

Anika Lemaire

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Jacques Lacan

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Translated by David Macey



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## Preface by Jacques Lacan

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A good thirteen years ago, I used to say to two of those people we call nonentities, which for public opinion, or at least for student opinion, simply better entitles them to occupy the professor's place, 'Don't forget that one day you will give what I am now writing as the subject for a thesis.'<sup>1</sup>

As though from a wish that they might look into it: where I would check whether the zero really does have any idea of the place that gives it its importance.

It has happened, then. Nothing has happened to them, only to me: thanks to my *Écrits*, I am now the subject of a thesis.

That this should be due to the choice of a young person is nothing new. To my surprise, ten years after its publication my Rome lecture made the adventure of an intellectual emerging into an American university from a trapper's tunnel.

As we know, it needs a second swallow to make a summer. The second is therefore unique in this place, even if there are several of them. A smile multiplies when it is that of a young person.

Anthony, Anika . . . what a sign of a new wind is insisting in these initials?

May she forgive me then, if I take the opportunity to designate what she effaces by showing it.<sup>2</sup>

My *Écrits* are unsuitable for a thesis, particularly an academic thesis: they are antithetical by nature: one either takes what they formulate or one leaves them.

Each of them is apparently no more than a memorial to the refusal of my discourse by the audience it included: an audience restricted to psychoanalysts.

But, precisely by including them without retaining them, each article shows by a further twist that there is no knowledge without discourse. For what would such knowledge be: the unconscious one imagines is refuted by the unconscious as it is: a knowledge put in the place of truth; this can be conceived only within a structure of discourse.

An unthinkable discourse, because it could only be held if one was ejected from it. Perfectly teachable, however, by a half-speaking: a technique which realizes that truth can only be half-spoken. This presupposes that the psychoanalyst never shows himself except in an asymptomatic discourse, which is, in effect, the least one can expect of him.

In fact, this 'impossible' is the basis of his real; a real from within which the consistency of the discourses in which truth limps can be judged, precisely because it limps openly, as opposed to the inanity of the discourse of knowledge, which, asserting itself with its closure, makes the others lie.

That, indeed, is the operation of academic discourse when it makes a thesis out of the fiction it calls an author, out of the history of thought, or out of something that styles itself progress.

Illustrating an incompatibility such as that in question with an example is always fallacious.

Obviously, it concerns the pupil.

I could draw a contrast and say that, in 1960, my two L's beat together as two wings (*deux ailes*), because one of them was such that it had to be taken universally or not at all. By that I mean the lichen which unifies the forest for you when the forest has to hide the tree from you.

At that date, it was a question of nothing less than making my teaching understood, my teaching which for seven years had been stated once every eight days in the most eminent site of French psychiatry in an unpublished lesson for those to whom it was particularly addressed: psychiatrists and psychoanalysts, who still leave it to one side.

This singular phenomenon is the doing of segregations, there as elsewhere effects of discourse, but which, to make concrete inferences, here enact promulgations different in origin and date.

First, the segregation of psychiatry in the Faculty of Medicine, where the university structure displays its affinities with the managerial system. This segregation is supported by the fact that psychiatry itself performs the office of social segregation. The result is that psychiatry designates a spare room on the strength of the University's liberal funds, those who have a right to this lodging being repressed into the ghetto which was once, and with some reason, known as the asylum.

Such a site lends itself to the exploits of civilization, where the fact of the prince (my friend Henri Ey, as it happens) is established.

A liberal diktat may arise there, as it may wherever the arbitrary finds itself a crack between domains of necessity.

What happens to me in my field because of Bonneval, the fief of Henri Ey, proceeds, therefore, from no other favour, from no dialectical progress.

If one thinks about it, the field of the psychoanalyst, the habitat he found in psychiatry, is motivated by a political configuration rather than by any connexion of practice. He was ordered there by his antipathy to academic discourse, an antipathy which is no less effective for having received its rationale from my teaching alone, when, as a symptom, it is translated into institutions conveying secondary benefits.

As for the segregational articulation of the psychoanalytic institution, it suffices to recall that the privilege of entering it after the war was to be measured against the fact that, some years earlier, *all* the analysts in

Central Europe had fled to the Atlantic countries – and then the batch – who would perhaps have to be restricted by a *numerus clausus* – announced by the anticipated Russian invasion.

The result is a sequel maintained by the established domination of academic discourse in the USSR and its antipathy<sup>3</sup> to sectarian discourse, which, on the other hand, flourishes in the USA, since the country was founded by it.

This symptomatic play explains the prodigious fact that a certain Ipepéc [IPP] could effectively forbid access to my seminar to all those in its obedience who were less than fifty years old, and see its decree confirmed by the student herd, even in the 'guard room' four hundred yards away from the Clinique Universitaire (cf. the spare room) where I used to speak at lunch-time.

