

rushing to his fate. The whole scene is directed toward that furious battle at the bottom of the tomb, which I have stressed repeatedly, and which is entirely of Shakespeare's own invention. Here we see something like a reintegration of the object  $a$ , won back here at the price of mourning and death.

I should be able to finish up next time.

(15 April 1959)

### *Desire and Mourning*

Thus, for Hamlet, the appointment is always too early, and he postpones it. Procrastination is thus one of the essential dimensions of the tragedy.

When, on the contrary, he does act, it is always too soon. When does he act? When all of a sudden something in the realm of events, beyond him and his deciding, calls out to him and seems to offer him some sort of ambiguous opening, which has, in specific psychoanalytical terms, introduced the perspective we call flight [*fuite*] into the dimension of accomplishment.

Nothing could be clearer on this score than the moment in which Hamlet rushes at whatever it is moving behind the arras and kills Polonius. Or think of him awakening in the dead of night on the storm-tossed ship, going about almost in a daze, breaking the seals of the message borne by Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, substituting almost automatically one message for another, and duplicating the royal seal with his father's ring. He then has the amazing good luck to be carried off by pirates, which enables him to ditch his guards, who will go off unwittingly to their own execution.

We recognize here a phenomenology that is familiar to us from our experience and our conceptions: the phenomenology of the neurotic and his relation to his life. But I have sought to lead you beyond these characteristics, however striking they may be.

I wanted to open your eyes to one structural trait that is present throughout the play: Hamlet is always at the hour of the Other.

That, of course, is just a mirage, because, as I've said, there's no such thing as an Other of the Other [*il n'y a pas d'Autre de l'Autre*].<sup>2</sup> In the signifier there is nothing that guarantees the dimension of truth founded by the signifier. For Hamlet there is no hour but his own. Moreover, there is only one hour, the hour of his destruction. The entire tragedy of *Hamlet* is constituted in the way it shows us the unrelenting movement of the subject toward that hour.

Yet the subject's appointment with the hour of his destruction is the common lot of everyone, meaningful in the destiny of every individual. Without some distinguishing sign, Hamlet's fate would not be of such great importance to us. That's the next question: what is the specificity of Hamlet's fate? What makes it so extraordinarily problematic?

What does Hamlet lack? Can we, on the basis of the plan of the tragedy, as composed by Shakespeare, pin down and spell out this lack in a way that goes beyond all the approximations that we have a way of permitting ourselves and that produce the general fuzziness not only of our terminology but also of how we act with our patients and of the suggestions we make to them?

Nevertheless, let's start with an approximation. You can say in simple, everyday terms what Hamlet lacks: he's never set a goal

<sup>2</sup> This often repeated Lacanian formula helps to distinguish the Other (capitalized) from the other (lower case) in Lacan's own discourse and from earlier uses of the terms by other authors. The Lacanian Other is in no way the complement or the negation of the subject, nor itself essentially a subject. Although the subject may take actual persons, beginning with the father, as incarnations of the Other, the Other functions only in the symbolic register, only in the context of language, authority, law, transgression, and sanction. All this makes it impossible for the Other to have an Other of its own. — Tr.

for himself, an object—a choice that always has something “arbitrary” about it.

To put it in commonsensical terms, Hamlet just doesn't know what he wants. This aspect is brought out in the speech that Shakespeare has him pronounce at one of the turning-points in the drama, the moment when he drops out of sight, the brief interval when he goes away on this nautical excursion from which he will return most rapidly. He has no sooner left for England, still obedient, in compliance with the king's orders, than he encounters the troops of Fortinbras, who has been present from the beginning in the background of the tragedy and who at the end will come to gather the dead, to tidy up, to restore order. In this scene our friend Hamlet is struck by the sight of these courageous troops going off to conquer a few acres of Polish soil for the sake of some more or less pointless military pretext. This gives Hamlet pause to consider his own behavior.

How all occasions do inform against me  
 And spur my dull revenge! What is a man,  
 If his chief good and market of his time  
 Be but to sleep and feed? A beast, no more.  
 Sure he that made us with such large discourse,

—the expression that is glossed “reason” is “large discourse,” fundamental discourse, what I have referred to in other seminars as “concrete discourse”—

... such large discourse,  
 Looking before and after ...

—now here's where the word “reason” comes in—

... gave us not  
 That capability and godlike reason  
 To fust in us unused. Now, whether it be  
 Bestial oblivion ...

