

JOHN HOLLAND

EDITORIAL

Capitalism and Psychoanalysis

In an unpublished article written for the French newspaper *Le Monde* on the heels of the events of May 1968, Jacques Lacan noted that the abundance of objects offered to us by consumer society does “not fill up [*remplissent*] the fateful object *a*.” In these words, we already begin to identify the difficulty that capitalism poses, not only to each of us in the most intimate aspects of our everyday lives, but also to psychoanalysis as such. The questions raised by the effects of capitalism are both clinical and theoretical, for they involve the subject. Any discussion that psychoanalysis provides about this mode of production will entail a re-examination and rethinking of its own basic concepts.

D’un Autre à l’autre [From an Other to the other], the seminar that is most closely bound up with May 1968, contains one of the most important fruits of Lacan’s engagement with Marxism: the definition of the object *a* as a surplus-jouissance, a term that is homologous with surplus-value; this jouissance is brought into existence through a process that is closely related to Karl Marx’s account of the production of this value. Then, with the advent of the theory of discourse, another question arose for Lacan: where is capitalism to be located in the four discourses? After a certain time of hesitation, he stated that it is not to be conflated with the discourse of the master, but constitutes a fifth discourse, the structure of which he wrote only once, in his Milan lecture, “*Du discours psychanalytique* [On the Psychoanalytic Discourse]”:

$$\downarrow \frac{S}{S_1} \not\propto \frac{S_2}{a} \downarrow$$

This writing was preceded, four months earlier, in one of a series of lectures given to the interns of the Hôpital de Sainte-Anne, under the collective title *Le savoir du psychanalyste* [The Knowledge of the Psychoanalyst], by a characterization of this discourse that is as important as it is cryptic: “What distinguishes the discourse of capitalism is this: the *Verwerfung*, the rejection, the throwing outside all the symbolic fields...of what? Of castration.”¹

Lacan's definition of this discourse raises, in a very urgent way, the question of what capitalism is for psychoanalysis. According to his definition, the fundamental characteristic of capitalism, as a discourse, is a particular psychic operation: the foreclosure of castration. Lacan does not, in any direct way, connect this foreclosure with the definition of capitalism as a mode of production. The question of how the two would be "related" is an urgent one. Perhaps, however, as with most urgent questions, we should not try to provide an answer too quickly; an immediate understanding could well miss what is most important.

Each of the six articles in this issue on capitalism and psychoanalysis seeks to arrive at certain answers concerning the relation—or non-relation—between the two. Their responses are diverse, and readers, quite fortunately, will find more than one divergence between the authors. One quality that all the authors share is a negative one: they do not approach psychoanalysis as a grid of knowledge, which could then be superimposed upon capitalism in order to produce an analysis. In other words, their aim is not to provide an "applied psychoanalysis," as this term is commonly understood; they are doing something else. Perhaps François Regnault throws some light on the nature of their projects in his discussion of a different "relation": the one between psychoanalysis and literature. As he reminds us, this general understanding of applied psychoanalysis was not Lacan's own; in his *écrit* on André Gide, Lacan says that "Psychoanalysis is applied, strictly speaking, only as a treatment and thus to a subject who speaks and hears."² As Regnault states, neither Freud nor Lacan "appl[ies] his theoretical views to literature." Instead, both of these analysts approach it in order to "bring...analytical theory one step forward"; their artistic and literary analyses are forms of theoretical psychoanalysis.³ In approaching capitalism through psychoanalysis, the authors of the following articles are doing something similar; they too are practicing theoretical psychoanalysis. Psychoanalysis can only examine capitalism by redefining, extending and diverting its own concepts onto new and different paths.

The first of the articles in this issue is Jacques Lacan's "On a Reform in Its Hole [*D'une réforme dans son trou*]," and it appears here in English translation for the first time; it is the text that was rejected by *Le Monde*, and it was never published during his lifetime. Written in February 1969 to comment on reforms for the teaching of psychiatry that had been proposed in the wake of May 1968, it also offers a much wider-ranging analysis. Drawing upon the concepts that he had been developing in *D'un Autre à l'autre*, he pushes them forward by analyzing the relations between the object *a* and castration, as they were being played out within the climate of social crisis that had been occasioned by the ceaseless expansion of capitalism. Lacan depicts the uprising as a "maelstrom," one that arose, in part, as a response to the triumph of the capitalist conception of knowledge within the French university.

Samo Tomšič's "Laughter and Capitalism" elaborates some of the consequences of the homology between surplus-jouissance and surplus-value. One of these is that the unconscious becomes what Lacan, in "Television," calls the "ideal worker"; it is a part of a system of psychic production that is structured in the same way as

the capitalist mode of production.⁴ In this context, the joke takes on a particularly interesting status. On the one hand, it is accomplished through an economization that has its clear counterpart in capitalist practices and it produces a “yield of pleasure [*Lustgewinn*]” that corresponds to surplus-jouissance. On the other hand, certain of its aspects can be dangerous to capitalism, as a tantalizing statement of Lacan’s, again from “Television,” suggests: “The more saints, the more laughter; that’s my principle, to wit, the way out of capitalist discourse—which will not constitute progress, if it happens only for some” (16). Following this indication, among others, Tomšič shows how psychoanalysis and the critique of political economy find common ground in the field of comedy, rather than tragedy, and locates a possible subversion of capitalism in the procedures of skeptical jokes.

Marie-Jean Sauret’s article, “Psychopathology and Fractures of the Social Bond” which is an excerpt from his book, *Malaise dans le capitalisme* [Capitalism and Its Discontents], approaches capitalism by examining the concepts of discourse and the “social bond [*lien social*].”⁵ The basis of Lacan’s discourses is precisely what Emile Durkheim had expelled in order to establish the “scientific” character of sociology. Sociology studies a “society” from which the most intimate aspects of our singularity have been excluded, whereas discourse is the structure in which each of us tries to inscribe this singularity in a connection with others. The four discourses present four different types of social bond, but the fifth, capitalist discourse, is far more problematic. First, Sauret shows that one of its particularities is its circularity; unlike the others, which have stopping-points that can allow us to change to another discourse, it is characterized by a potentially endless movement. It is also the discourse that is the most difficult for us to lodge our singularity in, and this difficulty often veers into impossibility; one of the clinical consequences of this is the increase in the number of suicides.

The two texts by Pierre Bruno are taken from his book, *Lacan, passeur de Marx: l’invention du symptôme* [Lacan, Marx’s *Passeur*: The Invention of the Symptom] and examine other aspects of this discourse.⁶ The first, “The Capitalist Exemption,” discusses a number of its effects, including one on sexuation: if the impossibility of the sexual relation is based on castration, then the result of the latter’s foreclosure is to render this relation possible. This is a surprising conclusion, and if we are to understand its implications, we must deepen our understanding of what castration is and what it involves; the task of analyzing “capitalism” thus leads us again to re-examine basic psychoanalytic concepts. Bruno begins this task by discussing the relations between castration and love.

In Bruno’s second text, “Hyde and Seek,” he discusses the status of the unconscious and the drives under capitalism and argues that the latter tries to cut the two entirely from one another, so that they will not communicate at all. In order to characterize this radical operation, he endows the French verb, “*scinder*”—translated here as “sunder”—with a new meaning; it marks out this radical new disconnection. According to him, the first literary text to have carried out this severance is Robert Louis Stevenson’s *Strange Case of Doctor Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, which thereby founded

a modern myth. In this work, Hyde is not at all Jekyll's unconscious; instead, Jekyll himself stands in S_2 , the place of the unconscious, and Hyde inhabits $\$$, that of the drives.

Finally, my article, "The Capitalist Uncanny," returns to the question of the status of the unconscious in the capitalist discourse, to which it provides a somewhat different approach. It examines the transformations of Lacan's formula, "the signifier represents the subject for another signifier," a formula that indicates one important way in which the unconscious can manifest itself. This formula became the basis for the discourse of the master, before being disrupted by the capitalist discourse, with its reversal of the places of S_1 and $\$$. This inversion, in turn, has dramatic effects: the signifier no longer represents the subject, and knowledge no longer exists in relation to the supposition of this subject. As a result, this knowledge loses its unconscious resonance and can come to be colonized by the calculations of *homo œconomicus*. The final consequence of these structural changes is the eruption of a new form of the uncanny, one that makes of "capitalism" a particular mode of the compulsion to repeat.

In the current conjuncture, a time when both psychoanalysis and capitalism are in crisis, the more pessimistic among us may well wonder both whether the former is able to respond to the problems that the latter causes and whether it can provide answers that will still be relevant to the contemporary "world." The ambition of these texts, which explore their relations, is to help psychoanalysis to continue and to develop.

I would like to thank Patrick Valas, to whom Lacan gave the typescript of "*D'une réforme dans son trou*," for making it available to everyone on his internet site, and for encouraging me in my project of translating it. I would also like to thank Marie-Jean Sauret and Pierre Bruno, along with their respective publishers—the Presses Universitaires du Midi and Éditions érès—for their permission to translate and publish their texts. Many thanks also go to Samo Tomšič for submitting his excellent article for this issue. Finally, I am very grateful to Sigi Jötkandt and Dominiek Hoens for inviting me to be a guest editor and for their invaluable advice and help.

Notes

1. Jacques Lacan, *Je parle aux murs: entretiens de la chapelle de Sainte-Anne*, ed. by Jacques-Alain Miller (Paris: Seuil, 2011) 96.
2. Jacques Lacan, "The Youth of Gide, or the Letter and Desire," in *Écrits: The First Complete Edition in English*, trans. by Bruce Fink, Héloïse Fink, and Russell Grigg (New York: Norton, 2006) 630.
3. François Regnault, "Lacan and Experience," in *Lacan and the Human Sciences*, ed. by Alexandre Leupin, trans. by Thelma Sowley (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1991) 55.

4. Jacques Lacan, *Television: A Challenge to the Psychoanalytic Establishment*, ed. by Joan Copjec, trans. by Denis Hollier et al. (New York: Norton, 1990) 14.
5. Marie-Jean Sauret, *Malaise dans le capitalisme, Psychanalyse & series* (Toulouse: Presses universitaires du Mirail, 2009).
6. Pierre Bruno, *Lacan, passeur de Marx: l'invention du symptôme* (Toulouse: Érès, 2010).

JOHN HOLLAND

INTRODUCTION TO JACQUES LACAN'S "ON A
REFORM IN ITS HOLE"

On February 5, 1969, in the course of his seminar, *D'un Autre à l'autre* [From an Other to the other], Jacques Lacan told his audience that ...yesterday, I allowed myself to scribble out a text rather hurriedly—actually, it isn't just a sketch, because I took my time with it—and I don't know whether you will see it published, because it will appear either in a single place or it won't appear at all—and I'm interested in knowing whether it will appear or not. In short, I've been interested to the point of delusional excessiveness.... I would like people to see that it is no longer possible to play the appropriate role in transmitting knowledge without being a psychoanalyst.¹

The text in question here is "On a Reform in Its Hole [*D'une réforme dans son trou*]." Lacan wrote it at the invitation of *Le Monde*; this newspaper had asked him, as a psychiatrist and psychoanalyst, for his opinion on Edgar Faure's reform of the French university in general, and of the teaching of psychiatry in particular, in the immediate aftermath of the events of May 1968.²

As Lacan had suspected, his text was never published during his lifetime. Nearly a year and a half later, he told the audience of his next seminar, *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*, that in this article, which

...did not get through...I speak of "a reform in its hole." Precisely it was a matter of using this whirlwind of a hole to take a number of measures concerning the university. And good heavens, by correctly referring to the terms of certain fundamental discourses one might have certain scruples, let's say, about acting, one might look twice before jumping in to profit from the lines that have opened up.³

It is not difficult to imagine the reactions of surprise or confusion that Lacan's article may have inspired in the editorial offices of *Le Monde*. Rather than merely providing his views on these current events, Lacan took them as a springboard from which to push his teaching forward by examining questions concerning the status of knowledge, truth and jouissance.

Among Faure's reforms was a plan to grant psychiatry greater autonomy in medical schools. From its beginning, the field of psychiatry had been plagued by serious epistemological problems stemming, in part, from the fact that, although it was a medical specialty, it had not been able to establish that psychiatric illness has an organic cause. Neurology, which did treat the organic body, had more prestige, so much so that psychiatry had ceased to be a separate field of study in medical schools. In the reorganization of teaching at the end of the Second World War, it had become part of a hybrid discipline, "neuropsychiatry," which was taught by neurologists. Faure, in response to demands by the professional organization of psychiatrists, the SPF [*Syndicat des Psychiatres Français*], proposed to reintroduce the teaching of psychiatry as an independent discipline, taught by psychiatrists themselves.⁴

Another of Faure's reforms involved the establishment of an experimental center in the suburb of Vincennes, one that would become the University of Paris 8. Michel Debeauvais, a specialist in educational reform who was a member of the center's planning committee, has noted that one of the main motivations behind the project was to "contain the leftist abscess far away from the Latin Quarter [of Paris]."⁵ He also believed it could serve as a model for fundamental changes in the system by which degrees would be awarded. Instead of granting them on the basis of four examinations held at the end of each year of undergraduate studies, as was the practice at the time, a new system of continuous assessment—similar to the one used in the United States—would be introduced. This would involve the introduction of course credits, a certain number of which would need to be earned in order to graduate. Other committee members liked this plan, although they thought the term "credit" should be avoided since "people will say that we're copying the Americans." They decided, instead, to use the expression "*unité de valeur*"—literally, "value-unit"—and when Debeauvais protested that this did not mean anything, they answered, "Well, that's precisely the point." Their new system was a great success and soon spread to all French universities.

Lacan takes up both of these aspects of the Faure reform in "On a Reform in Its Hole." He also finds ways to connect them with the seminar he was giving at the time, *D'un Autre à l'autre*; some aspects of this seminar throw light on the implications of the highly concentrated statements in his article. In his seminar, he was seeking to conceive of analysis in terms of set theory, a project that involved new ways of theorizing the object *a*, knowledge and truth. It begins with a redefinition of the object *a* as surplus-jouissance, a force that comes into existence in a way that is homologous to Karl Marx's account of the production of surplus-value (29, 45-46).⁶ This new formulation is accompanied by a rethinking of the object in terms of its relation with the superego, as Freud conceived of it in *Civilization and Its Discontents* (40). If the superego arises because we are obliged to renounce our drives, for Lacan, this renunciation comes to inhere in every attempt to elaborate a knowledge that would grasp the real.⁷ In coming into existence, each new signifier misses something, and this structural impossibility of symbolizing everything be-

comes Lacan's translation of Freud's process of renunciation; the object of surplus-jouissance gradually arises from the hole opened up by this failure of knowledge. With this analysis, a reworking of Freud's understanding of the impasses of civilization, Lacan was moving towards a fuller treatment of collective phenomena, one that would depart in significant ways from his previous theorizing of the singular character of each analytic treatment. This movement would eventually result, at the beginning of *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*, in his presentation of the four discourses.

Approached from this context, Lacan's unpublished article can be read as a meditation on the relations between knowledge, the object *a* and the hole. The figure of the hole appears throughout his discussions of the failure of knowledge in medical schools and in the university. For example, neurologists' inability to account for all medical problems led to the opening up of a gap; psychiatrists were the "flaring edges" of this gap, who flowed out to the institutions where the mental patients whom they treat are found ("On a Reform," 16). Yet psychiatry also failed, for instead of treating the psyche, it provided an approach that was "social" in the worst sense of the word, contributing to the maintaining of "'asylum-like' places, where the community segregates its discordant members" (16). By upholding standards of social conformity in this way, psychiatry had become what Lacan calls "sociatry" (15).

At the same time, but independently, the university as a whole was suffering from its own limited conception of knowledge. Even before the reform, the university had specified its mission by defining knowledge in terms of its worth or "value." To this end, emphasis was placed on the student's role in conferring such value. Knowledge is valuable for any particular student because s/he has had to expend effort—in other words, to work—to acquire it. As Lacan notes in *D'un Autre à l'autre*, the price for learning is supposed to be paid "through the sweat of one's brow": a sweat that gives knowledge its value, which the university then recognizes by awarding a degree (200). The latter serves as the visible sign that the now-former student has *graduated*, has attained the status of master (399).

Rather ironically, this definition of the value of knowledge has led the university to fall prey to another system in which labor creates value: capitalism, which had long been trying to dominate the social body. According to Lacan, the university was being subsumed within capitalism well before 1969. The reform only heightened the university's commodification of knowledge; the course credit, or "value-unit," "professes, like an enormous slip of the tongue, what we are defining as the reduction of knowledge to the function of the market" ("On a Reform," 20). The assumption that knowledge can be divided into a series of countable units, each of which can be given a numerical value, is fully consonant with the capitalist approach to anything that can be exchanged.

This practice of assigning value to units of knowledge allows one to understand retroactively a system that is far more general and has been functioning for a long

time. If a unit of knowledge can be assigned a value, then larger aggregates of knowledge can also be given values; different bodies of knowledge can even be assigned different values. After all, it has been evident for quite some time that some forms of knowledge have been considered to be more valuable than others. This inequality among the disciplines is not even recent, as is testified by the greater prestige of neurology over psychiatry in the market of knowledge constituted by medical schools. Seen in such a context, the university reveals itself to be one more "market of influence," in which each discipline competes with the others for prestige and funding (19).

This market extends, of course, even further; each discipline tends to be overseen by a "body of bosses," certain of whom will have more influence than others (19). In such situations, students are obliged to compete with each other, in the hope that the knowledge that they have acquired will enable them to be brought into the "inner" circle of the institution in question (19). Lacan's example of this aspect of the market of influence is, in fact, not the university, but another bureaucratic educational institution—the International Psychoanalytic Association—but his words can apply just as easily to it.

One of the implications of Lacan's argument is that capitalist conceptions affect not only students but also thought itself; they can undermine attempts to take seriously the epistemological status of science and knowledge. Such would seem to be the case with Jacques-Alain Miller's elaboration in "Suture: Elements of the Logic of the Signifier," to which Lacan alludes discreetly in the closing pages of his article; this text presents a scheme by which science is able to progress in a logical and orderly fashion by establishing a particular place for its subject.⁸ One can wonder whether an effort to construct a theory in which knowledge would possess its own autonomy—even a relative one—would not be undermined, from the beginning, by the violence of the market of influence. Such a market insists that the value of knowledge is determined directly, and not merely in the last instance, by capitalism, and can thus inhibit other explorations and explanations.⁹

One of the consequences of the triumph of this capitalist understanding of knowledge in the universities and other training-centers is their own decline on the market of influence. If even they have come to accept the capitalist conception, then they are, as it were, assenting to their own relative eclipse. The students' sense of this decline helped precipitate the uprising of May 1968. Lacan refers to these students as "bourgeois youth," who have been suffering from a feeling of "unrest" precisely because they have seen that the university is "going through such a rough patch" ("On a Reform," 19). In such a context, the "subject of science," the principle that was crucial for Miller, "has nothing to do with the kind of inflation [*boursouflure*] that is given a premium on the market of influence" (19). Any concern for the internal logic of various kinds of knowledge is being swept aside by capitalist competition.

In this context, Lacan feels that psychoanalysts can intervene in a privileged fashion in the debate about educational reform; their position as analysts has given them a very particular understanding of the workings of knowledge and truth, an understanding that extends beyond the clinical setting and into the functioning of educational institutions. On this basis, he rejects as incorrect the belief that students acquire knowledge through hard work; the latter is only the "invention of pedagogues" (*D'un Autre*, p. 200). In a session of his seminar in which he provides a gloss on the analyses that he had offered in his article, he denies that knowledge is attained through a long and laborious apprenticeship. Instead, he asks his audience, "isn't it something that happens in a lightning-flash?" (200). According to this conception, at the moment when it is transmitted, knowledge becomes something more than a series of discrete, countable units. At the very least, the relations among its various elements become clear, in an instant of insight, and at best, something radically new suddenly appears. As Lacan argues in this article, "Galileo, Newton, Mendel, Gallois, the ever-endearing James. D. Watson: none of them owes anything to his own labor; each owes it all to others" ("On a Reform," 17). Instead, their discoveries are transmitted in a sudden flash in which knowledge is acquired, and in which one can infer the presence of the subject (*D'un Autre*, 200).

It is truth, rather than knowledge, that "makes one work a good deal" (172). This is one of the central issues of analytic treatment, and it enables the analyst to pinpoint certain effects of the difficulties that knowledge has created within educational institutions. As he notes in his article, in analysis, the work required to attain truth will enable one to "refind the hole, at long last vivid, of...castration" ("On a Reform," 18).

This statement throws light on Lacan's use of the figure of the hole throughout this article. Whether this hole is the one opened up by the excessive pretensions of neurology or the one into which, at the end of the article, the dissident students have been pulled by the maelstrom, it is always the figure through which castration manifests itself. Whenever knowledge fails to grasp something of the real, castration makes an appearance; only, however, through the analytic work that is necessary for reaching truth can the character of this castration become clear.

Because it is analysis that enables one to grasp the attributes and effects of knowledge and castration, even when they play their roles within educational and therapeutic institutions, Lacan can propose a reform that no one else had dared to suggest: "anyone who would like to teach science classes should automatically or even obligatorily undergo it," that is, psychoanalytic training (19). This sentence goes beyond being a recommendation only for the teaching of psychiatry; in *D'un Autre à l'autre*, he states explicitly that any teacher of "mathematics...biochemistry or...any other field" that involves transmitting knowledge "would do well to be a psychoanalyst" (160).

In his seminar, Lacan had argued that the elaboration of knowledge necessarily produces surplus-jouissance as its residue; in the article, it is the failure of knowl-

edge within institutions that produced the object *a* that manifested itself in the tumult of May 1968. The figure by which he gives body to this object is the maelstrom. With this image, he is moving towards an analysis of the modes by which the libidinal is inserted into collective actions, modes that may differ markedly from those that are at work in the clinic of the singular subject. He even suggests that their appearance within this clinic is sometimes less problematic and difficult to deal with than their manifestations in social practices and struggles. "[T]he object *a* manages much better at making love with the specular image, which it perforates, than at animating the maelstrom that it provokes as surplus-jouissance" ("On a Reform," 18). Indeed, surplus-jouissance takes on an especially complex character, for Lacan asserts, in this article, that there is a limit to its homological relation with surplus-value: the object *a* "is the cause rather than the effect of the market" (18).

Those caught up within this tumult performed a singular service for everyone, but also found themselves in a dangerous situation. They showed that the consumer products with which the capitalist system was showering them are not particular manifestations of the object *a* and that to claim otherwise is an imposture; in their protests, they were "vomiting out the objects that this society expects will provide them with satisfaction galore, because such objects do not fill up [*remplissent*] the fateful object *a*" (19).

On the other hand, Lacan presents the students as being drawn deeper and deeper into a conflict from which they would not be able to extricate themselves; the two poles of this conflict are the maelstrom of surplus-jouissance and the hole of castration. "The maelstrom intensifies around the hole, leaving nothing to hold onto, because its edges are the hole itself and because whatever rises up against being drawn into it is precisely its center" (20). In a related passage in his seminar, he gives the students more specific advice; a direct, frontal opposition to highly problematic reforms may not be the best strategy to adopt. "[T]o charge against the obstacles that are set up against you is precisely to act like a bull." He suggests that the students should, instead, "go where there aren't any obstacles," or that they should, in any case, "not be especially interested in obstacles" (*D'un Autre*, 242).

In his article, the image of a maelstrom that pulls the students into the hole is followed by an enigmatic sentence, in which Lacan makes this image even more complex, transforming the tumult into a moving wheel, in the center of which is a hub, its inner hole. "Young people are not going to be able to slow down the wheel in which they are caught, when it is within them that the hub, by its very nonexistence, pays a visit to some" ("On a Reform," 20). Here, he guardedly and ambiguously leaves open some hope; through their actions, something of castration will be able to manifest itself. This hope, however, occurs in a situation in which the protests were accomplishing the opposite of what the students had intended; the authorities' response to the crisis was serving to strengthen the grip of a capitalism that was already exerting a strangle-hold upon the university. As Lacan argues, "the turmoil of May is precipitating what caused it," by making possible reforms, such

as the introduction of course credits, that strengthen the power of the capitalist conception of knowledge (20).

In its treatment of the effects of capitalist knowledge, this article discreetly raises the question of the relation between capitalism and science. In his teaching, Lacan sometimes presents the two as being closely connected, even if their relation may be a "curious copulation" (*Other Side*, p. 110).¹⁰ "On a Reform in Its Hole" could be said to place more emphasis on the adjective in this description than on the noun; it seems to suggest that there is a fracture between these two forces, and that science could well perish before the onslaught of capitalism. In the first half of the article, he had argued that one of the effects of science, in its guise as psychiatry, is the segregation of the "discordant" members of society within mental institutions (16). Near the end of the article, Lacan suggests that this process of segregation may accelerate and become more radical, if one condition is met: if science is extinguished by the system that has been nourishing it. "As for the psychiatric 'sector,' no less than for the new daycare centers that are called universities, the features are being sketched out of how the system will end up, if the science that still makes use of the system succumbs to it: namely, the generalized concentration camp" (20).

Without tarrying over the provocative suggestion that there is a relation between the creation of centers such as Vincennes and the movement towards a universe of concentration camps, one can ask a different question: does the hint that science may "succumb" to the "system" point forward to Lacan's later formulations about the capitalist discourse? This discourse is based on a "foreclosure" that disrupts the logic of "circular permutation" that had provided the foundations for the four discourses (*Other Side*, 39). If the very condition of such "capitalism" is a disruption of the quasi-mathematical logic that plays such an important role in Lacan's teaching, does this indicate that capitalism, in its most radical form, can only exist by neutralizing certain aspects of science? Such a question, which cannot be examined in the context of this introduction, suggests the complexity and far-reaching character of Lacan's article. Written to comment on a reform that is no longer even yesterday's news, it nonetheless contains suggestions that are worthy of further analysis.

Notes

1. Jacques Lacan, *Le séminaire, livre XVI : D'un Autre à l'autre 1968-1969*, ed. by Jacques-Alain Miller (Paris: Seuil, 2006) 160. Henceforth cited in the text as *D'un Autre*.

2. Jacques Lacan, "D'une réforme dans son trou," ed. by Patrick Valas. Available at <<http://www.valas.fr/Jacques-Lacan-D-une-reforme-dans-son-trou,014>>. Henceforth the English translation will be cited in the text as "On a Reform."

3. Jacques Lacan, *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis [Seminar XVII]*, ed. by Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. by Russell Grigg (New York, NY: Norton, 2007) 168. Henceforth cited in the text as *Other Side*.

4. Patrice Pinell, "La normalisation de la psychiatrie française," *Regards sociologiques* 29 (2004): 3. For discussions of the problematic status of psychiatry in the nineteenth century,

see the classic works by Foucault and Castel: Michel Foucault, *Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception*, trans. Alan M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon, 1973); Robert Castel, *The Regulation of Madness: The Origins of Incarceration in France*, trans. by W. D. Halls (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).

5. Michel Debeauvais, "Quelques souvenirs sur les origines de Vincennes," n.d. Available at <<http://www.jphdenis.com/article-quelques-souvenirs-sur-les-origines-de-vincennes-55205069.html>>. All the quotations in this paragraph come from this text.

6. For a rigorous account of this homology, see Samo Tomšič, "Homology: Marx and Lacan," *S: Journal of the Circle for Lacanian Ideology Critique* 5 (2012): 98–113.

7. For a discussion of this renunciation, please see my article "The Capitalist Uncanny" in *S: Journal of the Circle for Lacanian Ideology Critique* 8 (2015): 95–123.

8. Jacques-Alain Miller, "Suture: Elements of the Logic of the Signifier" in *Concept and Form: Volume 1, Selections from the Cahiers pour l'analyse*, ed. by Peter Hallward and Knox Peden, trans. by Jacqueline Rose (London: Verso, 2012) 91–101. Lacan himself argues elsewhere that this conception is mistaken, since "the progress of mathematical logic [enabled] the subject of science to be completely reduced—not sutured but vaporized" (*Other Side*, 105).

9. The expressions, "relative autonomy" and "determination in the last instance" are borrowed from Louis Althusser. See Louis Althusser, "Contradiction and Overdetermination." In *For Marx*, trans. by Ben Brewster (London: New Left Books, 1970) 111, 113.

10. See also Marie-Jean Sauret's reference to this expression in "Psychopathology and Fractures of the Social Bond," *S: Journal of the Circle for Lacanian Ideology Critique* 8 (2015): 38–62.

JACQUES LACAN

ON A REFORM IN ITS HOLE

Translated by John Holland*

*Free Opinions (a section of Le Monde),
February 3, 1969*

Opinions are never free. I must say this about the heading of this section of the paper. In discourse, we only acknowledge freedom so as to detect the necessity that its artifice reveals. See, for example, mathematical discourse, and also the “free association” that operates in psychoanalysis.

The Reform In Psychiatry and “Scientific” Emotion

The birth announcement of Schools of Psychiatry in a certain number of centers (or rather, decenters) has arrived, as if their birth were already inscribed in the civil registry.

This reform has two levels:

Level 1, Teaching: How wonderful it is that psychiatrists themselves will have something to say about this. Even better, in these new centers, psychiatrists will be able to teach what they know.

Level 2, Their Practice: This will be established on the basis of the same functional principle psychiatrists have always fulfilled, which is social.

The principle will take form in the instituting of “sectors,” or local regions

*[(Translator’s note) Patrick Valas, who has published the French text of this article on his website at <<http://www.valas.fr/Jacques-Lacan-D-une-reforme-dans-son-trou,014>>, has described its origin as follows:] The French newspaper *Le Monde* asked Lacan to write an editorial about the University reform that had been put forward by Edgar Faure in the wake of the tumultuous events of 1968. The present text, written for the op-ed section of the paper called “Free Opinions [*Libres Opinions*],” was supposed to appear on February 3, 1969 but was never published. I am transmitting it here in the way that Lacan wanted it presented; I have reproduced my own copy, which is a photocopy of the original manuscript, annotated in Lacan’s handwriting, and given to me for this purpose. Lacan made annotations and corrections on his typewritten text, one of which, rather oddly, keeps recurring: each time that he had written the object *a*, he states in the margins that the letter should be italicized—Patrick Valas.

headed by teams responsible for mental health, including preventive care.

Horrendum: the plan is that one can ascend from one level to the other and that this coming-and-going will be permanent.

This is where the fear in the University is coming from, whether in medical schools or in the humanities and even the science departments.

Here is its apparatus: this “sociatry”¹ would become so dominant in teaching that it would skew the results of whatever scientific research the field might produce, for want of other recourses.

This caveat serves to elevate pharmaceutical companies to the top of the endangered researchers list, and that is supposed to be enough to kill the reform once and for all. Who, after all, cannot see that the recourse to medication is not about to leave the stage [*tribune*]?²

We find that the objection made in this way is worthy of a more serious examination, not only the one that, as we have been told, our Minister provided in summing up the “teaching level” by kicking away the term “sociatry” in order to pin down the other level.

That term is all the more relevant since “relevance” is precisely what it designates.

The social fracture, which will suck more staff, facilities, and funding into its gaping maw than are needed, is obvious. Its cost is small, however, in comparison with the skills that will now be required as a prerequisite for dealing with it.

These so-called “skills” are what the university authorities—who, strictly speaking, did not want to know anything about them at the very time they were responsible for them—now find so alarming.

What follows requires that we know why things happened as they did; an example will shed some light on this.

The Disjunction between Neurology and Psychiatry

I will try to get through this example as quickly as possible, for it emerges from a rut that we are anxious to extricate ourselves from, as I have myself experienced in the aftermath of a dream—a rare formation in my present situation—that I had while I was first writing this untimely *écrit*, a dream that led me to linger over the example in question.

It concerns the conjoining of neurology and psychiatry in the professional qualification awarded by medical schools. We know that, as the reform now stands, their conjoining will soon be a thing of the past.

Now, we should remember that, for twenty years, this conjoining received the active and indoctrinated support of the very psychiatrists who are now applauding

its demise, brought about by the force of circumstance—that is, by the truth when it shouted.

For psychiatrists as for so many others, all with the most pious of intentions of course, it was a matter of being on the side of what the University held: what can be called, to use a rather expressive phrase, the upper hand [*le manche*].

An upper hand that—as young people have been demonstrating to the administrators and managers [*cadres*] (who are falling apart pell-mell throughout the world) of a University from which the universe has been missing from some time—is nothing more than a gaffe.

In our example, it is apparent that the focus on how damaging it could be for the practice of medicine if a psychiatrist were unaware of some aspects of neurology [*d'un fait neurologique*] allows the opposite risk to go unheeded. This, because people think that anyone can understand psychiatric problems. They assume that a course in something like “personal development” is sufficient for supportive therapy.

As for the reverence for science, it is now awakening those who had felt comfortable with the idea that there was no longer any reason for it.

Putting pharmacodynamics within the reach of (authorized) incompetence has been enough to let them think that they are scientists, by virtue of the certainty that the drugs they prescribe are produced and tested scientifically.

An ideal, nevertheless, beckons promisingly: the safety and high scientific tenor of neurologists (who are otherwise quite sensible, especially when endorsing therapies) will come to overrun the field, which will have been ceded to them, because the cerebral crossroads forms the narrow pathway that psychiatric phenomena are required to take.

Is this supposed to suggest that psychiatric phenomena can only be taken up there, in that context, even if they come from somewhere else? Even if that “somewhere else” is where we are most needed? This is not a problem: the flaring edges of the cut, which are proffered to its flow, are functioning; they stream towards “asylum-like” places, where the community segregates its discordant members. Here, for more than two centuries, psychiatry has not been snubbed, but it has also not been examined closely enough to identify a scientific order of the second power, an order that would be the effect, for example, of science on the social.

The net gain of the process lies in maintaining a position of imposing presence, which, as we know, is no small thing in effective medical treatment.

And so what if the ideal put forth in this way is a complete dead end, as we already can see it is, since no kind of training—and therein lies the rub—is less appropriate

than neurological studies for preparing one to be able to grasp psychiatric phenomena.

On a Cut-Rate Knowledge

Caring about science is left to psychologists, test-givers, and even social workers: an immense group of personnel, which, because it has been devalued by being given this role, is suspected of having an inadequate knowledge of science.

Do not be mistaken here: there is no disputing the part that medicine plays in this business. This is just a denunciation of the crime medicine commits when it gets plunged into the university system.

At the level of medicine, as elsewhere, the minimal definition of a University's mission is surely to preserve the gains [*bénéfices*] in knowledge. This implies that training, as an effect of knowledge, should prevail over its value as rated by a market.

In medicine, as elsewhere, the University will certainly not miss its opportunity to do that.

Yet it has been outdone by the subversion that arises from what we call the market.

We are right to use this word, since the value involved here has fallen below the value that is in play in the capitalist market, which establishes value in terms of the commodity and of the radicalization that the market consummates by including labor in it.

Do we have to spell out the elementary truths here and point out what is being obscured by those who are protecting knowledge? Specifically, that knowledge is not acquired through work, and the training that is the effect of knowledge is even less so.

This is not to disavow the knowledge of the workers, and even, if one likes, of the people—not in the least—but rather to affirm that they do not acquire it through working, any more than scientists do.

Galileo, Newton, Mendel, Gallois, Bohr, the ever-endearing James D. Watson: none of them owes anything to his own labor; each owes it all to others. Their discoveries are transmitted in a lightening flash only to those who have training, which is produced by a number of short-circuits of the same order, even if all memory of them has been snuffed out by the boredom of school.

Every homemaker knows that reading gets in the way of housework; the common, unskilled laborer sees it as a way out; the communist worker finds nobility in being lettered.

This is the inherent value-rating of knowledge.

On a Hole and the Little Pile that Opens it Up, Just as it Closes it Up

In this context, a function that can only be articulated in terms of psychoanalytic theory comes into play, one that I knotted together from the effects of the knowledge on which the subject is founded, sometimes as an effect of loss, which is then signified by a cut in the body. This has been given the algebraic name of the object *a*. Read this as “little *a*”; more unlettered people, who confine themselves to speech, translate this as a “little pile” [*tas*], just a computer glitch.³

This characterization is sufficient, but it is also necessary for situating correctly what all philosophy has missed: the cause, or rather the *a*-cause of desire.⁴

Recently, in an ongoing course I am giving, I correlated this cause and the function of surplus jouissance (*Mehrlust*, which is obviously homologous, but may not be analogous, to Marx’s *Mehrwert*,⁵ since it is the cause rather than the effect of the market).

My *Écrits* have already had an influence on the analytic practice of some of those who will read these lines. Yet the fact that I am addressing the readership of *Le Monde*, *quo talis est*, does not forbid me from advising readers to refer to the *Écrits*, since—unlike this prose where people want to place me—those writings are not something that can be skimmed through; let us say rather that any training-effect extracted from such a reading by mathematical ingenuity would only be indistinct, because the text is not sufficiently formalized.⁶

We nonetheless can see, with a little effort, that the object *a* manages much better at making love with the specular image, which it perforates, than at animating the maelstrom that it provokes as surplus jouissance.

All that is needed is an ideal, one that can be picked up anywhere; until now, this has involved an Other who is supposed to know. This is what the psychoanalyst dares to offer you as transference.

The fruitful impudence of producing truth: to begin with, truth alone makes work necessary.

This is the work that must be done to bring about man’s identification, and then—in relation to the jouissance that he encounters, the jouissance of the woman from whom he is born—to undo it; in other words, to refind the hole, at long last vivid, of the castration from which woman arises as truth [*surgit véridique*].

Such, at least, is the trail to the psychoanalyst blazed by neurosis, so that man can truly achieve this through its repetition.

It is something he can only accomplish by supposing that he is disbeing [*désêtre*], in being nothing other than desire for knowledge.

Suffice it to say that analytic training should exit from the hands of helots who have been confined to an international reserve, where they are enjoying the last of their ease (but this is another story, which we will not deal with here...); from now on, anyone who would like to teach science classes should automatically or even obligatorily undergo it.

This leaves almost no occasion for a certain body of bosses to provide their students with an access—whether calibrated, ceremonial or direct—to its “inner” circle, whether this circle be worldly or withdrawn, though preferably not familial and, especially, not dissipated.

Perhaps it would be better for psychoanalysts (and do not imagine that they are what they seem to be these days) to do without all of that and to stay out in the cold, if only to prove that they do not get cold feet, are not faint of heart and will not freeze up. There are no more nipples for Tiresias to cover up.⁷

Such is the price that must be paid to raise the value-rating of knowledge on the market, for that is what will be imposed on anyone who wants to see his or her stocks included in the choice of bets.

The tote board will be structuralist if there is one at all. The subject of science has nothing to do with the kind of inflation [*boursouflure*] that is given a premium on the market of influence.⁸

I am saying this not because I know what it can cost to clean up that sort of thing, but in order to remind you where else the object *a* finds lodgings.

The Turmoil of May and its May-Mory [*Maimoire*] in the Capitalist Subject

Thinking about this provides a better perspective on the confluence of biases, the backwash of motives, of the turmoil [*l'émoi*] of May (as we will come to call it).⁹

This is not to belittle its meaning. The unrest that bourgeois youth feel when they see influence going through such a rough patch, as a result of what we deem to be a contraction of its market, does not detract from the importance of what they have noted, and aspiring reformers would do well to include this in their calculations. It is just that the youth will not hang on quietly to what they have been promised until the next time, when they will have nothing to greet the crisis with but gold paving-stones.¹⁰

For, under the heading of “consumer society” and of the cars whose only purpose is to furnish sidewalks, these youth have been vomiting out the objects that this society expects will provide them with satisfaction galore, because such objects do not fill up [*remplissent*] the fateful object *a*.

The universal capitalist submersion is not done swinging from West to East. It has its role to play.

The good souls' hoarse cries of Maymorial [*maimorisation*]"—"Things will never be the same [*plus jamais comme avant*]"—are to be taken in their comic, i.e., rueful sense. For it is clear that things are even more the same than they ever were, and that the turmoil of May is precipitating what caused it.

The "course credit" [*unité de valeur*], promoted as the measure of a degree that has been earned, professes, like an enormous slip of the tongue, what we are defining as the reduction of knowledge to the function of the market.¹¹

As for the psychiatric "sector," no less than for the new daycare centers that are called universities, the features are being sketched out of how the system will end up, if the science that still makes use of the system succumbs to it: namely, the generalized concentration camp.

The maelstrom intensifies around the hole, leaving nothing to hold onto, because its edges are the hole itself and because whatever rises up against being drawn into it is precisely its center.

Young people are not going to be able to slow down the wheel in which they are caught, when it is within them that the hub, by its very nonexistence, pays a visit to some.

For the subject of the events, as wandering as it may be, is not consciousness, and this is why its reply only comes from one mind [*tête*] and never from a group.

To get your bearings here, you must know that the present is contingent, just as the past is futile. It is to the future that we must hold—against Aristotle, who faltered on this in insisting that the present has what there is of the necessary.¹² Tomorrow's unknown conqueror is already in command today.

Written on February 3, 1969. J.L.

Notes

1. [Lacan's portmanteau term "*sociatrie*," translated here as "sociatry" combines the terms "*société* [society]" and "*psychiatrie* [psychiatry]" (Translator's note).]
2. [The term "*tribune*" can also refer to the op-ed section of a newspaper. Lacan is suggesting that the pharmaceutical industry and its proponents are not ready to stop "editorializing" (Translator's note).]
3. [In spoken French, the words "*petit*" and "*a*"—as in "*objet petit a*"—are elided, and thus sound like "*petit tas* [little pile]" (Translator's note).]
4. [The expression, "*a-cause de*" is a pun on the common expression, "*à cause de* [because of]" (Translator's note).]
5. ["*Mehrwert*" is usually translated as "surplus value." (Translator's note).]
6. [The Latin phrase, "*quo talis est*" means, roughly, "such as it may be" (Translator's note).]

7. [This is a reference to Guillaume Apollinaire's play *The Breasts of Tiresias*. See Maurice Maeterlinck, Alfred Jarry, and Guillaume Apollinaire, *Three Pre-Surrealist Plays*, trans. by Maya Slater (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1997) (Translator's note).]
8. [A "*boursoufflure*" is a swelling, but "*bourse*" can refer to a stock market, a purse or a scholarship. In the eleventh seminar, Lacan's example of a forced choice, "Your money or your life!" is a translation of "*La bourse ou la vie !*" See Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*, ed. by Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. by Alan Sheridan (New York: Norton, 1978) 212 and Jacques Lacan, *Le séminaire, livre XI: Les quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse*, ed. by Jacques-Alain Miller (Paris: Seuil) 192 (Translator's note).]
9. [In French, "*l'émoi*" and "*les mois* [the months]" are pronounced similarly. The events of May extended well beyond that particular month (Translator's note).]
10. ["*Sous les pavés, les plages*" one of the students' slogans in May 1968, has been translated as "Under the paving-stones, the beach." See, for example, Thomas Pynchon, *Inherent Vice: A Novel* (Penguin Books, 2010) vii (Translator's note).]
11. [An "*unité de valeur*" is literally a "value-unit." In a French university, each class that a student passes will enable him/her to obtain a certain number of these units. Someone who has obtained a given number units will be awarded a bachelor's degree (Translator's note).]
12. [See, for example, Christopher Kirwan, "Aristotle on the Necessity of the Present," *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*. 4 (1986): 167–187 (Translator's note).]

SAMO TOMŠIČ

LAUGHTER AND CAPITALISM

In this time of crisis, interest in Marx's economic thought has once again found its way to the core of international political-economic debates. Only a good decade ago, many voices claimed this figure's attempts to think the capitalist mode of production no longer sufficed to explain our financialised technocapitalist societies, but he has now made a triumphal comeback from the annals of political philosophy. In the same move, another old alliance that had vanished from the political agendas, Freudo-Marxism, has now re-emerged, reformulated through its Lacanian developments. Marx and Freud, the critique of political economy and psychoanalysis (one could also write, the critique of libidinal economy) are no longer treated as ways of thinking that belong to some tamed "cultural heritage" (which is to claim that they do not need to be taken seriously). Instead, they are resuming their roles as critical and radical voices, addressing the question, in all its necessity and complexity, of how to break out of capitalist structures.

The official transcription of Lacan's seminar *D'un Autre à l'autre*, which contains his most direct contribution to the critique of political economy, was published in 2006, only a little more than a year before the outbreak of yet another fundamental crisis of capitalism. The seminar in question, too, was a crisis seminar, held in the turbulent moment of 1968-69, directly after the student and workers' protests, which had reached their well-known climax in May 68. Yet Lacan's seminar contains more than a confrontation with the political events of its time. It also performs a wide-reaching reorientation of the critical project known under the slogan of the "return to Freud." In this reorientation, which, it is true, stretches back to Lacan's "excommunication" from the International Psychoanalytic Association, Marx slowly replaced the authority of Ferdinand de Saussure, and consequently, the political implications of the theory of the signifier prevailed over the epistemological value of structural linguistics. Put differently, the science of value supplemented the science of signs, and the intricacies of discursive production¹ became the main preoccupation of Lacan's thought.

1. In its double aspect, which comprises production of subjectivity and production of enjoyment.

Despite being openly reserved toward the revolutionary slogans or the proclaimed goals of the worker-student alliance, Lacan sided with the movements by determining the sources of the structural opposition to the social rebellion. The theory of discourses, developed in the aftermath of May 68, could therefore be read both as Lacan's theory of crisis as well as his theory of revolution. Its pivotal point is the link between structure and instability. Lacan strives to think the real consequences of discursive logic by examining the contradictions, dynamics and impossibilities inherent in every structural order. It is within this perspective that his notorious response to the revolutionary students and critiques of structuralism should be read: "... if the May events demonstrate anything, then they demonstrate precisely the descent of structures into the street."² "Structure i[n] the street" intertwines the space of discursive relations with the site of political action, which, according to the agents of May 68, escapes the determinism of structural laws. Lacan's formulation, on the other hand, argues that events, be they social or subjective, political or traumatic, *are* realisations of structure; they are above all *logical* events, an assertion that does not simply suggest that they are overdetermined by a set of rigid relations. Lacan persistently argued against the dichotomy of structure and event, because this opposition depends on an oversimplified conception of both terms, a double misunderstanding. Just as structure is no stable and invariable compendium of necessary relations, event is no pure and mystic "outdoors," which would intervene out of the blue in order to bring about a sudden transformation. For psychoanalysis, there is some kind of event-character pertaining to structures as such, and one can thematise the emergence of events only by conceptually linking structure and instability. Lacan's theory of discourses thus pushes structuralism toward the *logic* of instability, whether this instability is called crisis, revolution or event. What matters is that all these cases necessitate a more sophisticated and critical notion of structure. Consequently, this reorientation brings about a fundamental reinvention of structuralism, which now begins to designate a science of the real,³ a science whose privileged epistemic object is precisely instability.

In this framework Lacan introduced and deployed his controversial thesis that there was a wide-reaching homology between Marx's deduction of surplus-value and Freud's attempts to theorise the production of enjoyment. The production of value in the social apparatus and the production of enjoyment in the mental apparatus follow the same logic and eventually depend on the same discursive structure. This move confronted Lacan's "return to Freud" in the midst of a capitalist

2. Lacan's intervention following Michel Foucault's lecture "*Qu'est-ce qu'un auteur ?* [What is an author]," in *Dits et écrits* (Paris: Gallimard, 2001) 848.

3. In the concrete case of Lacan's teaching, a science of the structural real. See, for instance, the following remarks: "Structure is thus real. In general, this is determined by means of convergence toward impossibility. This is why it is real." And further: "Let us say that, in principle, it is not worth speaking of anything other than of the real, in which discourse itself has consequences. Call it structuralism, or not. Last time I called it the condition of seriousness." Jacques Lacan, *D'un Autre à l'autre* (Seminar XVI, 2006) 30-31. Henceforth cited in the text as Seminar XVI.

crisis with a more general deadlock that Freud had already stumbled upon in his theoretical and clinical work: the production of *jouissance* against the background of a psychic conflict, a tension between opposing demands or heterogeneous instances in the mental apparatus. One of Freud's greatest merits consisted in the fact that he no longer conceived of enjoyment as a more or less insignificant side-effect of satisfaction, which would signal the decrease of bodily tension once the satisfaction of a need, desire or drive had taken place. Instead, he recognised in enjoyment a product emerging directly from the increase of tension. One merely needs to consult Freud's writings in metapsychology (for instance, *Repression, Instincts and their Vicissitudes* or *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*) in order to become aware that Freud associates the production of enjoyment with the intensification of tension. The more the unconscious tendency demands satisfaction, the more the mental apparatus works on creating the conditions for satisfaction. However, this satisfaction does not take place at the end of this process—it is inscribed in the process itself. The unconscious tendency constantly demands more enjoyment, and consequently, more psychic labour. Already from Freud's earlier works, such as *The Interpretation of Dreams* or *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*, it becomes apparent that unconscious labour performs an endless task of satisfying an insatiable demand. It is no surprise, then, that Lacan at a certain point described the unconscious with the expression "ideal worker," a worker that does not "think, judge or calculate". Yet complications emerge even in this seemingly automatic factory that is the unconscious.

For psychoanalysis, libidinal economy never follows the machine-like model. Instead, it is always articulated around a fundamental deadlock (e.g. repression), and the actual source of enjoyment should be sought precisely there. Already in Freud, this deadlock was contextualised both epistemologically and politically: it triggered the "scientific project" of psychoanalysis by becoming its privileged object, but it also provided specific insight into the mechanisms that support the social mode of production. It is not exaggerated to claim that *Das Unbehagen im Kapitalismus*, discontent in capitalism, would be the more appropriate title of *Das Unbehagen in der Kultur*, discontent in culture, since one can hardly ignore that Freud never speaks of some abstract culture, but precisely of industrial societies marked by insatiable consumerism, intensified exploitation and recurring breakdowns, economic depressions and wars. The nexus of the epistemological and the political problematic that accompanied the Freudian theory of the unconscious suggests that capitalism belongs among the crucial problems for psychoanalysis and that clinical practice constantly confronts the pathologies of what one could call the capitalist mode of enjoyment. Lacan brought out this point in the following emphatic remark: "The more saints, the more laughter; that's my principle, to wit, the

4. Jacques Lacan, *Television: A Challenge to the Psychoanalytic Establishment*, ed. by Joan Copjec, trans. by Denis Hollier et al. (New York: Norton, 1990) 16. Henceforth cited in the text as *Television*.

way out of capitalist discourse—which will not constitute progress, if it happens only for some” (*Television* 16).

The relation between psychoanalysis and capitalism could hardly be situated in a more openly antagonistic way. Psychoanalysis is the *envers* of the capitalist discourse, its conflictual flipside and inversion—which means its internal border and the point where the capitalist discourse can be destabilised, sabotaged and inverted. This clearly does not mean that psychoanalysis already stands outside capitalism, or that it possesses positive knowledge of how to break out of its forms of domination. But it does suggest that the imperative of psychoanalysis, as it was invented by Freud and reinvented by Lacan, consists in not shying away from direct confrontation with capitalism and in pursuing the line initiated precisely by Marx’s critique of political economy: to destabilise the appearances that sustain the capitalist mode of production and to mark the point, from which the capitalist social link can be envisaged in its irreducible contradiction. In Lacan’s words, “Without any doubt, the worker is the sacred place of this conflictual element, which is the truth of the system” (*Seminar XVI* 39). To mobilise this conflictual element—namely the subject that both Marx and Freud encountered in productive social labour and in unconscious labour—*against* the capitalist strategies of exploitation is the shared effort of psychoanalysis and the critique of political economy, which is why no psychoanalyst can be indifferent to the question: How can the exit from the capitalist discourse be brought about *for all*?