The present fashion should not consider itself any less gregarious; it is only a metabolic form of the growing power of the University, which shelters me just as well in its courts. The discourse of the University is desegregative, even if it does convey the discourse of the master, since it relays it only by freeing it from its truth. Science, it thinks, guarantees the truth of this project. Insoluble.

However, let no one underestimate the autonomy of this discourse in the name of its budgetary dependence. That settles no one's account. What is torn there can be surprised only by another discourse from within which the stitching can be seen.

It is more accessible to demonstrate academic discourse's inability to return to the discourse out of which it is patched together, an equivalent process.

The two paths merge when something of the discourse it represses happens to make itself felt within it, all the more so in that nowhere is it secure. This, one day, was the experience of a Politzer, who had a sensitive soul as well as being a Marxist.

Reopening the paperback in which this *Critique des fondements de la psychologie* has been republished, against all likelihood of the author's consent, you've no idea of the formulae with which he asks if thoughts left to themselves are still acts of the 'I'. To which he at once replies: 'Impossible' (p. 143 of the paperback).

And on p. 151:

Unconscious wishes . . . are perceived by consciousness, but at no moment does *an act with a human form* [author's emphasis] implying the 'I' intervene. But this wish is still subject to transformations which are no longer acts of the 'I'. . . . Systems which are too autonomous break the continuity of the 'I', and the automatism of the processes of transformation and working over exclude its activity.

This is what the would-be critique comes down to at the demand of postulates held to be extremely backward even where they persist –

namely in academic psychology – only because they remain basic to it, whether academic psychology likes it or not.

It is not by resorting to the author from whom academic discourse might well proceed that I will explain how, rightly promoting the ‘story’ as the very thing around which the analytic experience centres, he emerges as a ghost because he never looked at it.

It is in the nominalism essential to the modern university, the university with which capitalism befuddles itself, that I would have you read the scandalous failure of this critique. This is the discourse in which one can only become more and more caught up, even, and especially, if one curses it. (What a laughable operation if one thinks about it.)

My L’s get out of it by casting this ‘first person’ out of the unconscious with a flick of the tail. They know very well how, to please them, I refer to this unconscious as speaking in more than one person (*je l’entu-ile*).<sup>4</sup> It would be better, they tell us, to bundle it up ‘in person’.

They could, however, have remembered that I make truth say ‘I speak’, and that if I state that a discourse is sent out from somewhere only for its message to return there in an inverted form, this does not mean that the truth which an Other sends back in this way is on intimate terms with that Other.

I would have suggested to Politzer the image of the innumerable I, defined only by its relation to the unity of recurrence. Who knows? I might have put it in the transfinite.

But this jesting is not important. It should have been strikingly obvious to my two L’s that I had dispensed, and with reason as we can see, with a reference they take up only because they want to make a bow to the only people it affects – those who have nothing to do with psychoanalysis.

CNRS Marxism [Centre National de Recherches Scientifiques = academic Marxism] or phenomenology of forms; the (species) hostility or the (conjunctural) friendship that these positions show towards the only discourse in question derive from it the efficiency for which they are summoned there: once neutralized, they become neutralizing.

The idea is beginning to dawn on those for whom a discourse, of which they have not heard because they have kept quiet about it for seven years, affects a very stiff and starchy attitude that all they have to reinstate is the philosophical umbrella, and much good may it do the others.

After all, if it can be exported, this is an opportunity to save up currency which is legal tender in the Alma Mater.

This becomes obvious when the report on the unconscious is put on the unofficial market, which, aptly enough, is overlooked by *Les Temps Modernes*.

The sensibility of the professional common market is becoming more refined.

What will become of the unconscious in all this?

For the sake of propedeutics, let us limit ourselves to what articulates it in the apparatus of the signifiers. One could say that I did nothing (but in introducing Signorelli (as the entry of forgetfulness into discourse!) to the Société de Philosophie. But that was because of the context: the substantialist prejudice, which could not fail to have affected the unconscious there, derived from an intimidation to be produced by the crushing weight of its language-matter, if not from a dismay to be borne by leaving it in suspense.

Here, it is a question of people (at least if one insists upon speaking with valid interlocutors without composing a third party), of people, I say, whose myth is accredited by a practice. Here, as in any faith, the fabulous arms itself with the solid. It [*ça* = *id*] is dripping with strong ego, and swimming in aggression; to say nothing of the genital supreme, which really is well cooked up.

