

Returning to Freud:
Clinical Psychoanalysis in the
School of Lacan

Selections Edited and Translated by
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New Haven and London
Yale University Press

PART ONE. THE PSYCHOANALYTIC INTERVIEW

1 A Lacanian Psychosis: Interview by Jacques Lacan

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

The text that follows is a translation of the unedited transcript of an interview conducted by Jacques Lacan with a hospitalized psychiatric patient before a group of psychiatrists and analysts. The names have, of course, been altered, but in changing them Jacques-Alain Miller was careful to maintain the resonances that the original names had for the patient.

Translating such a text poses special problems. The transcript retains the particularities of a spoken discourse. I have rendered these in equivalent English forms. Also, the patient has a rather special way of using the French language, especially as concerns verb tenses and neologisms. In almost all cases I have retained the verb tense used by the patient, even where, for example, his use of the pluperfect or imperfect seems awkward in English. For the neologisms, wherever possible I have used an English neologism and have included the French term in parentheses. In short, I have translated good French into good English and broken and erroneous French into less than perfect English. At present, the original French transcript is unpublished.

THE PRESENTATION OF MR. GÉRARD PRIMEAU

DR. LACAN: Sit down, my good man. You have found a great deal of interest here. I mean that people are really interested in your case. You spoke with your psychiatrists. Many things have been somewhat clarified. Tell me about yourself.

(Mr. Primeau is silent) I don't know why I would not let you speak. You know very well what is happening to you.

MR. PRIMEAU: I can't manage to get hold of myself.

DR. LACAN: You can't manage to get hold of yourself? Explain to me what is happening.

MR. PRIMEAU: I am a little disjointed in regard to language, disjunction between the dream and reality. There is an equivalence between the . . . two worlds in my imagination, and not a prevalence. Between the world and reality—what is

Jacques Lacan is the director and founder of the Ecole Freudienne de Paris. He practices psychoanalysis in Paris.

called reality—there is a disjunction. I am constantly making the imaginative flow.

DR. LACAN: Speak to me about your name. Because Gérard Primeau, is not . . .

MR. PRIMEAU: Yes, I had decomposed, before knowing Raymond Roussel. . . . When I was twenty, I was studying *maths supérieures*. . . .¹ Since then I was interested in physical facts, and there is a lot of talk about intellectual strata and substrata. Language could present strata and substrata. For example, I had decomposed my name into *Geai*, a bird, *Rare*, rareness.

DR. LACAN: *Geai Rare* . . .²

MR. PRIMEAU: *Prime Au*. I had decomposed, in a somewhat ludic way, I had fragmented my name to create. What I have to tell you is. . . (silence)

DR. LACAN: And then—what then? What do you call—this is what I have been told—*imposed* speech?

MR. PRIMEAU: Imposed speech is an emergence which imposes itself on my intellect and which has no meaning in the ordinary sense. These are sentences which emerge, which are not reflexive, which are not already thought, but which are an emergence, expressing the unconscious. . . .

DR. LACAN: Go ahead. . . .

MR. PRIMEAU: . . . emerge as though I was perhaps manipulated . . . I am not manipulated, but I cannot explain myself. I have a lot of trouble explaining. I have trouble getting hold of the problem, trouble getting hold of this emergence. I do not know how it comes, imposes itself on my brain. It comes all at once: *You killed the bluebird. It's an anarchic system*. . . .³ Sentences which have no rational meaning in banal language and which are imposed on my brain, on my intellect. There is also a kind of counterbalancing. With the physician who is named Dr. D—I have an imposed sentence which says *Mr. D— is nice*, and then I have a sentence which counterbalances, which is my reflection; there is a disjunction between the imposed sentence and my sentence, a reflexive thought. I say, *But I am insane*. I say *Mr. D— is nice*, imposed sentence, *But I am insane*, reflexive sentence.

DR. LACAN: Give me other examples.

MR. PRIMEAU: I have a lot of complexes, at times I'm very aggressive. I often have a tendency. . . .

DR. LACAN: You are “aggressive.” What does that mean?

1. [This term refers to the first of two years of study preparatory to entrance into one of France's best private universities. A student in this course of study has graduated from the equivalent of high school with an outstanding record.]

2. [Pronounced exactly like *Gérard*.]

3. [“Anarchic system” is in English in the original text.]

MR. PRIMEAU: I've explained.

DR. LACAN: You don't appear to be aggressive.

MR. PRIMEAU: When I have an emotional contact, I am aggressive inside. . . . I can't say any more. . . .

DR. LACAN: You are going to succeed in telling me how that happens.

MR. PRIMEAU: I tend to compensate. I am aggressive, not physically but inside. I tend to compensate with imposed sentences. I am expressing myself badly, it is clearer now. . . . I tend to recover with the imposed sentences. I tend to find everyone nice or beautiful, . . . then at other times I have aggressive, imposed sentences. . . .

DR. LACAN: Take your time, take plenty of time to find out where you are.

MR. PRIMEAU: There are several kinds of voices.

DR. LACAN: Why do you call them "voices"?

MR. PRIMEAU: Because I hear them, I hear them inside.

DR. LACAN: Yes.

MR. PRIMEAU: Thus I am aggressive, and inside I hear people by telepathy. From time to time I have emerging sentences, which are meaningless, as I just explained.

DR. LACAN: Give a sample.

MR. PRIMEAU: *He is going to kill me the bluebird. It's an anarchic system. It's a political assassination, . . . political assastination* [assastinat], which is the contraction of words between "assassination" [assassinat] and "assistant" [assistanat], which evokes the notion of assassination.⁴

DR. LACAN: Which evokes . . . Tell me, no one is assassinating you?

MR. PRIMEAU: No, they are not assassinating me. I am going to continue with a kind of unconscious recovery. Sometimes I have emerging sentences, aggressive and insignificant, or rather, nonsignifying, nonsignifying in everyday language, and sometimes I recover from this aggressiveness, and I tend to find everyone nice, beautiful, and so on. This beatifies, canonizes, certain persons who I call saints. I have a friend who is named Barbara, and that gives "Saint Barbara." "Saint Barbara" is an emerging sentence, but me, I am in an aggressive phase. I always have this disjunction between the two, which complete each other, according to the influence of time, and which are not of the same order: one is emerging, and the other is reflexive.

