

PSYCHOANALYTICAL NOTEBOOKS

Issue 9, London, 2002

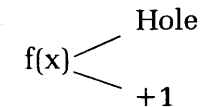
**A biannual publication of the London Circle of
the European School of Psychoanalysis**

***FICTIONS IN
PSYCHOANALYSIS***

THE PURLOINED LETTER AND THE TAO OF THE PSYCHOANALYST

Eric Laurent

Last time I found myself in this place, at the end of the course *L'Autre qui n'existe pas et ses comités d'éthique*, Jacques-Alain Miller spoke of the possibility of continuing the work of the seminar that had begun that year. This is really what is coming to be realised today, since I envisage this session and the offer that he's given me to speak today at his course as an occasion to communicate certain results of my teaching this year, half way through the university year. I proposed myself, in effect, to study the function of the plus-One for Lacan, at least certain aspects of this function, in taking into account at once the aspect of the hole and the aspect of the plus-One, that underlies the utilisation or the reference to the function of the plus-One.



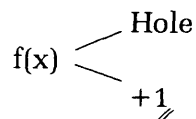
Schema 1a

FICTIONS

We had the occasion, last year, to approach the link of this function of plus-One with the place of the father and the Name-of-the-Father. This place of plus-One is to be gone into in depth for the psychoanalyst, especially from the perspective of Lacan's *Séminaire V, Les formations de l'inconscient* in the current presentation that Jacques-Alain Miller has made of it. This seminar places the accent on a place which is extimate to the system of language [*la langue*], distinguished in so far as it is outside the

system and yet inside. This place authorises new meanings that are produced each time that the effect of a *witz* inscribes a totally new usage or a new way of speaking in language, and it allows them to be admitted.

In the perspective constructed from this role of admission that the function of plus-One fulfils, I wondered how to marry the latter with the function of the psychoanalyst, which consists in editing the text, in punctuating it.



Schema 1b

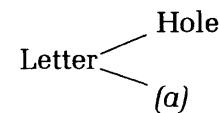
Thus, how to marry that which admits new meanings, the effect of sense, with that from which the practice is articulated, less with regards to the effect of sense than to the scansion, without neglecting, for all that, the fact that the scansion, implied by the editing of the text, distributes, of course, signification and produces effects of sense.

This is not, however, the whole of the definition of this place, which is centred more on punctuation than on sense. It is from this perspective that I have taken up the reading of *Lituraterre* again, an eminent text, in the series of texts by Lacan dating from the beginning of the seventies, to broach the question of the place of the letter, of its relation to semblants and to the effect of sense.

I took up *Lituraterre* again all the more that it appeared to me that Jacques-Alain Miller, at the beginning of his course this year, had supplied the matheme that was missing from a clear reading of this text, which is not considered, in general, to be a text that is easy to access.

The double function of the letter

The entire text of *Lituraterre* is centred on two aspects of the function of the letter. The letter in so far as it makes a hole and the letter in so far as it makes object (a).



Schema 2a

This text is articulated, in fact, around a reflection on the history of writing, much more than on a history of literature, on a history of writing, to which correspond two approaches, two apologues, two modes of consideration.

The two approaches to writing correspond to two traditions, western and oriental, that Lacan examines one after the other. To each of the two modes of writing, alphabetic or ideographic, corresponds an apologue. For the first, it is *The Purloined Letter*, for the second, I will say that it is a story of water: from high in his plane, crossing the Siberian desert, Lacan sees rivers. It seemed to me that it was a question of the same apologue, and in any case, it really is a question of grasping in what way the one and the other designate, deliver a message on the letter that indicates the same point.

Lituraterre is clearly the re-writing, in the seventies, of *The Instance of the Letter in the Unconscious*, a text in which Lacan was also particularly interested in two modes of writing, Greek and Chinese, but in another way. Thus, on page 504 of the *Écrits*, the opposition between them is evoked: "...is it your figure that traces our destiny on the tortoise-shell placed in the fire, or your lightning that makes this slow mutation of the Being surge forth in the *Ev πάντα* of language [*langage*]".

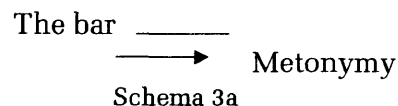
This sentence refers to Chinese writing, which everybody grants derives from a divinatory practice that consists in placing tortoise-shells in a fire, and by way of the crazing that is drawn upon them, to foresee destiny, the message of the gods, the writing.

The paths of writing in China are thus based upon divinatory practices with which you know to what extent China remains encumbered. Hence, the building of the bank of China in Hong Kong was only built after having performed some divinatory practices in order to be assured of the circulation of different fluids etc.

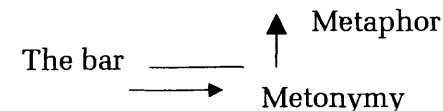
Thus, we have on the one hand divination by tortoise-shells placed in the fire and on the other hand, lightning, the Heraclitian lightning that makes the slow mutation of Being surge forth from the night and the way in which the One, being condensed in one phrase, comes to name the innumerability of things.

This passage of *The Instance of the Letter...* where Lacan confides to us his meditation on the different modes according to which Being comes to language, leads us to the diagrams of metaphor and metonymy, that appear to him, he says, to operate in Chinese poetry as well as in western poetry. It is the bar [*barre*] that appears to him as the veritable axis [*arbre*] that organises the division between them.

Here, in *Lituraterre*, Lacan re-reads and re-interprets this place of the bar, whereas before, he situated it as the reason for the unconscious, as repetition: either it repeated itself below the bar and it was metonymy,



or it crossed the bar, and it was metaphor that punctuated the incessant sliding of the signifier over the signified.



Schema 3b

Lacan reconsiders his approach in an amusing way saying: 'I said the letter was reason for the unconscious, is it not enough to designate what in the letter, to have to insist, is not there by rights to such an extent that with reason it is advanced'.

