LACAN, DISCOURSE, EVENT:
New Psychoanalytic Approaches to Textual Indeterminacy
Edited by Ian Parker and David Pavón-Cuéllar
ROUTLEDGE

LACAN, DISCOURSE, EVENT: NEW PSYCHOANALYTIC APPROACHES TO TEXTUAL INDETERMINACY

Lacan, Discourse, Event: New Psychoanalytic Approaches to Textual Indeterminacy is an introduction to the emerging field of Lacanian Discourse Analysis. It includes key papers that lay the foundations for this research, and worked examples from analysts working with a range of different texts. The editors Ian Parker and David Pavón-Cuéllar begin with an introduction, which reviews the key themes in discourse analysis and the problems faced by researchers in that field of work including an overview of the development of discourse analysis in different disciplines (psychology, sociology, cultural studies and political and social theory). They also set out the conceptual and methodological principles of Lacan's work insofar as it applies to the field of discourse.

Ian Parker and David Pavón-Cuéllar have divided the book into three main sections. The first section comprises previously published papers, some not yet available in English, which set out the foundations for 'Lacanian Discourse Analysis'. The chapters establish the first lines of research, and illustrate how Lacanian psychoanalysis is transformed into a distinctive approach to interpreting text when it is taken out of the clinical domain. The second and third parts of the book comprise commissioned papers in which leading researchers from across the social sciences, from the English-speaking world and from continental Europe and Latin America, show how Lacanian Discourse Analysis works in practice.

Lacan, Discourse, Event: New Psychoanalytic Approaches to Textual Indeterminacy is intended to be a definitive volume bringing together writing from the leaders in the field of Lacanian Discourse Analysis working in the English-speaking world and in countries where Lacanian psychoanalysis is part of mainstream clinical practice and social theory. It will be of particular interest to psychoanalysts of different traditions, and to post-graduate and undergraduate researchers in psychosocial studies, cultural studies, sociology and social anthropology.

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INTRODUCTION

Lacanian theory, discourse analysis and the question of the 'event'

David Pavón-Cuéllar and Ian Parker

This book presents a profound incursion into the emerging field of Lacanian Discourse Analysis, one that examines key texts that ushered in this field of research, contemporary reflections on it, and examples of its application to diverse discourses. The guiding thread of the reflections and examples of application is the concept of 'event'; i.e. act, surprise or rupture in relation to discourse, structure and determination. By thus reviving such classic tensions as those between act and discourse, voluntarism and determinism, agency and determination or event and structure, the book reveals how the theoretical tradition inspired by the work of the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan (1901–81) can help the discourse analyst deal with those unforeseeable events that seem to escape from the sphere of discursive structures and determinations.

The authors taking up the question of event here are scholarly specialists in the fields of psychoanalysis, psychology and philosophy who come from English-, Spanish-, French- and Italian-speaking countries, all of whom were specifically invited to participate in the book. The reasons for inviting them centred on their theoretical authoritativeness or leadership, the quality of their work and their interest in, or experience with, the topic. Among them we find the pioneers of Lacanian Discourse Analysis, but there are also some whose contributions represent their first foray into this field. Their focuses, referents and theoretical affiliations vary. There are also, logically, significant differences among the strategies adopted by different authors to analyse the question of event. In addition to this issue that all the authors address, there are two other elements that unite them: the Lacanian referent, and their interest in discourse or discourse analysis.

Before presenting, briefly, the 27 chapters included in this volume, we would like to take a moment to discuss the history of discourse analysis more generally, and of Lacanian Discourse Analysis in particular, so as to gain a better appreciation of the importance of the question of event in this field of research.

From discourse analysis to Lacanian Discourse Analysis

The expression 'discourse analysis' designates a heterogeneous and transdisciplinary constellation of more-or-less explicit, systematised methodological conceptions, practical executions and theoretical suppositions, whose only common denominator is the analytical study of the discursive manifestations of language, not only in their widely varied forms –especially written or spoken – but also in their different uses and contexts, be they psychic or cognitive, communicative or interactive, familiar or social, political or historical, ethnic or cultural. Upon recognising that the domains of the human and the discursive are co-extensive, as has been widely supposed for some time now, it becomes understandable that all fields of human activity offer discursive materials for analysis by discourse analysis. We also recognise that discourse analysts are currently proliferating in all the so-called 'human and social sciences' as, in this book alone, we encounter authors from such fields as philosophy, political science, psychology, psychoanalysis, psychiatry and pedagogy.

In the diverse disciplines in which discourse analysis is used, this technique is distinguished clearly from content analysis and other procedures that serve to study phenomena through the discursive articulations of language. But, while those procedures all attempt to go back to some reality that was expressed, represented or reflected in discourse, discourse analysis remains at – concentrates on – the reality of discourse itself; i.e. of words, of language. This does not mean, however, that discourse analysis can simply be assimilated to linguistics, which would limit its field of interest only to the formal system of language that, at times, may be exemplified through its discursive manifestations. Discourse analysis, in contrast, is interested in discursive manifestations as such, as specific, concrete discourses in which real subjects intervene and that interweave psychological and sociological factors, among others.

Although discourse analysis is therefore not to be confused with linguistics, it traces its origins back to that field, specifically to the work of the linguist Zellig Harris (1952), who coined the term 'discourse analysis' to describe 'an analysis of the occurrence of elements in the text' in 'relation to other elements in the text', but not 'to anything else in language', which makes it possible to 'discover something of the structure of the text' and 'learn not only *what* the text says', but also '*how* it says it' (p. 107). The proposed method detects formal 'equivalences' among different segments of discourse (pp. 112–127), makes them explicit through 'grammatical transformations' that put the text into canonical form (pp. 127–134) and predicts possible 'correlations' between the results and certain 'social situations' (pp. 108–109).

After Harris, and especially since the 1960s, discourse analysis separated itself from linguistics to enter the other human and social sciences. Those who practice discourse analysis are not always familiar with Harris' work and, on occasion, do not even present themselves as discourse analysts. Even when they do describe themselves as such, it is clear that they do not form a homogeneous

community of researchers. Rather, they tend to work in different perspectives that advance in parallel, do not share a common unifying heritage, tend not to converge or intersect, and generally remain isolated in their respective theoretical and methodological traditions.

As we strive to orient ourselves, it becomes possible to distinguish a frontier – though one fuzzy at best – between two broad types of perspectives within discourse analysis: on the one hand, perspectives that, under the direct or indirect influence of the critical tradition of French structuralism, tend to favour a position within the ideological, historical or cultural discursive structures that transcend and determine the discourse analysed; on the other hand, the English-speaking academic milieu of sociology and psychology includes perspectives that focus attention exclusively on the immanence of concrete, clearly-delimited discourse analysed from without in a – supposedly – neutral manner. These latter approaches include, for example, conversation analysis, centred on the sequential organisation of verbal interactions (Sacks, 1972); cognitivism, which deals with the mental processes entailed in generating and understanding texts (Van Dijk & Kintsch, 1983); rhetoric, that emphasises the argumentative dimension of discourses (Billig, 1987) and discursive psychology, which studies the construction of psychological phenomena through discourse understood as social action (Edwards & Potter, 1992).

Simultaneously, from the structuralist tradition, we see less limited perspectives opening up, among which we should mention: Marxist-structuralist analysis, which studies the discursive materiality of ideology and its interpellation and causal determination of the subject-effect (Pêcheux, 1969, 1975/1983; Althusser, 1970); Marxist-historicist analysis that accentuates history as the final horizon of discourse analysis applied to literary criticism (Jameson, 1981); archaeology, which reconstructs discursive practices that lead to power and constitute knowledge that is historically determined and institutionally supported (Foucault, 1969/1972) and deconstruction, that breaks down the structure of discourse on the basis of its intrinsic differences and the inconsistencies and omissions it reveals (Derrida, 1967/1976, 1983). We should also include discourse theory, that analyses social and institutional phenomena as discursive political constructions, conflictively articulated and ideologically objectified, whose constitutive elements have an always contingent meaning (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985) and critical discourse analysis, which is interested especially in the interactions between the discursive and non-discursive domains, in the discursive institutionalisation of certain social relations and in the ideological impugnation or reproduction of certain power relations by means of discourses conceived as social practices (Fairclough, 1995).

Critical discourse analysis has attained a relatively advanced and autonomous stage of development within psychology and, more specifically, the current of British critical psychology (Parker, 1992; Parker & the Bolton Discourse Network, 1999). Indeed, it was not long before this current made its debut in the form of a ‘critical discursive psychology’ (Parker, 2002) in which two of the

aforementioned discourse analysis perspectives apparently converge: critical discourse analysis and conventional discursive psychology. In reality, however, in the face of this discursive psychology, *critical* discursive psychology tends to present itself rather as an alternative option clearly ensconced in the structuralist tradition. It is from that position that critical discursive psychology turns to the theory of the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan. Indeed, it is from this very same position that critical discourse analysis in psychology becomes able to adopt the form of Lacanian Discourse Analysis that interests us here.

Lacanian Discourse Analysis

Lacanian Discourse Analysis appeared at a juncture, well described by Frosh (in Chapter 1 of this book), at which qualitative psychology was debating between the deconstructive vision of a human being fragmented in rival discourses, and the humanist conception of a subject whose integrity is accepted as an unquestioned premise and inevitable outcome. Against this ideology of the integral subject, Lacanian psychoanalytical theory offers a rich, subtle and potent argumentation (see Lacan, 1978/1991). Hence, it is understandable that Lacan is invoked by qualitative psychologists, who insist upon the fragmentation of the subject (from Henriques *et al.*, 1984, to Frosh in the aforementioned chapter). This insistence is particularly intense in discursive psychology, but even more so in critical discursive psychology, the orbit in which there emerges, not by accident, the first explicit proposal for a 'Lacanian Discourse Analysis' (Chapter 3 of this book).

From the moment at which it was first explicitly proposed, the denomination 'Lacanian discourse analysis' was so deliberately vague and unrestrictive that it could serve to designate, in a broad sense, and both within and outside of psychology, the most diverse ways of applying Lacan's theory in discourse analysis. We can appreciate this diversity simply by exploring the chapters of this book. What is presented here through the succession of chapters is, precisely, a broad spectrum of illustrations of what we call Lacanian Discourse Analysis. It is important to keep in mind, though, that this general denomination in no way meant to synthesise or smooth over the enormous differences among distinct ways of proceeding, but only to evoke their dual relation to the analytical-discursive turn, to which we referred earlier, and to the Lacanian affiliation, that entails certain shared antecedents and foundations.

If we wished to trace the Lacanian antecedents and foundations of Lacanian discourse analysis, we would have to begin with an exploration of Lacan's own reflections on discourse, and of his analytical approaches to specific discourses, including those found in Sade, Joyce, Duras, Claudel, Freud, Lagache, Hegel, Marx, Schreber, etc. Next, we would take a look at the incursions by specialists in, and followers of, Lacan in the sphere of discourse, and their Lacanian theorisations (e.g. Braunstein, 1982; Bracher *et al.*, 1994; Álvarez, 2005; Gerber, 2007; Negro, 2009). Finally, it is necessary for us to dwell for a time on

the perspectives of discourse analysis that we saw emerge from the French structuralist tradition, all of which received, directly or indirectly, a certain influence from Lacanian theory, and all offer forms of discourse analysis that display a certain consonance with Lacanian Discourse Analysis; though this is not to suggest, of course, that they all present this, properly speaking. The latter was developed only in some of those perspectives, initially in the Marxist–structuralist approach, where we encounter someone who might be aptly considered the first Lacanian discourse analyst: Michel Pêcheux (1969, 1975a, 1975 and Chapter 6 of this book), whose theoretical and methodological elaborations of discourse analysis are deeply impregnated by Lacanian theory. Indeed, were it not for the Lacanian conceptions of the signifier and the unconscious, there would be no discourse analysis such as the one that Pêcheux develops – based as it is on certain fundamental ideas of Althusser – to study concrete expressions of the discursive mechanism of ideology.

After Pêcheux's pioneering work one may discover traces of Lacan in other perspectives of discourse analysis, situated in the structuralist tradition, as in the case of Jameson's Marxism and the discourse theory of Laclau and Mouffe. However, these approaches and others that took centre stage in the 1980s and 1990s tend to favour theoretical speculations on broad perspectives rather than precise, timely methodological considerations. The revival of these considerations, which were plentiful in Pêcheux's work, would have to wait until the decade of 2000–10, when we witnessed the emergence of a number of authors who reflected upon the question of the use of Lacanian theory in discourse analysis in theoretical–methodological terms, primarily in the academic milieu of psychology (Parker, 2000, 2001, and Chapters 3 and 4 of this book; Hook, 2003, 2008; Georgaca, 2005; Pavón-Cuéllar, 2006, 2010, and Chapter 5 of this book; Ducard, 2007; Branney, 2008; Saville Young & Frosh, 2009; Malone & Roberts, 2010). It is in this context that one of the authors represented in this book proposed and elaborated his conception of 'Lacanian Discourse Analysis'; first, in 2005, on the basis of seven key elements of Lacan's work related to the development of the theory of discourse analysis in psychology (Chapter 3 of this book) and, later, in 2010, with the breakdown of those seven elements into 21 more precise aspects of that same Lacanian theory (Chapter 4). It was also in that setting that the first books devoted exclusively to applying Lacanian notions of discourse analysis in social psychology were published (Pavón-Cuéllar, 2006, 2010, and Chapter 5).

Parallel to the aforementioned theoretical–methodological reflections and, often, propelled by them, there appeared multiple works in discourse analysis that went beyond simple theoretical–methodological reflections by daring to cross the threshold of application to analyse concrete discourses using the conceptual resources that Lacan forged. Those Lacanian resources have now been employed to analyse, for example, theoretical considerations of adults in relation to issues of a sexual nature (Glynos, 2000), reflections of children on masculinity (Frosh, Phoenix & Pattman, 2003), therapeutic dialogues (Georgaca, 2001,

2003), discussions revolving around moral decisions in the sphere of mental health (Carlyle, 2008) and autobiographical literary narratives (Courteau, 1999). These resources have also been used to analyse transcriptions of narratives and dialogues from films (Christie, 2006; Parker, 2010), racial or racist statements (Seshadri-Crooks, 2000; Malone & Barabino, 2009; Hook, 2011; Saville Young, 2011), dissident anti-racist and feminist discourses from the Chicano movement (Peña, 2005) and discursive manifestations of green ideology from around the world (Stavrakakis, 2000, and Chapter 2 of this book). In addition to these analyses are explorations of old or new revolutionary Mexican discourses (Buenfil Burgos, 2000; Pavón-Cuéllar, 2006, 2010), rhetoric on the Russian government's foreign policy (Heikka, 1999) and discursive strategies of political legitimization by a president of Argentina (Fair, 2010). To these discourses, and others, one could add those analysed using Lacanian theory in this very book: the writings of Freud (Chapter 19) and contemporary psychiatric and psychological discourses (Chapter 20), the rhetoric of psychoanalysis (Chapter 24) and of *zapatismo* in Mexico (Chapter 17), a stage play about the theatre itself (Chapter 22), and an analysis of discourse in the psychosocial reading of an interview (Chapter 23). One could also add the traditional juridical conception of crime (Chapter 24) and the declarations of a Hispanic judge in the United States (Chapter 21), retrospective narrations on apartheid in South Africa (Chapter 18) and retrospective visions from Serbian cinema on urban resistance to Milosevic (Chapter 26), the language employed by Argentina's *montonero* movement (Chapter 25) and some messages emitted by groups of Mexican drug-traffickers (Chapter 27).

Lacanian Discourse Analysis and an event

The common denominator of the discourses analysed in this volume is that they all posit the question of 'event', also conceptualised as the problem of irregularity and indetermination, of the unforeseen and the unforeseeable, of the eventually subversive and the disruptive; all of which are problematic for a discourse analysis that has traditionally analysed the regular relations and mutual determinations among the elements of discourse and, therefore, seems to leave no place for the unforeseen and the unforeseeable, or for the eventually subversive and the disruptive. In this domain of determination and regularity, irregularity and the indetermination of event would be impossible. The event itself, in what it represents in each case quite apart from its irregularity and indetermination, would become essentially impossible and could only pass by unobserved by a discourse analysis that does not concern itself even with the possible, but only with the real possibilities already realised in the current reality of a concrete discourse.

Badiou identifies 'event' as 'a possibility' that up to the precise moment of its appearance continues 'invisible or even unthinkable' (Tarby & Badiou, 2010: 19). Being unthinkable and invisible, this possibility of event is also impossible

in the universe of possibilities that presents itself to vision and thought. Being impossible in that universe, event also turns out to be inexplicable. When the analysable is finally reduced to the explicable, the inexplicable quite naturally constitutes a problem for analysis. Event constitutes a problem for discourse analysis because discourse analysis, as we established before, tends, by definition, to stop at and focus on the reality of discourse itself, striving not to exit from it, such that that reality appears as a closed totality in which all the elements must be capable of explaining one another, though they cannot explain an event, for if they explained it, then the event would no longer be an event, but simply one more element of the structure.

As Pêcheux denounced at the appropriate time (Chapter 6 of this book), the structuralist error consisted precisely in erasing the event and then reabsorbing it in structure as an element of structure, and conjuring its intrinsic destructuring–restructuring capacity. This error of structuralism, and of certain other perspectives situated within the structuralist tradition of discourse analysis, was also a characteristic mistake of the discourse analysis approaches that developed in the academic milieu of sociology and psychology in the English-speaking world. In this latter case, instead of the event being dissolved in structures that transcend and determine the discourse analysed, as occurred in the discourse analysis of the structuralist tradition, what we witnessed was the reabsorption of the event into the immanent narrowness of the structure of the discourse analysed as a self-subsisting totality.

In the face of the reabsorption of the event into discursive structure, one may react in one of two ways, which turn to psychoanalysis in qualitative psychology and in what is known today as psychosocial studies. On the one hand, from a frequently Kleinian optic, it is possible to vindicate an event whose ineffable, traumatic and purely emotive aspect places it 'outside discourse' (Frosh, 1999). On the other hand, in a more Lacanian focus, the event can be conceived as something clearly irreducible to the discursive structure that discourse analysis analyses, but that simultaneously occurs in the 'scene' of that signifying structure (Lacan, 1953: 317), and as being 'produced' by that same 'signifier' (1986/1992) that would, in fact, also determine – retroactively – 'the appearance of the trauma' as 'something constituted after the event' (Chapter 3 of this book). This Lacanian conception is consonant with the well-known Deleuzian conception of the event, in which 'an event pertains essentially to language, has an essential relation with language' (Deleuze, 1969: 34). In both Deleuze and Lacan, it is language that produces the event. Indeed, in Lacan, the event as discursive production of language appears as the very enunciating act or appearance of the enunciated fact, which also brings us close to the Foucauldian conception of the 'discursive event' as 'historic irruption of an enunciation' irreducible to the 'play of the linguistic structure' (Foucault, 1968: 706).

The Lacanian conception of the event holds the promise of a discourse analysis that is non-reductionist with respect to the question of the event. To fulfil this promise, a Lacanian Discourse Analysis must be able to deal with the

event but *without* either reabsorbing it into the discursive structure, or conjuring up its intrinsic destructuring–restructuring capacity. In effect, this is what we find in the chapters of this book, wherein event is neither neutralised nor reduced to structure. Rather, it is apprehended in its challenging singularity through a polifaceted revalorization in which it acquires the following values:

1 *Value of the real*. Event as the real of the political (Chapter 9), the real intimately tied up with the symbolic and the imaginary (Chapter 14), the real as creative power that changes the coordinates of the symbolic (Chapter 17), the real as rupture around which the symbolic is restructured (Chapter 26) and the real that breaks in and persists as a failure of symbolisation and a Freudian slip or a silence in the symbolic (Chapter 21).
2 *Value of truth*. Event as knowledge without knowing that entails a truth (Chapter 19), a symptomatic emergence of truth (Chapter 27), an irruption of truth in history and the juridical and institutional spheres (Chapter 24), a revelation of truth through repression and the return of the repressed in racism (Chapter 18) and an enunciation of truth that is assumed before the superego materialised in a discourse that speaks only to itself (Chapter 7).
3 *Value of critique*. Event as an act useful for criticising political economy and, more specifically, that of capitalism (Chapter 12).
4 *Value as act*. Event as act (Chapter 26), analytical act (Chapter 20), act of discourse analysis (Chapter 23), discursive act that opens the possibility of an ethical stance (Chapter 22) and act related to social, political and ideological criticism (Chapter 12).
5 *Value as change*. Event as historical change (Chapters 16, 24), change of reason (Chapter 9), change of discourse (Chapters 9, 11), change of relation with the discourses produced by the analytical act (Chapter 20), change that ruptures a situation and restructures a socio-symbolic field (Chapter 26).
6 *Conjunctural value*. Event as a conjunctural and random conjunction of elements (Chapter 15), as a conjuncture whose conditions explain the Lacanian theoretical production of the four discourses (Chapter 10).
7 *Symptomatic value*. Event as symptomatic emergence of truth (Chapter 27) and as a symptom constitutive of the politics of psychoanalysis (Chapter 9).
8 *Analytical value*. Event as the politics of psychoanalysis in culture (Chapter 9), as analytical act (Chapter 20), the act of discourse analysis and of the analysis of discourse analysis itself, in a misinterpretation that allows the exclusion of the analyst, and thus prevents him from remaining in a long-term subjective perspective (Chapter 23).
9 *Philosophical value*. Event as a decisive notion in the configuration of the field of post-structural thought (Chapter 16), and as that whose productive relation with being justifies work on the specifically philosophical, mathematical–ontological axis, as opposed to operations of an exclusively linguistic type (Chapter 17).

10 *Distinctive value with respect to something that just happens*. Event as occurrence in duration, in continuity and in spatial time or the imaginary of self, which is to be distinguished from something that involves only the instant of the unconscious (Chapter 13).
11 *Distinctive value with respect to repetition*. Event as production of something new in a repetition not to be confused with the reproduction of the same thing (Chapter 8), and the taking of the word in which there is conjunction of the categories of subjectification, act and repetition (Chapter 25).
12 *Distinctive value with respect to discourse*. Event as a turn of discourse (Chapter 9), passage or succession between different discourses (Chapter 11), change of relation with discourses (Chapter 20) and rupture in discourse that is later recovered by discourse (Chapter 22).
13 *Distinctive value with respect to knowledge*. Event as subversion of knowledge (Chapter 27) and the appearance of a knowledge outwith knowledge (Chapter 19).
14 *Distinctive value with respect to the subject*. Event as subjectification (Chapter 25), cause of the subject (Chapter 17), revelation of the divided, traumatic subject of the enunciation (Chapter 21), and passage to another subjective position distinct from the previous one (Chapter 20).