—“bestial oblivion,” one of the key-words by which to measure Hamlet's existence in the tragedy—

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... or some craven scruple  
Of thinking too precisely on th' event—  
A thought which, quartered, hath but one part wisdom  
And ever three parts coward — I do not know  
Why yet I live to say, "This thing's to do,"  
Sith I have cause, and will, and strength, and means  
To do't. Examples gross as earth exhort me.  
Witness this army of such mass and charge,  
Led by a delicate and tender prince,  
Whose spirit, with divine ambition puffed,  
Makes mouths at the invisible event,  
Exposing what is mortal and unsure  
To all that fortune, death, and danger dare,  
Even for an eggshell. Rightly to be great  
Is not to stir without great argument,  
But greatly to find quarrel in a straw  
When honor's at the stake. How stand I then,  
That have a father killed, a mother stained,  
Excitements of my reason and my blood,  
And let all sleep, while to my shame I see  
The imminent death of twenty thousand men  
That for a fantasy and trick of fame  
Go to their graves like beds, fight for a plot  
Whereon the numbers cannot try the cause,  
Which is not tomb enough and continent  
To hide the slain? O, from this time forth,  
My thoughts be bloody, or be nothing worth!

(Act IV, Sc. IV)

Such is Hamlet's meditation on the object of human action. This object leaves the door wide open to us for all of what I shall call the particularizations that we shall consider. That is true dedication—shedding one's blood for a noble cause, for honor. Honor, too, is portrayed correctly: being totally committed by one's word. As for the gift, we as analysts cannot overlook this concrete determination, cannot help being struck by its weight, be it in flesh or in commitment.

What I'm trying to show you here is not merely the common form of all this, the least common denominator: it's not a question of formalism. When I write the formula  $\$ \diamond a$  at the end of the question that the subject, in search of his last word, asks in

the Other, this is not something that is actually open to investigation, except in that special experience which we call psychoanalytic experience and which makes possible the exploration of the unconscious circuit running along the upper track of the graph.

What we're concerned with is the short circuit in the imaginary register between desire and that which is across from it, i.e., the fantasy. I express the general structure of the fantasy by  $\$ \diamond a$ , where  $\$$  is a certain relationship of the subject to the signifier—it is the subject as irreducibly affected by the signifier—and where  $\diamond$  indicates the subject's relationship to an essentially imaginary juncture [*conjoncture*], designated by  $a$ , not the object of desire but the object *in* desire.

Let's try to get some notion of this function of the object in desire. The drama of Hamlet makes it possible for us to arrive at an exemplary articulation of this function, and this is why we have such a persistent interest in the structure of Shakespeare's play.

This is our starting point: through his relationship to the signifier, the subject is deprived of something of himself, of his very life, which has assumed the value of that which binds him to the signifier. The phallus is our term for the signifier of his alienation in signification. When the subject is deprived of this signifier, a particular object becomes for him an object of desire. This is the meaning of  $\$ \diamond a$ .

The object of desire is essentially different from the object of any need [*besoin*]. Something becomes an object in desire when it takes the place of what by its very nature remains concealed from the subject: that self-sacrifice, that pound of flesh which is mortgaged [*engagé*] in his relationship to the signifier.

This is profoundly enigmatic, for it is ultimately a relationship to something secret and hidden. If you'll permit me to use one of those formulas which come to me as I write my notes, human life could be defined as a calculus in which zero was irrational. This formula is just an image, a mathematical metaphor. When I say "irrational," I'm referring not to some unfathomable emotional state

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but precisely to what is called an imaginary number. The square root of minus one doesn't correspond to anything that is subject to our intuition, anything real—in the mathematical sense of the term—and yet, it must be conserved, along with its full function. It's the same with that hidden element of living reference, the subject, insofar as, taking on the function of signifier, he cannot be subjectified as such.

The notation  $\$$  expresses the necessity that  $S$  be eclipsed at the precise point where the object  $a$  attains its greatest value. This is precisely why we can grasp the true function of the object only by surveying its various possible relationships to this element. It would be excessive, perhaps, if I were to say that the tragedy of Hamlet took us over the entire range of those functions of the object. But it definitely does enable us to go much further than anyone has ever gone by any route.

## 2

Let's start with the ending, the meeting place, the hour of the appointment.

