

## LACANIAN ORIENTATION

### **THE *SINTHOME*, A MIXTURE OF SYMPTOM AND FANTASY**

**Jacques-Alain Miller**

I did not mention the word insignia last time, which stands as the emblem of this year's course, its vector.<sup>1</sup> This was enough for it to be thought that I had turned the page on this subject, which clearly demonstrates the use to be made of insistence in teaching. Lacan indicated as much: there can be no teaching without insistence.

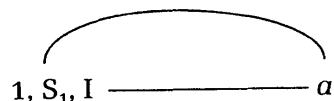
I was wrong not to pronounce this word, and I affirm that the insignia is still what constitutes my object and my theme. I remind you that its function must be circumscribed by two terms which are, on the one hand, the one, the  $S_1$ , or even, as indicated in an older and more specific way of writing this term, the big I, the initial of the ego ideal, the mark of the unary trait, and on the other, little  $a$ .

1  
 $S_1$   $a$   
I

I will add that there cannot be one without the other, nor the other without the one, when it comes to the insignia. The insignia is not only the unary trait. To give at once a usable definition of the insignia, let us say that it is the unary trait plus object  $a$ .

Since this year's theme is not only the insignia, but rather what constitutes an insignia,<sup>2</sup> I posit, in order to make sure that we are within our subject, that what constitutes an insignia has to do with the relation, the articulation between these two terms, and that the first one lends itself to diverse modes of in-

scription. This is what constitutes an insignia in the subjective economy.



Here we must make an effort of precision in order to recover, or even to reconstruct the notion of the insignia, a notion that some of Lacan's writings, forged for other ends, lead us precisely to misunderstand.

There is no impeccable writing. There is no omnivalent writing. As soon as one chooses to write certain functions, others are obscured.

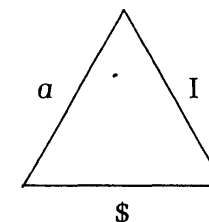
Thus, the writing of the four discourses which, by virtue of its convenience, has become teaching material, almost textbook material — especially in the Department of Psychoanalysis —, is not primarily designed for this purpose, since this writing has its matrix, that of the discourse of the master, which, from the very first, makes object *a* fall outside the signifying articulation as product.

This discourse does not seem to be made primarily to validate what I am formulating here on the insignia, and all the more since it interposes a third term between *S*<sub>1</sub> and little *a*, *S*<sub>2</sub>, which thereby appears to be an obligatory mediation — to the extent that the signifier seems, in effect, to confiscate the representation of the subject. This is what the discourse of the master inscribes.

However, in saying this, and in what I am going to propose today, which has a certain character of inversion, which implies a pivoting of perspectives — perspectives which I have, myself, here, in the past, fashioned at length —, do not believe that I am thinking of making an objection to Lacan. After all, if this was the case I would say so. I do not make objection to Lacan, except, as is my style, starting from Lacan himself.

## 1

To support my point of departure today, I have found a fragment of a schema which I went and got from his 1967 Seminar, where I found an operational version of the ternary which I take as a reference point. This ternary, a fragment of Lacan's schema, is a triangle, in which one side is marked with the barred subject, and is completed by two inscriptions, that of little *a* and that of big *I*, on the other two sides.



Well, what we will be concerned with — with the consequences which you will see, which are not small — is this ternary where the subject is framed by two terms which are to be linked back to the subject as \$, as crossed out, inexistent, the subject we are concerned with in the analytic experience, who constitutes the object of a wiping clean, just like the board is wiped clean before I enter this classroom. It is the wiping clean preliminary to the emergence of a necessity for discourse. Axiomatics — namely that one explains everything that will be used for purposes of demonstration — only formalises this wiping clean, in other words the position of an inexistence as the condition for a necessity to emerge. It is this that every analytic session repeats for its own purposes.

This necessity for discourse reflects the omnipotence of the signifier, this omnipotence which supposes inexistence at its origin and even which retro-poses it.

The signifier postulates inexistence as prior to itself.

What do we write when we write \$? We are going to ask ourselves once more.

In fact, we write two things, not just one thing.

Firstly, and as is current usage for us, we write the subject of the signifier. We write the subject as without a name, anonymous. We write any subject. We write the subject without a signifier, on condition that we understand that we write it as equivalent to a missing signifier.