DR. LACAN: Yes. Then let us talk more specifically, if you want to, of the

4. [In a French psychiatric hospital, an *assistant* is a physician who has completed his residency and is thus a staff member bearing primary responsibility for patient care. A psychiatrist who seeks this position in France is obliged to take a competitive examination called the *assistanat*.]

emerging sentences. Since when have they been emerging? This is not an idiotic question. . . .

MR. PRIMEAU: No, no. Since I did. . . . I was diagnosed as having paranoid delusions in March 1974.

DR. LACAN: Who said that, "paranoid delusions"?

MR. PRIMEAU: A physician, at the time. And these emerging sentences. . . .

DR. LACAN: Why do you turn toward that man?

MR. PRIMEAU: I felt that he was mocking me.

DR. LACAN: You felt a mocking presence? He is not in your field of vision. . . .

MR. PRIMEAU: I was hearing a sound, and I felt. . . .

DR. LACAN: He is surely not making fun of you. I know him well, and he is surely not making fun of you. On the contrary he is very interested. That is why he made a noise.

MR. PRIMEAU: The impression of his intellectual understanding. . . .

DR. LACAN: Yes, I think so, that is more like him. I tell you that I know him. Besides, I know all the people who are here. They would not be here if I did not have full confidence in them. Good, continue.

MR. PRIMEAU: On the other hand, I think that speech can be a world force, beyond words.

DR. LACAN: Exactly, let's try to see. You have just presented your doctrine. And in fact, it's one hell of a mess, this story of. . . .

MR. PRIMEAU: There is a very simple language that I use in everyday life, and there is on the other hand a language which has an imaginative influence, where I disconnect the people around me from the real. That is the most important. My imagination creates an other world, a world which would have a sense which is equivalent to the sense of the world that is called real, but which would be completely disjointed. The two worlds would be completely disjointed. On the other hand, these imposed sentences, to the extent that they emerge sometimes to go and aggress a person, are bridges between the imaginative world and the world that is called real.

DR. LACAN: Yes, but finally the fact remains that you maintain a clear distinction.

MR. PRIMEAU: Yes, I maintain a clear distinction, but the language, the fluency of imagination, is not of the same intellectual or spiritual order as what I say. It's a dream, a kind of waking dream, a permanent dream.

DR. LACAN: Yes.

MR. PRIMEAU: I don't think I'm inventing. It is disjointed, but that has no. . . . I cannot. . . . in answering you I am afraid of making a mistake.

DR. LACAN: You think that you have made a mistake in answering?

MR. PRIMEAU: I have not made a mistake. All speech has the force of law, all speech is signifying, but apparently at first they do not have a purely rational sense.

DR. LACAN: Where did you find this expression “all speech is signifying”?

MR. PRIMEAU: It’s a personal reflection.

DR. LACAN: Right.

MR. PRIMEAU: I am conscious of this disjointed world, I am not sure of being conscious of this disjointed world.

DR. LACAN: You are not sure of . . .

MR. PRIMEAU: I am not sure of being conscious of this disjointed world. I do not know if the . . .

DR. LACAN: If the . . . ?

MR. PRIMEAU: . . . the dream, the world constructed by imagination, where I find my center of myself, has nothing to do with the real world, because in my imaginative world, in the world that I create for myself with speech, I am at the center. I tend to create a kind of minitheater, where I would be at the same time the creator and the director, while in the real world, my only function is . . .

DR. LACAN: Yes, there you are only a *geai rare*, if indeed . . .

MR. PRIMEAU: No, the *geai rare* is in the imaginative world. The Gérard Primeau is the world commonly called real, while in the imaginative world, I am *Geai rare prime au*. It is perhaps from my word *Prime*, which is the first, the one which codifies, which has force. I used a term in one of my poems. . . .

DR. LACAN: In one of your poems?

MR. PRIMEAU: I was the solitary center of a solitary circle. I do not know if that was said before. I found it when I was rather young. I think it is by Novalis.

DR. LACAN: Precisely.

MR. PRIMEAU: I am the solitary center, a kind of god, the demiurge of a solitary circle, because this world is walled in, and I cannot make it pass into everyday reality. Everything which masturbates . . . well, which is created at the level of the interior dream—I was going to say “which masturbates”. . . . (silence)

DR. LACAN: But finally, what do you think of this? According to what you say, it would appear that you feel that there is a dream which functions as such, that you are the prey of a certain dream?

MR. PRIMEAU: Yes, it’s a little like that. A tendency, in life, also, to . . . (silence)

DR. LACAN: Tell me.

MR. PRIMEAU: I am tired. I do not feel very well this morning; I am not in the mood to talk.

DR. LACAN: Why the devil not?

MR. PRIMEAU: Because I was a little anxious.

DR. LACAN: You were anxious. Which side is that on?

MR. PRIMEAU: I don't know. I am anxious. Anxiety is also emerging. It is sometimes related to the fact of meeting a person. On the other hand, the fact of meeting you, and . . .

DR. LACAN: It makes you anxious to speak with me? Do you have the feeling that I understand nothing of your problems?

MR. PRIMEAU: I am not sure that the interview can release certain things. Once I had an emerging anxiety which was purely physical, without any relation to social fact.

DR. LACAN: Yes, my way of introducing myself into this world . . .

MR. PRIMEAU: No, I was afraid of you because I have a lot of complexes. You are a rather well-known personality. I was afraid of meeting you. It was a very simple anxiety.

DR. LACAN: Yes. And what is your feeling about the persons who are here, who are listening with a great deal of interest?

MR. PRIMEAU: It is oppressing. That's why it's difficult to speak. I am anxious and tired and that blocks my tendency to . . .

DR. LACAN: Who did you see in 1974?

MR. PRIMEAU: Dr. G——.

DR. LACAN: G——, he wasn't the first psychiatrist you saw?

MR. PRIMEAU: Yes, he was the first. I saw Dr. H—— when I was fifteen.

DR. LACAN: Who took you to him?

MR. PRIMEAU: My parents. I was opposing my parents.

DR. LACAN: You are their only child?