The final act, in which Hamlet finally puts the full weight of his life on the line, as the price for being able to accomplish his action—this act that he activates and undergoes, has something in it of the moment at the end of the hunt when everyone moves in for the kill. At the moment when his act reaches completion, he is also the deer brought to bay by Diana. A plot has been hatched out between Claudius and Laertes with incredible audacity and malice, whatever the reasons of each, and with the assistance of that loathsome insect, the ridiculous toady who comes to Hamlet to propose the tournament, that plot now closes around him.

This is the structure—extraordinarily simple. The tournament puts Hamlet in the position of being the one who, in the wager, takes up the side of Claudius, his uncle and stepfather. He thus wears another man's colors.

The tournament involves, rightly, certain stakes. In the dialogue between Hamlet and the man who comes to tell him of the conditions of the contest, nothing is spared to dazzle you with the quality, number, and array of the objects wagered. Hamlet bets Laertes six Barbary horses, against which Laertes stakes “six French rapiers and poniards,” a complete outfitting for duelists, along with “hangers”—the scabbards, I suppose. Three have what the text calls “most delicate carriages,” an especially elegant expression to refer to the loops from which the sword hangs. It’s the sort of word a collector would use, and the same as the word for the support of a cannon.

These precious objects, gathered together in all their splendor, are staked against death. This is what gives their presentation the character of what is called a *vanitas* in the religious tradition. This is how all objects are presented, all the stakes in the world of human desire — the objects *a*.

I have indicated the paradoxical and even absurd nature of the tournament that is proposed to Hamlet. Yet he seems just to lie down and roll over, one more time, as if there were nothing in him to stand in the way of his being constantly and fundamentally at somebody else’s beck and call: “Sir, I will walk here in the hall. If it please his majesty, it is the breathing time of day with me. Let the foils be brought, the gentleman willing, and the king hold his purpose, I will win for him an I can; if not, I will gain nothing but my shame and the odd hits” (Act V, Sc. II).

This is something that shows us the very nature of the fantasy. At the moment in which Hamlet is on the point of resolution—finally, as ever, on the verge of resolution—there he is, hiring himself out to someone else, and, what’s more, getting nothing in return, doing it all for free, even though the other person is precisely his enemy, the man that he must defeat. He stakes his resolution against the things that interest him least in the world, and he does this in order to win for someone else.

The others think they can charm Hamlet with these objects, these collector’s items, and they are doubtless wrong. Still, they are

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making an effective appeal to what does interest him. He is interested for the sake of honor—what Hegel calls the fight for pure prestige<sup>3</sup>—interested for the sake of honor in a contest that pits him against a rival whom he moreover admires. We cannot help pausing for a moment to consider the soundness of the connection advanced by Shakespeare, in which you will recognize the dialectic of what is already a long-familiar moment in our dialogue, the mirror stage.

What is expressly articulated in the text—indirectly, it is true, i.e., within a parody—is that at this point Laertes is for Hamlet his double [*semblable*]. When Osric, the tedious courtier who brings the proposal of the duel, speaks to Hamlet of his adversary, depicting the eminence of the man to whom he will have to show his mettle, Hamlet cuts him off: “Sir, his definement suffers no perdition in you, though, I know, to divide him inventorially would dozy th’ arithmetic of memory, and yet but yaw neither in respect of his quick sail” (Act V, Sc. II). He delivers an extremely precious, flowery speech, parodying the style of the man he’s addressing. He concludes: “I take him to be a soul of great article, and his infusion of such dearth and rareness as, to make true diction of him, his semblable is his mirror, and who else would trace him, his umbrage, nothing more.”

The image of the other, as you see, is presented here as completely absorbing the beholder. The particular value of this passage, inflated with its Gongoristic conceits, is that this is Hamlet’s attitude towards Laertes before the duel. The playwright situates the basis of aggressivity in this paroxysm of absorption in the imaginary register, formally expressed as a mirror relationship, a mirrored reaction. The one you fight is the one you admire the most. The ego ideal is also, according to Hegel’s formula which says that coexistence is impossible, the one you have to kill.

<sup>3</sup> “*Lutte de pur prestige.*” See the presentation of section B, IV, A of Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Mind* in Alexandre Kojève, *Introduction à la lecture de Hegel*, ed. Queneau (Paris: Gallimard, 1947), pp. 11-34, esp. 18, 22, 24. — Tr.