Thus, he takes up once more the Saussurian algorithm, with this 'by rights',

$$\frac{S}{s}$$

Schema 4a

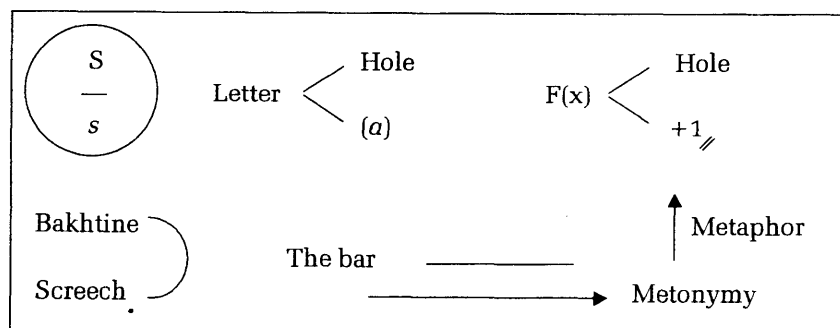
Once the question has been displaced and his teaching has reached the point where metaphor and metonymy are linked he wants to make a step further.

We have here a first misunderstanding. The misunderstanding, he says, is that in 1970 he is speaking in the context of the promotion of the written. The context is the implication, differently accentuated at the time by a certain number of authors, (Derrida is the most eminent amongst them, one can also cite Barthes, since Lacan makes reference to him in his text, and, to a lesser or other extent, Michel Foucault) of Lévi-Straussian structuralism, which is too centred, according to them, on structural phonology and on the privilege, they say, of the voice, of speech.

Indeed, the philosophical concert, that had been dumbfounded for ten years by the approach of Lévi-Strauss, started a come back, to which Derrida's lecture on Freud in 1966 at the *Institut de psychanalyse*, was to mark an important scansion. Lacan replies here, dryly, clearly and vigorously to Derrida, fairly vigorously to Barthes, and leaves other authors to one side.

From the start, one can reduce the misunderstanding. Lacan does not want to get involved in the promotion of the written. He says, rather, that he delights in the fact that it is our epoch that has truly taken up the reading of Rabelais. Thus, he insists not on the promotion of the written, but on reading: to read Rabelais. What does it mean for this epoch: to read Rabelais? He is a monument that has already been visited, what's more, Michelet has made him into the great man of the Renaissance. However, it is our epoch that has focused the reading of Rabelais on his laugh. It is the works of the Russian formalist Michael Bakhtine that have attracted the attention of critics on Rabelais' laugh. Altogether, Rabelais as *homme d'esprit* is known from the diffusion of these works, produced in Russia towards the end of the twenties and subsequently diffused throughout European criticism. There is on the one hand this Russian school, which makes of Rabelais the laugh of the people of the Renaissance, replying to the collapse of scholastic semblants, and then you have other readings, notably that of the English with Michael Screech who, instead of considering Rabelais' laugh as a popular laugh, shows that it is the laugh of the humanists and that Rabelais' most smutty jokes are derived in general from a piece of writing by Erasmus, with very precise references.

Table 1 (summary)



Let us leave these battles and simply highlight what our epoch brings to the fore, it is the effect of assuagement produced by these writings of Rabelais which is very important. The first texts of Kant were received with floods of tears, as a moral effect it was so beautiful that it is made generations of students cry, with Rabelais it was, and still is, the laugh, and it is this that is beautiful in their achievement: when this arises it provokes passions, like Lacan's *Écrits* in 1966, which made one laugh and cry at the same time.

So, it is necessary to emphasise this all the more given that Lacan borrowed the writing of the *sinthome* from Rabelais, and he finished by making it his banner. To declare in this way that the letter, in literature, must be grasped from the effect that it has on you and not from its signification, is befitting in order to clarify the place that the two apologues developed by Lacan will occupy: *The Purloined Letter* and the apologue that I will entitle *Flight Over the Letter*.

I will recall that *Flight Over the Letter* [*Vol sur la lettre*], the aerial flight over the letter, is written upon the ground. Evidently, *The Purloined Letter* [*La lettre volée*] is not here for nothing, given the fact that it is from a story of flight [*vol*] that he constructed the second apologue.

What the letter is not

It is a matter of considering, firstly, what the letter is not. The letter is not a print, and Lacan is precise about this. Contrary to what Freud says in *The Mystic Writing Pad* where, departing from the inscription or from the instance of the letter in the unconscious, he speaks about it as printing with these little tools, slates said to be magic that children are no longer familiar with today — they have computer screens. There were two sheets on which one pressed and made a print, you lifted the two sheets and suddenly there was nothing there... nowadays, you simply turn off the computer screen... This metaphor towards writing

appears incorrect to Lacan; it does not seem to him that writing is printing. Here, he attacks what Derrida had advanced in his lecture of 1966, where it was a question of the first fundamental trace, a primary print, outside-sense, which sense would then try to catch up with, never managing to reabsorb the primary outside-sense that makes a trace.

Hence, it is not a print, and, secondly, it is not an instrument. Indeed, he says that "That it [the letter] is an instrument proper to the writing of discourse [that one can write discourse with the letter] does not render it improper to designate the word taken for another [metaphor, is it not, by the fact that with writing you can write discourse, you can always write, indeed, a word that comes to the place of another; this is metaphor],

$$\frac{\$}{S}$$

Schema 5a

even by another [and it is metonymy,

$$\frac{\$}{S \rightarrow S}$$

Schema 5b

hence, in *The Instance of the Letter*, he gave as an example the way in which the word *tête* is taken in *tempête*; here is found 'the word taken by another', in the sentence, hence, to symbolise certain signifying effects, but it does not require that it be primary in these effects".

$$T[\text{emp}]ête \quad \frac{\$}{S \rightarrow S}$$

Schema 5c

It is here that Lacan himself puts into question the 'primary' place of the bar, and struggles against this thesis of a primary print, or the character of primary instrument that the letter would have. In this way, he puts into question the primary place of the bar that divides metaphor and metonymy. He says that this can serve for that, but it is not sufficient.

Thus, he criticises himself, as he often does: if it is not an instrument, if it is neither trace nor print, what consequence can be drawn?

It is, it seems to me, that Lacan relates the ensemble of what has been considered as the genesis of writing, or as the history of writing in the west, back to a non-pertinent knowledge [*savoir*]. In one paragraph, quite an admirable one as a matter of fact, he says "The question is to know whether what the textbooks seem to make a display of, being that literature is the using up of leftovers, is an affair of collocation in the written of what would firstly be song, spoken myth, or dramatic procession".

Indeed, one writes everywhere, at least in the serious textbooks on the history of writing, that at a certain moment the Greeks judged it timely to reunite the hymns with the gods, the songs, the myths that they recounted to each other or the dramatic processions, that is to say the tragedies, for them to be put down on paper. In fact, we still have the written record of the order that Pericles gave one day to establish the best possible version of Homer's texts, this version that was the glory of Athens, until the Hellenic sovereign, one of the Ptolemaists, in fact, laid his hands on it and deposited it in the library at Alexandria.