We can also write the subject with the small *s* of the signified. Lacan used this letter in such a way and not just at the beginning of his teaching. He started out by writing the subject as an effect of signification produced by the signifier. Then he wrote it as a missing signifier, \$, but not without continuing to write it, all the same, from time to time, when the need arose, as small *s*, especially when writing it as the supposed subject of knowledge [*sujet supposé savoir*].<sup>3</sup>

To write it as a missing signifier is to write it as an empty set: in other words, however empty it may be, it is under the domination of the signifier. This set must indeed be traced so that one can say 'there, there is not' [*là, il n'y a pas*].

It is thus — to repeat — a subjective inexistence marked from the first by the signifier. I consider that this has now been acquired — by who? by us all — on the basis of Lacan's elaboration and of the choice we made in developing this aspect of the barred subject.

To take it in this way, as the subject of the signifier, as a signifying void, immediately introduces the necessity for a signifier to come to fill the lack, namely this initial mark. This is what we are often commenting on here on the basis of the  $S_1/\$$  — the subject is represented by a signifier, etc. We make this necessity graspable through our definition of the subject itself. It is a subject who is in itself the effacement of a signifier. From there, we deduce the necessity for a signifying representation that comes to it from the Other, and we deduce the necessity of

the Freudian identification. We consider that this is the alienation of the subject — to take up Lacan's terms — in the initial identification which forms the ego ideal.

I have already stressed that this identification is to be distinguished from all resemblance with the imaginary order, from all specular identifications. Lacan concludes *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* on this point of the ego ideal, from where the subject sees itself as seen by the Other — I have already insisted at length upon this *from where* — *from where the Other sees me, in the form in which it pleases me to be seen*.

In writing the subject in this way, and in giving it this sense, we underline the necessity of the Freudian articulation of identification in posing that the subject defined in this way calls for a signifying complement. This identification, here, is representation.

Well, this value of \$, so operational, which is evidenced so much in the schema of the discourse of the master, is not the only one, even if it is the one that Lacan may have appeared to bring to the fore.

This is why I will give a name to the second value of \$, one which is not that of \$ as the subject of the signifier. I would hesitate to do it, after all, if the expression itself had not, once or twice, been used by Lacan. If it is justified to call it thus one day, it is here, where there is the possibility of the least misunderstanding.

Secondly, in writing \$, we write the subject of *jouissance*.

I only intend to move things on a few millimetres. You will see that one can shift a great deal with these millimetres. If there is a very small divergence in perspective at the start, if one follows it up, by the end it departs further and further away from what one is accustomed to see.

I want to apply the same logic that we are accustomed to put to work in relation to the subject of the signifier to the subject of *jouissance*, namely that there is also something missing

on this side, and also a call made to what might complement this loss.

If the subject of *jouissance* is written \$, it is because it is designated as voided of *jouissance*. In the same way that, when we treat it as subject of the signifier, it is not insofar as it is full, but on the contrary in so far as the signifier has been the object of a wiping clean. In the same way that we can say that the bar on the subject, this bar of something missing [*cette barre d'en-moins*], is an effect of the signifier, it also conforms to what Lacan articulates in that this voiding of *jouissance* is an effect of the signifier.

From which derives the necessity, for the subject, that something come to complement it which is not of the signifier. Here is what, in my sense, justifies Lacan in once having put this triangle on the board, which indicates that there is not only one complement for the subject. There is not just the complement constituted by the ideal. There is another one.

But of course, you tell me — *But we already know that it is the fantasy for the subject* — ( $\$ \diamond a$ ) as Lacan writes it.

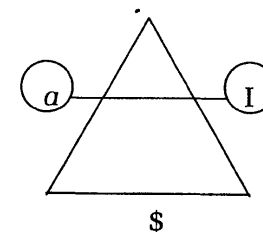
I have already asserted, and more than once, that identification, as a signifying representation which articulates the symptom with the subject in the place of truth (this place at the bottom on the left),<sup>4</sup> calls, in effect, for an articulation with the fantasy. I have even made this a theme, which has become an anthem — *From symptom to fantasy*.