This *for all* is indeed crucial, since it demands that psychoanalysis *force* the juncture of the singular with the universal, rather than remaining in the apparent autonomy and self-sufficiency of clinical experience. The impossibility of the psychoanalytic profession, which Freud had already spoken about seems to redouble and intensify when confronted with this challenging political task.⁵ On the other hand, Lacan’s remark contains a sobering moment for everyone else: there is no such thing as an easy way out, an exit from capitalism for one, some or many. Claiming the opposite would mean to fall back into an extremely problematic dichotomy between inside and outside, and consequently, to identify the exit with a metaposition. This would then amount to an even more problematic fetishisation, according to which psychoanalysis, for instance, would be considered the “great Outdoors” of the logic of capital, a small oasis of authenticity within the vast capitalist desert. Lacan’s critical stance is clear: psychoanalysts must restrain themselves from becoming self-sufficient, self-absorbed or self-centred, for these are precisely the key features that will abolish the radical and critical character of their discipline and

5. “Here let us pause for a moment to assure the analyst that he has our sincere sympathy in the very exacting demands he has to fulfil in carrying out his activities. It almost looks as if analysis were the third of those ‘impossible’ professions in which one can be sure beforehand of achieving unsatisfying results. The other two, which have been known much longer, are education and government.” *The Standard Edition of Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Vol. XXIII, trans. James Strachey (London: Vintage, 2001) 248. Henceforth cited in the text as Standard Edition, followed by the volume number.

integrate it into the logical frameworks of the dominant social discourse. A case of such assimilation is well known, the International Psychoanalytic Association, which can mockingly be called the “professional insurance plan against analytic discourse” (*Television* 15). The institution, created by Freud in order to be the official guardian of his epistemic invention, soon became an institutionalisation of the resistance against the most revolutionary insights of psychoanalysis.

By searching for a way out of the capitalist discourse, the task of psychoanalysis becomes embedded, from the very outset, in a significantly broader context than the supposed intimacy of the analyst’s office. In the apparent clinical withdrawal from the social structures, the latter are most effectively at work. They re-emerge in the patient’s speech, as well as in the structure of his or her libidinal economy. Capitalism is inscribed in the mental apparatus—this was already Freud’s insight, when he found the best metaphor for unconscious desire in none other than the capitalist, meaning that psychoanalysis began with a fundamental critical and political insight rooted in the rejection of the opposition “unconscious—conscious” or “private—social.” The unconscious is no archive or reservoir of unclear representations and forgotten memories; it is a site of discursive production. Consequently, what matters most in the unconscious is not the “explicit content” of memories and signifiers, but *what happens* to them, the procedures that manipulate the material, and which can be approached in a logical way. Freud famously broke this logic down to two central symbolic operations—condensation and displacement—for which Lacan provided a linguistic translation: metaphor and metonymy. But for Freud the unconscious processes were all about a specific *form of labour*. Operations like condensation and displacement are no simple automata; they demand a labouring subject, which, in the given regime knows only one form, labour-power. Hence, to talk about unconscious labour is far from innocent. Freud refers to the same economic reality and to the same conceptual apparatus as Marx.

The important Freudian insight would thus be that the unconscious is no neutral or transcendent space of thinking: its mechanisms and the corresponding mode of enjoyment depend on the same structure as the social mode of production. Lacan named this predominating structure the master’s discourse, a discourse that he first identified with the logic of the signifier, which comes down to his famous definition “the signifier is what represents the subject to another signifier.” To these three discursive elements Lacan later added the surplus-object, *a*. However, for the master’s discourse the same conclusion needs to be drawn as for the unconscious. It may be the oldest discourse, yet it does not function in the same way in different historical contexts (slaveholder societies, feudalism and capitalism). Why is this the case?—Because its four elements (master-signifier, S_1 ; knowledge, S_2 ; subject, S ; and surplus-object, *a*) know different “personifications” (as Marx would put it) in different modes of production. This point can be read along with the remark, from the *Communist Manifesto*, that the “history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles”—and not of Class Struggle.⁶ Marx and Engels were cautious

6. See Karl Marx, *Selected Writings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) 246.

enough not to make of class struggle a trans-historical invariable, which would simply assume different concretisations in different historical epochs. They even write that capitalism resolves previous class struggles and replaces them with the capitalist struggle between two social classes, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. Capitalism “simplifies” class struggle by making the non-relation that supports society fully visible in the split into two opposing camps, while past societies were still engaged into multiple class conflicts. Again, this does not imply that capitalism revealed the true essence of past struggles but that it fabricated something entirely different from the existing social inequalities and introduced new modes and strategies of exploitation, which introduced new social structures, etc.

To repeat, both class struggle and the master’s discourse turn out to be empty concepts, if we detach them from their social concretisations. They do not designate some ahistorical essence of history or positive entity; they stand for the inconsistency, contradiction or instability that traverses each concrete historical mode of production but which is also transformed together with the mode of production.⁷ The feudal lord cannot be compared with the modern capitalist, even if he can be associated with the same discursive articulation or with the same insatiable tendency of exploitation etc. Class struggle designates for Marx and Engels both the structure of the social link and the distortion of this structure. In other words, class struggle is an empty concept *precisely because* it designates structural instability and even instability *as* structure, thereby rejecting the essentialist readings, where structures are said to form an enclosed and stable order. Homologically, Lacan’s notion of the master’s discourse, too, envisions the instability in the relations of domination and not some eternal master, which would remain identical throughout history. One could therefore reformulate Marx and Engels by saying that all history is the history of the master’s discourses. In Lacan’s translation of the classical Marxian problematic, the master’s discourse should be taken as a formula of nonexistence rather than existence—namely of the nonexistence of the social relation, on the background of which other social links become possible (such as the hysteric’s discourse, which Lacan associates with various political revolutions, the university discourse, which is linked with modern science, or finally the analytic discourse, which concerns psychoanalysis but should not be limited only to that framework).⁸

Going back to the quotation from *Television*, we can ask ourselves who or what is the enigmatic saint that Lacan associates with the exit from the capitalist discourse. Let us consider the lines that precede the quoted excerpt:

A saint’s business, to put it clearly, is not *caritas*. Rather, he acts as trash: his business being *trashitas*. So as to realise what the structure imposes, namely

7. In the last instance, Marx’s term “mode of production” is homologous with Lacan’s notion of “discourse.” But the “mode of production” without specification (“slaveholder,” “feudal,” “capitalist” etc.) clearly does not say anything.

8. For the deduction and elaboration of the four discourses, see Jacques Lacan, *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis* (Seminar XVII), trans. Russell Grigg (New York: Norton, 2007).

allowing the subject, the subject of the unconscious, to take him as the cause of the subject's own desire. In fact it is through the abjection of this cause that the subject in question has a chance to be aware of his position, at least within the structure. For the saint, this is not amusing (*Television* 15-16, translation modified).

The task of the analyst consists in "realising what the structure imposes." But the realisation of structure also means its destabilisation, by detecting and circumscribing its internal impossibility, contradiction and disclosure. In doing so, the analyst enables the subject to become aware of its position within the given regime of production, namely that the subject is constituted as pure split, in the case of capitalism, as commodity labour-power.⁹ Marx already showed that labour-power is marked by inconsistency, because it is both one commodity among others and the only commodity that can produce other commodities. In this respect, he assumed the same position in relation to the proletariat that Freud did toward his neurotic patients: he was their analyst, in the sense that he *dissolved* (the actual meaning of *analysis*) the layers of appearances and fetishisations in order to reach the point where structure is realised in nothing other than the subject's inconsistency. In labour-power the contradictions of the commodity universe are knotted together—this is the actual critical point of Marx's labour theory of value, to which we shall return further below.

The realisation of structural imperatives requires transference, in which the analyst assumes the position of the cause of the analysand's desire and thereby establishes the libidinal relation that sustains the analytical economy. Here, a certain displacement is at work, since the analytical situation achieves something that otherwise remains unknown to the subject: it creates the conditions in which the subject can openly confront its own status in the broader social reality: "to be aware of his position, at least within the structure." This is why psychoanalysis does not aim at doing charity (*caritas*), i.e., creating the conditions, in which the subject would be reintegrated into the given social frameworks. Charity is a form of love, which does not seriously problematise the regime that created the conditions requiring charity. What Lacan calls *trashitas* contains a more subversive tendency, which aims to subvert the regime of domination by repeating its contradictions within the analytic situation. Yet should the task of analysis consist in more than mere repetition of existing deadlocks, it needs to prevent the development of transference into yet another "love-relation" (*caritas*) and instead orientate the subject toward the point where its act will transform the established mode of enjoyment. Targeting this transformation means working on a possible resistance against capitalism.

Lacan provided different names for this analytic goal—the pass, traversing the fantasy, identification with the symptom—which all envision the same structural shift: transformation of the subject ("the pass"), defetishisation ("traversing the fantasy") and organisation of structural contradiction ("identification with the symptom").

9. See Jean-Claude Milner, *Clartés de tout* (Paris: Verdier, 2011) 90.

In all these cases the realisation of what (the capitalist) structure imposes will widen the gap that allows the commodified subject to be transformed into a “saint-trash,” the counterpart to commodity. One subversive aspect of *trashitas*, transference, thus consists in its rejection of the only love that capitalism cultivates for its impoverished subjects (*caritas*). Of course, by practising *trashitas*, psychoanalysis risks strengthening the dependency of the analysand on the analyst, which is why Lacan incessantly repeated that the analyst should never identify with the object of transference. The risk of transference lies in the analysand’s fetishisation of the analyst as a “subject supposed to know,” to recall Lacan’s formulation; by identifying with this figure, the analyst would indeed end up in self-fetishisation, turning psychoanalysis into yet another form of capitalist domination. The analyst is merely a provisional love object, and the end of analysis inevitably coincides with the dissolution of transference.

Psychoanalysis should thus envision the subject’s confrontation with capitalism and strive to bring him or her to the point where an apparently private symptom can be recognised as a concrete manifestation of the general economic framework. There is no private suffering, and to cure concretely means to cure from capitalism. This would be the basic difference between psychoanalysis and other psych-professions. Psychiatry, psychology and psychotherapy all engage in the practice of *caritas* and thereby mystify the actual position of the subject within structure.

The association of laughter with the exit from capitalism is another surrealist moment in the citation from Lacan’s *Television*. Laughter as a weapon against capitalism seems to suggest that capitalism might be structured like a joke, and the envisioned universalisation of laughter – “the more saints the more laughter” – would mean the downfall of capitalism. Should psychoanalysis teach us how finally to laugh at capitalism? Much of the effectiveness of capitalism surely concerns the fact that it is more successful in causing anxiety than laughter. While Nietzsche wrote that all the gods died of laughter when one of them claimed He was the only one, will the same fate strike Capital, once everyone starts laughing at its advocates, who never get tired of repeating that we live in the best possible world or that we need to tighten our belts because we have been living beyond our means? “The more saints the more laughter” evidently means “The more ‘abjects’ the more politics,” a politics carried out with a somewhat different humour than the one proposed by the capitalist class. For the saint’s laughter is not the only laughter Lacan talked about. It is the inversion of the capitalist’s laughter, which Lacan stumbled upon in Marx’s *Capital*:

Marx introduces this surplus value almost guilelessly (...) after taking some time, when he lets the person involved, namely the capitalist, speak. (...) Marx allows him to take his time to develop this apologia, which appears to be nothing if not honest, and there Marx points out that this spectral figure he confronts, the capitalist, laughs.

This feature, seems superfluous, nevertheless struck me when I first read it. It seemed to me then that this laughter is properly something that refers to what, at that very moment Marx is unveiling, namely what concerns the essence of surplus-value. (...)

What I am unveiling in the passage has, of course, not been noted until now (...) I mean the conjuncture of laughter with the radically eluded function of surplus-value (...)

In short, there and elsewhere, I mean in the radical function hidden in the relation of production to labour, as well as elsewhere, in another, deeper relation, where I am trying to lead you with the help of surplus-enjoyment, there is something like a fundamental gag, which is located strictly speaking in this joint, where we have to drive our wedge when the relations that are in play in the experience of the unconscious, understood in terms of its most general functioning. (*Seminar XVI* 64-65)

The capitalist hijacks laughter by imposing his own idea of humour. The matching passage in Marx is to be found in the section on the production of absolute surplus-value, the chapter on labour and its valorisation, where Marx lays out most openly his correction of the political-economic labour theory of value, a correction that displaces the accent from the all-too-simple claim that “labour is the source of value” to the more sophisticated association of the source of value with the contradictions of the commodity form:

In fact, the seller of labour-power, like the seller of any other commodity, realizes [*realisiert*] its exchange-value, and externalises [*veräußert*] its use-value. He cannot take the one without giving the other. The use-value of labour-power, in other words labour, belongs just as little to its seller as the use-value of oil after it has been sold belongs to the dealer who sold it. The owner of the money has paid the value of a day’s labour-power; he therefore has the use of it for a day, a day’s labour belongs to him. On the one hand the daily sustenance of labour-power costs only half a day’s labour, while on the other hand the very same labour-power can remain effective, can work, during a whole day, and consequently the value which its use during one day creates is double what the capitalist pays for that use; this circumstance is a piece of good luck for the buyer, but by no means an injustice towards the seller.

Our capitalist foresaw this situation, and that was the cause of his laughter. The worker therefore finds, in the workshop, the means of production necessary for working not just 6 but 12 hours. (...) The trick has at last worked: money has been transformed into capital. Every condition of the problem is satisfied, while the laws governing the exchange of commodities have not

been violated in any way. Equivalent has been exchanged for equivalent. For the capitalist as buyer paid the full value for each commodity, for the cotton, for the spindle and for the labour-power. He then did what is done by every purchaser of commodities: he consumed their use-value.¹⁰

What the capitalist exploits is not simply labour but a specific structural feature, the minimal gap between use-value and exchange value. He mobilises the alienating dimension of the commodity form and turns this alienation into a privileged source of value. In doing so, he successfully implements labour-power as the commodified version of the subject. However, the commodity form is clearly not the only form of alienation. A much more fundamental level of alienation is labour as such. More precisely, what the English translation of Marx calls “alienation” is in German called *Entäußerung*, externalisation. By choosing this notion, Marx literally repeated something that Hegel already wrote in *Phenomenology of Spirit*, when he ranked labour and speech among processes of constitutive alienation, processes that do not simply cause alienation, but which simply *are* alienation in action. However, capitalism is the first mode of production in history that rigorously organises the creation of value around this alienating character of labour and speech, in other words, of discourse.¹¹

The critical importance of the labour theory of value that Marx adopted from his predecessors in political economy (Adam Smith and David Ricardo) consists in a highlighting of what the classics had failed to understand. For them, the labour theory of value was meant to situate labour as the source of value, next to self-interest (or what Freud called “human narcissism”). However, Marx recognised the insufficiencies and mystifications of this simple approach. For him the source of value is not labour but *exploitation* (among others of labour), and more fundamentally, the *exploitation of alienation* that inevitably marks all forms of human activity. And one should not forget that in this productive process, the *mystification of exploitation* (what Marx calls fetishism) plays a role that is just as important as exploitation. There is no exploitation without its ideological mystification, which strives to make exploitation socially invisible. Several readers of Marx have thus mistakenly concluded that he is merely rewriting Adam Smith by adding more drama, which is false. Instead, Marx provided the epistemic conditions that enable one to envision, behind the social exploitation of concrete men, women and children, a more fundamental exploitation of structural contradictions. With this move Marx also succeeded in isolating an entirely different form of subjectivity. Unlike the non-alienated and abstract subject of private interest in classical political economy,

10. Karl Marx, *Capital*, Vol. 1, trans. Ben Fowkes (London: Penguin Books, 1990) 300–301, translation modified. Henceforth cited in the text as Capital I.

11. Or as Alenka Zupančič has recently claimed, capitalism is the first mode of production, to have transformed the nonexistence of a social relation—a social non-relation—into the privileged source of profit. See Alenka Zupančič, “Sexual is Political?” in Samo Tomšič and Andreja Zevnik eds., *Jacques Lacan Between Psychoanalysis and Politics* (London: Routledge, 2015).

the subject of alienation and exploitation is no psychological or pathological (narcissistic) subject, no subject supposed to possess positive knowledge of its private interests and of market laws. Political economy remains centred on consciousness and cognition. On the other hand, the subject discovered by the critique of political economy, is non-psychological, non-individual and an 'abject' of knowledge; it is a subject of truth, which Marx targeted by introducing notions and procedures such as alienation, exploitation, contradiction and class struggle into the efforts of economic thought to elaborate a scientific theory of value.

Let us remain with the quoted excerpt from *Capital* a bit further. Marx continues to address the problematic of alienation in the following way:

By turning his money into commodities which serve as the building materials for a new product, and as factors in the labour process, by incorporating living labour into their lifeless objectivity, the capitalist simultaneously transforms value, i.e. past labour in its objectified and lifeless form, into capital, value which can perform its own valorisation process, an animated monster which begins to 'work', 'as if its body were by love possessed'. (*Capital I* 302)

Marx openly exposes two levels of alienation, the constitutive and the constituted, when claiming that what capitalism does is incorporate living labour into a lifeless thing. We should keep in mind that this incorporation, which is also mortification, does not simply target the production of commodities, but also and above all the transformation of living labour into labour-power, a measurable and calculable commodity, which, despite all asserted equality in exchange, assumes an exceptional status within the capitalist universe. While living labour has often been interpreted in a vitalist way, one should nevertheless consider that Marx's expression does not envision some non-alienated positive substance, but precisely the aspect of labour that, according to Hegel, makes of it a process of constitutive alienation. Instead of "living labour" one might as well write "living alienation," alienation that has not yet assumed the formal envelope of the commodity form. The predicate "living" is misleading because it suggests a vital horizon beyond alienation, a state in which labour would be liberated of alienation. But alienation is above all decentralisation and externalisation. It does not have the exclusively negative and tragic connotation of a "subjective drama," that the vitalistic readings persistently denounce. As Marx, Freud and Lacan have more or less implicitly argued, alienation should be transformed from tragedy to comedy. Only through this transformation can something like a political mobilisation of subjectivised negativity—subjectivity without predicates and/or imaginary features such as "race," "gender," "nationality" etc. (all cases of constituted alienation)—be achieved and the class struggle effectively actualised in the confrontation of two classes. (We can observe, today more than ever, that class struggle is most often a "one way street," "class struggle from above," as it has also been called.)

When talking about the capitalist's laughter, Lacan hints that no one ever seriously considered that the structure of jokes might reveal something about the scope and the effectiveness of capitalism. This is not entirely the case, since such a consideration can be found in none than Freud's book on jokes, which is filled with economic comparisons and where the central object of discussion is nothing other than *Lustgewinn*, surplus-enjoyment, the psychoanalytical homologue to surplus-value. Here is an exemplary comparison of the unconscious with capitalism, where the economic tendency toward saving re-emerges in the psychogenesis of jokes:

I may perhaps venture on a comparison between psychical economy and a business enterprise. So long as the turnover in the business is very small, the important thing is that outlay in general shall be kept low and administrative costs restricted to the minimum. Economisation (*Sparsamkeit*) is concerned with the absolute height of expenditure. Later, when the business has expanded, the importance of the administrative cost diminishes; the height reached by the amount of expenditure is no longer of significance provided that the turnover and profits can be sufficiently increased. It would be niggling, and indeed positively detrimental, to be conservative over expenditure on the administration of the business. Nevertheless it would be wrong to assume that when expenditure was absolutely great there would be no room left for the tendency to save (*Spartendenz*). The mind of the manager, if it is inclined to saving (*Ersparung*), will now turn to economisation (*Sparsamkeit*) over details. He will feel satisfaction if a piece of work can be carried out at smaller cost than previously, however small the saving may seem to be in comparison with the size of the total expenditure. In a quite analogous fashion, in our complex psychical business too, economisation in detail (*detaillierte Ersparung*) remains a source of pleasure, as may be seen from everyday happenings. (*Standard Edition VIII* 156-157, translation modified)

The unconscious engages in budget cuts and there is one insight that brings Freud particularly close to social economy: once business runs smoothly and expands with success, the tendency to economise turns toward the reduction of labour-costs. The system invests in the "division of labour" in the sense that it strives to prevent its political organisation. The entire liberal economic model with its fantasies of *homo oeconomicus* and private interests is destined to implement a system of values that would counteract the political tendencies of labour movements. When it comes to disorganising labour, no expenditure is too high, for as soon as the conflict between capital and labour would externalise in production, it would push class struggle into the midst of social reality and increase the costs and losses. So what Freud calls the "economisation over details" in fact concerns a multitude of strategies, which will support the interiorisation of the capital-labour conflict, the most successful interiorisation being precisely the creditor-debtor relation, as Marx's reinterpretation of primitive accumulation has shown. Here, the indebtedness of the system is "outsourced" to the multitude of political subjects and socially

implemented as the new “Holy Spirit,” the social link, in which the subject can participate only under the condition that he or she assumes the commodity form.

In another passage, Freud describes the tendency toward saving in the following way: “‘*saving (Ersparung) in expenditure on inhibition or suppression*’ appears to be the secret of the pleasurable effect of tendentious jokes” (*Standard Edition VIII* 119, translation modified). The success of jokes, but also of capitalism, lies in the minimisation of investment for inhibiting and repressing counter-tendencies. Once resistance is neutralised, the mechanism appears to run smoothly and the economic apparatus can exploit the sources of enjoyment without restrictions. We should be attentive to what Freud says here. He does not claim that social repression is abolished and the unconscious tendencies can find their uninhibited way into the realisation of their “creative potentials.” He remarks something much more sophisticated, namely that the unconscious conflict undergoes a transformation—the libidinal economy meets no *internal* resistance. This neutralisation of resistance is embodied in Lacan’s already-mentioned notion of the ideal worker, which now stands for labour without the moment of resistance; labour merges entirely with production and willingly executes the imperatives of capital.

Neoliberalism in fact created the conditions for such an ideal worker to emerge in the social context: the entrepreneur, the economic figure that Freud places alongside the capitalist in *Interpretation of Dreams*.¹² In a scenario in which the labourer has become a small entrepreneur, the capitalist does not need to invest in suppressing conflictual social movements or the organisation of labour. This is no longer necessary because this expenditure has successfully been delegated onto the labouring subjects: their main task is to work on themselves, impose self-discipline, stand in mutual competition, and in doing so they provide the best service to the system. The capitalist worldview, which adds private property and the egoistic pursuit of private interests to apparently universal political categories such as freedom and equality (thereby excluding *fraternité*, a non-narcissistic love as the foundation of a non-capitalist social link)—strives to create the conditions in which inhibition and suppression would be entirely delegated onto the subjects, and exploitation turned into self-exploitation.

Now, if both capitalism and the exit from it are structured like a joke, what types of jokes are at stake in both cases? Or differently put, what tension in jokes do these situations of laughter address? There are two notable Freudian examples, which thematise capitalist reality directly and contextualise the peculiar character of the capitalist’s humour. One is the well-known joke about salmon mayonnaise. A poor guy borrows a certain amount of money from his wealthy friend, after explain-

12. See *Standard Edition V* 223. I engage more extensively with the quotation in question in *The Capitalist Unconscious. Marx and Lacan* (London: Verso, 2015). See also Mai Wegener, “Why Should Dreaming be a Form of Work?” in Samo Tomšič and Andreja Zevnik, *Jacques Lacan Between Psychoanalysis and Politics* (London: Routledge, 2015).

ing his situation. The friend lends the requested amount only to find the poor guy shortly after in a fancy restaurant eating salmon mayonnaise:

“What? You borrow money from me and then order yourself salmon mayonnaise? Is *that* what you’ve used my money for?” “I don’t understand you,” replied the object of attack; “if I haven’t any money I *can’t* eat salmon mayonnaise, and if I have some money I *mustn’t* eat salmon mayonnaise. Well, then, when *am* I to eat salmon mayonnaise?” (*Standard Edition VIII* 50)

The joke is labelled cynical because the accused person displaces the accent from the reproach that “in his circumstances he has no right to think of such delicacies *at all*” (*ibid.*). Behind the apparent mocking of the creditor’s moralism, the debtor is in fact revealed as the one who is trapped in the creditor’s fantasy: means of subsistence, yes, luxury, no. The reproach is, thus, that the debtor has violated the unwritten rule, according to which he is not allowed to live beyond his means, and if he borrows money, it must be in order to repay his creditors, and not to spend it on personal enjoyment. The cynicism of the debtor can be translated into direct speech: “I can’t deny myself what tastes good to me, and it’s a matter of indifference to me where I get the money from to pay for it. There you have the explanation of why I’m eating salmon mayonnaise on the very day you’ve lent me the money” (*ibid.* 52). Freud rightly remarks that the translation abolishes the conditions of a joke—in the given case the minimal displacement in the debtor’s reaction to his creditor’s reproach: “I will not finance your enjoyment”—and turns it into a piece of cynicism. We can observe why such direct confrontation would not be funny, while also revealing complete impotence in face of the reproach: “In your position you have no right to enjoy.” It would in fact legitimise the capitalist fantasy that the poor personify the subject of enjoyment.

We can recall that Marx comes upon this fantasy when he criticises the “political-economic tale” (myth, fiction) of primitive accumulation, which provides the genesis of the capitalist and the labourer. In some distant past, to recall the story, there have presumably been two sorts of people, the elite, who renounced enjoyment and accumulated the first wealth, and the “lazy rascals,” who spent “their substance, and more, in riotous living” (*Capital I* 873), i.e., who have, as today’s advocates of austerity incessantly repeat, lived beyond their means and ended up possessing merely their labour-power, the capacity of their bodies to produce other bodies (commodities). So, what was, according to the political-economic tale, originally a subject of enjoyment has progressively been transformed into an indebted economic subject, who is forced to enter the market and assume the commodity form as the sole support of social relations. According to classical political economy, enjoyment produces debt, which is not false in itself, for Marx’s correction of the political-economic tale of primitive accumulation remains within this claim, but with a crucial correction. Marx first rejects the fantasy of the subject of enjoyment—there is no such “thing” as a subject of enjoyment, this subject is indeed an ideological fiction, which provides a basis for the problematic capitalist “morality,” the abstinence theory, which argues for the birth of wealth out of renunciation

of enjoyment. Marx's second correction consists in situating enjoyment correctly. The latter is no quality or action, pertaining to some presupposed and in the last instance fictitious subject, but a feature of the system. It is capital, which enjoys, and it enjoys under the condition of pushing its subjects deeper into indebtedness.

To return to Freud's joke, the debtor would disarm himself if he responded with open cynicism, for then he would walk straight into the ideological trap that the creditor's reproach had ready for him. He would admit that all he wants is "enjoyment without boundaries." *Vivre sans temps mort, jouir sans entraves* was also the demand of the revolutionary students in 1968: life without boredom, i.e., without abstract capitalist time, which forces everyone into an automatized process of production; and enjoyment without restrictions, i.e., without capitalist morality, according to which surplus-enjoyment follows from self-imposed abstinence. But the goal of capitalism is to raise everyone into a regime, in which they will enjoy (in) exploitation and thus become something like ideal masochists. This makes of capitalism a far more obscene form of domination than any previous historical form of the master's discourse. In this respect capitalism comes close to what Freud analyses under the category of obscene jokes, or more precisely, smut.

Financial capitalism or neoliberalism openly displays its systemic obscenity, and it is also no surprise that in this era the critical voices of political economy are entirely overshadowed by the unanimous voice (laughter) of what Marx had already envisioned with the term "vulgar economics":

In *M-M'* we have the irrational form of capital, the misrepresentation and objectification of the relations of production, in its highest power: the interest-bearing form, the simple form of capital, in which it is taken as logically anterior to its own production process; the ability of money or a commodity to valorize its own value independent of reproduction—the capital mystification in the most flagrant form.

For vulgar economics, which seeks to present capital as an independent source of wealth, of value creation, this form is of course a godsend, a form in which the source of profit is no longer recognizable and in which the result of the capitalist production process—separate from the process itself—obtains an autonomous existence.¹³

The obscenity of vulgar economics consists in the fetishisation of the highest capitalist abstraction—capital itself—which is equivalent to the self-fetishisation of capitalists as producers of value and vulgar political economists as scientists of value (this branch of "positive" science falls also statistics, one of the central factors in the distortion of social reality behind abstract numerical data). Incidentally, Marx shows that this condition displays the two tendencies that Freud ascribes to a certain type of tendentious joke: violence and obscenity. The cynical joke remains stuck in this perspective. There is, however, another tendency, which goes against

13. Karl Marx, *Capital*, Vol. III, trans. David Fernbach (London: Penguin Books, 1992) 516-17.

the established mechanism and which makes an unusual exception to Freud's classification, the sceptical joke, with the rightly famous example:

Two Jews met in a railway carriage at a station in Galicia. "Where are you going?" asked one. "To Cracow," was the answer. "What a liar you are!" broke out the other. "If you say you're going to Cracow, you want me to believe you're going to Lemberg. But I know that in fact you're going to Cracow. So why are you lying to me?" (*Standard Edition VIII* 115)

Freud immediately recognises in this verbal absurdity a complication, which contains a valuable epistemological lesson with direct political implications for a non-cynical notion of critique:

But the more serious substance of the joke is the problem of what determines the truth. The joke, once again, is pointing to a problem and is making use of the uncertainty of one of our commonest concepts. Is it the truth if we describe things as they are without troubling to consider how our hearer will understand what we say? Or is this only Jesuitical truth, and does not genuine truth consist in taking the hearer into account and giving him a faithful picture of our own knowledge? I think that the jokes of this kind are sufficiently different from the rest to be given a special position. What they are attacking is not a person or an institution but the certainty of our knowledge itself, one of our speculative possessions (*ibid.*).

While the capitalist's joke targets persons, more than anything else, the sceptical, or one could also say the critical-political joke, attacks and problematises the structure behind them. If Marx claimed in a letter to Engels that *Capital* was the biggest bomb ever dropped on the head of the bourgeoisie, we could justifiably claim that it was also an attempt to produce the deadliest joke in history (one can think of the matching Monty Python sketch), to create something like a politics of comedy, or at least to ground politics on a non-capitalist humour. Indeed, in Marx, but also in Lacan, the notion of critique comes to overlap with comedy. Critique *qua* comedy: this would be the Marxian discontinuity in the history of critique, its first revelation being that the capitalist's laughter concerns the fact that a web of social appearances (freedom, equality, property and the hypothesis of private interest) successfully camouflages the constant invention of ever-new forms of inequality, which help to keep profits growing.

Both the critique of political economy and psychoanalysis assume a status that is homologous to that of the sceptical joke: one that appears absurd from the perspective of the dominant regime of knowledge and thought, but which, nonetheless, sabotages the joke called capitalism. The political explosive that Freud's sexual aetiology of neuroses and his theory of sexuality dropped on the head of bourgeois puritanism also consisted in demonstrating that libidinal economy comes down to constant deviations, without a natural sexual norm in the background. Enjoyment is not so much a sign of perversion as the privileged indicator that there is no such thing as normative sexuality. Capitalism has been only partially successful in inte-

grating these lessons, for what it cannot digest is the point that Lacan so vehemently accentuated: “There is no sexual relation.” Capitalism needs fetishist fantasies of positivity, vital forces and creative potentials, for only in this way can it sustain the illusion that everything works just fine in this best of all possible political worlds, and continue making exploitation acceptable for the majority of its subjects.

MARIE-JEAN SAURET

PSYCHOPATHOLOGY AND FRACTURES OF THE
SOCIAL BOND¹

Translated by John Holland

This text² seeks to introduce a precise theory of the social bond, which Jacques Lacan deduced from the structure of the subject, as discovered by psychoanalysis.³ In order to highlight its novelty, we shall examine it in counterpoint with Freud's discussions of society. Although this procedure may seem abstract, my goal is practical. I am seeking, on the one hand, a tool for examining the contemporary social bond, and on the other, a way of retrieving the social bond, as a category, from the metaphysical dimension to which most authors consign it. This is why the ideal reader of this work would be a naïve one—who has no academic knowledge about how the “social bond” has been defined, but who is animated by a “passion of ignorance,” a determination to discover what s/he does not know. We shall highlight the relevance of this bond by asking certain questions: is there a subjectivity that is particular to our age and is the functioning of the psyche “contaminated” by the social bond in which we are living?

1. Position of the Problem

The question of the social bond can be formulated as follows: what makes groups of people hold together when, for human beings, biological factors such as instinct and need no longer provide this sort of cohesion? If we direct this question to psychoanalysis, four answers emerge immediately:

1. The meaning of the expression, “social bond,” changes with psychoanalysis, and especially with Lacan. “Social bond” designates the way in which the subject is able to place what is most singular about her/himself within communal life. Lacan will say that the social bond aims at the subject's relation with the social bond itself, rather than with another subject; this distinguishes the social bond from group- or crowd-phenomena.
2. Emile Durkheim more or less invented modern sociology with his essay, *Suicide: A Study in Sociology*.⁴ (It was probably not by chance that scientific sociology was also simultaneously invented elsewhere: in Czechoslovakia

with another essay on suicide—which has not received the emphasis it deserves—by Thomas Garrigue Masaryk, who had been a student of Franz Brentano's at the same time as Freud.) Durkheim demonstrates the nonexistence or very restricted existence of "extra-social causes" of suicide, and deduces the social character of what leads people to this action. Scientific sociology, which claims to examine what is universal, is founded on the exclusion of singularity from the study of society. This already contributes to our theme: a conception of a society without a subject, worthy of the age of science, is constituted on the basis of a general theory of suicide.

In this context, it is striking that Freud founds humanity not on suicide, but on a murder: that of the father.⁵ Indeed, he argues that what provides the basis of each subject's own humanity is the relation with this murder. Only by taking responsibility for it can the subject become a part of the community of his/her counterparts. In this sense, nothing is further from psychoanalysis than suicide!

This paradox is based on the distinction between the subject and the individual. Scientific sociology begins with the study of suicide, by rejecting singularity in favor of society; "parricide" founds both the attempt to "live together" with others and a capacity for the act, on the part of a subject who can choose suicide. Each of the subject's acts is based on a "no" directed to the Other, a separation from the Other; suicide is a sort of separation in which the subject cannot explain the consequences of his/her act. Its radical success is also its failure, when this conclusion remains unreadable. Yet we can guess from this that there is a suicidal aspect to each of the subject's acts—a death of the subject, rather than of the individual. We shall need to take the measure of this death.

3. There is a price to becoming human: it involves the murder of the father, the consequence of which is guilt; it involves renouncing *jouissance*, and consequence of that is the desire that is caused by this loss; it involves the threat that this *jouissance* will be recovered, with the consequence that desire will end, and that anxiety will be occasioned by this return of *jouissance*. In short, guilt, desire, anxiety, aggressiveness and violence show us that human community does not exist without discontents. On the one hand, subjects try to defend themselves against this malaise through their love for their counterparts (love, in this context, is the libidinal bond that supplants biological determinations) and by designating the stranger, the foreigner both as the limit of the community and as the thief of *jouissance*, the lack of which seems to give consistency to the "discontents" of our civilization.⁶

4. Freud formulates a theory of the group and the crowd (the Church and the army), which explains the process by which the subject becomes a part of a community. The bond between the members derives from a double process:

a) each of them identifies with a trait of the leader (whether Christ, pope or general); b) a sharing of the same type of *jouissance* (the incorporation of an object that would give a bit of being back to whoever asks what s/he is).

If Freud provides us with a theory of society, he does not say what a social bond itself would be, even if, here and there, he gives us some implicit or explicit indications, especially in terms of the Oedipus complex (see the works on Christoph Haizmann, Dostoevsky, Woodrow Wilson, etc.).⁷

These preliminary remarks locate a tension between certain terms—subject, society, social bond and science—and they ally the social bond with the process of humanization. We can posit that the “accidents” of a social bond carry with them a “pathology” that will be specific to the subjects who inhabit that particular bond—and vice versa. A subjective economy will vary according to the nature of the social bond.

2. Freud

What sparse elements did Freud provide that would help us develop a theory of the social bond?

1. Freud’s subject is defined by desire and a lack of satisfaction; because it speaks, the subject is lacking and can only re-find objects, which become substitutes for the lost object—the Thing of *jouissance*. The instinct mutates into the drive, which is the psychic representative of the somatic; because s/he speaks, the human being is constrained to wonder what to do about her/his anatomy, which does not dictate behavior. One response to this question comes from the silence of the organs themselves; another comes from language. On the one hand, the subject is determined by this very lack of determination—the drive; on the other hand, the subject encounters the Oedipus complex.

2. This implies a distinction between the subject’s life and organic life. Freud defines the latter as the whole of the forces that resist death. This is a way of recognizing that the death drive, the part of the subject that does not speak, must be situated at the heart of the human. Traumatic neurosis, repetition, nightmares, negative therapeutic reaction, etc.—all of these put Freud on the track of what is “beyond the pleasure principle,” which he called the death drive.⁸

3. How can subjects who are created in this way cohere into a group? Through the Oedipus complex, the subject accepts the foundations of humanity, and this complex makes the most important step possible: the separation from the parents.⁹ The Oedipus complex itself repeats the murder that provides the basis for humanization. We know the consequences of this murder: the substitution of a determination by language for the biological

determinations that had maintained the group's cohesion; the setting-up of a totem, the first version of the symbolic father, to set the limit between the human group and the natural world; the renunciation of *jouissance*, which is marked by the killing of the animal. From then on, the borders that demarcate the human group do not separate people from animals; instead, they separate human language from *jouissance*, which is not language.

4. From this, Freud extracts the theory of the group mentioned above: groups cohere, on the one hand, by identifying with the signifier of a leader, with a paternal trait, as it were, and, on the other hand, through an object that gives the subject back a bit of its *jouissance*-substance. This collusion between the ego ideal and the object accounts for the effectiveness of hypnosis. The subject identifies the object with what is most singular in itself and this object ends up being completely absorbed by the signifier. This statement may seem overly complicated, but Lacan will take it up and will remind us that psychoanalysis was born by breaking with hypnosis: by putting as great a distance as possible between the ego ideal and the object that is supposed to cause the subject's desire.

5. This enables us to formulate the problem of the social bond in Freudian terms: how can subjects cohere into a group without giving up on their desire, without sacrificing it to the community through a collective hypnosis? Desire is based upon a consent to language as our habitat, and therefore to lack, in which we encounter the defect in a knowledge that would respond to this desire (primal repression). This desire is based on taking responsibility for our guilt for "parricide"; it is based upon confronting the threat of a return of *jouissance*, which involves facing anxiety; finally, it is based on the fact that we bear the biographical traces of the imbroglios of *jouissance*, and therefore we also carry its existence through the symptom. These are the terms that Freud used to describe the "discontents" of civilization, a sense of malaise that results from the fact that speaking beings are the basis of civilization.

Lacan pays homage to Freud for being

...worthy of a discourse that maintains itself as close as possible to what refers to *jouissance*—as close as it was possible up till Freud. It is not very comfortable. It is not very comfortable to be situated at this point where discourse emerges, or even, when it returns there, where it falters, in the environs of *jouissance*.¹⁰

In locating the point where discourse emerges, Freud provides us with a surprising opposition, between *jouissance* and itself: not between the reality and pleasure principles, but between the pleasure principle and what is "beyond" it. Yet this is also Lacan's thesis: a social bond can only be founded on what is most heterogeneous to it, which he calls *jouissance*.

Lacan, in relation to Freud, seems to consider that the question of what constitutes a social bond can only be asked by those who have left their habitual communities, groups and societies, all of which are marked by a common identity. How does such a figure relate to others? This question may seem unusual, but it shows us what politics is. In a trivial way, we could say that the question is how to create a community composed not of our counterparts or friends, but of those who are different or dangerous, and with whom we may have relations of hatred.

3. From the Structure of the Subject to the Discourse of the Master

There is no social bond without a subject. Yet there is no subject of speech without language and its structure. The structure of language is the condition of speech, even if speaking implies that the subject must do more than merely repeat the Other's words. Speech subverts the discourse that has preceded it. The relation between speech and the linguistic structure that comes before it is a relation between the front and the back. The structure of language is the reverse of speech precisely because structure does not speak. Yet by speaking, the subject enters into this structure. Structure necessarily goes beyond any occasional speech, and therefore Lacan called it a "*discourse without speech*" (*Other Side*, 12).

What is this structure?

If we define language as the power of symbolization, this power consists in the articulating of elements—signifiers—each of which, when isolated, has no meaning. Lacan writes this element as S (the initial for signifier) with the numeral 1, to indicate its isolation; the S_1 necessarily calls to another signifier, in order to be able to signify what it is itself incapable of saying. Because of its imperious call, it will be referred to as the master signifier. The other signifier, the one that responds and works on signification, is written as S with the numeral 2, less because it is the second than because at least two signifiers are always necessary for producing a signification (at least one signifier, S_1 , must be extracted from all the signifiers in this S_2). This signification is the minimal form of knowledge, and therefore this S_2 will be read as knowledge. Lacan specifies that our definition starts from an S_1 that has been extracted from the set, which then addresses a network of signifiers forming the Other's knowledge: $S_1 \bullet S_2$ (*Other Side*, 12-13).

Signifiers, however, are not simply articulated with one another in the speech act. There must be a subject, so that the signifier, above all, will represent the subject that is connected with it. As soon as the master signifier is articulated, and even before any other signification is produced, the subject becomes precisely its *effect*. To say that the subject, which Lacan writes as $\$$, is the effect of the articulation between S_1 and S_2 is to recognize that the first signifier only represents it; it fails to transmit the subject's being exhaustively into knowledge. The subject is only, as it were, "half-said" [*mi-dit*], and this condition raises the question of what is "truly" speaking. In *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*, Lacan will go so far as to

claim that “the subject...doesn’t exist” (100).¹¹ The subject, like women, can only be verified one by one, in this case, in relation to the articulation of signifiers, in which it “function[s] only as a lack.”¹² It can thus be written as $\$$ (which is S, the initial of “subject,” as barred). “ $\$$ ” is thus a sort of signifier that Lacan uses in order to write the absence of a subject, thereby representing it and bringing it into our calculations. As we shall see, any other term of the structure of the subject can be substituted for it in transcribing the subject-effect that results from the signifying articulation: there are only symbolic articulations and there are no articulations without a subject-effect.

This is also why the subject “expects” the signifying chain to produce, apart from any signification, something of its being as subject, a being that does not exist, but which can be given positive form. Yet what the subject encounters in a form of knowledge that has been put to work is always-already and only...knowledge. In other words, the aspects of the subject’s being that escape representation by the signifier are *produced* precisely as what is *missed*. When S_1 intervenes on S_2 , the subject arises as divided, and there is a loss, which Lacan writes as the letter *a*.

In speaking, the subject discovers that it is divided from its being; it lacks being. Freud identified this lack with desire, as the essence of the human. Lacan qualifies jouissance as a “negative substance,” in which the subject encounters the flaw in speaking. In order to designate the aspects of the subject that do not become caught up in the signifier, Lacan writes them as *a*.

Since language falls short of exhausting the real of the subject in representation, this failure has another element: the production of a meaning [*sens*] that exceeds signification, and from which we sometimes derive jouissance. This jouissance is that of meaning—*jouis-sens*—instead of the jouissance that is lost in speaking. From this, we can already make a certain number of deductions concerning clinical practice: a) the subject is divided, separated from jouissance; its incurable condition is to desire, unless it pays the price through anxiety; b) this jouissance is lost in speaking, but is exchanged, in part, for the “*sens-joui*” (what is “too” strong in the pleasure of speaking); c) one meaning can always be reversed into another meaning, and therefore equivocation is a characteristic of speech; d) the result of equivocation is the battle for the last word, the one that would put an end to the flight of meaning, thus bringing about a final signification, of which the subject would finally be the master. The psychotic, for example is a subject who excels in re-entering discourse as a master.

In order to formalize these processes, Lacan uses the *matheme*, which provides a mathematization, even if it is not a part of mathematics as such. Etymologically, the term, “mathematics” designates precisely what can be taught (because it is a language without speech).

The master signifier represents the subject in the name of a truth, and is articulated with another signifier, which is put to work to produce the subject's being as a surplus of *jouissance*, which is beyond knowledge:

$$\uparrow \frac{S_1}{S} \rightarrow \frac{S_2}{a} \downarrow$$

We can guess what institutes the subject (S): it is its relation with the signifying chain ($S_1 \rightarrow S_2$). These relations define the structure of every speaking subject. If subjects cohere into groups in the same social world, it is not because they establish direct contacts with each other, but because the signifier that represents each of them is articulated with knowledge. This is why Lacan insists that the signifier represents the subject not for another subject, but for another signifier: *the social bond is the subject's relation with the social bond*. If we use the term "discourse" to designate the structure of every articulation of signifiers, we can almost say, just as Lacan does in the seventeenth seminar, that "discourse" and "social bond" are equivalent.

In sum, the structure of the social bond could even exempt the subject from adopting a figure of the Other.

The structure of the subject of speech can, as it were, become confused with the social bond of which it is part. This can happen because the social dimension is constitutive of the very definition of the subject; this is a Lacanian version of the truism that one does not become human by oneself, a situation that dooms to failure the efforts of anthropological detectives to find the missing link! It would be interesting to follow out Lacan's suggestion that there is a relation between collective logic and discourse; it is this relation that enabled him to posit that the *a* and the function of haste are identical.¹³

This inscription of the subject is structured by the incompatibility between the signifier that represents it and the *jouissance* of its being; this *jouissance* is produced and will have the status of what cannot be made homogeneous with knowledge. In this sense, the being of the subject's *jouissance* constitutes the "hole in knowledge" that Freud tried to account for with his concept of primal repression. Furthermore, if the subject calls for knowledge, it is the master signifier that commands this knowledge, which will function alone, unbeknownst to the subject. Freud designates this functioning, which remains unknown, as "unconscious knowledge"; it takes the form of *parapraxes*, bungled actions, symptoms, etc.

Freud notes the yield of pleasure that is attached to the unconscious formations: our paradoxical attachment to our symptoms, the extra pleasure (laughter) that arises in the joke, the secondary benefits of illness (and even the negative therapeutic reaction), the forepleasure that is associated with the simple fact of speaking.... From all of this, we can suspect that there is a connection between the unconscious for-

mations and fantasy. Only with Lacan did it become possible to locate within these “productions” the presence of the surplus-jouissance that is written as *a*.

The discourse of the master is Lacan’s name for the basic structure by which the subject is inscribed within structure itself. He calls it this because the master signifier—like the ego ideal, which represents the subject for all the other signifiers—is in the dominant position. This discourse, as we have just seen, gives us the *structure of the unconscious*. This structure articulates what is both most particular in the subject (unconscious knowledge, primal repression, the aspects of the subject’s being that escape the signifier, the various master signifiers in its history) and the social bond that constitutes what is human as such. Furthermore, the discourse of the master gives us the structure of the unconscious, which manifests itself in parapraxes that end up subverting the master.

4. The Structure of the Four Discourses

This matrix, by which the subject is inscribed in both language and the social bond obliges us to distinguish the terms that are used and the places where they are situated, as well as their order and direction.

Three terms belong to the register of the signifier, and another to that of jouissance. Lacan emphasizes that signifiers (signifier, the Other, knowledge, signifier...) go around in circles. The point of insertion of discourse resides precisely in what limits knowledge: the jouissance that Freud had dared to confront (*Other Side*, 15). These terms are introduced in a logical order so as to designate the functions that are specific to discourse (92-93). Lacan states that the particular letters that are used to write these mathemes are less important than the constancy of their relations with one another: the subject (*S*) which articulates and is the effect of the articulation of the master signifier, *S*₁, with knowledge, *S*₂, which, when put to work, produces *a*, the effect of which is an ordered chain: $S \rightarrow S_1 \rightarrow S_2 \rightarrow a$ (15). The writing of the four letters respects the initial matrix, in which the signifier represents the subject for another signifier. One can wonder whether it would then be possible to continue by adding another vector: $a \rightarrow S$. To do so, however, is impossible. The final product does not reach the first letter and this impossibility marks the incompatibility between signifier and jouissance. In this context, the impossible is one of the names of the real; locating this impossibility within logic is a way of situating it in discourse (165). If the vector, $a \rightarrow S$, were possible, it would write the threat of restoring jouissance to the subject; such a threat would mark its death as subject of desire, since a subject can only exist to the extent that it is separated from the jouissance that leads it to speak: “In effect, if *jouissance* is forbidden, then it is clear that it only comes into play by chance, an unusual contingency, an accident” (50).

Because of the particularities of the symbolic that Freud had already noticed, any symbolic element can move a quarter-turn forward or backward, and come to occupy a place that has just been held by another term; it can then act upon (\rightarrow) the following term. On the other hand, Lacan places a double slash or solidus ($//$)¹⁴

between the last and the first terms, to indicate that the former cannot reach the latter:

$$\begin{aligned} \mathcal{S} &\rightarrow S_1 \rightarrow S_2 \rightarrow a \quad (a // \mathcal{S}) \\ S_1 &\rightarrow S_2 \rightarrow a \rightarrow \mathcal{S} \quad (\mathcal{S} // S_1) \\ a &\rightarrow \mathcal{S} \rightarrow S_1 \rightarrow S_2 \quad (S_2 // a) \\ S_2 &\rightarrow a \rightarrow \mathcal{S} \rightarrow S_1 \quad (S_1 // S_2) \end{aligned}$$

In this fourth writing, a represents the subject for another signifier, which is written as \mathcal{S} , and the nonexistence of the subject is written here as S_2 (the unconscious is knowledge without a subject); the product obtained from linking a to \mathcal{S} is a master signifier, S_1 .

Organized around an impossibility and an impotence or incapacity (the impossibility of saying the whole truth, and the inability to reach the next term), discourse treats *jouissance*: in this context, “treating” means not curing, but rather writing and locating impossibility and impotence, the consequence of which is to enable the subject to position itself.

The object a can represent the subject, but only if it is made positive: for example, as the surplus-*jouissance* that has been removed from negative *jouissance* (that is, the *jouissance* lost because we speak, a remainder of which nevertheless persists). Thus the child who receives a gift from his/her mother may see it either as an object that serves as a substitute for a lost *jouissance* or as a signifier of the mother’s love. As we shall see, the psychoanalyst must know how to play in different ways with the possibility of putting a in the position of representing him/her for another signifier.

We have designated the place of S_1 as that of the master, of the command, the call; this is the place of the *agent* that inscribes the subject in discourse through the articulation of the chain. Knowledge is in the place of an *other*, which must submit to the master; it is the place of *work*, and Lacan will refer to it as that of the slave. \mathcal{S} is the term for which the signifier is “truly” articulated; not everything can be said about this place, for truth disappears.

If the subject cannot be reduced to either a signifier or a form of knowledge that would exhaust it, this is less because of any quality inherent in the subject itself than because it occupies the place of truth. Indeed, in another situation or discourse, such as “scientific” psychology, in which the subject is treated as an object of science, this “subject” could be absorbed entirely into a theory. Thus cognitivism identifies the subject as an information-processing system.