The revalorisation of the event offered herein, while inspired principally by Lacanian theory, also recognises diverse mediating theorisations that intervene in each chapter and that imply a particular reading, translation and interpretation of Lacan, as well as an original conception of what Lacanian Discourse Analysis should be. The referents invoked include Kierkegaard (Chapters 8, 13) and Freud (Chapters 7, 13, 18, 19), Heidegger (Chapter 13) and Bakhtin (Chapter 27), Althusser (Chapters 15, 16) and Deleuze (Chapters 11, 27), Foucault (Chapters 11, 14, 21, 27) and Derrida (Chapter 14), Badiou (Chapters 14, 16, 17, 26, 27) and Blumenberg (Chapter 16), Laclau (Chapters 12, 17) and Žižek (Chapters 12, 26). Of course, we are well aware that the positions sustained by these different authors are distinct – indeed, at times diametrically opposed – and incompatible among themselves; but these contradictions and incompatibilities reappear and are transformed, often in strange and disconcerting ways, in the tensions that are played out through the chapters of the book.

The book and its chapters

The 27 chapters of this book are divided into three sections. The first part presents six key texts, each related, in one way or another, to the emergence of Lacanian Discourse Analysis; hence, they can be considered pioneering texts because they uncover for the reader the context in which this field of research blossomed (Chapter 1), because they work in this field for the first time (Chapter 2), because they inaugurate and substantiate that work (Chapters 3, 4, 5)

or because they are precursors, precede it and/or anticipate that which is at stake, especially the question of the event (Chapter 6). The way in which this question is dealt with by Lacanian Discourse Analysis is the guiding thread of the other two sections. As a function of this guiding axis, the second part presents contemporary, unpublished reflections, first from a fundamentally Freudian and psychoanalytical optic (Chapters 7–9), later on the basis of an examination of the historical situation in which Lacan theorised discourse (Chapter 10) and, finally, through the fecund interaction between the Lacanian position and other theoretical referents (Chapters 11–17). The question of event is analysed once again in the third part, but this time in light of examples – also unpublished – of applications of Lacanian Discourse Analysis displayed successively in the ambits of psychoanalysis and Freudian theory (Chapters 18–20), personal experience (Chapters 21–22*), academic research (Chapter 23), history and juridical or institutional settings (Chapter 24), social or political movements (Chapters 25–26) and criminality (Chapter 27).

Even though they all follow the guiding axis of discourse and the event, the chapters summarized above never coincide completely in what they understand by the terms 'discourse' and 'event'. These two concepts are endowed with different meanings and then unfolded through the most diverse elaborations and complications. After a few pages it becomes clear that there is no consensus as to just what these two concepts represent, nor any collective argumentative development that might allow us, finally, to reach shared, definitive, synthetic conclusions. On the other hand, it is equally clear that the chapters share certain concerns and struggle with difficulties that are quite similar one to another. It is thus that they become capable of opening up a new field of work and positing a series of stimulating questions that will surely guide future developments in Lacanian Discourse Analysis.

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* Please be advised that Chapter 22 contains graphic material of a sexual nature, which some readers may find upsetting.

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Part I

LACAN, AND FOUNDATIONS OF A NEW RESEARCH PARADIGM

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1

DISINTEGRATING NARRATIVE RESEARCH WITH LACAN[1]

Stephen Frosh

Much of the appeal of qualitative research to students and academics alike is that it seems to offer a more holistic understanding of the human subject; it seems to oppose the atomizing tendency to be found particularly in psychology, with its reductionist vision of how to explain human behaviour. The impulse among qualitative psychologists is to take a kind of moral high ground in which what is left out of conventional psychology is rescued as in fact most significant – the 'subjectivity' of the subject, the meaning-making activity through which people forge their lives, their narrativizing core. There is a great deal to be said in favour of this: much of psychology is indeed reductionist, mechanical, fissiparous. The brain drives the mind, so let us see which bits of the brain light up when the subject is at work on some task; anxiety floods through us, so let us count the words that disappear from our lexicon as a consequence; people run towards trouble, so let us measure their steps. Qualitative psychology enters here as part of a turn in the so-called 'human sciences' towards the rolling-up of experience into narrative form: without discounting the reality of events, the key research question becomes not what happens to a person, but how this is accounted for, how it is put into a frame that makes sense. This *humanizes* reality, placing the emphasis on the agentic, meaning-making activity of the research (and human) subject.

Over time, the narrative turn in the social sciences has become increasingly important, with much qualitative research sharing its interest in reproducing, or re-presenting, the personal versions of experience that subjects describe. This usually means taking some kind of text that has originated with a person – perhaps in an interview or a diary – and subjecting it to an analytic process that breaks the text down in order to rebuild it in a more convincing way and make it a more coherent narrative. A person tells a story, but on the whole it is not very well told: it has too many twists and turns, too many characters that contradict each other, too many gaps. The researcher examines this and rewrites the text, presenting it as a set of themes that constitute a whole. However fragmentary these themes might be, the research task is to make some sense of them, to tell, that is, a better story. This story can have various tendrils and connections; indeed, it is a regular and important function of qualitative research to uncover

broader contexts that give meaning to the story, for example by reference to societal discourses, or maybe even to the Freudian unconscious (Frosh *et al.*, 2003; Hollway & Jefferson, 2000). But a story it is nevertheless, something with shape and direction: for instance, in Labov's familiar framework, it is structured into an abstract, an orienting passage, a complicating action, an evaluation and a resolution (Labov & Fanshell, 1977). In the course of this, the agency of the participating subject is restored: he or she is made into a speaker, with a point of view, someone positioned in discourse but nevertheless there, speaking to us from the page. We can identify the person through her or his speech; that is what a subject is. Recovering this subjecthood, this special nature of the individual, is a moral task, after all.

What can be wrong with this? On the face of it, it precisely coincides with an ethical and political act of resistance to the totalizing tendencies of globalization and the continually growing cultural hegemony of Western capitalism. It offers a 'voice', as people usually say, to marginalized individuals and groups whose views and experiences would otherwise be discarded – and, indeed, much qualitative work has had this goal and has consequently focused on groups usually pushed out of view through racism, sexism or other modes of oppressive practice (e.g. Mama, 1995). In many ways, the focus on restoring agency has an excellent philosophical and political grounding in Habermas's (1968/1987) notion of emancipatory practice, which, while embedded in a discussion of psychoanalysis, has resonance for all work that purports to rescue the truth of the subject through attending to and repairing broken narratives. Indeed, it might be suggested that the coalescing of hermeneutic approaches in psychoanalysis and narrative approaches in qualitative research around the notion of emancipation is a significant theme in contemporary social science (Frosh, 2006).

Habermas presents a powerful argument to differentiate psychoanalysis from the empirical sciences on the grounds of their differing relationship to a subject–object divide. Empirical (one might say here, quantitative) methods 'aim at disclosing and comprehending reality under the transcendental viewpoint of possible technical control' (Habermas, 1968/1987: 176); psychoanalysis, on the other hand, is premised on the promotion of a meaning-filled link between the analyst and the one 'studied', the object who in being communicated with becomes a subject. More strongly still, *psychopathological* states are characterized by a kind of alienation in which the subject is separated from her or his own subjecthood: that is, experiencing oneself as an *object*, split from one's meanings (wishes, desires, etc., in the Freudian scheme) and thus showing symptoms, is precisely what psychoanalysis sets out to remedy. 'Split-off symbols and defended-against motives unfold their force over the heads of subjects', writes Habermas, 'compelling substitute-gratifications and symbolizations' (p. 255). Psychoanalytic understanding is, therefore, a process not of seeking mechanical causes, but rather of restoring an identity between the subject and her or his own subjecthood. Habermas proposes that: 'the experience of reflection induced by enlightenment is precisely the act through which the

subject frees itself from a state in which it had become an object for itself. This specific activity must be accomplished by the subject itself' (pp. 247–248). The act of interpretation aims to provide for the analysand the opportunity to seize hold of lost or hidden meanings and re-own them; it is consequently a causal process, where cause is located in the reconstitution of transformative meanings and not in the identification of specific psychic facts.

Having been offered such a heavyweight banner under which to march towards an emancipatory approach to the reconstitution of personal meanings, it seems carping to suggest that there might be something wrong with the idea that rebuilding narrative coherence is an estimable goal for those who find themselves on the margins of hegemonic discourses. One can argue that just as individuals benefit in the psychotherapeutic domain from being able to speak their stories and have them reflected back in a way that enables them to be owned, so in the political domain it is precisely through the coherent articulation of subjugated narratives that oppressed groups become empowered. The histories of feminism, gay and lesbian rights and black consciousness are clear examples here. Nevertheless, there is something about this turn to narrative that is disconcertingly familiar from a long series of attempts to redefine identities, attempts that very often result in stronger versions of the same. The margins might contest the centre in this way, for sure, but how much changes? How much of what goes on here is a tactical attempt to give confidence to people who might otherwise lose hope, by telling them that their experiences actually make sense?

I take as my textual source here a brief critique of the trend towards 'narrativism' in psychoanalysis (as in other social sciences) from Jean Laplanche (2003), who argues that making a coherent narrative can be seen as a *defensive* process. Summarizing, Laplanche makes a point that can be taken as a general comment on the relationship between psychoanalytic therapy and psychoanalytic understanding but also has broader implications for the integrating tendency of much qualitative work:

> The fact that we are confronted with a possibly 'normal' and in any case inevitable defence, that the narration must be correlated with the therapeutic aspect of the treatment, in no way changes the metapsychological understanding that sees in it the guarantee and seal of repression. That is to say, that the properly 'analytic' vector, that of de-translation and the questioning of narrative structures and the ideas connected to them, remains opposed in every treatment to the reconstructive, synthesizing narrative vector.
>
> (p. 29)

Limits to making sense, to making connections, have to be set. The point here is that it may be consoling, therapeutic even, to have sense made of one's mystifying miseries, one's uncertainties and partial understandings. It can indeed be

empowering: we are made into agents; we are subjects with something to talk about. We do not even have to be completely sold on the idea of narrative coherence to accept that it might have an important part to play in an ebb-and-flow process of living in the world: understanding and deconstructing might take place sequentially, so that meanings come into the frame, allow identity to be stabilized and defended, and then once this has been absorbed new challenges occur, things get taken apart and have to be struggled with once more. However, even the advocacy of cyclical coherence misses an important point, one that has been central to modernist as well as post-structuralist and postmodern sensitivities and concerns: this is the idea that the human subject is *never* a whole, is always riven with partial drives, social discourses that frame available modes of experience, ways of being that are contradictory and reflect the shifting allegiances of power as they play across the body and the mind. Freud clearly knew this and articulated it in what Laplanche (1997) calls psychoanalysis's 'Copernican revolution', whereby the subject is no longer capable of being taken as the source and repository of psychic life. What postmodernism adds here is the notion that this 'decentring' can never be reversed through somehow returning agency to the subject, because the riven subject cannot be seen as a whole – there is, simply, no external point from which the true story of the subject can be told. Laplanche's (2003) formulation is pretty exact here: the 'properly analytic vector' is 'that of de-translation and the questioning of narrative structures and the ideas connected to them' (p. 29). In other words, however much, for therapeutic and strategic reasons, one might want to make a coherent narrative out of a subject's chaotic account, *don't believe a word they say*.

To summarize so far: there is a need to hold on to this dialectic, this movement between fragmentation and integration, the part and the whole, without desperately seeking resolution. Qualitative research lives in the tension between, on the one hand, a deconstructionist framework in which the human subject is understood as positioned in and through competing discourses and, on the other, a humanistic framework in which the integrity of the subject is taken to be both a starting- and end-point of analysis. In the first approach, which has the advantage of being anti-humanist in the sense of not positing a foundational 'essence', and so is less prone to ideological compromises, there is the recurrent problem of agency and resistance: how can one ever become other than what one is positioned as being? If one is 'positioned' by discourse, how does change ever occur? Criticism of some hard-line post-structuralist accounts is relevant here: for example, Benjamin's (1998) complaint that Lacanian psychoanalysis fails to engage with the 'authorship' of the subject and hence to articulate possibilities for people to grasp their futures differently. In the second approach, visible, for example, in some narrative psychology, it is common to chide psychological research for its tendency to fragment the subject and to present qualitative approaches as a way to return to a holistic understanding of the person. This is presented as an advance in terms of both epistemology and

morality: something special is pointed to, often silently, that works within the subject to act as an irreducible point of resistance, a place of safety or genuineness, which can never be explained away. However, the romantic view that arises from this is not only at odds with some of the more critical perspectives that bear on the emergence of qualitative psychology, but, if one follows Laplanche's argument, it also serves psychosocial functions best understood as defensive. For this reason, it is important to mount a critique of the tendency to produce integrated 'narratives' of experience and to argue for the importance of maintaining the vision of a subject in fragments. In what follows, however, I want to do this without adopting the extreme position in which fragmentation is celebrated: the history of psychosis is as good a place as any to turn to for evidence that being broken into bits is not a subject position to be advocated (Frosh, 1991). Instead, by employing a sleight of hand in which the opposition to the integrating tendency is presented not as *fragmentation* but as *multiplicity*, I will suggest that the aspirations of qualitative work are served best by adopting the notion of an over-determined subject, of a way of being that is 'excessive', too much.

On not saying what can't be said

Once in a while, an academic paper seems to strike some kind of nerve among readers and to be taken up, albeit gently and often by friends of the author, as if it reflects a general sense of something going on. One such paper of mine first appeared in 2001 in an obscure journal, the *International Journal of Critical Psychology*, and was reprinted in the book *After Words* a year later (Frosh, 2002). This seems to have gained much of its audience by virtue of its title: 'Things That Can't Be Said: Psychoanalysis and the Limits of Language'. In it the discursive turn in psychology was praised for the advances it has brought in restoring meaning to psychological investigation, but then criticized on the grounds that 'there exists a large variety of different psychological experiences of considerable emotional force which lie outside narrative—even outside of what can be spoken' (p. 135). The paper goes on to suggest 'that these experiences can be central elements in people's lives, key components of psychological functioning, and that they have a specific connection with trauma and the processing of traumatically troubling events' (p. 135). Following a development of these themes through investigations of gender, psychotherapy and Holocaust testimony, the concluding rhetoric runs:

> Things that can't be said are at the core of our experience, we are what they are. Once they are symbolized, they no longer traumatize as much, it is true, and there is a kind of responsibility to do something with them because of this. But this does not make it easy, and there are times when putting things into words is a deep and painful loss.
>
> (p. 149)

It is pleasing, of course, that this work has to some degree been taken up by others, and that it is part of a broad attempt, by discursive psychologists (e.g. Billig, 1999) as well as by critical psychologists (Parker, 2005a), to look at the way language often references its own 'aporias', its own gaps into which aspects of experience fall. I want to return to these points later. What is also striking about some of the responses to this paper is that, despite its explicit disavowal of any spiritual goals – any paean to some essential, irreducible element of human subjectivity – this is how the idea is often used. This reading of the extra-discursive *celebrates* the fact that some things 'can't be said' and takes it as meaning that these things have to be left alone, they have to be seen as that which cannot be reduced, quantified, qualitivized, narrativized or whatever. They can only be pointed towards, left not-known because they are so mystically precious. This seems partly to be a Zeitgeist issue: the search for meaning is always with us, and in its current form the marginal position is to look away from, on the one hand, materialism, and, on the other, organized and oppressive religious fundamentalism, and towards something personally whole, spiritually rewarding and philosophically sublime. This kind of marginality again makes moral claims: whatever you might do to the human subject, however you might dis-integrate her or him, something precious remains untouched. Perhaps we are back to the soul here, though few people will admit as much.

The line I actually take on 'things that can't be said' is rather different from this. It takes seriously the experience described by many people, perhaps by everyone, that somehow language never quite encompasses reality, that the way we talk about things might indeed have all the performative, effective and constructive functions described in the literature – that we might indeed be positioned by language – and yet the feeling remains that whenever we try to say something completely, the saying of it misses the point. That we keep on trying is a testament both to the importance of putting things into words and to the defensive elements of this narrative: without it, we spiral into nothingness. Lacanians might say of this that the Symbolic defends us against the Real, which by no means implies that we should get rid of the Symbolic, only that it is always a mode of covering-over, however much the world and its subjects depend upon it. It also references Kristeva's notions of the semiotic as an 'underside' of language and particularly of abjection (Kristeva, 1982): that which is excluded from the Symbolic as the disgusting, death-invoking thing that exists prior to language and threatens to plunge the subject back into non-existence. In effect, language both expresses abjection (semiotically) and (symbolically) defends against it. But if something cannot be captured in narrative, then what can be done with it – and how are we to know it at all? My view is that we are not in the presence of a kind of mute pointing – 'there is the Real, and there, and there . . .' Nor are we in the realm of the transcendent, absorbed into a Oneness that cannot be spoken of because it is either too 'Other' to have form, or too immanent to allow us to see it. The reason that some things cannot be said is not that they are mystical and the language in which to express them is absent, but rather that language itself

produces gaps and difference, that as we speak and therefore inhabit the Symbolic, we engage in a process of exclusion. This exclusion has two related forms: first, it reflects the partial way in which narrative proceeds, always striving towards a linear account of what is multifarious, uncertain and complex, always seeking to capture something that eludes it; and, second, it actively rejects what cannot be borne, what stands outside language as its radical other.

The first of these two forms of exclusion might be usefully indexed through the idea of multiplicity. There are, simply, *too many* ways of speaking about things, and to do them justice one would have to use all these different ways, all at once. Something is always left out precisely because something more can be said, and each new way of saying will add a new dimension, often contradicting what has gone before. This might sound overly jubilant about the prospects for language, but it is only another way of saying that our experiences are made up of overlapping bits and pieces, Lacan's (1978/1991) famous 'bric-à-brac', and that an exhaustive comment on all the potentialities of experience in all possible ways can never be achieved. In this framework, it is not so much that there are things that absolutely cannot be said, but rather that trying to say them all at once is impossible. Why should this be so? Not only because there are so many ways of articulating something, all of them different, none of them absolutely precise; but also because, given the reflexive nature of human consciousness, as one pronounces upon experience, so the experience itself must change. Otherwise, what would be the point of psychoanalysis or any other form of verbal psychotherapy? The speaking of the thing acts as a wager, a point at which something is risked into existence; the very act of doing that, as a mode of Hegelian externalization, means that it is worked on in the presence of the Other – whether that be the 'actual', interlocutive other of the analyst or the imagined other of the speaker her- or himself. This is, as it happens, exactly the paradigm of relational thinking: as Butler (2004) puts it, 'To ask for recognition, or to offer it, is precisely not to ask for recognition for what one already is. It is to solicit a becoming, to instigate a transformation, to petition the future always in relation to the Other' (p. 25). We do not recognize the other and get recognized ourselves through a linguistic process of exchange in which nothing changes; rather, we are called into being through the process of being recognized, and that in itself means we have some of that otherness laid upon us. So Winnicott is displaced by Lacan, and rightly so: the subject is not confirmed in what it is by the other's ministrations, by a process of accurate reflecting back of what is really there; instead, the subject is produced as something else by what the other does. Back in the terms of narrative, one can say that putting something into language changes it; as we speak, so something shifts.

Polymargins

The margins are not, therefore, places for some truer essence of the human subject, and certainly not just for a technology for the recovery of something

that the centre (e.g. in the form of mainstream empiricism) has left out. The margins are polymorphous, in this instance meaning that they celebrate additional layers of speech out of which the complexity of experience can emerge, with the key signifier of marginality being the refusal to hold to any one, specific narrative. There is no such whole narrative, not because of the ineffability of the human spirit, but just because that is the way things are. There are always 'plentimaw fish' in the sea of stories (Rushdie, 1990); power is marked precisely by its abolition of these plentimaws, by its insistence on pinning everything down. Being central has the sense of being secure, authoritative, knowing; being marginal suggests vulnerability, fragmentation, quibbling, arguing. It is perhaps no accident in this respect that one of the great documents of a marginal, or at least diasporic, people, the Talmud, purports to be authoritative (the oral Law, given by God on Mount Sinai), but in fact is as polymorphous as one can get. Not only are there variant readings, including two major but different versions (the Babylonian and Jerusalem Talmuds), but every page instantiates the value of argument. The main text lies in the centre, this being the Mishna, which presents a reading of the law as hinted at in the Bible, and the Gemara, which is a commentary on – or, rather, a tussle over – the meaning of the Mishna. Around the edges of the page lie the great commentary of the eleventh-century rabbi known as Rashi (some of it in ancient French) and opposite that are those of his followers and other commentators, who much of the time are at odds with one another. All this is studied as if it presents authoritative truth, but this process of study is itself a mode of ironic enactment: students are in fact learning the multiple contradictory debates that sustain the process of argument and critique that in turn maintains a lively, healthy marginality. In a sense, this multi-voiced text, with the arguments it spawns from one generation to the next, is a guerrilla force, a parody. If someone had the 'truth', that would be the end of it, but no-one does; there are only 70 (meaning, innumerable) ways of understanding.

There is much to be said in favour of this '70' and its wariness of anything that moves us towards adhering to a single truth. This also promotes wariness of the kinds of psychoanalytic approaches to material that find in it a set meaning: for example, psychoanalytic approaches to qualitative research that see 'underneath' a narrative the true significance of what the subject is saying, normally in the form of a set of defences against anxiety. As in the clinical situation, so in the research setting: interpretation of this kind moves us rather briskly towards what Parker (2005b: 108) sees as a major problem with Hollway and Jefferson's (2000) 'Free Association Narrative Interview' procedure: that it is individualizing, essentializing, pathologizing and disempowering; the key complaint being that it is organized around a pre-set discourse that imposes an expert account on the research participant in a typical (of psychoanalysis as well as psychology) 'researcher knows best' set of moves. Any fixing of the meaning of the subject in this way risks the loss of the polymorphous tendencies that upset claims to truth and hence maintain the healthy marginality of a resistive subject. Finding a specific psychodynamic source for a subject's 'choice' of location in discourse

(e.g. Frosh *et al.*, 2003) now seems to risk a kind of ungrounded reductionism that fixes subjectivity in one predetermined grid, usually that of a biographical difficulty with one's parents.

I have a different account to give here, which picks up on the Lacanian take on discourse analysis so usefully provided by Parker (2005a) and will eventually bring into play the second kind of exclusion that constitutes what 'cannot be said'. In the course of his rich paper, Parker comments:

> The reflexive position of the discourse analyst is an issue here, for when one approaches a text in hermeneutic mode as something we can 'understand' because it is like our own framework (or even because we recognize it as being the mirror opposite of what is familiar to us), this, for Lacanians, would betray the stance we are taking as lying on 'the line of the Imaginary' (imagining that we interpret from outside the text). The task of an analyst is to work on 'the line of the Symbolic' (working within the domain of the text), and to open up the text by disrupting and disorganizing it so that its functions become clearer, including its functions for us.
>
> (p. 177)

This is not the place to engage in detail with the technicalities that follow from this – after all, Parker warns us: 'If there are elements of technique that can be derived from the account in this paper, they will need to be explicated and warranted each time for each piece of analysis' (p. 178). However, the idea that we should approach a text not as something we can understand, but rather as something waiting to be opened up, is precisely in line with my argument for the polymorphism of marginal, 'disintegrated' qualitative research. Faced with the narrativizing tendency in which we seek to integrate what present themselves to us as fragments, I want to promote the 'disruptive and disorganizing' momentum of a reading strategy that insists on there being too many possible interpretations, too much going on. However, as the meanings that surface thereby slip away, there is a further suggestion of something threatening that gives momentum to all this productivity, undermining meaning at the same time as it makes it happen.