To limit oneself to what I have established as the algorithm appropriate for writing the relationship between the metaphor as significant structure and the return (once the fact of the signifier has been demonstrated) of the repressed becomes valid only as an extract from a construction whose design, at least, could be indicated.

The mental ground of today’s reader, let us say the young reader, has been swept clean by the converging effects of the discourse to which I have contributed, not without the question of the distance required for maximal effect having left me speechless before I had thought about it. He can have no idea of the inaudibility, so few years ago, of these remarks of mine, which are now running about everywhere. In doctors who are not yet Balinted, he can perhaps still measure the extent to which it is possible to live whilst completely ignoring the unconscious, which to him means (immense for him, thanks to me, poor): to ignore the unconscious, i.e. the discourse.

I can well see the embarrassment of my two L’s at approaching this masonic gathering. I do not think this is sufficient for them to take a free decision to do away with all recourse to the graph constructed for them in my seminar on the formations of the unconscious (1957–8).

That apparatus, in which figures . . . (God knows it’s a risk), in which the *apparole*<sup>5</sup> figures (let the ambiguity of this monster-word be welcome), the *apparole*, I say, made out of that spendthrift<sup>6</sup> the Other (known as the Great Other), so that the basket of desire can be hung up by its four corners and stiffened into a phantasy by the ‘a’, the ball-object. It is astonishing that bringing out this rigorous apparatus did not make the haggling over the double inscription a secondary issue or a resolved question, since it was resolved by Freud himself when he promoted, I shall say in my expected style, the *mystic pad*.<sup>7</sup>

The difficulties in work which count for a lot in the directions for psychoanalysis are certainly not revived for nothing in the passage that makes the analyst. For they are essentially concerned with the relationship with truth.

(This last word is not easy to handle, but this could be because its meaning vacillates, whilst its usage is correctly settled.)

I myself would not be caught up in analytic discourse if I here avoided the opportunity to show precisely what is carried away by academic discourse.

Let us begin with astonishment.

Let us admit that it is correct to use the formula for metaphor just as it stands, just as I give it in my text in Schreber, namely:

$$\frac{S}{S'} \cdot \frac{S'}{x} \rightarrow S\left(\frac{1}{s}\right) \quad (I)$$

As the subsequent passage shows, this scription is there to bring out the function of the signifier 'Phallus' as a sign for the 'signifier's passion'. This is what the x, habitually used to designate the variable, indicates.

The original formula (original in more than one sense) given in *The Agency of the Letter*, is:

$$f\left(\frac{S'}{S}\right)S \cong S(+ )s$$

The entire text of this *Écrit* is a commentary on this formula, which does not lend itself – and this should hold back our L – to the transcription we are about to see.

I refer to the transcription made on the basis of . . . analogy with a scription of the arithmetical proposition which must be stripped down by being put into figures:

$$\frac{1}{4} \cdot \frac{4}{16}$$

which does in effect give  $1\left(\frac{1}{16}\right)$  (and it's still an accident).

But that this  $\frac{1}{16}$  can be written (no accident) as

$\frac{1}{16}$  is no reason for transcribing Formula I, with its

$$\frac{4}{4}$$

on the letters, as  $\frac{S'}{s}$

---

$\frac{S}{S}$

In a word, what has the line with which Saussure inscribes the impassable gap relating signifier to signified, and in which I am (falsely) charged with finding the barrier between the unconscious and the pre-conscious, to do with the line, whatever it may be, indicating Euclidean proportion?

A little of the buzzing of the dialogue I had with M. Perelman in June of the same year in order to refute his 'analogical' conception of metaphor (cf. *Écrits*, pp. 889–92) would have sufficed to stop anyone fascinated by it from taking that path.

It fascinates him, but how? What is the term whose three suspension points (preceding the term analogy) show that I do not know which saint to dedicate it to? What is the word to designate the similarity with an idiot's manipulation of an abacus?

There's nothing to hum and haw about. It's my discourse all right which the author permits himself to adopt after his own fashion – which is not the right fashion, for all that it is the fashion in which the academic listens to me, and even if it is instructive.

I have to admit it: when, at a difficult moment, I despaired of the psychoanalyst, I naively placed some hope, not in the discourse of the university, which I did not as yet have the means to pin down, but in a sort of true opinion which I imagined there to be in its body. (We know who would have said Henormous!)

I saw a few members of this body being attracted by my pasture. I expected their votes. But they turned it into a schoolboy essay.

And what became of my L, still a little chicken of an L (*aile de poussin*)? His wings are now strong enough for him to imagine this formula: the unconscious is the condition for language.

That comes from him: one of the faithful assured me that he then expressed himself in those phonemes.

Now, what I say is that language is the condition for the unconscious.