Yet I believe that I am moving things on a few millimetres here. For if I place this term 'subject of *jouissance*' there, and the call for a complement which ensues, it is well and truly to emphasise that there is not only the fantasy which can respond to it. Here we must expose a much more general relation, of which the fantasy is merely a modality.

This ternary contains the writing of a relation of the subject to object *a* and a relation of the subject to *jouissance* which is not reducible to fantasy.

No doubt, the fantasy is a relation to *jouissance*, in the imaginary mode. But we are speaking also of a relation to *jouissance* when we talk of the drive, this time in the dimension of the real. That is to say that it is only an approximation or a partiality to treat the relation to *jouissance*, which is necessarily called for through the second value of \$, with the fantasy as a starting point.

It seems illuminating to me to bring fantasy and drive together under the hat of this relation to *jouissance*, and to oppose the subject's relation to the signifier to the subject's relation to *jouissance*.



Here we find inscribed the two sides of the insignia.

This duplicity of the signifier and *jouissance* goes for the concept of the Other, this Other which — axiom — we have made the place of the signifier, but which Lacan could also formulate as the body in so far as it is voided of *jouissance*, a desert of *jouissance*.

I would like to demonstrate how this correlation of  $S_1$  and *a* literally runs through Lacan's teaching and that, as a problem, it drives his teaching on.

If it is to be read with this key, one can see the question of their articulation in relation to the subject — who is the subject of the signifier and that of *jouissance* — emerge from beginning to end of his teaching.

One could already say, by means of a short-circuit, that the problem in apprehending it lies in that we have a single term for

the subject and its two values, while we have two when it comes to what complements it.

To put it briefly, again with a short-circuit, Lacan tried, at the extreme edge of his teaching, to introduce a single writing for  $S_1$  and  $a$ , a single writing for this complement of the subject as subject of the signifier and subject of *jouissance*.

This symbol which guides me today, and perhaps next time as well as I will not get to the end of it just like that, in this function, is the sigma of the symptom,  $\Sigma$ . This is my thesis. What Lacan brought with the renovation of the concept of the symptom, which he sometimes signalled with a new writing, *sinthome*, is the effort to write in one sole trait both signifier and *jouissance*.

$\Sigma$   
\$

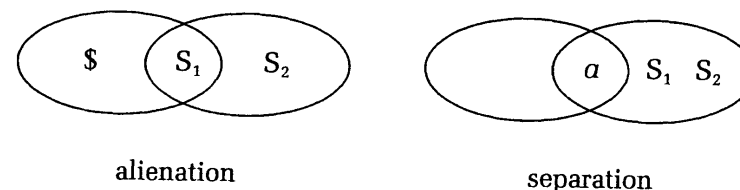
If we want to use the old modes of writing, this is the one I am proposing.

## 2

Now that I have shown you my aim, which alters the lines of perspective, I must show you at what point this is called forth in Lacan's teaching and in the analytic experience, insofar as not only does this teaching comment upon the analytic experience, but also invents it for us.

First, I must remind you that the two operations of alienation and separation, which are clearly distinguished through a temporal ordering, correspond exactly to this double value of the subject of the signifier and the subject of *jouissance*. I have already remarked that  $S_1$  and  $a$  come to be successively inscribed in the same place on the schema for these two operations. I will not comment on these operations again but simply remind them to you.

Alienation foregrounds the subject of the signifier, just as separation foregrounds the subject of *jouissance*.



Alienation is indeed a representation. This clearly says what it means to say. The subject as such is distinct from it.

One could localise the subject as barred subject in this part of the set. It is distinct from  $S_1$  and  $S_2$ . This is what the formations of the unconscious impose, since through them one sees the stumbling blocks and slips which are produced, between  $S_1$  and  $S_2$ , and which indicate that the subject remains distinct, which imply that it is only represented. But alternatively, we could say just as well that it is there as truth, since we recognise that what reveals itself in the lapsus is a truth. This schematisation is appropriate to figure this representation.

In separation, the second operation, one cannot say that the subject is represented. All that one can say of the subject is that it is little  $a$ . The subject asserts itself as object  $a$ . The positivisation that the subject obtains here with little  $a$  comes from the use that the subject makes of its own lack as subject of the signifier, by placing itself in the Other's lack. There is no representation. There is an identity as little  $a$ .