Hamlet responds to this necessity only on a disinterested level, that of the tournament. He commits himself in what we might call a formal, or even a fictive way. He is, in truth, entering the most serious of games, without knowing it. In that game he will lose his life—in spite of himself. He is going out—again, without knowing it—to meet his act and his death, which, but for an interval of a few moments, will coincide.

Everything that he saw in the aggressive relationship was only sham, a mirage. What does that mean? It means that he has entered into the game without, shall we say, his phallus. This is one way of expressing the particularity of Hamlet as subject in the play.

He does enter into the game, nevertheless. The foils are blunted only in his deluded vision. In reality there is at least one that isn't, that has been marked to be given to Laertes when the weapons are handed out: it has a real point and, what's more, is poisoned.

The off-handedness of a screenwriter is here coupled with what we might call the formidable intuition of the playwright. Shakespeare doesn't actually bother to explain how the poisoned weapon gets from the hand of one of the duelists into that of the other—this must be one of the difficulties in playing the scene. In their scuffle after Laertes scores the hit from which Hamlet will die, the point changes hands. No one bothers to explain such an amazing incident, and no one needs to. Because the important thing is to show that Hamlet can receive the instrument of death only from the other, and that it is located outside the realm of what can actually be represented on the stage. The drama of the fulfillment of Hamlet's desire is played out beyond the pomp of the tournament, beyond his rivalry with that more handsome double, the version of himself that he can love. In that realm beyond, there is the phallus. Ultimately the encounter with the other serves only to enable Hamlet to identify himself with the fatal signifier.

The funny thing is, it's there in the text. There's talk of foils as they are being handed out: "Give them the foils, young Osric. Cousin Hamlet,/ You know the wager?" Earlier Hamlet himself says, "Give us the foils." Between these two moments, Hamlet

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makes a play on words: "I'll be your foil, Laertes. In mine ignorance/ Your skill shall, like a star i' th' darkest night,/ Stick fiery off indeed" (Act V, Sc. II). The French translator does what he can: "*Laerte, mon fleuret* [fencing foil] *ne sera que fleurette* [little flower] *auprès du vôtre.*" But the word "foil" here clearly does not mean a fencing foil; the word has a meaning—indeed, a fairly common one—that we can trace back to its specific occurrences in Shakespeare's day: "foil" is the same word as the Old French *feuille*, used preciously to designate a container for something precious, i.e., a jewel case. Thus the passage means: I shall be there solely to set off your stellar brilliance against the blackness of the sky. These are the very conditions of the duel: the odds are set at 12 to 9, i.e., Hamlet is given a handicap. But why the pun on "foil"? It's no accident that it's there in the text.

One of Hamlet's functions is to engage in constant punning, word play, double-entendre—to play on ambiguity. Note that Shakespeare gives an essential role in his plays to those characters that are called fools, court jesters whose position allows them to uncover the most hidden motives, the character traits that cannot be discussed frankly without violating the norms of proper conduct. It's not a matter of mere impudence and insults. What they say proceeds basically by way of ambiguity, of metaphor, puns, conceits, mannered speech—those substitutions of signifiers whose essential function I have been stressing. Those substitutions lend Shakespeare's theater a style, a color, that is the basis of its psychological dimension. Well, Hamlet, in a certain sense, must be considered one of these clowns. The fact that he is a particularly disturbing character should not keep us from realizing that his is the tragedy that brings about this fool's, this punster's annihilation. Without this dimension, as someone has pointed out, more than eighty per cent of the play would disappear.

This constant ambiguity is one of the dimensions in which Hamlet's tension is achieved, a tension that is concealed by the masquerade-like side of things. For Claudius, the usurper, the essential thing is to unmask Hamlet's intentions, to find out why

he is feigning madness. Still, we must not neglect the *way* in which Hamlet feigns madness, his way of plucking ideas out of the air, opportunities for punning equivocation, to dazzle his enemies with the brilliance of an inspired moment—all of which give his speech an almost maniacal quality.

The others then start to build on this themselves, even to tell tales. What strikes them in what Hamlet says is not its discordance but on the contrary its special pertinence. It is in this playfulness, which is not merely a play of disguises but the play of signifiers in the dimension of meaning, that the very spirit of the play resides.

Everything that Hamlet says, and at the same time the reactions of those around him, constitute as many problems in which the audience is constantly losing its bearings. This is the source of the scope and import of the play.

