Logic and Love Catherine Millot

I miss Lacan. "You are not the only one [*la seule*], which does not make you less alone [*seule*]".¹ Who would say such a sentence to me today, a sentence with which he once welcomed the feeling of exile that I shared with him, linked, as far as I can remember, with the aridity, sometime, of being a woman? His sentences were often made of those twists, which turned them inside out, and which, in a toboggan slide, made you go from one side to the other and come out of the confinement in which you believed you were. They had the art of putting the inside and the outside into continuity, like those topological objects that rebel against imagination, and which had strange names: Möbius strip, Klein bottle, cross cap, and of which he made great use to get people out of the mania of understanding.

The world found itself enlarged as a result, even when he claimed that he was talking to brick walls in a tone that he raised almost to the point of vociferation, which was not without reminding us of Artaud's. They were not just any brick walls, but those of the asylum, on an evening when he spoke about the

¹ The extracts from Catherine Millot's book *La logique et l'amour*, published by *Éditions Léo Scheer* in 2019, are published here with the kind permission of the author and the publisher. CM is a writer and author of several books, including *Life with Lacan*.

Logic and Love

Catherine Millot

knowledge of the psychoanalyst in the chapel of Sainte-Anne. He added that talking to brick walls made him enjoy himself [jouir], and that we, his audience, also enjoyed it by participation. My heart was beating from hearing the accent in his voice, which went from dull rage to laughter of a gay knowledge [gai savoir], and I believe that it is from this instant that something was decided for me, which still [encore] lasts. Shall I call it transference? He had continued, that evening, by speaking of the "letter of love/wall" [d'(a)mur]. He borrowed this consonance of love [amour] and wall [*mur*] from a forgotten poet whom he had quoted: between the man and the woman there is love, between the man and love there is a world, between the man and the world there is a wall. It was not so long ago that the walls of Paris had been covered with inscriptions, while the ancient barriers had seemingly crumbled to dust. Love is what is produced when one changes discourse, he had also said. In those years, it seemed we breathed more freely. They forever have a name for me: the year of ... or Worse, the year of Encore, the year of the Non-dupes errent, and the year of *Joyce the Sinthome*. Bizarrely, it is only today that I realise that he never stopped talking about love then. About love and logic, which was the title he gave to a lecture in Rome, which I attended. Its recording was lost.

Combining seemingly dissimilar terms was just like him, pathos was disarmed, logic itself became erotic. What indeed interested him in logic was its flaws: its impasses, its unassailable paradoxes where its incompleteness, its inconsistency, is revealed. In sum, the whirlpools where logicians themselves get lost. These are the same paradoxes that he encountered in love, where it becomes serious and pushes the rigour, as the mystics did, to the point where one can no longer say anything without contradicting oneself and where loss and salvation are equivalent. This is where we touch, said Lacan, on "what love should be, if it had any sense at all". These points were like a siphon through which meaning was evacuated. Through these holes, hope of establishing any kind of relation between men and women also disappeared. Lacan invited us to do without them to reinvent games of love, that is to say perhaps another logic which starts from the impossible.

Lacan's logic would liberate you from understanding, and from the obsession to find a remedy for everything. The irremediable has its virtues, immediately alleviating [allégeantes]. If I move to the present era, it seems to me that what characterises it is the boredom with which the endless "problems" which demand their "solutions" overburden us. We suffocate under solutions. and what they suppose of incurable goodwill (is there any other definition of "political correctness?"), like under the water hose of society's fire fighters. In Lacan's time, we gave ourselves the right to think without dreaming of plugging holes in the universe with the flaps of one's dressing gown, according to the definition of philosophy by a Viennese humourist. In effect, the epoque was more theorist than philosopher. It loved holes, and logic as well. And thought did not believe itself compelled to reduce itself, media obliging, to the size of a slogan advertising nappies, proposing a solution to leakage problems. The space that had been opened is closed again today. Abelard was likely right when he said that the logician is "obnoxious [odieux] to the world".

The taste for theory did not exclude the taste for experience. The psychoanalytical experience, as Lacan called it, was not without echoing Bataille's internal experience. We would throw ourselves into it without restraint, betting everything to see how far it would go, to what point of impasse or to what unforeseeable opening. We were far from psychotherapy. This bet was transference, uncommon love since it led us straight to making ourselves partners of the Other, this Other whose cracks were the object of Lacanian logic. In these neighbourhoods, it happened that we would encounter what Lacan called true love, which is born from the signs of what for everyone marks the trace of his or her exile.