Finally, the place of the product, a , also needs to be singled out. These four places can thus be written as follows:¹⁵

| | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| $\frac{\text{agent}}{\text{truth}}$ | $\frac{\text{other}}{\text{product}}$ |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|

This matrix needs to be completed with the vectors that indicate the relations between the places: the master commands (\rightarrow) the other; truth calls to (\rightarrow) the agent, but also calls to an other, which answers for the agent's failure to represent all of it (truth \rightarrow other); the other delivers (\rightarrow) the product; the product is a response to the agent (product \rightarrow agent):

$$\uparrow \frac{\text{agent}}{\text{truth}} \quad \begin{array}{c} \rightarrow \\ \times \end{array} \quad \frac{\text{other}}{\text{product}} \quad \downarrow$$

Lacan thus effects a forcing. He considers this to be a quasi-mathematical formula whose permutations are dictated by the minimal rules of its construction: the independence between terms and places; the order of terms; the relations between the places. It thus becomes possible to permute the terms throughout the places, while respecting their order, and to wonder whether putting a particular term in the position of agent will have any interest or meaning for us. This procedure is like that of a mathematician who has defined addition in relation to the whole numbers of the decimal system; s/he posits an operation such as $3 + 2$, and finds 5 as the sum. Then s/he sees that this operation can be applied to situations from everyday life: three hand towels in one drawer plus two dishcloths in another equal five linens altogether (which does not mean that the towels and the dishcloths have to be put together in the same drawer).

Of the social bonds characterized by the three elements that are part of the signifier (S, S_1, S_2) each of which can come, in turn, to command, Lacan will speak of their kinship with the discourse of the master; they are oriented towards exercising power, unlike the analytic discourse, where the agent is a , an element that is not a signifier (69). Each of these four terms can come successively to occupy each of the four places, as long as their order is respected. In this way, we start with the following arrangement:

$$\frac{S_1 \rightarrow S_2}{S \quad a}$$

which is followed by a clockwise quarter-turn, which yields:

$$\frac{S \rightarrow S_1}{a \quad S_2}$$

or, if the first arrangement is given a counterclockwise quarter-turn, by:

$$\frac{S_2 \rightarrow a}{S_1 \quad S}$$

and then with a final counterclockwise quarter-turn:

$$\frac{a \rightarrow S}{S_2 \quad S_1}$$

With this fourth possibility, which can be obtained by both a clockwise and a counter-clockwise half-turn of the discourse of the master, the element that is not a signifier (*a*) occupies the place of the agent. Lacan designates each of these possibilities with the name of the agent: the discourse of the master (with S_1 as agent), the discourse of the university (when knowledge, S_2 commands), the discourse of the hysteric (with the divided subject as agent). For the moment, we shall not mention the name of the final discourse, although we shall emphasize that when *a* comes at the place of the agent, it *goes against the master*, and moves knowledge into the unconscious.

If the function of the social bond is to respond to an impossibility, we have three ways of dealing with the incompatibility between the signifier and jouissance, and the contradiction between knowledge and jouissance (79). However, exhausting the four possible theoretical forms of the social bond brings out a mathematical peculiarity, a logical impossibility: given how the places are defined, it is impossible to generate a new writing (for example, by changing the order of the terms) without having each term ending up occupying, in another discourse, the same place it had occupied in the original discourse. As a result, the four forms represent a sort of radical: it is the only possible way to generate, by combining the four terms and four places, four radically different discourse structures. Thus, these four forms are the only ones that can be produced on the basis of the logic that underlies discourse; the four terms and the four places lead to four radically different (discursive) structures (44-45). This logical impossibility accounts for and formalizes the clinical impossibility that each discourse must treat.

There is no structure without a logical impossibility that marks the impact of the real on structure itself (44-45). This is what led Lacan to search in Freud's texts for indications of the impact of the real, such as what is "beyond the pleasure principle," "repetition" and the "death drive." The seventeenth seminar provides a close rereading of *Totem and Taboo* and of the Oedipus myth and reduces them to the statement [énoncé] of an impossible act: it is impossible for the founding murder to be an act, since humanization followed, rather than preceded it; there was no humanization if the brothers did not take responsibility for the murder as such (125). In other words, it is impossible for the dead father to be equivalent to jouissance (123). This impossible equivalence places the real at the heart of Freud's myth. Oedipus himself did not know that the murdered man was his father and that the woman he married was his mother. In this case, what is essential is elsewhere: Oedipus was admitted to Jocasta's bed because he had passed a test that concerned truth.

What, then, is truth? Lacan describes it as the sister of the real, of jouissance; it is a sort of meaning-effect that knowledge gives off, in its movement towards a jouissance that it cannot absorb. If the real is impossible, truth is impotent; it cannot say everything because it lacks being. What truth hides is castration, which is to be understood not only as the forbidding of jouissance to anyone who speaks, but as an incurable structural division between the subject and jouissance. To love truth is to give what one does not have—one's being as jouissance—in order to repair

this primal weakness (52). “Truth is child labor,” in the sense in which it is said that truth comes out of the mouth of babes, precisely because the child gives birth to castration (153, translation modified). The child verifies the accessibility of the symbolic operation that will enable him/her to learn that the division from jouissance cannot be cured.

In this context, Lacan revises our understanding of the Oedipus complex and the “real father,” who as agent of castration, becomes the point at which the subject is inserted into the structure.¹⁶ This new approach can give rise to a number of misunderstandings if it is read too quickly: people have thought that Lacan identifies the real father with the spermatozoon, when he designates the latter as the limit of science’s knowledge on this subject, or that the real father is the father as he exists in reality (*Other Side*, 127). As Lacan says,

First, in general, everybody acknowledges that he is the one who works, and does so in order to feed his little family....

There is something to show that the mystagogy that makes him into a tyrant is obviously lodged somewhere quite different. It’s at the level of the real father as a construction of language, as Freud always pointed out, moreover. The real father is nothing other than an *effect of language* and has no other real. I am not saying “other reality,” since reality is something quite different (127, emphasis added).

Others have concluded that, for Lacan, nothing real is involved here: that the real father can be reduced to a symbol, which could be translated into Lacanian terms as a “structural operator,” thus removing the term, “effect,” from the expression “language-effect” (123). What is surprising is that these same readers postulate the existence of a primal jouissance, from which the subject has been driven away by the advent of speech. This is why the following passage is important:

...what [these critics] should see is this, for example. It is the position of the real father as articulated by Freud, namely, as impossible, that makes the father necessarily imagined as a depriver. It is not you, nor he, nor I who imagines; it arises from the position itself. It is not at all surprising that we always encounter the imaginary father. It necessarily, structurally depends on something that evades us, which is the real father. And it is strictly out of the question that the real father be defined in any assured manner unless it’s as the agent of castration (128, translation modified).

Without language, there is no way of constructing the real as what escapes knowledge. It is then necessary to assume responsibility, with castration, for the conse-

quences of this construction. The first of these is that there is no cause of desire except through castration (50-51).

5. Historicizing the Discourses

This matrix enables Lacan to account for social bonds that had long pre-existed psychoanalysis. Thus the dominant social bond for the Greeks of the fourth century B.C.E. put the questions (S_1) of a philosopher such as Socrates in the place of the command; the master commands the slave's knowledge (S_2) to produce a surplus-jouissance that can only be written mathematically as a square root, and which the philosopher-master immediately takes away from the slave. This can occur even if neither of them ever knows what animates the master's procedures (and thus why is in the position of truth). Lacan examines Hegel's master/slave dialectic in the same way, and deduces from it that knowledge "is the means of jouissance" (51).

The Middle Ages, with the accumulation of ancient science in encyclopedias and libraries, the inventions of the university and of scholasticism, give us a precise idea of a social bond in which knowledge (S_2) comes to command. Knowledge puts jouissance to work, and issues orders to embodied course credits [*unités de valeur*]; I have said this, without any embarrassment, about my own teaching. (Today, in the French university, we refer to them as "modules.") These bits of surplus-jouissance lead students to enroll themselves for the jouissance of the professor, to give their bodies in order to fill up the university courses. Excluded from knowledge, they are put to work (Lacan invents the term, "astudied" for them) in order to produce subjects (S) who want to learn: they are "students," who study, but who do not necessarily know (105). As Lacan says, "the desire for knowledge bears no relation to knowledge—unless, of course, we wheel out the lubricious word 'transgression'" (23). The "astudied," as he remarks later, "constitute the subject of science with their own skin" (105-106). The place of truth is occupied by the master (S_1), in whose name the teaching is given, without the master's ever really being subjected to genuine doubt: "It's true because Socrates said so!"

In the discourse of the hysteric, the subject commands. Anyone who doubts that this is a social bond should remember the epidemics of hysteria in the seventeenth century, after the high Middle Ages (the Convulsionnaires of Saint-Médard or the demonic possessions of Loudon). Descartes may well have played a decisive role in bringing out the function of the subject by putting forward his "movement of renunciation of...wrongly acquired knowledge" (23). Yet Lacan approaches this discourse less through this context than through its clinical manifestations. The subject of speech, divided from jouissance, comes to command for a precise reason: because the ancient master and knowledge failed to answer for what has been excluded from speech. This exclusion involves the sexed subject, grappling with the signifier's inability to say [*dire*] sex: a single signifier, the phallus says the opposition between men and women. For this reason, no signifier can say the aspects of

sexuality that do not get taken up by this signifier. What clinical practice discovers is that the subject in this discourse chooses precisely to incarnate the portion of *jouissance* that humans lose through speaking; this is the position that Freud qualifies as feminine, characterizing it in terms of its position as object, as passive, and even as masochistic.

The hysteric devotes herself to getting this excluded part recognized: she (or he) takes the floor to speak, manifesting her wrenching relations with *jouissance* through her symptoms, seeking a master (S_1) who would claim to be able to respond to her advances by producing knowledge (S_2). Yet she will then show how this knowledge can only respond in vain to the question of feminine *jouissance*, which is thus put in the place of truth. Hence the positions of the hysteric (whatever her/his anatomy may be): she literally “makes the man” [*fait l’homme*] (S), in the sense of bringing into existence a *parlêtre* [speakingbeing] who is “supposed to know woman.” In this way, she locates feminine *jouissance* as the limit of knowledge. The failure of knowledge preserves, and perhaps even demonstrates, the possibility of this *jouissance*. She seeks a master whom she can command. She loves the father’s castration, which she herself activates, since in loving the father’s (the master’s) castration, she gives what she does not have: her missing being, with, as a bonus, the proof of its existence through love.¹⁷

From a certain point of view, it could be said that the hysteric creates the social bond. She certainly invented the discourse of the analyst. This shows us why it is important for the subject in analytic treatment to be hystericized: insured against being absorbed into the analyst’s knowledge, the analysand addresses the subject-supposed-to-know without fear (or at least without this particular fear).

An hysteric is able to create this bond because a woman is introduced into the sexual relation [*relation*] as object *a*, the term that causes the desire of the *parlêtre* (and also her own). This term, in the position of truth, goes against the preceding social bonds, and leads her (and the male hysteric) to create this third bond.

The fourth discourse is instituted when what objects most radically to the social bond comes to “command” the other; this “objection” puts the subject itself to work in order to produce new master signifiers, which can respond to, welcome, bear and treat this subject. This new production supposes that such treatment is possible, and that a hitherto-unknown knowledge can exist in the place of truth. This discourse did not have to await psychoanalysis in order to manifest itself.

Let us take a single example, suggested by Lacan, who refers to a certain number of ancient Greeks (Empedocles and the pre-Socratics, Pericles) as psychoanalysts (*Other Side*, 38). In the Greco-Persian wars, the Greek city-states, faced with the invading Persian fleet, found themselves in what seemed to be an impossible situation. In terms of proportions, it would resemble a threat of invasion of the principality of Monaco by the U.S. navy.¹⁸ The members of the small Athenian republic were seized by fear (the affect that, according to Freud, characterizes the collision with *jouissance*) before the imminent danger of being crushed by the Persians, who

had, for them, become the figure of fierce and obscene jouissance. In the discussion of which strategy to adopt, an admiral suggested a new idea, which had never been tried; it functioned as a sort of interpretation. Instead of going out to face the enemy, they should allow the Persians almost to reach the city, to go as far as the straits of Salamis; there, the Persian ships would be immobilized by their own great numbers and would become vulnerable to the highly mobile Greek galleys.

In this way, the Persians were defeated, but the victory raised a new question: “Who were the real victors, we or the gods?”¹⁹ The Athenians discovered that their interpretation had opened up something real, which was stronger than the true, an area guaranteed by the gods. Treating the Persian threat through strategy led the Athenians not to efface themselves before their victory, but instead to produce a real that awakened them!²⁰

This question changes the status of knowledge: far from being guaranteed by the master, it has a “real” limit. This is the change of discourse that ended up in preparing the way for modern science. The discourse of the master would return and that of the university would become dominant, but the very change in discourses also transformed knowledge. A modern science began to speak through mathematics, departing from the laws of the signifier. The signifier came to represent itself, $A = A$, thus showing that the Greeks’ knowledge was merely mythical and producing something else, which science imposed upon us: a detached, unconscious knowledge, in which the signifier would insist by representing an absent subject for another signifier (*Other Side*, 90-91).

6. The Lacanian Field

It can never be repeated too often that Lacan’s theory of the social bond implies the coexistence of the four discourses. When what cannot be treated arises, it puts the dominant discourse in a difficult position, substituting for the agent something that comes in from the real. As Lacan remarks in *Encore*, the analytic discourse arises whenever there is a change in discourses (16). The Lacanian field is defined by its attempt to treat an “impossible” jouissance, and it includes—and, indeed, requires and authorizes—this changing of discourses. Lacan himself suggests that it be called the “Lacanian field,” in order to distinguish it from the Freudian field, which, at best, succeeds in situating jouissance at its limits (*Other Side*, 81). This explanation distinguishes between the social aspect—to which Freud’s group psychology adapts quite well—and the social bond.

It would be impossible to formalize this theory without the fourth discourse, the analytic discourse. Lacan notes that this discourse provides the only counterpoint to that of the master (*Other Side*, 69, 87). Every term related to the signifier retains a kinship with the master, but with the analytic discourse, a signifier does not occupy the position of agent. With psychoanalysis, despite the vector between a and S , jouissance does not return to the subject; instead, the analyst substitutes him/

herself for jouissance and becomes nothing more than its semblance. The discourse of the master can be called the reverse, or the other side, of psychoanalysis, not only because it is the opposite pole in terms of this four-part structure,²¹ but also because the master signifier sets up a matrix in which there is only one true alternative to this signifier: the semblance of the object. As Lacan writes, “There are only four discourses. Each takes itself for the truth. Only the analytic discourse is the exception. It would be better, in conclusion, for it to dominate, but this discourse, precisely, does not seek domination.”²² The analytic discourse goes so far as to *organize the loss of the power* that the other discourses hold on to!

Perhaps this *envers* [reverse]—and Lacan accentuates the similarity in sound between this French term and *vérité* [truth]—should be understood in a way that he would explain later: the subject thinks “against” [*contre*] a signifier, in the sense that the subject leans against it and relies on it. This “*contre*” reappears in the proposal to analysts, when Lacan speaks of a “*contre-analyse*,” a “counter-analysis,” which points forward to the pass (the device that he would invent in order to grasp what leads an analysand to become an analyst).²³

What happens at the end of a psychoanalysis? It brings the analysand, who was led to the couch by a symptom, to the point where the pathological reasons for going through an analysis fall apart. So why does the analysand stick with it? She gets a cause; she discovers that she herself is the very objection to knowledge whose limits the symptom decries (“Tell me what’s wrong with me, what’s happening to me”). She finds that she becomes reduced to a jouissance that is impossible to eradicate because, as a living being, she bears the signifier in the real. What is she to do with that bit of information? Use it to condemn all knowledge as ramshackle and decrepit, and also rely on it to reinvent knowledge through art, poetry, and writing. Or better: by writing in a new way, against [*contre*] writing, by doing poetry against [*contre*] poetry, and by painting against [*contre*] the art of painting itself—always in an effort to try to locate what there is of the singular, and in such a way that others will not find their own respective styles expressed in her works. The analytic discourse is devoted to making this singularity exist, and Lacan his remarks that it is not seeking domination in this way: “in other words, it teaches nothing. There is nothing universal in it; this is why it is not a subject that is taught in schools” (“Lacan pour Vincennes,” 278).

Learning of the fate of the subject-supposed-to-know in analysis—which is reduced, when it is embodied by the psychoanalyst, to any signifier of “disbeing” [*désêtre*]—the analysand may choose to use this discovery about her/his relation to this limit in knowledge (a subjective destitution). S/he does so by becoming an analyst: become a semblance of this limit, which a new analysand does not even know yet that s/he too will be called upon to reach.²⁴ In this sense, the psychoanalyst pretends to be the waste-object and the excluded object, in order to spare the other, the analysand, from having to incarnate it (whether by doing so her/himself or by bringing in the figure of a “thief of jouissance,” to use Jacques-Alain Miller’s expression).²⁵ Yet the psychoanalyst must still explain how and why s/he has taken this step; if

this is not done, then becoming an analyst would be a failed act, for all bungled actions are constituted by the refusal of an explanation.²⁶ Such an explanation can neither already exist nor be supplied by the Other, since it concerns what transforms the subject into the term that goes against knowledge: *s/he is, as it were, condemned to reinvent psychoanalysis, against [contre] psychoanalysis itself*.

At the end of analysis, the subject identifies with a piece of the real; this is the identification with the symptom, which Lacan prefers to write as “*sinthome*,” in order to distinguish it from the symptom that had existed at the entry into analysis. The subject discovers that, except for the *sinthome*, there is no Other—whether theoretical, divine or psychoanalytic—that can answer from its place and make the imaginary (the body, meaning), the symbolic (language) and the real (one’s *jouissance-being*) cohere. Lacan, indeed, explicitly denounces this Other: “What has a body and does not exist? Answer—the big Other” (*Other Side*, 66). The *sinthome* is the precise response invented by every subject in order to maintain what is singular, with and in the social bond.²⁷ This prevents us from confusing one singularity with another, which would destroy its most intimate knowledge.

Every accident of the social bond is therefore an accident of the *sinthome* as function. With this hypothesis in mind, we shall conclude by examining the contemporary social bond.

7. The Capitalist Discourse

Several times during the seventeenth seminar, Lacan seeks to specify the “nature” of the contemporary social bond by connecting the discourse of the master with capitalism.²⁸ Yet it is in a lecture given in Milan that he specifies that the contemporary eludes the four basic forms.²⁹ Dominated by science and the market, this bond is characterized by “the capitalist’s discourse[s]...curious copulation with science” (*Other Side*, 110). It exploits the structure of the desiring subject, making her/him believe that there is no need for any true bond, for science will manufacture the object that is lacking, and this object can then be found on the market—without the aid of any social bond. In a word, capitalism manufactures individuals, who are precisely subjects who have been completed by their surplus-*jouissance*. Science is thus set to work to manufacture objects, and is approached more as technology than as fundamental science; it constructs objects that flatten the planes of reality and truth against each other, a state that Lacan designates as a “Lathouse” (187).

In the position of the command—but placed there by the capitalist-master, by the market itself—comes the subject, which shows the primacy of narcissism by claiming to be master of itself as of the universe:

$$\downarrow \frac{S}{S_1} \quad \times \quad \frac{S_2}{a} \downarrow$$

This formalization is obtained by inverting the left side of the discourse of the master. As a result, S , is in the position of agent, just as it is in the discourse of the hysteric, and S_1 is in that of truth, as it is in the discourse of the university. Indeed, *the only discourse that is not represented here* (by one of the terms in place) *is the discourse of the analyst (while the discourse of the master is represented by two terms)*. Lacan will say that the capitalist discourse forecloses castration by promising to restore jouissance to the subject; the subject loses nothing through speech, and instead, gets what is coming to it. This foreclosure can be read in the fact that, in order to respect the order of the terms, the first arrow has to be inverted:

$$\downarrow \frac{S}{S_1} \frac{S_2}{a}$$

This discourse “makes” truth accessible, precisely because the logic that underlies the four discourses is not respected here. It is not marked by any impossibility of symbolization—an impossibility that inscribes something the real; this is what defines the foreclosure of castration; this castration, which is a part of the other discourses, but has been rejected by this one. This discourse thus contradicts the theory of the four discourses. By following the path of the vectors, we can see that it goes around in a “circle”: $S \rightarrow S_1 \rightarrow S_2 \rightarrow a \rightarrow S$. There is no longer a stopping-point in the sequence. It is true that the arrow, $(a \rightarrow)$, appears in both the analytic and the capitalist discourses, but it is found in different places: in the discourse of the analyst, it is located between the agent and the other, while in the capitalist discourse, it is between the *product* and the *agent*. As a result, the capitalist discourse promises that a real surplus-jouissance can be restored, at precisely the place where the analytic discourse places a *semblance* of the object as cause of desire. In the analytic discourse, this vector writes the impossibility of this restoration.

We can guess what Lacan means when he speaks of psychoanalysis as an exit from capitalism.³⁰ It does so by bringing back the consideration of castration, a change that results from the analyst’s incarnation of surplus-jouissance, which reintroduces the incompatibility between the signifier and jouissance.

We should bear in mind that the “foreclosure of castration” is equivalent to the “rejection of the signifier of castration” (or of the symbolic operation); this means that the signifier of castration would, first, have been ascribed to subjects, before being “sent back” into the real. In any case, this is the way in which Lacan introduced foreclosure in his discussion of psychosis: a subject who forecloses the Name-of-the-Father has “sen[t] packing (*Verwerfe*) the whale of imposture.”³¹ This comparison may suggest a possible connection (the equal impossibility of relying on castration) between the capitalist discourse and psychosis, which would have to be examined.

In any case, we can guess that a society in which psychoanalysis is impossible would create another problem: it would substitute a general utilitarianism for the treatment of jouissance. Perhaps such a society would prevent any emergence of

the analytic discourse and therefore any possible changing of discourses. I say “perhaps” because the advent of such a situation is far from certain; after all, there were many irruptions of analytic discourse even before the invention of psychoanalysis. Psychoanalysis was destroyed under Nazism and Stalinism and sometimes slept at the feet of tyrants in Brazil³² or Italy³³ and is probably impossible under any of the “fundamentalist” monotheisms. On the other hand, psychoanalysts were also able to protest against the Argentinian military dictatorship, which led to the expansion of psychoanalysis throughout the world. Argentinian psychoanalysts continued to receive patients, even when police spies were infiltrating the ranks of their analysands; some of them had to change their offices regularly in order to avoid the risk of being tortured, and of being forced to confess what they had learned during their analytic sessions. Many preferred to continue to practice in Spanish-speaking countries, but Argentinian psychoanalysts are now found in immigrant communities throughout the world. In conformity with the laws of Argentina and of several other Latin-American countries, they are able to hold a double nationality. We know that this American and European double nationality can be advantageous for professional football players...and can help people to get around the regulations of the Schengen Area!

8. The Current State of the Discourses

If the *sinthome* supposes the existence of castration, we can find a confirmation of Lacan’s thesis in contemporary pathologies that seek to do without castration.³⁴ The list can start with drug addiction, which provides a sort of paradigm of the subject completed by its surplus-jouissance; in its most extreme form, such addiction has been rejected by the capitalist discourse, because it makes us incapable not so much of loving, as of working. On the one hand, addiction is disconcerting for capitalists, although they make billions from it, and on the other, there is an element of protest in both drug addiction³⁵ and alcoholism.³⁶ This list would also include depression, which is the biggest cause of the health-care deficit in France, and which, on this scale, can be interpreted as a refusal to let the objects of the market save one’s desire.³⁷ The increase in cases of anorexia and bulimia is also striking; perhaps patients with bulimia short-circuit the relation between the objects of desire and of oral demand. Through the satisfaction of eating, they are seeking what has not been given to them by love, thus making use of a confusion induced by the contemporary social bond. Once full, they vomit in order to hollow out the void that would be the place of lack, which is necessary for desire. Those who doubt that there is a connection between anorexia and contemporary forms of the social bond should think of the “pro-ana” movement, in which young women (and some men) come together in order to campaign in favor of anorexia and support each other. Surrounded by all the objects of information technology and advertising, and adopting the pretext of trying to have a model’s idealized body, people suffering from anorexia find in it (despite its justified condemnation) not only an identification but a

way of saving their desire; through oral frustration, they prevent their desire from serving commercial consumption.

Drug addiction, bulimia, anorexia, polyphagia, alcoholism, binge drinking and other addictions, snacking, compulsive buying, kleptomania, some forms of obesity, detachment, depression: these are illnesses of accumulation (the subject dies either from accumulation or from the refusal to consume). It is difficult not to associate such symptoms with certain current ideological tendencies present in psychology, such as biopsychosocial conceptions. The latter seek, like other ideologies, to *naturalize* the subject by reducing desire to need.³⁸

In France, suicide is the highest cause of mortality among young adults and the second-highest in children (behind accidents, which could well mask suicide). At the very moment when they are supposed to situate what is most particular about themselves in a social bond, subjects prefer to exclude themselves from it by dying. How can we not judge such actions to be the fault of our social bond? In this context, the large increase in suicides among young people in Eastern Europe is particularly interesting, for it has accompanied these countries' adherence to the neoliberal project.³⁹ The capitalist social bond sometimes seems to suggest that the alternative to this radical "Durkheimian" exclusion through suicide is to be included as an object on the market. Not only is there adoption trafficking, but in Latin America, children are being brought up so that their organs can be harvested for North-American clinics. Transplantable organs of people who have been condemned to death in China are systematically being marketed. Corneas collected from European war zones are being transplanted in European clinics. Corpses are being recycled for "artistic" uses.⁴⁰

If suicide can be considered as the act of a subject who deserts a society that constructs itself without subjects, then this ultimate protest raises the subject to the level of the real, which then interprets society. Some of the pathologies mentioned above could also be considered as protests. If this is the case, then the subject is not—yet—dead.

In this context, we can even consider the fate of the proletarian—who was defined as "Human material"—to be enviable; in such a case, all that happened was the extraction of surplus-value (*Other Side*, 32). Now, with the production of surplus-jouissance as the general equivalent of commodities, humans are being included in the series of interchangeable objects. As Lacan exclaimed to protesting students:

Everything, credit points—to have the makings of culture, of a hell of a general, in your rucksack, plus some medals besides, just like an agricultural show, that will pin on you what people dare call mastery, or at least a master's degree! (*Other Side*, 183, translation modified).

We should be sensitive to the places where the subject tries to make itself heard, but we should also be aware of the difficulties inherent in each of these places: in a certain kind of clinical psychology, advice columns, religious cults and humani-

tarian and alterglobalization movements. Psychology tries to make itself scientific without realizing that there is a contradiction between science and the subject; in this context, it defines the subject exclusively through its ability to accumulate knowledge (“mental age” or “intelligence quotient”) or through its pathologies of accumulation (the addictions). Some approaches to psychoanalysis even fall prey to this difficulty, when they consider it to be a sort of cognitivism.⁴¹ Religious cults, in turn, are not a part of the religion that existed before science, and which was constructed on belief: the knowledge that the object of belief does not exist and calls for faith and love to prove that God exists.⁴² After all, the three most important events related to peace in the last twenty years have been carried out in the name of God: the end of apartheid, the end of the civil war between protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland, and the small steps—which we hesitate even to mention—in favor of a peace that never stops not arriving, between Israel and the Palestinians. Religion is not a cult, but “fundamentalisms” seem to be supplanting it.

Both the modern cult and modern fundamentalism are inventions of the age of science; sectarians search on the Internet to find out how to make bombs, study how to manipulate people’s laptops at institutes of technology, and learn to fly supersonic jets. Perhaps more importantly, fundamentalist doctrine recreates the Other in opposition to (the treatment of jouissance by) the social bond. Fundamentalists’ pronouncements tell us who we are and what we must do in order to deserve salvation. Crimes committed in this context are directed not only against writers (journalists, authors, poets) but also against women and children: those who, as *sinthome*, renew the social bond.⁴³ The capitalist discourse provides with a new race of outsiders: those who are useless to it, and who become a sort of “homeless” people, with no relation to the social bond. Jouissance returns in the real as what is to be “cleansed”....

These various examples cannot, of course, be located in the same place in the capitalist discourse; a fuller analysis would relate them in more subtle ways. Capitalism revives a preoccupation of Lacan’s: society and discourse should not be confused with each other. The setting-up of a discourse is conditioned by what prevents it from running smoothly, by what stops structure from working autonomously: jouissance as the impossible. As a result, the capitalism that seeks to cleanse and decontaminate the world of jouissance accentuates the fierceness, cruelty and domination of structure, which isolates its elements and separates them from each other. We refind this situation in the modern pathologies, which can be associated with particular terms of the discourse. Psychosomatic phenomena, borderlines, pathological narcissism and addictions may not correspond term-by-term to S_1 , but are related to it; they are a swarm, which divides the body into bits and pieces, splinters it and leaves it in the grips of an unregulated return of jouissance. S_2 appears as the new knowledge that will shut the hysteric up. The has been supplanted by the ego or the “I.” In the place of the *a*, a consumer product confuses need, demand and desire. Only the symptom—the *sinthome*—enables us to hope that discourse can

be refounded, and the survival of psychoanalysis testifies to the persistence of the symptom.

As I write these words during the financial crisis of 2008, I would like, more than ever, to adopt the following statement of Lacan's, although current events lead to a slight modification of the final statement:

I am caught up in a movement that deserves to be called progressive, since it is progressive to see the psychoanalytic discourse founded, insofar as the latter completes the circle that could perhaps enable you to locate what it is exactly that you are rebelling against—which doesn't stop the thing from continuing incredibly well (*Other Side*, 208).

Notes

1. [This article is the translation of a text entitled "*Fracture du lien social et psychologie*," which was published as the second chapter of Marie-Jean Sauret's book, *Malaise dans le capitalisme, Psychanalyse & series* (Toulouse: Presses universitaires du Mirail, 2009), 43–75. The term "*lien social*," translated here as "social bond," is frequently translated as "social link," as in Bruce Fink's translation of *Encore*. For example, "discourse should be taken as a social link...founded on language." See Jacques Lacan, *On Feminine Sexuality: The Limits of Love and Knowledge*, ed. by Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. by Bruce Fink (New York: Norton, 1998), 17. In further references, this text will be cited as *Encore*. (Translator's note.)]
2. The text was originally written for a conference sponsored by the Master's program in Psychopathology at the University of Brest, which was entitled, "From Myth to Structure, from Structure to Discourse, from Language to Speech, from Speech to Logic, from Logic to Ethics," and which was held on February 16-17, 2001, on the basis of a joint Franco-Colombian research project, in response to a call for papers from ECOS-Nord. I have modified several details (2008).
3. Other presentations of Lacan's theory of discourse can be found in Jean Clavreul, *L'ordre médical* (Paris: Seuil, 1978); Michel Lapeyre and Marie-Jean Sauret, *Lacan: le retour à Freud* (Toulouse: Milan, 2000); Serge Lesourd, *Comment taire le sujet?: des discours aux parloottes libérales* (Toulouse: Érès, 2006); Gérard Wajcman, "The Hysteric's Discourse," *The Symptom: Online Journal for Lacan.com*, 4 (2003). Retrieved from <<http://www.lacan.com/hysteric-discf.htm>>
4. Émile Durkheim, *Suicide: A Study in Sociology*, ed. by George Simpson, trans. by John A. Spaulding and George Simpson (London and New York: Routledge, 2002).
5. Sigmund Freud, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* (London: Hogarth Press, 1953-1974), XIII (1955): "Totem and Taboo," 1–161.
6. Sigmund Freud, XXI (1961): "Civilization and Its Discontents," 57–146.
7. Freud explains the constitution of society through an identification with a trait of the leader's (who is the dead father's heir) and the sharing of a way of relating to the object of jouissance. Perhaps Freud's conception (if one sets aside the reference to the object, which may be too much to ask) may be homogeneous with what Volckrick refers to as a second level of interaction and names the "generalized-third party," a pragmatic restraint on the second level, which supposes a 'reflexive third-party' on the third level, which would

enable us to speak of a social bond in the strict sense." See Élisabeth Volckrick, "Les dispositifs de médiation et la question du tiers," in *Avons-nous encore besoin d'un tiers?*, ed. by Jean-Pierre Lebrun and Élisabeth Volckrick (Toulouse: Érès, 2005), 151.

8. Sigmund Freud, XVIII (1955): "Beyond the Pleasure Principle," 3–66.

9. Sigmund Freud, IX (1959): "Family Romances," 235–42.

10. Jacques Lacan, *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*, ed. by Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. by Russell Grigg (New York: Norton, 2007), 71. Henceforth cited in the text as *Other Side*.

11. See *Malaise dans le capitalisme*, 29–30.

12. Jacques Lacan, "The Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire in the Freudian Unconscious," in *Écrits: The First Complete Translation in English*, trans. by Bruce Fink, Héloïse Fink, and Russell Grigg (New York: Norton, 2006), 683.

13. *Encore*, 48–49; Jacques Lacan, "Logical Time and the Assertion of Anticipated Certainty," *Écrits: The First Complete Edition in English*, 161–175.

14. [In consultation with the author, I have indicated the notion of impossibility by means of a double slash or solidus, rather than by the barred arrow that appears in the original French (Translator's note.)]

15. Before adopting this terminology, Lacan designates these places in other ways (*Other Side*, 93):

| | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------|---|------------------------------------|
| $\frac{\text{desire}}{\text{truth}}$ | $\frac{\text{other}}{\text{loss}}$ | We also find: | $\frac{\text{work}}{\text{production}}$ | on the right side of this matheme. |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------|---|------------------------------------|

16. Sidi Askofaré and Marie-Jean Sauret, "The Question of the Father: Father and Symptom," *Journal of Lacanian Studies* 1:1 (2003): 38–65.

17. Paule Giron, *La mère empêchée* (Paris, France: Éditions du Seuil, 1978).

18. This comparison is borrowed from a remark by Pierre Bruno.

19. See Christian Meier, *The Political Art of Greek Tragedy*, trans. by Andrew Webber (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993).

20. Jacques Aubert and Jacques Lacan, *Joyce avec Lacan* (Paris: Navarin, 1987).

21. Lacan writes the four discourses on the four corners of a square, with the discourses of the master and of the analyst placed at a diagonal.

22. Jacques Lacan, "Lacan pour Vincennes!," *Ornicar* 17:18 (1979): 278.

23. "Thus, 'man thinks with his soul' means that man thinks with Aristotle's thought," *Encore*, 111. For "counter-psychoanalysis," see Jacques Lacan, "*Le séminaire, livre XXIV: L'insu que sait de l'une-bévue s'aile à mourre*" 1977-1976, 16. Retrieved from: < <http://staferla.free.fr/S24/S24%20L'INSU....pdf> >

24. "The analyst...here has to represent...the discourse's reject-producing effect [*effet de rejet*], that is, the object *a*" (*Other Side*, 44).

25. Jacques-Alain Miller, "Extimité" (*L'orientation lacanienne* 1985-1986, n.d.).

26. Jacques Lacan, "Discours à l'Ecole freudienne de Paris," in *Autres écrits* (Paris: Seuil, 2001), 261–281.
27. The reader will have understood that what is singular, which stands apart from every generalization, is not to be confused with the particular, which can always be evaluated, whether quantitatively or qualitatively. See Marie-Jean Sauret and Olivier Douville, "À props de la démarche clinique et de son rapport aux singulier," in *Les Méthodes cliniques en psychologie*, ed. by Olivier Douville (Paris: Dunod, 2006).
28. See, for example, the following statements found in *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*: The modern master is the one "whom we call capitalist" and the proletarian "is characterizable by this term 'dispossessed'" (31-32). "'Consumer society' derives its meaning from the fact that what makes it the 'element,' in inverted commas, described as human is made the homogeneous equivalent of whatever surplus *jouissance* is produced by our industry—an imitation surplus *jouissance*, in a word" (81). "[T]his capital mutation...gives the master's discourse its capitalist style" (168).
29. Jacques Lacan, "Du discours psychanalytique," in *Lacan in Italia 1953 - 1978* (Milan: La Salamandra, 1978) 32-55.
30. Jacques Lacan, *Television: A Challenge to the Psychoanalytic Establishment*, ed. by Joan Copjec, trans. by Denis Hollier, Rosalind Krauss, and Annette Michelson (New York: Norton, 1990) 16.
31. Jacques Lacan, "On a Question Prior to Any Possible Treatment of Psychosis," in *Écrits: The First Complete Edition in English*, 484.
32. In Brazil, some analysts from the I.P.A. chose to collaborate with torturers and allowed colleagues who accused them to be directly threatened. See Helena Besserman Vianna, *Politique de la psychanalyse face à la dictature et à la torture: "n'en parlez à personne"* (Paris: l'Harmattan 1997).
33. See the "astonishing" testimony of Panayotis Kantzas, who as psychoanalyst, served in the ministry of defense in Silvio Berlusconi's first government. "Des choses merveilleuses et terrifiantes," *La Cause Freudienne* 33 (1996): 44–47.
34. Antonio Quinet, "Les nouvelles formes du symptôme en medecine," *Barca!* 13 (1999): 121–130.
35. Sidi Askofaré, Michel Lapeyre, and Marie-Jean Sauret, "Symptôme, sexualité, lien social: L'enjeu de la toxicomanie," *Analysis, Publication sobre problemas asociados con el uso de drogas*, 1 (2000).
36. This is one of Anna Cywinska's findings in her Master's thesis "L'alcoolisme: l'en-verre du capitalisme ? L'alcoolisme et le lien social contemporain: l'exemple de la Pologne" (Toulouse II Le Mirail, 2006).
37. Elisabeth Roudinesco, *Why Psychoanalysis?*, trans. by Rachel Bowlby (New York and Chichester: Columbia University Press, 2003).
38. [For more on biopsychosocial conceptions, see Sidi Askofaré, Marie-Jean Sauret, and Pascale Macary-Garipuy, "Current Controversies in the Treatment of Autism in France," trans. by John Holland, *S: Journal of the Circle for Lacanian Ideology Critique* 5 (2012): 129 (Translator's note).]

39. Especially the young members of “Generation T,” the transition generation, according to Martyna Bunda, as cited in Cywinska.
40. In this context, we should remember the polemic that was occasioned by the exposition of human bodies by the anatomist and artist, Gunther von Hagens, the inventor of the technique of “plastination.” The scandal that led to his being indicted for trafficking in the corpses of people who had been condemned to death in China had hardly been forgotten when his new exposition *Body Worlds* opened, under the pretext that it was a pedagogical, rather than an artistic project.
41. See the dossier of this debate in Pascal Mettens, *Psychanalyse et sciences cognitives: un même paradigme ?* (Brussels: De Boeck, 2006); Daniel Widlöcher and Émile Noël, *La psyché carrefour* (Geneva: Georg, 1997).
42. See Marie-Jean Sauret, *Croire?: approche psychanalytique de la croyance* (Paris, France: Privat, 1982).
43. Perhaps this is the reason for the disappearance of a certain kind of journalism, for the loss of interest in poetry, and for the success of the literature that requires the least from us.

PIERRE BRUNO

THE CAPITALIST EXEMPTION¹

Translated by John Holland

A Discourse without Loss

Below is the matheme of the capitalist discourse:² The matheme is constructed by inverting the terms found in the places of the semblance (or of the agent) and truth in the discourse of the master: $\$$ is now in the position of S_1 and vice versa. The direction of the arrow between $\$$ and S_1 remains unchanged, so that, in the capitalist discourse, it now moves from the top to the bottom. As a final modification, the arrow that had gone from a to S_1 moves from a to $\$$. The consequences of these changes require some comments.

(Place of the agent or semblance) $\downarrow \frac{\$}{S_1} \not\propto \frac{S_1}{a} \downarrow$
(Place of the truth)

Pleasure, like unpleasure, is a physiological reality. Jouissance is of a different order; if it does not exist without the body—the body as organism—it also does not exist without knowledge. In skipping the barrier of jouissance, it also skips an obstacle, the nature of which gives rise to a promise that can be kept only through annihilation. Jouissance is a “negative substance.” This means that by speaking, I destroy myself as thing and that this self-virtualization would provide me with jouissance precisely if I were not, as a candidate for jouissance, annihilated by this very candidacy.³ How can we get out of this—infernal—circle, even though those tormented by Satan (and this may well be Satan’s hope) have the chance to participate in jouissance through his dark side; this dark side, in turn, is not as bad as vanity, abandonment, or an emptiness of affect, to use the most common vocabulary. The central thread of this questioning has been woven in and out through the space/time of thought, and the relief, even the enthusiasm of the postwar period was degraded through its emphasis on the absurd, the herald of which was Albert Camus, in *The Rebel*.

§§§

The Milan lecture, in June 1972, entitled, “On the Psychoanalytic Discourse,” introduces the matheme of the capitalist discourse; through it, Lacan, brings out this impact of this use of language and suggests a way out of this nightmarish Moebius strip, provided that we are able to seize upon this exit. Perhaps an example—an unusual one for this context—may help us grasp what is at stake in this problem. In an analytic session, you go deliberately against Freud’s advice not to look for information about how things “really” happened, and say to a female analysand, “You could ask your mother about this.” During the next session, she tells you, “I couldn’t ask my mother anything,” and then adds, “It’s like the time when my mother asked me, ‘Whom do you prefer: your father or me?’” Nothing could stop her from hearing the analyst’s speech as coming from the Other of the transference. The analyst’s enunciation was reduced to the mother’s, who, by her question, had closed the child up in a transference cage: either you prefer me, or you don’t really love me. For this analysand, to ask the mother anything, no matter how small, meant answering in a way that she had not wanted to do at the time: I prefer you. As a result, she could only see her analyst as her mother’s ally. The analyst, whom she had wanted to become her liberator, became her jailer.

By starting with this slippage (which was not as unfortunate as it may seem, since it helped the analysand to say something new about the closing-off of her relation with her mother) we can look for the prototype of the exit from the capitalist discourse. How? Let’s examine things more closely. The demand contained in the analyst’s initial suggestion has its own signification: this demand can be understood “objectively” by approaching it simply in terms of its vocabulary and syntax. The analysand, however, hears it on a plane that is not empty, and which modifies its “objective” signification, so that following this suggestion would be the equivalent of accepting what she has always refused the mother: to mold herself into a transference relation with her that would not be exclusive, but would take precedence over others. This is not far from this analysand’s remark that she had thought that the analyst was asking her, indirectly, to treat her relation with him as more important than everything else. Let us say that *every signification is heard on a plane that always affects the message: a meaning [sens] is produced that was not contained in the signification*. The “skidding of the signifier” means that the latter is received on a plane that is always itself slippery. It is slippery because receiving a message is a function, on the one hand, of its content and its emitter, and on the other hand, of the relation between the receiver and the emitter, a relation called transference. If we consider this fact in all its breadth, we conclude, as Lacan notes, that it is possible to make a word say something very different from what it says. Someone who claims to be an atheist can be shown to believe in God, or—and this is my example—psychoanalytic theory can be shown to say something that is, in reality, the opposite of what one thinks it says, etc. Now, although in my first example, this sliding may seem to be a disadvantage—perhaps an unacceptable one—for the treatment,

it is really quite the contrary. Through this misunderstanding, the subject can preserve, or rather bring into existence, the margin of indeterminacy that will enable her to grasp the forced choice of alienation and make it the symptomatic means of her emancipation. For the neurotic, this will be through the separation produced by the fantasy; for the psychotic, it will be through the specific space that authorizes him/her to have a delusion. True separation can be encountered, however, only once the fantasy has been dismantled and “stabilized in a delusional metaphor.”⁴

What does this have to do with the capitalist discourse? It takes us to the very heart of the question: Hollywood films, such as *The Truman Show* or *Being John Malkovich*, portray people’s efforts to escape from a virtualization that seeks to program them entirely; this virtualization turns a stage or film set into reality, and thus reduces it to nothing more than the application (in the mathematical sense) of a linguistic function forged by an Other. It is as if the capitalist discourse were capable of turning itself into a universe: me, clone; you, hologram. Escaping from this virtualization involves making the barrier of *jouissance*—which the capitalist discourse has scrapped—function again. In psychoanalytic terms, this would dissolve the drive into the unconscious. From Jean Baudrillard to the multimedia artist, Tony Oursler, the theme of the cunning triumph of virtualization has now been fully sketched out. This may also be what a psychoanalyst, Jean-Claude Maleval, is aiming at when he uses the expression, “foreclosure of reference.”⁵ I myself especially like the French children’s show, *Bonne nuit les petits* [*Good Night, Children*], in which Oscar, the nephew of Nounours, the Teddy bear, turns himself off with the remote control; this shows us that virtualization can only succeed through the initiative of the agent who is also its object.

Let us look at it from a different perspective, that of Orwell’s 1984. Winston Smith begins to fall in love with what he ascribes to Big Brother: both the command to submit to a sacrificial castration and its enactment. Here it seems as though love itself, the emotion of love, can emerge alchemically from an annihilation to which one consents. This is not a baseless notion, provided that we see that this transformation of the emotion does away with Big Brother, since Big Brother is nothing other than the great persecutor as such.⁶

As we have seen, the unrestrained skidding of the signifier is connected with the fluctuations of all signification. Let’s examine this in terms of meaning [*sens*]. How can this be understood? In this lecture, Lacan reminds us that S_1 , the One of the signifier, rotates through each of the places in the discourse: those of the semblance, the other, the production and the truth. Because it can be translated from one discourse to another, a meaning [*sens*] can be born. This thesis is found explicitly in “*L’étourdit*.”⁷ Meaning, as distinct from signification, implies that the signifier can be translated. There is meaning only to the extent that there exists something that is outside a purely denotative language; this “outside” is speech itself, inasmuch as it supposes a subject.

A question can be raised here. Was Lacan correct to use the term, “discourse,” in describing the functioning of capitalism? A first error must be eliminated here—let us remember that a discourse is not a set of words, but, in the phrase “capitalist discourse,” designates the social bond that stems from the domination of the capitalist mode of production. In a way, the term “discourse” has been substituted for that of “mode of production,” and throws light on certain aspects of the latter. Nevertheless, does the absence of the disjunction that is internal to *jouissance* discredit the expression, “discourse,” in the Lacanian sense? This objection is more difficult. In order not to respond too hurriedly, I will simply remark that the barrier of *jouissance* is not really the condition *sine qua non* of discourse. Another condition stands in this place: as Lacan reminds us in this lecture, there is no discourse that is not of the semblance [*semblant*]. The unchecked skidding of the signifier allows us to exit from the aporia of *jouissance*, but discourse, because it involves the semblance, prevents this skidding from becoming so uncontrolled that it would destroy the bond assured by the function of language. If language gives prominence to the skidding of the signifier and the signifier’s claim to make an absolute meaning of the whole, the semblance [*semblant*] or *sens blanc* [white meaning], is different; its separation from these tendencies allows us exchanges that can have an acceptable level of misunderstandings. The objective of theater is to make this semblance implode, or rather to reveal the conditions that allow it to function, conditions that would otherwise remain unperceived.⁸ It happens that, in the capitalist discourse, $\$$ occupies the place of the semblance. If the absence of the barrier of *jouissance* has a major consequence for this subject, the very fact that it occupies the place of the semblance has a stabilizing effect: it enables the discourse to ward off the inordinate skidding of the signified.

The semblance is what, despite the complete impossibility of *jouissance* and of the slipping of the signifier, enables language, through discourse, to create a bond and ensure a regulation and circulation of *jouissance*; it is able, in principle, to distance us from the specters of mania or of a *passage à l’acte*, both of which are ways of putting an end to this bond. The price of this is the conventionality and artificiality of linguistic exchange, which makes the search for the truth of meaning into a bargain; we get it at a cut price. There is a touch of the vacuum when truth goes on sale.

In this context, I would like to introduce another unusual but, I hope, suggestive example: the pharmacist plays a major role in this discourse, for the capitalist subject believes that this figure can reveal what s/he desires. Surprisingly, the pharmacist becomes important by refusing to sell a product.⁹ Through this trick, the capitalist discourse demonstrates its superiority in its grasp of desire. It substitutes desire for need, which it does not satisfy; the proletarian, who would like to have public housing, is offered an estate, thereby placing the consumer as subject in command. From then on, the subject’s desire—as consumer and customer—becomes the effect of the reformulation—or interpretation—of the demand by the other, the pharmacist, who is located in S_2 . In the matheme of the capitalist discourse, this circuit goes from $\$$ to S_2 , by way of S_1 , and thus by means of a master signifier. This principle of author-

ity is concealed (since it is *under* the subject), but it is always necessary, in order to certify the kind of knowledge that is in question. In experimental psychology, its trace can be found in the Stockholm syndrome as well as in those chilling experiments that show how submission to authority can turn almost anyone into a torturer. In the matheme, the rising diagonal of the arrow that goes from S_1 to S_2 points to this power, which can be found at any moment. Throughout history, only the discourse of science forged by Descartes' *dubito, sum* has been able to make it totter or tremble, without abolishing it.

The arrow, $a \rightarrow S$, is found in both the capitalist and the analytic discourses, but it functions in them in completely opposed ways.¹⁰ In the analytic discourse, it is marked by an impossibility. In the capitalist discourse, however, surplus-jouissance (*a*) is supposed to saturate the lack-of-jouissance [*manque-à jouir*]. Whereas the capitalist discourse promotes the submission of knowledge to a masked authority, the discourse of the analyst writes a permanent disjunction between the master signifier and knowledge, a disjunction that could only be removed if jouissance were to fill up the place of the signifier.¹¹ One can note, finally, that in the analytic discourse (as in the other three original discourses), one place—truth—has a special status. In the four discourses, you can start out from this place, but you cannot reach it, since the two arrows *move away* from it. This inaccessibility of truth in discourse does not mean that it does not exist. Truth exists. It speaks, but you cannot speak it. The capitalist discourse, on the other hand, is constructed in order to *miss* this inaccessibility of truth. Not only is the place of truth accessible, but it must also be passed through in order to reach knowledge. *Truth, in the capitalist discourse, has the same status as it does in astrology; it cannot be falsified.*

The capacity of the mathemes to generate such readings and consequences may be surprising, and this is especially true of the capitalist discourse, which seems a bit cobbled together. Lacan himself emphasized that these mathemes only “imitated mathematics, and he sought later, in topology, to find a means of judging that is not subjected to the caprices of language; it is nevertheless true that the choice of a (mathematized) writing is, in itself, a choice in favor of science.”¹² Writing, with its terms, its signs, its punctuation, its rules for placement in space, imposes orientations and leads to conclusions that limit, a priori, the skidding of the signifier, on the condition that one resists any instrumentalization—which would finally be magical—of writing. It is therefore false to say that psychoanalysis, as Popper claimed, is unfalsifiable (an objection that Freud had already perceived). If it creates a problem, it is by always being falsifiable, up to the point when it ends. Indeed, the end of analysis could be called the end of the jouissance that comes from falsifying it: will and determination then become the notch of desire, the indestructibility and discontinuity of which are not recognized. It would not be too extreme to say that the analytic discourse is constructed on the principle of the inaugural and irremediable loss of jouissance, and that the nostalgia for falsifiability is only the ghost of this loss. The capitalist discourse presents itself as a discourse that has no loss and no entropy.

In this discourse S_2 is the slave-servant, whose knowledge can be activated. The relation $S_1 \rightarrow S_2$ (the diagonal arrow that goes from the bottom left to the top right) can be transposed onto the capitalist/worker couple, since what intervenes in production is the *savoir-faire* of the labor force: the highly variable degree of the worker's skill, which goes from the status of being semi-skilled to that of engineer.