Thus, there are these "collocations", as Lacan says, "in the written, of what would be, firstly, song, spoken myth, dramatic

procession". Here we have what writing would be: a means allowing this, and thus transforming all these texts into a useful instrument.

Now, what all these textbooks well and truly avoid, is the effect of *jouissance* thus produced. What was it, for Pericles, to gather together Homer's texts? What did it inscribe, other than his nostalgia for not having been one of Homer's heroes? Would he have suffered a slight effect of passivation from it ..., this first tyrant, unless he was not, already, the second, and hence, already nostalgic for the time when there were real men? So there we have what brings us back to *The Purloined Letter*. Here, there's a letter, a love letter addressed to the Queen by her lover, which undergoes a detour, with this paradox that those that come to be in possession of the letter start, shall we say, to busy themselves with their appearance. The unscrupulous minister, the plain speaking man, the chap who is 'up-for-anything', for any kind of treason, of Alcebiades' genre, the minister, to do what appears to him to be opportune, takes the letter and thereby becomes a dandy of the 19th century. He becomes Lord Byron, he busies himself with his tie, with his posture, he is on his sofa and he poses, whilst the police bustle about him, seeming to say to them: "Well done if you find it". Finally, he ends up back there in the position of the dandy, mocking the men of action. Dupin who, being more cunning, armed with his green glasses, is going to snatch the letter from the minister, and in so doing will find himself likewise encumbered, in a different way but with the same traits of dandyism. He ends up in the style of Edgar Poe, of Baudelaire. He also becomes a man of the 19th century.

Lacan summarises this in the following way: "The letter gives an effect of feminisation". The term has an initial sense which is Freudian, since for Freud the feminine position consists of actively searching for passive aims, it is the 'feminine masquerade'. We have in an initial sense the position of passivation of these men of action. In a second and more profound

sense, it is the grand enigma of all that which is aimed at: amongst all these people who bustle around and who, in fact, are all men, the grand enigma is, indeed, the position of the Queen. As for her, amongst all this, what does she want, what does the woman want?

The second level allows us to note that the feminisation induced by the letter, that is to say the sense or the very senses of the tale, the effects of signification, the story itself, all that is told in the tale, none of which takes any account of the position of *jouissance*, of her enigma. It suffices only that this enigmatic place be a place in reserve. In this respect, the place of *jouissance* surges up as, at once enigma, a hole in sense, and, at the same time, the place of this *jouissance* (cf. schema 2b). To read *The Purloined Letter* against all the supports of signification, one must distinguish the part of *jouissance* (a) and the effect of sense or the effect of signification introduced by the path taken by the signifier (cf. schema 3b).

Thus, Lacan is opposed to the philosophical position that simply organises itself according to the perspective of the opposition of sense and outside-sense, and he does this from Being.

Sense / outside-sense

Schema 6a

Being, as that which has some sense, is the status from which the philosopher interrogates the contemporary non-sense. To put this in Heideggerian terms, which Derrida cites, it is 'Being barred by a cross', Being barred like the status of modern non-sense in which the subject, given over to nothingness, moves. It is the status of modern subjectivity: Being and nothingness.

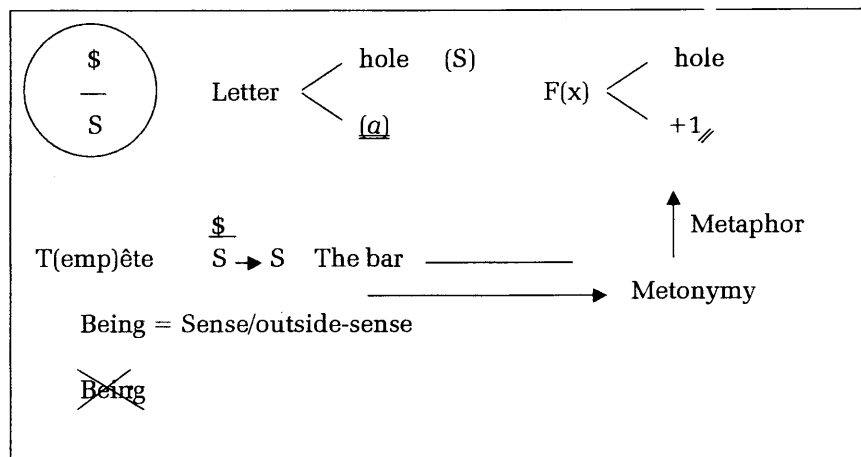
Being = Sense / outside sense
~~Being~~

Schema 6b

Lacan, on the contrary, shows that it is not from this perspective that the question of sense and of outside-sense must be distinguished, but from the opposition between the effect of signification and the place of *jouissance* (cf. Schema 2). Writing allows this place of *jouissance* to be noted; what it inscribes is thus what Pericles did in gathering the hymns, what Edgar Poe did in naming the *jouissance* of his epoch, the place of the dandy reflecting the taste of the epoch. In other words, a certain mode of the man of action, (the action of the epoch being, *par excellence*, that of the entrepreneur), is going to be inspired by the dandy's withdrawal from the world.

Thus, each time, we have an inscription and trace of something which is primary and that exceeds all the significations in play, and each time it is this harbouring, this very reception, of the *jouissance* in the letter, in writing, that comes to inscribe itself.

Table 2 (summary)



Nevertheless, what are the relations — and it is really this that Lacan will interrogate in this text — between the effect of signification and *jouissance*? He can no longer content himself with what he had introduced with metonymy, where the effect of sense, the metonymic flight [*fuite*]¹ of sense was equivalent to the metonymic object. It is here that we must have recourse to what Jacques-Alain Miller raised in his *Course* of 1987-1988, *Ce qui fait insigne*. At that time, he broached Lacan's texts from the seventies, (*L'Étourdit*, *Joyce-le-Sinhome* and *R.S.I*) around a problematic articulating the real and sense.

Real / Sense

Schema 7a

It is, thus, a problematic that has been established explicitly in the teaching of Jacques-Alain Miller since 1987, and that he pursued throughout that year in order to make us perceive the consequences to be drawn from this approach, in what way it touches the heart of our practice.