I remind you of all this to convince you that there is nothing arbitrary or excessive about allowing this last little pun on the word "foil" all its force. Hamlet's pun touches the immediate question [*Hamlet fait jeu de mots avec ce qui est alors en jeu*]: the distribution of the weapons. He says to Laertes, "I'll be your foil." And, sure enough, what will appear a moment later but the very foil that wounds him mortally and that also will permit him to complete his circuit and to kill both his opponent and the king, the final object of his mission. In this pun there lies ultimately an identification with the mortal phallus.

Here then is the constellation in which the final act is situated. The duel between Hamlet and his more handsome double is on the lower level of our graph, *i(a)—m*. Here the man for whom every man or woman is merely a wavering, reeking ghost of a living being, finds a rival his own size. The presence of this customized double will permit him, at least for a moment, to hold up his end of the human wager: in that moment, he, too, will be a man. But this customizing job is only a result, not the beginning: it is the consequence of the immanent presence of the phallus, which will be able to appear only with the disappearance of the subject himself. The

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subject will succumb even before he takes it in hand to become himself a murderer.

One question arises: what enables him to have access to this signifier in this way? To reply, we shall return once more to our crossroads, this most unusual crossroads, which I have mentioned before, i.e., to what takes place in the graveyard. [...]

3

Let me ask you to return to the graveyard scene, to which I have already referred you three times. There you will see something utterly characteristic: Hamlet cannot bear Laertes' display of sorrow at his sister's burial. It is the ostentatiousness of Laertes' mourning that makes Hamlet lose control, that staggers him, that shakes him so profoundly that he cannot put up with it any longer.

This is the first rivalry and the most authentic by far. Whereas Hamlet approaches the duel with the whole apparatus of chivalry and a blunted foil, at the graveyard he goes for Laertes' throat, leaping into the hole into which Ophelia's body has just been lowered.

Show me what thou't do.  
Woo't weep? woo't fight? woo't fast? . . . .  
I'll do't. Dost thou come here to whine?  
To outface me with leaping in her grave?  
Be buried quick with her, and so will I.  
And if thou prate of mountains, let them throw  
Millions of acres on us, till our ground,  
Singeing his pate against the burning zone,  
Make Ossa like a wart! Nay, an thou'lt mouth,  
I'll rant as well as thou.

Thereupon everyone is scandalized and rushes to separate the warring brothers. And Hamlet continues:

Hear you, sir.  
What is the reason that you use me thus?  
I loved you ever. But it is no matter.  
Let Hercules himself do what he may,  
The cat will mew, and dog will have his day.

(Act V, Sc. 1)

There's a proverbial element here which I think derives all its force from analogies that some of you are capable of drawing—I cannot go into them here.

Later, speaking with Horatio, Hamlet will explain that he couldn't stand to watch Laertes make such a spectacle of his mourning. This brings us to the heart of something that will open up an entire problematic.

What is the connection between mourning and the constitution of the object in desire? Let's go at the question by way of what is most obvious to us, which will perhaps seem the most remote from the center of what we're seeking here.

Hamlet has acted scornfully and cruelly toward Ophelia, and then some. I have already stressed the demeaning aggression and the humiliation that he constantly imposes on her, once she has become for him the very symbol of the rejection of his desire. Then, suddenly, the object regains its immediacy and its worth for him:

I loved Ophelia. Forty thousand brothers  
Could not with all their quantity of love  
Make up my sum. What wilt thou do for her?

(Act V, Sc. I)

These are the terms in which he begins his challenge to Laertes. Here, too, is a characteristic that presents Hamlet's structure in a different form and completes it: only insofar as the object of Hamlet's desire has become an impossible object can it become once more the object of his desire.

In the desires of obsessional neurotics we have already encountered the impossible as object of desire. But let's not be too easily satisfied with these overly obvious appearances. The very structure at the basis of desire always lends a note of impossibility to the object of human desire. What characterizes the obsessional neurotic in particular is that he emphasizes the confrontation with this impossibility. In other words, he sets everything up so that the object of his desire becomes the signifier of this impossibility.

But something even deeper demands our attention.

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Freudian formulations have already taught us to formulate mourning in terms of an object-relationship. Indeed, is it not striking that it was Freud who first stressed the object of mourning, after all those years in which psychologists had lived and thought?

The object of mourning derives its importance for us from a certain identification relationship that Freud attempted to define most precisely with the term "incorporation." Let's see if we can rearticulate the identification that takes place in mourning, in the vocabulary that we've learned to use in our work so far.