It is this that obliges us, at the same time, to distinguish and to articulate identification by representation, that which fixes the subject in relation to  $S_1$ , and identification with the object, which places us before an identity of the subject and before its being. This articulation both brings out and dissimulates the fact that here little  $a$  comes in the same place as  $S_1$ . This place is in evidence in these schemas, but that it be the same

place does not become problematised by Lacan in his commentary. It is the same place, but only on the schema, one could say, because, after all the lack is here, and it can be found again there. Is this structurally the same place? This is not what this schema attests to. But it calls the one into question. It evidences that there is cause to think the relation between  $S_1$  and little  $a$ , that there is cause to know what the relation between the signifying representation of the subject on the basis of the unary trait and his being of *jouissance* is.

Coming back from this point, one realises that the same question is taken up by Lacan in his schema of the four discourses.

From the discourse of the master — that is, from the discourse of the unconscious, which is the other name for the discourse of the master — to the discourse of the analyst, one can see that  $S_1$  and little  $a$  are liable to come in the same place.

$S_1$   $S_2$              $a$     \$

\$     $a$              $S_2$   $S_1$

You see that I am only handling abstractions today. I want to get to this point of the symptom, and, to get there, demonstrate to what extent this problematic insists in various moments of Lacan's teaching — including in the four discourses where this time there is no temporal ordering. Here we have an ordering of permutation, but one in which the same element is in question as I indicated for alienation and separation. What is it that appropriates  $S_1$  and little  $a$  so that they might be liable to accomplish what I used to call castling, namely to replace one another in an inversion?

I find yet another indication of the insistence of the question in the commentary that Lacan brings of the Freudian schema of identification, at the end of his Seminar on the *Four*

*Fundamental Concepts*. Lacan translates what, in Freud's schema, figures as lines which join up with an object placed as common denominator and the function of the ego ideal for each subject, through which the taking up of subjects in a series is accomplished. How does Lacan formulate it, if not in the following terms — conjunction, superposition, confusion, of the object  $a$  and the ego ideal, in other words of little  $a$  and big I. It is what he finds cause to formulate in relation to Freud's schema, in order to say, evidently — *such is the formula of hypnosis. That which interests one effectively. One says to oneself — Hold on, here is a formula for hypnosis, it is always worth having one.*

What is precisely important is to not be hypnotised by the fact that Lacan tells us *here is the formula of hypnosis*, but to perceive the logic which is present in this definition. In relation to identification and hypnosis, Lacan formulated that the object  $a$  can find itself superimposed in the same place as big I. The object  $a$ , as impossible to swallow as it might be in the order of the signifier — Lacan defined it at that time as being that which always remains stuck in the gullet of the signifier — is nonetheless liable to superimpose itself in the same place as an essential signifying point of reference, which is big I. And here a confusion is liable to occur between these two terms.

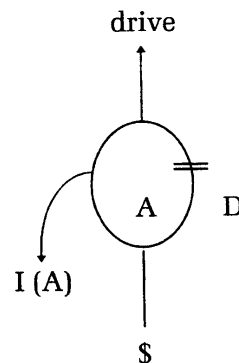
Here we find another call which is logically legible. One cannot but think that there is a certain homogeneity between these two terms, an homogeneity which implies that they are liable to come and confound themselves in the same place. And, prefiguring his four discourses many years in advance, in which the discourse of the master appears as the inverse of the discourse of the analyst, it is as the distance between big I and big A that Lacan formulates the possibility of psychoanalysis. Separating big I from big A is the condition for analysis to be possible.

From this third point which I am bringing out with regard to  $S_1$  and little  $a$ , we can apprehend the economy of Lacan's graph as fourth point, on the basis of the relation between big I-little  $a$ , for the graph is designed to indicate it.

What does the graph imply on this point? It implies that the normal issue of transference is identification, insofar as the very economy of transference is founded on suggestion. As soon as the subject engages in speech to the Other — and under the initial, primary form of speech which is demand — the issue of his trajectory is identification with the Other. As soon as he addresses the Other as the omnipotent Other of demand, what he ferries during his journey — and it is here that it ends up — is an identification. Transference, in this respect, leads demand to identification.

It is the schema of the discourse of the master which is there on Lacan's graph, a schema which includes alienation as the essential operation, namely signifying representation, which Lacan modulated in diverse ways in his four discourses or in the operation of alienation.