Three reals

Thus, in 1987, towards the month of June, when he was bringing his *Course* to a close, J.-A. Miller was speaking of the function and noting that in the approaches to the real, it is necessary to distinguish the real in science, the real in the symptom and the real in the analytic operation. He proposed, after a series of simplifications, to inscribe at the place of the hole, in the hole that any function supposes, the categories of the real, symbolic and imaginary.

The real that science knows of is mathematisable, it presents itself under symbolic form:

$$f(R) = S$$

Schema 7b

In the symptom, the symbolic becomes real in the psychoanalytic sense:

$$f(S) = R$$

Schema 7c

Lacan's idea is that it would be wonderful to propound for psychoanalysis that a certain function of the signified, not of the signifier, gives us a real, that is to say that in operating on the effects of sense, we might have a function where the effect of sense touches the real.

$$f(s) = R$$

Schema 7d

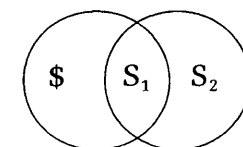
Within the manifold problematic of the seventies, *Lit-raterre*, in trying to catch the links of sense and of the real, is eminently situated from this perspective.

Table 3 (Summary)

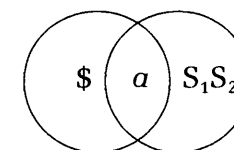
Real / sense
$f(R) = S$
$f(S) = R$
$f(s) = R$

How can we account for the fact that the real is made by means of the effects of sense? It is necessary to distinguish the register of alienation — by means of which a subject inscribes himself in the Other, where the effects of sense are produced by the primary identification, — from separation — where the place of *jouissance* is inscribed marking the place of the lost

object through the effects of sense (for example, Pericles' nostalgia circulating between the lines of Homer's poem).



Schema 8a



Schema 8b

It is from the apparatus of these schemas, which Jacques-Alain Miller had established whilst transcribing *Seminar XI* for us, that we are going to approach the second apologue.

"I'm coming back from a journey in Japan...", says Lacan. The anecdote is that of a flight, over a desert, Siberia, a route that, he says, he is taking for the first time — this is a real thumbing of the nose at the imprecise routes of Derrida — he travels thus for the first time by a polar route that has just opened, the Russians having accepted this aeronautical route, which allowed, in fact, a reduction of four or five hours by plane on the journey back from Tokyo to the West, but it is a desert route, for the Soviets wanted to be sure that no spy plane would photograph their installations. Besides, it is fairly reasonable seeing as, since then, we have learnt that all the commercial planes were at the very least equipped with small spying devices.

Here we have an impossible route in the complete desert, the Siberian plain, truly more deserted than that, this is not possible and what is more, a plain that is totally plain: no mountains, but only water, rivers.

So anyway, one says to oneself, OK, we can see the montage between *The Purloined Letter* and the flight. Then in the montage, he says, it is wonderful, he sees the rivers as a kind of trace from where the imaginary is abolished and he says it in the style of Mallarmé:

"Such as it invincibly came to me [...] from between the clouds, the streaming, the sole trace to appear, that forges more than it brings out the relief at this latitude, in what constitutes plain of Siberia, a plain desolate of any vegetation but for reflections, reflections which push into the shadow all that does not shimmer."

Indeed, it is written in Mallarmé's style, this is a French on which you really have to rack your brain to understand the exact construction, where are the relatives, is the subject in apposition, where? how? It is a language that puts one to work.

We can see, thus, this abolition of the imaginary: "reflections push into the shadow all that does not shimmer". It is not the sign, for the sign indicates something, but we have this trace that does not even come to underscore a pre-existing aspect of the world. It is not even the opposition of the river and the mountain, there is no deception — no opening out of a path — it is a pure trace that operates.

He tells us he is coming back from Japan, but as he says, he is coming back, above all, from a certain relation to writing. He draws his inspiration mainly from China. During those years, he reflected deeply on Chinese. We know from François Cheng and from the interview published in the Freudian magazine *L'Âne* No 48, that between 1969 and 1973 he had very thorough conversations with Lacan once a week on the Chinese classics and on three of them in particular, Lao Tseu, Mencius and Shih-t'ao. Cheng had published the latter's treatise on painting in an annex to his essay on Chinese painting *Le vide et le plein* published by Seuil in 1977. Furthermore, the combination of the characters 'mountain' and 'water' in Chinese means the landscape in general.

Obviously, it is not without this reference to Chinese painting that Lacan reads Siberia as calligraphy, as a pure trace that operates without indicating, without signifying what is there: nothing human, not a single human product on the horizon, that is to say no dustbins, (the human *par excellence* — here it is the dustbin, rubbish) this is what industrial China is going to produce by way of radioactive rubbish and which always leaves a trace. Here the beginning of Beckett's *Endgame* is evoked: "no trace of living life, hurry up, sprinkle on some powder". This is the pure operation of the letter taking place. "And there", he says, is established "the dimension, the demansion [...] of the *nomorthunwonn* [*pape-ludun*]², that which is evoked by the part of the subject, the part I set up in the *Wonn-mor* [*Hun-en-peluce*]³, as such it fills the anguish of the *Achse*..."

The One more [*Un en plus*], one could say, the One more with which the anguish of the *Achse* is filled, is the object (a), and in what form if not that of the teddy bear [*l'ours en peluche*]?

(a)

Schema 9a

It is the teddy bear as a reservoir of fundamental libido, that one adds to the Other, that each of us adds to the Other, which, when the Other has gone, and leaves you all alone, left to your own anguish, your anguish deserted of the *Achse*, you cling to once more. You cling on like a wretch, to your bobbin, to your teddy bear, and then, when you grow up, you cling to other objects that attempt to replace this, but evidently do so in vain.

So, you approach, as you can, what allows you to hold on, and here where there once was the hole, where the hole of the *Achse* appeared, the void, hey presto!, the One more [*Un en peluce*], of which it is very important that there's no more than one, is lodged.

Hole

(a)

Schema 9b

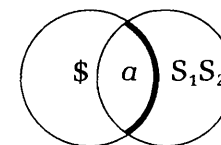
...you know, if you have a mother who spends her time taking away your teddy bear and washing it, so it is clean, because it is dribbled my dear, well that is no good. In the seventies, this gave rise to the cult of the teddy bear, it gave rise to some stinking, appalling things, that were not to be washed. Neither must one fall into excess, but finally, it is like everything, good maternal care is a question of tact, you have to make do, without extremes, not being dogmatic nor too fanatical about a thing because, in the advice given to mothers when they become fanatical about a solution, Doctor Spock said: above all, you must not give the kid a clout, that turns out bad. In any case, when it is necessary to give him the clout in question, it gives rise to a great deal of ravage due to a dogmatism of non-violence, it topples over in the other direction, so there is no method but for a sufficiently bad one...