Logic and Love, in Italy

Part of Lacan's teaching activity took place in Italy, especially in Rome, in the years 1973–1974. These years correspond to the

Logic and Love

Catherine Millot

seminars where he developed the "formulas of sexuation." A bilingual compilation exists, edited by Giacomo Contri, entitled Lacan in Italia, in which are transcribed a series of lectures and discussions that Lacan held during this period. It seemed apt to me, in order to pay homage to a psychoanalyst, to start from a bungled action [acte manqué]. In this compilation, a lecture given by Lacan in Rome is indeed missing, because the recording was faulty. I say bungled action, but after all, it was perhaps simply a matter of mechanics. In any case, the effect it had was to constitute a lost object. What is remarkable, however, is that this lost object has a name, "Logic and Love," the title of the lecture. "Logic and Love" is an enigmatic title, where one has the impression of having to deal with contradictory dimensions. On the one hand, rationality and, on the other, something linked to the irrational, or at least we believe we know so. This in itself is an enigma, which is already precisely at the heart of the question.

I set out to find traces of this lost object. I have searched my papers and immediately found notes of this lecture, which had not been recorded. I was hoping to learn all about logic and love, but having read these notes, which were rather exhaustive, I had to realise that there was almost nothing about logic and very little about love. This forces us to invent. This is exactly the model of the way in which unconscious knowledge works. There is a hole, a hole in knowledge, and in its place, we invent. This invention is our unconscious.

In this lecture, Lacan puts forward a formula, and in so far as it is a proposition, we are dealing with logic. It is a rather strange proposition: "a woman is being loved" [*on aime une femme*], constructed like a famous fantasy analysed by Freud: "A child is being beaten," which allows us to understand that this proposition is a fantasy. Lacan says that one could not say "I love a woman" [*j'aime une femme*]. He suggests that this would be of the order of the impossible, which relates to the impossible of the sexual relation. "A woman is being loved" embarrasses us "like a fish with a bicycle" (this is an expression of Lacan I use here). Lacan says this: "If you notice in an analysis that one loves a woman, it happens to people incidentally, who are distributed *[qui se répartissent]* among the two sexes, there are reasons for it. In analysis, one finds nothing better than this, that they are good for something. That one relates to the mother as such, that a woman is being loved, it does mean that one does not know how to find one's way out of the love for a woman. Because in the end, this supposed domination of all love for one woman by the primary experience that it is the mother who wiped our bottoms, and that it is to her that the demand for love is addressed, why do we demand this from the mother, and precisely this, that she loves us, if not because a woman is being loved in her? Inverted, this allows us to formulate the question in a less roundabout way. One would love one's mother because she is a woman." The perplexity increases. Of course, loving a woman is not without evoking some of Lacan's statements, in particular in "L'Étourdit:" "heterosexual is the one who loves a woman whatever one's sex." This means that a woman is something of the order of the Other (heteros).

It does not go without saying that love concerns the *heteros*. It is indeed the whole question. Freud, for example, underlined the narcissistic dimension of love, and this was largely taken up by Lacan. To love is to love someone who is your ideal or an image of oneself, or to love someone in the expectation that they will love you, which comes down to the same thing. Or further still, it is to love the other because he feeds you, for example, or because he wipes your bottom, which in the end always comes back to oneself. The whole problem is this: to love the other as Other is not at all easy. This touches on the question of logic. There are several ways of approaching the Other. The first one is the other sex. I will rely on what Lacan said at that time, the period of the formulas of sexuation, which is a logic: the logic of sexuation. This logic is centred on the impossible relation between the masculine side and the feminine side. There is something non-commensurable between the masculine and the feminine. With regard to that, in the Seminar Encore, Lacan speaks of traces. For each person, this

Catherine Millot

impossibility of the sexual relation has been approached in his or her own history and from his or her singularity. We each have our own way of being exiled from the sexual relation. A few years later, Lacan will take up this idea of exile again elsewhere, with respect to Joyce and his play The Exiles, saying that it is about exile from the sexual relation. Lacan says this at the end of the Seminar *Encore*: "Love is born from the encounter between the traces, in one and in the other, of the exile from the sexual relation." This relation between the traces of exile comes in some way to metaphorise the impossibility of the sexual relation. It is as if, at the same time, the fact that they encounter each other makes love arise and, suddenly, makes what does not cease not to be written seem to want to be written. What seemed impossible veers towards the contingent because of this encounter. The logic of sexuation belongs in part to modal logic, and Lacan writes the modal category of the impossible in the following way: does not cease not to. As impossible, the sexual relation does not cease not to be written. Love is when it tips over: the relation ceases not to be written. It is an effect of mirage, of illusion, a contingent effect born from the chance encounter. What love dreams about is to pass from the contingent to the necessary, to what "does not cease to be written."