How is the discourse of the analyst inscribed on the graph? It is inscribed by virtue of its operating in such a way that demand may be followed right up to the drive.



This is what makes the difference in properly analytical transference. It is here that the desire of the analyst makes the difference, according to Lacan's own terms. While transference brings demand back to identification by taking it away from the drive, the desire of the analyst, operating in big A, opens the way to the drive.

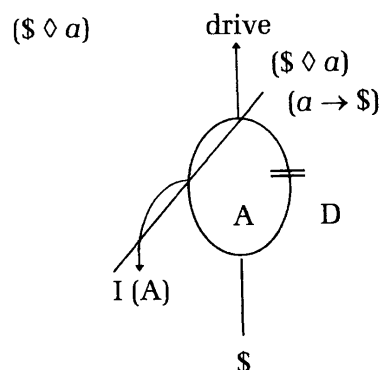
So what does Lacan formulate at this point? What does he suppose to happen when the demand of the subject goes towards the drive, attains it? He says something very curious, and even opaque in its formulation, which he has not really taken up again as such — *then, the fantasy becomes the drive*.

This notion that the fantasy, having broken through the plane of identification, would become the drive is very strange. Is it not precisely this possibility of formulating that *the fantasy becomes the drive* which justifies that both the fantasy and the drive are brought together by virtue of this common trait that both qualify a relation with *jouissance*? This implies that, as long as the subject is before or within the plane of identification, the drive is masked by the fantasy. It is necessary that the subject's relation to the object  $a$  be mapped for the fantasy to cease masking the drive. In other words, the crossing of the plane of identification is only possible — this is what Lacan formulates — through the intermediary of separation of the subject in experience, that is to say, by passing through the point where he confounds himself with the object  $a$ . This is to say that although the formula of the fantasy unquestionably writes the relation of the subject to *jouissance*, it does so in an imaginary form, since, as soon as the subject has found his bearings with respect to little  $a$ , the fantasy becomes liable to confound itself with the drive.

Identification, as written I (A), implies that the drive is masked in the fantasy. This is difficult to read on Lacan's graph, because the graph evidently stems from an earlier part of his teaching. One only sees the object  $a$  figured at the level of the

fantasy. The only relation to the objet  $a$  which is written on the graph is thus that of the fantasy.

This has not ceased to throw the reading of Lacan off course, because this object  $a$  is even more in evidence when it comes to the drive, although this does not figure on the graph. It is even here that it would be legitimate to write  $(\$ \diamond a)$ .  $a$  is italicised on the graph because Lacan wishes to indicate that it is imaginary. We could write it in normal script to indicate that it concerns the drive. We could even write it thus,  $(a \rightarrow \$)$ . There is something akin to a diagonal on this graph between  $I(A)$  and little  $a$ , which opposes, which puts at each end, at the two terms, the signifier of identification and object  $a$ .



We find that this conjunction, this articulation  $S_1$ -little  $a$ , is essential to the theory of transference. It is not only that the issue of transference is identification, but that the very medium of transference is the ideal signifier  $S_1$ .

And this to the extent that Lacan could still write in 1969 — although, of course, he had already situated the place of object  $a$  in transference since his Seminar on the *agalma* — *Transference seems to be already sufficiently motivated by the primarity of the unary trait*. Which is to say the extent to which the basic structure of transference does not imply object  $a$ . The

basic structure of transference implies the primarity of the unary trait. It is the very condition that allows us to think of defining transference on the basis of the subject supposed to know, since it implies a definition of transference starting from the signifier, starting with an effect of the signifier.

Which brings us to the fifth point, to the subject supposed to know.

You know how Lacan introduces the subject supposed to know. He introduces it as an effect of signification of an  $S_1$ , which, in the event, takes on the name of the signifier of transference. He writes it — signifier of the transference over its effect of signification which the subject supposed to know is. He writes it like this, as an effect of signification, in order to say — I am only asking you to note the phrase — that it is a signification which holds the place of a still latent referent. I have already taught you to read this phrase in the past. It implies that, in effect, little  $a$  will come to this ideal place.