MR. PRIMEAU: I am the only son, yes.

DR. LACAN: What does he do, your father?

MR. PRIMEAU: Medical salesman.

DR. LACAN: Meaning that he does what?

MR. PRIMEAU: He works for a pharmaceutical laboratory. His work consists in going to see physicians to present their products; he is a kind of representative.

DR. LACAN: He works for . . . ?

MR. PRIMEAU: D—— Laboratories.

DR. LACAN: You, did you have career counseling? You told me that you studied maths supérieures.

MR. PRIMEAU: That's right, yes. At the *lycée P——*.

DR. LACAN: Tell me a little about your studies.

MR. PRIMEAU: At what level? I was always a rather lazy student. I was naturally gifted. . . . I always tended to count on my intelligence rather than on work. In maths supérieures, I dropped out because I have . . .

DR. LACAN: I have . . . ?⁵

MR. PRIMEAU: There was a problem with a girl.

DR. LACAN: You had a problem with a girl?

MR. PRIMEAU: I was worried about a problem with a girl. I began maths supérieures in November, and then I cracked after two months because of a problem with a girl. Afterward I abandoned maths supérieures because I had a nervous breakdown.

DR. LACAN: You had a nervous breakdown linked to. . . ?

MR. PRIMEAU: To this disappointment with the girl.

DR. LACAN: This disappointment concerned whom?

MR. PRIMEAU: A young woman I knew at summer camp. I was a counselor and so was she.

DR. LACAN: Yes. I do not see why you would not say what her name was.

MR. PRIMEAU: Hélène Pigeon.

DR. LACAN: Yes. That was in 1967, then. Where were you in your “school-work”? We must call it that.

MR. PRIMEAU: I had had problems because I was lazy. Laziness is an illness. I had already had a lot of problems since I was fifteen, and I was having affective palpitations because of my stormy relations with my parents. It happened that I had memory losses.

DR. LACAN: You speak of your parents. You have already situated your father a little. And your mother?

MR. PRIMEAU: I was brought up by my mother because my father, a medical salesman, was working in the provinces. My mother was a very anxious, very silent woman, and since I myself was very retroactive, very, very reserved, the evening meal was very silent; there was no true affective contact from my mother. She was anxious, her mental state was contagious. . . . It is not a virus but concerns the environment. Thus I was brought up by this mother, very anxious, hypersensitive, exposed to family fights with my father when he came home for the weekend. The atmosphere was tense and anxiety-provoking. I think that by osmosis I myself was very anxious.

DR. LACAN: When you speak of osmosis, what is your idea of the osmosis in question, you know so well how to distinguish the real . . .

MR. PRIMEAU: . . . from the imaginary?

DR. LACAN: Yes, that's it. Between what and what is there osmosis?

MR. PRIMEAU: I believe that there is first a becoming conscious between what is called the real . . . There is a psychological tension created, anxiety in relation to

5. [The French *j'ai* (“I have”) is a homophone of *Geai* and *Gé*.]

the real, but carnal, that is to say, in relation to the body, and which then passes by osmosis to the mind. . . . Because I have a problem: it is that I cannot . . . I feel a little . . . Once I wrote a letter to my psychiatrist. . . .

DR. LACAN: To which psychiatrist?

MR. PRIMEAU: To Dr. G——. For a long time I was talking about the hiatus between the body and the mind, and there was a . . . I was obsessed by . . . I am speaking of then, and this is no longer valid. . . . I led a kind of . . . (Mr. Primeau seems very moved) . . . a notion of electrical bodies apparently linked and which apparently disjoined themselves. I could not manage to get hold of myself in relation to this body-mind situation.

DR. LACAN: “Then”—when was “then”?

MR. PRIMEAU: I was seventeen or eighteen. I was saying, what is the moment when the body enters into the mind, or the mind into the body? I do not know. I am obsessed—how?—by the body composed of cells, of all kinds of nerve cells. How does a biological fact become a spiritual fact? How is there a sharing between the body and the mind? In sum, how does thought have an interaction on the level of neurons? How is thought formulated? How, beginning with the interaction of neurons in the brain—how does thought come to emerge from these neuronic interactions, from these hormonal developments, from these neurovegetative developments or whatever. I had been led to think . . .

DR. LACAN: But you know that we don’t know any more about it than you do.

MR. PRIMEAU: I had been led to think that, seeing that biology takes its waves as being in the brain, I had been led to think that thought, or intelligence, was a kind of projecting wave, a wave directed toward the outside. I do not know how these waves were projected toward the outside, but language . . . This is related to the fact that I am a poet, because . . .

DR. LACAN: Yes, you are incontestably a poet.

MR. PRIMEAU: I tried, at the beginning, to . . .

DR. LACAN: You have some things written by you?

MR. PRIMEAU: Yes, I have some here.

DR. LACAN: You have some where?

MR. PRIMEAU: In the hospital. Dr. Z—— had asked me to bring them. But I would like to continue. I tried, by poetic action, to find a balancing rhythm, a music. I was led to think that speech is the projection of an intelligence which arises toward the outside.

DR. LACAN: Intelligence, speech. What you call intelligence is the usage of speech.

MR. PRIMEAU: I was thinking that intelligence was an undulating projection toward the outside, as if . . . I do not agree with you when you say that intelli-

gence is speech. There is intuitive intelligence, which is not translatable by speech, and I am very intuitive, and I have a great deal of difficulty in logifying [*à logifier*]. . . . I don't know if that is a French word, it is a word I invented. What I see . . . Sometimes it happened that I said, when discussing with someone, "I see," but I cannot translate rationally what I was seeing. These are images that pass, and I cannot . . .

DR. LACAN: Tell me a little about these images which pass.

MR. PRIMEAU: It is like a cinema, what is called a "cinema" in medicine. It takes off very quickly, and I would not know how to formulate these images because I do not succeed in qualifying them.

DR. LACAN: Let's try to be more specific. For example, what is the relationship between these images and a thing which I know—because I was told—is very important for you? The idea of beauty. Do you center your idea of beauty on these images?

MR. PRIMEAU: At the level of the solitary circle?

DR. LACAN: Of the solitary circle, yes.