If the S_1 does not possess knowledge, what gives it the capacity to command? The answer is financial power. The worker obeys and produces. S/he produces what Marx discovered the secret of: surplus-value. We know that for Marx, whom no one challenges on this point, capitalism is characterized by the fact that labor-power has become a commodity, just like wheat or iron. Thus, with capitalism, surplus-jouissance (*a*) takes the form of surplus-value. Surplus-jouissance also calls to mind Freud's *Lustgewinn*, the "yield of pleasure," and already in Freud, this yield makes up for the structural failure of jouissance, as is demonstrated by the fact that humor produces a *Lustgewinn*.¹³ *Mehrwert*, then, is the extra value produced by the salaried worker, throughout the working day, after having first reproduced the value or his/her labor-power. In order to reproduce her/his ability to work (education, food, lodging), a worker needs to create a value of, let's say, four daily hours of labor. If s/he works eight hours, however, the difference—eight minus four—constitutes the *Mehrwert*.

In this sense, capitalism precedes and conditions psychoanalysis by providing the means of shaping jouissance through value. This value is exchange-value, not the use-value that must be renounced in order to make the primitive accumulation of capital possible. Something makes our ears prick up here: it is the "surplus," the *Gewinn* (yield), rather than the *Lust* (pleasure). Lacan retroactively introduces into Marx's discovery of surplus-value the element that explains the capitalist discourse's efficiency. Without this substitution of surplus-jouissance for surplus-value, it is impossible to explain the gap between the "real" economy (which follows the principle of surplus-value) and the economy that functions through financial globalization. Surplus-value, indeed, only constitutes the motive force of the capitalist mode of production as long as it enables there to be jouissance; if it did not do so, no one would care about it.

Yet who gets off? A Marxist could retort that the proletarian sells his/her labor-power simply in order to survive: "eat to live rather than live to eat." "The jouissance that you're talking about," this Marxist might say, concerns the capitalist. This objection cannot simply be brushed off, for it comes from the real of the class struggle. However, the "cunning" of the capitalist discourse involves interesting the proletarian in jouissance, and in order to do so, it transforms the proletarian into a consumer, a capitalist subject: the $\$$ is in the place of the agent. Thus, money no longer serves as an instrument of measurement or as the general equivalent; instead, it is only valuable to the extent that it engenders itself or seems to engender itself, in a parthenogenesis that excludes the productive process.

Marx, according to Lacan, completed the capitalist discourse by giving it “its subject, the proletarian, thanks to whom the capitalist discourse is flourishing wherever the Marxist state-form prevails.”¹⁴ This rather daring judgment rectifies his assessment two years earlier, in *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*, that the Soviet system functioned through the discourse of the university: knowledge, taken as a unified whole, was its agent, and the “new man” was supposed to be produced.¹⁵ In my opinion, this judgment is correct, but the later collapse of this system gives support to the later thesis. Concerning this collapse, it would be comic, but fair, to argue that with the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the capitalist discourse experienced its first real defeat. Why not say that the Soviet system was the supreme stage of capitalism, for its axiom did not call the functioning of the capitalist discourse into question? The extortion of surplus-value did not stop. It was distributed differently, and apparently—or, in any case, according to the ideology— S_1 and S_2 , the capitalist and the worker, were no longer in an antagonistic relation: the former tried to get people to work too much, and the latter to diminish the amount of labor. Otherwise, the slogan, “we are all capitalists” sapped the Soviet system like the “old mole.” Since the system was never able to acknowledge that this was its slogan, *jouissance* tended to get a lot of bad publicity; the proletarians had to renounce it in order to have a better future, while the bureaucracy transformed itself into a bureaucracy of *jouissance*.

In all this, there are strategies for obtaining *jouissance*. What differentiates them is how one conceives of two couples within the discourse: with $\$ - S_2$, we have the proletarian whose desire gives in to surplus-*jouissance* (work more to get off more)¹⁶ and the worker as producer (work less in order to be less exploited); the other couple is $\$ - S_1$, since the capitalist is also sundered [*scindé*] between the one who recuperates surplus-value and commands the process, and the one who, as subject, consumes.¹⁷ Once this relation has been established, it cannot be revoked. The worker (in S_2) can go on strike, but the capitalist, in S_1 , cannot. The capitalist philanthropist or patron will never go so far as to indict the capitalist discourse itself. On the other hand, the capitalist can put him/herself in the ascetic position of subject, without thereby modifying the process. If the proletarian withdraws, as far as possible, from the position of subject of consumption, this will not have much of an effect. It is obvious, finally, that within the framework of the capitalist discourse, the proletarian’s increase in consumption, which involves going against the grain of the capitalist mode of production, never dries up the production of wealth.

From this, one must conclude that only the strike, a work stoppage, can constitute the symptom. One must also conclude that highlighting the contradiction between S_1 and S_2 reveals not a splitting but a sundering.

Since this is the case, finding the key to this discourse implies recognizing that the necessity of surplus-*jouissance* is founded on the status of *jouissance* as a “hole that must be filled” (“Radiophonie,” 434).

Marx fills this hole through surplus-value. This is why Lacan says that *Mehrwert* [surplus-value] is the *Marxlust*, Marx's surplus-jouissance. Surplus-value is the cause of desire, which the capitalist economy makes into its very principle, that of extensive production. Now, if capitalist production—the cycle M-C-M (Money—Commodity—Money + Money)—implies that consumption is always increasing, then this production would come to a sudden stop if it actually led to a consumption that could procure jouissance; consumption would then be halted, production would slow down, and this cycle would end. If this is not the case, it is because this economy, through a *reversal* that Marx had not foreseen, produces a lack-of-jouissance [*manque-à-jour*]. *The more I consume, the greater the gap between jouissance and consumption becomes*. Thus there is a struggle involving the distribution of this surplus-value, which “only induces those who are exploited to act as rivals on principle, in order to shelter their obvious participation in the thirst of the lack-of-jouissance” (“*Radiophonie*,” 435). Pareto, one of the theorists of neoclassical economics, forged an exquisite expression: the “*ophelimity*” of a glass of water. On the basis of an incontestable observation—that a drinker takes less pleasure in a third glass of water than from the first—Pareto deduces a law: the value of the water decreases in proportion to its consumption. The opposite law, however, governs the capitalist economy. Beyond drinking without thirst, this law can be stated as follows: “The more I drink, the thirstier I get.”

The Choreography of Love

As we have just seen, in the capitalist discourse, the accessibility of truth is combined with the disjunction between the places of truth and the production (on the bottom left and right). This suppression exonerates the capitalist discourse from a requirement that was believed to constitute all discourses.

The other structural characteristic that we have examined is the creation of an arrow, $a \rightarrow S$, which does not exist in the discourse of the master, from which the capitalist discourse derives. This arrow is also not found in the discourse of the hysteric, and although it does appear in the discourse of the analyst, it is marked explicitly by an impossibility. Only in the discourse of the university, which has a special kinship with the capitalist discourse, does this arrow function.

Within this framework, we can now approach another aspect of the capitalist discourse. As Lacan stated on January 6, 1972, in *Le savoir du psychanalyste* [The Knowledge of the Psychoanalyst]: “What distinguishes the discourse of capitalism is this — the *Verwerfung*, the rejection, the throwing outside all the symbolic fields... of what? Of castration. Every order, every discourse that has capitalism in common sets aside what we shall call simply the matters [*choses*] of love. It's for this that, two centuries after this sliding [*glissement*], let's call it Calvinist—why not?—castration has finally stormed back in, in the form of the analytic discourse” (*Je parle aux murs*, 96).

The heart of this statement is its connection between the setting aside of “matters of love” and the foreclosure of castration; before we approach it directly, a few remarks can place it in perspective.

First, according to Lacan, love is what makes up for the nonexistence of the sexual relation (whereas the mere addition of man + woman would give one access to a jouissance that is primary and absolute). There is no sexual relation because of castration, and the acceptance of this nonexistence can authorize a contingent sexual encounter.¹⁸ The foreclosure of castration, on the contrary, has a very different consequence: it makes the sexual relation possible (which can then be indicated by the arrow, $a \rightarrow S$, which can be read as “a woman fulfills a man”). In consequence, love, as something that makes up for this impossibility, becomes obsolete. The mechanics of sex would then become the physics of love, and there would be no need to differentiate sex and love; a manual of sexology would be the same as the map of Tendre.¹⁹

What is more subtle and difficult is an equivalence that Lacan posits in “*L’étourdit*,” a text from the same year (1972): “Death [*la mort*] is love [*l’amour*].” This reminds us, of the romance of Iseut and Tristan, in which death does indeed signal love. Either there is love or there is death. Or again, if love, which makes up for the nonexistence of the sexual relation, is an inaccessible outcome, death will do quite nicely; only it will have the power to make up for the situation in which castration has left us. Let us note, to strengthen this reading, that Lacan attributes this equivalence between love and death to Freud. What appears more directly in Freud’s work, however, is the equivalence between death and jouissance. This has an intrusive effect of double exposure. If, for Freud, jouissance is impossible for the living being, and is always lost (whatever the status of primary jouissance may be), the sole virtue of love, as distinct from desire, is that it brings with it the promise of a substitute that overcomes this loss. Its narcissistic structure lends itself to this, including in its lethal foundation, since anyone can get bogged down in seeking this specularity of love.

As for the other term involved, the foreclosure of castration is distinct from that of the Name-of-the-Father, the expression upon which Lacan had based the distinction between psychosis and neurosis. He uses the arrow, $a \rightarrow$ to indicate a subject that is completed by its surplus-jouissance, in an asymptotic countability. At the limit of this countability, we can hope to have an unbarred subject: the “new man,” who will soon be joined by the most precious capital, woman. What must be seen, indeed, is that the cycle Money-Commodity-more Money, which Marx had so impeccably taken apart, is homologous to the Easter computus; by virtue of money, capitalism *virtualizes all living things through coining*. In such an economy, even the cost of death would serve for something, and, in contrast to Freud’s interpretation, the world would be loveless, with the exception of a religious love for that highly abstract Other, the capitalist system.

What is in question here is the status of death. On the side of psychoanalysis, this is the for-nothing that makes it equivalent to the for-nothing of love, thwarting any full counting of the real (what would it cost to buy the universe and who would want to buy it?). On the side of capitalism, death would be transformed into a substance through its commodification, founded on an unlimited linguistic virtualization; the real would be equal to reality and the sexual relation would be necessary as the law by which the world works. This world would be nothing more than the reflection of the sexual relation.

As a result, when Lacan speaks of how castration storms back in through the analytic discourse, we should take him at his word: castration, as revealing the absence of the sexual relation, only becomes *for itself* with Freud. It had already been indicated, more or less, through the Oedipus complex, which was not, however, enough to permit the *Bejahung* (the yes to....) of castration, even if this consent is already present with language.

With the coming of capitalism, everything concerning the action of castration is foreclosed from discourse, starting with “matters of love”: this could cause difficulty for the Oedipus complex itself. To mention sexual criminality, which, in changing forms, has always constituted *something of* the scandal of mores, there are two ways of struggling against it: reintroducing castration or transforming the Oedipus complex into law. The effectiveness of the second solution is limited; only an acceptance of castration can enable the subject to accept such a law. In counting on law, one ends up forging a pseudo-castration, which would be complete and total. This pseudo-castration would only feed the misunderstanding of sexual difference, since it would reduce the feminine to a binary negative term in relation to the masculine. The foreclosure of castration does not mean the manufacturing of psychotics, for it also concerns neurotics, pushing *both of them* to seek in power—either as masters or as those who benefit from the latter’s trusts or entailments—a way to keep castration foreclosed. Can the hysteric and the obsessional neurotic be said to foreclose castration? Freud, in his case history of the Wolf Man, threw light on the foreclosure of castration in a way that can accommodate neurosis.²⁰ This suggests that castration cannot be brought wholly and totally into the field of the symbolic. The capitalist discourse transforms this partial restriction into a general rule. It must be insisted that a misunderstanding of castration is a structural, and not an accidental, part of the castration complex. Such a misinterpretation is inevitable when femininity is not apprehended as being *beyond* castration. Being beyond it means that castration is necessary, but not sufficient.

Now let us examine the context. Lacan mentions a poem by Paul Fort: “If all the girls in the world wanted to join hands, all around the sea, they could make a round.”²¹ Lacan does not content himself with pointing out that the “girls” themselves never dreamed of this. Unlike boys, they do not need to make a circle: a circle, for example, of officers or even a Freudian circle. Boys go around in circles because they are afraid of finding themselves alone with one girl. For this reason, it is up to the girl to separate the boy from his circle, from his “*Masse*.” Nothing is

missing from this choreography of love, not even the fact that before she succeeds in taking a boy out of his circle, a girl goes together with another girl, whom she will then leave on the sidelines, as soon as she has accomplished her abduction, when she will have kidnapped a boy.

If girls tend to go “two by two,” this has its foundation in what Lacan, in his “Guiding Remarks for a Convention on Female Sexuality,” refers to as a jouissance that is “enveloped in its own contiguity.”²² In this respect, feminine homosexuality could be particularized as a relation of Other to Other, and not of same to same. This is the case with the relation between Lol V. Stein and Tatiana, in Marguerite Duras’ novel, *The Ravishing of Lol Stein*.²³ How are these “matters of love,” when they are approached from the feminine side?

First of all, there is a gap between it and Freud’s conception of Eros, as it is found especially in *Civilization and Its Discontents*: “Eros and Ananke [Love and Necessity] have become the parents of human civilization too. The first result of civilization was that even a fairly large number of people were now able to live together in a community.”²⁴ Here, Eros proceeds by means of *Vereinigung*, to make it one that we know well: unification. It contributes to civilization, by constituting circles that become larger and larger, going from the clan to humanity.

In Freud’s words:

Since civilization obeys an internal erotic impulsion which causes human beings to unite in a closely-knit group, it can only achieve this aim through an ever-increasing reinforcement of the sense of guilt. What began in relation to the father is completed in relation to the group. If civilization is a necessary course of development from the family to humanity as a whole, then—as a result of...the eternal struggle between the trends of love and death—there is inextricably bound up with it an increase in the sense of guilt (*Civilization and Its Discontents*, 133).

According to Lacan, love does the opposite: it dissolves the circle by removing an element from it. He thus envisions “matters of love” as a *disunification*, and situates love more on the side of Thanatos than of Eros. The mythography of Eros is not at all unilateral.

Claude Lévi-Strauss deserves recognition for having emphasized the positive character of the Oedipal prohibition in *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*: “If these modalities can be subsumed under the general term of exogamy...this is conditional upon the apperception, behind the superficially negative expression of the rule of exogamy, of the final principle which, through the prohibition of marriage within prohibited degrees, tends to ensure the total and continuous circulation of the group’s most important assets, its wives and its daughters.”²⁵ However, Lévi-Strauss thereby covers over matters of love in his own way. He reduces women to values or goods and neglects exoandry, in which men leave their group and join their wives’

group. This kinship structure should take priority, as soon as women are considered as subjects, rather than as goods.

The feminine requirement of a minus-one (which may serve as the basis of its monandry) and of an "*Homoinizun*"²⁶ who will be her own, rather than being a boy from the regiment, is not symmetrical with masculine exogamy. We will understand this distinction better if we remember that in order to bear leaving the circle, a man needs to transform *a* woman—the one who has chosen him—into *woman*, quite simply by locating the Name-of-the-Father in her. This is a law: in order for a man—in this case, a neurotic man—to be able to attach himself to a woman, he must discern a paternal signifier in her. This is how he deals with the trauma of the encounter with the Other sex.²⁷ In psychosis, this transformation of a woman into *woman* cannot be effected through the Name-of-the-Father as operator and therefore implies that man himself must become Woman, "the woman that men are missing," without whom, let us add, they are doomed to remain in the circle (which the psychotic will not fail to denounce) ("On a Question," 472). For a woman, it should be emphasized that she awakens the man by separating him from the group. This dissymmetry between masculine exogamy and a woman's choice of a man is a part of the dissymmetry between what is generally attributed to man—the fantasy of the *Vereinigung*—and what a woman reveals: love as an election, which implies a dissolution.

We know the extent to which, for Freud, the question of understanding femininity was both decisive and insoluble. He considered anatomical and psychological determinations to be insufficient and concluded with an observation that—although it does not give us a positive definition of what a woman is—does provide a differential assessment: a woman differs from a man because she is not a woman from the moment of her birth, but becomes one. Man as *being* is opposed to woman as *becoming*. This is Freud's final lesson. Why did Freud, who had written about the choice of love-objects, not try to define women through their mode of choosing them? In any case, this is what Lacan did.

It can even be claimed that, in the sexuation table in *Encore*, Lacan provides a matheme for this mode of choice: the wall—erected by language—between the sexes can be crossed over from left to right—from the phallic side to the side that is not-whole—by following an arrow: $S \rightarrow a$ (*Encore*, 78). Lacan's comments on this arrow leave us in no doubt about how he schematizes men's choice of a love-object: "He is unable to attain his sexual partner, who is the Other, except inasmuch as his partner is the cause of his desire" (*Encore*, 80). After this, if we had the idea—and may God protect us from this—that there is a symmetry between the sexes (which would suppress their differences) we would expect a woman's love-choice to be written as $a \rightarrow S$; this could be the matheme for the masculine cliché of woman as seducer. This is not at all, however, what Lacan writes. Through her choice of sexual partner, a woman inscribes herself in the phallic function: *The Woman* $\rightarrow \Phi$. Yet, on the other hand, she has a relation with the Other, not through the intermediary of the *a*, but as radically barred. It does not seem risky to me to read the arrow,

The Woman→S(A) as indicating the feminine choice in love: it dissolves the set by extracting an element from it. Beyond this, it should be noted that the capitalist discourse introduces the arrow, $a \rightarrow S$, in terms of the possible, as if the movement went from the not-whole to castration, and as if we could read it as a sketch of a supermarket of love and desire, offered up for the subject's consumption. Thus the capitalist discourse forecloses castration and, when all is said and done, also calls sexual difference into question. The capitalist discourse is Jungian.

This consideration opens up a path for assessing how this setting matters of love aside can be related to castration in the capitalist discourse. Lacan, in his "Guiding Remarks for a Convention on Female Sexuality," recognizes the anti-entropic effects of feminine homosexuality, as they can be observed, for example, in the *Précieuses*. He also notes in passing that the *Précieuses* differed from the Cathars, who in sundering good absolutely from evil, anticipated the capitalist paradise, or—and this may be the same thing—fueled a millenarianism, the effects of which are not always cheering.

Among the *Précieuses*, who organized themselves in salons at the beginning of the seventeenth century, there is no doubt that women took the initiative in choosing a love-object. According to the classical analyses, such as Paul Bénichou's, men who were admitted into the salon had been taken from the group of knights.²⁸ This is a fair, if cavalier view. Knights were gradually disappearing, thanks in part to the *Précieuses* (and had, of course, been given their deathblow by Cervantes, who had mocked the knight errant's desire to preserve chivalry singlehandedly). In the salon, such knights were taught how to speak, rather than to kill or rape. It may well have been this "borrowing" of men to which Molière objected, but this does not discredit the mode of choosing love-objects that the *Précieuses* promoted. They are a perfect example of the civilizing work of women, which Freud had glimpsed: the dissolving of the group of men and the constructing of a community that acted through *dissemination*.

The Amazons, the other example that comes to mind, raise thornier questions. They are known through Greek mythology, beginning with Homer. Historians have said less about them, since they do not know who their historical prototypes were, or even whether they existed. One journalist-historian, Lyn Webster Wilde, in *On the Trail of the Women Warriors*, hypothesizes that they had been displaced from the southern to the northern edge of the Black Sea and beyond, towards Ukraine, where numerous tombs of female warriors have been found.²⁹ In this connection, I find it interesting that the oldest tomb (around 1200) of a female warrior to have been discovered was in Colchis, in present-day Georgia, the home of Medea. The latter was accused of killing her two sons, just as certain Greek authors had accused the Amazons of infanticide. Whether or not this is the case, there is one constant in this mytheme: the women chose the men whom they have defeated in battle, after which there was a celebration, the Feast of Roses, where each woman married the man whom she had conquered. The best-known of the Amazons is Penthesilia,

their queen, who fell in love with Achilles at the siege of Troy, and would have done anything to defeat him and take him away from the circle of the Greeks. If, according, of course, to ancient Greek authors, this circle represented the progress of civilization, then it is interesting that it was a barbarian who introduced matters of love into civilization. This is the paradox in which Thanatos civilizes Eros, which Giorgio Agamben seeks to account for in his stimulating work, *Homo sacer*. In the myth, it is Penthesilia who is defeated and dies; Achilles, defeated in his turn by his love for her, embraces her, a rather sensational case of male necrophilia.

Heinrich von Kleist's play, *Penthesilia*, reverses this situation by having Penthesilia kill Achilles. Once he is dead, she eats him raw, having the honesty to do so herself, instead of giving this task to her dogs, as Artemis had done with Actaeon.

How many a maid will say, her arms wrapped round
 Her lover's neck: I love you, oh so much
 That if I could, I'd eat you up right here;
 And later, taken by her word, the fool!
 She's had enough and now she's sick of him.
 You see, my love, that never was my way.
 Look: when *my* arms were wrapped around your neck,
 I did what I had spoken, word for word:
 I was not quite so mad as it might seem.³⁰

In such a context, it can be said that "A kiss, a bite,/The two should rhyme" (Kleist, 145).

The radical character of these actions provides a luminous insight into the mysterious cannibalistic primary identification ("Medusa's Head," 103). These women, in the throes of disgust, and whom Penthesilia judges correctly to be mad, are not exempt from a condition that we find in bulimia: bulimics eat the father again and again, because they have not dared really to eat him, as Penthesilia does. We know that in psychosis this "remake" of primary identification can take the form of psychotic ingestion.

A moment ago, I mentioned Agamben's *Homo Sacer*, which is as important a reference now as Michel Foucault's *The Birth of the Clinic* was in the 1960s. This book discovers a logical paradox that can only be solved topologically.

Homo Sacer refers to a very specific Roman law, which Agamben found formulated in Festus:

The sacred man is the one whom the people have judged on account of a crime. It is not permitted to sacrifice this man, yet he who kills him will not be condemned for homicide; in the first tribunitian law, in fact, it is noted that "if someone kills the one who is sacred according to the plebiscite, it will not be considered homicide." This is why it is customary for a bad or impure man to be called sacred.³¹

Agamben thus brings out a contradiction: death is a judicial punishment on the condition that it not take the form of a judicial punishment. Now, to understand the logic at work here in as simple a way as possible: an element is subtracted from a set in such a way that it becomes impossible to reintegrate it into any set at all. This logic is the same as what presides over a woman's amorous choice of a man. Once Achilles has been chosen by Penthesilia, he can no longer be the Greek whom he had once been.³²

Notes

1. This is a translation of the chapter entitled "*La dérogation capitaliste*" from Pierre Bruno, *Lacan, passeur de Marx: l'invention du symptôme* (Toulouse: Érès, 2010) 201–224.
2. This uses the schema of discourse from "Television" which differs from the writing of the discourses found in "Radiophonie" in the use of the crossed arrows. The specific matheme of the capitalist discourse can be found in *Lacan in Italia*. See Jacques Lacan, *Television: A Challenge to the Psychoanalytic Establishment*, ed. by Joan Copjec, trans. by Denis Hollier, Rosalind Krauss, and Annette Michelson (New York: Norton, 1990) 13, Jacques Lacan, "Radiophonie," in *Autres écrits* (Paris: Seuil, 2001) 403–447, and Jacques Lacan, "Du discours psychanalytique," in *Lacan in Italia 1953 - 1978* (Milan: La Salamandra, 1978) 40.
3. The definitive form of this thesis may perhaps be found in Lacan's Caracas seminar of August 1980: "What language can do best is to prove itself to be in the service of the death instinct." See Nicolas Francion, *Almanach de la dissolution*, (Paris: Navarin/Seuil, 1986).
4. Jacques Lacan, "On a Question Prior to Any Possible Treatment of Psychosis" in *Écrits: The First Complete Edition in English*, trans. by Bruce Fink, Héloïse Fink, and Russell Grigg (New York: Norton, 2006) 498.
5. Jean-Claude Maleval, "*Elements pour une apprehension clinique de la psychose ordinaire*," janvier 2003. Retrieved from <http://w3.erc.univ-tlse2.fr/pdf/elements_psychose_ordinaire.pdf>.
6. Orwell, who worked as part of the British secret services after spending the Spanish Civil War in the International Brigades, was not unambiguous in terms of his choice of camp.
7. "This touches on the fact that meaning [*sens*] is never produced except through the translation from one discourse to another." Jacques Lacan, "L'étourdit," in *Autres écrits*, 480.
8. [See Pierre Bruno's analysis of Bertolt Brecht's *Saint Joan of the Stockyards* in *Lacan, passeur de Marx*, 85–98 (Translator's note).]
9. [In France, pharmacists still have a role in suggesting medications to their customers (Translator's note)].
10. In his book, *Comment taire le sujet* [How to Silence the Subject], Serge Lesourd emphasizes the rising diagonal of $a \rightarrow S$ and relates it to the matheme for perversion, thus connecting capitalism with the epiphany of a subject who is "capable of experiencing jouissance without any constraints." Without discussing directly this identification of the two mathemes, I would note that in the matheme of perversion, the \diamond of alienation/separation is placed between a and S , rather than an arrow that is oriented in a single direction. It

should also be recalled that, according to Lacan, perversion involves a logical protest that goes against normalizing identifications. See Lesourd, Serge, *Comment taire le sujet ? : des discours aux parlottes libérales*. (Toulouse: Érès, 2006) and Jacques Lacan, *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre VI, Le désir et son interprétation, 1958-1959*, ed. by Jacques-Alain Miller (Paris: La Martinière, 2013) 569. I thank Marie-Jean Sauret for pointing out this passage to me.

11. In this respect, moreover, the discourse of the master, as the discourse of the unconscious, shows us the impossibility of commanding knowledge, while the analytic discourse works to “grip this [impossible] real.”
12. This writing can, moreover, be independent of any transcription of the spoken word, as can be seen in the use of the little arrows in quantum physics. See Richard Feynman, *QED: The Strange Theory of Light and Matter*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985).
13. Sigmund Freud, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* (London: Hogarth Press, 1953-1974), XXI (1960): “Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious,” 28.
14. Jacques Lacan, *Je parle aux murs: entretiens de la chapelle de Sainte-Anne*, ed. by Jacques-Alain Miller (Paris: Seuil, 2011) 96.
15. Jacques Lacan, *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*, ed. by Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. by Russell Grigg (New York: Norton, 2007) 206.
16. [This is a play on Nicolas Sarkozy’s campaign slogan during the presidential campaign of 2007: “Work more to earn more” (Translator’s note).]
17. [For a discussion of “sundering,” see Pierre Bruno’s article, “Hyde and Seek,” in this issue of *S* (Translator’s note).]
18. Jacques Lacan, *On Feminine Sexuality: The Limits of Love and Knowledge*, ed. by Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. by Bruce Fink (New York: Norton, 1998) 145. In further references, this text will be cited as *Encore*.
19. Jacques Lacan, “The Freudian Thing,” in *Écrits: The First Complete Edition in English*, 339.
20. Marie-Jean Sauret, *Malaise dans le capitalisme* (Toulouse: Presses universitaires du Mirail, 2009) 171–213. I am, of course, not unaware that certain analysts consider the Wolf Man to be psychotic.
21. Paul Fort, “The Round,” in *Jardin illustré de fables et de poésies: Édition bilingue français/anglais*, trans. by Jean-Pierre Lefeuvre (Paris: Publibook, 2011) 141.
22. Jacques Lacan, “Guiding Remarks for a Convention on Female Sexuality” in *Écrits: The First Complete Translation in English*, 619.
23. Marguerite Duras, *The Ravishing of Lol Stein*, trans. by Richard Seaver (New York: Pantheon, 1986). Lacan’s reading of this work can be found in “Hommage fait à Marguerite Duras du ravissement de Lol V. Stein,” in *Autres écrits*.
24. Sigmund Freud, XXI (1961): “Civilization and Its Discontents,” 97.
25. Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*, ed. by Rodney Needham, trans. by James Harle Bell and John Richard von Sturmer, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969) 479.

26. “*Hommoinzun*” is a play on “*au moins un* [at least one],” which introduces a reference to *Homme*, man.
27. In “Medusa’s Head,” Freud describes what he calls the “apotropaic” function: an image of castration, as terrifying as it may be, is better than the unthinkable confrontation with a hole that has no boundaries, which would be an absolute absence. See Sigmund Freud, XVIII (1955): “Medusa’s Head,” 274.
28. Paul Bénichou, *Morales du Grand siècle*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1948).
29. Lyn Webster Wilde, *On the Trail of the Women Warriors: The Amazons in Myth and History*, (New York: Thomas Dunne, 2000).
30. Heinrich von Kleist, *Penthesilea: A Tragic Drama*, trans. by Joel Agee (New York: Harper Perennial, 2000) 146.
31. Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. by Daniel Heller-Roazen, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998) 71.
32. In psychoanalysis, there is the example of an element that serves as exception to the set: this is the real father, who as agent of castration, re-imposes the primacy of the living being over language.

PIERRE BRUNO

HYDE AND SEEK¹

Translated by John Holland

In the capitalist discourse, $\$$ (the subject) and S_2 (knowledge) constitute a couple in which each element is *sundered* [*scindé*], rather than *split* [*divisé*] from the other.² I am using the term, “sundered,” as the name of a process in which the dialectic that occurs in splitting is absent. This sundering is the true subject of Robert Louis Stevenson’s extraordinary text, the *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. This book appeared in 1886, three months after Marx’s death, and two years before the article on hysteria that Freud wrote for Villaret’s medical dictionary. This narrative deserves to be considered a new myth because it is removed from the problematic of the double, which characterizes German “dark romanticism.” Just as Hyde is not Jekyll’s double, so Jekyll is also not Hyde’s double. These are two sundered entities, rather than a split subject.

It is true that Jekyll himself uses the word, “double” in the succinct notes that he keeps on the experiment in transformation. Yet there is a decisive reason not to rank Stevenson’s story within the prolix literature of the double produced during the nineteenth century: Hyde and Jekyll never encounter each other, for although they are sundered, they are also the *same*. They are both enclosed within the “fortress of identity,” as Stevenson says.³ Naturally, Jekyll is situated in the place of S_2 and Hyde in $\$$. Jekyll is a doctor, a man of knowledge, like Faust. Yet Doctor Faust triumphs where Jekyll fails. If a diagnosis were required, one could say that Jekyll and Hyde are *one* schizophrenic. Yet what is important is that, during the very period when the process of constituting the individual could be considered to have been achieved and the metaphor of the organic social body to have become obsolete, Stevenson’s long story brought to light an individual sundered within himself, in the form quite exactly of a *subject that has been cut from its unconscious*: $\$ // S_2$.

This is one of the keys of this reading: Jekyll is Hyde’s foreclosed unconscious. In other words, Hyde should be considered as the hero, whose inability to know anything about his unconscious is the tragic weakness that constitutes the story’s motive force and novelty. The access to the unconscious has been radically closed because the barrier of *jouissance* has been lifted and the unconscious ends up go-

ing solo. If the unconscious, like Jekyll, is in S_2 , this means that, contrary to the received psychoanalytic idea that Hyde is Jekyll's unconscious, *it is Jekyll who is Hyde's unconscious*. Because Jekyll is the unconscious and the latter is, by virtue of the capitalist discourse, closed, Hyde is the drive, rather than the unconscious. Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde are the emblematic figures of this "scission." They could even become its eponym, if we keep the game of hide and seek in mind, since Hyde's name is obviously a punning reference to this game.

Stevenson, who came from a family in which the men had traditionally been constructors or engineers of lighthouses, wrote this tale at the age of 36. The kernel of the story emerged in a nightmare that he had had a year before, from which his wife, Fanny, frightened by his screams had awakened him. He wrote a first narrative of this nightmare, which he then destroyed after a violent argument with her; she thought that it was a failure because it did not include any moral.

This tale has a precedent in Stevenson's work: an early play entitled *Deacon Brodie, or the Double Life*, which was inspired by a real event: Brodie was a cabinet-maker by day and a burglar by night, as well, of course, as being a deacon whose task was to distribute alms. This already indicates that Stevenson is concerned more with questions of money than with neoromantic narratives of doubles. It may not be irrelevant to note both that his father was a rigorous and intransigent Calvinist and that, according to his own statements, he wrote his tale to pay "Byles the butcher."⁴ It is also relevant that Stevenson was once struck by reading an article on the subconscious. All of these matters converge on an emphasis on the conflict between good and evil, but one in which the problems of money and the "subconscious" come into play in an entirely new way, the result is a new configuration that overwhelms the established ethical conceptions.⁵

I have chosen the term, "scission" in order to accentuate the incompatibility between two entities, which belong, nevertheless, to a single personality. *Entzweiung*, the term that Freud uses in the article, "Splitting of the Ego in the Process of Defence," would have been appropriate if I were writing in German. "Two divide into one," which reverses the formula by which Mao Zedong defined the dialectic, could also, in an ironic way, be appropriate. The term, "scission" has also been used to characterize the lacerating break within the psychoanalytic movement in 1953. This is a supplementary reason for my choice, since in this split, Lacan, by analogy, would, of course, be Mr. Hyde (the drive) and the Paris Psychoanalytical Society would just as incontestably be the unconscious. Let us hope that this institute will not lead Lacan to commit suicide—which, in my little analogy, would involve his transformation into something like the I.P.A.—which would not be impossible, if such a transformation involves the petrification of theory.

Do contemporary myths exist, or must we resign ourselves these days to dealing only with ideologies? I am tempted to maintain that myth remains relevant, and perhaps we would be better off to replace sociology (or to regenerate it) with an ethnography of our own societies, which may well be civilized, but which are

nonetheless prehistoric, since writing still does not have its true place in them. It was compromised by the sacralization that it first inspired, and now by an inflation of publications, which bears a strong resemblance to what is referred to, in finance, as a money-printing frenzy.

As the very perceptive critic, Jean-Pierre Naugrette, notes in his preface to a French translation of Stevenson's story, there is, however, a limit to this splitting: except on one occasion, Hyde never says "I."⁶ For this reason, he can never become the radically immoral narrator of the tale. The final chapter is entitled, "Henry Jekyll's Full Statement of the Case" (with its equivocal use of the term, "case," which can refer to both a police investigation and a clinical case). Jekyll has thus not, at this point, lost the capacity to speak. The loss of his subjectivity will eventually reach the point where he can no longer say "I," and where Hyde will take over from him. This may be the story's sole resemblance to the problematic of the double, but this also may not be a correct assessment. It would be better to ask what the status of this "I" is in analytic experience. A narration of a dream often begins with "I," but we know that the action reported by this "I" also conceals the actual place of desire; this desire is figured, instead, in the third person, in another of the dream's entities. Thus we can ask whether awakening from a dream doesn't have a particular function: to prevent what arises from "pure evil"—from Thanatos—from becoming interwoven with the other aspects of desire. This is, of course, true, yet does this mean that there could be a satisfying dream—from which one would not wake up—or at least, a dream that would not have to be interrupted by an awakening? Wouldn't such a dream be one in which Thanatos and its libidinal linkage with the dream have been hidden successfully? This would correspond to what Stevenson's tale does: *Thanatos is disentangled* from the rest, for Mr. Hyde is forbidden from saying "I." In other words, saying "I" is a minimal libidinalization of the pure culture of death.

These are the sorts of questions raised by the story of Henry Jekyll, an honorable physician and scientist, who is transformed by a drug into the cruel Mr. Hyde. The latter, after trampling a girl in the street, kills a member of parliament, Sir Danvers Carew, for no reason. Jekyll decides to stop this experiment, but the transformations continue and he can no longer control them. In order not to become and remain Hyde, he commits suicide.

From the Door to the Window

In this story, the choice of various last names involves a certain "predestination" in Stevenson's treatment of his characters. This is obvious with "Hyde," but is also the case with "Utterson," the utter, perfect son, who is also an utter idiot. He is an "incurable" son: one who cannot make himself an exception to the Oedipus complex, whether the latter be positive or negative. Such a son would fundamentally be a sinner, even without killing his father. Utterson thus contrasts with Markheim, the main character of another story by Stevenson. The latter does not believe that he

can be reduced to his criminal act, and wants only to be judged from within himself. Externally, he is determined by his act, but remains free “within”; this, according to Markheim, is what counts in God’s eyes. He is his father’s son, but this predicate misses his being. For this reason, he refuses the pact that the devil proposes to make with him.⁷ There is another difference between “Markheim” and the *Strange Case*. Whereas in the former, the hero resists the devil, or at least the tempter, Hyde is constantly mentioned as a possible figure of the devil; this suggests, as soon as we learn that Hyde is Jekyll, that the devil is not an external character, but is the part of each of us that involves the drives. If we go a step further, we will reach Freud’s thesis that the devil is the equivalent of the father: a representation of the father whom it is possible to hate.

We can now return to Utterson, the strange lawyer who, in apparent contrast with his well-ordered and disciplined life, “incline[s] to Cain’s heresy,” by “lett[ing] my brother go to the devil in his own way” (2).⁸ His ability to forgive anything makes him an ideal father, which is the fate of a son who is imprisoned for life in the Oedipus complex. In the first part of the story, as investigator, he wants to know who Hyde is: “If he be Mr. Hyde...I shall be Mr. Seek” (21). Yet he starts off by following a false, rather vague lead, which is not exactly the one that was given to him by Richard Enfield, the friend who had witnessed Hyde’s trampling of the little girl. Enfield had mentioned the possibility that Mr. Hyde was blackmailing Dr. Jekyll, but Utterson fixates on a somewhat different idea: that Jekyll is concealing an old wrongdoing, which would explain the mysterious will in which he has made Hyde his heir, just as it would explain why Hyde is in possession of Jekyll’s signed checks. Utterson, after seeing his friend and trying in vain to convince him to change the will in favor of Hyde, ends up in consenting to a request of Jekyll’s: that he help Hyde after he himself is dead.

Both these events and those that follow raise a question concerning the reader. As the story progresses, there are numerous clues that Jekyll is indeed Hyde. Unfortunately, it is difficult to specify at what moment(s) the reader(s) would solve the mystery, since most readers are now aware of the solution from the beginning. It is unlikely, however, that even an entirely innocent reader would not be a few steps ahead of Utterson, who is unequal in his capacity to be duped. While awaiting the revelation, the facts emerge gradually, before being placed in logical order by Jekyll’s final confession. Yet the question remains, the importance of which can be emphasized by returning to the question of psychosis: at what point is it possible to know that Jekyll is Hyde, and thus to foil both that paranoiac innocence so admirably stowed away in the jewelry box of authenticity that typifies paranoid manners, and also the fierce ignorance of the schizophrenic.

A year after Jekyll’s request to Utterson, a crime occurs: it is the repetition, in an aggravated form, of the inaugural scene, in which Hyde trampled the little girl. In this second scene, the victim, who does not survive, is a member of parliament, Sir Danvers Carew, who is “trampl[ed]...under foot,” a feature that, because of its repetition, leads me to believe that it had figured in Stevenson’s nightmare (37). In

scene I, the witness is Utterson's friend, Enfield. In scene II, the witness is a maid with "romanti[c]" tendencies, whose master was being visited by Hyde (35). A letter for Utterson is found on the corpse, thus confirming that the former is the key character, with whom all the others are connected. This is an important point: Utterson is the ultimate receiver of all the numerous letters in the story, even of those that are not initially addressed to him. This letter is the only one whose content we never discover. It has the status of an exception, and it constitutes a point of incompleteness in the story, like the hand of one of the *Meninas* in Velázquez's painting. Let us also note, because it confirms that this text is not part of the romantic tradition, the narrative's astonishing modernity. The action involves objects that could be so many clues to help us discover the truth, but which must await the correct interpretation: an example is the cane, which is not only the murderer's weapon, but is also a present given by Utterson to Jekyll. The same could be said for the butt of the checkbook, which had escaped being destroyed by fire in the chimney of Hyde's apartment, and which is in Hyde's name.

Because of this clue, the police inspector and Utterson wait for Hyde at the bank where he has his account, but he never comes. Then Utterson visits Dr. Jekyll, who claims that he no longer has any relation with Hyde. He shows Utterson a letter supposedly written by Hyde (letter 2), in which he assures Jekyll that he has a way to keep from getting caught. Utterson is reassured, but after asking Poole, Jekyll's servant, what the messenger looked like, he learns that there had been no messenger. Returning, worried again, to his home, he shows the letter to Mr. Guest, his head clerk, who also happens to be an expert graphologist, and asks him his opinion about the "murderer's autograph" (51). After examining the paper, Guest says that the writer is "not mad; but it is an odd hand" (51). When a servant enters, carrying a letter (letter 3)—an invitation from Dr. Jekyll—Guest recognizes the handwriting and asks Utterson for permission to compare Hyde's letter with Jekyll's note, concluding that "the two hands are in many points identical: only differently sloped" (52). Later, when alone, Utterson thinks to himself, "What!...Henry Jekyll forge for a murderer!" (52). This episode is interesting because it raises the question of whether Jekyll knew what he was doing in forging a letter. The answer revises this question; the "forgery" is real. A better question would: who wrote it, Jekyll or Hyde? If Hyde wrote it, he did so not to deceive Jekyll, but to enable Jekyll to deceive Utterson. If Jekyll wrote it, it would still have the same goal. The ruse is the same whoever wrote it.

Thousands of pounds are offered for Hyde's capture, to no avail. Jekyll becomes himself again and renews his relations with his friends. However, Utterson twice finds his friend's door closed to everyone, and worried once again, pays a visit to Lanyon, with whom he had dined at Jekyll's home a few evenings before. He finds Lanyon dying, and the latter, knowing that he has so little time left, confides in him: "I sometimes think that if we knew all, we should be more glad to get away" (57). Retroactively, we can, of course, explain why Lanyon makes this statement, but upon reading it for the first time, it is enigmatic. Lanyon also tells Utterson that he

has broken entirely with Jekyll. Troubled, Utterson returns home, writes to Jekyll to ask him why he is not receiving and why he has quarreled with Lanyon. Jekyll answers (letter 4) without revealing anything, and only asking Utterson to “suffer me to go my own dark way” (58). Eight days later, Lanyon dies, leaving Utterson an envelope (letter 5) that contains another envelope (letter 6) marked as “not to be opened till the death or disappearance of Dr. Henry Jekyll” (60). Utterson is struck by the term, “disappearance,” which had already figured in the will that Jekyll had made in Hyde’s favor.

Utterson has stopped visiting Jekyll because of his friend’s taciturnity, but one evening, while on a walk with Enfield, he finds himself standing under Jekyll’s window. Encountering Jekyll, they begin to speak with him, and he seems happy to see them, but then suddenly “the smile was struck out of his face and succeeded by an expression of such abject terror and despair, as froze the very blood of the two gentlemen below” (64).

From then on, events move quickly. One evening, Jekyll’s servant, Poole, visits Utterson and begs him for help, since his master has shut himself up in his laboratory. On knocking on its door, they hear Jekyll say that he does not want to see anyone. Poole remarks to Utterson that Jekyll’s voice has changed, and that they are now hearing Mr. Hyde’s voice.

The Change of Voice

Within the anomalous matheme of the capitalist discourse, this voice can be located at *a*:

$$\begin{array}{ccccc} \text{Hyde} & & & & \text{Dr. Jekyll} \\ & \downarrow \frac{S}{S_1} & \bowtie & \frac{S_2}{a} \downarrow & \\ \text{Stevenson} & & & & \text{voice} \end{array}$$

If S_2 , knowledge, is Dr. Jekyll, and S , the subject, is Mr. Hyde, then in S_1 we can only place the author himself, Robert Louis Stevenson, the master of the mystery. The transformation of the voice would then concern two arrows: the one that descends from S_2 to a , and then the diagonal arrow that moves upward from a to S . Voices are modulated by knowledge: how, for example, is it possible not to recognize the voice of a priest on a radio broadcast? Now, the consequence of the transformation of Jekyll’s voice into Hyde’s is to strip it of the knowledge that clothes it in order to make the strings of the drive, which had until then been concealed, begin to vibrate. Knowledge has one voice and the drive has a very different one, which betrays the subject. This reading may seem a bit forced, and since Lacan defines the object a in this discourse as surplus-jouissance, one can wonder if it wouldn’t be more appropriate to say that money—and especially surplus-value—occupies the place of the production. This place could also be taken by the numerous consumer objects, which are supposed to saturate the subject’s desire, although they seek to

do so in vain, since the subject never ceases to be split. This structural requisite will form the center of the denouement of the “strange case.” I shall soon confirm these hypotheses.

Despite these considerations, there is another reason to emphasize the voice as object *a*. Doesn’t the variation in the voice invite us to locate not only Hyde, but also Utterson, in S? Perhaps, at the end, Utterson, the utter son, is also found here, in a way that resolves the enigma of how two are divided into one. Indeed, it is Utterson who will be substituted for Hyde in Jekyll’s will, a substitution that has never received the emphasis that it deserves.

In the denouement, Poole reveals a second episode to Utterson, giving him a note (letter 7) in which Jekyll complains to his apothecary that a particular powder did not have the same composition as the one that he had bought earlier. (It will turn out that the first powder was *impure* and that this very impurity had probably enabled it to turn Hyde back into Jekyll.) Then Poole tells Utterson that he had once seen his master disguised, as if he were wearing a mask on his face. After having once again produced an incorrect explanation, Utterson finally decides to intervene, as Poole had asked him to. They break down the laboratory door, and find the corpse of Hyde, who has swallowed cyanide.

This time, the reader will certainly have seen further than Utterson, who is still looking for Dr. Jekyll, even after finding Hyde’s body. Utterson’s time is always, structurally, late. He does not know how to read the clues that he continues to discover, even when he finds in the laboratory a religious book, which is annotated in Jekyll’s own hand with “startling blasphemies” (86). Finally, on the table, Utterson finds three documents: Jekyll’s will, in which he is designated as heir in Hyde’s place; a letter (letter 9) in which Jekyll enjoins him to read the document that Lanyon had sent to him; and finally, Jekyll’s confession (letter 10). The solution to the mystery finally appears in these two last documents.

These two documents bring to an end the story, along with its enigmas and lacunas, its holes in the narrative tissue, its red herrings and the pseudo-explanations produced systematically by Utterson. The action finishes. Lanyon and Jekyll are dead. With the unveiling of what had been hidden, one returns to the present in order to go back over the course of events, the coherence of which is now guaranteed by the revelation of the secret that had made them incomprehensible.

The Devil or Science

There is a reason why the two final texts were written by two doctors, the custodians of knowledge, who were rivals in the field of science, or rather, disagreed about its powers. One, Lanyon, was a humanistic positivist, while the other wanted to enable human beings to become the equals of their creator, to borrow the terminology that was used in the second half of the nineteenth century. This theme marks

a turning point. In dark romanticism, people turned towards their doubles or their shadows, and the consistency taken on by the latter was credited to the Devil; it was with the Devil that one could make a pact—at the price of being bound by it—that would permit access to a *jouissance* that was inaccessible by other means. I have already mentioned that Goethe was an exception to this scheme, because he subverted the notion of the pact by making Faust the victor and Mephisto the vanquished. In this respect, Jekyll is more modern than Lanyon, just as Doctor Moreau is more modern than Brigitte Bardot, because they prefigure the biological manipulation that seeks to preserve the animality of the human, rather than to imagine the humanity of the animal. Nevertheless, the gap between Lanyon and Jekyll cannot be more slender. The most blinkered positivism can be compatible with the most credulous spiritualism⁹, but this is not what is really at stake: neither Lanyon nor Jekyll is tempted by spiritualism, and they are hardly responsible for the return of astrology under capitalism. Instead, the question is a fundamental one: that of the limit of science. Does science have a place in the field of *jouissance*? What is in question is not sexology, which is always stupid and fraudulent, but the intertwining and the disentwining of the drives, of Eros and Thanatos.

The two final documents, Jekyll's statement in particular, throw an interesting light on this problem. Before examining them, however, I would like to point out an interesting discrepancy in Lanyon's letter concerning the date of the letter in which Jekyll had appealed to him to follow his bizarre instructions (which were supposed to enable Jekyll, who had been transformed unexpectedly into Hyde while far from home, to procure the drugs necessary to recover his original identity). The date of this letter is 10 December 18.... In his confession, however, Jekyll situates this episode on a "fine, clear, January day" (131). Perhaps this contradiction results merely from an oversight on Stevenson's part. Yet even if there is some confusion, why not raise it to the level of a symptom, and consider it as the final mark, in the real, of the impossibility of grasping simultaneity? One person's time is never the same as another's, and even if physics can measure both, it cannot situate them on the same continuum, since the space in which they take place is never the same.

More importantly, what is new about Lanyon's narrative is his encounter with Hyde, and his shock at seeing Hyde being transformed into Jekyll. Lanyon tells Utterson about the effect produced by Hyde's presence: an "odd subjective disturbance [was] caused by his neighbourhood. This bore some resemblance to incipient rigor, and was accompanied by a marked sinking of the pulse" (99). Lanyon makes it clear that this effect is not the result of a feeling of hatred. Certainly Hyde, as other witnesses have attested, inspires, and even catalyzes hatred. Yet Lanyon is testifying to something else. Perhaps what Lanyon discovers in this unalterable alterity is the human being as such.

The effect of Jekyll's reappearance is less shocking, although just as cataclysmic: "My life," says Lanyon, "is shaken to its roots" (105). The horror of discovering Jekyll's "moral turpitude" and that he is Carew's murderer (note the affectionate use of the name, "Sir Danvers") will push Lanyon to his death. Only ethics can evaluate

this situation, since morality, as Dr. Lanyon's death proves, does not provide a sufficient rampart against this discovery.¹⁰

Let us now enter the central part of Stevenson's edifice: Jekyll's own narrative, his "statement of the case," before Utterson as judge. Jekyll's rather commonplace biography can be summarized in terms of the conflict between duplicity and sincerity, or, to be more precise, objective duplicity and subjective sincerity. Closer to the heart of the ethical question, we find the thesis that "man is not truly one, but truly two" (108). Perhaps, he wonders, the "fortress of identity" exists only to contain this primal sundering and can be undone, by orienting one's scientific studies "towards the mystic and the transcendental" (111, 107). Beyond this, Jekyll does not exclude the idea that people can be multiple; Stevenson himself kept abreast of the work of psychologists and physicians, who were using an experimental model involving hypnosis, on multiple personalities. The story, however, leaves the question of dualism or pluralism in suspense, and we could only take it up by examining the work of Deleuze and Guattari.¹¹

In the case of Jekyll, however, only two entities are confronted with each other: good and evil. These "polar twins" are not divided up in Jekyll and Hyde *partes extra partes*. Although Hyde is indeed presented as pure evil, Jekyll remains divided between the two. If this had not been the case, Jekyll would not have been tempted to become Hyde. On the one hand, isolating evil, transferring it into Hyde, exonerates Jekyll from his guilt:

the unjust might go his way, delivered from the aspirations and remorse of his more upright twin; and the just could walk steadfastly and securely on his upward path, doing the good things in which he found his pleasure, and no longer exposed to disgrace and penitence by the hands of this extraneous evil (109).