Holding on to 'disrupting and disorganizing' readings is not an easy task, because the sense-making tendencies of interpretive analyses are deeply engrained culturally and – if the account given earlier has anything to it – fulfil defensive functions against the terror of personal disintegration. In addition, narrative material is often worked-over so that it does in fact 'make sense', either because it is constrained by the questioning of an interviewer, or because the stories told by a speaker are rehearsed, in whole or in part. Indeed, having expended so much effort in articulating the importance of not being seduced by narrative, in an earlier version of this paper I then produced a loving, rather romantic and holistic interpretation of the text to be presented – coming 'full

circle and ending up facing backwards', in the evocative words of one reviewer. This is perhaps not only a personal failure, but a symptom of the difficulty and of the strength of the pull towards integration; falling into the abyss is not an easy choice.

Note

1 This chapter is extracted, with kind permission of the author, from Frosh, S. (2007) 'Disintegrating qualitative research', *Theory & Psychology*, 17, 635–653.

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2

THE DISLOCATION FACTOR IN GREEN POLITICS[1]

Yannis Stavrakakis

Although the 1990s witnessed a vast proliferation of publications attempting to analyse Green politics and Green ideology, some of the basic questions that shaped this whole field of research remain crucial and largely unanswered. Most prominent among these questions are surely the following: What is the background against which the need for the articulation of Green ideology emerges? Why does that need arise, and how? More generally, to what do Green ideology and Green politics owe their emergence, and what factors can account for their development? In this chapter I shall try to move beyond standard, but to a large extent unsatisfactory, answers to these questions, towards an analysis of the emergence and development of Green ideology informed by discourse theory and particularly by what I shall call a theory of dislocation.

What I mean by 'theory of dislocation' is a set of theoretical assumptions and analytical tools articulated around the concept of dislocation as it is introduced by Ernesto Laclau. A theory of dislocation, which is here understood as an integral part of 'discourse theory', differs from other more traditional forms of analysis in the sense that it elevates to the epicentre of our discourse what is foreclosed in more traditional approaches. It focuses on the element of negativity inherent in human experience, on the element of rupture and crisis threatening and subverting our social ideological forms, the field of social objectivity. Starting from a negative ontological framework, according to which all human constructions constitute attempts to institute an impossible object (society) and master an excessive element (the real in Lacanian terms) that always escapes our means of representation, theory of dislocation belongs to a type of theorisation and political analysis that is based on the assumption that understanding social reality is not equivalent to understanding what society is (describing the positive forms our social constructions take) but what prevents it from being.[2] What prevents it from being what it promises to be is the force of dislocation, which is also – this is the crucial part for the analysis developed here – what generates new ideological attempts to reach this impossible goal.

Green ideology is not a single, direct expression or representation of nature but entails a new imaginary/symbolic answer to the dislocation of our previous conceptions of it. Furthermore, this new conception is invested with political

significance because it coincides with a political dislocation and serves as an attempt to cover over, to suture, this dislocation also. Let me make clear at this point that I am not arguing that whenever we have these two dislocations we shall necessarily have the emergence of Green movements; this will depend on the particular contingent hegemonic play.[3] What I will try to show is that in our particular historical example these two dislocations were administered in a way that produced Green ideology.

Let me now present in a more detailed way the two dislocations that, as I argue, are related to the emergence and development of Green ideology. My argumentation will be supported by a variety of empirical examples taken from a number of mostly European contexts.

The first dislocation . . .

Surely, one 'necessary' dislocation is the dislocation of nature as exhibited in our perception of the ecological crisis. As we have already argued, this is not only a real experience of ecological crisis. It is primarily a dislocation of our imaginary/symbolic construction or mediation of our relationship to (the real of) nature and of the concomitant construction of environmental crisis as a pressing social problem.[4]

The field of our relationship to nature is one of the fields in which the real is continuously intersecting with our symbolic and imaginary reality, with our constructions of objectivity. It is in that sense that Žižek presents ecological crisis as initiating a period of continuous, everyday encounter with the real.[5] Here, the real, as introduced by Lacan, is that which always escapes our attempts to incorporate it in our constructions of reality, constructions that are articulated at the level of the image (imaginary level) or the signifier (symbolic level). The encounter with this impossible real is exactly what dislocates our imaginary/symbolic constructions (ideologies, paradigms, and so on). Ecological crisis is characterised by such a dislocatory dimension. In fact, the unpredictability and severity of natural forces have forced people from time immemorial to attempt to understand and master them through processes of imaginary representation and symbolic integration.[6] This usually entails a symbolisation of the real of nature, the part of the natural world exceeding our discursive grasp of nature. The product of this symbolisation has been frequently described as a 'story' or a 'paradigm' about how the world works. We can trace such a story, or many competing stories, in any civilisation or cultural ensemble. In modern secular techno-scientific societies it is usually science that provides the symbolic framework for the symbolisation of nature. Predicting the unpredictable, mastering the impossible, reducing the unexpected to a system of control, in other words symbolising, integrating the real of nature, is attempted through the discourse of science and its popularisation in the media.

Now, as we have pointed out, these discursive mediations instituting human reality are not eternal or transcendental but change over time. It seems that today

we are witnessing such a gradual but important change. What is asserted by many analysts of the environmental crisis is that 'a new story about the relationship between humans and nature is emerging in western societies that contrasts sharply with the story that currently dominates public discourse'.[7] Indeed, if we call this story a paradigm, generalising the Kuhnian application of the term, if we understand it as a discursively constructed belief structure that organises the way people perceive and interpret their relation to nature, then we could assert that we are witnessing a gradual paradigm shift.[8] It has been suggested that this is a shift from a Dominant Social Paradigm (DSP) to a New Environmental Paradigm (NEP).[9] Most importantly, this shift is produced by the dislocation of the old paradigm and the need for a new discursive structure to fill the lack produced by this dislocation.

At this point, it is important to keep in mind that the lack of meaning produced by a dislocation can activate a plurality of reactions. As Žižek has put it, one can continue to stick to the old paradigm, pretending that the dislocation does not affect it, or engage in frenetic environmental activism, identifying with new paradigms, new stories, new ideologies.[10] The direction of the response depends on the course of action that seems to be more capable of neutralising the terrorising presence of this impossible real, more capable of covering over the lack of meaning in question and of providing the greater feeling of 'security'. This means that subjective responses to such situations cannot be predicted in advance, nor do they follow any rational rules. In cases where the dislocation is severe and the symbolic means to articulate a new response are not *available* it is even possible for social actors to ignore its implications for their life. In fact, as Beck has put it:

> as the hazards increase in extent, and the situation is subjectively perceived as hopeless, there is a growing tendency not merely to accept the hazard, but to deny it by every means at one's disposal. One might call this phenomenon, paradoxical only at first glance, the 'death-reflex of normality'. There is a virtually instinctive avoidance, in the face of the greatest possible danger, of living in intolerable contradiction; the shattered constructs of normality are upheld, or even elevated, as if they remained intact.[11]

Beck quotes Patrick Lagadec who, in his exposition of major accidents and the reactions to them, continuously comes up against the phenomenon that the people most gravely affected by these accidents are frequently those who are most determined to repress them. Lagadec presents the empirical example of the Seveso accident and its victims:

> Many did not criticise those who denied the hazards arising from dioxin. On the contrary, they displayed a truly boundless trust in those who played the dangers down, while those who stressed the toxicity of

> dioxin but knew no appropriate counter-measures met with bitter and occasionally pedantic criticism.[12]

Lagadec continues:

> The populations' scepticism and indignation were most apparent when the people evacuated from the zone of greatest danger . . . got into their cars on the morning of Sunday 10 October, and returned to Seveso. They broke through the barbed-wire fence and moved back into their homes. For hours the contaminated zone became virtually the theatre of an uncanny spectacle. In the black comedy that ensued, the actors played out their lives in the safe and familiar world of the past, the world prior to the disaster that had left the scene largely intact. The houses and gardens, the grass and the countryside it all looked so hospitable! People invited each other to dinner or picnics. This 'authentic' spectacle only came to an end when the police and gendarmes were deployed, and when the provincial and regional authorities appeared.[13]

Sticking to the old paradigm, to the old symbolisation, is not, however, the only response to such a catastrophe or a crisis. In fact, as far as it concerns the general environmental crisis, it could be suggested that one of the dominant responses to this dislocation has been the identification of the public with what we have called a 'New Environmental Paradigm'. This paradigm is built on the dislocation of the previously dominant view of our right to dominate nature, this domination being fantasised as an operation with no hazards and no limits. What is shown by the current environmental crisis, the environmental dislocation, is in fact that there are some limits, limits to growth and economic expansion, limits imposed by the real of nature to which the public is becoming sensitive.

This productive/ontological character of dislocation is not something surprising. Milbrath, at the end of his analysis, an analysis very near to our own, asks the following question: 'nature can use its fury to get us to listen, even when we do not wish to. Must we always learn the hard way, by death and destruction?'[14] The answer must be affirmative, although this affirmation is something we easily forget. Dislocation, with all its disruptive power, can be found at the root of all paradigm, discursive, or ideological shifts. Even the romantic idealisation of nature in the late 1800s, which generated the first wave of conservationist environmentalism, can only be understood as a reaction to the social dislocations of the period. The idealised conception of nature provided a source of stability and harmony that attempted to cover the lack produced by these dislocations.[15] It was, again, dislocatory events such as Chernobyl that reinforced the current wave of environmentalism, initially produced by environmental problems such as acid rain, toxic waste and so on. As Dalton has put it, 'the Chernobyl nuclear disaster in 1986 may be the event which finally changed the course of contem-

porary European politics on environmental issues'.[16] Wiesenthal has also pointed out that events with great dislocatory power, such as Chernobyl, bring forward a 'that's enough' logic, which can facilitate a paradigm shift, an identification with a new discursive ensemble. It is these striking incidents that prompt new innovative interpretations, and suggest new routes of action.[17]

People involved in Green politics seem to be aware of the tremendous power of such dislocations in facilitating a change in the direction of 'Greening' public opinion. The introduction of radical environmentalism in Denmark presents a paradigmatic case. In a society that largely neglected environmental issues, Green activists chose to *simulate* environmental dislocation, anticipating that this violent event would result in an identification with radical environmentalism. They enacted the following happening in a meeting of a respectable natural history society at the University of Copenhagen in March 1969. This is how one of the participants describes the events:

> We locked them all in. We were about twenty people. After we had locked the doors, we cut off the ventilation and started to poison them. It was pretty violent. We got up on the stage and talked about air pollution. We burnt garbage and tobacco in large quantities. We poured waste water from a nearby factory in an aquarium with goldfish who slowly died . . . And we had taken along a wild duck which we covered with oil. 'Come and save it', we screamed. 'You talk about pollution. Why don't you do anything about it?' Finally we cut off its head to end its suffering, and we walked down along the first row of chairs so that all who were sitting there got blood on their clothes. After an hour we opened the doors and said that we wanted to start an environmental movement, and that the founding meeting was being held in the next room.[18]

Environmental dislocation, however, is not a sufficient condition for the emergence of Green politics and Green ideology. Nor is it enough to administer such a dislocation in the direction of constructing a New Environmental Paradigm. There is no necessary link between the development of so-called 'environmental consciousness' and Green politics *per se*, or the construction of a Green political ideology. This so-called Greening of consciousness can be articulated within pre-existing ideological discourses. Besides, environmental dislocation can be administered in ways not leading to the Greening of a society. Although Green ideology cannot be articulated before the traumatic experience of environmental dislocation because without it nature is not cathected with any importance, this dislocation does not lead directly to the emergence of Green ideology.

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In fact, it has been argued that wherever Green identifications occurred, the experience of environmental dislocation was coupled with another fear

resulting from social and political dislocations. Dickens's analysis of the *Mass Observation Archive* leads to such a conclusion:

> for some people, analogies are being made between on the one hand unpredictable natural disasters and on the other hand the feeling of insecurity deriving from increasingly globalized economic and social conditions. This suggests that some people are, albeit unconsciously, projecting their personal fears in the social world out to the natural world . . . It would be difficult to argue, therefore, that the deterioration of the physical environment is, on its own, the cause of the recent resurgence in environmentalism. Rather, such politics are at least as much a commentary on people's social circumstances, analogies being made between these circumstances and their sense of alienation from other aspects of society.[19]

This view is supported by various personal histories depicted in interviews contained in the archive. The implication of this is that an increasing number of people look for a solution to problems such as unemployment and economic deterioration in Green ideology. Now, although this is undoubtedly true, this moment in fact *follows* the emergence of Green ideology, and concerns its hegemonic appeal. What is not mentioned here is another important dislocation. If today people are increasingly looking to Green ideology in order to solve these problems, this means that previously hegemonic identifications (from the labour movement up to the limits of the radical tradition, not to mention the right wing of the political spectrum) have been dislocated. Our argument then runs as follows. For Green ideology to emerge, what was needed, besides environmental dislocation, was the dislocation of a certain political tradition or ideological field (it was the radical tradition that happened to perform this role), a dislocation partially resolved by making nature or the NEP the core of a new ideological rearticulation. This process produces an appealing new object of identification as a potential solution to the social problems around which hegemonic struggle currently takes place.

What I am arguing, in other words, is that a dual dislocation is the necessary precondition for the emergence of Green ideology. This is not a metaphysical point. This emergence was not a necessity but a contingent development, which, however, had very precise conditions of possibility. Dislocation is the concept we can use in order to facilitate an analysis of the conditions of possibility related to this area of contingency. This is also stressed by Adrian Atkinson if one connects his conception of crisis with that of dislocation. Atkinson speaks of two crises: 'amongst those who do perceive our age as one of crisis there are two almost completely different sets of notions as to what is involved'.[20] The first of these crises is what we have been calling the environmental dislocation, a growing concern and fear that the way in which our society is making use of the biosphere is not sustainable even in the medium term. The second one is a political dislocation. Atkinson especially stresses, in this respect, the collapse of social democracy,

socialism and communism. One should not underestimate the effect of these dislocations on the identity of people involved in left-wing politics:

> For many these changes have precipitated personal crises that turned to new opportunities or resignation, but the general reaction has not been one of the kind of tension associated with crisis but rather of a quiet falling away of value structures into a life process that seems effortlessly to carry all along with it. In so far as this has generated a sense of crisis, this has been one of intellectual concern with the wisdom of the changes in train and an anxiety with regard to the ultimate social, political and cultural settlement that might evolve out of the current rapid metamorphosis.[21]

Atkinson has very successfully shown how the fear produced by these dislocations initiated a quest for new identifications and new ideologies that would fill this ideological lack.

In that sense, Atkinson's view is very close to the idea that in the basis of the emergence of Green ideology one can detect a dual dislocation: a dislocation of the way our relationship to nature has been symbolically negotiated up to now, and a second dislocation, of a political tradition. The first dislocation elevates the idea of nature to a virtual nodal point, a potential master or empty signifier that contingently came to articulate around it a whole ideological edifice as an answer to the second dislocation. The crisis of the left – a contingent coincidence – created the need for a rearticulation of radical politics, and nature, as constructed within the NEP, was historically *available* as a potential nodal point with enormous power and social appeal.[22]

This is, then, the logical structure of our argument regarding the second ideological dislocation. Green ideology did not exist in the 1920s or the 1940s. The fact that it has become an object of identification can only mean that previous identifications have failed. The need to identify with something new can only arise after the failure/dislocation of our previous identifications (in the same sense that we have argued that the articulation and the identification with the NEP can only be understood as following the dislocation of an older social paradigm that regulated our relationship to nature). But this logical argument is not enough. One has to show that it holds true in different concrete cases. What is, however, the empirical evidence for this second political dislocation? Although the argument presented here suggests that such a dislocation can be found wherever a Green ideology is articulated, I will limit myself to presenting only a couple of examples from different political contexts.

In Hulsberg's analysis of the German Greens, it is evident that one of the factors that most strongly influenced the emergence of Green ideology and of the German Green party has been the failure of the Marxist left and the left in general during the 1960s. Far from being a purely ecological phenomenon, Green politics and the formation of the German Green party was much more the result of the

concrete social situation in which a crucial role was played by the failure of the Comintern models of revolution and the erosion of the potential force of the labour movement and social democracy in general.[23] It is true that in the German context, the 1960s and 1970s have signalled an acute disillusionment of the left, which led to phenomena such as left-wing terrorism and had a profound effect on German society.[24] This was more so for the politically active younger generation: 'violence, fruitless theoretical discussions and conflicts with their immediate surroundings led many students to search for a new context in which to overcome their own isolation. The ecology movement provided an important outlet for them to express their dissatisfaction.'[25] This failure/dislocation of the left has been a central ideological theme also for the movement of the *Spontis*, a source of great inspiration and powerful influence for the Green movement:

> the left, argue the *Spontis*, has failed to take part in the revolt of life against the world of death, which they describe as prisons, lunatic asylums, family structures, schools and war. This failure is caused by its overestimation of analysis and knowledge.[26]

The role of the Green party as filler of the lack produced by the failure of the left has also been reinforced by the particular German political setting. The German Greens

> filled a gap in supply of a kind that was unknown in the political systems of other western European states, namely, the specific German lack of a socialist opposition, resulting from the division of the country, the cold war, and the semi-official anti-communism.[27]

It is the case of the Netherlands, however, that is essential to our argument. Here the articulation of a Green ideology and the emergence of a Green party followed the dislocation of dominant left ideologies, ideologies that were previously expressed by a series of Dutch parties, namely the Communist Party of the Netherlands (CPN), the Pacifist Socialist Party (PSP), the Political Radical Party (PPR) and the Evangelical People's Party (EVP). Here, as in Germany, the emergence of the new 'Green Left' party, which resulted from the merger of these parties, followed the dislocation of their respective ideologies, 'notably, the abandonment of the class struggle as the sole engine of history and the dislocation of the idea of the vanguard of the working class'. In any case, 'cooperation among these parties started in the 1970s, stimulated by the introduction of new left ideas and the rise of new social movements, combined with the declining electoral fortunes of the parties themselves'.[28]

Our argument that the emergence of Green ideology and Green politics presupposes a dislocation in a certain part of the ideological spectrum, to which it constitutes a response, is further reinforced by the failure of a 'pure' Green party to develop despite the favourable social and political conditions. This is what Voerman has described as a *paradox*:

> Despite the low electoral threshold (a party requires only 0.67 per cent of the vote to obtain a seat in the national parliament) and the presence of a large electoral reservoir in the shape of relatively strong new social movements in the 1970s and early 1980s, a Green party did not enter the Dutch parliament.[29]

In fact, when a deep Green party was set up in 1983 'it suffered failure after failure'.[30] It developed only as a result of the *rapprochement* of already existing parties as part of their attempt to re-articulate their ideology and enhance their electoral prospects. This is what Voerman calls the second Dutch *paradox*. He even concludes his paper with the expression of an *aporia* that shows the inadequacy of standard theoretical approaches to Green politics: 'In theory, then, there remains room in the political landscape of the Netherlands for a deep Green party. In practice, it has been demonstrated that such a party will not grow in the present Dutch electoral climate.'[31] The paradoxical puzzle in which Voerman finds himself and the inadequacies of his theoretical tools to approach political practice are due to the fact that, as I have tried to suggest, the deciding factor in this case is the factor of dislocation. The successful Dutch Green party ('Green Left')[32] owes its 'success' to the fact that its development was stimulated by a very real need for re-articulation, the need for a new ideological construction following the dislocation of the ideological profiles of the radical parties that were united or merged to form it. No other 'pure' Green party managed to develop, besides the favourable conditions, because it did not correspond to any preceding dislocation in the ideological spectrum; there was no room or real need for it.[33]

Conclusion

To recapitulate, our hypothesis concerning the emergence of Green ideology runs as follows. Green ideology is articulated as a result of the temporal and contingent coincidence of two dislocations. These dislocations constitute its *conditions of possibility*. The first is a dislocation of our previously hegemonic mode of symbolising the real of nature. This dislocation of what has been called the 'Dominant Social Paradigm' led to the articulation of a 'New Environmental Paradigm' simultaneously investing the signifier 'nature' with major social importance. The second is a dislocation of the Western radical tradition. For a variety of reasons, at some point in time radical ideologies can no longer perform the job of every ideology, that is to say, to master the real of society, the impossibility of society in other words, to provide 'credible', hegemonically-appealing answers to social dislocations taking the form of 'social ills' such as unemployment and inequality. This dislocation produced a lack in the ideological level, which had to be covered over if the radical side of the political spectrum still wanted to appear as a hegemonic force, an administrator of social dislocations. In order to do that the radical tradition was in need

of a re-articulation, a new investment of its potential. This new articulation was performed around 'nature', a highly cathected signifier of public discourse and discussion; a signifier with a radical potential. What emerged was Green Ideology; this is probably the closest we can get to the caprices of humanity and nature and their relation to Green politics.

Notes

1 This chapter is extracted, with kind permission of the author, from Stavrakakis, Y. (2000) 'On the Emergence of Green Ideology: The Dislocation Factor in Green Politics', in D. Howarth, A. Norval and Y. Stavrakakis (eds), *Discourse Theory and Political Analysis: Identities, Hegemonies and Social Change*, (Manchester, Manchester University Press).
2 E. Laclau, *New Reflections on the Revolution of Our Time* (London, Verso, 1990): 44.
3 The place of contingency cannot be eliminated; it is impossible to make it entirely transparent. It is possible, however, to recognise its powers and take into account its structural causality.
4 If the real is beyond our symbolic means of representation then both our social behaviour and our analysis cannot be based on a positive symbolisation of this real. What we argue here is that we can experience, however, the causality of this real through the dislocation of our social constructions. Although the real is not graspable *per se*, the failure to grasp it (which is revealed in the moment of dislocation) can become the focus of our analysis. This failure is a productive failure; its administration leads to the construction of new symbolisations. This is not applicable only to the real of nature but to all modalities of our encounter with the real.
5 S. Žižek, *Tarrying with the Negative* (Durham NC, Duke University Press, 1993).
6 For a brilliant account of the attempts of traditional societies to make sense of the dislocatory force of nature see M. Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return* (London, Arkana, 1989).
7 L. Milbrath, 'The world is relearning its story about how the world works', in S. Kaminiecki (ed.), *Environmental Politics in the International Arena* (New York, SUNY Press, 1993): 21.
8 T. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1962); Milbrath, 'The world': 23.
9 R. Dunlap and K. Van Liere, 'The new environmental paradigm', *Journal of Environmental Education*, 9: 4 (1978).
10 S. Žižek, *Looking Awry* (Cambridge, MA, MIT Press, 1991).
11 U. Beck, *Ecological Politics in an Age of Risk* (Cambridge, Polity, 1995): 48–9.
12 Lagadec in *ibid.*: 49.
13 Beck, *Ecological Politics*: 49.
14 L. Milbrath, 'The world': 38.
15 R. Dalton, 'The environmental movement in Western Europe', in Kaminiecki, *Environmental Politics in the International Arena*: 43.
16 R. Dalton, 'The environmental movement': 58.
17 H. Wiesenthal, *Realism in Green Politics* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1993): 84.
18 A. Jamison, R. Eyerman and J. Cramer, *The Making of the New Environmental Consciousness* (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 1990): 66.
19 P. Dickens, *Society and Nature* (Hemel Hempstead, Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992): 171–2.
20 A. Atkinson, *Principles of Political Ecology* (London, Belhaven Press, 1991): 1.