Littoral

All this, ultimately, in order to say how the subject is established. The subject, when he cannot be represented, when he is no longer represented in the Other, when the Other is no longer the place where he is alienated, or where he inscribes himself, but becomes the desert of *l'Achse*, then, instead, the subject clings to what is its fastening point, the object (*a*) and the letter, Lacan tells us, becomes littoral: "[...] between knowledge [*savoir*] and *jouissance*, there is the littoral that only turns towards the literal on condition that this turn may be taken likewise at any instant".

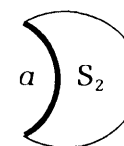
So, what is this littoral? This littoral that appears so enigmatic, such that some people made it the title of a review, a lit-

tle as if it were *Ornicar?* exclamation mark, as if it were the enigma, littoral. Littoral designates exactly that, the edge that separates the letter, (*a*), from knowledge [*savoir*], bringing it back to simplify the pair (S_1S_2) to S_2 .



Schema 9c

Littoral is represented knowledge, and, indeed, the letter that comes to inscribe itself in that place makes this edge distinct in its function from that other edge there.

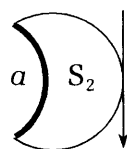


Schema 10a

There are not two signifiers, there are two things that are of two distinct kinds. The effect of sense, noted by S_2 , and the place of *jouissance* mean that between the two there is no longer a frontier but a line which is everywhere heterogeneous. It is this, this line here, that in *Encore* Lacan will approach by compactness. One could reproach him for the importation of this mathematical concept into psychoanalysis, but I will nevertheless emphasise that it is an extremely sound way to bring forth a separation that is not a frontier, and, above all, not a frontier between an interior and an exterior.

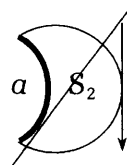
It is here that we find in the text the critique of a perspective brought about by biology, where the interior and the exterior, the subject and the object, are separated. Here, you see that

with alienation and separation, if one takes these formulae from which Jacques-Alain Miller has established the schemas, in fact the frontier, the littoral enters the interior of psychic reality, this is not a frontier between the interior and the exterior, it is within the subject.



Schema 10b

Here we find the interest of the apologue that Lacan adds to *The Purloined Letter*. In *The Purloined Letter* he made the place of consciousness appear, however it is still too exterior. Here, he points out that the division of unconscious knowledge and *jouissance* is carried out on the side of the subject and, as noted by Jacques-Alain Miller in *The Seminar of Barcelona* in 1997, in Barcelona, Lacan makes a radical jump in refusing the Freudian opposition between the pleasure principle and the reality principle and in considering them as divided around a topology of the interior and the exterior.



Schema 10c

The unary stroke of the brush

He only accepts this opposition as being at play in the interior of the subject, like in this apologue of the trait [*trait*] that operates in the desert, without indicating that what he sees there, secretly, is the stroke [*trait*] of the calligrapher. Here the reference is less

to Japan than to Shih-t'ao and to what he had read of what is the major lesson of chapter V of Shih-t'ao, which François Cheng translated in his book *Le vide et le plein*, page 84.

Shih-t'ao, who was writing in the 17th century, had the particularly original theory that the painter and the calligrapher proceed by what he calls the unary stroke [*trait*] of the brush.

This is a Chinese word that François Cheng translates by 'unique' in his book, however it would be better to translate it by 'unary', which is what Lacan did in his *Séminaire XIV, La Logique du fantasme* (unpublished), where he makes reference to this kind of Shih-t'ao's. He says the following: "The indistinct function of Yin and Yun — it is chaos, it is not Yin and Yang — constitutes original chaos. And if this is not by way of the unary stroke of the brush, how could one open up original chaos? [...] To carry out the union of the Ink and the Brush is to resolve the distinction between Yin and Yun and to undertake the opening up of chaos [...] In the midst of the ocean of Ink, to firmly establish the spirit [*l'esprit*]; at the tip of the brush, that life might assert itself and surge forth; that on the surface of the painting be the metamorphosis; that at the heart of chaos the light be installed and spring up! [...] From the One, the Multiple is divided; from the Multiple, the One is conquered, the metamorphosis of the One produces Yin and Yun — and here it is that all the virtualities of the world are found accomplished". (op.cit., pp. 84-85).

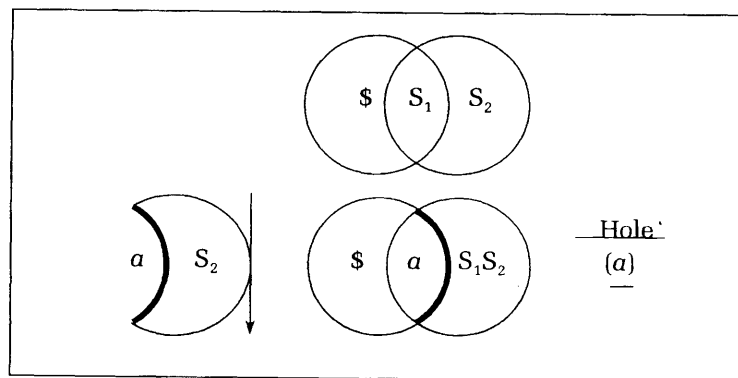
As Cheng notes very well, it is a conception where there is no opposition between the subject One, and the world that it represents. Creation for the Chinese painter is not opposed to him, he pursues it, he adds himself to it. Far from being a description of the spectacle of creation, painting is an addition that allows an opening out, to open the way, to add, not to a world conceived as exterior, but to a world conceived as an object.

This approach to Chinese painting, that has been dominant for one thousand two hundred years, is very specific. This

painting of the calligrapher is not a question, as in Renaissance painting, of describing the world, of ordering the internal chaos, but of ordering by way of the stroke [*trait*] of the paint brush, of operating by making a trace. It is here where the gesture of the painter, the gesture of Shih-t'ao meets up with the gesture of the infant throwing his bobbin to make *fort-da*, to shape the anguish of the *Achose*. It is not only the phonemic opposition of the 'o-a', *fort-da*, but the gesture itself that counts, bearer that it is of the inscription of this trace.

From this distinction where the real is not in opposition, is not exterior, a littoral is deduced, wholly interior, between the sense, the effect of sense, and the place of *jouissance*.

