, psychology is nothing but that—the confused image we have of our own body). But this confused image is not without a component—let us give it its name—of affects; in other words, if we imagine this psychical relation, there is something in the psyche which is affected, which reacts, which is not detached—as Joyce testifies, having been beaten up by his 4 or 5 friends, there is something which simply slips away, like the skin of a fruit. This is striking, that there should be people who have no affect when subjected to bodily violence. There

[36] *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, op. cit.*, pp. 82–3.

is something, moreover, which is ambiguous about it: it gave him, perhaps, some pleasure; masochism is in no way outside the possibilities of sexual stimulation for Joyce, as he emphasized sufficiently in the case of Bloom. But I would say that what is more striking is the metaphor he uses, the detachment of something like the skin of a fruit. This shows that he did not experience *jouissance*, but rather—this is something which is valid psychologically—he had a reaction of disgust, and this disgust relates to his own body. It is like someone who expels a bad memory, puts it in parenthesis. This is absolutely left as a possibility in the relation to his own body as foreign [*étranger*]. And this is just what is expressed by the use of the verb 'to have': one 'has' a body, one 'is' not it in any way; and this is what leads to belief in the soul—there's no reason to stop there, so one ends up thinking one has a soul, which is the last straw.

This kind of 'dropping out', the 'dropping out' of the relation to the body, is highly suspicious to an analyst. This idea of the self, of the self as body, has something of significance. This is what is termed the ego. If the ego is said to be narcissistic, this is because something at a certain level supports the body as image. But in the case of Joyce, is not the fact that this image is not here engaged—is that not a sign that the ego has a quite particular function on this occasion? How can that be written in my *noeud bo*?

So now I'm going to trace, go through something which you might not necessarily follow. How far does *père-version* go, so to speak (written, as you know, in my way)? The *noeud bo* does just that: it sanctions the fact that Freud makes everything depend on the function of the father. The knot is nothing but the translation of the fact, which I was reminded of last night, that love—and beyond the marketplace, love one could describe as eternal—is what relates back to the function of the father, addressing him in the name of this: the father is the bearer of castration. At least, that is what Freud puts forward in *Totem and Taboo*, in other words in referring to the primal horde: it is because the sons are deprived of women that they love the father. It is actually something quite unique, quite staggering, which only Freud's intuition sanctions. But I am trying to give that intuition another body, with my *noeud bo* which is so apt to evoke Mount Nebo, or, as is said, the Law—the Law which has absolutely nothing to do with the laws of the real world (which are an entirely open question). The Law here is simply the law of love, in other words perversion.

It is very curious that learning to write—to write my Borromean knot, at any rate—has a function. And what I am about to illustrate is this: imagine that there is somewhere, there for instance [reference to *mise à plat*], a mistake, in other words that the writing makes an error there, what will this lead to? You will certainly not have imagined that the Borromean knot has, in its own nature, an imaginary aspect; here, as you see, the ring I can simply take its leave. It slips away: exactly in the manner of what Joyce feels after receiving his beating. It slips away, the imaginary relation has no place. It has no place in this instance, and this makes one wonder whether Joyce's intense interest in perversion had perhaps a different signification. Maybe, after all, the beating did disgust him; maybe he was not a true pervert. Because it is quite a task to imagine the reason why Joyce is so unreadable. If he is so unreadable, it is perhaps because he arouses no sympathy in us. But

could not something be suggested in all this by the fact—quite visible, actually—that he has an ego of a totally different kind than the ego which does not function, precisely at the moment of his revulsion, which fails to function immediately after this revulsion? For he manages to become detached from himself—that's for sure—but afterwards, I'd say, he no longer recognizes having suffered that beating.

So what I'm suggesting is this: that one supposes the correction of that error, fault or lapsus here—I mark it on the board there, one passing over the other. After all, nothing is simpler to imagine: why should a knot not be Borromean, why shouldn't it come undone? I have made thousands of mistakes drawing it on the board. There is exactly what happens, when I embody the ego here as the correction of the lacking relation, of what does not knot itself in a Borromean way, as that which knots together the real and the unconscious in the case of Joyce.

Through this artifice of writing, I would say that the Borromean knot comes to be restored. As you see, it is not a question of one of the faces of the Borromean knot, but of a thread. Ordinary geometry is where we get the word 'face' from—polyhedrons are full of faces, stops and summits—but the knot (actually a chain here) presents us with a quite different dimension, which I would describe—in contrast to the *evident* quality of a geometrical face—as 'voided' [*évidé*]. And because it is voided, it is not 'evident'.