21 *Ibid.*: 1–2.
22 Which means that if the emergence of the NEP coincided with a crisis in the right of the political spectrum it is conceivable that Green ideology could emerge as a solution for the rearticulation of conservative politics. Needless to say, such a Green ideological configuration would be composed of different elements than the current one (of elements coming from the supposedly dislocated conservative discourses it would attempt to rearticulate).
23 W. Hulsberg, *The German Greens* (London, Verso, 1988): 218.
24 E. Papadakis, *The Green Movement in West Germany* (London, Croom Helm, 1984): 46. Consider, for example, the implications of the decree introduced by the Social Democrat chancellor Willy Brandt in the early 1970s that forbade people with radical convictions to be employed in the public sector. Taking into account that this decree was most often exercised on the left, it is not very surprising that 'it caused many left-wing Germans, frustrated by this first social democratic government, to feel they had no political home'. D. Jahn, 'Green politics and parties in Germany', in M. Jacobs (ed.), *Greening the Millennium? The New Politics of the Environment* (Oxford, Blackwell/The Political Quarterly, 1997): 174.
25 Papadakis, *The Green Movement*: 46.
26 *Ibid.*: 36. In that sense the emergence of the Greens is due to the integration of the 'ideologically homeless on the left with the anti-state sentiments antiestablishment initiatives of the young'. Jahn, 'Green politics': 174.
27 Wiesenthal, *Realism*: 195.
28 G. Voerman, 'The Netherlands: losing colours, turning Green', in D. Richardson and C. Rootes (eds), *The Green Challenge: The Development of the Green Parties in Europe* (London, Routledge, 2004): 110.
29 *Ibid.*: 109.
30 P. Lucardie, 'Greening and un-greening the Netherlands', in Jacobs (ed.), *Greening the Millennium?*: 187.
31 Voerman, 'The Netherlands': 125.
32 Although Green Left is not considered a 'deep Green' political force it is definitely 'the greenest in the Lower Chamber of [the Dutch] Parliament' and is generally identified as the greenest party by various surveys (Lucardie, 'Greening and un-greening': 188). Most important, it has hegemonised the signifier 'Green' and managed to attach it to its own political platform. This may be another factor that influenced the failure of the 'pure' Greens. When they emerged, 'other parties had already claimed the colour green, literally in their election posters, or ideologically in their election platforms . . . The Greens still resent the name Green Left' (*ibid.*: 187–8). In other words, Green Left managed to construct a link between the rearticulation of the ideologies of the parties that formed it and the signifier 'Green', which became the 'necessary' nodal point of their 'rapproachment'. Thus its discourse could be constructed, according to our typology of Green ideology, as a Green ideological discourse, although not of the most radical kind.
33 Our hypothesis is that evidence from other countries reinforces this, albeit contingent, link between the dislocation in the left and the emergence and development of Green ideology in Western Europe and North America. Further research may reveal the validity of this claim. However, space limitations force us to conclude our argumentation here.

3

LACANIAN DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

Seven elements[1]

Ian Parker

This chapter explores the various descriptions of 'discourse' in Lacan's work and the potential contribution of Lacanian theory to the analysis of discourse in psychology. It should be noted, before we go any further, that Lacan was not a psychologist and his development of psychoanalytic clinical practice and theoretically-guided readings of Freud are antithetical to notions of the subject and social relationships that underpin research in Anglo-American psychology (Malone & Friedlander, 2000). Lacan's hostility to psychology is often underplayed in critical writing in the discipline, which often wants to use his ideas to amend or improve the way we do things (e.g. Burkitt, 1991; Parker, 1997a). While this has made him more attractive to some writers, it also serves to distract us from what is most radical in his work. So, an assumption that governs this chapter and runs as a thread through it is that a Lacanian approach demands a quite different conception of what human beings are. It is one of the most critical strands within 'critical psychology' precisely because it is not psychology at all (Parker, 2003).

The seven elements outlined here are distilled from a variety of sources, and do not pretend to represent a fully-formed theory of discourse, still less a 'method' that might be applied to texts. In common with much discourse analysis, the notion that there should be a fixed method or grid for reading text is anathema to Lacanian psychoanalysis. Neither does Lacanian psychoanalysis treat as empirical definable substance any of the paraphernalia that characterize accounts of psychoanalysis in psychology textbooks. This approach 'implies no recognition of any substance on which it claims to operate, even that of sexuality' (Lacan, 1964/1973: 266). The 'unconscious', for example, is a quality of speech, 'that part of concrete discourse qua transindividual, which is not at the subject's disposal in re-establishing the continuity of his conscious discourse' (Lacan, 1953: 50). The moment-by-moment reconstruction of consciousness and what has become structurally unavailable to it makes Lacanian analysis already quite compatible with studies of rhetoric, social construction and discourse (Billig, 1999; Burr, 1995; Edwards, 1997).

The first two elements, which concern the formal qualities of text and the anchoring of representation, offer points of fruitful connection with these studies. There are certain specifications for the way subjectivity should be understood in Lacan's work that need to be reframed for discursive research in psychology, and these specifications of agency and determination, outlined here as element three, then have consequences for the way we may conceive of knowledge in discourse, element four, and positions taken up by the subject, our fifth element. As we move through these notions we will arrive at a distinctive view of the real, element six, and of the place of interpretation, as the seventh element in our account.

Element 1: formal qualities of text

An influential early formula for reading Lacan in the English language was 'Freud + Saussure = Lacan' (e.g. Bird, 1982). While this misled many readers into reducing Lacan to a species of structural linguistics, the formula draws attention to the way a Lacanian analysis of language emphasizes *form* over content. The interpretation of a text does not aim to uncover unconscious meaning that lies hidden beneath the surface, or even to retrieve the 'signified' content, the 'concepts' that Ferdinand de Saussure (1974) assumed to be attached to the 'signifiers' (the sound images). Rather, it is the organization of these signifiers in the text as such that is the object of study, and the formal structures of a text are decomposed by treating language, as Saussure did, as 'a system of differences *without positive terms*' (Saussure, 1974: 120).

The aim of Lacanian psychoanalysis is 'to obtain absolute difference' (Lacan, 1964/1973: 276), and we can read Lacan's specification of this aim as an injunction addressed to the analyst of a written text. In this reading, the end of psychoanalysis includes bringing the subject to the point where they are a perfect Saussurean, such that they recognize that the language that bears them is made up only of differences without any positive terms. We will come to the role of the discourse analyst presently, when we turn to the activity of interpretation. For the moment, the motif of 'absolute difference' will serve to highlight the task of searching for patterns and connections between signifiers, but as connections that differentiate them from each other and hold them in tension rather than divining connections that reveal an underlying order.

This focus on differences accords with one of the founding principles of discourse analysis in psychology, in which the analyst looks to the 'variability' in accounts rather than divining a deeper unitary principle that would bring diverse statements together (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). For Lacanians this variability is not itself traced only to the creative activity of a subject who is attempting to communicate to another subject and then finding that language gets in the way; 'A signifier is that which represents a subject' (Lacan, 1964/1973: 198), but this signifier is neither something that is given meaning by concepts that lie inside the head of the author or speaker nor is it something that can be discovered and

taken up by another subject as addressee, because when a signifier represents a subject it is 'not for another subject, but for another signifier' (Lacan, 1964/1973: 198). The signifying value of a term or phrase would be identified by an analyst, then, by way of an orientation to later terms in a sequence, though not, as conversation analysts would have it, by the orientation of other speakers as subjects (e.g. Antaki, 1994).

The end point of a specific analysis, therefore, would not be to arrive at words or phrases that sum up what has been said as if they were 'themes' that expressed what the real meaning of the text was, or repertoires or discourses that were responsible for producing what occurred in the course of the text. Rather, a Lacanian analysis aims 'to bring out irreducible, *non-sensical* – composed of non-meanings – signifying elements' (Lacan, 1964/1973: 250), and Lacan is claiming here that for each subject there is a signifier that is 'irreducible, traumatic, non-meaning' to which they are 'as a subject, subjected' (Lacan, 1964/1973: 251). A Lacanian Discourse Analysis would not, in sum, be attempting any kind of reduction to the biographies of the characters, but it would be searching out the signifying elements that do *not* make sense and specifying the role these nonsensical elements play in organizing and disrupting the flow of a text.

The deliberate shift in Lacan's work from a reading of content to the analysis of formal qualities of a text – expressed in the focus on differences, the representation of subjects for signifiers and the search for nonsensical signifiers – is also rendered explicit in his theoretical mapping of discourse through 'mathemes'. As we shall see in the following sections, the relations between signifying elements are captured by the arrangements into mathemes made up of algebraic symbols as 'absolute signifiers' (Lacan, 1977: 314).

Element 2: anchoring of representation

The analysis of a piece of text, whether it is spoken by a particular subject or assembled by one or more subjects as writing, aims at how the text is structured. While text may seem to flow seamlessly from one topic to another, perhaps in a series of spontaneous exchanges between speakers, a close examination should enable us to show how it is structured and held in place so as to give it a certain character. Lacan alerts us to ways of identifying points of blockage where nonsensical signifiers may be at work, but specifying these points may be the furthest we can go in any particular analysis. This theoretical framework is useful for locating fixed points around which one text may revolve, locating a text in broader patterns of discourse, and examining how the temporal logic of a text is constructed.

Lacan's use of Saussurean linguistics raises a question about the way meanings are fixed in language so that the speaker may at least have the sense that they are directing their message to an audience. If language is 'radically powerless to defend itself against the forces which from one moment to the next are

shifting the relationship between the signified and the signifier' (Saussure, 1974: 75), then how does a particular subject defend him- or herself against those forces? For Lacan, the question is even more urgent because the process of 'repression' proceeds by pushing signifiers out of the circuit of communication, and the creation of metaphors allows these signifiers to slide under that circuit. Lacan (1977) claims that certain key 'quilting points' – or points of *capitonnage*, named after the *points de capiton* that hold upholstery material through the stuffing – keep the fabric of the signifying system in place, and this claim cues us into noticing the way certain signifiers or metaphorical substitutes recur in a text. This repetition of signifiers then signals the presence of the quilting points.

There are also certain recurrent signifiers that exemplify wider patterns of structural 'repression', and it is here that one of Lacan's mathemes is helpful. Still in line with structural linguistics, Lacan represents the relationship between one particular signifier (depicted as S_1) and the rest of the signifying system (depicted as S_2) by way of the matheme $S_1 \rightarrow S_2$. A signifier only takes on value by virtue of its relation with the other signifiers, and Lacan's matheme also serves to represent the way in which certain signifiers stand out, operating in a dominant position over the rest of the text such that they effectively operate in broader discourses as the *points de capiton* in a symbolic system. These 'master signifiers' function as anchors of representation in a text through such rhetorical tropes as the insistence that 'this is the way things are', that it is not subject to challenge or dissent. A speaker adopting the position of S_1 here makes a claim to authority that is maintained by repetition of the claim rather than reasoned argument, and the point where a façade of reasoned argument breaks down may thus reveal certain signifiers in their function as master signifiers.

There is an important twist that Lacan adds to our understanding of the process of fixing meaning through repetition of certain signifiers or metaphorical substitutes in their function as quilting points or master signifiers, which is that the process of anchoring occurs *retroactively*. In a narrative of life history the appearance of trauma is something that is constituted after the event as an attempt to give sense to an event that could not be comprehended by the subject, as a 'retroversion effect' (Lacan, 1977: 306). The retroactive constitution of traumatic, nonsensical and otherwise inexplicable anchoring points makes everyday narrative into something that is determined 'after the event', and such an 'event' may be something that occurs at the level of a particular sentence. Lacan argues that the punctuation of a sentence retroactively determines what that sentence will be understood to have meant, and so the temporal logic of apparent cause and effect is, in a Lacanian reading, reversed. An analysis of discourse, then, will search out anchoring points that serve as the 'conclusion' of sentences or other stretches of text, anchoring points that only then, at that concluding moment, posit their own original starting point.

Together, the quilting points and master signifiers operate through rhetorical processes of deflection and avoidance that one might see as very close to recent

discursive re-readings of psychoanalysis (Billig, 1999), and an attention to the retroactive effect of signifiers would thereby distance Lacanian Discourse Analysis even further from any 'predictive' study of language. The reading of a text will always be provisional, for the meaning is determined not only by the last signifiers to appear but also by signifiers that may appear even later (to reconfigure what will come to serve as the key points that serve as anchors of representation). These operations of language have consequences for how we view the determination of meaning and action.

Element 3: agency and determination

There is an explicit debt in Lacanian analysis to the work of Claude Lévi-Strauss (1966), and this is evident, for example, in the claim that 'signifiers organize human relations in a creative way, providing them with structures and shaping them' (Lacan, 1964/1973: 20). What is distinctively psychoanalytic – and discursive – about Lacan's use of structuralism, however, is the emphasis on the 'creative' aspect of signification together with the reflexive re-making of the present and the past such that simple prediction of behaviour is rendered impossible. The classic psychoanalytic description of the 'overdetermination' of meaning (Freud, 1999) posits that one interpretation does not preclude others, and one possible interpretation should not aim to fix and limit what may be said by the subject.

Lacan (1975/1998) describes the interlinking of three 'registers' – the Symbolic, the Imaginary and the Real – in such a way as to sidestep a simple distinction between what lies 'inside' and what lies 'outside' discourse. We will focus on the relationship between the Symbolic and the Imaginary briefly here to show how both figure as qualities of discourse (and we will turn to the Real subsequently). While the Symbolic corresponds quite neatly to the sphere of mediated social exchange that Lévi-Strauss (1966) describes, the Imaginary is somewhat more of a Janus-faced concept. On the one hand it has allegiance to the realm of narcissistic and rivalrous identifications with others, and in this sense it is of particular interest to clinical psychoanalysis. On the other hand it operates as a certain mode of interaction, in which relations of similarity and opposition are constituted and reproduced, and here it is of use to discourse analysis. The discourse analysis of 'Imaginary' aspects of interaction would pick up those specific kinds of textual operation that hold antagonistic positions in relation to each other.

The reworking of psychoanalytic categories into forms of discourse that Lacan's work invites also has profound consequences for how we conceptualize what is 'unconscious'. For Lacan, language is the condition for the unconscious. The unconscious is constituted at the moment the subject starts to speak and figures as '*the discourse of the Other*' (Lacan, 1964/1973: 131). Analysis of what is 'unconscious' to the subject in a piece of text, then, is an analysis of the 'gaps' and 'holes' where what is said at any moment presupposes that something

else cannot or will not be said (cf. Billig, 1999). It is this that makes Lacanian Discourse Analysis radically different from forms of 'conversation analysis' that aim to carefully redescribe only what is present (e.g. Antaki, 1994; Edwards, 1997). The unconscious in Lacanian Discourse Analysis is what functions as absence in the text.

A productive new concept Lacan elaborates in his work is that of the *objet petit a*, and this concept too can be viewed as a property of discourse. He speaks 'of that object whose reality is purely topological . . . which rises in a bump, like the wooden darning egg in the material which, in the analysis, you are darning – the *object a*' (Lacan, 1964/1973: 257). What this evocative description draws attention to is the role of something indefinable and fascinating, which we suppose in an analysis to be a 'cause' around which a speaker circles. The object is not empirically real, but is an analytically-fruitful device to explore the orientation of a speaker, around which they move in a manner that does not reduce their orientation as only being to another empirically present speaker. In this sense, the *objet petit a* can operate as an equivalent to gravity in the field of discourse, and we can use it to trace patterns in discourse, not to move out of discourse into a specification of what it really is (cf. Parker, 1998).

There are crucial assumptions in Lacan's work that make his account of 'determination' simultaneously an account of 'agency'. The two are not separated and counter-posed to each other. Instead, the overdetermination of meaning is at the same time an overdetermination of the subject, and what is most 'intimate' to the subject is what is outside it. Lacan's neologism for this intimate exteriority of the subject in discourse is 'extimacy', and the symbolic, unconscious and *objet petit a* do not lie outside discourse and inside the subject (Miller, 1986). They are extimate to the subject, not reducible to it, and this is one reason why they are relevant theoretical concepts for discourse analysis.

Element 4: the role of knowledge

For Lacan, what defines a human subject is the act of speaking, together with the effect of the system of language – Symbolic, Imaginary and Real – on the speaker. Psychoanalysis is predicated on the effects of speech, and in the attempt to disentangle the ways in which the subject has been constituted by language: 'speech commits its author by investing the person to whom it is addressed with a new reality' (Lacan, 1977: 85). The necessary otherness of language to the subject makes all 'analysis' an analysis of discourse. While we speak to particular others – through the line of the Imaginary – the system of language also operates above and beyond us, and it is in this realm, of the Symbolic, that we speak in relation to the big Other: 'The Other in this framework is not an entity but the function of validating the subject's discourse and guaranteeing him/herself a subjective position' (Georgaca & Gordo-López, 1995: 166). This has consequences for the knowledge that one is able to arrogate to oneself when one speaks, and the knowledge that one imputes to the Other when one is faced with

the field of language; it is something we face with each utterance, including when we are speaking about psychology (Malone, 2000).

One way of making use of this account of the subject's relation to discourse as a relation to knowledge is to trace the points in a text where knowledge is presumed. The 'supposition' of knowledge by the speakers or characters in a piece of text will indicate, for example, where authority and power are presumed to lie. The counterpart to the address made by the speaker to the Other as a necessary function of any speech, an audience without which it is not possible for human communication to take place, is the sense of being addressed by the Other. It is this function that Althusser (1971) uses to identify the work of ideology in the hailing or 'interpellation' of the subject into a certain position. For Lacan, this is a function of the Other in all speech, summed up in the (usually implicit) question 'What does the Other want of me?' (Lacan, 1977: 316).

Lacan's (1981/1993) elaboration of psychoanalytic categories of psychopathology as discrete clinical structures – hysteria, obsessional neurosis, psychosis and perversion – embeds each of these structures in a relation to language (Miller, 1996; Soler, 1996). This does not mean that discourse analysts should employ these structures to diagnose authors or characters in written texts, but it does mean that forms of speech may be analyzed in such a way as to reveal something of the structure of the discourse that is at work and the position of the subject within it (e.g. Quackelbeen, 1997). Each clinical structure presupposes a certain relation to knowledge and to what the Other wants of the subject: obsessional neurosis displays stereotypically masculine refusal of dependence; hysteria an accusation addressed to the Other; psychosis a paranoiac sense that there is 'an Other of the Other' manipulating things; and perversion an attempt to make oneself the instrument of the enjoyment of the Other (Fink, 1999).

Lacan (1991/2007) outlines a distinctive way of describing discrete discourses in his seventeenth seminar on 'the other side of psychoanalysis'. The four discourses he outlines each consist of a relationship between the speaker as 'agent' and the kind of 'other' that is addressed by them. The agent is underpinned by a form of 'truth', and in each discourse there is a certain kind of 'product' of the relationship between agent and other. For example, 'the discourse of the hysteric' as a certain kind of 'social bond' consists of a speaker as agent who is lacking something – represented here as a subject who is 'barred' ($\$$) – complaining and challenging an other positioned as a master (a master signifier). The 'truth' of this agent is something that 'causes' them in a way that cannot be grasped and which they cannot let go (the *objet petit a*). The 'product' of this activity of complaint and challenge is knowledge (S_2). We will describe the other three discourses in Lacan's seminar – the discourse of the master, university and analyst – as follows.

A Lacanian view of the relation of the subject to others and to the Other as a 'function' that validates the subject's discourse does risk sliding into a categorization of individual 'clinical structures'. Any analysis of the way discourse 'interpellates' a subject also takes that risk, for it may presume to know something of

the way a subject will be addressed that is the same as or different from the way the analyst reads the text. The delimiting of these as rhetorical strategies and social bonds in a form of critical discourse analysis would also require an analysis of the 'political' projects and suppositions about the nature of the world that each calls upon. This analysis would also require a reflexive analysis of the position of the analyst, something Lacanians insist upon in the argument that 'there is no other resistance to analysis than that of the analyst' (Lacan, 1977: 235).

Element 5: positions in language

For Lacanians it is not possible to produce or receive language without being positioned by it, but the positions are not simply determined by images of the person or roles set up in discrete discourses (cf. Parker, 1992). 'Discourses' do not fully define subject positions, but it is the activity of speaking itself that positions the subject in relation to another. This activity of speaking is crucial to psychoanalysis, and Lacan's distinction between the 'empty' speech of repeated clichéd formulae and the 'full' speech that appears when a subject in analysis speaks the truth, was one key starting point for his own 'return to Freud' (Lacan, 1953).

What is being said does not, according to Lacan, lie outside existing chains of signification, but always leads the speaking subject to 'lie' inside those chains. This is why Lacan repeatedly argues that 'no metalanguage can be spoken' (Lacan, 1977: 311), that there is no external point from which it is possible to speak that is not also necessarily implicated in a certain kind of position. This is not at all to warrant a simplistic refusal to acknowledge that there is an extralinguistic dimension to speaking. While this argument is specifically directed toward psychoanalysts as a warning that they should not imagine that they can work out what an analysand really means by drawing on other information about them to fill in the gaps, it has implications that go beyond clinical practice. Another way Lacan puts the point is when he argues that 'there is no Other of the Other' (Lacan, 1977: 311), and this point again draws attention to the way language manifests itself as other to the speaking subject (but not because there is something behind it pulling the strings).

The activity of speaking divides the subject between the various things they say about themselves as they address an other and the activity of speaking as such, an activity which opens up a realm of truth. Lacan refers to this as the 'division between the statement and the enunciation' (Lacan, 1964/1973: 139). This theoretical account of the subject divided in the process of speaking can be usefully reworked into an analytic distinction between the array of characters and positions that constitute a text as if it was 'an abstract system of signs', which is the kind of text usually studied by discourse analysts, and the process by which utterances are 'produced in concrete situations' (Georgaca and Gordo-López, 1995: 164).