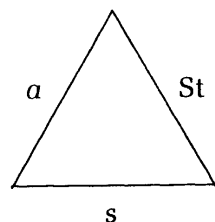
$$\begin{array}{c} \underline{St} \\ s \rightarrow (a) \end{array}$$

It is little  $a$  which will act as the referent of the affair. The fall of the subject supposed to know implies the replacement of this signification by object  $a$ . If we read it as it befits, it is yet another mode of conjunction between  $S_1$ , here the signifier of transference, and little  $a$ , supposed to come in the place of the signification induced by this signifier.

In the very theory of the subject supposed to know, there is thus implicitly the notion of a conjunction between  $S_1$  and  $a$  — the point where this effect of signification is liable to be replaced, if you want, by a real product.

Since I have written this ternary, the problematic of the subject supposed to know is articulated between the signifier of transference and little  $a$ , and here the subject is written as an effect of the signified.





In flicking through Lacan's teaching in diverse places, one can see that, at every turn, the question of the articulation between  $S_1$  and little  $a$  is posed.

## 3

We are finally going to put the sixth mode in evidence, precisely in relation to the theory of the symptom.

One might think that analysts would agree that symptoms, in psychoanalysis — at least psychoanalysable symptoms — are interpretable. If a symptom is interpretable by the Other, well, it is because it is a message to the Other, and, as communication is fundamentally inverted, well, the symptom is fundamentally a message from the Other. This is Lacan's point of departure, which one could call Freudian, on the symptom.

Of course, he really had to draw the consequences of the way in which he defined the unconscious, since the symptom is articulated with the unconscious. Any definition of the unconscious given by an analyst will rebound against, have an impact on the definition he gives of the symptom.

Once the unconscious is defined as structured like a language, which is the definition established by Lacan concerning the psychoanalysable symptom, it is *supported by a structure which is identical to the structure of language*. Why not say *supported by the structure of language*? It is true too. To say that it is identical to the structure of language is to say that the elements

which may be put in play there can very well also be borrowed from the body. There is thus a little shift here.

Lacan formulated the idea of structure as language — you will find it on page 444 of *Ecrits* — by way of reference to the distinction between signifier and signified. This implies that the symptom be, not simply a signification, but also the relation of a signification to a signifying structure. This is what you find to be implied by the schema of the graph, where the place of the symptom is to be found at  $s$  (A), signified of the Other. But this signification does not suffice to constitute the symptom.

Let me add that, when I say symptom, the same goes for the identical structures of the dream, the lapsus and the *witz*, namely everything that Lacan called a formation of the unconscious.

The possible interpretation of the symptom, that is to say in retroposition, in retroaction with respect to the fact that it is psychoanalysable, the sole fact that it may be interpreted, or, better, that it can be read, implies that it is itself articulated in a process of writing. Lacan will not give much attention to this word 'writing', which appears in his writings as early as the 50's, until the end of his teaching.

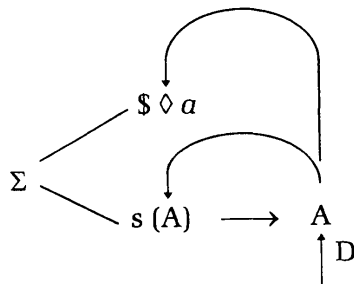
Why doesn't this signification suffice to produce what the symptom is?

You know how Lacan articulated it on his graph, close to Freud. For there to be a symptom, the fantasy must come to interfere with this effect of signification which stems from the passage of demand to the Other.

Let us rapidly go over the argument again. Here we suppose a subject equipped with a need. It is necessary that he formalise this need, under the guise of demand to the Other, and in the process a certain effect of signification is produced, amongst which there may be love, for example. We could also have, and particularly, misunderstanding, displacement, etc. It is in

agreement with the Other that this effect of signification is produced.

For there to be a symptom, another element must come into play. It is here that Lacan writes the fantasy. It is necessary that another element come to interfere with this signification, which has nothing to do, in itself, with this signification. What is produced by the whole circuit, which passes through the drive and which masks the relation to the drive, must come here. The symptom is a composite element in this regard.



I am not illustrating things. I am showing you that what I will develop is founded in multiple ways in Lacan's work.

The symptom, as it is put into place in Lacan's graph, is made of two elements. It is made of a signification which is the effect of the signifier and of an element which, here, is called the fantasy, but which we have already purified as being the subject's relation to *jouissance*.