One can only be struck by this prefiguration of the modern, even postmodern subject; nearly half a century later, the character of Pierpont Mauler in Bertolt Brecht's *Saint Joan of the Stockyards* would follow this configuration to an astonishing degree.¹² Yet it should also not be forgotten that what can be criticized for its conformity to the capitalist discourse was originally a rejection of the doctrine of original sin; seen in these terms, the conclusion would not be so unilateral, for this ideal goes well beyond its possible instrumentalization by capitalism. The other thing to be noted is that Stevenson, in relation to his conception of Jekyll's transformation into Hyde (evil is physically smaller), has an intuition about the immateriality of the body. To translate this intuition without forcing things, I shall quote the way that Lacan treats this question in "*Radiophonie*": "The first body [the body of the symbolic] creates the second by incorporating itself into it. This is where the incorporeal that remains to mark the first comes from, from the time after its incorporation."¹³ This is why Hyde is called an "inorganic" creature, which does not contradict, but rather confirms his "love of life" (133, 139). This love is not an Eros

that has a biological essence, but is the result of an experimentation that had been wished-for and conducted by a human being.

This leads us to the heart of Jekyll's practical reason. Whereas Hyde is supposed to be pure evil, Jekyll is a composite of good and evil. It is because he rejects this subjective division that he conceives and carries out the Hyde project, but without succeeding. Jekyll and Hyde are therefore not symmetrical, and we have reason to claim that the myth forged by Stevenson concerns the refusal of the subject's division. The only way to get rid of the Hyde in him is to change himself entirely into Hyde or to kill himself. In the same way, *mutatis mutandis*, in *Saint Joan of the Stockyards*, Joan is supposed to be pure good, and Mauler is the division between good and evil.¹⁴ Thus it is not very surprising that Jekyll himself, as he says in his statement, had thought that he had made this discovery "under the empire of generous or pious aspirations," which, according to him, would have enabled him to "come forth an angel instead of a fiend" (115). This may be an illusion, but it reveals the temptation to rid himself of the ethical question. In this sense, *scission is an orthopedic prosthesis that serves to screen off he subject's division*.

As I have mentioned, a gnawing preoccupation makes itself felt throughout the everyday life of this bizarre couple: the need for the money that would be necessary for Hyde's survival should Jekyll disappear. At the beginning, there is the will that makes Hyde the heir, then the money demanded by the parents of the girl whom he had trampled, and the check to them taken from a checkbook in Hyde's name (a checkbook that he will burn in order to efface any trace of it, but the butt of which is recovered intact in the ashes) and the fact that the police believe wrongly that they can catch him when he goes to the bank to take out some money, etc. There is no transferral of personalities without a transferral of money, for the latter, with the coming of the capitalist mode of production, has become not only the indispensable means of subsistence, but also the standard for measuring something's value; Hyde's "respectability" can only be guaranteed by Jekyll's fortune. There is no subject without money, no $\$$ without *a*. Money comes very precisely in the place of the loss of jouissance, which is sealed by the entry into language, which also sets up our requirement for jouissance. In *a*, I first situated the voice, as part-object. Yet the voice, as Stevenson says over and over, changes. Hyde's voice is not Jekyll's. This variability of the objects *a* is what makes them precarious and signals their inability to ensure surplus-jouissance; this surplus-jouissance, in the capitalist discourse—for an individual who has been *deprived* of his/her unconscious—is expected finally to be able to lift the bar that divides the subject. In the full-fledged capitalist discourse, this subject would be reduced to the status of zero, which is its status outside its constitutive division, since zero is its appropriate value, as soon as it is made a pure effect of language. Since, however, the subject cannot be reduced to its splitting, it is the capitalist discourse that is headed for a blowout.¹⁵

In the capitalist discourse, money substitutes itself for the part-objects, and thus becomes their general equivalent, to use Marx's term; it thereby provides the invariability that is necessary in order for surplus-jouissance not to fail. This supposes,

of course, what is said by the very people who have contributed to this illusion: the abandonment of the real economy and the belief that money is conceived by parthenogenesis, which would shelter it from any devaluation.

In a certain sense, everything is decided when Jekyll can no longer control Hyde's transformations into him and vice versa. Jekyll's determination is deactivated. This occurs on that "fine, clear, January day" mentioned above; until then, Jekyll's determination guaranteed the permanence of his identity (131). Hyde was merely his "creature," even if the "creator" rejoiced in Hyde's "moral" independence. In this new configuration, however, Jekyll's panic is presented as the signal of a threatening depersonalization: the total loss of identity, which would involve a reconstitution of his identity in the form of Hyde. In this situation, what comes literally to save Jekyll is a memory: "that of my original character, one part remained to me: I could write my own hand; and once I had conceived that kindling spark, the way that I must follow became lighted up from end to end" (133).

As we recall, it was Guest, Utterson's first clerk, who noticed that Jekyll and Hyde's handwriting differed only in their slopes. Unlike the voice, writing cannot change; it can only, at a pinch, be forged. Writing is on one side, and the voice and money are on the other. To say it roughly, what saves Jekyll is what condemns the capitalist discourse. To make this formulation more absolute, I shall add that writing, as a resistance to virtualization, is nothing other than the symptom as such. There is no need to treat "writing" as a metaphor to move from handwriting to Stevenson's status as writer. For the signature as such marks the presence of the proper Name, which has a geographical particularity that goes against the globalization of language; writing becomes the way to exit from the prison-house of language. As Nathalie Sarraute wrote, "Knock, knock, real, open up."

Finally, on this basis, we can approach the most sensitive question: who dies when Jekyll commits suicide? Is it even a suicide, since the body of the person who has killed himself is not the same as the corpse that Utterson and Poole find? In his statement of the case, Jekyll insists on this: "He, I say—I cannot say, I" (134). He thus emphasizes that when he is Hyde, he can no longer appropriate himself subjectively by speaking in the first person. This, indeed is the usual, or more precisely necessary case, since the "I" of the enunciation never corresponds with that of the statement. Is Jekyll, however, telling the truth? The final proposition of this narrative is "I bring the life of that unhappy Henry Jekyll to an end" (141). Who, in this case, is "I," since Jekyll is referred to in the third person? Isn't it Hyde? Several lines above, Jekyll writes, "when I shall again and forever reindue that hated personality, I know how I shall sit shuddering and weeping in my chair" (141). In the sentence itself, isn't a transferral of the "I" operating continually, and doesn't the reader be-

come sensitive to the pathetic quality of Hyde as subject: the evil one who finally *reaches his division, thanks to his own anxiety?*

The Three Scenes

We have just examined the final enigma presented by the denouement, but we have not yet finished. In Dr. Jekyll's statement of the case, there is something that we have not yet mentioned: a slight event that takes place while Hyde is going from the hotel to Dr. Lanyon's home, where he hopes to find the drug that will turn him back into Jekyll: "Once a woman spoke to him, offering, I think, a box of lights. He smote her in the face, and she fled" (135).

This scene constitutes the third version of what we have referred to as the primal scene, and it is impossible not to think of Freud's analysis of the forms of the fantasy in "A Child is Being Beaten." In Stevenson's tale, we would obtain the following:

Primal Scene (Scene I): a little girl is being beaten by Hyde, while a man is watching.

Scene II: a man is being beaten by Hyde, while a woman is watching.

Scene III: a woman is being beaten by Hyde, but who is watching?

Since this third scene had at least one witness—the one who reports it—we could say that Jekyll is watching. It happens that this witness is unsure of himself, and adds, concerning the matchbox, "I think." It is as if, at the moment when this scene takes place, Jekyll has already been partially absorbed by Hyde's personality and isn't the point of disappearing as a witness.¹⁶ Yet the final witness, the tale's author, is Stevenson himself. We shall soon see how this hypothesis will be borne out.

In these three scenes, Hyde is regularly in the position of the agent: the agent of castration, to introduce Freud's thesis, and the real father—who carries out the subject's castration—to present Lacan's in his seventeenth seminar, *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*.¹⁷ This conclusion confirms, rather than contradicts, the argument that Hyde is a pure being of the drives. The fantasy, which is primarily sadistic, is located on Jekyll's side, in either an unconscious or a conscious form, and the bare drive, stripped of the fantasy, is found on Hyde's side. The murder of Sir Danvers Carew procures a sadistic jouissance for him (he "tast[ed] delight from every blow"), but the jouissance that Stevenson attributes to him is certainly the result of a confusion connected to the author's own conception of the real father (127). The jouissance of the real father must remain definitively unknown, since the very definition of this figure carries the logical implication that the jouissance attributed to him is the subject's own (see Stevenson's nightmare). Yet despite this reservation, Hyde is very much the agent of castration, the one who is an exception to the phallic law, and indeed, he is exempt from the passion of hatred for the man he kills. He is the object, rather than the agent of hatred. This leads us to question the figure of

the father who is paired with Hyde: Utterson, who is decidedly a jack of all trades. He is a symbolic father, the one who conforms to the law in everything, and who, as a correlate, can explain everything, especially the sons' turpitudes. The perfect son, quite consistently, turns out to be the perfect father. I shall not even enter into Stevenson's apparently rather complex relations with his own father, who supported his son, but had rather settled opinions on the path that he should follow: the compromise between the careers of engineer and writer was to study law!

Jekyll refuses his division as subject and occupies the place of knowledge, delegating that of subject to Hyde. In doing so, Jekyll inscribes himself precisely in the capitalist discourse: his explicit hope is to disencumber himself of his relation to desire by constructing a relation in which the object-cause of desire would complete Hyde as subject. This completion would put an end to the subject's division, as well as to subjectivation itself. This subjectivation is to be found in the fact that Jekyll is never totally absent from Hyde. If he were, why would he want to become Jekyll again? *The division of the subject is therefore what resists the capitalist discourse*, what this discourse cannot tame. As for the solution that would lie in having Hyde become the one who commands, and who would thus incarnate the S_1 —the master signifier rather than the subject S ,—Jekyll refuses this with horror. If this were to take place, it would mean accepting that Hyde is the agent of castration, which he does not want. Such an acceptance would, however, be the condition of a return from the capitalist discourse to that of the master; S_1 would be found again in the place of the agent, and S in that of truth.

$$\downarrow \frac{S}{S_1} \times \frac{S_2}{a} \downarrow \rightarrow \uparrow \frac{S_1}{S} \times \frac{S_2}{a} \downarrow$$

Through this return, the unconscious could reclaim its rights and a psychoanalysis could take place.

The last matter that Jekyll mentions is the possibility that Hyde will destroy his statement. Likewise, he notes that in setting down his pen, he puts an end to the life of Dr. Henry Jekyll. What is a tale, if not the duration of its reading, during which the characters are alive? Can Hyde, in the fiction, exit from the fiction in which he was born, in order to prevent Jekyll from living in this fiction, and in consequence, deprive Stevenson of the status of being the author, and us of reading this master-work? To whom is Stevenson alluding, in this highly discreet, shadowy passage, if not to Fanny Osbourne, who, at an early moment, had suggested that the immoral first version of the *Strange Case* should be destroyed. Who better than his beloved cousin, Katherine de Mattos, could be the dedicatee of this first verse: "It's ill to loose the bands that God decreed to bind"?

Notes

1. This article first appeared in French under the same title, as a chapter in Pierre Bruno's book, *Lacan, passeur de Marx: l'invention du symptôme* (Toulouse: Érès, 2010) 63–84.
2. [The term, “*division*,” sometimes translated as “division” and sometimes as “splitting,” plays an important role in this article. As the author notes, it is related to Freud's use of the term, “*Spaltung*,” which is translated as “splitting,” in his late article, “The Splitting of the Ego in the Processes of Defence,” Sigmund Freud, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* (London: Hogarth Press, 1953–1974), XXI (1964). Pierre Bruno's use of this concept is closely related to Lacan's arguments in *L'acte psychanalytique* [*The Psychoanalytic Act*], the (unpublished) seminar that was interrupted by the outbreak of the events of May 1968. Bruno argues that this seminar enables us to distinguish between “castration” and “division”: to do so would involve differentiating between “lack (which opens up the possibility of *not* lacking) and loss (which is irreversible) and especially between the negativization of the phallus (– ϕ) on the one hand and the barred subject, $\$$, on the other. The latter implies the production of an object—the object *a*—that has no representation (which, as a result, situates it radically outside any representation in language). The end of an analysis lies in accepting this division and mourning for one's castration, inasmuch as the latter...preserves the possibility of filling in lack (by sex, money, power).” See Bruno, 57–58. In this article, Bruno argues that this rejection of division in the capitalist discourse takes a particular form: the establishment and maintenance of as radical a distinction as possible between subject and knowledge. In order to name this operation, he confers a new meaning on the French verb, “*scinder*,” the meaning of which is usually more or less synonymous with “*diviser*.” To translate this term, I have chosen the English verb, “to sunder.” (Translator's note)]
3. Robert Louis Stevenson, *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (London: Longmans, Green, 1886) 111.
4. See Richard Dury's introduction to Robert Louis Stevenson, *The Annotated Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (Genoa: Edizioni Culturali Internazionali Genova, 2005) 9.
5. In an essay entitled, “A Chapter on Dreams,” published in 1888, Stevenson mentions the role of brownies, who can be compared with unconscious molecules. See Robert Louis Stevenson, *Across the Plains* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1905) 153–168.
6. See Jean-Pierre Naugrette, *Préface*, in Robert Louis Stevenson, *Le cas étrange du Dr Jekyll et de M. Hyde*, trans. by Théo Varlet (Paris: Flammarion, 1994).
7. The modes by which the subject can relate to the devil would be worth investigating. Faust, the most eminent among them, signs a pact but succeeds in outwitting the devil. If we admit that Toussaint Turelure—a character in Paul Claudel's trilogy, which Lacan discusses at length in his seminar on transference—serves as a figure of the devil, then Sygne de Coüfontaine makes a “pact” for which she would receive nothing in return; then, at the end of her life, she refuses the new pact that would distort the meaning of the first one. Christophe Haizmann, the painter whose story Freud reconstitutes in “A Seventeenth-Century Demonological Neurosis,” *invents* a pact as an alibi for his inability to do without a nurturing, and perhaps even “nourishing” father. Such ethical choices, and they are not the only ones, mark out for us three major aspects of the subjectivity of our age. In the case of “Markheim,” whether the figure involved is indeed the devil remains uncertain. The character who proposes the pact is, instead, the incarnation of temptation.

See Sigmund Freud, XIX (1961): “A Seventeenth-Century Demonological Neurosis” and Jacques Lacan, *Le séminaire, livre VIII : Le transfert 1960-1961*, ed. by Jacques-Alain Miller (Paris: Seuil, 1991).

8. In this respect, Utterson resembles Sacher-Masoch, who was also a “Cainite.”

9. Friedrich Engels explored this tendency in the work of Alfred Russell Wallace, a first-rate English naturalist and scientist, who turned towards the study of miracles at the end of his life. See Friedrich Engels, *Dialectics of Nature*, trans. by Clemens Palme Dutt (New York: International Publishers, 1940).

10. The gap between morality and ethics is a constant in Stevenson. In “Markheim,” the hero is a criminal in the world and pure in God. See Robert Louis Stevenson, “Markheim,” in *The Merry Men and Other Tales and Fables* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1887).

11. [See Bruno, 117–137 (Translator’s note).]

12. [See Bruno, 85–97 (Translator’s note).]

13. Jacques Lacan, “Radiophonie,” in *Autres écrits* (Paris: Seuil, 2001) 409.

14. [See Bruno, 85–87 (Translator’s note).]

15. The capitalist discourse “works like a charm, like skids that have been fully greased, but that’s just it: it goes too fast, it consumes itself [*ça se consomme*], and it does so so well that it uses itself up [*ça se consume*].” Jacques Lacan, “Du discours psychanalytique,” in *Lacan in Italia 1953 - 1978* (Milan: La Salamandra, 1978) 48.

16. In *Le crime du caporal Lortie Traité sur le Père* (Paris: Fayard, 1989), Pierre Legendre discusses the case of a man who committed a crime while being filmed by a surveillance camera, and who remembered nothing when confronted with this recording.

17. Jacques Lacan, *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*, ed. by Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. by Russell Grigg (New York: Norton, 2007) 128. [Also see Pierre Bruno, “On the Real Father,” *Journal of Lacanian Studies*, 1:2(2003): 181–203. (Translator’s note).]

JOHN HOLLAND

THE CAPITALIST UNCANNY

In May 1972, during a lecture entitled “*Du discours psychanalytique* [On the Psychoanalytic Discourse],” delivered at the University of Milan, Jacques Lacan announced to his listeners that “the crisis, not of the discourse of the master, but of the capitalist discourse, which is its substitute, has begun.”¹ The capitalist discourse is a “modern” modification of the discourse of the master, and in making this statement, Lacan was marking out certain limits of a particular trajectory of his teaching, one that had enabled him to develop his theory of the four discourses: a theory of the ways in which *jouissance* and the unconscious inhere within particular social practices.

This article seeks to provide a broad sketch of the workings of the fifth, capitalist discourse, lightly etching in certain arguments that would deserve to be developed more fully elsewhere. I shall argue that this discourse is a particular mode of the compulsion to repeat, and gives rise, at its heart, to an experience that could be called a capitalist uncanny. Left desperate by such a compulsion, the “capitalist” will make an attempt to impose stability upon this movement by recreating the *Weltanschauung* of his/her predecessor, the master. Such efforts, however, will be rendered vain by the confrontation with the force of a new superego.

1. Discourse and Ideology

The fifth of Lacan’s discourses immediately raises the question of how a discourse can be called “capitalist.” A discourse is a particular social formation in which the existence of speech establishes places from which one can act; to define capitalism as a discourse is to relate it to the internal logic of this structure. The precondition for answering this question is an understanding of what discourse itself is. The particularity of Lacan’s discourse-theory can be approached by examining how it differs from its closest theoretical “relation”: the Lacanian-inspired ideology-analysis initiated by Slavoj Žižek and others. Their treatment of ideology diverges somewhat from Lacan’s discourse-theory, most notably in their account of the relation between fantasy and reality.

In his relatively early work, Žižek set out certain premises of a valuable and subtle theory of ideology; his essay, “*Che Vuoi?*,” which appeared in *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, the first book that he published in English, can, for the present purposes, be taken as the founding act of this theory.² By drawing on Lacan’s graph of desire and emphasizing the role of fantasy, he produced a theory of the way in which jouissance and the unconscious insinuate themselves into configurations of signifiers, configurations that involve conceptions of society, economics, politics or sexuality. One of the starting-points of Žižek’s analysis is his treatment of the limits of the work of Louis Althusser, for whom ideology “represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence,” a relationship that is established when agents of the Ideological State Apparatuses “hai[l] or interpellat[e] individuals as subjects.”³ Žižek states that

...the crucial weakness of hitherto (post-)structuralist essays in the theory of ideology descending from the Althusserian theory of interpellation was to limit themselves to the lower level, to the lower square of Lacan’s graph of desire—to aim at grasping the efficiency of an ideology exclusively through the mechanism of imaginary and symbolic identification.⁴

Althusser’s formulations involved only the first two of the four levels of the graph of desire, the ones dominated by the symbolic and imaginary. Žižek’s innovation is therefore to show how the third and fourth levels, which bring in jouissance and the unconscious, affect ideology.

According to Žižek, the person who interpellates us opens up, without knowing that s/he is doing so, a dimension that has nothing to do with consciousness; contained within this call is the *Che vuoi?*—What do you want—addressed to us by the S(A), the point of impasse, of silence, of “inconsistency” in the Other (123). Because of this unknown and uncalculated dimension of the call, an ideology finds the source of its power in the unconscious and jouissance; “the last support of the ideological effect (of the way an ideological network of signifiers ‘holds’ us) is the non-sensical, pre-ideological kernel of enjoyment,” which is “structured in fantasy” (124).

Fantasy thus becomes one of the principal elements of ideology. It stages a relation between two terms ($S \diamond a$), a relation that provides an answer to the *Che vuoi?* This response tells me what the Other wants of me, and therefore what I myself want. As conceived in this way, fantasy becomes linked inextricably with another category: reality. Žižek follows Lacan in presenting fantasy as the frame by which we perceive reality; the “fantasy framework” provides the coordinates by which we choose the particular elements of our “reality” that become important to us, the elements that we include in our account of what occurs around us (47). This strict connection between fantasy and reality is one of the most fruitful aspects of Žižek’s theory of ideology; it marks a radical departure from any conception of ideology as a “false consciousness” that can be dissipated by a fuller understanding of reality.

Their linkage becomes a powerful tool for explaining the stasis of ideology, the persistence of highly problematic ideologies, in which we claim no longer to believe.

This connection also provides ideology-analysis with a reliable way of locating the coordinates of fantasy within any particular ideology. Although both $\$$ and a are fundamentally ungraspable, their position can be found by paying close attention to the ways in which people describe their experiences of reality. In “*Che Vuoi?*” the most important example of the ideological functioning of the object a is the figure of “the” “Jew” in anti-Semitic corporatist ideologies, which contend that all elements of society should function in harmony, in the way that the organs in a healthy body supposedly do. “The Jew” becomes the scapegoat for the inevitable failure of such a conception, the explanation of why society is actually “split by antagonistic struggles”; for anti-Semites, this figure becomes a sort of “fetish,” a foreign body that “marks the eruption of enjoyment in the social field,” and therefore serves as a perfect example of the object a (126). “Reality” becomes the principle that enables analysts of ideology to locate the constituents of the fantasy.

Like the theory of ideology, Lacan’s work on discourse also seeks to specify the unexpected implication of the subject and jouissance within our everyday lives; in this case, it looks for them less in the various networks of “ideas” than in a series of social practices. This change of focus will sometimes involve radical reformulations of the roles played by fantasy and reality.

The elaboration of the four discourses, and later of the capitalist discourse, marks something of a change in Lacan’s teaching: until that moment, he had devoted himself to theorizing a specific practice—that of psychoanalysis—in its autonomy; whenever he referred to historical or social questions, he had done so only to illuminate analytic practice. His theory of discourse, on the other hand, is based on a sort of wager: that the letters that he had elaborated in order to think through psychoanalysis can also throw light upon other practices, which may differ radically from it. As he argues, “Through the instrument of language, a certain number of stable relations are established, inside which something that is much larger and goes much further than actual utterances (*énonciations*) can, of course, be inscribed.”⁵ Lacan’s wager, in developing a theory of these positions, involves an hypothesis that concerns history: that the letters by which he formalized analytic experience can also illuminate social relations that existed long before Freud invented analytic practice.

In comparison with the complexity of terms that he had employed with the graph of desire, his approach to discourse is radically simplified, and even minimalist, for he uses only four terms: $\$$, a force that exists outside the symbolic, and about which we can only learn retroactively, through the signifiers that it underlies; S_1 , the signifier that represents the subject; S_2 , the network of signifiers upon which S_1 intervenes; a , the surplus-jouissance that cannot be lodged within the S_2 . Not only do all the letters— $i(a)$, m —that had designated the imaginary in the graph of desire disappear, but also the very term that marks the point of impasse within

the unconscious— $S(\mathbb{A})$, the signifier of the lack in the Other—is not written as such. Its absent presence can only be inferred by means of the changing relations within the four terms used in writing the discourses. These letters can occupy four places, which neither disappear nor change their order in the movement from one discourse to another:⁶

$$\begin{array}{cc} \text{agent} & \text{other} \\ \hline \text{truth} & \text{production} \end{array}$$

In the discourse of the master, which was, in historical terms, the first to emerge, one encounters a series of relations in which the signifier represents the subject for another signifier, to which surplus-jouissance is added. He writes it in the following way in “*Du discours psychanalytique*” (40):

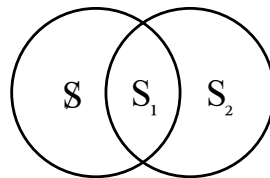
$$\uparrow \frac{S_1}{S} \rightarrow \frac{S_2}{a} \downarrow$$

Here, the S_1 occupies the place of the agent, the S_2 of the other, the a of the production and S of truth. The three other discourses are then made to appear through what Lacan, in *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*, calls a quasi-mathematical operation of “circular permutation,” by means of a series of counter-clockwise rotations: when S_2 becomes the agent, the discourse becomes that of the university; the analytic discourse emerges when the a serves as the agent; the discourse of the hysteric occurs when S acts as agent (39). Each discourse is marked by a series of vectors, which indicates the ways in which one term acts upon and establishes a “relation” with another; each is also, however, characterized by incapacities and impossibilities, where these relations fail, either completely or in part. Here will be found one of the most important differences between Lacan’s discourse-theory and the ideology-critique inspired by his teaching: the discourses show the way in which specific social practices render particular functions of the psyche unavailable for us when we find ourselves caught up in them.

The discourse of the master is particularly important in the present context, both because it will mutate into the capitalist discourse, and because its manner of operating will place it in stark contrast with some of the theoretical assumptions of ideology-analysis. The master who dominates this discourse is a figure who operates not only in Hegel’s master-slave dialectic, but also, and more importantly, in classical philosophy and especially in Aristotle’s thought. Although Lacan only formulated this discourse and its operation in 1969, he was preoccupied with the master throughout his teaching, and in *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, he refers specifically to the *Nicomachean Ethics*, a work that tells us much about the master’s metaphysical, epistemological, and libidinal stance; the master, as Lacan argues, derives his authority to command by “enter[ing]...and submit[ting] to an established and eternal ‘order’ which has been set in motion by the ‘unmoved mover.’”⁷

Within the theory of discourse, this master intervenes upon the slave, establishing a relation of command and obedience, hierarchy, and domination. If, in *D'un Autre à l'autre* [From an Other to the other], Lacan had referred to the master as a “dumb ass [con],” he progressively delineates a more complex status for him, first in *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis* and then in *Encore*, showing that if this figure is separate from knowledge, he nevertheless embodies a somewhat sinister epistemological position.⁸ In sketching out the master’s role in the seventeenth seminar, Lacan emphasizes that his power derives from his definition of himself as being “identical with his own signifier” (90). This very simplicity enables him to intervene swiftly upon the slower-moving slave, who is encumbered by the complex relations of signifiers that constitute knowledge. Animated by a desire for “things [to] work,” the master commands the slave to do his bidding. He would like, in particular, to take possession of this knowledge and to have it used for his own purposes. As Lacan says, this knowledge is to be “transmitted from the slave’s pocket to the master’s—assuming that they had pockets in those days”; in this way, the slave is gradually dispossessed of “this knowledge in order for it to become the master’s knowledge,” an operation that would pave the way for the establishment, first, of classical philosophy and then of the discourse of the university, in which the S_2 takes the place of the agent (22).

At the center of the discourse of the master is a cluster of psychic and libidinal positions: the slave’s transference towards the master, and the latter’s exclusion of his own jouissance in favor of his ability to control the slave. In intervening upon the slave’s knowledge, the master unfortunately acquires a position of great psychic significance for the slave. With the master’s advent, the slave loses a more or less direct relation to his own body, which becomes the master’s property (89). As a result, from the slave’s perspective, the master’s action comes to stand in for the primal loss of an unmediated relation to his body, a loss that we all experience, and which Lacan, in *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*, had called “alienation.” Alienation designates, first, the operation of primal repression and then of secondary repressions, in which the living being has to make a “forced choice” between its own being and “meaning,” which Lacan would later write as S_2 . This being, in consenting to being represented by these signifiers, loses not only a direct access to its body, but also a specific signifier with which it had identified and which can be written as S_1 , and which is no longer accessible to consciousness. This operation can be represented as follows:⁹



The master, in making the slave submit to him, brings the S_1 to bear upon an “already constituted” field of knowledge, a set of signifiers that are “already articulated with one another” (*Other Side*, 15). Through its operation, the master signifier will come to stand in for the signifier that has already been eclipsed by primal repression, the term that “Freud defined by placing it between the enigmatic parenthesis of the *Urverdrängt*” (90). In this way, each signifier that is part of the slave’s “headless knowledge” acquires a new resonance, precisely because it has come to refer to the signifier that had been “split off” from the others. This resonance exacts a heavy price upon the slave, for it binds him in a transferential relation to the master. In conjunction with this new relation, the $\$$, “the subject as divided, emerges” in the place of the “truth of the master” (15, 90). This $\$$ becomes the subject-supposed-to-know for the slave and the master acquires a power over him because something in this master is presumed to know about his unconscious. This transference, just as much as the master’s ability to punish the slave, seals the latter’s submission to him.

Despite the subjective roots of the slave’s subservience, the master is not all-powerful; not only are there limits to his ability command the slave, but this very capacity is based upon an acceptance of severe restrictions on his own psyche. The master’s discourse is marked by both “impossibilities” and incapacities or even “impotences [*impuissances*]” (*Encore*, 16). The impossibility inheres in the relation between the master signifier and knowledge; although it is true that the signifier’s intervention has an enormous psychic effect upon the slave, from the master’s own perspective, its results are inevitably disappointing. Although the master may want things to function smoothly, what his experience will show him is that this will not occur through his commands, either in the field of knowledge or in more practical matters. As Lacan asserts, “it is effectively impossible that there be a master who makes the entire world function. Getting people to work is even more tiring, if one really has to do it, than working oneself. The master never does it” (*Other Side*, 74). Nothing is less certain than that the slave elaborates knowledge expressly at the master’s command, in part because the master signifier, when it first intervenes upon the slave, acts upon a “network” of knowledge that has already been formed (13). If the slave brings forth any further knowledge, it is not as a result of a successful command from the master, but because the structure of the discourse has instituted a transference that is directed to $\$$, rather than to S_1 .¹⁰

The *impuissance* that inheres within the discourse of the master will have an even more far-reaching effect, for it will render inoperative, within this discourse, the relations upon which Žižek’s first formulations of ideology-analysis depend. If the vectors in the discourses mark the existence of certain sorts of connections, which allow an agent, for example, to act upon an other, and for this other to produce a third element, there is, on the contrary, a “barrier” between surplus-jouissance, located in the place of the production, and the $\$$, the master’s truth. Because of this barrier, “the master is castrated” (97). If the slave is bound by transference to the master, the latter, in turn, “is only able to dominate” him “by excluding” both phallic jouissance and the fantasy that serves as its precondition, from his experience;

he does so, in part because this jouissance could expose him both to the subversive effects of the sexual non-relation and to the contradictions inherent within his own particular desire (97). Such an exposure would sap his ability to dominate the slave, for this ability depends upon his capacity to define himself as identical to himself. This conclusion, as Lacan notes, is unexpected, for “what people usually say” is the opposite: “that jouissance is the privilege of the master” (22). The master, however, is radically unlike the primal father in Freud’s *Totem and Taboo*, just as he differs from the term that figures in Lacan’s mathemes of masculine sexuation: $\exists x \overline{\Phi}x$, the at-least-one element that has not submitted to castration.

If fantasy does not operate for the master, then this structural particularity raises a question about the role of reality in his discourse: how can reality manifest itself here, if it has been defined as what frames a psychic formation that no longer operates? If the master has no fantasy, then what kind of reality does he have? To my knowledge, Lacan never gives an explicit answer to this question, but I shall argue that he provides an implicit response, and leaves us the coordinates that can enable us to understand the character of the master’s reality.¹¹ This reality will turn out to be the opposite of the one that Lacan describes in *Encore* as being approached through “apparatuses of jouissance”; instead, it can be conceived of as a particular variation of the reality principle, one in which the hope of refinding the hallucinated object of satisfaction has disappeared (55).

Certain indices concerning the master’s relation to reality can be found in *Encore*, in the passage in which Lacan discusses what he calls a “conception of the world,” an expression that he employs as a way of rethinking Freud’s remarks about the *Weltanschauung* (41-43). In his essay, “The Question of a *Weltanschauung*,” in the *New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-analysis*, Freud defines a *Weltanschauung* as “an intellectual construction which solves all the problems of our existence uniformly on the basis of one overriding hypothesis, which, accordingly leaves no question unanswered and in which everything that interests us finds its fixed place.”¹² The expression that interests Lacan in this definition is “fixed place,” and he will take up Freud’s formulations by employing the term, “world,” in a way that is reminiscent of Alexandre Koyré’s use of it: it denotes a stable Aristotelian cosmology and metaphysic, which is based upon a bounded system of spheres, in which the master himself comes to be located at its “center.”¹³

Lacan’s interest in the “world” and the topological qualities of the sphere is of long standing, and an important aspect of his concern with them derives from their connection with a particular understanding of what reality is. He occupied himself with the sphere because it permits a clear and simple demarcation between inside and outside, one that provides the condition for what he calls “cosmological thinking” in his seminar, *Problèmes cruciaux pour la psychanalyse* [Crucial Problems for Psychoanalysis]: a form of thought that is characterized by an adequation between macrocosm and microcosm, in such a way that the latter comes to be seen as the result of the former, and will correspond to it point-by-point. This microcosm can be conceived of in several ways: “as subject, soul, $\eta\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ (*nous*),” while the determi-

nant macrocosm can be called “reality” or the “universe.”¹⁴ The sphere thus becomes the basis of a theory of knowledge in which reality can be divided into a thousand separate atoms, each of which will exist in a more or less perfect correspondence with the mental presentation that we make of it.

It is this sort of epistemology that underlies the master’s position; he locates himself at the center of the system of spheres and bases his power upon his “clear-sighted” access to reality, the condition of which is his acceptance of castration. As Lacan argues in *Encore*, the stability of the conception of the world as a series of spheres is guaranteed by “a view, gaze or imaginary hold” that remains outside the system: that of the unmoved mover, who has set the spheres in motion. The master is able to occupy the center of this system because he defines himself as the figure who is able to discern and submit to this external and constitutive gaze; in Lacan’s words, “some-one—a part of this world—is at the outset assumed to be able to take cognizance of” this gaze and the imaginary hold that it provides (43).

Lacan’s use of the expression “take cognizance” is significant, for it denotes an operation that is the condition for the master’s assumption of his status, an operation that will have a crucial effect on the ordered set of knowledge. This expression is not at all absent from Freud’s work, for it is a central element of his concept of disavowal, with the crucial difference that, with the latter, it is always marked by a sort of negation, a “refus[al] to take cognizance” of something. This is the case with fetishism, for example, which arises when a boy refuses “to take cognizance of the fact of his having perceived that a woman does not possess a penis.”¹⁵

By contrast, the master’s affirmation, his action of taking cognizance is much less familiar to us as a concept than disavowal; it had to wait until 1972 to be formulated, in *Encore*, and it is marked by what is, for us, the radical strangeness of the master’s exclusion of his own jouissance, an exclusion that is unfamiliar for us and is difficult for us to grasp.

The master’s taking of cognizance is not the symmetrical opposite of the budding fetishist’s refusal to do so. The latter refuses to recognize what is empirically available to him in sense perceptions; the master, however, acknowledges something that is never present to the senses as such: something of which the gaze as object *a*—which Lacan defines as “unapprehensible”—is itself the index (*Four Fundamental Concepts*, 83). The master recognizes not a sense-perception, but a logical position that is located beyond the object *a*: this position is that of the unmoved mover, which stands outside, and thus constitutes an exception to the system of spheres. For the master, this figure has the status of the at-least-one element outside castration— $\exists x \Phi x$ —and his acknowledgement of it becomes something like the primordial *Bejahung*, the “judgment of attribution” that marks him as radically castrated and constitutes his position as master.¹⁶

The master can then claim that he has the “right” to command others because he believes that his affirmation—his *Bejahung*—is a sign of his strength. As a consequence, he claims to be unlike the fetishist; he supposedly does not allow psychic

and libidinal concerns to prevent him from affirming the correctness of his perceptions. He presents his own subjective and libidinal impasses as virtues, by using his “clear-sighted” perception of reality as the source of his power. Such a choice gives the master a very particular relation to the Freudian “reality principle.” Lacan had always argued that, as he says in *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, “the world of perception is represented by Freud as dependent on the fundamental hallucination without which there would be no attention available”; reality would not interest us if we did not believe that we could locate in it an hallucinated representation of what has once satisfied us (53). The master, however, seeks to approach the reality principle more directly, in a way that is not oriented by the search for an hallucinated satisfaction; in Freud’s words, his goal is to “form a conception of the real circumstances in the external world and...make a real alteration in them,” without needing this world to be “distorted” by his own jouissance.¹⁷

If this construction of the master’s fundamental epistemological position is correct, then it will affect our understanding of his connection with the slave’s knowledge. His conception of the world provides him with a relation to reality that underlies his domination of the slave and determines his relation to knowledge. He himself knows “nothing,” for he does not occupy the place where knowledge is to be found; his position as bearer of the master signifier does, however, enable him to intervene upon and judge this knowledge: to prescribe the characteristics that the signifiers in this set should possess. The master becomes a sort of “policeman” of reality: he patrols the border between reality and our presentations of it, acting to ensure that each signifier corresponds to its atom of reality. He thereby upholds the pre-eminence of reality over the knowledge that presents it. This species of surveillance becomes an integral part of the process by which the master takes possession of the slave’s knowledge, and will thereby gradually enable the discourse of the university to emerge, in a form that Lacan characterizes, in *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*, as a “pure knowledge of the master, ruled by his command” (104).

The discourse of the master thus presents us with a social practice that has constraining effects upon the unconscious and libidinal positions of its participants. The position of the master does not correspond directly with the graph of desire, which presents relations of speech in which fantasy plays an almost necessary role; the master’s exclusion of fantasy and his very different relation to reality are not parts of a theory of ideology based upon the graph.

This significant difference will bring us back to the question with which I began this discussion: what is the capitalist discourse and what does it mean to qualify a discourse as “capitalist”? For the moment, an answer to this question remains impossible, but several preliminary observations can be made. First, with the capitalist discourse, it is not at all clear that the two mainsprings of the Lacanian theory of ideology, fantasy and the reality that it frames, will be able to operate at all. If the capitalist discourse is the modern “substitute” for the discourse of the master, then in spite of the radical differences between the two, it is uncertain that it re-

stores the operation of the fantasy. The capitalist mode of production would then be obliged to gain and keep its hold on us by some other means.

Second, it is also uncertain that the “capitalism” in question in this discourse is even fundamentally a mode of production. As we shall see, when Lacan defines the structural particularity of the capitalist discourse, he does so by emphasizing the very specific character of the *jouissance* and the unconscious relations of those who are entrapped within it; he claims that it is marked by a foreclosure of castration. Any direct or indirect connection between this “capitalist” characteristic and the capitalist mode of production will therefore not be apparent from the start. It would itself have to become the object of an investigation.

2. The Capitalist Discourse

Lacan, indeed, himself required a fairly long time to define the particularity of both the capitalist discourse and the specificity of the *jouissance* that is to be found within it. In *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*, he sometimes locates capitalism within the discourse of the master, positing that Marx’s worker is a direct descendant of Hegel’s slave; just as “the slave will, over time, demonstrate [the master’s truth] to him,” so the worker will spend his/her time in “fomenting [the capitalist master’s] surplus-*jouissance*” (107). Lacan’s writing of the capitalist discourse as such, and the rather spare comments that he made about it, would have to wait another two years, until 1972. They will enable us to take the measure of both the similarity and the difference between this discourse and that of the master. What these two discourses have in common, as the seventeenth seminar suggests, is the way in which surplus-*jouissance* is produced. Unlike the discourse of the master, however, “capitalism,” for Lacan, institutes a series of relations in which this force of the *plus-de-jouir* makes the unconscious—to the extent that the latter can be grasped in terms of signifiers—cease to operate. This radical change has several consequences: a compulsion to repeat that may never cease and new forms of the superego and the trauma.

The two discourses share a common account of the production of the *plus-de-jouir*, one that Lacan had begun to formulate as early as November 1968, before he had even presented his theory of discourse. He gave his first exposition of this concept in the opening sections of his seminar, *D’un Autre à l’autre*, by means of a reference to Marx’s account of surplus-value. For Marx, the production of a surplus-value is synonymous with the creation of capital. In the second part of Volume I of *Capital*, Marx sets himself the task of tracing “[t]he [t]ransformation of [m]oney into [c]apital” and thus of showing how money, which had been exchanged in both the ancient and the medieval worlds, had mutated into something that would become the basis of a new mode of production.¹⁸ In this new mode, the capitalist uses the money that is at his disposal in order to buy both the means of production and labor-power. The latter is purchased at its current exchange-value, but its use-value

often proves to be much greater; in the course of a day, workers may produce a value that is, for example, “double what the capitalist” has paid them (301). The capitalist appropriates this “increment or excess” and the appearance of this new “surplus-value” is crucial: Marx locates in it the point at which money is changed into capital and the element upon which capitalism is founded (251). The capitalist appropriates this new value that has been produced, and uses a part of it to repeat and expand the process. He buys more material and hires more workers in order to obtain an even greater surplus-value, thus instituting a process that could, in theory, continue forever. Within this system, the production of surplus-value “takes place only within [a] constantly renewed movement. The movement of capital is... limitless” (253).

Lacan’s claim that Marx was the inventor of the symptom is well-known.¹⁹ It could just as well be argued that he was also the inventor of the concept of the compulsion to repeat; the capitalist mode of production’s continual pursuit of profit becomes the endless movement of an infernal machine. Within the domain not of the psyche but of economics, Marx delineated a process by which the production of something new would institute a sort of automatism, a structural necessity in which this new value “forms of itself the starting-point for a new cycle” (253).

In *D’un Autre à l’autre*, Lacan’s recognition of this structural necessity becomes the basis of a new definition of the genesis of the *objet petit a*. In this seminar, he no longer—as he had done earlier, in seminars such as *Anxiety* and *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-analysis*—uses the mathematical term, “remainder,” as a way of theorizing this object (*Four Fundamental Concepts*, 154). He ceases to treat it as an element of the real that has been left over from the process of transforming the latter into signifiers, and instead, referring explicitly to Marx, defines it as a real object that is gradually produced by the repeated elaboration of signifiers. Playing upon the French translation of *Mehrwert*, surplus-value, as “*plus-value*,” he dubs the object *a* as the *plus-de-jouir*, a “surplus-jouissance,” and argues that the production of the object *a* is “homologous” to that of surplus-value (*D’un Autre*, 29, 45–46).²⁰ Just as labor produces surplus-value, so the gradual establishment of knowledge—the elaboration of a set of traits, each of which fixes a part of our *jouissance* and satisfaction—produces something else: a certain kind of precipitate or sediment (180). The latter would not exist if there were no process of creating signifiers, but it is not itself a signifier: it cannot give rise to meaning by being enchainé with other signifiers. This generation of knowledge is a process that is repeated many times, and with each repetition, more of the precipitate is generated, with the result that after a certain point, it coagulates into a consistent object, which stands in relation to knowledge as a surplus-jouissance.

This object, as some of Lacan’s formulations make clear, does not comfort us and palliate our lack; instead, he links it explicitly to Freud’s concept of the death drive. It is produced by the “renunciation of *jouissance*,” a renunciation that is presented less as a deliberate choice than as a consequence of a structural impossibility: that of translating *jouissance* into signifiers. The attempt to do so inevitably results in

the loss of a part of it, a loss that gradually solidifies into the *plus-de-jouir*. The result of this renunciation is that the surplus-jouissance assumes the status of a cause of the “discontents of civilization” (40). This direct reference to *Civilization and Its Discontents* indicates the profound connection between this jouissance and what Freud formulated concerning the superego. In this work, Freud had argued that the effect of what the *Standard Edition* translates as the “renunciation of instinct” is the “erection of an internal authority”—the superego—that watches over and torments the ego.²¹ The repetition that characterizes the production of surplus-value in Marx thus provides Lacan, in the opening sessions of *D’un Autre à l’autre* with a way of beginning to rethink the death drive.

Although this conception of the object *a* was presented shortly after the events of May 1968, an understanding of some of its mortal effects would only come during the winter and spring of 1972, in the course of several presentations that were made outside the framework of his regular seminar. Here, he began to speak of a fifth, “capitalist” discourse, a paradoxical one, for its very existence disrupts the logic of discourse. This discourse is marked by precisely the action that is unavailable to the master in his own discourse: the appropriation of surplus-jouissance.

Lacan pinpointed one of the central characteristics of the capitalist discourse in an aside that he made in the course of a lecture given January 6, 1972 to the interns at the at *Hôpital de Sainte-Anne*. There he claims that “What distinguishes the discourse of capitalism is this—the *Verwerfung*, the rejection, the throwing outside all the symbolic fields... of what? Of castration. Every order, every discourse that has capitalism in common sets aside what we shall call simply the matters of love.”²² Then, four months later, in a lecture delivered in Milan entitled “*Du discours psychanalytique*,” Lacan continued these reflections by providing a writing of the structure of the capitalist discourse (40):

$$\downarrow \frac{S}{S_1} \times \frac{S_1}{a} \downarrow$$

This writing shows that this discourse is a mutation of that of the master; the foreclosure of castration is written as an inversion of the two terms that are located on the left side of the latter— S_1 and S —so that the place of the agent is now occupied by the S and that of truth by the S_1 .

One of the major effects of this inversion is the breaking through of the barrier between *a* and S , which characterizes the discourse of the master. Because the S has ceased to be located in the position of truth, and is found, instead, at that of the agent, the *plus-de-jouir* can reach it directly. The S , rather than the capitalist, appropriates surplus-jouissance, and the gap between subject and object is thereby abolished. If, in the discourse of the master, the *a* had been rendered so radically unavailable that the S could obtain no sense of it, here it is too fully present. The S is violently “completed” by its object, and through this encounter, castration ceases to exist.

This foreclosure of castration—the inundation of the $\$$ by the a —is the opposite of the situation that Lacan had described in *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, in his discussion of the *trompe l'oeil*, as the “taming” of the gaze. In that seminar, in telling the anecdote concerning the Hellenistic painters, Zeuxis and Parrhasios, he was concerned with showing the result of the introduction of castration—of the $-\phi$ —into the object a . After Zeuxis had painted a bunch of grapes that was so convincing that birds tried to eat it, Parrhasios painted “a veil so lifelike that Zeuxis, turning towards him said, *Well, and now show us what you have painted behind it*” (103). The revelation of the *trompe l'oeil*—that there is nothing behind the veil—however, has a calming effect upon this impulse; it reduces the invasive quality of the wish to look, thereby lessening the violence of a tendency that, when left to itself, would have the “effect of arresting movement and...of killing life” (55). The *trompe l'oeil* thus introduces a mode of castration that is not as radical as what determines the master’s position; the $\$$ has access to a , while also maintaining a distance from it, so that it is not overwhelmed by the libidinal object.

In the capitalist discourse, on the other hand, the relation between the $\$$ and the a is precisely the opposite: the a is unmarked by the $-\phi$, and the $\$$ is stricken by the encounter with it. Since this subject is not the psychological “subject” of consciousness, but is, instead, related to the unconscious and its chain of signifiers, it is “stricken,” however, in quite a particular sense. What is stunned and overwhelmed is the very status of the unconscious; the absence of castration will involve something like the disappearance of unconscious formations.

This disappearance can occur because one of the roles of castration is to enable jouissance to be ciphered into what we can apprehend as the signifiers of the unconscious. Such a role is implied by Lacan’s very broad claim that every signifier ciphered by the unconscious refers to castration and has a phallic “signification.” The latter term, as he explained, is to be understood in the sense of the Fregean “*Bedeutung*”; it concerns a word’s reference and denotation.²³ Each signifier can be taken to refer directly to castration, for that is the action that has made its production possible. Castration enables the unconscious to generate signifiers by introducing a distance with respect to the overpowering quality of jouissance; if jouissance is too present, there is no need—or possibility—of symbolizing it. Such symbolization can only take place when this jouissance is lessened, and this is what castration does, at the cost of leaving the subject with a jouissance that can only be experienced as “insufficient” (*Encore*, 105). In other words, signifiers denote castration in part because the latter constitutes the condition for their possibility.

It is within this context that one of the implications of the inversion of the S_1 and the $\$$ starts to become apparent. In the discourse of the master, the slave’s sinister subjection to the master’s supposed unconscious is based upon the formula that Lacan used frequently in order to describe one of the fundamental structures of unconscious formations: the signifier represents the subject for another signifier. In this formulation, the problematic term is not “signifier,” for in analysis, we can ap-

prehend very specific signifiers directly; we extract them from our dreams and our parapraxes, connect them with other signifiers, and thereby learn something about a desire whose existence we may well not have expected. The term that has a more difficult status is “subject,” for we can never have direct access to it. In explaining it, Lacan frequently uses the Aristotelian term, “*hypokeimenon*,” for it *underlies* the signifying chain, but its nature is fundamentally different from that of any signifier, and therefore its existence can only be a logical “supposition”; we can infer that it exists because of the effect of our encounter with the chain (*Other Side*, 13). It is a force that would seem to generate signifiers through a *chifffrage*, a ciphering, of jouissance; only by examining the chain can we form any hypothesis concerning its jouissance, an enjoyment that would seem to derive a part of its satisfaction through the very process of ciphering. None of these signifiers, however, is identical with the subject and none can encapsulate it; each of them tells us something about it that seems too partial that it ends up being little more than a “lie” about this subject.

In the capitalist discourse, the consequence of the inversion of the S_1 and the $\$$ is that the signifier no longer represents the subject for another signifier. The capitalist discourse disarticulates the subject from both this signifier and knowledge. As a result, the $\$$ now precedes the signifier that had once represented it and ceases to be the subject of the unconscious; knowledge, in turn, is no longer presumed to be touched by such an unconscious. Within this discourse, the unconscious ceases to operate.

If this is the case, then we can answer in the negative the question of whether fantasy functions within the capitalist discourse. Fantasy exists no more here than it does in the discourse of the master, but for a very different reason. The master knows nothing about his fantasy because the point of arrest between a and $\$$ prevents these two terms from communicating. What is paradoxical in the capitalist discourse is that it is precisely the absence of this point of arrest that renders the fantasy inoperative. The vector, $a \rightarrow \$$, does not write the relation between the divided subject and the “external” object in which it locates its “being.” Instead, it writes a violent breach of that delicate relation of “externality.” What had been the subject of the unconscious encounters the jouissance of the death drive; overwhelmed, it becomes merely an empty place.

As a consequence, not only castration, but also much of the psychic apparatus of which the fantasy had been part are now abolished; this abolition renders the operation of this discourse very different from that of the graph of desire. In the graph, the fantasy had provided an answer to the question, *Che vuoi?*, posed by our dim sense of the existence of the $S(A)$; when, however, the unconscious ceases to confront us with signifiers that disturb us because of their enigmatic quality, the $S(A)$ disappears, along with any need to provide a response to it. The answer given by the fantasy provides us with a supple way of dealing with our castration, for it allows the $-\phi$ to be “switched from one of its terms to the other”: from $\$$ to a and

then back.²⁴ With the foreclosure of this castration, not only the fantasy but also the very reason for its existence disappear.

In a context in which the unconscious and fantasy cease to exist, one may wonder what would be the status of knowledge in the capitalist discourse, since it would no longer be linked to a supposed subject. In what follows, I will suggest that such knowledge can take various forms, which will have in common only the cutting of this link with the $\$$. As a first approach to its status—one that highlights its disconnection from the unconscious—let us imagine how a cognitive psychologist might conceive of one of the phenomena that has served as a foundation of analysis: the dream. This psychologist could well isolate in a dream elements that we would call signifiers, but s/he would not assume that they point enigmatically to an ungraspable term that underlies them, and about which we can only know partially and imperfectly. Instead, this network of signifiers would be taken to be little more than the day's residues, which are now being "processed" and laid to rest by the giant computer that is our mind.