One of the characteristics of human language for Lacan is that it makes possible 'communication in which the sender receives his own message back from

the receiver in an inverted form' (Lacan, 1977: 85). Lacan argues that the analyst's task is to take the message the subject sends, and send it back 'in its true signification, that is to say, in an inverted form' (Lacan, 1964/1973: 140). Because this task is structured by the nature of language, not by the intervention of the analyst from outside it, there are some interesting consequences for discourse analysis. What this idea leads us to look for in a text is the way modes of speech call upon a response, and the way that a response may send the message back to the speaker as if in reverse and thereby revealing some truth that was concealed in the original message.

A Lacanian analysis of discourse carries with it, then, a certain 'ethical position' in which, for example, one speaks not from within a 'metalanguage' but as always reflexively positioned in relation to the text. The grounding of analysis in a relation to the Other means that every communication is viewed as directed to an audience, as an appeal for recognition (Lacan, 1986/1992). It is this that makes every act of speaking into an act woven into discourse, with performative effects on others and effects on the speaker. The translation of Lacanian concepts from the clinical domain, in which the analysand may interpret and speak the truth, to a discourse-analytic domain, in which the 'analyst' is given free rein over the interpretation of a text, poses new ethical problems and questions about academic practice that require further work (Parker, 2005b).

Element 6: deadlocks of perspective

A Lacanian approach to discourse has consequences for the way we think of 'criteria' for research. It sets itself against attempts to arrive at a richer, more complete understanding of a text, something proposed by advocates of 'triangulation' in research (e.g. Banister, Burman, Parker, Taylor & Tindall, 1994). Lacanian Discourse Analysis would require a quite different perspective on the reading of texts, a perspective that focused on deadlocks of perspective (Parker, 2005a).

For Lacanians, the idea that there was 'agreement' over an interpretation between analyst and analysand would indicate the operation of 'the line of the Imaginary'. It would signal not only an analytic failure to keep to 'the line of the Symbolic' but also an ethical failure to allow the distinctive irreducible truth of the subject to appear. The desire of the analyst 'to obtain absolute difference' (Lacan, 1964/1973: 276) will necessarily lead to a representation of the analysis that is structured by disagreement rather than agreement. Instead of a common view of what is going on in a text, there would need to be a specification of what the stakes of the disagreement are. In Lacanian psychoanalysis the account given of analysis by the analysand is seen as part of a research project to 'validate' the work as well as testimony (Dunand, 1995), and there are implications here for how we build into a discourse analysis the accounts of those subject to it.

One of the stakes in this theoretical position, one emphasized by Lacan, concerns the constitution of sexual difference. The statement 'there's no such thing

as a sexual relationship' (Lacan, 1975/1998: 12) is designed to draw attention to the specific different discursive positions that men and women occupy, and we can read those discursive positions as culturally constituted at the same time as we take those differences seriously (MacCannell, 1986). Masculine and feminine speech genres would, then, be viewed as structurally incompatible by virtue of the organization of discourse. The task of analyzing these structural differences is clearly an important one for discourse analysis as part of critical and feminist research (Frosh, 1994; Wilkinson and Kitzinger, 1995). Furthermore, from within the Lacanian tradition, to say that there is no sexual relationship is 'precisely an attempt to delineate the real' (Nasio, 1998: 112). In this perspective the point of contradiction between different speech genres would be a point of deadlock that would function as 'real'.

A Lacanian view of a constitutive 'antagonism' that makes human communication possible, and impossible, also makes for a distinctive approach to the 'Real', and this has consequences for politics as well as for academic work (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985). Lacan's (1975/1998) account in his later work is of the Real as a third register that is knotted together with the Imaginary and the Symbolic. The Real is not a realm 'outside' discourse that can be identified and described, but it is something that operates at a point of breakdown of representation, at a point of trauma or shock that is then rapidly covered over in order that it can be spoken of. Those points in a text that indicate something unspeakable, something 'unrepresentable', can be interpreted as points of encounter with the Real, and this is the closest we can speak of something 'outside discourse' (Frosh, 2002: 133).

As one Lacanian writing in the field of political theory puts it, 'The field of discursive representation, a field extending from the linguistic to the social in general, is constitutive in all our doomed attempts to achieve a perfect identity with ourselves' (Stavrakakis, 1999: 52). The conclusion to be drawn here is that an understanding of the nature of discourse as constituted by deadlocks of perspective means that it is the *failure* of agreement that needs to be displayed rather than an attempt to cover that disagreement over. At the level of supposed 'criteria' that attempt to determine what a 'correct' reading of a text would be as well as at the level of political argument, we do then indeed need to take up a discursive framework as 'a view of politics and academic work as a more partial, incomplete, contingent and corrigible activity' (Wetherell, 1999: 405). Attending to deadlocks of perspective would be a Lacanian way of doing that, and the space this would open for application of 'criteria' in qualitative research in psychology would then be more constructively permissive than prohibitive (Parker, 2004).

Element 7: interpretation of textual material

Lacanian analysis eschews a form of interpretation that aims to reveal 'signifieds' as concepts that lie submerged under the 'signifiers', and this also means

that it is not 'hermeneutic' (Lacan, 1964/1973: 8). The interpretation of a text would not explore the 'horizon of meaning' of the text, still less the internal world of speakers viewed as responsible for producing it. The reflexive position of the discourse analyst is an issue here, for when one approaches a text in hermeneutic mode as something we can 'understand' because it is like our own framework (or even because we recognize it as being the mirror opposite of what is familiar to us), this, for Lacanians, would betray the stance we are taking as lying on 'the line of the Imaginary' (imagining that we interpret from outside the text). The task of an analyst is to work on 'the line of the Symbolic' (working within the domain of the text), and to open up the text by disrupting and disorganizing it so that its functions become clearer, including its functions for us.

Lacan was very aware of the problem that the analyst might be tempted to impose an interpretation on the analysand, and he warned against the interpretation of the transference as functioning as a form of 'suggestion' and against the attempt to bring an analysis to a successful conclusion by way of identification between the ego of the analysand and that of the analyst (Lacan, 1964/1973). In his later work this kind of imposed interpretation would be viewed as exemplifying the 'discourse of the master' (e.g. Lacan, 1991/2007), and there are lessons to be drawn here against the forcing of interpretation in discourse analysis. In the discourse of the master the analyst assumes the position of master signifier in relation to the other signifiers, and that relationship ($S_1 \rightarrow S_2$) serves to cover over the fallibility of the analyst, represented as the barred subject ($\$$) in this matheme.

A further warning Lacan gives, which also serves as a reflexive injunction to discourse analysts, is that the position of the analyst as a kind of master can be masked in the name of knowledge. A form of discourse analysis that would aim to 'educate' readers, rather than to illuminate a text and open up questions about it, would be represented in Lacanian terms as operating within 'the discourse of the university'. In this discourse, the analyst positions him- or herself as working in the place of knowledge (S_2), concealing their reliance on certain master signifiers. The analyst here would bring knowledge to bear as an agent that worries away at something inexplicable (as the *objet petit a*), producing subjects who end up knowing nothing, who end up as 'barred subjects' ($\$$) (Parker, 2001). In this sense, Lacan's (1991/2007) description of the 'discourse of the analyst' as one of the four discourses is apposite for the work of Lacanian Discourse Analysis (Verhaeghe, 1995). Lacan's description is relevant to the role that knowledge (S_2) plays as a theoretical underpinning for our reading of texts and the way that master signifiers (S_1) emerge as the product of the reading.

There is a further reflexive consequence of taking seriously Lacan's version of psychoanalysis, for the analysis always produces its object in a particular context: to name the unconscious 'is not simply to attach a name, naming is an act which not only instantiates an element, but gives it consistency and engenders a structure' (Nasio, 1998: 48). This argument is consistent with Lacan's

argument that Freud 'invented' the unconscious, and it means that when we carry out any form of psychoanalytic discourse analysis we are indeed reproducing and transforming what we name rather than 'discovering' things. This is what makes Lacan a most powerful and innovative resource for discourse analysis in theoretical psychology.

Note

1 This chapter is extracted, with kind permission of the author, from Parker, I. (2005) 'Lacanian Discourse Analysis in psychology: Seven theoretical elements', *Theory & Psychology*, 15 (2), 163–182.

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4

NEGOTIATING TEXT WITH LACAN

Theory into practice[1]

Ian Parker

In this chapter we will explore an interview, one that is 'ready made' (Parker, 2005a). It is an 'interview' that prepares for an 'act', but from a certain context. One advantage of selecting this text is that we who analyze it have not also been in the position of the interviewer, and so we can sidestep the tendency of some proponents of psychosocial research to tell us what the text really means because the researcher knows something beyond what the reader can see on the page or because the researcher 'feels' something about it (e.g. Hollway & Jefferson, 2005). The use of Lacanian reference points is not designed to privilege Lacanian over other psychoanalytic approaches, but we will see in the course of the analysis how certain theoretical concepts from that tradition make it amenable to a 'psychosocial' reading (Hook, 2008b).

The material elaborated under the seven headings is elaborated theoretically in more detail in Chapter 3 (see also Parker, 2005b). This chapter is primarily concerned with the way the theory can be rendered into something useful for discourse analytic practice in psychosocial research, and so it revolves around the way Lacanian Discourse Analysis can be brought to bear on a text. A transcript of a conversation is not the same as the text that appears in psychoanalysis – that produced by the analysand in a specific kind of relation with the analyst – the kind of text Lacan was concerned with. Each different kind of text calls for some theoretical work to help us make sense of it. We are not trying to dig things up from under the surface, but to show how the surface of the text – the text as a kind of 'Moebius strip' – constitutes certain objects, subjects and relationships between them, and how it also at the same moment covers them over (Frosh & Baraitser, 2008: 349). That is, the different forms of representation and mechanisms of defence produce the objects they so painstakingly shield themselves against.

The interview

This interview is from a film, and so, as with a contextual framing of any research interview, the reader needs to know something about the conditions in which it took place. This is the scenario of the film, *The Negotiator* (Gray, 1998): 'Realizing that he is being set up by his colleagues, a police hostage negotiator takes hostages of his own, and is besieged by corrupt cops who want him dead' (Halliwell, 2004: 617). Danny Roman (played by Samuel L. Jackson) is a black police hostage negotiator in Chicago who calls for Chris Sabian (played by Kevin Spacey), a white police negotiator from another district who he does not know, to be brought in to negotiate the release of Danny's hostages, and to help find the real killer. Chris arrives, and in the opening conversation by phone with Danny aims to establish some rapport, to mark a position from which to negotiate. This first conversation occurs about half-way through the film after the hostage situation has been set up. Danny asks Chris what he does in his spare time.

Chris: I read a lot of books you know. I er I watch a lot of old movies you know. AMC. You got satellite? They show those old Westerns.
Danny: Westerns huh. I like comedies myself. I did like Shane though.
Chris: Shane. That's a good one. But I'd have picked one where the hero *lives* at the end you know, like Rio Bravo or er Red River.
Danny: I think you're talking about the wrong movie there Chris you know. Shane *lives*. At the end of it he's riding off and that kid er Brandon=
Chris: =Brandon de Wilde=
Danny: =de Wilde is calling his name 'Shane, come back Shane'.
Chris: Well Danny, I'm sorry to have to be the one to tell you this, but Shane *died*.
Danny: You never see Shane dead. That's an assumption.
Chris: No. It's a common mistake you see. In the final shot you see him slumped over on his horse. He doesn't look back because he can't. Shane's *dead*.
Danny: He's slumped because he's shot, not because he's *dead*.
Chris: Well I guess you think that Butch and Sundance live too. Although you never see them dead, they're entirely surrounded.
Danny: Oh, so now you're some kind of history buff.
Chris: Yeah, I generally read histories and biographies.

One of the frames for this conversation becomes salient later in the film when Danny tells Chris that he had asked for Chris to be brought in because Danny could trust no-one inside the Chicago police force. Chris reworks this comment a few turns later when he makes it clear that Danny does not know what he, Chris, can be capable of. Chris refers to himself as a 'stranger'. The 'stranger in town' motif then reappears at the denouement in the final few

minutes of the film. Chris takes Danny at gunpoint and dupes Frost, the white senior officer who had actually killed Danny's colleague, into trusting him. Chris has to convey to Danny that when he shoots him, Danny should play dead.

Chris: Do you like Westerns Frost?
Frost: What the fuck is that supposed to mean?
Chris: I like Westerns. I can't get enough of them. Watch them all the time. My favourites have always been the ones where the hero dies at the end. You remember Shane Danny?
Danny: What?
Chris: I think you're right. Shane died at the end.
[Chris shoots Danny]

This second piece of text, which has Danny and Chris joined by the corrupt cop Frost, thus gives us some kind of equivalent to a follow-up research interview. Rather than simply probing for some more information that the researcher is interested in, we are given some new material that retroactively shapes the way we interpret the first piece of text.

Let us now put some of the theoretical aspects from Lacan to work. I will move back and forth from the text to the theory, for there are some more specific points I want to make about each of the aspects as we go along. I will mark each of the 21 aspects with Roman lower case numbers in parentheses so we know we are in the argument about the relation between Danny and Chris.

Formal qualities of text (i–iii)

We are concerned here not with meanings that can be dug out from the text, but with the way the text is structured. This is why the formal structure of the text is so important. We can make some guesses about the content of the film, for example, if we notice the allusions to the 'Western'. Chris Sabian is, he says, a 'stranger' in town, and the motif of the Western is explicitly flagged in these extracts, so what we get from this is an attention to the formal structure of the Western as a genre of film.

Like an analysand coming to the end of analysis, Danny Roman has to understand that signifiers get their value by their structural relation to other terms, not by a connection to a signified meaning or to a referent outside language. Instead (i) language is 'a system of differences *without positive terms*' (Saussure, 1974: 120). Danny arrives at an understanding of what Lacan (1964/1973: 279) calls *absolute difference* – and so do we as readers – when he realizes that the signifier 'died' can also operate as if it meant 'live'. It can then even function as the injunction 'you will live' because it can then operate as a message that 'you must pretend to die' when Chris shoots him so that he only seems to die, as Danny told Chris that Shane did when they were discussing that film during the first interview.

One might say that 'died' here is (ii) *a signifier that represents a subject for another signifier* (Lacan, 1964/1973: 198). One way of putting this concept to work is to explore how the 'subject' here may be Danny. He will play dead, and will be the dead subject in the scenario with Frost, and the signifier that he is represented for is Frost, who assumes the place of the figure of the real bad guy, the real killer; 'died' is then the signifier that represents the subject, which is Danny for another signifier, which is 'Frost'. Another way of working with this concept would be to say that a signifier that represents Danny is 'Shane'. Already, Danny himself produces this signifier 'Shane' in the interview when he tells Chris that this is one of the Westerns that he liked, and so then the signifier that constitutes the figure for whom Shane is alive is the name of the little boy who calls after Shane, 'Brandon de Wilde'. Danny starts to speak that signifier, but it is actually completed by Chris. The signifier 'Brandon de Wilde' is of the one who will call 'Shane, come back Shane', and so here we have another formula, one in which 'Shane' is the signifier that represents the subject, which is Danny for another signifier, which is 'Brandon de Wilde'.

There is therefore a curious overdetermination of signifiers representing this subject for other signifiers, and this very overdetermination opens up the possibility for Danny to act as a subject rather than as a mere cipher of language (Lacan, 1986/1992). The signifying relation between the boy and Shane that Danny positions himself in serves to subvert the signifying relation that Chris voices in the encounter with Frost. One might see a space for movement in that ironic speech act, 'Shane *died* at the end', and Danny is able to position himself in that signifying relation 'died' for 'Frost' as a subject who will be alive. The signifier 'died' is reduced to 'non-meaning' and (iii) becomes one of the *nonsensical signifiers*, not in order to abolish the subject but to give it life (Lacan, 1964/1973: 250). It has been repeated by Danny and Chris, and given different values so that it has all but been evacuated of content. It can then represent Danny precisely because it does not carry a determinate meaning.

Anchoring of representation (iv–vi)

The genre of the Western cues us into what fixed points the text might revolve around. The importance of this anchoring of representation has, of course, been noticed by other traditions in social theory (e.g. Moscovici, 2008), and here we can notice specific aspects of that anchoring and the way it produces a peculiar Lacanian temporal logic to the text.

In this case we have the cluster of signifiers around death that the exchange between Chris and Danny revolves around, and the rubric of the 'Western' – the term that names that cluster as being of a certain genre – enables us to (iv) conceptualize how the motif of death operates as one of its *quilting points* (Lacan, 2006). This signifier, which has a number of avatars in the text in the descriptions of Shane as having died, as being dead, holds the text in place. To function in this way as a quilting point it does not necessarily ever have to be empirically

visible as such, and it is a quilting point that we as analysts of the text construct from its different manifestations, manifestations even as the reverse of death perhaps, as in 'the hero lives'. There is an important conceptual point here that bears on the way that Lacanian theory operates when it searches for the 'Name-of-the-Father' as a quilting point in an analysand's speech, and we need to take seriously Lacan's (1991/2007) argument that 'latent' content is not unearthed by the analyst from 'manifest' content, but is constructed by the analyst. So, death as a quilting point could be said to appear first when Chris and Danny both evoke it as something that the hero will be able to avoid: 'the hero lives', says Chris; 'Shane lives' says Danny. This quilting point then holds together a little symbolic order, and it focuses our attention on what kind of symbolic order it is for these two characters. It is then a symbolic order in the second piece of text that these two characters Danny and Chris are inside but that Frost is outside, and this is to be crucial to the communication that then takes place. When Chris asks Frost 'do you like Westerns', Frost has no anchoring point, there is no 'death' as the quilting point that he can use to make sense of what is going on: 'What the fuck is that supposed to mean?' he says.

Since Frost is the killer we can assume that he knows what death is, but it is not a quilting point that can anchor him here in relation to the others speaking to him or, it would seem, with reality, for he is reduced here to a signifier. We can notice how (v) there are certain terms that provide positions of mastery for speaking subjects. In this case, both Danny and Chris are 'negotiators', and the position of the 'negotiator' is therefore one that operates as a kind of 'master' position around which there circulate other more dependent positions. To be a 'negotiator' is not to be an equal partner in a dialogue. The 'negotiator' is a *master signifier* (Lacan, 1991/2007). The battle of recognition between Danny and Chris is, among other things, a battle to occupy the position of this master signifier. Who will be the negotiator?

The way that signifiers function is in a crucial way for Lacanians 'after the event'. We only know what that dialogue between Danny and Chris means much later in the film, here in the second piece of text where we effectively revisit the interview in the first piece of text our assumptions about the relationship between Danny and Chris. There is, in this sense (vi) a *retroactive determination of meaning*, a retroactive effect that is elaborated in Lacan's (1991/2007) account of 'logical time'. We can see this retroactive determination of meaning at work when we have the topic of the dialogue reworked and transformed. First it is about Westerns, and it then turns into an exchange about 'history'. However, the punctuation point of the first extract produces another different signifying effect for the whole exchange. This punctuation point, when Chris responds to Danny's sarcastic characterization of him as being a 'history buff' in response to his reference to Butch and Sundance being dead, appears when Chris says 'I generally read histories and biographies'. So, it turns out that the exchange was not at all about 'histories', but about 'biographies', and the subject who assumes the position of being the 'negotiator', Chris, is collecting

information about his subject, Danny. The retroactive determination of meaning is important for every attempt we make to grasp the meaning of a text, or, for that matter, a Lacanian concept, and again we need to keep in the research frame the acknowledgment that we have a 'ready made' text here in which the 'punctuation point' that retroactively reframes what has occurred up to that point is a construction of the analyst. This is the case, of course, in every text, including in interviews actually carried out by the researcher, for there is always a decision about when the interview begins and ends, and how the extracts from an interview will be selected and represented to make analytic points.

Agency and determination (vii–ix)

Again, it is worth emphasizing that what we are tracing here is not a mechanism that blots out the creative contestation of meaning and reworking of signification. We are able to attend to how the creative work is simultaneously made possible at the very moment it is organized by the signifying relations. This requires a theoretical perspective that refuses the too-simple everyday commonsensical trap of assuming that who we are as thinking, feeling individuals is separate from our relation to others or the medium through which we are connected with them.

One way of negotiating the complex relationship between the subject and language is to notice the difference between what Lacan (1975/1998) calls different 'registers'. On the one hand Danny and Chris are indeed able to 'negotiate' with each other, recognizing each other as being in some way the same; on the other hand the relations between the two of them are structurally asymmetrical. This is marked in a number of different ways, and an attention to the different registers of language that position them in different ways can here provide some fruitful resources to the intersection of different forms of subjectivity in psychosocial research. The difference (vii) between the register of communication and that of structural relations is characterized by Lacan as the difference between the *imaginary and symbolic*. To focus on the symbolic at the expense of the imaginary would indeed be a mistake (Jefferson, 2008: 363), and the imaginary relation, the communication between the two of them as 'negotiators', is as important as the difference between Danny, now positioned as the outlaw, and Chris as the 'stranger' in town. One signifying relationship that is never made explicit in the film, and not directly in these extracts, is that Danny is black, while Chris is white (as is the real killer, Frost).

Symbolic aspects of this kind, absences that structure the discourse that runs between Chris and Danny, are precisely what we might understand as the *unconscious* of the text, that which Lacan (1964/1973: 131) defines (viii) as '*the discourse of the Other*'. The unconscious is not a place with determinate contents inside the head of each of the participants that psychoanalytic research should then attempt to dig out, but the unconscious is that aspect of discourse in which material that is 'repressed' has to be shut out, and shut out as a repeatable,

reiterated process of exclusion (Lacan, 1964). That Danny does not say to Chris that he is a black police officer who can be more easily framed, and that he has asked Chris in to negotiate notwithstanding or even because Chris is white, are things that we must take seriously. What is missing, what seems to be covered over, is unconscious to the text, but it operates to structure the text (Butler, 1997; Billig, 1999).

There is another more specific concept that we can use to notice the movement of the text. In the first extract, for example, the object that Danny is aiming at is looped around: the 'killer'. It is never actually named here, and operates as the object cause of the dialogue precisely because it is not named. For Chris at this point this object, the 'killer', might be embodied in Danny; that is, Danny might be the 'killer'. However, to name it in that way would disrupt the communication that is taking place between Chris and Danny, disrupt the necessarily imaginary communication that is taking place in this little fragment of the symbolic they are creating. In addition to this (ix), this little object that they are both searching for is driving the exchange between them, here functioning in Lacanian terms as *objet petit a* (Lacan, 1964/1973: 257).

The role of knowledge (x–xii)

A question that drives the characters most of the time in the narrative is not so much who the killer is, but who knows who the killer is. In this light it is not surprising, perhaps, that the exchange between Danny and Chris should be about knowledge, and about who knows what.

We should keep track of the fact that Danny chose Chris, and this means that there is already in place a certain kind of relationship to Chris and the knowledge he may have or may be able to get access to. This choice also attributes to him a certain kind of expertise. Danny knows that Chris is a 'negotiator' like him – this is in the line of the imaginary – but he may come to know something, about who the real killer is, precisely because he does not already know too much about the Chicago police force. In Lacanian terms (x) Chris is able to produce a different kind of knowledge about what is going on because he is not duped by his sense that he knows what is happening, rather like the analyst who refuses to be drawn into the idea that the life of the analysand is already transparent because the analysand is one of a type already well enough described in the case literature. The question that drives each of them is one that Lacan (2006) claims haunts every subject: *What does the Other want of me*? We could ask here whether it is significant that the word 'Sabian' carries connotations of knowledge. This is a US American film, in which a culturally-available resource – in the line of the symbolic – is that 'Saber' in Spanish means 'to know'.