MR. PRIMEAU: That's it. But the idea of beauty as concerns the dream, it is essentially a physical vision.

DR. LACAN: What is beautiful, aside from you? Because you do think that you are beautiful?

MR. PRIMEAU: Yes, I think that I am beautiful.

DR. LACAN: The persons to whom you attach yourself, are they beautiful?

MR. PRIMEAU: What I look for in a face is its luminosity, always this projection, a luminous gift; I seek a beauty which radiates. It is not foreign to the fact that I say that intelligence is a projection of waves. I seek people who have a sensitive intelligence, this irradiation of the face which puts one in relation with this sensitive intelligence.

DR. LACAN: Let's talk about the person who preoccupied you in 1967, . . . whose name was Hélène. Did she radiate?

MR. PRIMEAU: Yes, she radiated. Finally, I met others. . . .

DR. LACAN: Other radiant persons?

MR. PRIMEAU: Other radiant persons, men as well as women. Sexually, I am as much in love with a woman as with a man. I was speaking of physical relations with men. I was attracted solely because of this radiance, at once intellectual and sensitive.

DR. LACAN: I see very well what you mean. I am not obliged to participate, but I see what you mean. But really, you did not have to wait until you were seventeen to be touched like that, by beauty. Who brought you to . . . ?

MR. PRIMEAU: About a question . . .

DR. LACAN: Tell me.

MR. PRIMEAU: . . . of opposition with my parents. My mother was very silent, but my father, when he came home for the weekend . . . about questions of education, about questions about everyday life, with the advice that he used to give me, I was rather refractory, in revolt, already very independent, and I was irritated by the advice my father wanted to give me, as though I already had the possibility of going beyond them by myself, without receiving advice from my father. It was then. . . .

DR. LACAN: What did he say to H——?

MR. PRIMEAU: I don't remember anymore.

DR. LACAN: He said that you opposed him.

MR. PRIMEAU: I don't remember anymore what he said. He made me speak, then he made me go out of the room, and he spoke with my father. He did not give the diagnosis when I was there. He made me take tests, undressed. I had a lot of complexes, sexually.

DR. LACAN: This word "complex," for you, signifies . . . It is especially centered on, let us say, sexuality. Is that what you mean? You have already used this word "complex" five or six times.

MR. PRIMEAU: It is not only about sexuality. It is also about relationships. I have a great deal of difficulty in expressing myself, and I have the impression of being, not rejected, but . . .

DR. LACAN: "But . . ." Why do you say "not rejected"? You feel that you are rejected?

MR. PRIMEAU: Yes, I have complexes about speech, complexes about social life. It is through fear, it is a certain anxiety, a fear of speaking, of . . . I have an after-wit [*un esprit de l'escalier*], I have no sense of replies, I have a tendency to retreat into myself because of that. I have a lot of difficulty. . . . I stop myself sometimes, I cannot . . . The fact that I was afraid to see you, before, was an inferiority complex.

DR. LACAN: You feel yourself in a state of inferiority in my presence?

MR. PRIMEAU: I said "before." I have complexes about relationships. Since you are a very well-known personality, that made me anxious.

DR. LACAN: How do you know that I am a well-known personality?

MR. PRIMEAU: I tried to read your books.

DR. LACAN: Ah yes. You tried? (Mr. Primeau smiles) You read. It's within reach of everyone.

MR. PRIMEAU: I don't remember anymore. I read that when I was very young, when I was eighteen.

DR. LACAN: When you were eighteen you read some things that I had produced.

MR. PRIMEAU: Yes.

DR. LACAN: What year does that put us in?

MR. PRIMEAU: In 1966.

DR. LACAN: That had just come out.

MR. PRIMEAU: I do not remember. . . .

DR. LACAN: At that time you were. . . .

MR. PRIMEAU: At the C—— Clinic for students. I saw it in the library. I must have been twenty.

DR. LACAN: What pushed you to open this damned book?

MR. PRIMEAU: It was under the influence of a friend who had spoken to me. . . . I leafed through it. There were a lot of terms which were very. . . .

DR. LACAN: Very what?

MR. PRIMEAU: Very complex, and I could not follow the book.

DR. LACAN: Yes, that comes from the fact that the book has been making the rounds lately. Does that impress you?

MR. PRIMEAU: It pleased me. I did not read all of it, I simply skimmed through it.

DR. LACAN: Good. Let's go, try to come back. *Dirty political assassination*. Why these assassinations?

MR. PRIMEAU: No, there is "political assistants" and there is "assastination."

DR. LACAN: Is there a difference between "assistant" and "assassin," or is all that equivocal?

MR. PRIMEAU: Equivocal.

DR. LACAN: It's equivocal?

MR. PRIMEAU: I cannot. . . .

DR. LACAN: . . . distinguish the "assistant" from the "assassin." When did this start, this mix-up which I will call "sonorous"? When did the words—we leave to the side the story of your name, *Prime-Au—Geai Rare*, that has some weight, the rare jay—but—"assistant" and "assassin," the words slide together. We cannot say that there the words take on weight, because the "dirty assassination" . . .

MR. PRIMEAU: Their weight, to the extent that it is not reflexive.

DR. LACAN: Which is to say that you do not add your reflection to them?

MR. PRIMEAU: No, it emerges, it comes spontaneously, in bursts, sometimes spontaneously.

DR. LACAN: In bursts?

MR. PRIMEAU: In bursts. Exactly; I thought that there was perhaps a rational relationship, even if this is not emerging, between *dirty assassination*, *dirty assistants*, and *dirty assastination*. But finally these contractions of words between "assassin" and "assistant" . . . I was also interested in the contraction of words. For example, I had known Béatrice Sarneau, who is a singer. In going to

see her at the V—— theater, I had known her. The feast of Saint Béatrice is February 13. I found that in looking through my dictionary—not my dictionary, my calendar—and since she had asked me to come back and see her again, because I had said some very lovely things about her concert, I had written a wish: “From the place where I read you, didn’t Béatrice festive” [*De l’espace où je vous lis, ne s’est pas Béatrice en fête*]. I had written *dix*, ten days: at the same time the fact I was wishing for ten days, the distance between thirteen and twenty-three, ten, and the formulation, I had not said [*dit*] it, because the ten [days] did not pass without there being a feast.