The elimination of the stopping-point between the a and the $\$$ in the discourse of the master has another consequence: it transforms the capitalist discourse into a sequence that, once one enters it, will become extremely difficult to exit. In the other discourses, these points of arrest between the places of the production and of truth help make it possible for anyone who is traversing a particular discourse to pause, take a distance from it, and try to move into another discourse. With the capitalist discourse, this pause does not occur. Because of this change, one can move, without impediment, from starting-point back to the same point: $\$ \rightarrow S_1 \rightarrow S_2 \rightarrow a \rightarrow \$...$ ²⁵ This discourse thus "succeeds" in a way that the other discourses, marked as they are by the impasses between production and truth, do not. It reproduces, in the field of the psychic and the social bond, the limitless movement that characterizes capital; both domains are dominated by the same sort of infernal machine. Once the circuit has been traversed and one returns to the beginning at $\$$, nothing favors one's escape from this discourse and everything leads one, instead, to repeat the same path that has only just been taken. Commenting on this circular motion in "*Du discours psychanalytique*," Lacan notes that the inversion makes the discourse "work like a charm, like skids that have been fully greased, but that's just it: it goes too fast, it consumes itself [*ça se consomme*], and it does this so well that it uses itself up [*ça se consume*]" (48).

A sequence that moves faster and faster until its very efficiency leads to collapse and destruction: what Lacan is describing can easily be understood as a specific mode of what Freud calls the compulsion to repeat, and thus of the death drive. In "The Uncanny," Freud describes this repetition as "the constant recurrence of the same thing," a recurrence that points towards "a compulsion powerful enough to overrule the pleasure principle, lending to certain aspects of the mind their daemonic quality."²⁶ Our entrapment within the capitalist discourse can take on a similar character; the sense of being caught within its continual movement constitutes a part of its nightmarish quality.

If the capitalist discourse is indeed a form of the compulsion to repeat, then it can only be characterized as one in which the passion for ignorance is particularly aggravated, because of the destruction of the signifier's capacity to represent the subject. Freud, in elaborating his conception of this compulsion in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, had been seeking to resolve a problem that had been brought to the fore by soldiers who had been traumatized during the First World War: they dreamed repeatedly about the experiences that had traumatized them. Freud theorized that this constant repetition in dreams was part of an attempt to "bind" the trauma: to symbolize it, to translate something of it into signifiers, thus depriving it of some of its force.²⁷

What distinguishes the capitalist discourse from the process that Freud theorized is the way in which the former disables the attempt to transform trauma into signifiers. If one of the hallmarks of Freud's uncanny and the death drive is a compulsion to repeat, then one can speak of a capitalist uncanny in which repetition and jouissance take a very particular form. Repetition does not enable the real to be symbolized; instead, this discourse becomes the site of an uncanny repetition in which a traumatic jouissance keeps recurring and can never be symbolized.

In the capitalist discourse, the $\$$, rather than being the *hypokeimenon*, thus becomes the place of the trauma that is inseparable from this repetition.²⁸ The vector, $a \rightarrow \$$, writes this capitalist uncanny: the traumatic overwhelming of the subject by jouissance occurs over and over because this subject, wrenched out of its position as what is represented by the signifiers, is unable to lessen the force of the trauma by transmuting it into new signifiers. In this discourse, the endless movement of the machine becomes the machine's very *raison d'être* and traumatic jouissance becomes the fuel that enables this repetition to continue.

In treating capitalism as a discourse in which a signifier ceases to represent the subject for another signifier, Lacan is departing somewhat from Freud's own formulations. As Samo Tomšič remarks in his analysis of the homology between surplus-value and surplus-jouissance, Freud frequently approached the ciphering effected by the unconscious in terms of metaphors borrowed from the field of capitalist production; he used expressions such as "Traumarbeit, dream-work, Witzarbeit, jokework, etc." This could be read as implying that the proletarian is precisely the "subject of the unconscious" and that the unconscious is an eminently capitalist enterprise ("Homology," 99, 111). I would like to take a slightly different tack, by suggesting that the capitalist discourse marks Lacan's departure from these formulations of Freud's. At least insofar as it delineates the conditions under which the unconscious ceases to operate, and is, indeed, rendered impossible, the $\$$ can now no longer be employed in just this way.

If the $\$$ becomes the mark of a new form of trauma, the a becomes that of a new form of superego. At the beginning of *D'un Autre à l'autre*, in sketching out the way in which surplus-jouissance is produced, Lacan had likened it to Freud's account of the genesis of the superego in *Civilization and Its Discontents*. The *plus-de-jouir* acts

as a superego, and this superego can function, for example, as the voice, which is linked to a call that Lacan characterizes in a famous passage in *Encore*: “The superego is the imperative of jouissance—Enjoy!” (7). This object calls upon us to pursue an “absolute” jouissance, an injunction that is impossible for castrated figures to obey. This command, as Lacan argues at the end of his seminar *D’un discours qui ne serait pas du semblant* [*On a Discourse that would not be of the Semblance*], is “the origin of everything that has been elaborated in terms of moral conscience”; the push towards an unreachable jouissance comes, paradoxically, to clothe itself in a voice that demands that one obey traditional morality (178).

In the capitalist discourse, surplus-jouissance also acts as superego, but its role is different, for it commands us to submit to a jouissance that has ceased to be impossible. Because the command, “Jouis!” or “Enjoy!” is no longer a “correlate of castration,” it becomes imbued with a devastating power (*Encore*, 7). The subject, in encountering the *a*, is required to lend itself to—to become the habitation of—a jouissance that contains too much excitation, and is therefore more or less impossible to bear. In this way, jouissance itself becomes a sort of authority, to which the subject is compelled to submit, and the effect of which will be traumatic.²⁹

3. Capitalist Knowledge

At this point, it still remains unclear why this discourse is qualified as capitalist. A compulsion to repeat has been initiated by surplus-jouissance, a term that is homologous to surplus-value, which itself begins a different process of repetition; the latter occurs within the infrastructure. This homology does not, in itself, suffice to enable us to qualify this discourse as specifically “capitalist” in the economic sense. If Lacan’s discourses are attempts to theorize the fate of the unconscious and jouissance within specific social practices, then does this discourse provide us with a way of understanding the effect of certain capitalist structures?

As a first, approximate, response to this question, one can consider S and S_2 as two aspects of the proletarian. The S , overwhelmed and deprived of everything—especially its status as the term that underlies a chain of signifiers connected with the unconscious—has no recourse other than to solicit the capitalist, S_1 . Submitting to the latter’s orders, the proletarian becomes a “worker” in the place of knowledge, thus producing surplus-jouissance, which will then lead to a repetition of the cycle.

One way of theorizing the process by which this knowledge can become related to capitalism as a mode of production is provided by capitalist thinkers themselves. They do so through their concept of the *homo œconomicus*, the “subject” that they believe would be the correlate of capitalism in its various forms: one that obtains satisfaction by acting on the market. Christian Laval, in *L’homme économique: essai sur les racines du néolibéralisme* [*Homo (Economicus): an Essay on the Roots of Neoliberalism*], his intellectual history of the genesis and consequences of this concept, has shown how, for capitalist thinkers, a market cannot exist unless each participant

in it—each instance of *homo œconomicus*—has elaborated a sort of capitalist knowledge: a catalogue of what provides satisfactions or causes pain.³⁰ The basis for such a catalogue was given its classical expression by Jeremy Bentham, at the beginning of his book, *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*: “Nature has placed mankind under the governance of two sovereign masters, *pain and pleasure*. It is for them alone to point out what we ought to do, as well as to determine what we shall do.”³¹ Building upon this foundation, each economic actor will rank the degree of satisfaction that various objects provide him or her, a procedure that is made possible by considering them purely in quantitative, rather than qualitative terms (Laval 159). According to Bentham’s notorious calculus of pleasures and pains, the “value” of any object is its “force,” the intensity of the satisfaction or sense of discomfort that it provides (Bentham 29). This value can be calculated in a quasi-mathematical fashion by taking into account the intensity and duration of the pleasure or pain that is expected, along with its “certainty or uncertainty” and its “propinquity or remoteness” (29). As Bentham states, whenever people have had “a clear view of their own interest,” they have always followed precisely this practice (32).

In other words, such calculations are supposed to provide the basis for all trade and contracts (Laval 158). The medium of such exchanges is money, which becomes the means par excellence of measuring the intensities of anticipated satisfaction in a way that would correspond to Bentham’s calculus of pleasure. Armed with such a conception of self-interest, individuals would be able to compete with each other in the market, each seeking to accumulate as much satisfaction for him/herself as possible.

Homo œconomicus, the figure who arranges the objects that provide such satisfactions according to their “values” is, as Samo Tomšič remarks, a purely “psychological” subject.³² Calculations are conscious and satisfaction is judged on the basis of criteria that make no appeal to the split subject. Such satisfaction, indeed, is not complicated by the considerations of any insuperable gaps between need and demand, between demand and desire, or between desire and *jouissance*; in the formulations of the earliest utilitarians and the classical economists, the object that I ask is, in effect, the one that will satisfy, in a seamless and unproblematic way, the goals that I have set for myself. For example, “jewelry...and fine clothing” will, without any great difficulty, succeed in “making us loveable or impressive” (Laval 159). The goals of being loveable or impressive are not, in turn, considered to harbor discontents within themselves, discontents that would then render them less satisfying than had been foreseen.³³

Homo œconomicus, in cataloguing of objects in terms of the degree of satisfaction that they procure, shows us one of the principal forms taken by capitalist knowledge; grouped together, these rankings of intensity of satisfaction can comprise one of the most important and widespread instances of the S_2 in the capitalist discourse. As Laval has noted, however, such a catalogue can only be constructed under one condition: all such objects are to be considered to be commensurable

with each other (158). In order for them to be compared, they must all provide a satisfaction—or a pain—that differs only in degree, and not in quality; certain satisfactions must not be so fundamentally different from the others that they can no longer even be compared with them.

For psychoanalysis, this necessary commensurability of the satisfactions included within capitalist knowledge must be considered as one of the weakest elements of the capitalists' formulations: it does not take into account the incompatibility between the pleasures recorded in the catalogue and surplus-jouissance. If the objects in this catalogue can be measured and ranked in a way that is considered to be fundamentally unproblematic, then they have the status of signifiers. Lacan argued that each signifier in the place of knowledge has something like the status of a 1; the more that we speak of it within an analysis, the more it has the appearance of a relatively clear and distinct entity and it can therefore be theorized as a positive integer.

On the other hand, surplus-jouissance stands radically apart from such a catalogue of satisfactions, for Lacan has explicitly theorized, there is a non-relation between the signifiers collected in S_2 and the object a . The two are precisely *incommensurable* with each other. The object a , rather than being like a positive integer, is something like an irrational number; its boundaries, instead of having an integer's distinctness, can never be marked out fully, and can only be written with an endless and nonrepeating decimal, such as 0.618 (*D'un Autre*, 131).³⁴ A number possessing this quality cannot be written in terms of a relatively neat proportion with other numbers; it thereby falls outside the utilitarian attempt to relate the numerical values of anticipated satisfactions to each other. For it, Bentham's calculus of pleasures and the various systems of currency would be nothing more than so many Procrustean beds, which can only misapprehend the character of its jouissance. Such systems are unable to take into account a surplus-jouissance that overwhelms the subject.

If the preceding account of the functioning of the capitalist discourse is more or less correct, then it enables us to entertain some rather dire hypotheses concerning the effects of the calculations made by *homo œconomicus*. When the unconscious functions, every attempt to cipher jouissance into a knowledge about our satisfaction must necessarily miss a part of what is being aimed at, and the result is the production of the *plus-de-jouir*, which is linked to the death drive and the superego. The elaboration of capitalist knowledge made through utilitarian calculations of interest is necessarily cruder than the operations of the unconscious; what these calculations miss regarding jouissance is far more radical and therefore one may suppose that the production of surplus-jouissance—the violent embodiment of what cannot fit into knowledge—will be accomplished with an even greater rapidity and efficiency.

If surplus-jouissance must remain alien to the catalogue of satisfactions, then one can well wonder about the particular forms through it will manifest itself in this discourse. If the object a is set apart radically from our usual satisfactions, then it is

not at all clear that consumer objects come to embody it and that the fifth discourse is fundamentally a way of theorizing a “drive of consumption.”³⁵ In most cases, consumer products would seem to be more closely related to the catalogue of capitalist knowledge than to surplus-jouissance; since the arrival of consumer capitalism, peoples’ calculations have come to be occupied more and more with the satisfaction that such items are expected to bring. The object of surplus-jouissance would presumably, for the most part, be somewhat different: it would be located anywhere the four objects of the drives—the breast, feces, the gaze and the voice—have taken up residence. If the consumer object may sometimes harbor the object *a*, the latter may also be found in a thousand places that have nothing to do with consumption. The distinguishing feature of this surplus-jouissance, instead, will be that it lacks lack; the inversion of the positions of S_1 and $\$$ enables the latter to encounter an object *a* that is not marked by the $-\phi$.

In 1968, Lacan had suggested that this surplus-jouissance provides us with a way of conceiving of the superego, as Freud had presented it in *Civilization and Its Discontents*: it is produced through a structural “renunciation” of jouissance. Lacan’s somewhat later formulations about the capitalist discourse place Freud’s work in a certain perspective: they show the extent to which Freud both grasped and fell short of understanding various mutations in the social bond. Despite his important formulations about the production of the superego, he had perhaps not anticipated some of the effects of capitalism; the constant self-purification and radicalization of this mode of production may well have made certain of its features clearer to us now than they had been to him in 1930. Freud had argued that civilization is based on an “internal erotic impulsion which causes human beings to unite in a closely-knit group,” but which can be “disturb[ed]” and imperilled by the aggression that arises from the death drive (133, 112). Such formulations do not take into account the way in which capitalism seeks to transform this aggressiveness into an integral part of the system: universal competition, in which we are all compelled to take part, and the effect of which can only be psychic violence. Perhaps more importantly, Freud does not quite see the way in which this superego, created by the attempt to renounce the aggressive drives, not only creates a sense of malaise in us but also becomes the precise element that makes the repetition of the discourse possible. The object-superego ensures the death of the subject and the impossibility of the unconscious, thus allowing our minds to be colonized by a capitalist theory of knowledge and a new production of the object. For this discourse, our discontent is our excessive, tormenting jouissance, which enables capitalism to perpetuate itself.

4. Looking into You

If the *plus-de-jouir*, the superego’s push towards a jouissance that is not marked by castration, is not usually located in the object of consumption, this does not mean that it is rarely present in our everyday lives. On the contrary, it can be found everywhere, and can catch us at any time. One of the areas where we can learn

about this object is art and literature; these fields constantly mark out a place for it, soliciting its attention and charting its effects. Don DeLillo's *Cosmopolis*³⁶ takes as its theme the financial forces that now dominate the capitalist mode of production, but it is also a complex meditation upon the capitalist discourse itself. If Lacan had imagined that this discourse could end up in exploding, DeLillo's novel presents us with what is perhaps a somewhat optimistic dramatization of this event (*Du discours psychanalytique*, 48). It also, and more importantly, shows, both in its themes and its form, the production of a lethal surplus-jouissance that has the potential to destroy the subject. This jouissance manifests itself not only in the novel's characters, but in the very process of reading it. Finally, it also approaches the difficult question of the relation of continuity and discontinuity between the master and the capitalist. It shows the latter's doomed attempt to lend stability to this discourse by continuing and extending the master's *Weltanschauung*. The feverish attempt to ensure that language corresponds to an ever-changing reality will, however, have the opposite effect: it will induce a vertigo that will help precipitate the capitalist's collapse.

These processes, and the novel itself, begin with an activity that will finally become enmeshed within the capitalist discourse: reading. Eric Packer, the novel's main character, is dominated by a sense of malaise. He is tormented by insomnia, finds "every act" to be "self-haunted," and feels that the "palest thought carried an anxious shadow"; ruling out any psychic source of this dread, since "Freud is finished," he can only try to stabilize his reactions by "read[ing] his way into sleep" (6, 5). He thus becomes a sort of stand-in for those who read the pages of DeLillo's own novel. A literary text is a very particular elaboration of knowledge, in the sense in which this term has been used throughout this essay: it consists of a set of signifiers which are articulated with each other in complex ways. Well before the appearance of the object *a* as surplus-jouissance, Packer discerns some elements of jouissance in these literary arrangements of knowledge: less in the meanings that may be produced, but in their very appearance upon the page, which calls upon the reader to look at it. When he reads a poem, his feelings "float in the white space around the lines," and he is enchanted by the appearance of "spare poems sited minutely in white space, ranks of alphabetic strokes burnt into paper" (66, 5). What calls out to Packer when he reads a text is a series of abstract shapes: the "eloquence of alphabets" (24). With these abstract letters, we are not far from Lacan's reminder that the alphabet began as representations of commonplace objects; the capital, "A," for example, was first the drawing of the head of a bull or cow, which was then turned upside-down, and gradually ceasing to be an image, became an abstract figure.³⁷ Now, as we read, it is as if the very abstractness of the letters grasps our attention and draws us into a text, soliciting us to continue reading.

Such reading is an activity: it mobilizes a part of our bodies—our eyes—as well as something that is incorporeal—the gaze—which is connected with our jouissance and which may well show its first inchoate stirrings at the initial moment of our encounter with a text. What Packer does not note, in looking at the volumes of

poetry, is that if our attention is to continue to concern itself with the text, our minds must work upon these letters; letters fix words, and as we move through the text, we subject them to a deciphering that turns them into sentences. In certain cases, this grammatical structure will enable us to give these sentences a relatively simple signification, but such words will also confront us with enigmas to which it will be more difficult to respond. If a text acts upon us, it will have particular effects that we cannot calculate from the beginning; what *Cosmopolis* itself will suggest is that the capitalist discourse can involve a specific mode of reading.

Even before this mode reveals itself, however, *Cosmopolis* shows us another, rather surprising aspect of reading; it suggests that the lover of literature's initial fascination with a text is not as different as we might hope from a financier's interest in a very different arrangement of knowledge. Eric Packer is a speculator, and his concern with poetry is dwarfed by his interest in the columns of numbers that formalize the fluctuations in the "value" of currency and goods on international markets. In his opinion, "it was shallow thinking to maintain that [the] numbers and charts" that record the fluctuations of capital "were the cold compression of unruly human energies, every sort of yearning and midnight sweat reduced to lucid units in the financial markets" (24). Instead, for those who believe that goods provide satisfaction and that money measures the latter, these numbers are irradiated by the jouissance that they condense within themselves; "data itself was soulful and glowing, a dynamic aspect of the life process" (24). Such jouissance exerts an attraction both upon those who read these data and those—located in the S_2 of the capitalist discourse—who work to formalize it. Money is already an abstract entity, and such knowledge-workers, who focus on its importance, experience a certain jouissance in formalizing it even further and increasing its abstractness; this is part of what replaces the jouissance of ciphering, the process by which something of our unconscious comes to be symbolized.

This formalizing is Eric Packer's particular interest; inhabiting the place of the capitalist, S_1 , he commands his workers to elaborate knowledge. Such knowledge concerns, in particular, the relative values of various currencies, but it also extends to other areas. Certain employees, for example, analyze security threats made against Packer, putting under a microscope each movement that he may make in order to assess his vulnerability to an attack. Packer, in turn, shows a particular interest in critiquing the limits of such analyses, pointing to their blind spots and pushing his employees to expand and deepen their analyses. In hearing his security analyst announce with certainty that "Our system's secure—we're impenetrable... there's no vulnerable point of entry," Packer immediately pinpoints the weak spot in this expert's knowledge: "Where was the car last night after we ran our tests?" (12). For Packer, knowledge and its formalization never reach a point where they can be complete.

What complicates his project is an inheritance from the discourse of the master, for he seeks to use his position as capitalist to recreate and extend the master's "world." He attempts to locate capitalist financial patterns within a system of "spheres"; he

then induces his workers to show that such patterns respond to the same sort of analysis that the natural world does and conform to mathematical patterns that can be found in nature. The most advanced techniques of formalization are put at the service of discovering a system of correspondences, a method that one of his former employees will describe:

You tried to predict movements in the yen by drawing on patterns from nature.... The mathematical properties of tree rings, sunflower seeds, the limbs of galactic spirals.... The way signals from a pulsar in deepest space can describe the fluctuation of a given stock or currency.... How market cycles can be interchangeable with the time cycles of grasshopper breeding, wheat harvesting (200).

One of the consequences of this newly formalized reintroduction of the master's system is the very approach to language that Lacan had criticized: the assumption that there is an adequation between it and reality. Packer's concern with this correspondence, however, will manifest itself in a particularly violent way, since he seeks to make the world exist in a situation that is radically different from the one in which the master commanded the slave. The master had inhabited a world that was believed to be fundamentally stable and eternal, and in which it was not difficult to grasp a reality that did not change. Packer's relation to reality is very different: his goal is to render it as unstable and mutable as possible: to intervene upon it, altering it with each new "advance" in technology and financial capitalism.

Such constant mutation, however, brings about a radical instability in the language that is supposed to exist in adequation to reality; each time that an atom of reality changes, the signifier that had corresponded to it is rendered more or less obsolete. As a consequence, Packer finds himself preoccupied by the conviction that particular common nouns or compound nouns should be destroyed and then be replaced with words that would be more fully adequated to the most recent reality. At the beginning of the novel, he brings his dissatisfaction to bear upon the word, "skyscraper," which disturbs him because of its anachronistic quality. In the contemporary world, where such towers are the norm rather than a rarity, there is no longer any sky that can be "scraped" in such a manner; the word belongs only "to the olden soul of awe, to the arrowed towers that were a narrative long before he was born" (9). Similarly, the expression, "automated teller machines" seems out-of-date; it is "aged and burdened by its own historical memory," suffering because it retains a reference to "fuddled human personnel and jerky moving parts," both of which belong to a past that has now become so distant that even mentioning it seems irrelevant (54). Indeed, in the course of the novel, the common nouns, "walkie-talkie" and even "computer," among others, come in for the same criticism (102, 104). By the end of the book, it is apparent that this vertiginous procedure has become so generalized that no common noun can escape it; any of them can become the object of Packer's automatic suspicion and will to destruction. When he enters the building where he will die, he notices that "A man lay dead or sleeping in the vestibule, if this is still a word" (182). The willed impermanence of reality has a corrosive effect

upon both a language that Packer would like to make into its mere reflection and the capitalist's attempt to perpetuate the master's world.

A project of such complexity must inevitably encounter stumbling blocks, and both the thematics and the form of the novel give body to a violence that is produced by failures and impasses of formalization; the attempt to revivify the master's world leads to catastrophe. *Cosmopolis* takes place on the day when the limits of Packer's system of calculation become apparent and bring him to a ruin that is not merely financial. Having been "borrowing yen at extremely low interest rates and using this money to speculate heavily in stocks that would yield potentially high returns," he has left himself vulnerable to the eventuality that the value of the yen would rise; "the stronger [it] became the more money he [would] need to pay back the loan" (84). He has done so because every element of his complex system of formalization has led him to believe that "the yen could not go any higher"; nevertheless, "it did go higher time and again," and in this result that he had deemed to be impossible, he discerns the failure of his own process (84).

Cosmopolis thematizes the results of this failure: the repetitive workings of the machine of calculation results in the production of a *plus-de-jour* that is marked by a lethal violence. This object is the gaze, and it arises with a strength and violence that seems directly connected with the novel's repeated concerns with formalization and destruction; it is as if the elaborating of knowledge has been precipitating a kind of sediment, which now assumes consistent form, in the look of a former employee, Richard Sheets. The latter describes with great lucidity the effect upon him of Packer's method of formalization. "You made this form of analysis horribly and seductively precise," and its very complexity destabilizes workers, causing a sense of vertigo in them: "your system is so microtimed that I couldn't keep up with it. I couldn't find it. It's so infinitesimal. I began to hate my work, and you, and all the numbers on my screen, and every minute of my life" (200, 191).

While falling gradually into madness, Sheets became more and more fascinated with Packer himself, becoming the steady, determined presence through which something of the ungraspable and "evanescent" object that is the gaze can flash out (*Four Fundamental Concepts*, 77). He becomes dominated by the impulse to seek Packer out, and all the technology that the latter has used to show himself has had the effect of catching Sheets's gaze: "I used to watch you meditate, online.... I couldn't stop watching.... I watched every minute. I looked into you" (DeLillo, 198). This look is not the tamed gaze, the intensity of which would be lessened by castration. Instead, it is marked by violence and aims at Packer's destruction; in comparison with it, the gun with which Sheets shoots him is little more than the tool by which this look can meet its goal. Richard Sheets's look is the surplus-jouissance of the capitalist discourse.

If one effect of this method of formalization is to locate Sheets as marking the place of the object *a*, another is to put Packer in the position of the $\$$. The financier embraces his own destruction; having, at the beginning of the novel, located the ques-

tion of where the limousines are kept at night as the limit of his security experts' knowledge, Packer places himself on a trajectory that leads to this place, where, as if by chance, he falls into the hands of his murderer. Sheets, himself, struck by this coincidence, remarks, "we want to know why you'd willingly enter a house where there's someone inside who's prepared to kill you." Packer, as his antagonist surmises, could only have experienced "Some kind of unexpected failure. A shock to your self-esteem" (190). The financier's response is that "I couldn't figure out the yen" and therefore "became halfhearted," and determined, as Sheets says, to "bring everything down" (190). In this way, Packer marks himself out as the $\$$, the place of the element that will be annihilated by the force of surplus-jouissance.

This encounter is an instance of the capitalist uncanny: the experience of the violent shock of the a and the $\$$, an overwhelming of the subject that carries with it undertones of horror. In the case of *Cosmopolis*, this repetition goes beyond that of the novel's plot, in which Packer thinks obsessively about the fall of the yen and recurrently bets his and other people's funds on it. It also comes to involve the reader, whose look will acquire something of the violence associated with the *plus-de-jouir*. If, in much of the novel, Eric Packer stands in for the reader, experiencing the way in which the attraction of black marks on a white page draws him/her into a text, by the end, Richard Sheets becomes the figure who embodies the violence of reading.

Cosmopolis is a text—and it is not the only one—that leads us to read *within* the capitalist discourse, and to do so is, finally, to become a part of the destruction that reigns at the end of the novel. Reading this novel is a process in which Packer's very preoccupations teach us what to look for as we read; if, at first, the abstract beauty of the novel's letters played a part in capturing our attention, we are gradually drawn into a would-be world in which even the bizarre theory of the adequation between reality and language, which is a part of capitalist knowledge in this novel, can have a constraining effect upon us. Reading can become violent, in part, because it comes to be touched by the will to destruction that is characteristic of Packer's approach to language: the determination to efface the existence of an entire series of words that no longer corresponds to the reality that he is struggling to bring into existence. His constant concern can affect the way in which we read this novel; his will to obliteration becomes part of our own way of approaching the words on the page. To read *Cosmopolis* is to imagine that the words that we see before our eyes at any particular moment can cease to exist. This process can also, however, be extended; to follow, page after page, the main character's determination to "bring everything down" is also to imagine that such destruction could be applied to a very particular proper name: "Eric Packer" itself can disappear.

At the end of this novel, this will to destruction, as applied to Packer, becomes divorced from any attempt to maintain the capitalist's "world" and becomes a jouissance that can be imputed to the process of reading. Eric Packer's self-engineered death is designed to call to the gaze; my thesis is that it has the potential to attract the reader's look, the small, incorporeal element that is distinct from the eye,

and which becomes the invisible incarnation of the reader's jouissance. The will to destruction that the reader has been "trained" to apply to the "obsolete" vocabulary becomes detached from the "world" and brought to bear upon Parker himself. Within the fiction, the murderous gaze of Richard Sheets comes thereby to stand in for that of the reader. The more the reader imagines such a destruction, the more fully does his/her own look come to be represented by, and even to identify itself with this look.³⁸ Within the capitalist discourse, the activity of reading, like the most common activities of everyday life, thereby becomes marked by violence. This violence is the inevitable result of the annihilation of the subject that had been represented by one signifier for another.

Notes

1. Jacques Lacan, "Du discours psychanalytique" in *Lacan in Italia/Lacan en Italie (1953-1978)*, ed. by Giacomo Contri (Milan: La Salamandra, 1978) 10.
2. The following discussion of Žižek's work is necessarily very partial. For example, it does not take into account later developments of this theory of ideology, including his increasingly complex engagement with Marxism. It also does not enter into his discussions of the symptom, his important treatments of the act, or his own considerations on discourse. For more extensive examinations of his ideology-analysis, see Ronan de Calan and Raoul Moati, *Žižek, marxisme et psychanalyse* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2012) 47–100; Fabio Vigli and Heiko Feldner, *Žižek: Beyond Foucault* (Basingstoke; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007) 29–40.
3. Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation)," in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. by Ben Brewster (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1972) 162, 173.
4. Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London: Verso, 1989) 124.
5. Jacques Lacan, *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis [Seminar XVII]*, ed. by Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. by Russell Grigg (New York: Norton, 2007) 13. When Lacan speaks here of "relations," he is referring to the ability of a particular term to act upon the next term in the series: a master, for example, commands the slave, who then produces the *plus-de-jouir*. Such relations, if they occur, are indicated by vectors. The term, "relation," is thus used in a somewhat different sense than it is in Lacan's later discussions of the sexual relation, or rather, lack of it. In the latter sense, the term refers, instead, to questions of the logical commensurability or incommensurability of certain terms. This is not to say, however, that the discourses are untouched by problems of commensurability; knowledge and surplus jouissance are incommensurable with each other.
6. Jacques Lacan, *On Feminine Sexuality: The Limits of Love and Knowledge*, ed. by Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. by Bruce Fink (New York: Norton, 1998) 17.
7. Jacques Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis, 1959-1960 [Seminar VII]*, ed. by Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. by Dennis Porter (New York: Norton, 1986) 22.
8. Jacques Lacan, *Le séminaire, livre XVI: D'un Autre à l'autre 1968-1969*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller (Paris: Seuil, 2006) 385. Since the master and the slave are, first of all, historical roles held by men, I have used the masculine pronoun for both throughout this discussion.

9. See Colette Soler, "The Subject and the Other (II)," in *Reading Seminar XI: Lacan's Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis: Including the First English Translation of "Position of the Unconscious" by Jacques Lacan*, ed. by Richard Feldstein, Bruce Fink, and Maire Jaanus (Albany: SUNY Press, 1995). This Venn diagram marks a further formalization of the diagram that appears in Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-analysis*, ed. by Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. by Alan Sheridan (New York: Norton, 1978). Also see Bruce Fink, *The Lacanian Subject: Between Language and Jouissance*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995). There is an especially useful discussion of primal repression in Fink's article "Alienation and Separation: Logical Moments for Lacan's Dialectic of Drive," *Newsletter of the Freudian Field*. 4.1 & 2 (1990).
10. It is here that one can locate the imposture that lies behind the best-known depiction of the master's relation to the slave's knowledge: Plato's portrayal of Socrates' dialogue with the slave in *The Meno*. Claiming that the slave already possesses a knowledge of incommensurable numbers, but has simply forgotten it, Socrates asks him a series of questions that are supposed to lead him to remember it. However, as Lacan remarks, the slave is simply answering what "the questions already dictate as their response," and perhaps more importantly, a true master could not ask these questions, since he is defined precisely as lacking the knowledge that they presuppose (*Other Side*, 22).
11. For a discussion of the master's relation to reality, see John Holland, "La fin du monde," *Psychanalyse*. 28 (2013): 62–66.
12. Sigmund Freud, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* (London: Hogarth Press, 1953–1974), XXII (1964): "The Question of a *Weltanschauung*," 158–84.
13. Alexandre Koyré, *From the Closed World to the Infinite Universe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1957) 41–2.
14. Jacques Lacan, "Séminaire XII : Problèmes cruciaux pour la psychanalyse, 1964–1965," n.d., Staferla, 75. Available at <<http://staferla.free.fr/S12/S12%20PROBLEMES.pdf>>.
15. Sigmund Freud, XXI (1961): "Fetishism," 153.
16. Jacques Lacan, "On a Question Prior to Any Possible Treatment of Psychosis," in *Écrits: The First Complete Edition in English*, trans. by Bruce Fink, Héloïse Fink, and Russell Grigg (New York: Norton, 2006) 465. In this *écrit*, the *Bejahung* concerns the judgment that the signifier of the Name-of-the-Father exists, and is thus directly opposed to the psychotic's *Verwerfung*, foreclosure of this signifier. Although the master has no access to fantasy, he can affirm the existence of a gaze through the vector that goes directly from *a* to S_1 in the writing of this discourse in "*Du discours psychanalytique*."
17. Sigmund Freud, XII (1958): "Formulations on the Two Principles of Mental Functioning," 219.
18. Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, trans. by Ben Fowkes (London: Penguin Books in association with New Left Review, 1981) 245.
19. For example, see Jacques Lacan, *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan, Livre XVIII, D'un discours qui ne serait pas du semblant 1970–1971*, ed. by Jacques-Alain Miller (Paris: Seuil, 2006) 164 and Pierre Bruno, *Lacan, passeur de Marx: l'invention du symptôme* (Toulouse: Érès, 2010) 227–254.

20. For fuller discussions of this homology, see Samo Tomšič, "Homology: Marx and Lacan," *S: Journal of the Circle for Lacanian Ideology Critique* 5 (2012): 98–113. Also see Alenka Zupančič, "When Surplus Enjoyment Meets Surplus Value," 155–178, and Juliet Flower MacCannell, "More Thoughts for the Times on War and Death: The Discourse of Capitalism in *Seminar XVII*," 195–215, both of which can be found in *Jacques Lacan and the Other Side of psychoanalysis: reflections on Seminar XVII*, ed. by Justin Clemens and Russell Grigg (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).
21. Sigmund Freud, XXI (1961): "Civilization and Its Discontents," 40.
22. Jacques Lacan, *Je parle aux murs: entretiens de la chapelle de Sainte-Anne*, ed. by Jacques-Alain Miller (Paris: Seuil, 2011) 96. See also Pierre Bruno, "The Capitalist Exemption," in *S: Journal of the Circle for Lacanian Ideology Critique* 8 (2015): 63–79.
23. Jacques Lacan, *Le séminaire, livre XIX: ...ou pire, 1971–1972*, ed. by Jacques-Alain Miller (Paris: Seuil, 2011) 55. For Frege, the "*Bedeutung*" of a name is its reference, as distinguished from its sense. Because the planet Venus was referred to as both the "Morning Star" and the "Evening Star," Frege argues that "The *Bedeutung* of 'Evening Star' would be the same as that of 'Morning Star,' but not the sense." Gottlob Frege, "On *Sinn* and *Bedeutung*," in *The Frege Reader*, ed. by Michael Beaney, trans. by Michael Beany (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997) 152.
24. Jacques Lacan, "The Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire in the Freudian Unconscious," in *Ecrits: The First Complete Translation in English*, trans. by Bruce Fink, Héloïse Fink, and Russell Grigg (New York: Norton, 2006) 699.
25. See Marie-Jean Sauret, "Psychopathology and Fractures of the Social Bond," *S: Journal of the Circle for Lacanian Ideology Critique* 8 (2015): 38–62.
26. Sigmund Freud, XVII (1955): "The Uncanny," 238.
27. Sigmund Freud, XVIII (1955): "Beyond the Pleasure Principle," 62.
28. For a different view of the relation between capitalism and trauma, which highlights the increasing fragility of the psyche and the difficulty of surmounting trauma in the contemporary world, see Colette Soler, *L'époque des traumatismes/The era of traumatism*, ed. by Diego Mautino, trans. by Berti Glaubach and Susy Roizin (Rome: Biblink, 2005) 68–73.
29. Another consequence of the capitalist discourse is its radical incompatibility with the Other jouissance, which is related to the *pas-tout* and femininity (*Encore*, 71–74). The particularity of the feminine is that it offers a way to go beyond the phallus and castration. The capitalist discourse would seem to lay a trap on this path; in preventing the advent of castration, it also eliminates the possibility of surpassing the latter.
30. Christian Laval, *L'homme économique: essai sur les racines du néolibéralisme* (Paris: Galimard, 2007) 159. For a Žižekian treatment of *homo oeconomicus*, see Heiko Feldner and Fabio Vighi, *Critical Theory and the Crisis of Contemporary Capitalism* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2015) 42–60.
31. Jeremy Bentham, *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907) 1. Available at <<https://ia700406.us.archive.org/0/items/princmoralsleg00bentuoft/princmoralsleg00bentuoft.pdf>>
32. Samo Tomšič, "Laughter and Capitalism," *S: Journal of the Circle for Lacanian Ideology Critique* 8 (2015): 22–37.

33. As a result of the ever-increasing radicalization of capitalist practices over the course of the last two centuries, Bentham's successors have, of course, found themselves obliged to explain why the implementation of their suggested policies has not left us all awash in joy. Such attempts have not stopped with marginal utility theory, and have, in recent years, involved the creation of more and more complex epicycles in an attempt to save the appearances of capitalist utilitarianism. My article "*La fin du monde*," 68-74, discusses recent work by Gary Becker and Luis Rayo, who have used evolutionary biology and psychology to explain the stubborn persistence of unhappiness.

34. For more on irrational numbers in Lacan, see Guy Le Gaufey, *Hiatus sexualis: du non-rapport sexuel selon Lacan* (Paris: EPEL, 2013) 13-32 and Guy Le Gaufey, "Towards a Critical Reading of the Formulae of Sexuation," trans. by Cormac Gallagher (2008), Available at <<http://www.lacaninireland.com/web/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/Le-Gaufey.pdf>>.

35. Pietro Bianchi, "From Representation to Class Struggle: Reply to Samo Tomšič," *S: Journal of the Circle for Lacanian Ideology Critique* 5 (2012): 120.

36. Don DeLillo, *Cosmopolis: A Novel*, (New York; London; Toronto: Scribner, 2003).

37. Jacques Lacan, "Séminaire IX: L'identification, 1961-1962," n.d. session of December 20, 1961. Available at <<http://staferla.free.fr/S9/S9%20L%27IDENTIFICATION.pdf>>.

38. This account of the violence of reading within the capitalist discourse emphasizes its origin and growth in terms of a problematic of reading that is internal to *Cosmopolis*: the relation between, on the one hand, the attraction exerted by the letter, and, on the other, a meaning that is concerned with, and encourages thoughts about the destruction of elements of language. One can also mention a simpler and more commonsensical aspect of the reader's destructiveness: I suspect that many readers find Packer to be a reprehensible character and are rather pleased when Sheets murders him.

MLADEN DOLAR

ANAMORPHOSIS

I will take my cue from anamorphosis, but I wish to disentangle this concept from its mere placement in the field of the visual and give it a more emphatic range. This would be an ontological status, as it were, a structure which has far-reaching consequences for the major questions (I am almost embarrassed to say it) of subjectivity and being. I wish to formulate from the outset a simple philosophical thesis, namely, that the subject can be grasped as an anamorphosis of being. This is one way to bring subject and being together in one conceptual move. The way subjectivity is inscribed in being is anamorphic, that is, we never have an initial zero situation where subject would confront being out there, where the subject would be essentially established in a subject-object relation, in a correlation (caught in a correlationist cage, to follow the trendy parlance promoted by the recent vogue of speculative realism). Rather, there is an anamorphosis of being which conditions the very notion of the subject as placed in a (dis)torsion.

This is in line with Lacan's initial and pervasive move in session VII, entitled 'Anamorphosis,' of *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* (26 February 1964).¹ This is the session whose reference to Hans Holbein's notorious painting *The Ambassadors* (1533) provided the front cover image for the book publication of the seminar in 1973 (subsequently reproduced in most of its numerous translations). This choice of cover image thus placed the whole enterprise of *Seminar XI*, Lacan's most famous and most programmatic seminar, under the banner of this anamorphic structure, under the cover of anamorphosis as clue. Anamorphosis thus offers itself as entry point to something that epitomizes Lacan's psychoanalytic endeavor, capturing its thrust in an image, something that vividly (graphically, as the American saying goes) encapsulates Lacan's particular take on the Freudian discovery: his perspective and the torsion it involves. The cover image cannot help but function as an allegory or a metaphorical condensation of the teaching that is being expounded; it is its striking emblem, one designed to strike the eye.

The enigmatic blur featured on this very famous painting is no longer really an enigma to anyone these days. It presents the most notorious case of anamorphosis,

1. I will be referring to Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, trans. A. Sheridan (London: Penguin 1977).

often used as a showcase in the classroom (including my own schooldays). It is a pedagogical device that can immediately enthrall the audience of pupils to the delight of the teacher and provide the instant gratification of discovery. It is thus an apt initiation into the visual arts, and particularly apt since it demonstrates by a very simple means that a picture, an image, the visual field as such involves an enigma. The image has to be deciphered; there is a blur implied in its viewing and by extension ultimately in all vision. Given the notoriety of this picture and the fame of the solution to its riddle, it takes effort to restore to it the dignity of an enigma. This is what I will try to do here. There is an immediate joy in discovering an image within an image, in detecting the two perspectives one must adopt: the side-view that makes sense of the blur, but this making sense can only be attained at the price of turning everything else into a blur. One sees this other image only by blurring what was presented to the canonical front-view, so one is stuck with a parallax view. Either one sees the ambassadors, or one sees the skull; we cannot have it both ways. There is a choice, a shift in view that constitutes the tension in the image and the oscillation of the gaze. Hence there is already a minimal trap of desire in this oscillation, a pulsation of desire that comes from being caught between two viewpoints, from being literally displaced in relation to what is presented up front. The satisfaction then comes from the shift itself, the gap involved in the gaze. While there is an immediate joy that comes from deciphering, from finding a hidden image within the image—a message within the message, the making sense of what seemed merely a contingent smear or disturbance—in fact, and here is where the value of allegory comes in, one surmises that this gap conditions the very image itself. It spells out the hidden condition of its vision, well beyond the particular picture at hand. If this is endowed with this allegorical value, and assuming this hidden condition to be universal, then the blur in this particular picture displays something that conditions vision as such, its anamorphic torsion, and this particular picture only brings out and displays what is usually concealed: the blind spot not usually seen as such.

Lacan's move is very simple. It is spelled out in various ways in the four sessions that constitute the second part of the seminar under the general heading "Of the gaze as *objet petit a*." It is condensed in the simple statement that the gaze is an object. This claim is counterintuitive for one commonly assumes that the gaze is a subjective opening to objectivity. It is in front of the gaze that objects are presented—this would even be what presents the minimal trait that defines objectivity, namely, the capacity of the object to be both an object of and for the gaze and thus, by extension, an object of representation. The object's "thereness" consists in its availability to the gaze. An object is what offers itself to the gaze. Thus the gaze epitomizes the subjective standpoint, the subject's point of view on the world at large out there. Even if the physical gaze is metaphorized or spiritualized, the same structure still holds, or holds even more emphatically in its pure form. This is what is encapsulated in the very term theory. It comes from *theorein*, to look, to contemplate, to seize by the gaze, to gain insight. And this is not merely by the physical

eye, which is always prey to deception, but by the mind's eye—the eyes of the soul, as Plato famously put it—in a pure gaze that is beyond the limitations of physical perception.² Pursuing this metaphor, thought would then be the pure gaze beyond perception. The same goes for the term speculation, with its Latin etymology from *specular* (and thus all the way up to 'speculative realism'). Furthermore, the same also goes for reflection as an essentially optical phenomenon: there is no reflection and no self-reflection without the prop of the mirror. From Plato to Husserl, one follows the sustained endeavor of theory to seize the *eidos*, the pure form or the pure object as it presents itself for an essential vision, for a pure gaze. (What is Husserl's phenomenological and eidetic reduction but a systematic attempt to distill the pure gaze as constitutive of objectivity?) There is a quintessential visual metaphoricity underlying western philosophy, its theory, its speculative turn, its reflection. In short, visibility underpins the very notions of subject and object. The history of philosophy could be written as the history of optical metaphors from Plato's cave to Marx's *camera obscura*. To know is to see properly, to see clearly, and if human vision is distorted, if one cannot see and know properly, this can be accounted for by optical delusions and trickery, by the physics of vision underlying the metaphysics. To be aware of these delusions is tantamount to removing them or counteracting them, thus enabling clear vision. The metaphor is not innocent, its visibility has a number of invisible presuppositions.

In the opening paragraph of the 'Introduction' to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, on the very first page of that notoriously difficult book, Hegel uses the metaphor of the optical medium as the metaphor for cognition in order to expose some presuppositions of this metaphor. He speaks about the ray of truth being refracted through a medium, through the prism of our cognitive apparatus. The epistemological problem of cognition would then be how to subtract the refraction so as to get to the original direction of the ray of truth, to its undistorted form. Our cognitive attempts refract the unalloyed ray of truth and the problem is how to set it straight. Hegel's point, in a nutshell, is that, by formulating the problem of cognition in these terms, we are already looking at the picture the wrong way: we presuppose that we are over here and the truth (the object, being at large) is over there, and the problem is how to get to it. His point, not unlike Lacan's, is that we are already inscribed in the ray of truth supposed to come to our gaze from out there. Our gaze, he claims, cannot be separated from it: "For it is not the refraction of the ray, but the ray itself whereby truth reaches us, that is cognition" (47).³ And a bit further: the idea of cog-

2. Derrida famously diagnosed Plato's enterprise as 'phonocentrism,' the privilege of the voice in its unalloyed presence over writing, the trace etc. (and in Plato's tracks, the whole history of western metaphysics that followed suit). But the theme of the voice is no doubt of a lesser importance in Plato in comparison with the ubiquitous presence of the theme of vision, the proper ways to see (cf. the parable of the cave etc.), with all its metaphorical extensions, so that Plato's endeavor can perhaps be more adequately described as "oculocentrism" See Adriana Cavarero, *For More Than One Voice* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2005).

3. G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford UP 1977). Henceforth cited in the text as *Phenomenology*.

dition as a medium, as an optical mechanism, “assumes that there is a difference between ourselves and this cognition” (47) In short, the problem is rather that *we* are part of the picture. Our gaze is already inscribed in the image we are supposed to reach through some pure vision, through the purification of the refraction that distorts our vision. We are ourselves already the refraction of the ray, but the ray of truth is nothing without this refraction. What ultimately follows from this could be called the “ontological necessity” of anamorphosis: the necessity of blurred vision as an inner condition of truth, of vision itself—the condition of theory as *theorein*. Subject and truth meet in the refraction of the ray. By removing the refraction from the ray, by straightening it out, we would lose the ray itself.

A further common assumption places the object at a certain distance from the gaze and endows the objective world out there with a certain permanence and stability (as opposed to the experience of the sound and the voice where no such distance can be maintained; the voice hits us in the interior, and furthermore the sound/voice lacks stability and steadiness, it is constantly on the move—I have written about this extensively elsewhere⁴). Furthermore, one has a certain liberty with respect to the gaze. One can direct it where one wants, one can inspect the world in a series of snapshots to get one’s bearings and construct objectivity from multiple glimpses. Even more, one has the freedom to close one’s eyes and withdraw from the visual, one can cut it off (whereas ears, on the other hand, have no lids making one always exposed and available to the sonorous). This seems to subtend visual perception in any common experience. It defines the minimal relation between a subjective stance, namely, its perspective, its free capacity to capture and take in on the one hand and, on the other, the object (truth, being) as something separate, something placed at a distance from the gaze and endowed with an independent consistency, an ontological firmness. This forms the basic opposition and correlation that subtends our thought.

Hence the claim that the gaze is an object, even an object *par excellence*, and counts among the privileged objects that psychoanalysis has to deal with. *Objet a* goes against the grain of common understanding and experience. If it is an object, it needs to be placed out there, at some distance from the observer and separated from him/her. But this is precisely the assumption Lacan attempts to put into question by examining what he calls the split, the schism between the eye and the gaze (“The split between the eye and the gaze” is the programmatic title of the previous session). The eye as an organ, as an opening, a physiological condition, an aperture, is coupled to the gaze as its extension but does not coincide with it. It is, rather, that the gaze, irreducible to the subjective stance, appears as a short-circuit between the subject and the object out there. It is the way in which the subject itself becomes part of the picture. And if the subject is indeed inscribed in the picture in the form of the gaze that is part of the picture, this is precisely what yields the necessary structure of anamorphosis—not as *trompe-l’œil*, optical illusion, a trick or distor-

4. See for example Mladen Dolar, *A Voice and Nothing More* (Cambridge, MA.: MIT Press, 2006).

tion, a blurred picture that must be deciphered by adopting the proper perspective. It is rather as an inner torsion of the visual field itself: vision's constitutive blur, its separation of itself from itself, its condition of being torn and distorted. The oldest philosophical problem of appearance versus essence or true reality, the "insight" that things in their essence don't coincide with the way they appear, that all perception is prey to delusion, this oldest philosophical mantra is simply one way of expressing this inner rift of visible reality. What you see is not what you get—or perhaps, fatally, ultimately it is.

Lacan never tires of repeating this point in the sessions we are dealing with. In its most compact form: "The picture, certainly, is in my eye. But I am in the picture" (96). "*Le tableau, certes, est dans mon oeil. Mais moi, je suis dans le tableau.*"⁵ Evidently this statement, as clear and simple as it is, appeared so outrageous to the English translator Alan Sheridan that he must have either assumed it was a typographic error or made an oversight, for he translated it as "But I am *not* in the picture" (my emphasis). This would be the opposite of an oversight: seeing too much, seeing a "not" that is not there.

Let me give some more examples: "The correlative of the picture, to be situated in the same place as it, that is to say, outside, is the point of gaze ..." So the gaze is on the same surface, as it were, as the picture, and this already implies an anamorphosis. The sentence continues:

...while that which forms the mediation from the one to the other, that which is between the two, is something of another nature than geometrical, optical space, something that plays an exactly reverse role, which operates, not because it can be traversed, but on the contrary because it is opaque—I mean the screen. (96)

The point of the inscription of the gaze in the picture—and hence also of the subject's desire and its propensity to divide the space, to bring in a twist in the geometric and the optical space—is also a screen. It is screened off. One never gets a clear picture of the gaze as the mark of the subject's inscription. What we get is the screen of distortion, the blur, the curving. We cannot see the gaze as an object in a straightforward vision. In other words, there is no 'full frontal nudity' of the gaze. It only consists in the curvature of anamorphosis. Anamorphosis is the screening of the object *a*. As Lacan says, "And if I am anything in the picture, it is always in the form of the screen, which I earlier called the stain, the spot (*la tache*)" (97).

In the beginning of the next session, Lacan sums this up even more outspokenly:

I must, to begin with, insist on the following: in the scopic field, the gaze is outside, I am looked at, that is to say, I am a picture. This is the function that is found at the heart of the institution [*placement*] of the subject in the visible. What determines me, at the most profound level, in the visible, is the

5. Jacques Lacan, *Les quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse*, ed. J.-A. Miller (Paris: Seuil 1973) 89.

gaze that is outside. It is through the gaze that I enter light and it is from the gaze that I receive its effects. Hence it comes about that the gaze is the instrument through which light is embodied and through which ... I am *photo-graphed*. (106)

A photographic move inhabits the subject of vision. One is photographed, as it were, in the field of vision before one can isolate oneself as the subject who photographs, and the way one is photographed, seized, captured in the visible will leave its mark as a blot, a stain, a torsion in photography: the opaque screen of the gaze.