The relation to knowledge can be elaborated in different ways for different subjects, but if we are to make use of a psychoanalytic characterization of different kinds of subject we need to take care not to think that we already know what these individuals are like. There is therefore a complex theoretical task here for

the analytic researcher in which a characterization of the subject can be elaborated, but in such a way as to guide the analysis rather than by pinning the subject down as an object of knowledge. Let us briefly take each of the characters in turn. Danny wants to know, and challenges those in positions of power, he questions authority. Chris, on the other hand, is more in control and able to manage Danny. One way this difference is formulated in Lacanian theory is (xi) in the notion of different *clinical structures* (Lacan, 1981/1993), in which case Danny might be characterized as a hysteric and Chris as an obsessional neurotic. A hysteric accuses the other, and dramatizes their conflicts in such a way as to enrol an audience into their distress, while the obsessional neurotic attempts to master both his own self and those of others, keeping close to his chest secrets as puzzles that he aims to solve on his own. This simple and reductive characterization also taps into and reiterates an ideological characterization of femininity and masculinity, of women who hysterically blame others and men who obsessionally compartmentalize the world and others in it. This is a characterization that we must treat as a quick step to take before distancing ourselves from ideological motifs that we can attend to in our analysis. We can note these structures, drawing on the later phase of Lacan's work, as different sets of discursive positions (Lacan, 1991/2007). One might see here something of the way the strategy of the hysteric is to accuse the other, which is how Danny is positioned here – both as hysteric and as other – while the strategy of the obsessional neurotic is to refuse dependence on the other.

We might see Danny as speaking from within a certain kind of discourse, and it is useful here to turn from hysteria as clinical structure to (xii) Lacan's account of the *discourse of the hysteric*. Danny challenges Chris, 'so now you're some kind of history buff', positioning himself as hysteric against Chris the master. In this discourse of the hysteric the subject who is barred, barred from knowledge, is driven by the *objet petit a* as cause of his desire, and goes at the master as master signifier to produce knowledge as a collection of signifiers. There are consequences here, of course, for how the hysterical position as stereotypically feminine, and the obsessional position as stereotypically masculine, position Danny and Chris in relation to each other. We will return this question, and to the intersection between discursive positions that our characterization of Danny positioned as feminine and Chris as masculine has brought to light.

Positions in language (xiii–xv)

For the moment, let us stay with the notion of 'positions' in language, a notion that has been productive in work antecedent to the 'psychosocial' turn (Hollway, 1989) and in recent discursive research concerned with the nature of the subject in relation to language (Wetherell, 2005). We will also then be able to appreciate the way the activity of speaking sometimes pretends to escape but is always included as a position.

In Lacanese the formulation of the impossibility of taking a god's-eye view of things and speaking from a point that is not also already included in discourse is to say (xiii) that *no metalanguage can be spoken* (Lacan, 2006). In this text, for example, Chris Sabian is a 'stranger', an 'outsider', but that does not at all mean that he is 'outside' these events. Precisely as an 'outsider' he is *inside* in a certain kind of position. Danny, in contrast, is positioned as the object of suspicion, perhaps even as the object cause of the whole drama, as the killer, and as object cause of these events is positioned as 'outside' in a different kind of way, intimately involved at the same time as excluded. At the same time, there are moments when Danny speaks something of the truth of his refusal of this positioning. The activity of speaking produces a division in the subject, a separation between, on the one hand, the things they say and what is said about them – 'statements' that then operate in psychological discourse as statements of fact about who and what they are – and, on the other, an activity of speaking as such that opens up the dimension of truth. There is (xiv) a difference between being the *subject of statement and subject of enunciation* (Lacan, 1964/1973: 139). Danny as the subject of the statements that are already circulating about him, as the object of suspicion, is still able to cut through those statements in the way he speaks. In the way he speaks he appears as the subject of the enunciation. One point at which this difference appears is where he speaks the statement 'Shane lives', which may empirically be a lie, but in the process of speaking it is true of him, *true* of Danny. For him as Shane, Shane lives.

We can explore this dimension of truth in a different way. Danny sends to Chris a message, one we might read here as 'I am guilty' – that is, 'here I am as a hostage-taker betraying what it is to be a negotiator who frees hostages'. However, there is a difference between this message and the reply, which we might read as Chris's response: 'You are innocent'. Chris sends back a reply, which is the truth of the message from Danny, and it is (xv) what Lacan (2006) terms the *message in reverse*. It is rather like the paradox of the Cretan liar who says 'I am lying', which for Lacan (1964/1973) is a message that demands a response as a message in reverse, as 'you are telling the truth'. There is an ethical position assumed here, in which we enrol the subjects of our research, which is that we never speak from within a 'metalanguage', but from a position, and in this kind of research we are always positioned in relation to the text. Every communication supposes that there is an audience, an other to which the subject speaks, and our analysis opens up a dimension in which truth appears, not as empirical truth but bound to an emancipatory act of the subject (Lacan, 1986/1992).

Deadlocks of perspective (xvi–xvii)

This text – and the film which encloses it – plays with a paradox about the nature of communication. There is no 'negotiation', and Danny does not find a common point of meaning with Chris.

There is *no agreement* (xvi), and this is a source of strength in the analysis, not weakness, for it draws attention to deadlocks that structure the text. The illusion of agreement between the two would signal that they were communicating through the line of the imaginary, and such collusion between Chris and Danny would also signal that Chris had simply been drawn into one version of reality. The film needs the deadlock, the disagreement between Danny and Chris in order for the dialogue between them to work. The question as to whether Shane lived or died is not an empirical question to be resolved one way or the other. It is the very difference between the two of them regarding that question that structures the relation between the two characters.

One way to embed this disagreement in symbolic structures – dimensions of representation that determine how each of the characters will be heard by the other – and how we will hear them as analysts of the film, is to attend to the deadlock of perspective through (xvii) the optic of *sexual difference* (Lacan, 1975/1998). In the first extract we have two men talking, and in the second extract three men. There are no actual women present or referred to, but that does not mean that there is no sexual difference at work in this text. Gender is relevant even when it is not explicitly marked. In this case we have unmarked categories that are clearly still being put to work. Here, we might, for example, see the difference of gender displaced onto difference of race. This displacement is overdetermined and reinforced by the feminization of Danny, speaking in the discourse of the hysteric, challenging Chris. This 'sexual difference' is treated as a 'non-relation', which defines a field of positions in which subjects of whatever sex are pitted against each other and in which other kinds of subject are pitted against each other as 'men' or 'women'. What Lacan enables us to do here is both to circumvent the reductionist ascription of 'gender' to real underlying biological sex differences, for the categories of 'man' and 'woman' are themselves organized in relation to each other as signifiers, and to show how this pervasive and pernicious binary opposition organizes other axes of power and subjection such as race and class. This gives us a conceptual tool to make sense of how a contemporary ideological process of 'feminization', which also applies to certain men, intersects with 'racialization' such that black men become at some moments 'feminized' and at other moments rendered into hyper-masculinized objects (Burman, 2005, 2008b). Lacan's argument also draws attention to the dangers of trying to account for this process in terms of what one can observe or the feelings that one has about it, an understanding produced in the line of the imaginary and in which binary oppositions will simply be confirmed and reproduced. Instead, the attention to 'sexual difference' symbolically organized as a deadlock of perspective invites us to map it with respect to other symbolic forms. This requires theoretical elaboration to enable us to appreciate how our 'feelings' are part of the process we are analyzing.

There is another impossible dimension at work. We might treat the shooting as (xviii) the eruption of *the real*. Here is a third register that is interwoven with the imaginary and the symbolic, but cannot directly be grasped. It flashes into

view, and can then only be articulated through the other two registers (Lacan, 1975/1998: 2). However, the real is also present in the boundaries that cannot be articulated by the speakers themselves and that make the dialogues possible. Here, for example, these characters in the first extract are in a hostage situation, and they speak of a film *Shane*, but they are also in a film, *The Negotiator*. That is, there are certain ungraspable properties of the interaction in that frame, and sometimes they intrude upon the interaction. There is a point here that connects with Lacan's (2006) point that there is no metalanguage from which we can view what is really going on, and there are important lessons here for the motif of 'reflexivity' in qualitative research. Reflexivity is not simply the sum total of personal investments that a researcher has in the material they study nor the journey that has led them to a research question, and to see it in this way is to psychologize reflexivity. Rather, reflexivity is produced as one maps the standpoint of the researcher in relation to the material by virtue of the political, theoretical and institutional positions from which one views it (Parker, 2005a).

Interpretation of textual material (xix–xxi)

When we read this kind of text we are often drawn into the illusion that we understand what is going on, and the cultural resources that make any kind of reading possible – from the symbolic – may also lure us into the idea that we know what each of the characters really mean. For example, when Chris refers to *Rio Bravo* we might find some meaning in the fact that this film, which starred John Wayne and Dean Martin, was one in which a 'wandering cowboy and a drunken sheriff hold a town against outlaws' (Halliwell, 2004: 740). What this draws attention to is that we are making interpretations of interpretations, but that we cannot perfectly understand what the first layer of interpretations means. The interpretations are themselves structured into patterns of discourse. We have already mentioned the discourse of the hysteric, and now we turn briefly to the other three discourses Lacan (1991/2007) outlines.

In (xix) the *discourse of the master*, the agent speaks from the position of the master signifier, but as a master who is in truth a barred subject who does not fully grasp what he pretends to. Here we see the sure response to the challenge to knowledge that Chris articulates when he says he reads 'histories and biographies'. The master, Chris, puts knowledge to work – knowledge as a collection of signifiers – here making Danny speak in order to produce something more of the *objet petit a*, something more about the killer.

In (xx) the *discourse of the university*, the agent speaks from the position of knowledge. We see this when Chris tells Danny that the assumption that Shane lives is 'a common mistake, you see', or when he fills in the speech of Danny with 'Brandon de Wilde'. This agent speaks from within knowledge and treats the other as *objet petit a*, and this agent speaks as if there were fixed grounding points of truth as master signifiers, and he turns the one he addresses into someone who does not know what they speak about, producing a barred subject.

There is something quite different at work when the agent speaks in such a way as to hystericize the other, as Chris does when he addresses Frost with the enigmatic question, 'Do you like Westerns Frost?' Here he speaks from the position of the enigmatic object, *objet petit a*, and all Frost can do is reply, 'What the fuck is that supposed to mean?' as barred subject. Here the agent speaking as *objet petit a* for the one he addresses is underpinned by knowledge – Chris knows who the killer is – and he produces something that will sum up what Frost is. He produces a master signifier, 'killer'. This (xxi) is the *discourse of the analyst*.

Conclusions

The aim here has been to produce an analysis that is 'psychosocial', but without 'psychosocializing the social and human sciences' (Burman, 2008: 374). It shows the discursive conditions of possibility for an 'act' (that of Chris and of Danny). There has been an attention to the intersection between gender and 'race' that is one of the positive defining characteristics of psychosocial research (e.g. Stopford, 2004). This study focused on an unusual 'interview' text, one in which there is a distinctive contextual frame and specific position demanded of the researcher. It was chosen to illustrate the value of Lacanian psychoanalytic theory in psychosocial research, chosen precisely because it poses questions about the nature of a research text so starkly.

Every interview is unusual, and the task of the researcher is to attend to the way the construction of the material gives rise to certain meanings. This is the case whether the text is a representation of an encounter with fictional characters, in which case there is the construction of a particular kind of 'affect' in the narrative, or whether the text is an actual interview carried out by the researcher, in which case there is a more pervasive temptation to imagine that the researcher can have direct access to that affect by feeling it and thinking about it.

The aim has been to show how theoretical resources for research can help us use psychoanalysis in such a way as to analyze the text rather than colonize it with psychoanalytic discourse. In this way the field of psychosocial studies can redeem the promise of approaches to language and subjectivity that ground both in a radical approach to power and ideology, power and ideology of which our contemporary 'psyche' and 'society' are dubious partners.

Note

1 This chapter is extracted, with kind permission of the author, from Parker, I. (2010) 'Psychosocial studies: Lacanian Discourse Analysis negotiating interview text', *Psychoanalysis, Culture & Society*, 15, 156–172.

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5

THE ENUNCIATING ACT AND THE PROBLEM OF THE REAL IN LACANIAN DISCOURSE ANALYSIS[1]

David Pavón-Cuéllar

Concentrating on the realm of full speech, this chapter concerns itself with how Lacan redefines the two levels, originally defined by Jakobson, of the *enunciation* (the process of stating something) and the *enunciated* or the *statement* (what is stated). A reflection on the first of those levels enables us to tackle the problem of the real in Lacanian Discourse Analysis.[2] In so doing, I discuss why study of enunciation necessitates an examination of the real that cannot be reduced, either to a discourse analysis of the statement, or to a content analysis of the imaginary reality signified by the statement.

The signifierizing enunciating act and the signifying enunciated fact

When speaking, the subject of full speech is not yet created, but he will have been created by his speech. Even if he is spoken of already, that does not mean that he is plainly enunciated. He is not explicitly told, but rather implicitly foretold. He is thus implicated in the telling of his foretelling; his discourse heralds him. But even if he appears to us as a promise that already fills his discourse, he is not a piece of this enunciated discourse. He is just the truth of his discourse, but this truth is not enunciated by this discourse. The truth of his structural subjection cannot be objectively enunciated. His real signifierization cannot be expressed as a symbolic signifier.

The causal overdetermination and constitution of a signifier cannot be confused with the consequential signifier. The subject's articulation is not articulated. This articulation is not enunciated knowledge, but the truth of this knowledge. It is the truth of the subject who will have existed by virtue of his enunciation of knowledge. This truth is also the retroactive investment and positioning of the subject, through his enunciation, in the signifying social

structure of knowledge. It is thus the structuring power that constitutes and confirms, retroactively, the truthfulness and fullness of speech.[3]

As structuring power, the truth of the subject is his retroactive situation, overdetermination, signifierization, positioning and investment in the signifying structure. In a sense, this truth amounts to the real subject himself, to his life, to his speaking and spoken history. His truth is actually his structural constitution as a real subject, or, to put it more correctly, his subjectivation through his subjection to the structure. Now, this truth *is enunciation*, but it *is not enunciated*. There is here a crucial difference between two things:

1 *The enunciation*. It is *the act of enunciating or stating something*. It involves the signifierization of the subject who expresses a discourse. It functions as an assimilation of this expressing subject to the enunciating structure of language that articulates the enunciated chain of discourse. At stake here is the individual truth (*vérité*) of the subject, which lies in the real foundation of the symbolic, the structure of the signifier, the fullness and truthfulness of full speech.
2 *What is enunciated*. It is the *enunciated fact*, the *statement* or the *stated thing*. It involves the unfolding of the signifierized events that are enunciated. Thus it corresponds to the enunciated chain of discourse, which is expressed by the subject and articulated by the structure of language. At stake here is the symbolic signifying stuff of general knowledge (*savoir*), which precedes and determines all knowledge (*connaissance*) of the imaginary objective reality of the signified.

Borrowed from Jakobson, this conceptual distinction 'between the levels of the enunciation and of the enunciated' (Lacan, 1959–60/1996, 16/12/59: 79) predominates in the most structuralist period of Lacanian theoretical evolution (1958–64). At this moment, the conceptual distinction takes the place of the differentiation between full speech and empty speech (1953–58). From this previous differentiation, the new distinction recovers the parallel oppositions between subjectivity and objectivity, the real and reality, truth and knowledge. The new distinction also recuperates two conceptual polarities: symbolic–imaginary and signifier–signified. However, after the structuralist shift from signification to signifierization, the enunciation and the enunciated can operate as two symbolic signifying levels. *In depth, in the real of the symbolic, the enunciating act enables a retroactive signifierization. On the surface, in the symbolic of the imaginary, the enunciated fact makes possible a retrospective signification. This signification depends on signifierization just as the enunciated fact depends on the act of enunciation.*[4]

The individual truth of the real subject and the symbolic subject of general knowledge

The objective distinction between the *enunciated fact* (symbolic knowledge or imaginary reality) and the *enunciating act* (the truth of knowledge) also implies

a subjective distinction between the *symbolic subject of the enunciated fact* (the grammatical subject) and the *real subject of the enunciating act* (the enunciator).[5] This real subject is an individual in the flesh, while the symbolic subject is nothing more than a signifier. Apparently, they are independent of one another, yet they both arise from the same identification of the real one with the symbolic one. Therefore, in reality, they are dependent on one another. Actually, the identification of an individual to a signifier, through his enunciating act, entails his alienation in language, that is to say, his signifierization and subjectivation through his subjection to the structure, which generates both him as a real subject and his signifier as a symbolic subject. Thus, all things considered, the enunciation entails a creation of both the symbolic enunciated subject and the real enunciating subject.[6]

In a Lacanian perspective, the real subject arises from the enunciating act. He exists through this act. The protagonist of this act is consubstantial with the act. The speaker is the truth of his speech act. He is the truthfulness of his full speech. By revealing the real subject of the enunciation, full speech thus immediately reveals its truthfulness, which is the truth of a particular subject, who will have been through the enunciation of his speech. Now, besides this real subject identified with the signifier, there is the signifier or the symbolic subject, whose existence is also determined by the enunciation and identification of the real subject with it. However, unlike the real subject, this symbolic subject is not the unique truth of the enunciation, but it is part of a shared knowledge. This is why many people can identify with a signifier in general knowledge. On the other hand, there is only one person who can incarnate the individual truth of a real subject, with his particular way of telling the signifier. In other words, the *told* signifier can be applied to everybody, but the *telling* will not be the same for everybody. The telling can be serious or humorous, risky or safe, proud or ashamed, and countless other things combined one way or another. As an individual truth, the telling would only be characteristic of one individual and only by a combination of circumstances, while what is told, as general knowledge, can be told of various individuals in diverse circumstances.

What is told obviously depends on what one can tell, must tell or wants to tell under certain circumstances. But all of this is not entirely translated into what is told. All of this can only be expressed by the telling, and it concerns only the telling *or* its subject, the real subject of precise structural circumstances, of incomparable necessities, of a distinctive structuring power, of specific laws and rules characteristic of only one individual position in the world. The telling refers precisely to this one and only position held by the real subject of *an* unconscious, of *a* language, of *a* particular expression of the signifying social structure. What is told or not told logically depends on this unique structural telling position, or, to be more specific, on the unparalleled way in which this enunciating position is overdetermined by the structure.[7]

The enunciating workforce and the work of the unconscious

Lacanian Discourse Analysis presupposes, behind the analyzed discourse, a real subject who should tell exactly what has to be told in his unique telling position. In this structural position, the subject does not decide anything, but should tell what has been decided somewhere else by the structure. In so doing, the enunciating individual subject does the work of the signifying social structure. Since this structure includes the economic system of society, we may regard the subject as a 'proletarian', or a pure enunciating workforce, which is there to do the work of the unconscious (Lacan, 1968–69/2006, 12/02/69: 172–173; 1969–70/1991, 17/12/69: 33–35; 1970–71/2008, 21/05/71: 203; 1974: 187). To do this work of the signifying structure, the worker is indispensable. There would not be a telling without a real teller. Unlike what is told (which can even be told by the cognitive abilities of a software tool), the telling involves a real subject in the flesh (an actual person who cannot be replicated by any kind of virtual simulation).

What is told involves only a 'grammatical subject' as 'place where something' is symbolically 'represented' (Lacan, 1968–69/2006, 11/12/68: 83), while the telling involves the real presence of a 'living subject' whose 'subsistence' depends on his telling 'workforce' (Marx, 1867/2006, II, VI: 133). This force is the prerequisite for the real subject to exist in the human world, or in the structure, which is the only place where he can exist. As Lacan (1968–69/2006) postulates, 'there is only a subject of a telling', and 'the subject is the effect of this telling' (04/12/68: 66).

The subject arises from his telling. As for this telling, it arises from the signifying structure, which needs to make a real subject in order to do its work. So the telling requires a structure, which, in turn, requires the subjection and subjectivation of an individual. The resulting subject will have existed by being subjected to the language of his telling. This telling 'calls' the subject 'to existence' (Lacan, 1972: 449–450). Thus, through this telling, the signifying social structure creates the real subject by summoning him to appear.[8]

By creating a real subject, the signifying structure generates the individual telling the truth that substantiates its own general told knowledge. This enunciating act generates a particular truth of the universal knowledge, while the enunciated fact simply regenerates this knowledge, which makes it possible to imagine a reality. For this knowledge to be regenerated, the enunciated fact functions as a mechanism that is immanent to the symbolic system of the real structure. It is a sort of device that would simply restore and reinforce this latent existing system of knowledge. As for the enunciating act, it must transcend the system. Without this, the structure cannot be particularized, as a particular language or unconscious, for the structural position that is already kept for the subject. This particularization of knowledge underlies any generation of the truth. It is thus present in any constitution of the subject by a subjection to the structure. In sum, when an individual is subjected to the signifying social structure, the enunciating act

will transcend and particularize this structure for him, while the enunciated fact will simply reproduce the universal immanence of the structure.[9]

The container and the content

On the enunciated side, there is the 'sense' of the universal 'true' knowledge (Lacan, 1975–76, 09/03/76: 117), which is also the symbolic value of an 'imaginary' reality, as 'that which makes sense' (13/04/76: 131). On the enunciating side, there is the particular 'truth' of the subject, or the 'true real' (10/02/76: 85), which 'doesn't make sense' (09/03/76: 117). Even if this nonsensical true real corresponds to the fullness and truthfulness of full speech, it is not *content* in the strict meaning of the word, and it should not be confused with the imaginary signification that makes sense.[10] Far from it, the true real is the literal container of all conceivable content. It is the structure of everything in the human world. First and foremost, it constitutes the real matrix of all symbolic forms. As for these forms, they are thus contained by the real, but they also contain the imaginary. In other words, the symbolic form of discourse is both the content of the real enunciating structure, and the enunciated container of the imaginary content.