From the first the symptom is not thinkable, if not as an articulation between a signifying effect — one could even call it an effect of signification or an effect of truth — and the relation of the subject to *jouissance*.

One can understand why that seemed appropriate to Lacan at the time. How can it interfere? It concerns two elements, nonetheless imaginary, the fantasy and signification, which join up with each other in the symptom. One can see here what is meant by the construction of the fundamental fantasy, which

causes a lot of worries in analysis — *Am I constructing my fundamental fantasy properly?* The construction of the fundamental fantasy is strictly dependent upon interpretation in so far as it trims the symptom down. The interpretation trims the symptom down by virtue of its enumerating or leading the subject to enumerate the set of master-signifiers, the swarm [*essaim*],<sup>5</sup> from which signification arises.

The construction of the fundamental fantasy occurs following the rhythm of the symptom's interpretation, in other words the rhythm at which the effects of truth of the symptom are progressively linked back to the  $S_1$  which induces them. And, by way of consequence, object *a* is isolated, in other words the fantasy is disimaginarised. The construction of the fundamental fantasy is the same thing as its reduction to the drive.

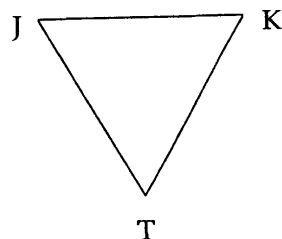
What is already implied in Lacan's graph? It already contains a certain knot of the symptom, where object *a* and an effect of truth, object *a* and a signifying effect are engaged at the same time. One can not misrecognise the question which is posed here... Or rather, one can misrecognise it, because object *a* only appears in the graph in so far as it is taken up in the fantasy. Moreover, it is barely there as object *a* on the graph, for it still is the little other that one stages in the fantasy as imaginary. It is only progressively, including in the formula of the fantasy, that Lacan will bring out object *a* as surplus-enjoyment. One can easily misrecognise what is at stake. A relation to *jouissance* is in fact implicated in the symptom at the same time as the effect of truth. But one should not misrecognise the question of the implication of *jouissance* in the symptom, and that the symptom is, doubtless, articulated on the basis of a signifying structure.

How can we think the *jouissance* which is caught up in it? And what is this inscription, this writing where *jouissance* inter-feres?

In order to find this theme again as somewhat exposed as such by Lacan, we have to wait for his reflections on the pass,

where he gives this definition to the symptom — I already mentioned it in the past — that it is a truth,  $s(A)$ , which resists knowledge, that is to say deciphering, on the basis of *jouissance*. It is a truth which plays on the side of *jouissance*.

This will lead Lacan, at the same time as he constructed the ternary which I drew earlier,  $\$$ , little  $a$  and  $I$ , to draw another triangle, that of *jouissance*, knowledge and truth.



This is the precise problem which the so-called negative therapeutic reaction discovered by Freud brings to the fore — namely the *jouissance* of the symptom. Even when it is interpreted, there is a *jouissance* in the symptom which continues to resist.

We must realise that, if one puts the accent on the *jouissance* which there is in the symptom, that is to say if one discovers that, beneath what is here called fantasy, what is at stake is the filling relation of the subject of *jouissance*, then the distinction between fantasy and symptom can be thrown into question, it can be overcome.

These two terms may be encompassed by a third one: this term, which came at the end of Lacan's teaching to encompass the symptom and the fantasy, it is the *sinthome*.

This is why he could at the same time highlight the *jouissance* of the symptom and say — *You only enjoy your fantasies*. This was to indicate that, if one is to re-centre things on *jouissance*, then there is a mixture of the symptom as effect of truth

and of the relation to *jouissance*, which is properly speaking the *sinthome*.

I went a little quickly last time, when I told you straight away that Lacan, with regard to inexistence, said of the symptom that it was conditioned both by the inexistence of truth and by the inexistence of *jouissance*. I was quoting from memory from his articulations in his Seminar... *Ou pire*. I checked. He didn't put it exactly like this. Indeed, in his Seminar ... *Ou pire*, he is still just before his invention of the *sinthome*. He speaks of the inexistence of truth — that is of  $\$$  in the place of truth or of  $s(A)$  — as the essence of the symptom, and of the inexistence of *jouissance* as the essence of repetition-compulsion. *Inexistence is the essence of the symptom, the inexistence of the truth which it supposes, even though it marks its place, while repetition-compulsion brings to the light of insistence the inexistence of jouissance*. It is not part of a great development, he said this in passing.