Someone once asked me why I didn't say the truth about the truth. I do not say the truth about the truth, because the truth is that it is a lie. 'In-tension-al' truth (allow me to write it 'in-tension', as distinct from 'ex-tension') can, from time to time, touch on something of the real; but if it does, it is by chance. One can never over-estimate the frequency of errors in writing. The *lapsus calami* has no primacy over the *lapsus linguae*, but it can be conceived as touching the real. I am quite clear that my knot is that by which—and uniquely by which—the real is introduced as such. There's no point in getting worked up about that; it doesn't amount to all that much. I am not the only one who handles it. Equally, I make use of it because it serves me in explaining things to you. My fooling around, with the feeble means I have, can certainly be tolerated—as that's exactly what you do. But it is a way of articulating precisely this: that all human sexuality is perverse, if we follow carefully what Freud says. He never succeeded in conceiving that sexuality as other than perverse, and that is the very reason I question what could be termed the fecundity of psychoanalysis. You have heard me very often declare this, that psychoanalysis couldn't even be bothered to invent a new perversion. That's sad—because, after all, if perversion is the essence of man, what a lack of fecundity in this practice.

Well, I think that thanks to Joyce we are reaching something I had not imagined. I had not immediately imagined it, but it came to me with time—to consider Joyce's text, the way it is made. It is made exactly like a Borromean knot, and what is striking, also, is that this totally escaped him, in other words there is no trace of anything like it in his whole oeuvre. But that seems to me, however, a sign of authenticity. Had I stopped there, what I would have found striking, when reading the text and especially the commentaries on it, is that not only is the Joycean text teeming with enigmas, but it could be said that he played on that, in the knowledge that there would be joyceans for two or three hundred years. These people

are occupied uniquely with resolving the enigmas—namely, at least, why Joyce put it in that way. Of course, they always find a reason—he put it in that way because there's such-and-such a word right after it. In the end it's exactly like my tales of *os-bjet*, *mensionge* or *dit-mension* just now. In my case, there are reasons, I wish to express something, I equivocate. But with Joyce, one always loses what I could call his Latin (especially as he knew a bit of Latin).

The enigma, then, is something in which luckily I took interest at one time. I wrote it Ee—it being a question of the enunciation and the statement [*énoncé*]—and the enigma consists in the relation of the E to the e, in other words why the hell a particular statement has been pronounced. The enunciation is the enigma. When the enigma is taken to the power of writing, it is something worth pausing over. Would this not be the result of the sewing-up which is so badly done by an ego whose function is enigmatic and reparatory?

That Joyce is the writer of the enigma *par excellence* is what I urge upon you—I could have given you dozens of examples if it wasn't so late—but I advise you to go and verify this for yourselves. *Ulysses* exists in a French translation, reprinted by Gallimard, if you don't have the old edition of Sylvia Beach's day.

I'm going to indicate a few small things which seem to me notable, before leaving you. You must be aware of what I've told you about man's relations to his body, which entirely consist—this is what I've told you—in the fact that man says that he *has* a body, his body. To say 'his' is already to say that he possesses it, like he possesses a piece of furniture, and this has nothing to do with anything allowing a strict definition of the subject. The subject can only be defined correctly as a signifier as it is represented for another signifier.

I would also like to say something which might perhaps even slow down a little the gulf opening in what we are able to grasp of this perversion, by using the Borromean knot. There is something which one is astonished to see is no longer of any use to the body—not a body, but the body as such: that is dance. This would allow me to write the term 'condansation' a little differently...

Is the real straightforward [*droit*]? That is the question I'd like to put to you today. I'd also like to point out that in Freud's theory the real has nothing to do with the world. Because what he explains, about something concerning precisely the ego, namely the *Lust-Ich*, is that there is a stage of primary narcissism, and that this stage is characterised, not by the absence of a subject, but by the absence of a relation between interior and exterior. I will certainly have to come back to this—not necessarily before you, because after all I am not certain at present that next year I'll still have this amphitheatre.

I must say a few more words—it's something I've prepared—about the 'epiphany', the famous Joycean epihany, which one encounters at every turn. Please note this, when he gives a list of his epiphanies: that they are always distinguished by the same thing, that they are the result of a mistake, namely that the unconscious is liked to the real. It's an amazing thing, which Joyce himself does not describe otherwise. It is absolutely legible in Joyce that the epiphany is where, due to a mistake, the unconscious and the real are knotted together.

There is something—today I have been a bit slow, but that's because I wanted to be understood—there is something I want to draw for you here. If you have

some idea of the meaning of a Borromean knot, I'll show you this: that, if this is the ego as I drew it for you just now, we are situated to see the Borromean knot reconstitute itself in the following way: here is the real; here is the imaginary; here is the unconscious; and here is Joyce's ego. You can easily see on the schema that the rupture of the ego sets the imaginary relation free. It is easy to imagine that the imaginary will bugger off—if the unconscious allows it to, and it incontestably does.

There you have what I wanted to point out in this last session. One thinks against a signifier—that is the meaning I gave to the word *appensé*—one leans against a signifier in order to think. There you go, you are free.