Lacanian Discourse Analysis must be levelled, primarily, at both the enunciating structural matrix, or the articulating real container, and its articulated symbolic content, as the enunciated form of discourse and the container of the imaginary content. In the analysis of this articulated content, we must begin by examining the signifying chain of discourse, the succession of symbolic events, before eventually proceeding to the imaginary signified reality. In the analysis of the articulating container, we must, in parallel, analyze the literality of the signifier, the real material structure of the symbolic form, the body of the soul (or the *hypokeimenon* of the *entelechies*). When analyzing this enunciating body, we must regard each person in the flesh as a support of the structure. We must approach thus the relation between the corporeal individual subject and their literal position in the structural social matrix, as real emptiness and space of their lacks, needs or desires, as well as their anguishes, drives or lost enjoyments.[11] All of this should make it possible to describe the subjecting of individuals, or the positioning of subjects in the structure, and not only their structural positions. In this description we should deal with the real act of overdetermination, structuration and signifierization, and not only with the symbolic system of the overdetermining signifying structure. In this way, the description of the real of the symbolic should give an explanation of the symbolic. The analysis of the enunciating act of positioning the subject in the structure should elucidate the enunciated structural position of this subject.[12]

Besides helping to elucidate the symbolic, the real enunciation should help in some way to clarify the imaginary. In fact, by explaining the enunciated fact, which creates the 'image of objective reality', the enunciating act also indirectly explains the 'subjective creation' of this 'image' (cf. Schaff, 1964/1969: 225–227). The reason for that is the 'creative function' of language, which has been

so authoritatively considered by Humboldt (1834, §7: 163). Fulfilled through the 'acted' reality, this function concerns the enunciating level of the 'acting' truth (§14: 202). At this level, language is not 'an instrument intended for the representation of a known truth', but a way 'to discover an unsuspected truth' (1820, §20: 88). Such a truth reveals, 'in language', a structuring 'autonomous power' and a 'divine liberty' to create reality (1834. §3: 147).

The act and the Word

With regard to the divine creating liberty or creative function of the enunciating act of language, we must acknowledge that 'in the beginning was the Word' (John, 1: 1). Lacanian Discourse Analysis makes us accept, to be more specific, that *in the beginning was the telling of the Word* or *the enunciating act that enunciates the enunciated fact*. The Lacanian synthesis of John (*Word*) and Faust (*act*) thus poses a 'beginning' in which the 'action of the Word' is 'essential to the Word and renews its creation every day' (Lacan, 1953: 135). Through this renewed enunciating act of creation, the imaginary reality is created, while 'the real' is 'demonstrated' by the 'act reached in the symbolic' (1970: 592).

In the symbolic system, the real act of enunciation is also an act of retroactive demonstration of the real subject who will have existed through the act. From this enunciating act, the enunciated fact of the symbolic subject and its predicative world also determines the entire imaginary reality of the *ego* and the *other* in the mirror. This determined mental reality of the signified self is prioritized, as we know, by cognitive content analysis (Lacan, 1957–58/1998, 25/06/58: 486). On the other side, traditional discourse analysis focuses on the determining enunciated fact of the signifying discursive chain. As for Lacanian Discourse Analysis, it must also examine the fundamental enunciating act of signifierization and structural overdetermination. Our analysis thus aims at illuminating the subjection of the individual to the structure, as well as the structure itself, its structuring power and its real emptiness, that is, the real matrix of the symbolic form, the literal foundation of the signifying determination, the articulating structural reason of the articulated discursive functioning, *the why of the how*.

The *why* of the *how*, structure and form, concrete psychology and discursive psychology

In Lacanian Discourse Analysis, the *why of the how* refers to the enunciating structure whose real emptiness is negatively composed of logical identities and differences, literal positions and oppositions, as well as gaps, but also lacks, anguishes, desires, motivations, drives, repetitions and other factors that are evidently inseparable from the symbolic.[13] As the real of the symbolic, these factors function retroactively as the cause of their own cause. Thus, paradoxically, they underpin what gives rise to them. Once generated by discourse, they retroactively exist as real telling things that explain the told words in discourse. These

things directly concern the individual subjected to the structure, that is, the concrete literal incarnation of this structure. If that is the way it is, the real things deserve, beyond discursive psychology, a 'concrete psychology' of the enunciating subject as an incarnation of the structure (Politzer, 1928/1968, 1947).

Through the concrete psychology that characterizes the enunciating subject of an enunciated statement, Lacanian Discourse Analysis should reveal the incarnate real structure of the symbolic form in the analyzed discourse. The analysis should expose, in this way, the retroactive signifierization of the signifier, the telling truth of the told knowledge, the corporeal thrust of the discursive movement. So, the analysis does not confine itself to strategic discursive operations, but it is also interested in the structural and structuring gesture that animates these operations. This gesture is analyzed as the corporeal enunciating act that generates the enunciated discursive fact.[14] It is the movement that articulates the analyzed discourse; it is crucial for our analysis. Its *muscular force* is also crucial. It is the unremittingly applied workforce of a proletarianized subject who makes, in discourse, the continuous work of the structure, of language, of an unconscious.

Notes

1 This chapter is extracted, with kind permission of the author, from Pavón-Cuéllar, D. (2010) *From the Conscious Interior to an Exterior Unconscious: Lacan, Discourse Analysis and Social Psychology*. London: Karnac.

2 My proposal of Lacanian Discourse Analysis is not without precedent. It is actually preceded by two generations of intense work. The first one was French and clearly Marxist and Althusserian (Pêcheux, 1969, 1975a, 1975b; Pêcheux & Fuchs, 1975). The second one is mainly British and rather multifaceted (Parker, 1997, 2000, 2001, 2003, 2005; Frosh, 2002; Frosh *et al.*, 2003; Georgaca, 2005; Hook, 2003, 2008; Branney, 2008). Just like those who precede me, I think that discourse analysts should take Lacan seriously. They should recognize the intrinsic value of his approach to discourse (e.g. Pêcheux, 1975b; Parker, 2005), or at least the cultural and psychological importance of what is disclosed by his approach (e.g. Parker, 1997, 2000; Dunker & Parker, 2009).

3 Here is the outline of the problem that will be treated in this chapter. Posing this problem in all of its complexity, Frosh, Phoenix and Pattman (2003) note that the 'investment' of 'people' in 'subject positions is not necessarily captured by the articulation of the discourses themselves; rather, it may hinge on unspoken and at times unspeakable events, experiences and processes, all of them cultural, but also deeply embedded in subjectivity' (p. 42). As will be seen, Lacanian Discourse Analysis must replace these events in the spoken and speakable sphere of the enunciation. In this sphere, we *are* these events that *speak themselves* when we speak. That does not mean that they can be told or enunciated. Even if we *speak them*, we cannot *speak about them*. The fact remains that they are speaking and spoken through enunciation. If they are embedded in subjectivity, this subjectivity is embedded in enunciation. In fact, subjectivity arises retroactively from enunciation. Therefore, we must assume, together with Pêcheux (1975a, 1975b), an idea of enunciation in which the subject 'is not at the origin of the enunciated sense' (Pêcheux, 1975a: 3–4), but it is its 'retroactive effect' (1975b: 139).

4 In the semiotic perspective that Camus (1999) wants to 'introduce into social psychology' (p. 277), there is a 'retroactive construction of signification', which 'concerns' the enunciation or the 'act value of the enunciated' (p. 282). In our

Lacanian perspective, all this can be accepted, provided that the *construction of signification* is not confused with the *signification* itself, but rather conceived as an unconscious signifierization, which would retroactively determine the conscious signification. Alas, this conception is hardly reconcilable with a semiotic perspective.

5 Here is the Lacanian version of the four elements originally distinguished by Jakobson (1957): the 'related event' or 'process of the enunciated', the 'discursive action' or 'process of the enunciation', the 'protagonist of the enunciated process' and the 'protagonist of the process of the enunciation' (p. 181).

6 Together with the Althusserian–Lacanian analysis of Pêcheux and Fuchs (1975), our Lacanian Discourse Analysis regards 'enunciation' as a 'subjection' and a 'constitution of the subject' (p. 15). We can also assume the Althusserian explanation of this constitution as a 'retroactive effect' of the '*interpellation*' (Pêcheux, 1975b: 138–139), that is, the movement that 'calls out the individual to become a subject of discourse' through his 'identification' with this subject (p. 240).

7 Even if Pêcheux and Fuchs (1975) disregard this unparalleled character of each individual overdetermination, they do not fail to observe that 'processes of enunciation consist of a set of determinations', which 'allow what is told and reject what is not told' (p. 20).

8 Pêcheux (1975b) already regards enunciation, in his Althusserian–Lacanian perspective, as the 'interpellation' of the subject who is 'called to existence' (p. 138). Similarly, in our Lacanian perspective, the enunciation is considered the gesture of the signifying social structure, which calls for a subject to exist in order to do its work; that is, the work of the unconscious. In this way, together with Pêcheux, we analyze the enunciation as a subjective 'effect' of the 'structural determination' and 'positioning of the subject' in the structure (p. 157).

9 In the terms of Billig (1987), the enunciating act needs the 'particularization' with its 'capacity for transcendence', for 'rule-creation, rule-breaking and rule-bending', while the enunciated fact implies 'categorization' and 'rule-following' (p. 130). Explaining the 'natural propensity for prejudice' (p. 132) in the work of Gordon Allport, this categorization can be explained, in turn, by the natural propensity of the symbolic system to reproduce itself through the enunciated facts. Obviously, this propensity is challenged by the 'natural tendency to form particularizations and to make special cases' (ibid.). However, for the particularizations to be produced, the categorizations must be reproduced. Someone must be an occurrence of a signifier among other occurrences of the same signifier (as an enunciated subject) in order to be unique among them (as an enunciating subject).

10 Accordingly, the Lacanian Discourse Analysis of this true real should not be confused with the cognitive content analysis of the imaginary reality. Our analysis, together with the precursory analysis proposed by d'Unrug (1974), assumes that 'formal indicators' of the enunciated fact 'refer to analyzable processes', at the level of the enunciating act, and not to 'contents which are attributed rather than observed' (p. 231).

11 This analysis of the enunciation corresponds, in Frosh, Phoenix and Pattman (2003), to the

> move required if one wants to understand the specificity of each subject's personal investment in discursive positions, a move which goes *beyond* or *beneath* discourse to explore the needs which are being met, the *enjoyment* created, by the positions which are taken up (p. 52).

In the Kleinian theory of the 'defended subject' proposed by Hollway and Jefferson (2000), this move leads us always to a 'need to defend oneself against feelings of anxiety', as 'crucial motivation for investment in particular discourses' (p. 59).

12 So 'a psychoanalytic frame of analysis can provide plausible reasons for the adoption of specific identity positions' (Frosh, Phoenix & Pattman, 2003: 42). From this point of view, 'there may be important reasons why each one of us ends up where we are, and these reasons are the legitimate target of psychological inquiry' (p. 52). These reasons are also the legitimate target of Lacanian Discourse Analysis, as long as they are connected, through enunciation, to the enunciating structure.

13 Such factors may explain 'why speakers *choose* to inhabit particular subject positions over others (motivation, personal investment) and why certain *choices* persist over time and place (continuity, repetition)' (Gough, 2004: 247). In discursive psychology, those questions are 'sidestepped in favor of concentrating on participant's practices' (ibid.). In this way, discursive psychology disregards the *why* in order to concentrate on the *how*. Similar to Gough, I think 'discourse analysts within social psychology need to do more to examine subjectivity' and subjective factors that explain 'why individuals take on certain positions and reject others' (p. 265). Now, avoiding a relapse into the purely imaginary 'subjectivism' of the psychological mirror, we must situate those subjective factors in the enunciating structure (Pêcheux, 1975b: 161–162). After all, these factors are not immanently 'subjective' in the sense that they would 'affect' an already constituted 'subject', but they are transcendental factors 'in which the subject is constituted' by the enunciating act of the structure (pp. 136–137).

14 Here is my Lacanian structuralist reinterpretation of the 'action orientation' that Potter (2003) gives to 'discursive psychology' and to 'discourse analysis' in general. In Lacanian Discourse Analysis, this *action orientation* must not orientate us only to the activity inherent in discourse, but also to the structural impulse that determines this activity. Unlike other kinds of discourse analysis, ours must scrutinize the *why* and not only the *how* of the action. Together with the Lacanian–Althusserian discourse analysis of Pêcheux (1975b), ours must go beyond any 'utilitarian and pragmatist theory' in which 'language is first used by me to act on others' (p. 233). Language acts on others, granted, but that does not mean that I use it for that reason. In any case, in spite of myself, language acts on me as much as on the others.

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6

DISCOURSE

Structure or event?[1]

Michel Pêcheux

I can think of several quite different pathways into the reflection that I begin here with you.

The first pathway would be to take a sentence as a theme and to work on it: for instance, *On a gagné* ("We won"), as it spread over France on 10 May, 1981, a few minutes after 8.00pm (the event at the point of encounter between actuality and memory).

Another way, apparently more classical (but what is classicism today?) would be to begin with a philosophical question: for instance, the relationship between Marx and Aristotle concerning the idea of a science of structure.

At this very point I am threatened by a host of specialized disciplines rising up from every corner of philosophy and the human and social sciences with all their references. They remind me that I am not a specialist in Marx or in Aristotle or in the history of philosophy, and that I do not have any privileged access to the immense oral and written archives that have been proliferating for the last few years around 10 May, 1981.

What then? Would I not do better (a third possible way) to remain in the "professional" field in which I am now trying, for better or worse, to find my bearings: the field of discourse analysis in the French tradition?[2] For instance, I could take up, within the set of theoretical and procedural problems with which the discipline is now confronted, the relationship between analysis as description and analysis as interpretation.

If I take refuge in this tactic of intervention, how do I escape the long list of prerequisites necessary to the most minimal adjustment or "tuning" of what I mean (*voudrais dire*) to what will be understood of it? The evocation of certain proper names (Saussure, Wittgenstein, Althusser, Foucault, Lacan) or certain areas of the real (history, language, the unconscious) do not suffice to characterize a working position. Will I not be compelled to begin with a series of points of definition, which nothing would prevent a priori from functioning other than as opaque signs of recognition or as theoretical fetishes?

Should I lead you on a tour—a very hurried one, necessarily—of the construction site of the technical procedures proper to discourse analysis? Or, further, should I attempt through a presentation of the results of these procedures to convince you of their pertinence and interest, even as ongoing research tends to pose new problems rather than to valorize the supposed quality of the "answers"?

One says in French that someone does not need to beat around the bush when he is getting right to the point (*n'y va pas par quatre chemins quand il se dirige droit sur l'essentiel*). But in these circumstances, what would this wonderful way to the point be when the "affair" of which I speak is taking place before your very eyes like a film that cannot be rewound or edited?

Agreeing that such a way is nothing but a religious myth, I would prefer to attempt to advance by thinking it better to go on crisscrossing between the three pathways I have just indicated (event, structure, and the tension between description and interpretation within the field of discourse analysis). Thus, each of these trajectories will be effectuated through the partial intervention of the other two.

"We won"

Paris, 10 May, 1981, 8.00pm local time. Simplified and recomposed through electronic devices, the face of the future president of the French Republic appears on the television screen. Everyone is amazed, whether through delight or dread: it is the face of François Mitterrand. At the same time, commentators report voting estimates provided by pollsters: they all declare Mitterrand the winner. The "election specials" begin: tables of percentages start rolling. The initial reactions of spokespersons from both camps have already been expressed, as have the immediate responses of experts in "politology." Both are going to "put the event to work" (the new fact, the statistics, the initial statements) in its immediate context and in the space of memory that it evokes and has already begun to reorganize: French socialism from Guesde to Jaurès, the Congress of Tours, the Popular Front, the Liberation.

The event that thus appears on the "front page" of the great Televisual machine, the final score of a political Super Bowl or World Cup (Mitterrand wins the French championship), is a journalistic and mediatic event that refers to a sociopolitical content that is at the same time perfectly transparent (the verdict of figures, the evidence of the tables) and deeply opaque.

The discursive confrontation over the naming of the unlikely event began long before 10 May through the immense work of formulations (reported, shifted, passed from one side to the other of the political field), tending discursively to prefigure the event, constituting a discursive prefiguration of the event, shaping and fashioning it, with the aim of hastening, or preventing, its arrival. This process goes on, marked by the novelty of 10 May, but this novelty does not rule out the opacity of the event, inscribed in the oblique play of its denominations. None of these sentences is a paraphrase of the other:

François Mitterrand is elected president of the French Republic.
The French Left wins the day in the presidential elections.
The Socialo-communist coalition takes hold of France.

They refer (*bedeuten*) to the same event, but they do not construct the same significations (*sinne*): the discursive struggle goes on through the event.

In the midst of this circulation/confrontation of formulations that has not ceased to unfold on the television screen throughout the entire night, a news flash appears that is both a report and a call: all Parisians for whom this event is a victory are to assemble en masse at the Place de la Bastille to shout for joy. The others will not be there on such a night. The same will happen in the many other French towns. Among the cries of victory, there is one that was taken up with a particular intensity: *On a gagné*! – "We won!"—repeated endlessly as an inexhaustible echo of the event. The discursive materiality of this collective utterance is most peculiar: neither its content, shape, nor enunciative structure is that of a slogan at a demonstration or a political meeting.[3] *On a gagné*, sung with a determinate rhythm and melody (*on-a-ga-gné*/ do-do-sol-do), constitutes the deployment, in the field of political events, of the collective chant of fans at a game when their team has just won. When that chant fills the stadium, it marks the moment in which the passive participation of the spectator supporter is reconverted into a collective gestural and vocal activity, materializing the celebration of the team's victory the more intensely as it was the more unlikely.[4]

May 1981 was the first time that sport offered itself as the popular metaphor most adequate to the French political field. Such an event requires an elaborate critical study of the links between the mode of functioning of the media, on the one hand, and of professional politicians, on the other, especially since the 1970s.[5] What may be said, in any case, is that the metaphoric play around the utterance "We won" overdetermined the event in underscoring its equivocation. The obviousness of sports results is supported by their presentation in logical tables (team X defeated team Y and is therefore qualified to play team Z, etc.). The results of the game will, of course, become the object of strategic commentaries and reflections by team captains and sports commentators, since there are always other games on the horizon. But all the same, the result as such appears within a discursive universe that is logically stabilized; that is, it is based on relatively limited sets of arguments, predicates, and relations, and it can be comprehensively described through a series of univocal responses to factual questions (the main one of which is, of course, as matter of fact, who won, X or Y?).

Questions such as "Who *actually* won, really, beyond appearances, in the eyes of history?" are irrelevant and even absurd when asked about the results of a game. This may be explained by the fact that what is at stake in a game is logically defined as being contained in its result: "team A won" means "team A defeated team B in a game that took place at such and such a site," and no more.

Symbolic marks and objects that may be associated with that victory (and therefore may be appropriated by supporters who identify with the team) are only secondary consequences of the result. It is not certain that what has been won by the winners may be shown or described.

Electoral results, when considered according to the way they are displayed by the media, show the same logical univocity. The universe of percentages, provided with rules to determine victory, is all the same a set of percentages, arguments, and relations. From this point of view, we may say that on 10 May, 1981, after 8.00pm, the proposition "François Mitterrand has been elected president of the French Republic" became true, and no more. But at the same time, the statement *On a gagné* is deeply opaque: its lexico-syntactic materiality (an indefinite pronoun as the subject, the tense and aspectual markers of perfective form, the verbal lexical morpheme "win," and the absence of any object) immerses the utterance in a network of implicit associative relations—paraphrases, implications, commentaries, allusions, and so on—that is, in a heterogeneous series of statements, functioning at various discursive levels, with a variable logical stability.[6]

It follows that the conflation of politics and sport described previously functions as a stabilized proposition (indicating an event localized as a point in an area of logical disjunctions) only if we do not ask what the subject of the verb "win" refers to, or what the missing objects refer to.[7] By 1983, the question can no longer be excluded from political debate.

On a gagné!—we rejoiced in the same way at each victory of the Left: May 1936, Liberation, and so on. Others before us made the same speeches: *On a gagné!* And every time it was an "experience" that did not last long. Sacrifice and enthusiasm wasted; a sudden blaze, but a flash in the pan: the fall, the bog, and the accepted defeat. "*On a gagné*": what has been won, how, and for whom?[8]

Concerning the subject of the statement: who won?

French syntax permits, through the use of the indefinite pronoun *on*, the omission of the subject utterance in "who wins." Is it "we," rank-and file members of Left parties? The people of the Left? Those who always supported the perspectives of the Common Program? Those who first supported it and then suddenly gave up? Those who, quite at sea in the Left/Right categorization in Parliament, nevertheless felt sudden release through the departure of Giscard d'Estaing and all he represents? Or those who never had anything to do with politics and are surprised and enthusiastic because at last things are changing?

The effacement of the agent induces a complex feedback, intermingling different forms of activism with the passive participation of the electoral spectator, reluctant and skeptical up to the last minute . . . when the incredible happens: the critical touchdown is scored and the supporter rushes to the aid of victory. The statement *On a gagné* brings together "those who still believed in it" and "those who no longer believed."[9]

Concerning the objects of the statement: what is won, how, and for whom?

A glance at the dictionary shows us that the verb "to win," *gagner*, is constructed (1) with a live subject (an agent endowed with will, feeling, intention, etc.)—to earn one's living, to earn so much per month; to win a competition, to be the winner; to win a game of chance, to win the jackpot; to take (land, space or time) from an opponent; to earn stripes or a medal; to reach a place, a post or a position; to win someone's sympathy, to win over men, allies, friends); or (2) with a lifeless subject (a thing, a process without any proper will, feeling, or intention.) These "agents" become objects: heat, cold, enthusiasm, sleep, illness, joy, sadness overtake us (take hold of me, of him, of us.)

What part did each of these lexico-syntactic ways of functioning play in the equivocal unity of the reverberated chant? "We won": joy of victory is enunciated without an object, but objects are not far away—we won the match, the game, the first round of the elections; but at the same time, we won by chance, as the jackpot is won when no one dared to hope for it, and, of course, ground is gained over the opponent, with the anticipation of places to be filled, above all the place from which France is governed, the place of governmental and state power. "The Left takes power in France" is a plausible paraphrase of the formula-statement "We won" as an extension of the event. Assuming power: at last something that may be shown as the object of the verb "to win."

Power to be taken: can something finally qualify as the object of the verb "gagner?" It is not at all certain that the verb "to win, to take power" may be explained univocally.[10] "Power" may in a way be considered an acquired object, the deserved fruits of a long effort, or as unexpected good fortune; in any case, the symbolic first prize to be managed for the good of everyone. In another way "power" may be seen as a resistant space to be conquered in an ongoing struggle against feudalities of every order who did their best to assure that "this will never happen" and who continue to resist the bastions of capitalism (which did its best to prevent it and continues to resist). In still another way, power is a performative act to be upheld (to do what was promised) or even a new set of social relations to be constructed.

On a gagné: for two years, the equivocation of this formula has troubled leftists in government posts as well as other layers of the population; it troubles those who believe in it as well as those who do not, those who are waiting for a large popular movement and those who are resigned to a generalized apoliticism, officeholders and ordinary people. Therefore, there are two distinct temptations: (1) to deny the ambiguity of the event of 10 May, for instance, by bringing it down to the logically stabilized level of political institutions (yes or no, is the French Left in or not? If yes, then let us be consistent with the will of the people); (2) to deny the event as such, by behaving as if the problems were the same as if the Right Wing were in power (nothing really happened. What has been won?).[11] Yielding to either of these temptations would ultimately divide the

two Lefts from each other and surrender both to the opponent. If the Right Wing were to come back into power in France, one would see—too late—what "one" has lost.