DR. LACAN: What is this “festive” [*en fête*]? Was that the feast?

MR. PRIMEAU: It was the feast. In the wish there was this word which was contracted. There is another word like *écrasété*, which is at the same time “crushed” [*écrasé*] and “exploded” [*éclaté*]. I had written a poem that I called “Vénure,” which is a contraction of *Vénus* and *Mercur*e. It was a kind of elegy. But I do not have it here, because . . . There was also a word “to fall” [*choir*] which I used to write *choixre*, to express the notion of falling and the notion of choice [*choix*].

DR. LACAN: And who else outside of Hélène, to call her by her name, and the *Vénure*—who “venurated” you? Tell me that.

MR. PRIMEAU: Then there was Claude Tours; I knew her at C——.

DR. LACAN: Tell me a little about her.

MR. PRIMEAU: She was also a poet. She worked alone on the piano, and she worked on four-handed piano playing, she danced, she drew.

DR. LACAN: She also was illuminating?

MR. PRIMEAU: When I knew her, she had a kind of beauty. She was very much marked by the medication she was taking. Her face was puffed up. Later I continued to see her, after she left the clinic; she had lost weight, she had a luminous beauty. I am always attracted by these beauties. I am looking for a personality in the room. Perhaps this lady with blue eyes who is wearing a red foulard. It’s a shame that she is wearing makeup.

DR. LACAN: She resembled this lady?

MR. PRIMEAU: Yes, she resembled her a little. But Claude did not wear makeup. This lady has put on makeup.

DR. LACAN: Do you ever put on makeup yourself?

MR. PRIMEAU: Yes, it happens that I put on makeup. It has happened to me, yes. (He smiles) It happened to me when I was nineteen, because I had the impression . . . I had a lot of sexual complexes . . . because nature endowed me with a very small phallus.

DR. LACAN: Tell me a little bit about that.

MR. PRIMEAU: I had the impression that my sex was shrinking, and I had the impression that I was going to become a woman.

DR. LACAN: Yes.

MR. PRIMEAU: I had the impression that I was going to become a transsexual.

DR. LACAN: A transsexual?

MR. PRIMEAU: That is to say, a sexual mutant.

DR. LACAN: That is what you mean? You had the feeling that you were going to become a woman.

MR. PRIMEAU: Yes, I had certain habits, I used to put on makeup, I had this impression of the shrinking of the sex and at the same time the will to know what a woman was, to try to enter into the world of a woman, into the psychology of a woman, and into the psychological and intellectual formulation of a woman.

DR. LACAN: You hoped. . . . It is nonetheless a kind of hope.

MR. PRIMEAU: It was a hope and an experience.

DR. LACAN: Your experience is . . . that nonetheless you still have a masculine organ, yes or no?

MR. PRIMEAU: Yes.

DR. LACAN: Good, then how is it an experience? It was rather like a hope. In what way is it an experience?

MR. PRIMEAU: In hoping that it was experimental.⁶

DR. LACAN: Which is to say that you “were hoping to experience,” if we can once again play on words. It remained at the state of a hope. . . . Finally, you never felt yourself to be a woman?

MR. PRIMEAU: No.

DR. LACAN: Yes or no?

MR. PRIMEAU: No. Can you repeat the question?

DR. LACAN: I asked you if you felt yourself to be a woman.

MR. PRIMEAU: The fact of feeling it psychologically, yes. With this kind of intuition of . . .

DR. LACAN: Yes, pardon me, of intuition. Since intuitions are images that pass through you. Did you ever *see* yourself as a woman?

MR. PRIMEAU: No, I saw myself as a woman in a dream, but I am going to try . . .

DR. LACAN: You saw yourself as a woman in a dream. What do you call “a dream”?

MR. PRIMEAU: A dream? I dream at night.

DR. LACAN: You ought nonetheless to perceive that they are not the same, a dream at night . . .

6. [The French word *expérimental* can also be translated “experiential.”]

MR. PRIMEAU: And a waking dream.

DR. LACAN: And the dream that you yourself have called “waking” and to which, if I have understood, you have fastened imposed speech. What happens at night, these images that one sees when one is asleep—is that of the same character as the imposed speech? This is a very approximate way of saying it, but perhaps you have your own ideas.

MR. PRIMEAU: No, there is no relationship.

DR. LACAN: Then why do you call your imposed speech dreams?

MR. PRIMEAU: Imposed speech is not a dream; you have not understood me.

DR. LACAN: Please excuse me. I heard you very well when you used the word “dream” in that context. Even in adding “waking,” it was you who used the word “dream.” You remember having used this word “dream”?

MR. PRIMEAU: Yes, I used this word “dream,” but the imposed sentences are between the solitary circle and what I aggress in reality. I don’t know which is a part of . . .

DR. LACAN: Good. Then, what is this bridge which aggresses?

MR. PRIMEAU: Yes, it is the bridge which aggresses.

DR. LACAN: Then these words or speeches . . .

MR. PRIMEAU: No, they are sentences.

DR. LACAN: These speeches which pass through you express your assassination. This is very close to what you said yourself, for example, *They want to monarchize me*. This is something that you say, but it is an imposed speech.

MR. PRIMEAU: It is an imposed speech.

DR. LACAN: Good. The “they” in question are people that you harm and to whom you impute the will to “monarchize” your intellect. Do you agree?

MR. PRIMEAU: Yes, but I do not know if it is . . .

DR. LACAN: Thus either the speeches emerge as such, they invade you . . .

MR. PRIMEAU: Yes, they invade me.

DR. LACAN: Yes.

MR. PRIMEAU: They invade me, they emerge, they are not reflexive.

DR. LACAN: Yes. Then there is a second person who reflects on them, who adds what you add in recognizing that you play this part. You agree?

MR. PRIMEAU: Yes.

DR. LACAN: What do you add, for example? *They want to monarchize my intellect?*

MR. PRIMEAU: It has never happened that I add a sentence to this sentence: *They want to monarchize my intellect. But Royalty is not defeated or is defeated*. I do not know if . . .

