

**Jacques Lacan**

## **Postface to the French Edition of *Seminar XI***

**T**HUS shall be read – this book I am betting.

It shall not be like my *Écrits*, the volume of which gets bought: but in order not to read it, so they say.

This is not to be put down to accident, the accident of how difficult they are. In writing *Écrits* on the sleeve of the collection, that was what I understood myself to be expecting of them: the way I have it, a piece of writing is made not to be read.

Rather, something else is being said.

What? Since this is where I am at in what I am presently saying, I will take this as a case by which to illustrate it, after my own fashion.

**W**HAT has just been read, at least this much can be reckoned by my postfacing it, is not therefore a piece of writing.

A transcription, now here is a word I am discovering thanks to the modesty of J. A. M, Jacques-Alain, Miller by name: what gets read passes through the writing whilst surviving there intact.

Now, what gets read, this is what I am speaking about, since what I say is devoted to the unconscious, namely, what gets read above all else.

Need I insist? – Naturally: because here I am not writing. If I were, I would be post-effacing my seminar, not postfacing it.

I shall insist, as needs must for it to get read.

**B**UT I have yet to acknowledge the author of this work for having convinced me – from having borne this out to me throughout its course – that what gets read of what I say does not get read any less than the fact that I say it. The stress is to be laid on the fact of saying, because the / can still very well go running off.

In short, let there be some benefit when it comes to making the analytic discourse consistent, trusting as I am in my getting re-read. To go back to the time of my arrival at the École normale is merely to take note of the end of my wilderness period.

**I**T cannot be doubted, from the time I put into it, that the outcome I have qualified as poubellishing is not to my liking. But that people have bin forgetting [*qu'on p'oublie*] what I say to the point of turning it on the university lathe means that it is well worth my marking out their incompatibility here.

**S**ETTING down the written as I do, mark well at the nib's leading edge that I have got it down pat, even that its status will be set therein. Were I actually to have something to do with it, it would not prevent it having been established well before my findings, because after all, writing as not-to-be-read was introduced by Joyce, or better still: intraduced, since coining a word be-traits beyond languages, it can scarcely be translated, being everywhere equally precious little for reading.<sup>1</sup>

**H**OWEVER, in view of whom I am speaking to, have to get out of their heads what they reckon they got from their school days, doubtless said to be maternal<sup>2</sup> because one becomes fluent in dematernalisation: namely, one learns to read by being schmooled in literasilliness. As if a child, in knowing to read in one picture that he has to say "giraffe" and in another "gibbon", were not merely learning that the G that each are written with has nothing to do with getting read because it does not respond to it.

The fact that from then on what is produced by way of *anorthography* can only be judged by taking the function of the written as a mode different from the speaker in language is where you win out in what you cobble together makeshift, albeit bit by bit, though it would go more quickly were you to know what it is all about.

It would not be a bad thing for getting read to be understood as it ought to be, right where one has a duty to interpret. That this should be the spoken word

1 [TN, *intraduit*, is quite literally "untranslated". In *faire du mot traite au-delà des langues*, the theme of *traduttore, traditore* is invoked through the phonetic proximity of *traître* and *traite*. A *traître mot* is a "single word", as used in negative expressions including "not a single word". *Trait* also lies in close phonetic proximity. The literal meaning of *traiter*, elided in our translation, is "to deal with", "to treat", "to negotiate" or "to handle"; when used, as here, in the present tense, it is identical to the noun *traite*, a "draft document" or a "bill of exchange".]

2 [TN, in France, nursery school is known as *La maternelle*.]

where what it says does not get read is however that wherewith the analyst jolts, once he is beyond the moment he pushes himself, *púsàs himself*,<sup>3</sup> ah!, to giving himself over to lending an ear to the point of no longer standing on his own two feet.

**A**TENTION, challenged, one takes cover, wary, one defends oneself, represses, balks, the slightest thing is all it takes not to hear that the "why are you lying in telling me the truth?" from the tale that is said to be Jewish on account of it being the not so daft one who speaks up, says no less than that it is on account of not being a reading book that the train timetable is here the means by which Lviv gets read in the stead of Kraków – or else what in any case settles the question is the ticket the station issues.