But that is not the only relation between logic and love. In an intervention made in Milan, Lacan takes up this question again, which brings into play the relation of love to the Other (*heteros*), not necessarily as a sexuated other, but as Other in so far as the question of its will, its desire, its *jouissance* is posed. The question is to know if love can free itself from narcissism in this relation to the Other. In this lecture entitled *Excursus*, of 3 February 1973, Lacan referred to Medieval theories of love, where love is taken by its divine face, which is a serious way of putting things. Some authors thought that two theories of love could be distinguished: physical theory and ecstatic theory. The physical theory comes from Aristotle: God is the Sovereign Good, to love God is to love one's own Good. Supreme Good is Good understood if you like.

Logic and Love

This refers to a kind of well-understood egotism. But then the alterity goes out the window. The mystics, who had the experience of the love of God, were not in agreement. On their side, we can situate an ecstatic theory of love: love consists in coming out of oneself, dispossessing oneself, detaching oneself, forgetting oneself to the point of being lost. There is no need to be a mystic to have a notion of this, whoever has been in love was confronted to this. To the extent that the mystics did not deal with a *semblable* that disturbs the question, they rigorously went to the heart of this problematic of being until the point of encountering a certain modality of the impossible. I quote a passage from the *Excursus*:

There has been all the same a certain number of sensible people who have realised that the peak of love for God was to say to him: 'If that is your will, damn me', that is to say, the exact opposite of the aspiration to sovereign Good. This must mean something, this challenge [*mise en question*] to the ideal of salvation in the name of the love of the Other. It is from this moment on that we enter the field of what love should be, if it had any sense at all. But it is also from this moment on that it becomes absolutely senseless [*insensé*], that's the interesting thing: it is to realise that when you have reached an impasse, when you get to the end, it is the end, and it is there where the real is. And it is extraordinarily important that in this field, and not only in this field, one cannot say anything without contradicting oneself.

In this respect, the mystics, the lyrical poets, and those who celebrate courtly love came to the realisation that the best way to touch these points about love was the rhetorical figure known as the *oxymoron*, the union of opposites. I will quote for you some verses from a mystic called Hadewijch of Antwerp, of whom Lacan speaks in the *Encore* Seminar:

What is sweetest in Love Is her storminess,

Catherine Millot

Her deepest abyss Is her most ravishing form. Lose your way in her You touch her close, Die of hunger for her You eat and taste her. Love's despair is certainty Love's most brutal wounding Her all-healing grace.²

It is a classical theme, which touches on a point of real in love, where there is something that plunges into the impossible, that swirls. I would say that it is in the image of the flaws of logic, of all logic (not only of the logic of sexuation). I will evoke here some logicians, to whom Lacan himself referred, in particular Gödel's theorem, which demonstrates the incompleteness of any symbolic system, namely that in every symbolic system there is a zone where a thing and its contrary can be supported. It is the zone of paradoxes, where we arrive at a point where things are reversed, where a proposition can be true and false at the same time. We have an example of this in set theory, it is Russell's paradox, which is well known. If we have a perfectly constructed statement, whereby the existence of a set of all the sets that do not contain themselves is posited, this set, will we exclude it or not? If it is included, it must be excluded; if it is excluded, it must be included. These are the flaws of logic, and the flaws of love are, in a way, their image. The mystics have their rigour, they go straight to the impossible.

Love has many faces. According to one of them, love wants to know nothing of the impossible. Today, the ideal of love, or rather the ideal of the couple (which is not the same), puts the onus on the partner to satisfy the needs, the demand, the desire, *jouissance...* The partner [*conjoint*] is called upon to conjoin

Logic and Love

[conjoindre] everything: the impossible encounters here its maximum negation [*dénégation*]. We can see that Lacan aspired to a love that would invent knots with the impossible. He also said that the impossible is the place of the *jouissance* of the Other: "The supreme Being in Aristotle is in the opaque place of the Other's *jouissance*. It is in their courage in bearing the intolerable relationship to the Supreme Being that friends recognise and choose each other."

Translated by Bogdan Wolf Revised by Nicolas Duchenne

² Love is Everything: A Year with Hadewijch of Antwerp, ed. A. Harvey, trans. A. Harvey, Singapore, Medio Media, 2022, p. 255.

Psychoanalytical Notebooks

A Journal of the London Society of the New Lacanian School