What is at stake here is not the notion of representation, which is always a representation for a subject, namely, that which is put before him (*vor-stellen*). Possessing the function of the screen, the stain is like a stand-in for the gaze: the objectal external 'representative' of the subject and its desire, and it has ultimately the same structure as the notorious *Vorstellungsrepräsentanz* in the field of language and the signifier, that is, as a representative of representation. The stain is a stand-in for a structurally missing representation (the signifier of the missing signifier), which makes the whole field of representation dependent upon it. The ersatz of the stain is structurally missing but this stand-in is on the same level as other representations, standing in for the impossibility of ever closing, delimiting or totalizing the field of representation. Representation is non-whole, not-all, because of the inscription of the subject for whom something is represented in the field of representation itself. There is a short-circuit. (Hence also Lacan's notorious canonical formula that "a signifier represents the subject for another signifier," making representation immanent to the signifying chain and metonymic to infinity. The crucial point of this formula is that the subject features as something represented and not, as commonly assumed, that for which something is represented.)

What is at stake is also not some kind of "beyond of representation" or, in the Kantian parlance Lacan employs, a noumenon beyond the realm of phenomena: a transcendental level conditioning phenomena as the realm of appearance. What is at stake in this very long-standing philosophical division is, rather, the division as such—the partition of the visible:

For us it is not in this dialectic between the surface and that which is beyond that things are suspended. For our part we set out from the fact that there is something that establishes a fracture, a bi-partition, a splitting of being to which being accommodates itself, even in the natural world. (106)

Une schize de l'être, une fracture de l'être—being is attuned to a crack, a split, a schism. Being 'is' this split of being; there is no being without the split. Philosophy famously partitions being into appearance and its beyond—whether as essence, as the suprasensuous, the idea, the noumenon, the true reality freed of semblance—but this partition that has conditioned philosophy from its inception obfuscates the minimal and obvious 'fact' of a split that traverses the visual. One must envision the split *as such* before assigning to it the familiar bi-partition of appearance and essence, of the delusive and the true reality.

Curiously, in this quote Lacan implies that this split would not be a human exception, that is, a particularly human way of inscribing desire in the visual as compared to the animal world. It is there already “*dès la nature*,” starting from nature. It is already present in nature in incipient ways such that human desire, the gaze, anamorphosis all take off, as it were, from a split already present in natural being. Taking his cue from Roger Caillois’ *Méduse et Cie* (1960), Lacan invokes mimicry, producing a series of loose reflections on this topic throughout his sessions on the gaze. Here he enters into something that might well appear as wild speculation:

In it [in mimicry] being breaks up, in an extraordinary way, between its being and its semblance, between itself and that paper tiger it shows to the other. (107)

In mimicry, an organism splits between its organic being and the way it presents itself in appearance: the intimidating but phony paper tiger. There is “something like a mask, a double, an envelope, a thrown off skin” by which being already masks itself in nature. It parades, it thrives on appearances:

It is through this form of being separated from itself that it enters into play in its effects of life and death, and it might be said that it is with the help of this doubling of the other, or of oneself, that is realized the conjunction from which proceeds the renewal of beings in reproduction. (107)

The fact that there is already a split of being in nature, the fact that nature itself divides into being and semblance conditions the very reproduction of life, that is, the way being breeds more being. Is mimicry anamorphosis in nature? The natural prefiguration, anticipation of the cultural? This is one line of thought that would follow from our topic, leading one, intriguingly, to question the dividing line between nature and culture itself. The gaze, the screen, the semblance, the split, the stain in the picture; turning oneself into a part of the picture, all of this is already “in place,”—or, rather, out of place, in nature itself. Nature, that is, is “always already” out of place, a dislocated nature that need not wait for the human to operate with lack, gaze and semblance. Nature is out of joint.⁶ I cannot pursue this any further here.

6. This line is severely opposed to, say, Kojève and Sartre, but not to Hegel. Kojève, Lacan’s subject supposed to know in matters of philosophy, maintained that the lack, the negativity as such, is the privilege of the human, conditioning human desire, as opposed to the natural being, which is in itself continuous, inert, without a lack. Sartre followed suit by his massive division into *en soi* and *pour soi*. But in Hegel one finds a different line of thought, e.g. light itself is already a first reflexivity of nature. It is the moment of its manifestation, neutral and abstract; it is the medium of phenomenality as such, where nature lets itself be seen and sees itself. It reflects itself, as it were, in light which it produces, and thereby light entails already a first movement of subjectivity, the first split into light and darkness: the light is “the first ideality, the first selfhood [*das erste Selbst*] of nature. In light, nature becomes for the first time subjective and is now the universal physical I [*das allgemeine physikalische Ich*] ...” G.W.F. Hegel, *Aesthetics II. Lectures on Fine Arts*, trans. T.M. Knox (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1975) 808. *Werke in zwanzig Bänden, Theorie Werkausgabe*

Let us return instead to Hegel and comment briefly on two passages related to our topic. The most spectacular is the following from the *Aesthetics*, which deals with the question of the gaze in its relation to art:

... it is to be asserted of art that it has to convert every shape in all points of its visible surface into an eye, which is the seat of the soul and brings the spirit into appearance. ... [A]rt makes every one of its productions into a thousand-eyed Argus, whereby the inner soul and spirit is seen at every point. And it is not only the bodily form, the look of the eyes, the countenance and posture, but also actions and events, speech and tones of voice, and the series of their course through all conditions of appearance that art has everywhere to make into an eye, in which the free soul is revealed in its inner infinity. (*Aesthetics*, 834, TWA 13, 203-4).

Hegel refers to the Greek legend of Argus Panoptes, the giant with a hundred eyes (not a thousand, as Hegel says). All-seeing Argus (a precursor to the Panopticon) was hired by Hera to watch over Io, a nymph that Zeus fell in love with, and who was transformed into a white cow. The legend has it that Argus could sleep at all times by closing some of his eyes while the majority would always be open and on the watch. Hegel thus proposes this very strange and troubling image: a work of art is like Argus, this gigantic, hundred-eyed monster. Everything in the work of art turns into an eye; its every element and move should be considered as a metaphorical eye, a stand-in for the eye. We never simply watch an artwork. It watches us at the same time. Of course, here Hegel invokes the traditional notion that the eyes are the seat of the soul, its revelation, the part of the body where the soul manifests itself. However, pushing Hegel a bit, one could make him say that what makes art special is the way the object gaze is inscribed in the work of art. It is the kind of object which never simply exists out there, opposite the observing subject, separate and independent. If it is an artwork worthy of its name, it has the capacity to embody the gaze, to be not just the object of the gaze but the object into which the gaze is inscribed—a short-circuit between the subject and the object. It is not that the artwork returns our gaze in a symmetrical exchange and recognition. Rather, it acquires in some form the quality of anamorphosis, the blur that regards us: its gaze is entwined with our own. What singles out art, then, is that it is never simply an object. What we must decipher in its enigmatic appearance is the way we are inscribed in it: it regards us, it embodies our own gaze, appearing to us as an enigma that we cannot grasp self-reflexively. To push it to the extreme: every artwork is anamorphic, art is the anamorphosis in the “picture” of society.

(Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1971) v. 15, 31. (German text henceforth cited as TWA). It is already in light that nature becomes unequal to itself by manifestation in phenomenality, so the process of reflexivity, of something becoming itself by becoming other than itself, has always already begun. It is not the human privilege.

The second passage is from the end of the chapter on understanding in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, which, concluding the section dealing with consciousness, presents the passage to the notion of self-consciousness. Hegel says:

It is manifest that behind the so-called curtain which is supposed to conceal the inner world, there is nothing to be seen unless we go behind it ourselves, as much in order that we may see, as that there may be something behind there which can be seen [*ebenso sehr damit gesehen werde, als dass etwas dahinter sei, das gesehen werden kann*].” (*Phenomenology*, 103; TWA 3, 135-6)

Philosophy began from the insight that what is seen and immediately perceived cannot be true. However, against its claim that there must be a hidden truth behind the surface, a concealed essence we must aim for, Hegel, at the point of the demise of the grand metaphysical tradition, posits that there is nothing behind the curtain. Yet there is nevertheless a structural necessity that pushes the subject—a move that constitutes subjectivity—to step behind the curtain of the visible to discover that nothing. What we see there is simply ourselves stepping behind the curtain. There is nothing else to be seen. Subjectivity is thus based on a certain “structural blindness” which inextricably connects illusion—chasing the ghost behind the curtain—with the production of truth that is deployed in this move. The subject can only function by missing the curtain as the mere surface, trying to penetrate beyond to the real. Yet it is only by this oversight that what resides on the surface can emerge—the beyond as the anamorphosis of the surface. What we miss in the surface, in other words, is the subject’s own place, which we mistakenly located somewhere behind the surface. As a result, we necessarily overlook the way in which the subject is inscribed on the surface itself and is tied to it.

Lacan uses the same image of the curtain in his reading of the famous parable of Zeuxis and Parrhasios. Zeuxis’ painting of the grapes is so convincing that even the birds are deceived. Parrhasios merely paints the curtain, setting a trap for the gaze that seeks to penetrate behind its surface (103, 111).⁷ One could say that by attempting to disentangle the topology of the gaze, Lacan was largely echoing Hegel in this passage, positing the gaze as the non-reflexive object that the subject structurally misses through a blindness at the heart of seeing. What the subject structurally misses is its own inscription in the image: the short-circuit that conditions the anamorphosis of the surface, a strange offspring of Hegelian reflexivity. To put it in a nutshell, the object is the non-dialectical kernel of Hegelian reflexivity, something that cannot be dealt with through the subject’s reflexive self-appropriation. The anamorphic stain is unoblatable, *unaufhebbar*, something that resists the movement of Hegelian *Aufhebung* yet persists at its heart.

7. One can add that in Holbein’s picture the ambassadors are actually standing in front of a curtain and that the blur floating in the forefront of the picture could be taken as what epitomizes the gaze that wants to reach behind the curtain, the beyond being placed in the indefinite space in front of the two figures and the implements.

At the end of the previous session there is an extremely important and clarifying exchange with Moustapha Safouan (who, among many other things, translated *The Interpretation of Dreams* into Arabic (1959), as well as La Boétie's treatise on voluntary servitude). Safouan asked Lacan about the relation of the eye, the gaze and the picture, and Lacan responded:

I shall take up here the dialectic of appearance and its beyond, in saying that, if beyond the appearance there is no thing-in-itself [Sheridan: "nothing in itself"!], there is the gaze. It is in this relation that the eye as organ is situated. (103)

Instead of the thing-in-itself, instead of the noumenon beyond phenomena, in the empty place of the missing *Ding an sich*, there is the gaze. But this first step of the answer could lead us astray. It could take us in the direction of conceiving the gaze as the unattainable *Ding*, or else (and concomitantly) in the direction of the gaze as the transcendental condition conditioning phenomena—the condition of possibility of their visibility, of their being given to the vision. Or the gaze could figure as the thing that is to be excluded from reality in order for reality to be constituted, for reality to close upon itself and become totalized by the exclusion of its constitutive exception. But the exchange continues. Safouan asks: "Beyond the appearance, is there the lack or the gaze?" His question is to the point because the lack or the gaze are not at all the same and, in a sense, everything depends on the connection between the two. After all, the gaze was posited from the outset precisely as an object and, in its objecthood, as a short-circuit between the subject of vision and the field of vision, that is, the way that the subject and its desire are present in the field of vision. This is what undermines any usual notion of object which is prey to the framework of (the object as an object of) representation for the subject or correlated to the subject. Hence the proposition that the gaze is an object counteracts the notion of a transcendental lack, or the logic of the constitutive exception. Maintaining that the lack is nothing (and thus what one excludes), that it is not an element but an empty set is not enough to undo this logic for the crucial move is that the lack has to appear as such as an element among all other elements, on the same level with them. This is precisely what happens with the object *a*. The inclusion of the gaze into the field of vision detotalizes this field. It prevents it from closing in on itself by some constitutive exclusion, and the presence of this inclusion is precisely anamorphosis. The object gaze is present in the field of vision as its anamorphic torsion, its inner split, its fracture, which is the fracture of being itself, *la schize de l'être*. With the inclusion of the transcendental condition in the realm of phenomena one detotalizes phenomena and subverts the very notion of the transcendental. The transcendental appears, but only as the object *a*. The transcendental appears within the order it conditions and makes possible.

As an aside, one might add that Kant himself was far more aware of this than one might think or as generally presupposed in a naïve reading (including Lacan's own

sometimes). His problem was not that the noumenon is a beyond that cannot be known, the unreachable *Ding an sich*, but rather that the very absence of the noumenon leaves a trace in the world of phenomena. The traces of the absent noumenal world of beyond haunt the phenomenal world. This is the central problem of Kant's third critique, the *Critique of Judgment*, with its focus on the beautiful, the sublime, the teleological—one could say its focus on the glimpses of the beyond inscribed in the phenomena themselves, as their excrescence.

Lacan responds:

At the level of the scopic dimension, in so far as the drive operates there, is to be found the same function of the *objet a* as can be mapped in all the other dimensions. The *objet a* is something from which the subject, in order to constitute itself, has separated itself off as organ. This serves as a symbol of the lack, that is to say, of the phallus, not as such, but in so far as it is lacking. It must, therefore, be an object that is, firstly, separable, and secondly, that has some relation to the lack. (103)

This is what stands at the core of Lacan's take on psychoanalysis: the strange and paradoxical connection between the lack and the object, the *objet a*, which comes not to fill in the lack but to present it as such, as a stand-in for the lack, its inclusion. The lack introduces the relation to phallus and castration, the basic cut or the (-1) (the $(-\phi)$ in the Lacanian algebra), the separation, the cutting off, the negativity which, in psychoanalysis, is always mapped onto the body and its topology, its apertures and its extensions. Paradoxically, one can maintain that for Lacan the problem of castration is not the problem of lacking something, but of having something too much. It is not that one lacks, that one is cut off from *jouissance* that is the problem. Rather, one gets an excess of it in the place of the lack, a *jouissance* that one cannot quite place and cope with, an enjoyment one didn't cater for, indeed a *surplus* enjoyment for the object can neither fit the lack nor fill it. Instead, it produces anamorphosis.

Earlier in the seminar, Lacan invoked penis tattoos to make a joking connection between the phallus and anamorphosis. This practice does exist: the kind of anamorphic pictures that appear as blurs "in the state of repose" (88) acquire the distinctiveness of a fully blown picture in the state of erection. It is a specific type of anamorphosis linked to bodily sexual functions. Lacan speaks of a "phallic phantom" that haunts anamorphosis. There is more for, if we consider anamorphosis in its various historical uses, one sees that the hidden picture one deciphered by adopting a particular perspective was there to evoke a hidden meaning. It served two main purposes: either what emerged as the hidden image were various obscene scenes, pornography lurking in the innocent-looking pictures, lying low in some blurry detail—the underside of the sexual and the forbidden, of the sexual as the forbidden, pointing to the concealed sexual meaning underneath and within the official and the spiritual one. So one use of anamorphosis was to bring out the hidden and repressed sexual reference lurking within the ideal and the elevated. One sim-

ply had to adopt the proper perspective to see it. Or, the hidden image epitomized the highest meaning, the cipher of our destiny, the skull—reminder of our mortality and harbinger of *vanitas*, of *vanitas vanitatum*, the vanity of all human endeavors as their ultimate truth. This is the way Holbein's painting is usually interpreted. The skull stands for the nullity of human worldly striving and thus points towards the true meaning: that of spiritual elevation. What anamorphosis seemed to convey was this: look for the higher hidden meaning within the apparent meaning (in *The Ambassadors*, behind the instruments of human knowledge and their apparent magnificence and omnipotence, there is vanity and death). Or else, look for the lower hidden meaning, the sexual meaning within the apparently non-sexual, the ideal. Taking the phallic cue, one sees in psychoanalysis the link between the one and the other: the secret highest meaning to debunk is always tied to the sexual. "The Signification of the Phallus" is the title of one of Lacan's famous *écrits*, and there, true to the title, Lacan attempted to spell out the connection between the phallus and the production of meaning: the phallus as the operator of meaning, the phallic signifier which, marking a lack and meaningless in itself, is the condition of the production of meaning as such. It is the apparition of meaning in what has the value of a blot. Anamorphosis seems to prolong this phallic quest for meaning, the image within image bringing out hidden meaning within meaning. But this is where anamorphosis is also misleading, a lure (and this is where the phallic reference is also a lure). For the great joy, the childish joy one obtains from deciphering this image hidden in a blur, depends on the supposition that this hidden meaning can be had, is something one can get a hold of. It has the value of a revelation like the solution of a riddle, the elucidation of a puzzle, of good detective work brought to an end. "Aha, so this is what the blur means: it's a skull, *caput mortuum*, vanity." (Alternatively, "aha, there's porn inside this sacred image, let me show it to you too, let's have a good laugh.") The shift, then, is from the apparent official meaning to the real secret meaning. Isn't this an excellent metaphor for the psychoanalytic endeavor as such? The debunking of secret meanings and sexual underpinning of all apparently official pictures? To decipher the anamorphoses, to offer the proper perspectives from which they can make sense?

Not at all. This is why it is difficult to restore the value of enigma to Holbein's painting for everyone already knows the solution and no enigma appears to be left once we have been shown the way to see this other message. Anamorphosis is a riddle whose solution is misleading, our joy at finding the solution is premature. And so it is for the unconscious.

Adopting this particular perspective, it seems clear that the unconscious has a structure that is analogous to that of anamorphosis. It always emerges as a blot, a smear, a blur in the picture that makes sense—a quirk in the sense-making. Whether as a tiny slip of the tongue, a dream whose meaning is enigmatic, a symptom that is out of joint with one's usual life, there is always an enigma to be deciphered, a sense to be restored to what does not seem to make sense. And the analyst seems to proceed like a teacher, or an art historian, saying: see here, you have to look at

it sideways and then you will see that this blot actually makes sense—even more, it conveys the secret sense underlying all sense-making, the true sense behind the appearance of sense, the secret cipher, the clue. Sense was amiss for a moment with the formation of the unconscious. But by adopting this other perspective, by looking awry, we have restored sense to what seemed to resist it. We have straightened out the crooked lines, debunked the pattern in the amorphous, restored order to the chaotic. One recalls the childish joy of reading *The Interpretation of Dreams*, where Freud comes up with illuminating and unexpected solutions to the murkiest puzzles—the sudden revelation of the clue to it all whose solution, as in all good detective stories, has been there right under our noses, too obvious for us to see. All it took was this slight adjustment of perspective. The unconscious seems to be telling us something in roundabout and blurry ways; now the business of the analyst would be to say in the most straightforward, direct and clear way what has been conveyed through a puzzle. But this is precisely a lure.

Of course, it is the business of psychoanalytic interpretation to try to decipher the hidden meaning of blots of the unconscious. It is hard work, but it would be a lure to suppose that by debunking this hidden meaning one can meet the unconscious in person which, with one's detective effort, finally makes its appearance. The meaning one gets hold of—say the latent content of a dream—pertains to the preconscious. One can always, with some effort, bring clarity to what was blurred and make conscious what was obscure, but in doing so one neither does away with the unconscious nor brings it to consciousness. The unconscious consists precisely in the roundabout; by straightening out the roundabout one loses the unconscious on the way. The unconscious pertains to the “excess of distortion,” to the *Entstellung*, the dislocation of meaning. By spelling out meaning in a direct way one can account for everything, for every unintelligible element of the dream, except for the dislocation itself that made it possible. This resides in the form—the form of distortion—not in the content.

Freud only gradually became fully aware of this, and undoubtedly his pleasure in his detective work of unearthing hidden messages in *The Interpretation of Dreams* frequently gives the impression that we are thereby unearthing the unconscious itself. But he says explicitly in *The Introductory Lectures*:

The latent dream-thoughts are the material which the dream-work transforms into the manifest dream [...]. Analytic observation shows further that the dream-work never restricts itself to translating these thoughts into the archaic or regressive mode of expression ... In addition, it regularly takes possession of something else, which is not part of the latent thoughts of the previous day, but which is the true motive for the construction of the dream. This indispensable addition is the equally unconscious desire for the fulfillment of which the content of the dream is given form.⁸

8. Sigmund Freud, *The Pelican Freud Library, Vol 1: Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973-86) 261-2.

He adds that latent thoughts may be unconscious for the dreamer but they are perfectly intelligible and can be brought to consciousness. The unconscious desire, on the other hand, pertains not to latent thoughts as such but to the surplus of the distorted manifest form over the hidden latent content. It resides only in between the two, in the surplus of distortion. It conditions the distortion and, although all the distorted elements can be sorted out and put into order, the unconscious desire persists in the gap between the two:

The remains of the day are not unconscious in the same way (as the unconscious desire). Desire belongs to another kind of the unconscious ... Already when we posit one unconscious we are reproached that this is fantastic; what will they say if we admit that we need two kinds of unconscious? (Freud 265)

This is the quote one should keep as a motto for every introductory course on psychoanalysis. There are two kinds of unconscious. We must redouble the very notion of the unconscious: the one that can be spelled out by adopting the proper perspective and seeing the hidden image within the blur, and the other which consists in the blur itself, the distortion, the break, the crack, the division of the visible and the intelligible—ultimately *la schize de l'être*, the scission of being, of which the unconscious is the indicator as something conditioning our being, and ultimately being as such.

One could make an analogous argument for the other great discovery of psychoanalysis, sexuality, but I must limit myself to the briefest of hints. Sexuality and anamorphosis? The situation seems from the outset rather the reverse of that of the unconscious, for the unconscious presents an anamorphic blur one must look at properly to make sense of it. In sexuality, it is rather the case that nobody seriously considered it a mystery or an enigma until Freud. This is one way to formulate Freud's discovery: to turn sexuality into anamorphosis, to restore to it the value of an enigma where everyone else saw the pursuit of a natural course (pursued by humans in particular ways, but at the bottom still pertaining to natural causality, in continuity with the animal instincts). To put it in a formula: sexuality is not a universal answer, but a universal question. It is always a blur in the picture. It is not something that can explain other things—"in the limit everything," as the psychoanalytic vulgate goes—but is itself badly in need of an explanation. Sexuality is not a primary given; it is an intruder which denaturalizes the natural course and thwarts it. It is in itself nothing but a deviation. It is something that causes the anamorphosis of human experience, not something that could explain away the anamorphic enigma and make sense of it. It lurks in the rift and the torsion and this is why it cannot be made into some universal substance, nor can one be rid of it. It emerges only at the point of disruption or deviation of a supposedly natural course. To put it in a nutshell: sexuality is not an entity, not a separate realm of being, an existing *something*, but rather what constantly produces an anamorphosis of human experience, its blur, its distortion. It persists only in the anamorphic curving, but one is never in a position where one could look at the blur from a proper per-

spective and say “this is sex,” as one says “this is a skull” (or “this is porn”). Or to put it in another way, what Lacan calls *jouissance* is the anamorphosis of life, but it has no substance of its own apart from the anamorphic one.

What I am ultimately getting at is this: there are entities which can only “exist,” insist, persist through anamorphosis. The unconscious and sexuality, if I take only the two grand entities psychoanalysis deals with, do not have a separate existence apart from their anamorphic distortion. Thus it is not that the unconscious is the intrusion of some other reality into the picture, which manifests itself in anamorphosis—the unconscious has no other reality than the anamorphic one, and ultimately neither does sexuality. Both can only exist as a picture within a picture, and the hidden picture that one debunks within the picture is not something that one can get hold of by itself. The illusion that one can (“this is the skull,” or “this is pornography”) is the lure of anamorphosis, whose other expression is the common opinion that Freud discovered the unconscious and sexuality as the underlying hidden realms that determine our existence. They only exist as the blurs on the picture and cannot be apprehended separately, for what counts is not the content or the hidden message, but the torsion itself—the scission of being by which the subject is inscribed in being as its anamorphosis.

Let me finish on a lighter note, with *Alice in Wonderland*, and the notorious disappearing Cheshire Cat of which only the grin remains, lingering on without the cat, an anamorphosis of the cat that is not there. Psychoanalysis is the science of the grin without the cat.⁹

‘All right,’ said the Cat; and this time it vanished quite slowly, beginning with the end of the tail, and ending with the grin, which remained some time after the rest of it had gone.

9. Lacan uses this image as well, in the “Introduction to Hyppolite’s Commentary on Freud’s ‘Verneinung’”: “And were there to remain of a dream [in the analysand’s account] but a fragment as evanescent as the memory floating in the air of the Cheshire cat who fades away in such a worrisome manner in Alice’s eyes, this would simply render more certain that we have here the broken end of what constitutes the dream’s transference tip—in other words, the part of the dream that directly addresses the analyst.” *Écrits*, (Paris: Seuil, 1966) 378 (English trans. B. Fink, New York: Norton 2006, 315). The reality of transference, another of the four fundamental concepts of psychoanalysis, is also tied to anamorphosis.



Cheshire Cat fading to smile

“Well! I’ve often seen a cat without a grin,” thought Alice; “but a grin without a cat! It’s the most curious thing I ever saw in my life!”

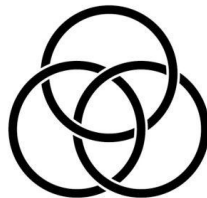
DUANE ROUSSELLE

NUMBERS & THINGS

A Contribution to Number Theory Within Lacanian Psychoanalytic Theory

Making Things Count and Things Making Count

Lacan eventually adopted the Borromean knot as a topological model for psychoanalysis.¹ The knot was constructed from the three psychical registers (Real, Symbolic, and Imaginary) put forward during his life-long teaching. In his twenty-second seminar, Lacan stated that “[t]he definition of the Borromean knot begins with the number three: if you untie any ring then all three become free; that is to say, the two other rings are released.”² From this we can deduce two properties worthy of attention, what I name “Borromean Dependence” (concerning the mutual dependence of the rings) and “Borromean Numericity” (concerning the number three). Borromean dependence concerns a situation in which any individual ring is tied always, minimally, through two other rings. This explains Slavoj Žižek’s insistence that there is not only the real-real, but also the symbolic-real, and the imaginary-real, and so on. He wrote, “[o]ne should always bear in mind the complex interconnection of the Lacanian triad Real-Imaginary-Symbolic: the entire triad reflects itself within each of its three elements.”³ Put another way, the interconnection of any two rings depends strictly upon the introduction of a third, such that any individual ring includes within itself two other rings.⁴



There is something rather perplexing about the second property. Why did Lacan claim that the knot begins with the number three? He provided one possible answer to the question: “the Borromean knot, because it supports the number three, is within [...] the Imaginary register[,] because there are three spatial dimensions.”⁵ There is some relation among the three spatial dimensions, the imaginary register, and the Borromean knot. I’m not convinced by this argument. Lacan, who was perhaps also not convinced, invited us to think about other possibilities: “[...] the Borromean knot [...] will always bear the mark of the number three, so you can ask yourself the question: to which register does the Borromean knot belong? Is it the Symbolic, Imaginary, or Real?”⁶ My provisional claim is that the symbolic register has some connection to the number 3 through Borromean numericity, the number 1 is linked to the imaginary register through the logic of identity, and the number 0 is linked to the real through the logic of truth (see table below). My argument begins with some claims made by Jacques-Alain Miller and Yves Duroux during Lacan’s seminar in 1965.

| | Number | Psychical Register |
|----------------------------------|--------|-------------------------|
| Borromean Dependence | 3 | Real-Symbolic-Imaginary |
| Borromean Numericity | 3 | Symbolic |
| Identity | 1 | Imaginary |
| Truth (Affirmation: ‘Truth is) | 0 | Real |
| Truth (Negation: ‘Not-Identity’) | 0 | Real |

Jacques-Alain Miller and Yves Duroux discovered the “logic of the origin of logic” hidden beneath the pretense of the “logician’s logic” within Gottlob Frege’s system. Miller wrote: “[b]y considering the relationship between this logic and that which I will call [the] logician’s logic, we see that its particularity lies in the fact that the first treats of the emergence of the second, and should [therefore] be conceived of as the logic of the origin of logic—which is to say, that it does not follow its laws, but that, prescribing their jurisdiction, itself falls outside that jurisdiction.”⁷ Duroux, for his part, claimed that the logician’s logic functions through force, precisely by giving name to number: “[f]or Frege, the name of number [...] is only obtained, in the end, by a *coup de force* [...]”⁸ The process of naming through force is what permits the succession of numbers (e.g., from 1 to 2, and from 2 to 3, and so on). During each succession a name is imposed upon the preceding numbers such that those preceding numbers are taken as objects of the new number. We shall now see that things are more complicated than all of this.

Further elaboration concerning Frege's logical system seems justified. Frege introduced three main terms, including "concept," "object," and "number." He also introduced two principal relations or operations, including "succession" and "identity." The object is akin to the variable through which singular nouns or proper names (along with their definite articles) may be made to pass through the concept. An object has no empirical existence but refers purely to the object of logic itself. Frege wrote that many "logicians fail to recognize the possibility of there being something objective but not actual [...]."⁹ Although Frege provided us with a means to discuss an object which has no recourse to empirical frameworks, he nonetheless made it impossible to discuss something which insists within his logic and which is validated by neither empiricism nor logicism. Perhaps the logician's logic is set up as objective and not actual so that it does not have to be made to encounter *das Ding*. In any case, the concept includes, roughly, the predicate, copula, as well as its corresponding adjective or indefinite article. It operates in logic much like a function, Frege wrote: "[w]e thus see how closely that which is called a concept in logic is connected with what we call a function. Indeed, we may say at once: a concept is a function whose value is always a truth-value."¹⁰ We can think of any expression, any sentence, as including within itself the object(s) and a concept under which the object(s) is / are capable of passing.

For example, the expression "Badiou is a philosopher" includes within itself "Badiou" as an object and "is a philosopher" as the concept. However, we know, intuitively, that "Badiou" is not the only object that can be made to pass under the concept of "being a philosopher." "Socrates," "Plato," and "Descartes" are also, arguably, philosophers. Indeed, many more objects may be passed through the concept "is a philosopher." Together, these objects form something like a class of objects defined as the "extension of the concept 'is a philosopher.'" Thus, the extension of a concept refers to the entire group of objects capable of passing through its concept. We should be precise here: the extension of a concept is not simply all of the objects passed through a concept (along with all of the properties associated with each object; i.e., the object "cat" with the respective property "brown"), but rather it is the taking into account of each object as a "unit" within a larger class of objects. I shall only further state that a "unit" has been the topic of much debate. What we do know is that it excludes the properties of objects. For example, Frege was fond of claiming that a "white cat" and a "black cat" each form an independent unit "cat" without their associated properties of "white" or "black." For this reason, number has nothing to do with properties. The debate before us therefore concerns the unitary status of units; each unit is certainly different from any other (e.g., under the concept "is a philosopher," we know that "Badiou" is not "Socrates"), and yet each unit is divorced from its properties under the reign of number.¹¹ Frege's answer was that we ought to maintain that each unit is different from any other unit, and he proceeded to establish logical support for his claim.

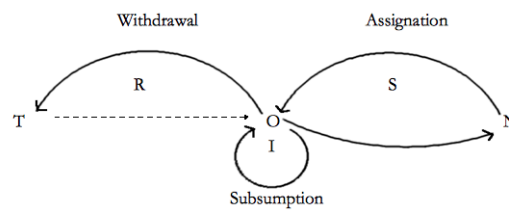
The "extension of a concept" is what permitted Frege to impose a new name of number by indexing its units. Anthony Kenny has put this rather well: "Frege says,

'I assume that it is known what the extension of a concept is.' For logicians prior to Frege, a concept's extension is the totality of objects which fall under it: thus, the extension of the concept *cat* is the set of all cats, and the extension of the concept *moon of Jupiter* is the set of Jupiter's moons."¹² To put it in another way, the extension of the concept "is a philosopher" is the class or set of all philosophers. However, this operates differently within the logic of the numerical system. The objects 0, 1, and 2, all pass through the concept 3 because there are 3 independent units in the class. The number 3 is therefore indexed in the set of objects itself. We can think about it like this: the extension of the concept 3 consists of the class of objects under the concept 3, including 0, 1, and 2. We could suggest that the extension of the concept 3 occurs through a process of remembering the numbers taken as objects preceding its concept, namely 0, 1, and 2. Yet, the unit 3 is the name of this "set," it is flattened—removed of its properties—and transformed into number based solely on the objects counted as units. We once again rub up against the problem of the unit. We shall see that Frege developed a solution which involved developing a notion of "identity" and "non-identity."

Does it not seem as though 3 has appeared out of thin air? It was nowhere within the class of objects which gave rise to its name (0, 1, and 2). It seems to me that we associate number with the index of units inside of the class of objects. Given this, we might claim that numbers within the numerical system are imposed upon objects as if from the hands of God. If this is correct then Duroux's statement about the *coup de force* of number must have referred to the way in which "succession" operates at the hands of a primordial "imposition," an imposition which occurs after the fact and takes hold of everything that came before. There are two maneuvers on the part of the logic of "succession": on the one hand, the new number imposes itself by force onto the class of objects (e.g., the number 3 is named and then pushed into the numerical system of objects); and in another sense, the named number has to be supposed before it has even been invented (e.g., we need to know the name of the number 3 before we can count to it). I name "assignation" the operation which imposes by force the name of number onto preceding objects, and I name "succession" the operation which presumes in advance the number which it postures at inventing. Taken together, assignation and succession enclose the symbolic dimension of my simplified graph on the numeric system.

Frege wrote his definition of succession as follows: "there exists a concept *F*, and an object falling under it *x*, such that the number which belongs to the concept *F* is *n* and the number which belongs to the concept 'falling under *F* but not identical with *x*' is *m*."¹³ There exists a concept 4, and four objects falling under it, 0, 1, 2, and 3, such that the number which belongs to this concept is 4, and the number which belongs to the concept "falling under 4 but not identical with 0, 1, 2, and 3," is 3. This follows because 3 is found in the counting of those 4 objects (namely, 0, 1, 2, and 3) but it is not therefore identical with 4—because the number 3 does not include 3 itself as an object. 4 is therefore the successor of 3. We thereby have a logical means to move from one number to the next in the symbolic chain. This also provides

us with the logical framework required to insist on the point that each number is unique from the standpoint of any other number; unique because each number has a single unit which differentiates it from the index of any other number. Each number is missing a single unit within its index *vis-a-vis* its successor. For example, the number 3 has one more object than the number 2 but one less than the number 4.¹⁴



The name of number (N) is imposed upon the set of objects through assignation (demonstrated by the arrow moving from N to O) and yet the objects (O) taken under concepts (demonstrated by the loop beginning at O and ending at O) provide the basis for succession (demonstrated by the arrow moving from O to N). Three registers may be constructed: the loop made by the arrow moving from O to T and back is the Real (R), the loop made from O back to O again is the Imaginary (I), and the loop moving from N to O and back is the Symbolic (S). For each loop, there is a relation. The first relation, withdrawal, is my own addition to the logic. The other two relations, subsumption and assignation, are Miller's and Duroux's contributions that are already present but not always apparent within Frege's logical system. Taken together, this model extends the property of Borromean dependence. We shall see soon that these rings also overlap one another. The following mathemes formalize the relations across three orders of the graph:

Matheme of Number: Concept \leftrightarrow Number¹⁵

Matheme of Concept: Object \leftrightarrow Concept

Matheme of Object: Thing \leftrightarrow Object

The matheme of number concerns the relation of the concept with any number.¹⁶ I have demonstrated that any number and the concept interact through assignation and succession, but perhaps there are further possibilities. The mathemes permit us to speculate. The matheme of concept formalizes the relation between an object and the concept, and the matheme of object formalizes the relation between things and an object. All of this establishes some basic coordinates for thinking about the relationships that might exist between each of the four notions (thing, object, concept, number). I invite the reader to tease out all of the possibilities.¹⁷ We are no doubt struck by the possibility that things and any number might also have some relation. Or, perhaps, the thing only interacts with number through the mediation of its effect upon an object. In any case, these are questions for the reader to pon-

der—they are not my present concern. Until now, I have been discussing the *matheme* of number and concept. I shall now make a leap into the *matheme* of object.

The *matheme* of object formalizes the fictitious representation of *das Ding* by an object (demonstrated by the arrow moving from O to T in the graph). Yet *das Ding*, the thing, is implicated also in the construction of an object (demonstrated by the dotted line moving from T to O). My claim has been that *das Ding* (T) is anterior to the *objet petit a* of psychoanalysis.¹⁸ Recall, once again, that Miller claimed that “[t]he logic of the origin of logic [...] does not follow its laws [i.e., does not follow the logician’s logic], but that, prescribing their jurisdiction, itself falls outside that jurisdiction.”¹⁹ Something is at the origin of logic, responsible for its emergence, but does not follow the laws arising therefrom. This thing which is at the origin of logic is not the name of number, forced as it is through assignation, that is, *après-coup*, and neither is it an object or the concept. Rather, *das Ding* imposes its own necessity, the necessity, for example, of subsumption, upon the numeric system precisely through its withdrawal from that system. Miller wrote, “[w]hence you can see the disappearance of the thing which must be effected in order for it to appear as an object—which is the thing in so far as it is [O]ne.”²⁰ Thus, Miller and Duroux discovered that Frege’s logical system described objects isolated from their Thing, “not as a forgetting, but as a repression” (Miller 2013, 2). Whereas the logical system isolates itself from *das Ding* through repression, *das Ding* imposes the possibility of repression upon the system through withdrawal.

We are confronted by two points of departure. First, Miller’s point of departure was from within the numeric system, and his chief question was: how is it that an object of number is related to an object of the real, *objet petit a*? I have demonstrated elsewhere that this logic has its basis in “correlationist” thinking.²¹ Quentin Meillassoux described correlationism as the philosophical presupposition that we only ever have access to a “real” thing by way of its relationship to the thinking human animal (e.g., the symbolic or signifying system); it is not possible to discuss the “real” thing itself. There is an additional problem here. Adrian Johnston asserts that Meillassoux avoided asking the crucial follow-up question concerning “[...] whether or not mind can be explained as emergent from and / or immanent to matter.”²² Ultimately, I cannot provide any clear or satisfying answers. My own position is similar to Johnston’s who, to borrow the words from his philosophical opponent, Graham Harman, proposes that “mind [is] emergent from physical reality, [and] this takes mind to be a relatively rare and late-coming entity that appeared only after numerous complex material conditions had been met.”²³

Miller’s question asked about the relation between the subject of “lack” and the object, *objet petit a*, or, in this case, Frege’s object of number. Is it any wonder, then, that Miller described 0 as that object which “stands-in-place-of” the subject of lack? Frege used the concept “not identical with” to construct the 0 object within the series of numbers, beginning with the number 1. 1 initiates the sequence by falling under the concept “identical with 0.” George Boolos explained: “Since no objects fall under the former concept [“not identical with”], and the object 0 falls under the

latter ["identical with 0"], the two concepts are, by logic, not equinumerous, and hence their numbers 0 [the former] and 1 [the latter] are, by Hume's principle, not identical."²⁴ For example, it is not true that a car falls under the concept of being identical with a fruit-fly. Consequently, they are "not identical," or, in other words, 0. On the other hand, we could claim that a car falls as an object under the concept vehicle—we could inscribe this relation as 1. The point is that the whole system of numbers begins from 0 and from the concept of "not identical with." It is only after this that something which is identical with "not identical with," that is, with 0, emerges, namely, the 1. 1 has precisely one indexed object, or one unit—it is therefore counted the 0 counted as 1.

Similarly, repression occurs only after the phallic function inaugurates the system of signifiers, only after the *objet petit a* has been pushed out the other side. I inscribe this logic using the following formula, $S_2/a \leftarrow \forall x \Phi x$, which may be read as: "every human animal is submitted to the phallic function on the condition of obtaining some knowledge, or system of signifiers, but this knowledge is always cut by the object cause of desire."²⁵ In the final analysis, Miller concludes that the numeric system carries with it the logic of a certain neurosis. It seems to me that Miller did not actually discover the origin of the logician's logic. Rather, he discovered, simply, the lack at the heart of numericity itself—an origin which succumbs to the *après-coup* of the signifying system. This lack may be overcome fictitiously by number through "suture," that is, through the "stand-in-place-of" function of 0. Miller wrote that "[s]uture names the relation of the subject to the chain of its discourse; we shall see that it figures there as the element which is lacking, in the form of a stand-in [*tenant-lieu*]" (Miller 2013, 2). This only works if we follow Miller's point of departure from within the numeric system itself through to the point where it finds itself lacking and thereby sutured. If we take the real as our point of departure then we necessarily admit that repression is no longer the privileged operation of numeric logic.

The thing withdraws from access leaving only a trace which thereby produces the lack at the heart of the numeric system. Is it any wonder that Lacan described the *objet petit a* as a "trace of the real" (e.g., in Seminar 10)? Moreover, Lacan claimed that the chain of signifiers, S_2 , "effaces the trace" because of one signifier's representation of lack for another signifier:

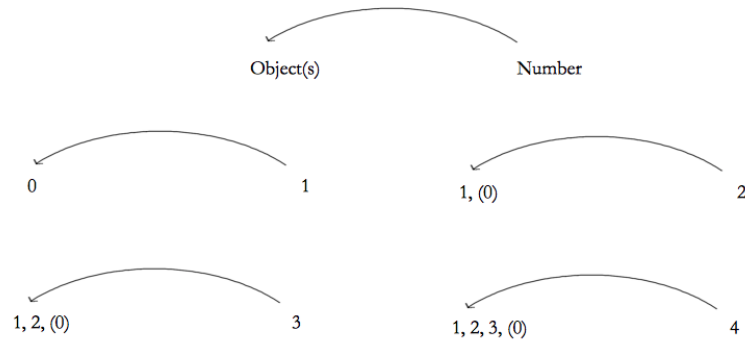
[T]he signifier, as I told you at one turning point, is a trace, but an effaced trace. The signifier, as I told you at another turning point, is distinguished from the sign by the fact that the sign is what represents something for someone. But the signifier, as I told you, is what represents a subject for another signifier.²⁶

Similarly, Miller and Duroux claimed that suture, in effect, effaces the trace of lack. Miller wrote that "nothing can be written" in that place where the object of number is lacking, so that "a 0 must be traced, [...] merely in order to figure a blank, to render visible the lack" (Miller 2013, 2). The thing, unlike lack, operates as an "event"

from the standpoint of the world of numbers. Thus, Alain Badiou has claimed that the trace is “what subsists in the world when the event disappears [...] [i]t’s something of the event, but not the event as such; it is the trace, a mark, a symptom.”²⁷ It is possible to think of lack, which gives rise to suture within the logician’s logic, as some thing which remains or exceeds the numeric system precisely because it comes before.

For Miller, the empty place within the numeric system is also the locus of the subject. Alain Badiou has claimed that the trace is not the mark of an empty place for the subject but rather the mark of an empty place for some object, for something objective—it is an “objective trace.”²⁸ If Frege demonstrated that the numeric system could be thought in objective terms, and if Miller demonstrated that Frege’s logic effaces or represses the trace through suture, then Badiou, finally, found a third way which was some combination of the two: with Frege and contra Miller, he maintained the objectivity of the numeric system; and with Miller and contra Frege, he affirmed the empty place at the heart of number. My claim has been that the trace or lack is some object which persists within the numeric system after the thing has withdrawn from access. Against Miller’s view that an object takes the place of *das Ding* within the numeric system, I claim that some thing also takes the place of an object from the real. The distinction that I am making between Miller and Badiou was summed up very well by Joan Copjec when she wrote: “[...] while Miller designates the (constitutive) empty place of reality as ‘subject,’ Badiou will name it ‘the Event.’”²⁹ While I share Badiou’s emphasis on the empty place as the place of an “objective trace,” I do not think that this trace is necessarily inaugurated by an “event” per se. Rather, the empty place is neither subject nor event—it is the consequence of the thing’s withdrawal from the world of numbers.

Miller wrote that “[...] to be situated in the function of identity [involves] conferring on each thing of the world the property of being 1, [and this] effects its transformation into an object of the (logical) concept” (Miller 2013, 4). Each object, beginning with the number 1, must be taken as 1 even though the thing which it postures at representing has withdrawn from numeric access (thereby leaving the mark of 0). Miller put it this way: “[...] [the] concept, by virtue of being a concept, has an extension, [and] subsumes an object. Which object? None” (Miller 2013, 5). The lack of object is subsumed under the concept “identical with 0.” This is confirmed by Anthony Kenny, a foremost interpreter of Frege: “0 is the number belonging to the concept ‘not-self-identical.’ 1 is the number belonging to the concept ‘identical with zero.’”³⁰ 0 is precisely the mark of lack and this is why it falls under the concept of “not identical with itself”—it marks the incompleteness of all concepts of identity.³¹ The principle of identity states that each number has as one of its objects this primordial repression of that which is not identical with itself—this initial repression has to be renewed at each succession in the numeric chain. Anthony Kenny confirmed this when he wrote that “[t]he crucial feature of an object, for Frege, is that it is something which possesses an identity which is capable of being recognized over and over again.”³²



“Subsumption” is the name Miller gave to the process of transforming an object into the concept “identical with itself.” The number 1 counts the lack of a thing as unit, an operation which is essentially self-validating. This process is perpetuated through succession, which repeats on the condition that it continually represses the primordial lack at the heart of the numeric system. Thus, the numeric system is a rather sophisticated manner of displacing the lack, spreading it out, deferring it, burying it, and thereby ensuring that one never has to encounter it directly again. At the very beginning there is the unifying function of the One, which, by implication, establishes itself with regard to its own logic: it is *identical* with zero. Miller’s claim was that the operation of subsumption is secured and the logic of identity is premised upon this initial suture: “suture [is] the general relation of lack to the structure [...] it implies the position of taking-the-place-of” (Miller 2013, 2). Suture concerns the way in which 0 has to be invented as a stand-in for lack.³³ As one commentator put it, “[i]t is necessary that zero should be a number, that zero should occupy the suturing place of what is missing, so that the discourse of logic may close.”³⁴ Number, then, seems to be of the order of the ego.

If we are honest about this thing (*das Ding*) which withdraws from number then we should inscribe a place for that affirmation within the system of numbers. This is what Miller refused to do, since, for him, number is sutured to the real as lack through the mark of 0. Thus, 0 can only function as an imaginary support of number. With Frege, Miller claimed that 0 is forced to occur within number because there needs to be a concept of “not identical with itself”; 0 is therefore the mark of lack as negation; it is the rendering visible of something which should remain negative. My claim has been that we can inscribe a thing of the first order real with the mark of 0 so as to formalize (and not necessarily suture) the relation of withdrawal. I am putting forward a positive proposition which states that something has withdrawn and that this thereby made possible the emergence of *objet petit a* as “visible lack.” For example, Miller wrote that “if 0 must be traced, it is merely in order to figure a blank, to render visible the lack” (Miller 2013, 5). But 0 is also a

trace of some *thing* intruding into the numerical system from the first order real, something which insists on intruding through each succession.

If we affirm the principle of Borromean dependence—which states that the triad of the real-imaginary-symbolic reflects itself within each of its three registers—then we are permitted to claim that the real-symbolic operates in, from, and toward a different register than the symbolic-real. These are different points of departure. The first is a relationship from the real to the symbolic and the second is a relationship from the symbolic to the real. I propose that there are two placeholders for each of the many combinations of rings. For example, within the symbolic-real, the symbolic occupies the first placeholder and the real occupies the second. If we like, we can think with George Spencer-Brown’s logic: the marked (i.e., everything to the right of \Uparrow) and unmarked (i.e., everything to the left of \Uparrow) spaces of distinction. The first placeholder operates like an adjective inasmuch as it places the thing of its order near the corresponding name—“adjective,” here, is a word derived from the 14th century Latin *adicere* meaning “to place a thing near.”³⁵ The second placeholder operates like a noun inasmuch as it names the order itself—noun means “name.”³⁶ We can thereby deduce a few more combinations, of which I shall list four:

| Adjective | Noun | Form |
|-----------|-----------|----------------|
| Real | Symbolic | S \Uparrow R |
| Real | Imaginary | I \Uparrow R |
| Symbolic | Real | R \Uparrow S |
| Imaginary | Real | R \Uparrow I |

The adjectival place distinguishes a given order from any other listed within the nounal place. The adjectival real is that first order real which puts the thing near the nounal symbolic and imaginary orders (Thing \leftrightarrow Object); it is represented formally as S \Uparrow R (the real thing is placed near the symbolic name) or I \Uparrow R (the real thing is placed near the imaginary object). The adjectival real places the thing near, while the nounal real is the consequent negation or lack associated with *objet petit a*, the second order object of the real. The number 0 is the emergence of a lack of signification (negation) but it is also the mark or trace of a thing within the world of signification with that which we cannot be without. It is an indication that there has been an “event,” an event precisely in the form of the withdrawal of a thing from the real. We can claim that some thing in the real gives birth to the system of logic, to the logician’s logic, and then withdraws from access, thereby leaving a lack in the numeric system of signification. 0, in this place, is not the imaginary mark of suture, it is the only honest number—it is the only number which admits contradiction and therefore inscribes a place for truth. Truth inscribes a place for a number which is not identical to itself.

1 is not a truthful number, as Miller wrote: “[t]his system is thus so constituted with the 0 counting as 1. The counting of the 0 as 1 (whereas the concept of the

zero subsumes nothing in the real but a blank) is the general support of the series of numbers" (Miller 2013, 6). The number 1, as primordial repression of lack, affirms the law of identity and thereby represents the lack for another number. Moreover, the number 1 represents the lack, 0, precisely as 1. Whereas Miller's claim was that 0 can only exist to suture the entire system of numbers, my claim is that numbers only exist because of the trace of the first order real through the mark of 0. We've been dealing with two notions of truth. First, for Miller, there is the negative dimension of truth, borrowed from Frege, which states that truth is that which is "not identical with." For example, within numeric logic there is always an "error" from the standpoint of assignation and subsumption, and there is truth to that error. This is the truth of that which is not identical, of negation, of lack, from the standpoint of the numeric system. There is another dimension of truth, borrowed from Lacan, which claims that "truth is." For example, Miller wrote that "[i]n order for the number to pass from the repetition of the 1 of the identical to that of its ordered succession, in order for the logical dimension to gain its autonomy definitively, without any reference to the real, the zero has to appear [...] [because] truth is" (Miller 2013, 5). Truth is that which insists within the chain of numbers.

We might extend this to imply something which neither Miller nor Duroux was prepared to admit: truth is also the affirmation of the consequences of the withdrawal of the thing. In Badiou's language, "truth is a consequence of an event inside the world."³⁷ In this sense, truth is a way of the real touching us and not simply of us touching the real. When we begin from the real marked as $\mathbb{I}\mathbb{R}$ or $\mathbb{S}\mathbb{R}$, and when we affirm the operation of withdrawal via the matheme of object, then we necessarily take the position that truth occurs as a pure affirmation, as that which leaves a trace and permits us to organize the consequences of its withdrawal via the assistance of the trace. This explains why during a debate between Slavoj Žižek and Alain Badiou about the question of truth within Lacan's work, Badiou claimed that the following tension exists:

On the one hand, truth is secret and unknown [for Lacan]. The truth of the subject is produced by the subject and yet the subject himself has no knowledge of this truth. This is why, for example, truth is always unconscious. On the other hand, the aim of psychoanalysis is to generate knowledge about the unknown. The paradoxical position concerning truth is therefore that there is no knowledge of truth but that there is a psychoanalytic knowledge precisely concerning this absence of knowledge.³⁸

This tension was effectively removed from psychoanalytic logic by Miller in his early paper. It has been my aim to have it restored. I aim to take seriously the claim that some knowledge of the real can exist, even if the price we pay for it is with rigorous formalization through the matheme, or through topological models, and so on.