DR. LACAN: It is you who make the distinction between the imposed speech and

the reflection that you add on, and in general—this is not the only example—you add a “but.” You just said, *But Royalty is defeated*.

MR. PRIMEAU: *They want to monarchize my intellect*, emergence. *But Royalty is defeated* is a reflection.

DR. LACAN: Which is to say, it’s yours, you made it up?

MR. PRIMEAU: Yes, while the emergence has been imposed on me. It comes to me like that, they are like intellectual drives that come to me, which are born brutally, and which impose themselves on my intellect.

DR. LACAN: During our discussion . . . ?

MR. PRIMEAU: I have had a lot of them.

DR. LACAN: Perhaps you can reconstruct them.

MR. PRIMEAU: *They want to kill me the bluebirds*.

DR. LACAN: *They want to kill me the birds*. . . .

MR. PRIMEAU: *The bluebirds. They want to get hold of me, they want to kill me*.

DR. LACAN: Who are the bluebirds? Are the bluebirds here?

MR. PRIMEAU: The bluebirds.

DR. LACAN: What is that, the bluebirds?

MR. PRIMEAU: At the beginning, it was a poetic image, related to the poem by Mallarmé, “L’Azur,” then the bluebird was the sky, the infinite azur. The bluebird was the infinite azur.

DR. LACAN: Yes, go ahead.

MR. PRIMEAU: It is an expression of infinite liberty.

DR. LACAN: Then, what is it? Let us translate “bluebird” by “infinite liberty.” It is the “infinite liberties” that want to kill you? We must find out whether the “infinite liberties” want to kill you. Go ahead.

MR. PRIMEAU: I live without boundaries. Not having boundaries . . .

DR. LACAN: We must find out if you live without boundaries or if you are in a solitary circle, because the word “circle” implies the idea of a boundary.

MR. PRIMEAU: Yes, and of a tradition in relation to . . .

DR. LACAN: The image of the solitary circle . . .

MR. PRIMEAU: In relation to the dream—the nonimaginative [things] created by my intellect?

DR. LACAN: No, but we must nonetheless get to the bottom of this.

MR. PRIMEAU: It is very difficult, because . . .

DR. LACAN: What do you create? Because for you the word “to create” has a meaning.

MR. PRIMEAU: At the moment that it emerges from me, it is a creation. It is a little like that. One must not become intimate. The fact of speaking of these solitary circles and of living without boundaries; there is no contradiction. In my

mind I do not see a contradiction. How can I explain that? I am in a solitary circle because I am broken off from reality. It is for that that I speak of a solitary circle. But that does not prevent living at an imaginative level, without boundaries. It is precisely because I have no boundaries that I have a tendency to explode a little, to live without boundaries, and if one does not have boundaries to put a stop to this, you can no longer struggle. There is no more struggle.

DR. LACAN: Before, you distinguished the world from reality, and you said that reality is things like this table, this chair. Good. You seemed to indicate that you think of it like everyone does and that you apprehend it through common sense. Let us then bring the question to bear on this point. Do you create other worlds? The word "create" . . .

MR. PRIMEAU: I create worlds through my poetry, through my poetic speech.

DR. LACAN: Yes, and the imposed speeches create worlds?

MR. PRIMEAU: Yes.

DR. LACAN: That was a question.

MR. PRIMEAU: Yes, they create worlds. They create worlds, and the proof is that . . .

DR. LACAN: The proof is that . . . ?

MR. PRIMEAU: I just told you that *They want to kill me the bluebirds* implies a world where I am without boundaries. One comes back, I come back into my solitary circle where I live without boundaries. It is confused, I know, but I am very tired.

DR. LACAN: I just pointed out to you that the solitary circle does not imply living without boundaries, since you are bounded by this solitary circle.

MR. PRIMEAU: Yes, but in relation to the solitary circle, I live without boundaries. But in relation to the real, I live *with* boundaries, if only because of my body.

DR. LACAN: Yes, all that is very true, if we know that the solitary circle is bounded.

MR. PRIMEAU: It is bounded in relation to tangible reality, but that does not prevent the middle of this circle from living without boundaries. You think in geometrical terms.

DR. LACAN: I think in geometrical terms, this is true, and you, do you not think in geometrical terms? But living without boundaries produces anxiety. No? Doesn't that make you anxious?

MR. PRIMEAU: Yes, that makes me anxious. But I can't manage to get rid of this dream or this habit.

DR. LACAN: Good. That much said, you had a problem which determined your coming here. If I understood, a suicide attempt. What pushed you to that? Was it your friend Claude?

MR. PRIMEAU: No, no, no, no. It was because of telepathy.

DR. LACAN: Precisely. We have not yet touched on this word. What is telepathy?

MR. PRIMEAU: It is the transmission of thought. I am a transmitting telepath.

DR. LACAN: You are a transmitter?

MR. PRIMEAU: Perhaps you can't hear me.

DR. LACAN: No, I hear you very well. You are a transmitting telepath. In general, telepathy concerns reception, no? Telepathy warns you of what has happened?

MR. PRIMEAU: No, that is clairvoyance. Telepathy is the transmission of thoughts.

DR. LACAN: Then to whom do you transmit?

MR. PRIMEAU: I don't transmit any message to anyone. What passes through my brain is heard by certain receiving telepaths.

DR. LACAN: For example, am I a receptor?

MR. PRIMEAU: I do not know.

DR. LACAN: I am not very receptive, since I am showing you that I flounder in your system. The questions that I asked you prove that it was precisely from you that I wanted to hear your explanations. I have thus not received the important part of what we will call provisionally "your world."

MR. PRIMEAU: A world in my image.

DR. LACAN: Do these images exist?

MR. PRIMEAU: Yes.

DR. LACAN: They are something that you receive, since you see them.

MR. PRIMEAU: Telepathy concerns speech. The emerging sentence and the reflections that I can have, because I have some from time to time . . .

DR. LACAN: Yes, you reflect all the time about your sentences.

MR. PRIMEAU: No, I do not reflect all the time on the sentences, but I have reflections on diverse subjects. I do not know what is given by telepathy, but these images are not transmitted by telepathy. Finally, I suppose so, because I am not at the same time me and an other.