You see that, in this type of proposition, he is still situating the symptom only as  $s(A)$ , effect of truth, and that he distinguishes the relation to *jouissance* which is present in repetition-compulsion. We are just a step away from the one he will make two or three years later.

This orients all his research of that period — and this completely eluded all those following it, me included —, which precisely aims to give a definition of the symptom which would include both truth and *jouissance*, the signifying effect and *jouissance*, which thus includes repetition-compulsion in the symptom.

And indeed, he will try to write the symptom and repetition-compulsion in a single trait with this great thing which he called *RSI* and his Seminars on knots. This is why he was able to formulate — *The symptom is that which does not stop writing itself*. In order to be able to say that *the symptom is that which does not stop writing itself*, one can no longer define the symp-

tom on the basis of the effect of truth, which certainly is not something which does not stop writing itself, and one must have defined symptom and repetition-compulsion in the same stroke.

This is when he laid his cards on the table in his *RSI*, in the effort which it contains, in other words Lacan's last problematic, where he was able to formulate that he defined the symptom — I have already indicated this last time — as *the way in which each subject enjoys his unconscious insofar as the unconscious determines him*. It is a definition which overturned everything, which entirely changed the perspective. When he says *insofar as the unconscious determines him*, Lacan is expressly designating  $S_1$ , the imperative signifier, the primary saying [*dit*]. He defines the symptom as a mode of *jouissance* of the unconscious, precisely a mode of *jouissance* of  $S_1$ .

His last effort bears upon what I have just enumerated for you today, that is to say this conjunction — which one finds throughout his teaching —, this superposition of  $S_1$  and little *a*. And here he goes so far as to define a *jouissance* of the signifier.

This *jouissance* of the signifier displaces all the lines. This is why at the time — and it seemed opaque to me then —, at one point Lacan substituted a reflection on the sign to that which he was making on the signifier, that he was able to oppose sense and sign. Whereas the *a*, *b*, *c*, that we thought we knew was precisely that the sign had given way to the signifying articulation. He spoke of the sign, for example in *Television*, in the place of the signifier, precisely because he was looking for a term where the signifier was complemented by *jouissance*.

This is also why he substituted a problematic of deciphering for the problematic of interpretation. Interpretation does not have its antonym, while deciphering has its antonym in ciphering. He employed the term ciphering and cipher, not just to vary his vocabulary but to try to think the signifier and *jouissance* in the same stroke.

It is there that he brought out the function of the symptom. What did he make of the symptom? The symptom, precisely because it is at once little *a* and big *I*, at once the signifying function and the function of *jouissance*, designated by a single symbol  $\Sigma$ , is that which more than anything else is apt to write the proper name as particular to the subject.

This is why he formulated Joyce-the-symptom. He made these considerations — which have remained until now rather opaque — aiming to designate the true proper name of James Joyce by calling him *Joyce-the-symptom*. In that he was saying that what makes an insignia for the subject<sup>2</sup> is his symptom.

I have managed to get to Joyce-the-symptom. Next time I hope to develop this symptom as insignia in a less arid and abstract fashion.

11 March 1987

Translated by Philip Dravers and Véronique Voruz

1. Transcript of the thirteenth session of *Ce qui fait insigne*, *L'orientation lacanienne*, course delivered within the framework of the Department of Psychoanalysis at Paris VIII. Text established by Catherine Bonningue, from the transcription and recording of Fabienne Henry, Michel Jolibois and Bernard Cremniter. Published with the kind consent of Jacques-Alain Miller.
2. *Ce qui fait insigne* can be heard both as that which constitutes an insignia and that which makes a sign to the subject [TN].
3. Also translated as 'subject supposed to know' [TN].
4. Reference to the structure of the discourse of the master, in which the subject occupies the place of truth [TN].
5. *Essaim* in French is homophonic with  $S_1$  [TN].

This text was first published in *La Cause freudienne* No 39, 1998.