Table 4 (summary)



The Tao of the psychoanalyst

Hence, the last part of Lacan's text can be conceived, following these two apologues, one on the western letter, the other on the oriental letter, with some considerations that can be centred around a reflection on the conditions 'of a discourse that would not be a semblant': From the perspective that Jacques-Alain Miller had thus established, in what conditions could a discourse, to put it correctly, border *jouissance* and its littoral from the signifier?

Lacan takes many discourses. He considers on the one hand, science and, on the other, psychoanalysis, which could be taken as avant-garde literature and the Japanese subject. In an apparently disparate fashion, he broaches this question so as to designate and articulate what must really be called the *Tao* of the psychoanalyst, his way [*voie*].

How might he situate himself in relation to these effects of sense? If we refer ourselves to the transcription made by François Cheng of his dialogues with Lacan, and to what he noted, precisely enough, it seems, to have been able to subsequently make a transmission of it in *L'Âne* No 48, we find he noted that this was precisely what Lacan was looking for the most with him: the Chinese way from where sense and, not *l'Achose*, but that which has a name and that which doesn't have a name, come to be articulated.

There is a very beautiful passage in this transcription that François Cheng has given, who, after having situated the way [*voie*] in Lao-Tseu, isolates the passage that had gripped Lacan: "the way in so far as it is that which is nameless, and that can all the same, name itself".

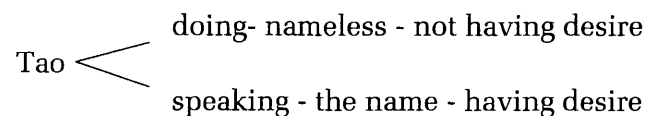
So, I am giving it to you because it corresponds exactly with the summary that Lacan made of this problematic at the bottom of page 10 of *Lituraterre*⁵, it concerns chapter 1 of the *Livre de la Voie et de sa vertu*:

The Way that can be enunciated
Is not the Way forever
The name that can be named
Is not the name forever
Without name: from which Heaven-and-Earth proceed
The name: mother-of-all-things

The *Voie/voix* [Way/voice], in so far as it is, first of all, nomination, the effect of nomination, that makes something come

about, but what? For it is there where it is not Greek; it is no longer a question of bringing into Being, but of a certain usage. Chinese is not an Indo-European language, there is no verb 'to be'. At the place of the copula there is this invention proper to Chinese, which is that the word *Tao* means at the same time 'to do' and 'to say', 'to enunciate'. Furthermore, it is one of the most extraordinary stories of thought that is revealed by the history of thought in China, where Chinese thought has succeeded in accommodating the Being transmitted by Buddhism in the mode of the void, because it spoke Sanskrit, an Indo-European language, thus, implying Being and non-Being. Furthermore, the Chinese took, all the same, eight hundred years to make *Tao* meet up with the Buddhist void. It took a long time and caused a lot of friction in the different Chinese schools, to adjust two notions that had nothing to do with each other, and to make of it a creation of discourse, which would be transmitted to Japan, with the Buddhism that we call *Zen*. The 'Chan' sect devised, in fact, a rather sophisticated version of this combination of the Hindu void and the Chinese *Tao*.

Here we have the *Voie/voix* in so far as it is prior to nomination, and Cheng says that whilst reading this text, Lacan says: 'it is wonderful!', he stops, he stops Cheng and produces for him the following little schema:



Schema 11

He says to him: there you are, here is the *Tao*, so we make two registers; doing, speaking; what is nameless, here — and the name there; what is not having desire, and what is having desire. Thus, Lacan makes him this little schema, but straight away he

says that "it is now a question of knowing how to hold the two ends, or rather what Lao-Tseu proposes in order to live with this dilemma".

What usage to make of it? This is the question that Lacan poses. How to make these things hold together? When we read this interview from the perspective that Jacques-Alain Miller has traced, once one has isolated the real, the symbolic and the imaginary, the real, sense and outside-sense, very well, these are some dimensions, this is what is at stake, but how to live with them, how to live with this dilemma?

There, what interested Lacan in speaking with Cheng, was the proposed solution, and in Cheng's testimony we read this: "without thinking about it too much, I responded: 'by the Void-median'. Once this term 'Void-median' was pronounced, we did not stop until we had elucidated the reality of this most fundamental of all notions". After having examined the sources closely, verified the interpretations, they were able to establish that the three, in Lao-Tseu, was nothing other than the Void-median. And yet, following Cheng, who is here the specialist, whereas, until then, the three had not really retained the specialists of Chinese thought, who stopped at two, at the opposition of Yin and Yang, this interpretation was henceforth adopted by all the sinologists as well as by the Chinese learned themselves. (Cf. *L'Âne*, op. cit., p. 53). They took great care to observe the multiple usages of the Void-median in the concrete domain at the heart of a person — it is very precious, the Void-median, at the heart of a person — in a couple, between two tribes, (in making reference to Lévi-Strauss), between actor and spectator in the theatre, etc.

So here is, thus, in the concrete, where the void is situated. How to articulate the void, it is this that interested Lacan. The correct usage of the void, of this Void-median which is a kind of version of the littoral, being what separates two things that between them have no way of holding together, nor any way to pass from one to the other.

In following this inquiry into the Void-median with Cheng, Lacan finds that all in all, Chinese poetry, the Chinese mode of reasoning, is altogether invaded by metaphor, that everything is metaphorised. And there, he says to Cheng that what strikes him, is that in Chinese thought, metaphor and metonymy are not really opposed. "All in all", he says, "the more there is metaphor, the richer the metonymy. In other words, metaphor and metonymy result one from the other, they mutually engender each other, man being the metaphor *par excellence*", — he refers to his own classic definition from *Booz endormi*; *Sa gerbe n'était point avare ni haineuse* [His sheaf was neither miserly nor spiteful] — "man being the metaphor *par excellence*, his relation to the world — another metaphor — would be, I suppose, but a universal metonymy", he said to Cheng (*ibid.*).