DR. LACAN: Yes, but how do you see that the other receives them?

MR. PRIMEAU: By his reactions. If I ever aggress them, if I ever say things which do not seem to me . . . The physicians have often asked me the question. It is a reasoning that I make. When I go to see someone, I see if his face is frozen or if there are different expressions, but I do not have a perfectly objective or scientific notion that certain persons receive me.

DR. LACAN: For example, have I received you?

MR. PRIMEAU: I don't think so.

DR. LACAN: No?

MR. PRIMEAU: No.

DR. LACAN: Because the questions I asked you showed that I was floundering. Who here has received, aside from me?

MR. PRIMEAU: I don't know, I have not had the time to look at the people. On the other hand, these are psychiatrists who habitually concentrate and do not react. . . . It is especially with the patients that I see.

DR. LACAN: Your friends in the hospital?

MR. PRIMEAU: That's right.

DR. LACAN: How long has this been going on, this telepathy, this frozen expression in which you note that someone has received something?

MR. PRIMEAU: It started in March 1974, when G—— diagnosed my paranoid delusions.

DR. LACAN: Do you believe in this paranoid delusion? I do not find you delusional.

MR. PRIMEAU: At the time it was there. At the time I was very excited, I wanted . . .

DR. LACAN: You wanted . . . ?

MR. PRIMEAU: I wanted to save France from fascism.

DR. LACAN: Yes, go ahead.

MR. PRIMEAU: I was listening to a radio program on *France-Inter* at 10:00, and I was speaking at the same time. Pierre Boutellier said, during his program, "I did not know that I had listeners who have those gifts." That was when I became conscious of the fact that I could be heard through the radio.

DR. LACAN: You had, at that moment, the feeling that you could be heard through the radio?

MR. PRIMEAU: Yes. And I have another anecdote, when I made my suicide attempt. There was a program called "Radioscopie." I was reflecting . . . They talked for a moment, and they laughed together as though they understood something, and I was talking, I no longer remember what I was saying, but finally, they said, "That is what I want to say to an anonymous poet." It wasn't exactly that, it was an indifference which is not indifferent; indifference did not exist. They spoke of an anonymous poet. Another time on "Radioscopie" there was another guest who was Roger Fressoz, the editor of *Canard Enchaîné*.⁷ It was after my suicide attempt. Just at the end of the interview they were talking of anticlericalism, and I said "Roger Fressoz is a saint."⁸ They burst out laughing, both of them, on the radio, in a way that had no relation with what they were saying, and I heard, somewhat softer, "He could work at *Canard Enchaîné*." Is that the pure fruit of my imagination, or did they really hear me? Were they both

7. [A satirical political newspaper.]

8. [In French the word *saint* is feminine.]

receptor telepaths, or is it pure imagination, a creation?

DR. LACAN: You can't make up your mind?

MR. PRIMEAU: I can't make up my mind.

DR. LACAN: Thus it was because of this telepathy, clearly distinguished from clairvoyance, that you made this attempt?

MR. PRIMEAU: No, it was not because . . . I was abusing my neighbors, I was very aggressive.

DR. LACAN: You were abusing them?

MR. PRIMEAU: Because there were often family squabbles. One afternoon, I was coming back from O——, and . . .

DR. LACAN: And what?

MR. PRIMEAU: I had a lot of medicine.

DR. LACAN: Yes.

MR. PRIMEAU: I had a lot of anxiety already about people hearing certain of my thoughts.

DR. LACAN: Yes. Because these abuses happened through your thoughts?

MR. PRIMEAU: Yes, through thoughts. It was not face to face. It was the apartment above ours. I was aggressing them. I heard them cry out, "Mr. Primeau is mad, he should be put in an asylum," and so on.

DR. LACAN: That was what determined your . . . ?

MR. PRIMEAU: I was very depressive. I was already very anxious from seeing that certain persons could perceive certain of your thoughts or certain of your more or less baroque fantasies. I was listening at the same time to the radio, and I was saying things that were insignificant and banal. On the radio I had the impression that someone was listening to me, was making fun of me. I was really at the end of my rope, because with this telepathy, which had been going on for a while, I had other neighbors who I had abused and who looked at me strangely. All of a sudden I wanted to commit suicide and I took . . .

DR. LACAN: No, but what does that resolve, your committing suicide?

MR. PRIMEAU: It's an escape. . . . To escape my anxiety. Intellectually I was against the suicidal mind. I had a sentence: "Life as a means of knowing." Every time I was in despair after I fell ill at fifteen, I have this sentence which came back: "If I die, there are things that I cannot know." I believe in reincarnation, but I do not believe in heaven.

DR. LACAN: You believe in reincarnation?

MR. PRIMEAU: I believe in metempsychosis. There was a time, when I was about eighteen, when I believed I was the reincarnation of Nietzsche.

DR. LACAN: You thought you were the reincarnation of Nietzsche? Yes, . . . why not?

MR. PRIMEAU: Yes, and when I was twenty I discovered Artaud. When I was

seventeen I read *L'Ombilic des limbes*, and I bought the complete works of Artaud. And when I was around twenty I had the impression that I was the reincarnation of Artaud. Artaud died March 4, 1948. I was born September 10, 1948. He was born September 4, 1896; we were both born under the sign of Virgo. Since I knew the length of time between March and September, I had the impression that his mind and soul had emigrated for six months and that this soul, this mind, were reincarnated in me, when I was born, September 10, 1948.

DR. LACAN: You really believe that?

MR. PRIMEAU: Now I no longer think I am the reincarnation of Artaud or Nietzsche, but I still believe in reincarnation, because when I was very young, I had a dream which was kind of a double reincarnation, a dream at night, a nocturnal dream. I was seven or eight. At this age one has not read books on metempsychosis. In this dream, I found myself in the Middle Ages, and I had the impression that I had already lived in the Middle Ages. At the same time, in this dream, I found myself in a run-down castle, and in my dream, I was also dreaming.

DR. LACAN: A dream within a dream, yes.

MR. PRIMEAU: And I thought I had known this castle before, when I had another life, before the Middle Ages. I remember that I knew this castle, even though it was a little run-down.

DR. LACAN: Then this castle dated from before the Middle Ages.

