

# HURLY- BURLY

ISSUE 6  
SEPTEMBER 2011

**Jacques Lacan**

## **Overture to the First International Encounter of the Freudian Field, Caracas, 12 July 1980**

I HAVEN'T got itchy feet. The proof being that I've left it till my eightieth year before coming to Venezuela.

I've come over because I was told that it was the right place to summon my pupils from Latin America.

Are you my pupils? It's not something I can judge beforehand, because I'm used to raising them myself.

That doesn't always give such great results.

You are not unaware of the problem I've had with my École de Paris. I solved it as I had to – by tackling it at the root. I mean, by uprooting my pseudo-School.

Everything I've got for it since then confirms that I did the right thing. But that's already an old story.

In Paris, I'm accustomed to speaking to an audience composed of many faces that I know, on account of them coming to see me at my place, 5 rue de Lille, where I practice.

You, it seems, are my readers. All the more so given that I've never seen you come along to hear me.

So, obviously I'm curious as to what I might get from you.

This is why I shall say thank you. Thank you for responding to my invitation.

You deserve credit, because more than one individual has tried to block the

way to Caracas. Indeed, it seems that this Encounter has been bothering a great deal of people, and in particular those who profess to represent me without asking my opinion. So when I show myself, they necessarily get in a muddle.

I must however thank those who came up with the idea of this Encounter, namely Diana Rabinovich and, along with her, Carmen Otero and her husband Miguel, in whom I have put my trust for everything that goes to make up a Congress such as this. I feel at home here, and it is down to them.

I've come here prior to launching my *Cause freudienne*. You see I hold this adjective dear. It's up to you to be Lacanians if you wish. For my part, I'm a Freudian. This is why I think it's worthwhile saying a few things about the debate I've been keeping up with Freud, which doesn't date from yesterday. I'm going to summarise it for you.

Here we go. My *three* are not the same as his. My three are the real, the symbolic and the imaginary. I came to situate them by means of a topology, the topology of the knot that is called Borromean. The Borromean knot highlights the function of the *at-least-three*. This is the one that ties in the other two that are not tied to each other.

I gave that to my pupils. I gave it them so that they might find their way in their practice. But do they find their way any better than with the topography Freud passed down to his?

It has to be said that what Freud drew up as his topography, the one that is called the second topography, is not free of awkwardness. I suspect he did it to make himself heard, no doubt, using the markers of his time.

But can't we turn what features there to our advantage, as an approach to my knot?

Consider if you will the spongy bag produced by the link to the Id in his article called *Das Ich und das Es*.

This bag is supposedly the container of the drives. What a potty idea it is to sketch it out like that! It's only understandable if the drives are thought of as marbles, to be fired out, no doubt, through the orifices of the body once they've been ingested.

Onto that he stitches an Ego, where columns of dotted lines seem to have been prepared on its behalf. But all that is no less encumbered, topped as it is by a weird perceptual eyeball, which many people also read as the germinal spot of an embryo on the vitellus.

And that's not all. The black box of some contraption worthy of Marey finishes it off. All this says a lot about the difficulty of the reference to the real.

Finally, two bars are hashed in as the join that shows the relationship this outlandish ensemble bears with the bag of marbles, designated as the *repressed*.

It leaves one quite flummoxed. Let's say that it's not the best thing Freud came up with. It even has to be confessed that it doesn't favour the pertinence of the thinking it is intended to convey.

What a contrast with the definition Freud gives of the drives as linked to the orifices of the body. This is a crystal clear formulation that calls for a different depiction from this bottle, of which anybody could be the stopper.

Isn't it rather, as I've had occasion to say, the Klein bottle, which has neither inside nor outside? Or even, simply, why not, the torus?

I shall content myself with noting that the silence attributed to the Id as such presupposes chit-chat. The chit-chat for which an ear lies in wait, that of *indestructible desire* as it is translated. The Freudian diagram is puzzling, oscillating between the field itself and the symbolic of what sounds it out.

It's quite remarkable though that this fudging didn't prevent Freud from coming back afterwards to some of the most striking indications concerning the practice of analysis, namely its constructions.

Should I take encouragement from calling to mind that at my age, Freud was not dead?

**O**F course, my knot doesn't tell the whole story [*ne dit pas tout*]. Without which I wouldn't even have the opportunity of taking my bearings in what is there, because there is, I say, not-all [*pas-tout*]. Not-all, quite surely, in the real that I broach in my practice.

Remark if you will that in my knot the real features constantly as a straight line stretching to infinity, i.e. the unclosed circle that it presupposes. This is what upholds the fact that it can only be admitted as not-all.

The surprising thing is that number is provided by *lalangue* itself, with what it conveys by way of the real.

Why not admit that the sexual peace of animals – if we just take the one that is said to be their king, the lion – is down to the fact that number is not introduced into their language, whatever it may be. Doubtless, training animals can produce something that looks like it, but it's just appearance.

Sexual peace means that one knows what to do with the Other's body. But who knows what to do with a parlêtre's body? Except to hold it more or less closely?

What does the Other manage to say, and then only when he really wants to? He says, *hold me tight*.

Copulation, easy as pie.

Anyone can do better than that. I say *anyone* – a frog for instance.

There's a painting that's been lingering in my mind for a long while now. I've remembered its author's name, not without the difficulties one meets at my age. The painting is by Bramantino.

Well, this painting vouches very well for the regret that a woman is not a frog. She's been put there, on her back, in the foreground of the picture.

What struck me most in this picture is that the Virgin, the Virgin with the child, has something of a shadow of a beard, in view of which she looks like her son, when he is painted as an adult.

The depicted relationship with the Madonna is more complex than is thought. Moreover, it is poorly withstood.

This has been rattling me. But still, I think I situate myself better than Freud did in the real at stake where the unconscious is concerned. Because the *jouissance* of the body forms a point where it confronts the unconscious.

Hence my mathemes, which stem from the fact that the symbolic is the locus of the Other, though there is no Other of the Other.

It follows that the best thing *lalangue* can do is to demonstrate how it is in the service of the death instinct.

That was Freud's idea. It's a great idea. Which also means that it's a grotesque idea.

The strongest point is that it's an idea that is confirmed by the fact that *lalangue* is only efficient when it passes over into the written.

That was the inspiration behind my mathemes – in so far as one can speak in terms of inspiration for a labour that cost me long nights when not a single muse stopped by, though it has to be supposed that this keeps me amused.

Freud had the idea that the death instinct is to be explained by a downshift to the lowest tension threshold the body can stand. He called it the beyond of the pleasure principle, i.e. the body's pleasure.

It has to be said that this really is the sign of a thinking in Freud that is more delusional than anything I've ever shared with you. Because, of course, I don't tell you everything. To my credit.

**T**HERE you go. I declare this Encounter open – this Encounter which has to do with what I've been teaching. You are the ones who, by your presence, mean that I have taught something.

**Translated from the French by Adrian Price**

Originally published in *L'Âne*, Issue 1, March-April 1981, pp. 30-1, and then in *L'Almanach de la dissolution*, Navarin, Paris, 1986, pp. 81-7. An audio recording was issued on compact disc on the occasion of the first Congress of the WAP and the Tenth International Encounter of the Freudian Field, Barcelona 1998. A previous English version was published under the title "The Seminar, Caracas, 12<sup>th</sup> July 1980", translated by O. Zentner, in *Papers of the Freudian School of Melbourne*, Vol. III, 1981, pp. 103-6.

*Hurly-Burly* publishes this text with the kind permission of Jacques-Alain Miller.