In summary, I have claimed, with Duroux, that Borromean numericity establishes itself through force. Thus, assignation is an operation which gives name to number,

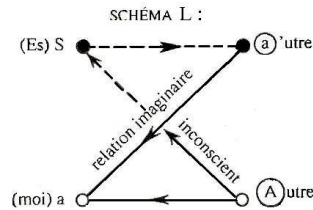
produces the possibility of succession (which manifests as the signifying chain, S_2), and yet, relying as it does on an initial operation of subsumption, nonetheless represses a primordial encounter with lack. This third movement, which operates via the number 3 (taking 0, 1, and 2 as its objects) occurs via the symbolic register of the numeric system. Put simply, assignation consists of the naming of one number dependent upon another which represents the lack, a logic which is no different from the logic of the signifying chain inasmuch as the latter is made up of a system comprised of signifiers which represent the lack for other signifiers. To gain a better understanding of the symbolic dimension of number I shall now turn to Lacan's 1956 seminar on "The Purloined Letter."

The *Coup de Force* of 3

In his seminar on "The Purloined Letter" (1956), Lacan described the elements of the symbolic order in terms of a rudimentary chain of pluses (+) and minuses (-), representing, respectively, presences and absences. His claim was that Freud already developed some understanding of the signifying chain when he wrote about his observations of a child playing in his 1920 essay *Jenseits Des Lustprinzips* (*Beyond the Pleasure Principle*). Freud wrote:

The child had a wooden reel with a piece of string wound round it. [...] [H]e kept throwing it with considerable skill, held by the string, over the side of his little draped cot, so that the reel disappeared [*fort*] into it, then said his significant "o-o-o-oh," and drew the reel by the string out of the cot again, greeting its appearance with a joyful "*Da*" ("there"). This was therefore a complete game [of] disappearance and return.³⁹

Lacan deepened Freud's original insight about the *fort-da* game in at least three ways. First, he claimed that the symbolic order is a relatively autonomous psychical register. He wrote that "[t]his position regarding the autonomy of the symbolic is the only position that allows us to clarify the theory and practice of free association in psychoanalysis." In other words, that exemplary method which was and continues to be of such profound clinical necessity, namely, free association, obtains its importance precisely because analysts have used it to isolate the analysand's unconscious symbolic relations as if they existed in an order of their own.⁴⁰ Was this not the lesson of Lacan's "L Schema"? We can see that the symbolic axis, which is also the axis of analytic intervention, is positioned in such a way as to demonstrate its relative autonomy *vis-a-vis* the imaginary relation. Indeed, if one were to follow the arrows in the schema, one would discover that there are two autonomous tracks. Treatment aims at isolating the symbolic relation, taking analysis along that track, so as to bring the unconscious to bear upon the analysand's speech.

(Lacan's "Schema L")⁴¹

The second way that Lacan deepened Freud's original understanding of the *fort-da* game had to do with his explanation of the inhering elements of the signifying chain. Lacan believed that the signifying chain at its most basic level could be thought as a linear placement of ostensibly random pluses and minuses, or, as we shall see, zeroes and ones, which might look something like this: 0 1 0 0 0 1 0 0 0 1 1 1 0 1 0 1 0 1 1 0 0 or - + - - - + - - - + + - - + - - + - -. Recall that there exists within the chain of signifiers a mark of the real, 0, and an inscription of the imaginary, 1. Also recall Miller's claim that 0 is the mark of suture, and my own claim that 0 is the trace of the real. We have also found that 1 is that number within the chain which counts that which is "not identical with," or 0, that is, zero is counted as self-presence or as the presence of an object which is identical-with or counted-as One. I have already demonstrated how it is that the logic of succession and assignation plots two routes through the symbolic loop of the numeric system. I shall now attempt to demonstrate that Lacan offered another possible way of thinking about the symbolic.

This brings me to the third way Lacan deepened Freud's insight about the *fort-da* game. Lacan claimed that the symbolic order is constitutive of the subject rather than constituted by the subject: "[...] the symbol[ic] order can no longer be conceived of [...] as constituted by man but must rather be conceived of as constituting him."⁴² He wrote, "this game manifests in its radical traits the determination that the human animal receives from the symbolic order."⁴³ Lacan was not claiming that the agency of the child is responsible for the production of the imaginary and symbolic orders but rather that the imaginary and symbolic orders, as relatively independent agencies, are enacted upon the child in such a way that the child, as a subject, could not be said to precede them. The child becomes increasingly aware of these orders which precede and yet produce him as a subject, such that the human's object, in this case it is the child's wooden reel, also becomes enmeshed by its determination. Lacan wrote, "[s]imply connoting with + and — a series playing on the sole fundamental alternative of presence and absence allows us to demonstrate how the strictest symbolic determinations accommodate a succession of [coin] tosses whose reality is strictly distributed 'by chance.'"⁴⁴ The game of *fort-da* thereby becomes an important moment in the constitution of subjectivity. Lacan suggested that the two elements representing the chance flip of a coin inevitably give way to fairly precise symbolic determinations or rules which further produce

the subject as lack. Indeed, there exists “a truth which may be drawn from [this] moment in Freud’s thought [...] namely, that it is the symbolic order which is constitutive for the subject.”⁴⁵ In this understanding the subject is what comes after the symbolic order, after the phallic function, and is, in effect, produced as something lacking through that order. The subject is nothing without the signifying chain which is its support and its determination.

I shall return to the question of the subject of lack and its symbolic determination.⁴⁶ For now, it is important to demonstrate that it is possible to construct a catalog of potential combinations which occur each in a series of three. First, + + + and - - - can denote the letter “A” due to the principle of “constancy.” That is, there is no variation in the symbolic chain, and the first symbol is carried through the series. Second, + - -, - + +, + + -, and - - + can denote the letter “B” according to the principle of “dissymmetry.” That is, we have two symbols which are the same (either + + or - -) which follow or are preceded by an alternate symbol. One symbol, whether at the beginning or at the end of the series, separates “A” from “B” (e.g., + + - precludes “A” on the basis of the final symbol, -). Third, + - + and - + - can be described as “C” according to the principle of “alternation.” Here, we can see that the series is constituted by alternating symbols such that the series begins and ends with the same symbol (e.g., + - + begins and ends with +). To review: each of the three principles are represented by a letter which carries logical significance. We denote “A” for the principle of constancy, “B” for the principle of dissymmetry, and “C” for the principle of alternation. To understand these symbolic determinations further, let us look at the example Lacan provided in a footnote added to the manuscript in 1966:⁴⁷

| | | | | | | | | |
|-----------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|---|
| + | + | + | - | + | + | - | + | - |
| A | B | C | B | B | B | B | C | |
| Constancy | Dissymmetry | Alternation | Dissymmetry | Dissymmetry | Dissymmetry | Dissymmetry | Alternation | |

The first three elements of the series (+ + +) function according to the logic of constancy, represented by “A”. The next three elements in the series (+ + -) function according to the logic of dissymmetry, noted by the letter “B”. Next, + - +, the logic of alternation, is represented by the letter “C”, and so on. From this we can deduce future and anterior determinations. I shall provide just one example to demonstrate the point: alternation cannot follow constancy (and constancy cannot follow alternation) without passing through dissymmetry. We can reach constancy after alternation because the first two places of constancy (+ + or - -) are not present in the last two places of alternation (+ - or - +). So, one must pass through dissymmetry, “B”, to move from alternation, “C”, to constancy, “A”:

$$\left. \begin{array}{c} - + - - - \\ \text{CBA} \end{array} \right\} \text{alternation} \rightarrow \text{constancy}$$

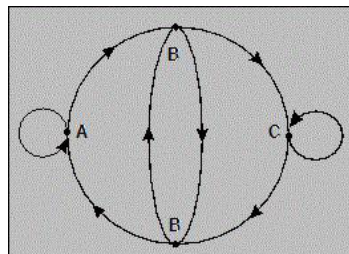
Put another way, “A” can only follow “C” after it has been mediated by “B”. Similarly, “A” can only precede “C” if before “C” there appears the mediation of “B”:

$$\left. \begin{array}{c} + + + - + \\ \text{ABC} \end{array} \right\} \text{constancy} \leftarrow \text{alternation}$$

Taken together, alternation \rightarrow constancy, or $C \rightarrow A$, and constancy \leftarrow alternation, or $A \leftarrow C$, demonstrate, respectively, future and anterior symbolic determinations. Moreover, each determination requires three moves to pass from its source to its destination, or from its destination to its source: $C \rightarrow (C \rightarrow B \rightarrow A)$ or $A \leftarrow C (A \leftarrow B \leftarrow C)$. We can understand the centrality of the number three for the determinations of the symbolic order: there are three elements in each series, whether constancy, alternation, or dissymmetry, and the minimum number of moves possible between destination and source is often also three. To make this point clear, the combination $A \rightarrow C$ (constancy \rightarrow alternation) might represent the following completed series:

| | | |
|-----------------------|-------------|-------------------|
| Completed Series: | $+ + + - +$ | $A \rightarrow C$ |
| Constancy (yellow): | $+ + + - +$ | A |
| Dissymmetry (yellow): | $+ + + - +$ | B |
| Alternation (yellow): | $+ + + - +$ | C |

To demonstrate the impossibility of moving from $A \rightarrow C$ in only two steps, I shall provide all possible combinations. We begin with $+ + +$ and the next move can be either $+$ or $-$. In the case of $+$, our string becomes $+ + + +$, and, in two moves, we have $A \rightarrow A$. In the case of $-$, our string becomes $+ + + -$, and, in two moves, we have $A \rightarrow B$. There are no further possibilities. Lacan mapped out all of these precise determinations in his “1-3 Network” diagram:⁴⁸



The “1-3 Network” demonstrates that it is impossible to move from “A” to “C” without passing through “B”. It also demonstrates that “A” can move to another “A” or else to a “B”, and that “C” can move to another “C” or else to a “B”, and so on. We know from Miller and Duroux that we can only move to the number 3 by first establishing as fact the number 1, and that this is what the imaginary permits. The question Miller and Duroux were asking in 1965 concerned the nature of number and the logic of succession—how is it possible to move from 1 to 2, and from 2 to 3, and from 0 to 1, and so on? In other words, what makes possible our ability to count?⁴⁹

In 1966, Lacan produced an addendum to his essay on the purloined letter. It now included the following signifying chain (I have added the highlights):

L Chain: (10...(00...0)0101...0(00...0)...01)1111...(1010...1)111...

I hazard to guess that Lacan named this the “L Chain” so as to evoke in the reader a sense of its relation with the “L Schema,” such that one could discern in it the possibility of there being imaginary and symbolic tracks. Indeed, Lacan explicitly linked the two: “[t]he similarity between the relationship among the terms of the L Schema and the relationship that unites [...] the oriented series in which we see the first finished form of a symbolic chain [above] cannot fail to strike one as soon as one consider[s] the connection between them.”⁵⁰ If, within the L Schema, there are two psychical dimensions (imaginary and symbolic), then, within the L Chain, there is added the dimension of the real. This advances upon the traditional L Schema but without allowing the real to have its own autonomous order with its own relations.

Each parentheses of the L Chain might be associated with a ring of the Borromean knot.⁵¹ For example, the strings of consecutive zeroes nested inside of the first set of parentheses, highlighted with yellow, indicate the place of the real and can be understood within the clinic as moments of abrupt and noticeable silence or scan-sion. More particularly, Lacan described this as the locus of the subject, and the silence of the drives. The enveloping parentheses, highlighted with red, represent the imaginary a-to-a’ relation from the L Schema and enclose not only zeros but also ones. It is possible to distinguish between zeros which are isolated within the real (yellow), which are a set of multiplicity of zeros, and zeros which are no less real, but which are dispersed amongst the ones of the imaginary (the latter corresponds to R 1 I). Finally, outside of the parenthesis, highlighted with blue, is a series of ones, without any zeros, which are meant to represent the field of the symbolic and its repetition compulsion.

However, we’ve overstepped our bounds. In all actuality, the ones and zeros represent a fourth level in a multi-tiered structure. An example of the first three tiers can be found below:

+ + + - + + - - + -
 A B C B B B C
 $\alpha \gamma \beta \gamma \gamma \delta$

The first tier consists of chance flips of a coin (the chain of pluses and minuses represent presences and absences). On the second tier, there are three possible English letters (“A”, “B”, and “C”) representing the logic of constancy, dissymmetry, and alternation. The “A” represents the constancy of the three pluses which precede it on the line above, the “B” represents the dissymmetry of the + + - above it, and so on. Now, we can add another tier, representing further logical possibilities:

| α (alpha) | β (beta) | γ (gamma) | δ (delta) |
|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| A→A (const→const) | A→B (const→dissym) | B→B (dissym→dissym) | B→A (dissym→const) |
| A→C (const→altern) | C→B (altern→dissym) | | B→C (dissym→altern) |
| C→C (altern→altern) | | | |
| C→A (altern→const) | | | |

We can see, within the example provided from Lacan above (+ + + - + + - - + -), that the first series on the second line is “A B C.” It therefore moves from A → C and so may be inscribed on the line beneath it with an “ α .” Next, the “B C B” moves from B → B and may be inscribed with “ γ ”, and so on.⁵² I have chosen to by-pass any further discussion on these logical determinations so as to remain on the track I have laid out regarding the relation between the number three and the symbolic order. We can thereby correlate the Greek letters (α , β , γ , δ) with ones and zeros. However, these Greek letters also correspond with the opening and closing of rings in the Borromean knot. For example, we might use the following rubric:⁵³

$\alpha \rightarrow '1'$
 $\beta \rightarrow '('$
 $\gamma \rightarrow '0'$
 $\delta \rightarrow ')'$

The fourth tier brings us back to our point of departure, which was the series of ones and zeros. Thus, one version of the completed L Chain looks like this:⁵⁴

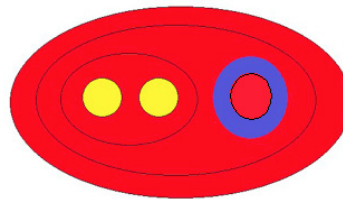
+ + + + - + + + - + + + - - + - - - - - + + - - + + + + + + - - - + + + + + + + + ...
 A B C B ... B B B ... B A B C B A ... B B B B ... B C ... B A A A A A ... B C B A B ... A A A A A ...
 $\beta \alpha \gamma \dots \beta \gamma \gamma \dots \gamma \delta \gamma \alpha \gamma \alpha \dots \gamma \beta \gamma \gamma \dots \gamma \delta \dots \gamma \alpha \delta \alpha \alpha \alpha \dots \beta \alpha \gamma \alpha \gamma \dots \alpha \delta \alpha \alpha \dots$
 L Chain: (1 0 ... (0 0 ... 0) 0 1 0 1 ... 0 (0 0 ... 0) ... 0 1) 1 1 1 1 ... (1 0 1 0 ... 1) 1 1 1 ...

I should mention the interpretive flexibility we have at our disposal for the completed model. This is no doubt due in part to unresolved tensions and leaps of argument made in the original text produced by Lacan. What we can state with confidence is that the model moves from a system of pluses and minuses, of presences and absences, toward, finally, a chain of ones and zeros nested at various levels with a placement of parentheses. The chain is further mediated by a system which breaks the series into three groups of logical determinations (constancy, dissymmetry, and alternation), and then further by the possible relations between those determinations. Given my decision to comply with the principle of Borromean dependency, I would like to invite readers to imagine a final layer of parentheses enveloping the entire chain. The opening parenthesis stands before the first symbol, before the originating parenthesis, and the closing parenthesis stands after the final symbol (after the 1 from the series of 1 1 1). The result is the modified L Chain:

Modified 'L Chain'

((1 0 ... (0 0 ... 0) 0 1 0 1 ... 0 (0 0 ... 0) ... 0 1) 1 1 1 1 ... (1 0 1 0 ... 1) 1 1 1 ...)

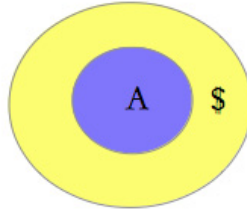
I have added some highlighting to emphasize the different registers. We thereby achieve the following topology:



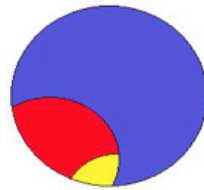
The L Chain is therefore skewed in favor of the imaginary register (e.g., the red circles encase the others). The real seems to be embedded within the imaginary parentheses. In this topology, then, the real is entirely encased by the imaginary order—it is transformed into a “unit” of sorts. Yet, we know that the real is that which persists despite all imaginary encasing. Also, within the L Chain, the symbolic is *not* contained. We could think of it as the absolute envelop of the entire chain, or else we could imagine parentheses encasing it, as I have in the most recent topology. But Lacan did not include enveloping parentheses around the blue series of ones. This implies that the locus of the symbolic is *outside* of our topological model, even though we imagine it to be inside. How do we resolve this paradox?

The symbolic order, represented by the repeated series of ones, is a part of the unconscious relation within the clinic. It is therefore inside of the mental system. On the other hand, we also know that Lacan placed the series of ones outside of parentheses. We are forced to admit, then, that the symbolic is outside even while being inside. Lacan developed a concept to describe this: extimacy. Extimacy describes the locus of the symbolic Other as the outer-most unconscious determinations of mental life. As Jacques-Alain Miller explained: “[i]f we use the term extimacy in

this way, we can consequently make it be equivalent to the unconscious itself. In this sense, the extimacy of the subject is the Other.”⁵⁵ In the same essay, Miller produced a simple topology:



We do an injustice to the series of ones by surrounding it, as we have, by the imaginary order in our topology. In Lacan’s seventh seminar, he claimed that the big Other, represented in the model above as “A”, is “something strange to me, although it is at the heart of me.”⁵⁶ The parentheses for the symbolic order (blue) in the L Chain are missing, and I have claimed that this is because the symbolic order, and the field of the big Other, is extimate. Truthfully, the imaginary order provides the parentheses required for there to be any organized design of mental life, above. This is no doubt problematic. However, if we return to the claim that the symbolic order is the absolute envelop, because it is outside and extimate, then we arrive at the following topological model:

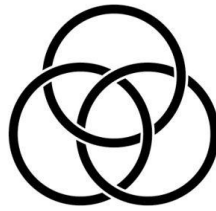


The symbolic (blue) here gives birth to the imaginary (red) which further gives birth to the real (yellow). In some cases, we might extend this claim to insist on the point that the symbolic gives birth to an imaginary, which was anyway already there which further gave birth to the real which was anyway always already there. However, even here, we might once again note the problem that that the symbolic is the privileged point of departure—we thereby eclipse Borromean dependence. Levi Bryant addressed this problem in his recent book *Onto-Cartography* (2014):

With the Borromean knot, Lacan’s work undergoes a fundamental transformation. In his earlier work, the imaginary dominated [sic] the real and the symbolic. In the work of his middle period, it was the symbolic that over-coded the real and the imaginary. In his third phase, it was the real that over-coded [sic] the symbolic and the imaginary. With the Borromean knot,

no order over-codes the others. Rather, they are all now treated as being on equal footing.⁵⁷

The principles of Borromean dependence and numericity make necessary the de-privileging of the symbolic and imaginary orders. Consequently, we must retie the knot:



In other words, if we begin with the imaginary as our point of departure in thinking about the L Chain, then we end up with a flattened model. If we begin with the symbolic, then we end up with a model which has an “inside” and “outside” but we miss out on the autonomy of the other two rings. It is only with the real as our point of departure that we can begin again to restore the knot to its rightful place, with Borromean dependence affirmed.

We must now investigate what Mladen Dolar described as the “paradox of the emergence of a transcendence at the very heart of immanence, or, rather, of the way immanence always doubles itself and intersects with itself. Or, to put it another way: there might be no inside, there might be no outside, but the problem of intersection remains.”⁵⁸ How, from the model I have been elaborating, is it possible to move from the supposed immanence of the real toward the transcendental symbolic and imaginary orders within that immanence?

Transcendental Barriers

Lacanian thought has been oriented around the transcendental position in philosophy. This position begins frequently with the assumption that a thing exists outside of, and yet cannot be entirely grasped by, mind. Thus, the transcendental position amounts to an assertion that some barrier is lodged between the thing and a mind, and this keeps the two at some distance from each other and thereby prevents the latter from directly accessing the former. On the other hand, the immanental position presumes that a mind and the thing are in some proximity to one another, and that any such barrier separating the two is absent. Therefore, philosophies of immanence assert that the mind and a thing exist together on the same plane of immanence. One such position was maintained by Gilles Deleuze, who wrote that “immanence is in itself: it is not *in* something, *to* something; it does not depend on an object or belong to a subject [...] When the subject [...] is taken as the universal [...] it finds itself enclosed in the transcendental.”⁵⁹ It would not make sense for Deleuze to claim that a thing is barred from mind or that a mind has within itself

some internal barrier which keeps it from directly accessing an object of the real. Transcendental philosophies may therefore be distinguished from philosophies of immanence by the presence of some barrier between mind and thing.

We could claim that transcendental positions are often at odds with philosophies of immanence on the basis of some mutually decided barrier propped up between the two positions themselves. In other words, each position must make a fundamental decision which results in the exclusion of the other position. Philosophies of immanence erect a barrier which puts at some distance all transcendental philosophies on the presupposition that the latter are ontologically and / or epistemologically flawed. Transcendental philosophies erect a barrier which puts at some distance philosophies of immanence even while they are the first to authorize the possibility of thinking immanence. According to the standards dictated by the philosophies themselves, then, the consequence is such that the barrier between the two philosophies produces results which are not symmetric. On the one hand, philosophies of immanence maintain that transcendental philosophies can be thought but that they do not describe what exists in the real, and, on the other hand, transcendental philosophies maintain that immanence can be thought precisely because there is already within the plane of immanence a barrier separating what is immanent from itself. Thus, Deleuze claimed that “it is always possible to invoke a transcendental that falls outside the plane of immanence, [...] all transcendence is constituted solely in the flow of immanent consciousness that belongs to this plane. Transcendence is always a product of immanence.”⁶⁰ Slavoj Žižek claimed that “immanence generates the spectre of transcendence because it is already inconsistent in itself.”⁶¹

It would be fruitful to note that there are actually two transcendental positions within traditional Lacanian thought, the first being the foundation for the second. The first position authorizes from behind the scenes the second, and the second is the avowed domain of psychoanalysis proper. Lacanians must begin by bracketing the question of the thing outside of mind so as to think the object of the second order real (*objet petit a*) as the blind-spot within mind itself. When Lacanians have adopted the second position (which I list as $S[a]$) they have also often avoided the possibility that mind inheres in the thing as its bracketed term (which I list as $t[S]$ or $t[S[a]]$). The first position is that there is an essential transcendental barrier between thing and mind, the result of which is that the thing ought to be passed over in silence so as to move into the second and more fundamental discussion of the transcendental barrier which exists between subject and *objet petit a*. We might conclude that there is some object of the real which eludes direct access and yet about which we can nonetheless have partial knowledge. If, in this first case, direct knowledge of the thing is impossible, then, in the second case, partial knowledge of the object is to some extent possible.

Graham Harman has produced a useful conceptual framework for thinking about the relationship between mind and thing, or, more specifically, the presence or absence of barriers between thing and mind.⁶² First, there is the position of na-

ive realism. This position begins with the presumption that things exist outside of mind and therefore can be entirely grasped by the various symbolic and imaginary systems of mind. Another variation of naive realism would be the position which claims that there are only things in the world and that there are no subjects. Given that this position maintains that there is no difficulty regarding our access to things, precisely because all barriers forbidding such access are absent—it thereby gravitates toward philosophies of immanence. At the other end of the spectrum there is absolute idealism. This position begins with the presumption that only mind exists and that things outside of mind therefore do not exist. Given that this position maintains that things outside of mind do not exist, it gravitates once again toward philosophies of immanence. On the basis of there being no barrier between mind and thing, because, on the one hand, things do not exist, and on the other hand, mind either does not exist or else mind is reduced to thing, we can claim that both positions, naive realism and absolute idealism, are closer to philosophies of immanence.

There are two further positions nestled somewhere between naive realism and absolute idealism. These two middle positions are named “weak correlationism” and “strong correlationism,” and they proceed on the basis of a different assumption. Both positions presume that some barrier demarcates mind from thing and thing from mind. Unlike naive realism and absolute idealism, weak and strong correlationisms introduce a notion of there being a barrier for thinking things. Strong correlationism, which is closer to absolute idealism than to naive realism, is the position which maintains that things may very well exist outside of mind but that it is futile to think them because at every step of the way, they are reduced to the abstract categories of thinking. This position assumes, unlike absolute idealism, that things exist outside of mind. The problem is that we cannot have any knowledge of those things. On the other hand, weak correlationism, which is closer to naive realism than to absolute idealism, is the position which maintains that things do exist outside of mind and that there is some difficulty in directly accessing them from the limited symbolic and imaginary systems of mind. However, weak correlationism, unlike strong correlationism, maintains that some knowledge of things is possible. It seems to me that both weak correlationism and strong correlationism share a sort of transcendental position on the basis of their presumption that there is some barrier between thing and mind.

For Lacanians, there is certainly a transcendental decision to bracket things in the first order real in favour of an analysis of objects in the second order real. The first decision to bracket things is based upon Lacan’s belief that the “[t]he affair [*sache*] is the word [*wort*] of the thing [*ding*].”⁶³ In other words, Lacan believed that all the things which exist are things transformed into objects, into the material of the symbolic: “it is obvious that the things of the human world are things in a universe structured by words, that language, symbolic processes, dominate, govern all.”⁶⁴ It is clear that Lacan here took a position closer to absolute idealism than to naive realism. However, is this position strong correlationism, the position which claims

that things do exist but that it is futile to form knowledge of them, or absolute idealism, the position which claims that things do not exist? If we take Lacan at his word when he claimed that every attempt to render reality intelligible, that is, every attempt to link the reality principle with the physical world, renders our efforts all the more isolating,⁶⁵ then we by necessity end up positing that Lacan's position is the position of strong correlationism.

However, there is another transcendental position inherent to Lacan's thought. For example, there is the barrier which exists within mind itself, which splits the subject, and splits the subject precisely in terms of access to the object of the second order real.⁶⁶ When Jacques-Alain Miller and Yves Duroux explored the concept of suture in Frege's numerical system—we should forever keep in mind that both of these students were adamant that Lacan had already inaugurated this logic in his own way—they took the position of strong correlationism. For them, number established itself over the real through a *coup de force* of the symbolic and imaginary systems. What therefore makes possible the count from 1 to 2, and from 2 to 3, and so on, is the inaugurating gesture of the number 1 which “stands-in-place-of” the object of lack, 0. Recall also that to remain true to the principle of Borromean dependence requires that we think through the way in which the real forces its way, like a speed bump in the movement or succession of the symbolic, into the numerical system. Thus, I was able to produce a new logic not reducible to assignation, succession, identity, or subsumption, which occurs from the real and toward the other two Borromean rings. The logic of withdrawal operates under the assumption that things have a power over mind and that, precisely, their power is the possible erection of a barrier to thinking. You can see that we've made possible a shift from strong correlationism, with the logic of suture, to weak correlationism, with the logic of withdrawal. The logic of suture is strongly correlated because it proposes an impossible access to being, and the logic of withdrawal is weakly correlated because it proposes that things have a power too.⁶⁷

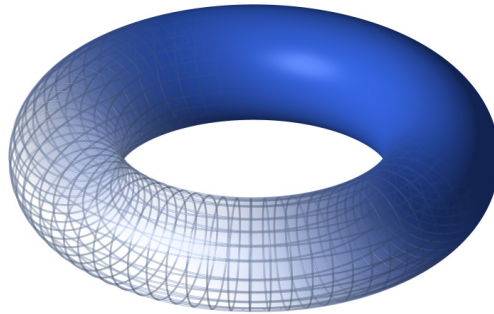
There are periods of Lacan's teaching which motion toward the position of absolute idealism (whereby all that exists is mind), and there are periods which motion toward the position of strong correlationism (whereby things exist but are forever isolated from mental life). I also maintain that it is possible to locate periods of weak correlationism in Lacan's teaching. Thus, we are permitted to think another possibility than the one offered to us by Slavoj Žižek who wrote that: “The [Lacanian] Real is not out there, as the inaccessible transcendent X never reached by our representations; the Real is here, as the obstacle or impossibility which makes our representations flawed, inconsistent. The Real is not the In-itself but the very obstacle which distorts our access to the In-itself.”⁶⁸ Here, Žižek's position conflates the two orders of the real. It is as if the first order real is merely a fictional construct of the second,⁶⁹ that is, it is as if the subject is always in some relation to *objet petit a* ($S \leftrightarrow a$). In this understanding, Borromean dependence cannot be fully maintained. Žižek's reduction of the real to the barrier itself avoids the possibility that there are

things outside of mind and that these things exist outside of mind whether or not mind is there to have the trouble of thinking them.

It seems to me that the Lacanian real often obscures the immanent world of things through its linkage with some notion of the barred or split subject. If, on the one hand, there has been a subject of the real, a lacking subject which lacks despite the “stand-in-place-of” function of number, then, on the other hand, there are also things of the real which disrupt the “stand-in-place-of” function of number, as well as the string of ones and zeros which otherwise are the determinate coordinates of symbolic and imaginary life. Žižek and Badiou have interpreted Lacan’s work as a transcendentalism of the second order by reducing all analyses to the inaccessible *objet petit a* which splits mind from within itself. In this conception, the symbolic is the absolute envelop of the imaginary and real orders. At this point we should speculate as to how it is possible to think the emergence of transcendence from the plane of immanence. I have already begun by claiming that the plane of immanence has within itself a barrier which gives rise to the symbolic and imaginary orders. If we like, we might provisionally claim that this barrier is nothing but a potential. Thus, mind, like most children born today, must be the beautiful and yet unintended result of an accident.

At the center of everything, there where the three rings of the Borromean knot form a Reuleaux triangle, we find the *objet petit a*. *Objet petit a* is therefore something like the atom of traditional Lacanian psychoanalysis, precisely because it is irreducible, it is the remainder, the cause, and it produces the gravity around which the rings orbit in their Borromean universe.⁷⁰ Between the symbolic and real rings there is phallic enjoyment, or “JΦ,” and between the imaginary and real rings there is the enjoyment of the Other, or “JA.” Finally, there is meaning, which can be found where the symbolic overlaps with the imaginary. What this means is that the phallic function, if it can be said to be operative in the Borromean universe, must be located in some proximity to *objet petit a*. Moreover, this helps to further establish my claim that the *objet petit a*, which is itself always split through the chain of signifiers (S_2), is the result of the primordial signifier (S_1). Or, to put it another way, *objet petit a* is the result of the intrusion of the phallic function into the first order real.

I would like to close this paper by making mention of a recent discovery made by a Canadian topologist. For the moment, let us presume that there exists a single string looped around and into itself such that the result is a torus of some considerable size (see below):⁷¹



In this model, the string represents the closed loop of the real, an infinite track without barrier—pure immanence.⁷² If we introduce a tri-blade inside of the torus, we may demonstrate a remarkable property: by moving the blade through the entirety of the torus, while rotating at some precisely calculated degree such that it returns to its original starting degree at the end of the loop, the result is that the torus transforms into a perfect Borromean knot. Much like the big bang, then, we end up with more space, more surface area, than existed before the splitting. Research on this effect was presented by Dr. Carlo H. Sequin, a topologist who wrote a paper in the early 2000s named “Splitting Tori, Knots, and Mobius Bands.”⁷³ Sequin’s work is fascinating for its simplicity. His discovery: it is possible to produce a Borromean knot out of a single torus, and not, as it were, out of three interlinked tori (the “chain”). It is unusual that a discovery such as his, which has unthinkable implications for topology, mathematics, physics, psychoanalysis, and countless other disciplines, was not made known until so very recently in our history. In any case, he has demonstrated that one can produce knots of various sorts, including the complex Borromean knot, simply by splitting a torus using the appropriate blades and at the appropriate degree of rotation through-out the material. Perhaps nature already has these splitting machines within itself.

We can find an equivalent notion of “splitting” in Lacanian psychoanalytic thinking: the “splitting” of the subject. The subject is split, or, if we like, barred, through a process in which the subject comes to be constituted as a lack within the symbolic chain. This splitting is a necessary part of the process of the coming-into-being of the neurotic subject and it occurs through the phallic function. Lacan claimed that “one can show that a cut on a torus corresponds to the neurotic subject.”⁷⁴ The cutting transforms the loop into a surface which can then be twisted and stitched back together so as to produce the Mobian surface which so fascinated Lacan. However, Lacan and his followers had not considered that one could produce a cut from inside of a torus itself, as an interruption of infinity, and as a swerve in the real. We should therefore take Žižek at his word when writes that “[f]or Lacan, [...] the Real [...] is also a swerve, a black hole detectable only through its effects, only in the way it ‘curves’ mental space, bending the line of mental processes.”⁷⁵ My claim has been that we should use the principle of Borromean dependence to think all of the

possibilities that exist between the orders: Real (first order, *das Ding*), Real (second order, *objet petit a*), Symbolic (the phallic function), and Imaginary (the transference). Each has its gravity. Lacanian number theory and topology must contend with this problem. The future of Lacanian realism shall be one which maintains the tripartite Borromean position such that the real will have its place and not merely return to it.

Conclusion

Lacan claimed that the real is that which forever returns to its place. However, my claim has been that the real might only be situated within its proper place for psychoanalytic discourse if we cease returning to the formulae passed on to us through secondary literature. Instead, we should interrogate the claim that the real is that which returns to its place within the symbolic order, and, consequently, return to the question of the real itself. It is precisely the real which permits the return, that is, the turning again or revolving around a central pivot of Phi. It is the turning again, usually counter-clockwise and at a 90 degree angle, that introduces the possibility of new discourses in psychoanalysis, politics, and philosophy. Indeed, “revolving” as a word is derived from the French phrase recorded in the 1660s meaning “cause to travel in an orbit around a central point.” What could be more central to the experience of neurotic humanity than the phallus? This orbit, this “revolving” or “returning,” is nothing but the changing of the foundational experience of our neuroses; it is the bending of our psychical orbits toward the production of new perturbations, new subjects, and new signifiers.

I have pursued a number of speculative arguments within this manuscript concerning the real and its place. Incidentally, this “it” which is “its place” relates to the “id” of Freudian thought, and is linked to the middle English derivative for “thing or animal spoken about before.” This “before” could, in turn, be linked to the arche-fossil of Meillassoux’s philosophy. Thus, when Lacan writes that “I must come to the place where the id was” (in one translation of Freud’s famous expression “*wo es war soll ich werden*”), we might claim, now, that the Symbolic and Imaginary orders, which appear to us to be uniquely human (but perhaps are not), *must* come from the “it” of the real, that is, the pre-historic place of things or animals. This method of speculative argumentation is similar to the one in which Freud engaged in his *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), wherein he admitted, and on more than one occasion—as if to emphasize the point, that he was simply pursuing a line of speculation through to its end to see where it might lead him. Of course, this work was largely dismissed by later Freudians as metaphysical non-sense. Lacan claimed that it was an “extraordinary text [...], unbelievably ambiguous, almost confused.”⁷⁶ However, Lacan championed the book, finding in it Freud’s most creative and decisive position on the drive, repetition, and the reality and pleasure principles. Similarly, it is through intensive speculative engagement with the neurotic clinical structures of hysteria and obsession, as they were presented by Lacan, that I have offered

my new theses. Without any doubt, readers shall either feel unsettled by my theses, and reject them in their entirety, or, they shall find in them some measure of novelty, however repetitious their claims. To be sure, these claims are new to the reader precisely because they were hidden in plain sight within the primary texts, like a seed beneath the snow.

Notes

1. At least as early as Seminar XIX, “*ou pire...*” A class given on February 9th, 1972.
2. My translation: “*La définition du nœud Borroméen part de 3. C’est à savoir que si des 3, vous rompez un des anneaux, ils sont libres tous les 3, c’est-à-dire que les deux autres anneaux sont libérés.*” Jacques Lacan. (1974) *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XXII, 1974-5: RSI*. Unpublished. Henceforth cited as *RSI*.
3. Slavoj Žižek, “The Rhetorics of Power,” *Diacritics*, 31.1 (Spring 2001): 91-104.
4. Lacan claimed: “It is easy for you to see that no two rings of string are knotted to each other, and that it’s only thanks to the third that they hang together.” Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XX: Encore, On Feminine Sexuality, The Limits of Love and Knowledge, 1972-1973*, trans. Bruce Fink (New York: Norton & Company, 1998) 124.
5. My translation: “*J’avance dès aujourd’hui... ce que dans la suite je me permettrai de démontrer ...j’avance ceci: le nœud borroméen, en tant qu’il se supporte du nombre trois, est du registre de l’Imaginaire. C’est en tant que l’Imaginaire s’enracine des trois dimensions de l’espace...*” *RSI*. It is also important to point out that in Seminar XV Lacan claimed that you can never have 2 without first having 3. This explains why I do not deal with the number 2, but only with the numbers 0, 1, and 3. See *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, The Psychoanalytic Act: 1967-1968, Book XV*, trans. Cormac Gallagher from Unedited French Manuscripts. Karnac Books. For Private Use Only.
6. My translation: “[V]ous avez tout de suite à vous poser la question: à quel registre appartient le nœud borroméen? Est-ce au Symbolique, à l’Imaginaire ou au Réel?” *RSI*.
7. Jacques-Alain Miller, “Suture (Elements of the Logic of the Signifier),” [1965], trans. Jacqueline Rose (2013) 1-9. Retrieved July 14th, 2014 from <<http://cahiers.kingston.ac.uk/pdf/cpa1.3.miller.translation.pdf>>.
8. Yves Duroux. [1965] “Psychology and Logic,” trans. Cécile Malaspina. Retrieved July 17th 2014 from <<http://cahiers.kingston.ac.uk/pdf/cpa1.2.duroux.translation.pdf>>
9. Gottlob Frege, *The Basic Laws of Arithmetic: Exposition of the System*, trans. and ed. Montgomery Furth (California: University of California Press, 1964) 16.
10. Gottlob Frege, *Concept and Function* (1891) 139. Retrieved July 30th 2014 from <http://fitelson.org/proseminar/frege_fac.pdf>
11. For an overview of the debate see Anthony Kenny, *Frege: An Introduction to the Founder of Modern Analytic Philosophy*. (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1995) 68-77.
12. Kenny 1995, 88.

13. Gottlob Frege, *The Foundations of Arithmetic: A Logico-Mathematical Inquiry into the Concept of Number*, trans. J. L. Austin (Oxford: Blackwell, 1950).
14. This is a variation of what philosophers of mathematics refer to as the ‘axiom of extensionality.’ In this case, it states that two numbers are different if the class of objects for one number has one object which is not in the class of objects for the other number.
15. The symbol which finds itself between each of the two terms is named a “punch” (from the French “*poinçon*”). The original French word has some relation to the word “point” in English. This makes sense given the context of the Borromean knot: there where two rings are brought together, at the point of intersection, is what Lacan names a “point.” Thus, in *RSI*, Lacan says: “There is nonetheless a way to define what is named a ‘point’, namely, that it is something strange, which Euclidean geometry has not defined [...] A point within Euclidean geometry has no dimension at all, zero dimensions. It is contrary to the line [...] [which has] one, two, three dimensions. Is it not, in the definition given to us of a point from Euclidean geometry, that which intersects two straight lines?” [My translation: “*Il n’y en a pas moins moyen de définir ce qu’on appelle un point, à savoir ce quelque chose d’étrange, que la géométrie euclidienne ne définit pas [...] C’est à savoir que le point, dans la géométrie euclidienne, n’a pas de dimension du tout, qu’il a zéro dimension, contrairement à la ligne, [...] qui respectivement en ont une, deux, trois. Est-ce qu’il n’y a pas, dans la définition que donne la géométrie euclidienne du point... comme de l’intersection de deux droites*”] Interestingly, if we separate the French root word for “point” from “poinçon” we are left with “çon,” which means any number of things, including: “cunt,” “asshole,” “shit,” “prick,” and even “bloody.” We are here dealing with the rims of the erogenous zones (e.g., asshole), as well as objects of those zones (e.g., shit). I cannot provide a full account of the punch within Lacanian mathemes. In a sense, I am using it in a fairly restricted way to imply ‘is in some relation with’ (e.g., ‘Object is put in some relation with Object’). However, I do want to point out that a punch represents the possibility of at least four relations for Lacan, including envelopment (‘>’), development (‘<’), disjunction (‘^’), and conjunction (‘v’). For a full explanation I highly suggest the following article: Santanu Biswas, “The poinçon (<=>) in Lacan,” *(Re)-Turn: A Journal of Lacanian Studies* 6 (Spring 2011): 135-147.
16. Miller provided some support for the construction of the aforementioned mathemes: “You will be aware that Frege’s discourse starts from the fundamental system comprising the three concepts of the concept, the object and the number, and two relations, that of the concept to the object [object<=>concept], which is called subsumption and that of the concept to the number [concept<=>number] which I will call assignation. A number is assigned to a concept which subsumes objects.” Miller 2013, 3-4.
17. There are twelve possibilities. See note 15.
18. See Duane Rousselle, “The New Hysterical Question,” *Umbr(a): A Journal of the Unconscious: The Object issue* (2013): 71-87.
19. Miller 2013, 2.
20. Miller 2013, 4.
21. See Rousselle 2013.
22. Adrian Johnston, “Hume’s Revenge: A Dieu, Meillassoux?,” in *The Speculative Turn: Continental Materialism and Realism*, ed. Levi Bryant, Nick Srnicek, and Graham Harman (Melbourne: re.press, 2011) 96.

23. Graham Harman, "Johnston's Materialist Critique of Meillassoux," *Umbr(a): A Journal of the Unconscious: The Object issue* (2013): 29-45; 32.
24. George Boolos, "The Standard Equality of Numbers," in *Frege's Philosophy of Mathematics*, William Demopoulos (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995) 248.
25. See Rousselle 2013.
26. Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book X: Anxiety, 1962-3*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller (London: Polity Press, 2014).
27. Alain Badiou, *The Subject of Change*, ed. Duane Rousselle (New York: Atropos Press, 2013) 85.
28. Badiou, *The Subject of Change*, 85.
29. Alain Badiou, "Introduction to 'Frege / On a Contemporary Usage of Frege,'" *Umbr(a): A Journal of the Unconscious: Science and Truth issue* (2000): 99-115.
30. Kenney 1995, 84. As Frege put it: "'1' is the number which belongs to the concept 'identical with [the object] '0'." Gottlob Frege. (1960) "§77, Our Definition Completed and Its Worth Proved," in *The Foundations of Arithmetic*, 90.
31. Frege wrote "'0' is the number which belongs to the concept 'not identical with itself'." Gottlob Frege. (1960) "§74, Our Definition Completed and Its Worth Proved," in *The Foundations of Arithmetic*, 87.
32. Kenney 1995, 84.
33. Miller wrote: "[i]t is this decisive proposition that the concept of not-identical-with-itself is assigned by the number zero which sutures logical discourse," 5.
34. R. Horacio Etchegoyen, *The Fundamentals of Psychoanalytic Technique* (London: Karnac Books, 2005) 40.
35. Retrieved July 16th, 2014 from <<http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=adjective>>
36. Retrieved July 16th, 2014 from <<http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=adjective>>
37. Retrieved July 16th, 2014 from <<http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=noun>>
38. See my own transcription of this talk at <<http://dingpolitik.wordpress.com/2013/06/04/zizek-versus-badiou-is-lacan-an-anti-philosopher>> Retrieved August 10th 2014.
39. Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), ed. Ernest Jones, trans. C.J. M. Hub-bak. Retrieved August 15th, 2014 from <https://archive.org/stream/BeyondThePleasurePrinciple_633/freud_sigmund_1856_1939_beyond_the_pleasure_principle_djvu.txt>
40. Freud argued that the "main road that leads to the interpretation of dreams" consists of a technique which "asks the dreamer to free himself from the impression of the manifest dream, to divert his attention from the dream as a whole on to the separate portions of its content and to report to us [analysts] in succession everything that occurs to him in relation to each of these portions—what associations present themselves to him if he focuses on each of them separately." Sigmund Freud "Revision of the Theory of Dreams, (1933)" in *Sigmund Freud: New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*, trans. James Strachey (New York, NY: Norton & Company, 1990).

41. See Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book II: The Ego in Freud's Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis, 1954-1955*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. John Forrester (New York: Norton & Company, 1991) 243-4.
42. Jacques Lacan, "Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter'" [1956], *Ecrits*, trans. Bruce Fink (New York: Norton & Company, 2006) 46.
43. Lacan, "Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter,'" 34-5.
44. Lacan, "Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter,'" 35.
45. Lacan, "Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter,'" 12.
46. Mladen Dolar confirmed this view when he wrote: "We can say that in Lacan's early work, where we find the adage 'the unconscious is structured like a language,' the starting point is the logic of the signifier—his concept of the subject, as $\$$, *sujet barré*, the subject without qualities rooted in a lack (that is, the subject without roots), follows from there." Mladen Dolar, *A Voice and Nothing More* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2006) 144.
47. I have adapted Lacan's example for the sake of clarity. The underlying logic remains the same.
48. I have been dealing with Frege's logic of number, which includes a very specialized understanding of the numbers '1,' '2,' and '3.' Lacan's '1-3 Network' also makes use of the numbers '1,' '2,' and '3,' but in a way that might now be confusing to the reader. To avoid confusion I have simply changed the diagram to correspond with the 'A-B' network I have constructed above. The essential logic has not changed.
49. Yves Duroux [1965], "Psychology and Logic," trans. Cecile Malaspina in *Concept & Form, Volume One*, ed. Peter Hallward & Knox Peden (New York: Verso Books, 2012) 85-90.
50. Lacan, "Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter,'" 54.
51. Readers may notice that one of the rings stands completely outside of the other two rings. This further demonstrates that Borromean dependence is not all it is cracked up to be. We shall see that the 'L Chain' puts the symbolic ring outside of the imaginary and real rings, whereas the real ring is wrapped into the imaginary. One possible explanation may be to suggest that Lacan privileged the symbolic ring by constructing it as the absolute envelop of the other two rings. This interpretation is close to Levi Bryant's claim that the Borromean knot is in actuality only knotted from the symbolic, thereby neglecting the real. Levi Bryant, "Notes Toward a Borromean Critical Theory," Lecture at York University, (2013) Cf., <<http://larvalsubjects.wordpress.com/2013/04/02/notes-towards-a-borromean-critical-theory/>> Retrieved August 24th, 2014.
52. Bruce Fink has achieved a remarkable feat with his examination of this logic in the appendix of his early book on the Lacanian Subject. See his "Appendix 1" and "Appendix 2," in *The Lacanian Subject: Between Language and Jouissance* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Books, 1995) 153-72.
53. Some of this interpretation was provided by Bruce Fink. See previous footnote. Fink noted that there have been strikingly few interpretations of the 'L Chain' in the secondary literature. Indeed, he claimed that even those whose work has focused on Lacan's seminar on the purloined letter have completely avoided any discussion of it. However, Fink's interpretation is at odds with at least one other interpretation provided by Dr. Jacques B.

Siboni of the Lutecium School. See Jacques B. Siboni, "Freud-Lacan: Mathematical Models of Desire," [Mailing-list Discussion (1998)] Retrieved August 22nd, 2014 from <<http://www.lutecium.org/pipermail/freud-lacan/1998-October/001502.html>>

54. My thanks to Joady Rousselle for collaborating on this particular break-down of the 'L Chain'.

55. Jacques-Alain Miller, "Extimacy," *The Symptom* 9 (2008). Retrieved August 29th, 2014 from <<http://www.lacan.com/symptom/?p=36>>

56. Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book VII: The Ethics of Psychoanalysis, 1959-60*, trans. Dennis Porter (London: Routledge, 1992).

57. Levi Bryant, *Onto-Cartography: An Ontology of Machines and Media* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014) 258.

58. Dolar, 166.

59. Gilles Deleuze, *Pure Immanence: Essays on Life* (Cambridge, Mass.: Zone Books, 2005) 27.

60. Deleuze, 30-1.

61. Emphases are mine. Slavoj Žižek, "The Descent of Transcendence into Immanence or, Deleuze as a Hegelian," in *Transcendence: Philosophy, Literature, and Theology Approach the Beyond*, ed. Regina Schwartz (New York: Routledge, 2004) 246.

62. See Graham Harman, "Johnston's Materialist Critique of Meillassoux," *Umbr(a): The Object issue* (2013): 29-50.

63. Lacan, *Ethics Seminar*, 76.

64. Lacan, *Ethics Seminar*, 53.

65. "As soon as we try to articulate the reality principle so as to make it depend on the physical world to which Freud's purposes seems to require us to relate it, it is clear that it functions, in fact, to isolate the subject from reality." Lacan, *Ethics Seminar*, 55.

66. As Santanu Biswas has put it: "Lacan once again clarified that the barred condition of the subject is related to the irreducibility of the object *a*, by stating that the 'S' [barred or split subject] has the form of division following the operation because the '*a*' as the remainder of the operation is irreducible." Santanu Biswas, "The Punch," *Re-Turn: A Journal of Lacanian Studies* 6 (2011): 138.

67. This is a phrase used by Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010).

68. Slavoj Žižek, *Less Than Nothing: Hegel and the Shadow of Dialectical Materialism* (New York: Verso Books, 2012) 389.

69. Alain Badiou, whose work has opened many pathways for realist political philosophy, has nonetheless also read Lacan's work in this way: "[t]he real, in its Lacanian conceptual content, is what absolutely resists symbolization, whether carried out by means of mathematics, logic, or topology. This motif recurs over and over: the real of the subject is unsymbolizable." Alain Badiou and Elisabeth Roudinesco, *Jacques Lacan: Past and Present, A Dialogue*, trans. Jason E. Smith (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012).

70. Lacan described objet petit a as something like an 'atom' in his tenth seminar (class of May 22nd 1963). See Jacques Lacan, *Anxiety: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book X: Anxiety*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller (London: Polity Press, 2014).
71. "Torus," from Wikicommons. Retrieved September 20th, 2014 from <<http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/1/17/torus.png>>
72. Lacan's position on the torus was quite different from the one I present here. A full paper could be written on Lacan's use of the torus as a topological investigation into subjectivity. I will forgo such an attempt.
73. Carlo. H. Sequin, "Splitting Tori, Knots, and Mobius Bands," Bridges Conference, Banff, Canada (2005) 211-8.
74. Jacques Lacan. (1966) "Of Structure as the Inmixing of an Otherness Prerequisite to Any Subject Whatever," Symposium ["The Languages of Criticism and the Sciences of Man"] Johns Hopkins Humanities Center. English translation available at LacanianInk. [unknown translator] Retrieved September 20th, 2014 from <<http://www.lacan.com/hotel.htm>>
75. Žižek, *The Puppet and the Dwarf: The Perverse Core of Christianity* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2003) 74.
76. Lacan, Seminar II, 37.