MR. PRIMEAU: Perhaps during the Middle Ages the life span was no more than thirty-five or fifty years. The dream of the dream was perhaps from the time of the Middle Ages also, and perhaps it took fifty or one hundred years for the castle to become a little run-down. But that is a hypothesis that I formulate but which was not formulated in my dream.

DR. LACAN: It is a hypothesis that you have emitted.

MR. PRIMEAU: I had experiences of levitation. I developed⁹ very young, when I was eleven. One day . . .

DR. LACAN: What you call "developing," what is that? Having erections?

MR. PRIMEAU: That's right.

DR. LACAN: Then?

MR. PRIMEAU: I had a levitation dream.

DR. LACAN: Yes, tell me.

MR. PRIMEAU: I was masturbating, and I felt an extreme *jouissance*. I had the sensation of rising into the air. Did I really rise, or is it an illusion of orgasm? From the point of view of thought, I really think that I levitated.

9. [The French expression *être formé* refers generally to a girl's attaining puberty.]

DR. LACAN: Yes, one does hope. (silence) Tell me, what are you going to do now?

MR. PRIMEAU: I am going to continue to try to get well. Now? Long- or short-term?

DR. LACAN: Long-term.

MR. PRIMEAU: I have no idea. I do not formulate into the future.

DR. LACAN: Are you following a course of study?

MR. PRIMEAU: No, I am no longer a student.

DR. LACAN: Right now you are not working?

MR. PRIMEAU: No, I am not working.

DR. LACAN: One day you will have to leave the hospital. How do you envisage pulling yourself together?

MR. PRIMEAU: If I succeed in overcoming my anxiety, in finding a possibility for a dialogue . . . There will always be this phenomenon of telepathy which will harm me, because I will not be able to act, all my actions will be immediately recognized by telepathy by those who hear me, without my even hearing it . . . I will not be able to live in society as long as this telepathy exists. I will not be able to have a social life without being the prisoner of this telepathy. People hear my thoughts, I will not be able to work, it is not possible. What tortures me the most . . .

DR. LACAN: Since when have you been feeling a little better?

MR. PRIMEAU: Since two weeks ago. I had numerous discussions with the psychiatrists, and that has loosened me up a little. But the fact that my secret garden is perceived by certain persons, that my thoughts and my reflections are . . .

DR. LACAN: Your secret garden, is that the solitary circle?

MR. PRIMEAU: A secret garden where the reflections, the images or the reflections that I can have on different subjects, and so on . . . How can you have a professional activity if some of those around you perceive your reflection and are short-circuited? Even if one lives in a completely direct manner, there are things . . . If I was in a study group and I had to direct people, and they heard me, it would be unlivable. A month ago I was really very sick. I stayed on my bed constantly sleeping. I was very broken up. I had thought of committing suicide once, because one cannot live with this telepathy, which has not always existed, which was born at the moment. . . .

DR. LACAN: Which has not always existed? Imposed speech came first?

MR. PRIMEAU: Imposed speech and telepathy began in March 1974 . . . , at the moment of the paranoid delusion, when I wanted to fight the fascists and so forth, with thoughts.

DR. LACAN: At the time you were seeing H——.

MR. PRIMEAU: I only saw him once.

DR. LACAN: At this time, did you have anything like the imposed speech or the telepathy?

MR. PRIMEAU: No, that's not right. Besides, when I saw my psychiatrist G—— again, when I returned from O——, he said to me: "Your telepathy . . ." I had twenty-five electroshocks, thirteen at N—— and twelve at O——. I am more and more anxious. I can't manage to concentrate. With electroshocks they attain the cells.

DR. LACAN: That is what you think. The drama of being ill, for you, is the electroshock.

MR. PRIMEAU: These electroshocks were made to heal me, because I was really delusional. I have taken a lot of tests in my life. When they took me to the clinic at M——, I was so delusional. . . . Intellectually I was hearing voices which asked me questions about fascist France. I had the impression that I was studying philosophy or elementary math—I do not know, I can no longer concentrate. I was thinking that the fascists had taken power, that they had taken by force the radio and television communications center. Using thoughts, I made Jean-Claude Bourret and Jean Ristat¹⁰ kill each other, strangling each other. At that time I was also obsessed with fraternity. . . . I was responding with mathematical symbols. I had the impression that they were posing questions. It was necessary that I answer in order to save France from fascism. They asked me questions, and these responses, I gave them very openly, they were mathematical series or poetic symbols. I cannot remember that. That is why they said I was delusional.

DR. LACAN: Finally, who is right, the physicians or you?

MR. PRIMEAU: I don't know. . . .

DR. LACAN: You put yourself in the hands of the physicians.

MR. PRIMEAU: I put myself in their hands, trying to conserve my free will.

DR. LACAN: You have the feeling that free will is important in your life? In what you have just told me, you are undergoing certain things which you don't understand.

MR. PRIMEAU: Yes, but. . . .

DR. LACAN: Yes, but. . . ?

MR. PRIMEAU: I have a hope, a hope of finding my power of judgment again, my power of dialogue, a power to get hold of the personality. I think that that is the most crucial problem. Like I had told you at the beginning, I can't manage to get hold of myself.

10. [Well-known television personalities.]

DR. LACAN: Good, my friend, good-bye. (Dr. Lacan shakes his hand) I would be happy to have some samples of your . . .

MR. PRIMEAU: Of my writings [*écrits*]?

DR. LACAN: We'll get together in a few days.

MR. PRIMEAU: Thank you, sir. (He leaves the room)

DR. LACAN: When we get into details, we see that the classical treatises do not exhaust the question.

A few months ago I examined someone who had been labeled a Freudian psychosis. Today we have seen a "Lacanian" psychosis . . . very clearly marked. With these "imposed speeches," the imaginary, the symbolic, and the real. It is because of that very fact that I am not very optimistic for this young man. He has the feeling that the imposed speech has been getting worse. The feeling that he calls "telepathy" is one more step. Besides, this feeling of being seen puts him in despair.

I don't see how he is going to get out of it. There are suicide attempts which end up succeeding. Yes.

This is a clinical picture which you will not find described, even by good clinicians like Chaslin. It is to be studied.