Sheaf
Other
man
—
x
Schema 12

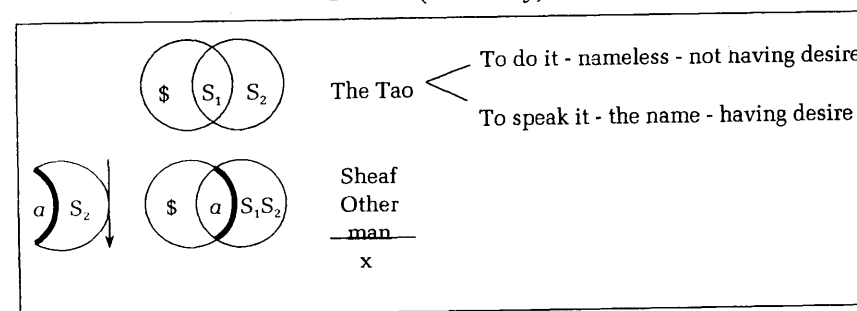
"Shih-t'ao, did he not speak of Universal Circulation?", he continued. "That explains perhaps why the Chinese privileged the notion of subject/subject to the detriment of that of the subject/object, since, as the subject is completely metaphorised, what is important in their eyes is what happens between the subjects, rather than the subject itself in terms of being a separate or isolated entity. Here intervenes again, without doubt, the Void-median", concludes Lacan.

Here is the summary of a long exchange that situates well the problematic in question since it is to say that it is neither with the help of the opposition between metaphor and metonymy, nor with the help of the old system of the bar, that we can best situate the metaphorised place of the subject, but in its re-

lation, in the interior of itself — the relation subject/subject — which is at the same time the relation to another subject, or the relation to itself in terms of addressing itself to the Other.

So, we can understand, from this perspective, why the end of *Lituraterre* is concerned with the mode of address of the Japanese subject. Considering the way in which the Japanese subject comes to say 'you', how can he prop himself up upon the 'you', how can he separate what comes back to him, that is to say his place as subject, from the Other, in so far as he is a deposit of *jouissance*, in so far as he is the partner, the 'you' to which the subject addresses himself?

Table 5 (summary)



What has to be read moreover — I will not do it here in detail — in *L'adresse au sujet japonais*, concerns the Japanese mode of language [*la langue*], the way in which this fixes a mode of littoral separating *jouissance* and signifying articulation. It is, again, necessary to consider the discourse of science — Lacan puts a damper on this discourse — in so far as it would come to entirely absorb the real without symptom, a mathematisable symptom.

A Lacanian ecology?

Here we have the indication of a sort of Lacanian ecology that is yet to be fully developed and is engendered from the following sentence, written in 1971: "Physical science finds itself, is going to

find itself, brought back to the consideration of the symptom, in fact, by the pollution of the environment". It must not be forgotten — to the extent that the discourse of science that seemed to be without rest, without any littoral between signifying articulation and *jouissance* — ah well!, it must not be forgotten that what we are going to find, he says, is pollution, the big pile of waste that science fabricates for us, and which is becoming more and more difficult to eliminate from the surface of the planet, provoking, indeed, an interrogation. We have passed beyond the interrogations of the links of science and conscience, beyond the states of the soul of the atomic bomb inventors in their different versions. The scientists of today are no longer seen as grand consciences, besides, it is no longer demanded of them, nobody believes in it any more. The torments that occupied the post war years, where these grand scientific consciences managed to have an effect of sense, the states of the soul of Oppenheimer, of Einstein or of Sakharov, counted, but now everybody knows very well that for a biologist, having scruples, who would stop such and such research, having caught sight of terrible consequences, there would always remain ten or a hundred others to continue the research, no problem, that makes one less competitor, everybody is delighted, and that's all. Here, we are really dealing with an entirely different affair from that, however, on the contrary, what counts, are, in fact, the problems of responsibility, of pollution, that are at the heart of our relation with science — like the story of contaminated blood — in so far as it concerns, very precisely, a relation to the symptom. Inasmuch as now we have to know something about it, one can no longer say that the discourse of science does not produce a certain number of leftovers.

Avant-garde literature

There is this other figure that Lacan takes into consideration, that of avant-garde literature. Well, one must see that Lacan evoked a most contemporary problematic for the intellects that

were very lively in those years, in broaching the social bond from the point of view of avant-garde literature, from communities such as surrealism, the *Collège de philosophie*, *Acéphale*, then *Les temps modernes* and *Tel Quel* etc., communities founded precisely on a certain relation to outside-sense, to the affect of panic, to *jouissance* and not to the useful.

In the seventies, Philippe Sollers could still write the single sentence without punctuation in his *Paradis*, there was that and then there was a literature that was looking towards making a community of readers in the outside-sense, that was transmitted according to certain channels, and it was this that Lacan puts in question, in asking this literature on what grounds it is to be distinguished: "Is it possible for the littoral to constitute such a discourse that is characterised by not being issued from the semblant?" For Lacan, it is not because this avant-garde literature is itself made of littoral that it can claim to prove something other than the fracture of which it itself is an effect. As for the fracture itself, avant-garde literature cannot produce it, only a discourse can do it.

The psychoanalytic discourse

Now we come to the fourth diagram that is ordered by the relations of the semblant and of sense. It arises from the psychoanalytic discourse where the letter is grasped in the effects of reading of the signifier that writing allows.

It is what Michel Leiris' example illustrates and of his exclamation '*reusement*'. It is what comes to mark his first memory, the screen memory of his life, which marks his relation to happiness, or, more exactly, his relation to unhappiness and his relation to the woman who corrects him: he chooses the soldier that he loves, a soldier is going to fall, he only just catches him, he says '*reusement*' and his mother says to him "no, we don't say '*reusement*' we say '*heureusement*'". Thus, there is this memory that he places at the forefront of his writings, at the forefront of his book, and from there one knows that he has experienced un-

happiness, full stop. He had an analysis after an extremely serious suicide attempt that occurred in the course of a night spent with Bataille, they had pushed it a bit far on the unhappiness of living, etc. In addition, he constructed a literature which is of an extreme purism, that is to say that he never again allowed anybody to say to him: "no, no, we don't say '*reusement*' we say '*heureusement*'", he never allowed that again. It is he who distributed the deformations, who was able to invent codes, deform the usages, and that is wonderful, "we don't do things like that, but yes we do see them done like that, but yes old chap!"

Reusement

Schema 13a

We can see here what he lodged of *jouissance* in secret. We can see as well that writing is not primary, what is primary is the signifying exclamation of the chap who says '*reusement*'..., and who lets drop a little the '*heu*', afterwards, moreover, he will always be a little hung up on the '*heu*' in general.