If we pursue this route, armed with our symbolical apparatus, we will gain perspectives on the function of mourning that I believe to be new and eminently suggestive, perspectives to which you would otherwise have no access. The question of what identification is must be elucidated by those categories which I have set forth in these seminars over the years, i.e., the symbolic, the imaginary, and the real.

What is the incorporation of the lost object? What does the work of mourning consist in? We're left up in the air, which explains the surcease of all speculation along the path that Freud nevertheless opened up in "Mourning and Melancholia." The question hasn't been posed properly.

Let's stay with the most obvious aspects of the experience of mourning. The subject who descends into the maelstrom of sorrow finds himself in a certain relationship to the object which is illustrated most clearly in the graveyard scene: Laertes leaps into the grave and embraces the object whose loss is the cause of his desire, an object that has attained an existence that is all the more absolute because it no longer corresponds to anything in reality. The one unbearable dimension of possible human experience is not the experience of one's own death, which no one has, but the experience of the death of another.

Where is the gap, the hole that results from this loss and that calls forth mourning on the part of the subject? It is a hole in the real, by means of which the subject enters into a relationship that

is the inverse of what I have set forth in earlier seminars under the name of *Verwerfung* [repudiation, foreclosure].

Just as what is rejected from the symbolic register reappears in the real, in the same way the hole in the real that results from loss, sets the signifier in motion. This hole provides the place for the projection of the missing signifier, which is essential to the structure of the Other. This is the signifier whose absence leaves the Other incapable of responding to your question, the signifier that can be purchased only with your own flesh and your own blood, the signifier that is essentially the veiled phallus.

It is there that this signifier finds its place. Yet at the same time it cannot find it, for it can be articulated only at the level of the Other. It is at this point that, as in psychosis—this is where mourning and psychosis are related—that swarms of images, from which the phenomena of mourning arise, assume the place of the phallus: not only the phenomena in which each individual instance of madness manifests itself, but also those which attest to one or another of the most remarkable collective madnnesses of the community of men, one example of which is brought to the fore in *Hamlet*, i.e., the ghost, that image which can catch the soul of one and all unawares when someone's departure from this life has not been accompanied by the rites that it calls for.

What are these rites, really, by which we fulfill our obligation to what is called the memory of the dead—if not the total mass intervention, from the heights of heaven to the depths of hell, of the entire play of the symbolic register. [...]

Indeed, there is nothing of significance that can fill that hole in the real, except the totality of the signifier. The work of mourning is accomplished at the level of the *logos*: I say *logos* rather than group or community, although group and community, being organized culturally, are its mainstays. The work of mourning is first of all performed to satisfy the disorder that is produced by the inadequacy of signifying elements to cope with the hole that has been created in existence, for it is the system of signifiers in their totality which is impeached by the least instance of mourning.

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This explains the belief we find in folklore in the very close association of the lack, skipping, or refusal of something in the satisfaction of the dead, with the appearance of ghosts and specters in the gap left by the omission of the significant rite.

Here we see a new dimension in the tragedy of *Hamlet*: it is a tragedy of the underworld. The ghost arises from an inexpiable offense. From this perspective, Ophelia appears as a victim offered in expiation of that primordial offense. The same holds for the murder of Polonius and the ridiculous dragging around of his body by the feet.

Hamlet then suddenly cuts loose and mocks everyone, proposing a series of riddles in particularly bad taste which culminates in the expression "Hide fox, and all after," a reference to a sort of game of hide-and-seek. Hamlet's hiding of this body in defiance of the concerned feelings of everyone around him, is here just another mockery of that which is of central importance: insufficient mourning.

Next time we shall have to spell out the connection between the fantasy and something that seems paradoxically distant from it, i.e., the object-relationship, at least insofar as mourning permits us to shed some light on this connection. The ins and outs of the play *Hamlet* will enable us to get a better grasp of the economy—very closely connected here—of the real, the imaginary, and the symbolic. [...]

(22 April 1959)

### *Phallophany*

The tragedy *Hamlet* is the tragedy of desire. But as we come to the end of our trajectory it is time to notice what one always takes note of last, i.e., what is most obvious. I know of no commentator who has ever taken the trouble to make this remark, however hard it is to overlook once it has been formulated: from one end of *Hamlet* to the other, all anyone talks about is mourning.