It's not the same thing; in fact it's the direct opposite. But one cannot therefore say that there is no relationship between the two

L would have been flustered if he had said that the unconscious was the logical implication of language: in effect, no unconscious without language. That could have been a step towards the root of the implication and of the logic itself.

He would have got back to the subject presupposed by my knowledge (*au sujet que suppose mon savoir*).<sup>8</sup>

Perhaps – who knows – L might thereby have outstripped me in that which I am reaching.

This is precisely where his lower  $\frac{S}{S}$ , which as such can only mean

that one signifier is worth another, could have taken him from the moment that (and he was aware of it) he admits that a signifier is capable of signifying itself.

For, knowing the difference between the formal usage of the signifier, notation  $\bar{S}$ , and its natural function, notation  $S$ , he would have understood the very detour on which the so-called mathematical logic is founded.

But, as one cannot re-discover everything by oneself, his lack of information really must be put down to laziness, the unfathomable amongst the sins out of which the tower of the deadly sin arises.

To make up for it, let  $L$  ask himself the question posed at the point  $I$  have reached, namely: what satisfaction is there to be found in forcing  $S$ , the natural signifier, to experience what a still more advanced formalization of its practice reveals in it to be irreducible as language.

Could this be what ties the knot that stops knowledge detaching itself from *jouissance*, but still means that it is never anything but the *jouissance* of the Other?<sup>9</sup>

Ah! Why does he linger over what Freud has for ever designated as the narcissism of minor difference. 'Minor' – that is sufficient for it to differ from the interval separating truth from error.

What Freud does not seem to have known he could be grateful to is that narcissism, that narcissism to which he owes the fact of being Freud for ever, throughout his lifetime and after it for a whole circle of people, and that fact that he can never fail to be quoted as insurpassable in what he says.

The fact is, he has the good fortune not to have the university pack at his heels.

Only what he calls 'his gang'.

That allows my gang simply to verify his discourse.

But they behave oddly towards me. When, beginning with the structure of language, I formulate metaphor in such a way as to account for what he calls condensation in the unconscious, and I formulate metonymy in such a way as to provide the motive for displacement, they become indignant that I do not quote Jakobson (whose name would never have been suspected in my gang – if I had not pronounced it).

But when they finally read him and notice that the formula in which I articulate metonymy differs somewhat from Jakobson's formula in that he makes Freudian displacement depend upon metaphor, then they blame me, as if I had attributed my formula to him.

They are, in a word, playing about.

When, after years of sleep (the sleep of the others), I have to summarize what I said to the mob at Bonneval (the tree springs up again, and on my arms, all the birds, all the birds . . . how can one survive their eternal twittering?),<sup>10</sup> all I can do in an *écrit* – *Position de l'inconscient* – is to recall the object 'a' is the pivot around which every turn of phrase unfolds in its metonymy.

Where is this object 'a', the major incorporeal of the Stoics, to be situated? In the unconscious or elsewhere? Who can tell?

May this Preface be an omen to one who will go far.

The good use she has made of academic sources inevitably lacks what oral tradition will designate for the future: texts faithful in pillaging me, but never deigning to pay me back.

Their interest will be that they transmit what I have said literally; like the amber which holds the fly so as to know nothing of its flight.

## Notes

- 1 This does not refer to S. Leclaire and J. Laplanche. We will come to them later. (*Anika Lemaire*)
- 2 Let me make myself understood: by showing it as it should be shown. (*Lacan*)
- 3 Naturally, the refusal of segregation is basic to the concentration camp. (*Lacan*)
- 4 The neologism defies translation. It is a condensation of *en* (in) *tu* (you, thou) and *il* (he, it). The formation of the neologism is aided by its phonetic association with *intituler*: to entitle. (*Translator*)
- 5 *Apparole* is a condensation of *appareil* and *à parole* (apparatus, speaking). (*Translator*)
- 6 *Panier percé* means both a spendthrift (metaphorically) and a basket with a hole in the bottom (literally). (*Translator*)
- 7 In English in the text. (*Translator*)
- 8 A reference to the seminar given on 10 June 1964: 'Du sujet supposé savoir, de la dyade première, et du bien', now included in J. Lacan, *Le Séminaire. Livre XI: Les Quatre Concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse*, Seuil, Paris, 1973. (*Anika Lemaire*)
- 9 There is no real English equivalent for *jouissance*, which covers the fields, 'pleasure', 'domination', 'possession', 'appropriation', etc. It should be noted that the verb *jouir* also has the slang meaning of 'to come'. (*Translator*)
- 10 A reference to the image used in 'The unconscious: a psychoanalytic study' by Laplanche and Leclaire (48). Cf. Part Four, Chapter 9 of the present text. (*Translator*)