But the function of the written does not forge the timetable then, but the very path of the track. And the object *a* such as I write it is the rail whereby what dwells, what takes shelter even, in the demand to be interpreted comes round to surplus-jouissance.

**I**f from the bee's foraging I read its role in the fertility of spermatophytes, if I divine from the lowest swooping flock that forms a flight of swallows the fate of tempests – it is of precisely what carries them to the signifier of this fact that I speak, that I have to give an account.

**T**HIS calls to mind the impudence that was imputed to me on account of one of those *écrits*, for having taken my measure from the word. One Japanese woman was quite put out by this, which rather astonished me.

Because I did not know, even though I was propelled, by the care she took, right to where her language is dwelt in, that I was merely dipping my toe into it. Only since then have I understood what tangible experience incurs from this writing, which from *on'yomi* to *kun'yomi* passes on the signifier to the point that it is torn from it by so many refractions, which any old newspaper, like any old crossroads sign, accommodate and impress. Nothing helps so to forge afresh the beams that come streaming out from so many gates<sup>4</sup>, all of which from the wellspring came out into the open though Amaterasu.

So much so that I told myself that the speaking being might thereby escape from the artifices of the unconscious that do not reach him on account of closing up there. A limit-case to corroborate me.

3 [TN, *le moment où il se poussah*, ah! introduces *poussah*, the French transliteration of "pu-sah", into the past simple *se poussa*. Whilst derived from Chinese, the French term designates less the seated Buddha than a rotund figurine that rights itself when pushed by virtue of its low centre of gravity, much like a roly-poly toy.]

4 [TN, a *vanne*, a gate or sluice gate, can also be a form of witticism: a "zinger" or a "wisecrack"]

You do not understand *stécriture*.<sup>5</sup> So much the better, this will be good reason for you to explain it. And should it stay out in the cold, you will get off with embarrassment. You see, for what I still have of it, I have ridden it out.

THE embarrassment still has to be serious to count. But for that you can follow me: don't forget that I restored its lot to this word in my seminar on anxiety, i.e. the year before what comes here. This is to tell you that it is not so easy to get rid of as I am.

IN the meantime, may this be the right scale by dint of what gets read here: I'm not making you scale up it only for you to scale back down again.

What strikes me when I re-read my spoken words from back then is the surety that kept me from messing up with respect to what I came up with afterwards.

Each and every time, it seems to me that the risk is full to the brim, and that is what tires me out. That J. A. M should have spared me this makes me think that this shall not be nothing for you, but likewise it gives me to believe that if I have come through it, it is because I have more writing than I have an ink-ling of.

RECALL, for we who have less of an ink-ling of ourselves than in Japan, what impresses itself in the text of Genesis: there nothing gets created *ex nihilo* but the signifier. Which is quite plain since indeed it does not merit more.

The drawback is that existence depends on it, to wit, that for which only the fact of saying can vouch.

That God is thereby proven ought to have put it back in its place long ago. Namely, the place that the Bible posits not as myth, but much rather as history, it has been marked, and in this respect the gospel according to Marx is no different from our other ones.

The awful thing is that the relation wherein the whole thing is instigated concerns nothing but *jouissance*, and that the prohibition that religion projects into it being shared with the panic that philosophy proceeds from to this spot, a mass of substances rise up out of it as substitutes for the only proper one, that of the impossible to speak of, being real.

MIGHT not this "underhand-stanza" have offered itself up more accessibly in this form whereby the already written aspect of the poem forges the least daft fact of saying?

Isn't this worth the trouble of being built, if it really is what I presume to be promised, land for the new discourse that analysis is?

<sup>5</sup>[TN, *stécriture* combines *sténographie* and *écriture*, and invites the reading *cette écriture*, "this writing".]

Not that one could ever expect from it the relation whose absence is what I say affords the speaker access to the real.

But the artifice of the channels by which *jouissance* comes to cause what gets read as the world, there you have, it will be admitted, what makes for the fact that what gets read of it ought to avoid the onto-, Toto<sup>6</sup> take note, the onto-, even the ontotautology.

No less than here.

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<sup>6</sup>[TN, Toto is a fictive hapless child, the butt of a series of "Toto jokes", the French equivalent of "Little Johnny".]