Reusement

Heureux Heureusement
Heu

Schema 13b

Nevertheless, without doubt in a motivated way, he produces a signifier. Subsequently the letter allows a reading which is that, indeed, there was *heureu*, *heureusement*, etc., and that there is a part, namely the '*heu*', that fell. But what that inscribed, from the moment when the signifier that appeared is read, is the part of lost *jouissance*, happiness forever lost (cf. Schema 10b), from where the subjective position is deduced,

which is linked to this relationship with unhappiness, an unhappiness that will always be, throughout all the effects of sense, profoundly a relation with the unhappiness of Being that will accompany the subject. It is not linked to the effect of signification; in the same context, if things had been otherwise, if he'd had a mother a little happier and without doubt a little more cheerful — she did what she could — but a mother who had not been depressive, instead of saying to him, well, bothering him with this purism, she would have given him a cuddle, and hey presto!, all would've been back as it was, they would have burst out laughing and after he had said: "everything is really possible", she would have said, "ah! it's very funny, I'm going to tell your father about it when he comes back, I'm going to say to him "you know, he did something amazing, he said '*reusement*', amazing", well, everybody burst out laughing. Obviously it does not have the same effect, it does not leave the same trace as unhappiness, does it, so it is not signification, it can be read in many ways, and above all the littoral can be inscribed between the effect of sense and the place; the effect, the affect, of *jouissance* can be inscribed in many ways.

And there Lacan is able to say that in the analytic discourse, what operates, is the letter, in so far as it dissolves what gives form. What gives form, is the signifier, is the semblant, is the '*reusement*', and afterwards the letter will crush it, will enable it to be read, to be articulated, to produce a certain effect, to transform what 'in the semblant pleased' [*plu du semblant*] in so far as it makes the signifier, with a play on words: one is for the rain [*la pluie*], the other is what pleased [*a plu*] in the sense of the verb 'to please' [*plaire*].

Reading

Here, what in the signifier pleased is subsequently placed in question in the reading of the unconscious made by the analytic discourse. Lacan carries out this reading by respecting the frac-

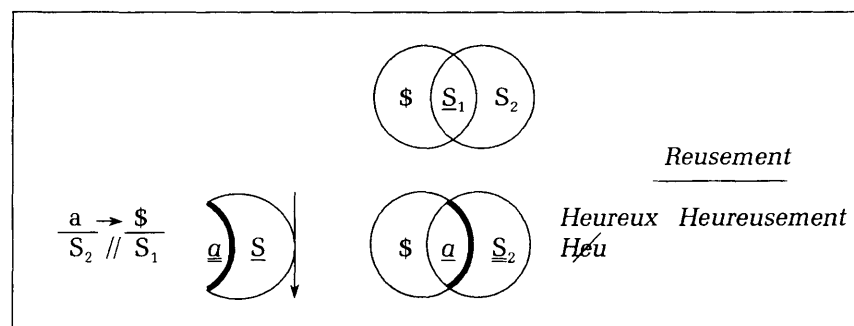
ture that was produced, and in causing or in emphasising the effect of production of this fracture, this being what the analytic discourse inscribes from the discourse of the master.

$$\frac{a \rightarrow \$}{S_2 // S_1}$$

Schema 14

Once you make this type of distinction, it is necessary to produce the identification: you identified yourself with the unhappy child, you were devoted to unhappiness, the time when your happiness, your '*reusement*' was not welcomed by your mother, well there is your identification and that is separated from all that is unconscious knowledge linked to this '*reusement*' that remains a memory. Still, it is necessary to tear from the subject, for the subject to produce, his identification and this in the name of unhappiness, of the trace, I would say, written forever, of the voice before all domination, of the *Tao* of unhappiness that he traced for himself. And there it operates, in all, on condition that a certain void is introduced between the identification with the master signifier and the unconscious chain.

Table 6 (summary)



The Void-median... making active

I would like to finish on this handling of the *Tao* of the psychoanalyst and the very example that François Cheng gives of it when recounting a day spent with Lacan in 1977.

Cheng wrote his book on *La poésie chinoise* in 1977. Lacan asked him to spend an afternoon with him at Guitrancourt. Throughout the whole day, which Cheng recounts wonderfully, Lacan interrogates him on one sole problem, saying to him: explain to me, from this poem, the Chinese conception of time. After having spoken about it for the whole day, and whilst accompanying him back home in the evening, Doctor Lacan said to him the following: "Dear Cheng, you have known many ruptures in your life. You'll know how to transform these ruptures into Void-median; making active and linking for you your present with your past, you will, at last, be in your time". It is an interpretation that Doctor Lacan allowed himself in the name of friendship. Since it is Cheng who told us this, I am not being indiscreet in making you party to it, and one can see how — with the aid of what is language [*la langue*] that was being elaborated, the Void-median meaning something for one and for the other — how they knew what they were speaking about. He said to him: 'you have known fractures, you have known these frontiers, you have known without continuity a certain number of things, exile, the re-appropriation of another culture,' etc., and the following: "you will know how to transform these ruptures into active Void-median", 'active' here meaning allowing him to circulate in his history.

All told, the *Tao* of the psychoanalyst, if we follow Lacan's indications, is to manage to be able to hold oneself in one's place, there where there was a rupture, there where there was a fracture, there where the letter came to inscribe the littoral, the edge of all possible knowledge, transforming this into an active Void median. It is to transform it into a possibility of making what does not hold together hold together, the real and sense,

doing and speaking; these registers that were stated in a distinct way by Lacan, but are held together by the place of the psychoanalyst, in so far as, in this place, acting within the rubric of the non-acting [*non-agir*], within the rubric of the active-Void, which is another way to formulate the non-acting of the psychoanalyst, is to manage to do this, to hold oneself at this point where, ultimately, someone can circulate within what, for him, made a return.

Translated by Marc Thomas and Victoria Woollard

1. Although the English translation 'flight of sense' would seem to make reference to the theme of flight that runs throughout the text, the original French *fuite de sens* makes no such direct reference.
2. The neologism '*papeludun*' is a homophone of the French *pas plus d'un* which could be translated in English as 'not more than one'.
3. The neologism '*Hun-en-peluce*' is a homophone of the French *un en plus* which can be translated in English as 'one more' or 'one extra'.
4. The page numbers here correspond to those of *Ornicar?* n° 41.
5. J. Lacan, *Seminar III, The Psychoses*, trans. Russell Grigg, Routledge, London, 1993, p. 228.

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This text was first published under the title *La lettre volée et le vol sur la lettre* in *La Cause freudienne* No 43, Paris, October 1999.