My intention in taking the event of 10 May, 1981, as an example has been to raise the question of the status of the discursivities that traverse an event, interweaving propositions that seem logically stabilized and therefore may be univocally responded to (yes or no, X or Y) with those formulations that are irredeemably equivocal. Discursive objects that seem to be stable, that seem privileged by a relative logical independence in relation to statements produced about them, exchange their trajectories with other kinds of objects whose mode of existence is governed by the very way they are spoken about. Is one type of object more "real" than another? Is there an underlying space common to the deployment of such dissimilar objects?

Science, structure, and scholasticism

To suppose that, in certain circumstances at least, an object is independent in relation to any discourse about that object is equally to suppose that, in the interior of what appears to be the physical-human universe (things, living beings, persons, events, processes), "there is something of the real." That is, there are points of impossibility determining what cannot fail to be thus. The real is the impossibility that things could be otherwise. Therefore, one does not discover the real; one bumps into it, encounters it, finds it.

Thus, the domain of mathematics and the natural sciences has to do with the real, insofar as one can say of a mathematician or of a physicist that he or she has found the solution to a problem that had remained up to that point unsolved. Also, we say that a student, facing math or physics homework, has solved such and such part of the problem, that he or she is "right" (*il "a raison"*) on such and such a question, while as far as the rest is concerned he or she is "lost" (*il sèche*).

A very great number of material technologies that produce physical or biophysical transformation "have to do with" the real, in opposition to the techniques of divination and interpretation. The point is to find, with or without the aid of the natural sciences, the means of obtaining a result in the most effective possible fashion, while taking into account the exhaustibility of nature: the means to use natural processes, to instrumentalize them, to direct them toward the sought-for effects. To this series is added a multiplicity of techniques of the social management of individuals: they are marked, identified, classified, compared, placed in order, in ranks and tables. They are reassembled and separated according to defined criteria in order to put them to work, to teach them, to give them dreams or hallucinations, to protect them and maintain surveillance over them, to lead them to war, to induce them to have children.

This administrative (juridical, economic, and political) space presents the appearance of a disjunctive logical constraint. It is "impossible" that one is both a bachelor and married, that one can have and not have a diploma; that one

works and is unemployed, that one earns less than *x* dollars per month and more than that sum, that one is both a civilian and in the military, that one is elected to such and such a function and is not elected, and so on. These spaces, through which the possessors of knowledge are placed, the specialists and officials of diverse existing orders (all of them functioning as agents and guarantors of these multiple operations), have a very specific property: they essentially forbid interpretation. This interdiction is implied by the ordered usage of logical propositions (true or false) with disjunctive interrogations (is the state of affairs A or not A?). Correlatively, this interdiction implies the refusal of certain marks of discursive distance,[12] such as "in a sense," "if you like," "we might say," "to an extreme degree," "properly speaking." In particular, these spaces imply the refusal of all quotation marks of an interpretative nature that would displace the categorization. For example, the statement "such and such a person is very military in civilian life" is prohibited, even though this statement, of course, makes perfect sense.

In the discursive spaces designated above as logically stabilized, a given speaking subject is supposed to know what is being talked about; every statement produced in these spaces reflects structural properties that are independent of the enunciation of the statement. These properties are transparently inscribed in an adequate description of the universe, such that this universe is discursively grasped in the spaces. The apparent unifying factor of these discursive spaces is a series of logical–practical evidences at a very general level, such as: the same object X cannot be at the same time in two different places; the same object X cannot have at the same time property P and property not P; the same event E cannot at the same time have occurred and not have occurred; and so on. The logical homogeneity that conditions the logically representable as a set of propositions capable of being true or false is traversed by a series of equivocities (in particular concerning such terms as Law, Rigor, Order, Principle, etc.), which covers at the same time, like patchwork, the domains of the exact sciences, technologies, and public services.[13]

This "logical" cover (*couverture*) of the heterogeneous regions of the real is too massive and systematic a phenomenon to be seen simply as a deception, constructed piecemeal by some mystifying prince: before this simulation (*faux-semblant*) of a natural and sociohistorical real, covered by a network of logical propositions, everything happens as if it were not in anyone's power totally to escape, even—and perhaps especially—those who believe themselves not to be duped by it (*"les non-dupes"*), as if this inevitable inclusion would come to be realized in one way or another.

If we put aside all explanations that are not explanations, insofar as they are only the commentaries of this inclusion itself, there is perhaps a crucial point to consider from the direction of the multiple exigencies of everyday life. However, to call this point into question supposes the suspension of the position of the universal spectator as the source of logical homogeneity; it necessitates the interrogation of the "pragmatic" subject in the Kantian sense, as well as in the contemporary sense.[14] The idea that these logically-stabilized spaces could

be imposed from the exterior, like the constraints placed on the pragmatic subject, through the sole power of people of science, specialists, and administrators, becomes, once it is seriously considered, indefensible.

The pragmatic subject—that is to say, ordinary people faced with the diverse exigencies of their lives—has itself an imperative need or logical homogeneity, marked by the existence of a multiplicity of small, portable, logical systems: from the management of everyday existence (for example, in our civilization, wallet, keys, schedules, calendars, papers), to the great decisions of social and private life (I decided to do such and such and not something else, to respond to X and not to Y), to the whole sociotechnical environment of household appliances (the series of objects that we acquire, that we learn how to work, that we throw away or use, that we break or repair or replace). In this space of equivocal necessity, in which are intermingled things and persons, technical processes and moral decisions, instructions for use and political choices, any conversation (from the simplest request for information to discussions, debates, and confrontations) is capable of putting into play a logical bipolarization of statable propositions—with, from time to time, the insidious impression of a univocal simplification, which could eventually be deadly for oneself and/ or for others.

It does no good to deny this need (or desire) for the appearance of homogeneity bearing logical disjunctions and categorizations: the universal need for a "semantically normal (i.e., normalized) world" begins with the relation that we each maintain with our own body and our immediate environment (beginning with the distribution of good and bad objects, archaically figured by the disjunction between food and excrement). Nor does it do any good to deny that this need for boundaries coincides with the constructions of links between multiple "things to be known" (*choses à savoir*): we say "things to be known" and "things of knowledge"; we say "things of beauty." These "things to be known" can be considered as reserves of accumulated knowledge that we depend on,[15] machines of knowledge against threats of any kind: the state and institutions functioning most often—at least in our societies—as privileged poles of response to this need or demand.

Thus, such "things to be known" stand for things that might be lacking for the happiness (and ultimately for the simple biological survival) of the pragmatic subject; that is, anything that threatens him or her by the very fact that it exists (the fact that it is part of the real, whatever grasp the subject in question has of the structure of the real). It is not necessary to have a phenomenological intuition, a hermeneutic grasp, or a spontaneous apprehension of the essence of typhus to be affected by this malady;[16] in fact, it is quite the contrary: there are "things to be known" (knowledges to be socially managed and transmitted), that is, descriptions of situations, symptoms, and acts (to be performed or avoided) associated with the multiple threats of the real for which ignorance of the law is no excuse—because the real is without pity.

The project of knowledge would unify this multiplicity of "things to be known" into a homogeneous representable structure, the idea of a possible

science of the structure of the real, capable of making it explicit, outside of any simulation, and of assuring the control over this real without the risks of interpretation (therefore a scientific self-reading of the real, without fault or lack)—this project obviously corresponds to an urgency so vivid, so universally "human," tied (knotted) so well (around the same stake of domination/resistance) to the interests of successive masters of this world, as well as to those of the wretched of the earth, that the phantasm of such an effective, manageable, and transmissible knowledge could not fail historically to use any means to make itself materialize.

The promise of a royal science as conceptually rigorous as mathematics, as concretely effective as material technologies, as omnipresent as philosophy and politics—how could humanity resist such a godsend?

There was the moment of Aristotelian scholasticism that marked the beginning of the deployment of the categories that structure language and thought, fashioning the model and organon of any systematization: disjunctive questions *en utrum* ("either/or") considering divinity, the sex of angels, celestial and terrestrial bodies, plants and animals, all things known and unknown. How many catechisms have been structured by the networks of such scholastic questions and responses?

There is the modern-contemporary moment of positive rigor that has appeared in the historical context of the constitution of physics, chemistry, and biology as sciences, a moment associated with the emergence of a new form of Law (organized into a set of propositions), as well as with a rebirth of mathematical thought. The result is a new organon, constructed in opposition to Aristotelianism and based on a reference to the exact sciences, beginning in its turn to homogenize the real, from mathematical logic to social and administrative spaces, from the experimental hypothetical-deductive method to the "techniques of the proof."

Last but not least, there is the moment of Marxist ontology, pretending to produce the dialectical laws of history and matter; another organon, partially resembling the two preceding organa and in any case sharing with them the desire for omnipotence: "the theory of Marx is all powerful because it is true" (Lenin). On the whole, the workers' movements have visibly been unable to resist the extraordinary gift of a new unified philosophy capable of institutionalizing itself efficiently as a critical/organizational component of the state (whether the existing state or the state to come). The basic apparatus of Marxist dialectical ontology (with *Capital* as the absolute weapon: "the most powerful missile ever aimed at the head of the bourgeoisie") has shown itself to be capable—like all knowledges of this unified and homogeneous appearance—of justifying anything in the name of urgency.[17]

Neo-positivism and Marxism thus form the major episteme of our time, entangled in a partially contradictory manner around the stake of the human and social sciences, with the question of history at the centre; that is, the question of the possible forms of existence of a science of history.

The point here is not to decide whether or not *Capital* and the research that has derived from *Capital* have produced what I have called "things to be known." Even for the fiercest adversaries of Marxism, the process of capitalist exploitation, for example, incontestably constitutes a "thing to be known," and the owners of capital have learned to use it as much as, and perhaps better than, those they exploit.[18] The same goes for class struggle and several other "things to be known." The question is, rather, to determine if the "things to be known" that have emerged from Marxism are capable or not of being organized into a coherent scientific space, integrated into a systematic montage of concepts, such as the productive forces, relations of production, social–economic formations, social formations, infrastructure and ideological, juridical and political superstructures, state power, and so on, in the sense that, for example, the Galilean discovery was capable of constituting the coherent scientific matrix of physics, in the current sense of the term.[19]

The moment of the Galilean rupture opened the possibility of a construction of the physical real as a process, following the track of the impossible proper to this real through the ordered relations combining the construction of conceptual writings and experimental devices (thus employing a part of the register of material technologies evoked previously). Accordingly, the first instruments (inclined planes, winches, etc.) used by Galilean physics were inevitably imported from pre-Galilean technological spaces; and it is in the development itself of physics that the aforementioned instruments were transformed, in order to be adapted to the intrinsic necessities of Galilean physics, with, as a retroactive effect, the indefinitely enlarged production of industrialized technical objects associated with a new technical–social division of labor ("scientists," engineers, and technicians), which made physics appear also as a "social science."[20]

The intellectual consequences of the Galilean discontinuity are marked by the fact that for no physicist today is Aristotle a colleague or even the first physicist: Aristotle is simply a great philosopher. Another mark of this discontinuity is that Galilean and post-Galilean physics do not interpret the real—even if, of course, the movement they initiate, the construction of the physical real as process, incessantly becomes the object of multiple interpretations.

The question I am posing here is that of knowing if Marx may or may not be considered the Galileo of the "continent of history."[21] Is there an impossibility specific to history, marking structurally that which constitutes the real? Is there an ordered relationship between the formulation of concepts and the construction of instruments capable of grasping the real? And can we discern, with the emergence of Marx's thought, a discontinuity such that the historical real ceases to be the object of divergent interpretations in order to be constituted in its turn as a process (for example, a "process without subject or end(s)," according to Althusser's famous formula)?

The fact of the "crisis of Marxism" is today sufficiently acknowledged. I can be brief and say that everything leads us to think that the epistemological discontinuity associated with Marx's discovery has become extremely precarious

and problematic. Marx is neither the first historian nor the first economist, in the sense that Galileo could be the first physicist: Thucydides, who is apparently not a colleague for the contemporary practitioners of historiography,[22] is without doubt a historian before as well as after Marx. All we can suppose is that eventually Thucydides would not be read in the same manner, according to whether or not the reading takes into account the work of Marx (that is to say, in fact, a given reading of a given text signed by Marx, or by Marx and Engels, etc.). However, can we not say exactly the same thing about any great thought that has emerged out of history? Failing to be the founder of a science of history, let us say that Marx would be a very great philosopher, as important as Aristotle.

What would have (and to a certain extent has) happened is that Marx would be considered the first Marxist theoretician, in spite of the famous phrase with which he rejected the categorizing adjective derived from his proper name that certain of his contemporaries had already coined in his lifetime. The fact that Marx thus refused to recognize himself in the initial effects associated with the social–historical "reception" of his work has almost always been understood as a denial, signifying, in fact, "I, Karl Marx, am effectively a Marxist, but not in the sense in which it is commonly understood." It seems to me that the aristocratic thematic of the "good" reading as opposed to "bad" (banal or fallacious) readings, of the correct interpretation always held in reserve under erroneous interpretations, of the truth as the telos of a potentially infinite process of rectification, begins at this precise point.

The scholastic effects of the division of reading (exoteric/esoteric reading, Marx read by X/Marx read by Y, etc.), of which Marxism had been the site from the very beginning, with a quasi-indefinite postponement of the moment of the decisive experience, would not be especially surprising. The impossible proper to the structure of the historical real—that is, the specific real considered by Marxist theory—is probably literally ungraspable in the "applications" of the aforementioned theory. The same aporetic point appears in another way: the question of "instruments." If we consider (as was the case for a century for a not-negligible part of humanity) Marxism as the science of history put into practice by the proletariat, we must admit that the practitioners of the science in question were constrained to "borrow" from the existing (and therefore pre-Marxist) social–historical world a whole series of instruments (institutions, or "apparatuses," forms of organization and practices, etc.) in order for this science-practice to be constituted simultaneously as a space of knowledge and a means of intervening in history.

Insofar as it is a question of intervening in history by obeying its laws (which incidentally presupposes that the "things to be known" concerning history, society, and politics have the structure of laws of the scientific-Galilean type), it is clear that, like the inclined planes and winches of Galileo, the first "instruments" utilized have been, up to this point, dissimilar to their new "scientific" goals, inadequate to their transformational function, in a word, crude (only inveterate utopians can believe that it is possible to construct ex nihilo such

social–political instruments by magically denying the weight of the past). The crucial problem is that the development of the applications of Marxism as a science-practice, the new instruments or apparatuses constructed under its scientific auspices, continue to resemble, *grosso modo*, earlier structures—sometimes with aggravations that are more than accidental: in particular, the same patchwork, the same simulation of logical homogeneity, telescoping the discursive stability proper to the natural sciences, to the material technologies and to procedures of administrative management and control, has not ceased to dominate the different variants of Marxism. In other words, to speak brutally, the instruments have not followed theory in its "applications," which can also be understood as an indication that the science-practice in question has not (yet?) been correctly applied.

To speak this way is, to suppose a "true" Marxism in reserve, a Marxism *introuvable*;[23] that is, basically, to repeat Marx's own denial of the interpretation of his work, it is to be identified with Marx's gesture, in what is most defensive about it. So, let us stop protecting Marx and protecting ourselves through him. Let us stop supposing that the "things to be known" concerning the social–historical real form a structural system, analogous to the conceptual-experiment coherence of the Galilean system.[24] And let us try to comprehend what this systematic phantasm implies as a kind of link to "specialists" of all kinds and to the institutions and state apparatuses that employ them, not in order to place ourselves out of play, or out of state (!), but so we may think the problem outside of a Marxist denial of interpretation, that is, by facing the fact that history is a discipline of interpretation and not a physics of a new type.

To read, to describe, to interpret

To raise the question of the existence of a real specific to the disciplines of interpretation requires that the non-logically stable not be considered a priori as a lack, or simple hole, in the real. This assumes that—"the real" understood in various ways—there could exist a real other than that already evoked, as well as another kind of knowledge that is not reducible to the order of "things to be known" or to a network of such things. Thus, a real that is constitutively foreign to logical univocity and a knowledge that is not transmitted, learned, or taught but nevertheless exists in the production of effects.

The intellectual movement that was named "structuralism" (as it developed, in particular, in France in the 1960s, around linguistics, anthropology, philosophy, politics, and psychoanalysis) may be considered, from this point of view, an anti-positivist attempt to take into account the type of real that thought "bumps into" (*buter*) at the intersection of language and history. New practices of reading (symptomatic, archaeological, etc.) applied to textual monuments, and initially to the Great Texts (cf. *Reading Capital*), have emerged from this movement. The principle on which these readings are based consists, as we know, of disengaging what is being said "here" (at a precise place in a text)—said in such a way and

no other—from what is being said elsewhere and in another way, in order to be able to "hear" the presence of the "unsaid" within what is said.

By postulating that "any fact is already an interpretation" (an anti-positivist reference to Nietzsche), structuralist approaches made it a point to describe the textual discursive arrangements (*agencements*) in their material imbrication. Paradoxically, in this manner, they set aside the production of interpretations (representations, contents, *Vorstellungen*) in favor of a pure description (*Darstellung*) of these arrangements. It was in this way that structuralist approaches expressed their refusal to be constituted as a "royal science" of the structure of the real. Nonetheless, we will see in a moment how they were able, in their turn, to be seduced by this fantasy, and to end up giving the appearance of new "royal science."

First it is necessary to stress the fact that in the name of Marx, Freud, and Saussure a new theoretical foundation, politically very heterogeneous, took shape, leading to a critical construction that shattered the literary obviousnesses of "lived" authenticity, as well as the "scientific" certitudes of positivist functionalism.

I recall how, at the beginning of *Reading Capital*, Althusser marked the encounter of these three fields:

> Only since Freud have we begun to suspect what listening and hence what speaking (and keeping silence) means (*veut dire*); that this "meaning" (*vouloir-dire*) of speaking and listening discloses, beneath the innocence of speech and hearing, the specifiable depth of a hidden level, the "meaning" of the discourse of unconscious—that level whose effects and formal conditions are thought by modern linguistics.[25]

The subversive effect of the trilogy Marx-Freud-Saussure was an intellectual challenge that held out the promise of a cultural revolution that would call into question the evidence of the human order as a strictly bio-social order.

To restore something of the specific work of the letter, the symbol, and the trace was to begin to open up a fault within the compact block of pedagogies, industrial and biomedical technologies, and moralizing humanisms or religions. It was to call into question the direct articulation of the biological and the social (an articulation that excluded the symbolic and the signifier from the real). It was an attack on the individual and the collective narcissism of human consciousness (cf. Spinoza in his time), an attack on the eternal negotiation of the "self" (as master/slave of its action, speech, and thought) in its relation to an other-self.

In a word, the structuralist cultural revolution never ceased to raise a very explicit suspicion concerning the register of the psychological (and concerning the psychologies—of the "self," of "consciousness," of "behavior," or of the "epistemic" subject). This suspicion was thus not engendered by the hatred of humanity that was often attributed to structuralism. It was the consequence of

the recognition of a structural fact proper to the human order: that of symbolic castration. At the same time, however, this anti-narcissistic movement (whose political and cultural effects have obviously not been exhausted) turned toward a new form of theoretical narcissism—a narcissism of structure.

This theoretical narcissism may be marked in the structuralist tendency to reinscribe its "readings" in the unified space of a conceptual logic. Thus, the suspension of interpretation (associated with the descriptive gestures of the reading of textual constructions [montages]) tips over into a sort of structural overinterpretation of the montage as the effect of the whole: this overinterpretation applies the "theoretical" as a kind of metalanguage, organized as a network of paradigms. Stucturalist overinterpretation then functions as a translating device, transposing "common empirical statements" into "conceptual structural statements." The mode of functioning of structural analysis (and in particular of what could be called structural materialism or political structuralism) thus remains secretly governed by the general model of interpretative equivalence. To render this schematically, take the empirical statement P1 (for example, "The face of existing socialism is distorted"): P1, in fact, means nothing else but . . . theoretically comes to say that . . . in other words . . . that is to say . . . the theoretical statement P2 (for example, "Bourgeois ideology dominates marxist theory"). It is above all this state of theoretical *surplomb*, its allure as a discourse without a subject simulating mathematical processes, that conferred on structuralist approaches the appearance of a new "royal science," denying, as usual, its own interpretative position.

The paradox of the early 1980s is that the stalling of French political structuralism, its foundering in its capacity as a "royal science" (that nevertheless continues to produce effects, notably in Latin America), coincides with the growing acknowledgment of the works of Lévi-Strauss, Lacan, Barthes, Derrida, and Foucault in the Anglo-Saxon countries—in England, West Germany, as well as in the United States. By a strange seesaw effect, at the precise moment that America discovers structuralism, the French intelligentsia "turns the page" by developing a massive resentment of the theories suspected of having spoken in the name of the masses, while producing a long series of ineffective symbolic acts and unfortunate political performatives. This resentment is the effect of a mass movement "from below," a sort of ideological backlash on which we must reflect, and which must not be confused with the cowardly relief of many French intellectuals who react by discovering retroactively that "theory" "intimidated" them.

The great force of this critical revision is that it calls into question the theoretical "heights" of political structuralism, the level on which it sought to construct a relation to the state (and eventually, its identification with the state—and especially with the party-state of the revolution). This backlash has forced us to turn toward what is happening "below," in the infra-ecstatic space that constitutes the ordinary of the masses, especially in a period of crisis. It is becoming increasingly obvious that—in history, sociology, and literary studies—we must learn to listen to this often-silent speech enclosed within the urgency of survival. It is a

matter, beyond the reading of the Great Works (of science, law, and the state), of listening to the everyday circulations embedded in the "ordinary" (*l'ordinaire*) of meaning.[26] At the same time, the risks of this movement are quite clear, especially the risk of following the greatest ideological slope, of conceiving the "ordinary way of meaning" as a natural psychobiological process inscribed in a logically-stabilized discursivity. Hence, the risk of a tremendous regression toward positivism and the philosophies of consciousness.

A meeting such as this could be an opportunity to avoid some of these risks, if we can determine the stakes involved and situate the major points of encounter. As far as I am concerned (but I am expressing a point of view here that is not mine alone: it is a working position that is developing in France today), I will underscore the strong interest of a theoretical and procedural rapprochement between practices of "ordinary language analysis" (within the antipositivistic perspective that may be drawn from Wittgenstein's work) and practices of "reading" derived from structuralist approaches.[27] Taken seriously (i.e., other than as a mere "cultural exchange"), this rapprochement involves, in a concrete manner, ways of working on the discursive materialities implicated in ideological rituals, philosophical discourses, political statements, and aesthetic and cultural forms, through their relations to everyday life, to "the ordinary" of meaning. This project can only solidify if it prudently avoids any present or future "royal science" (whether positivism or Marxist ontologies).

This way of working imposes a certain number of requirements that must be explained in detail and that I can only refer to here briefly in closing.

The first requirement consists of giving priority to *descriptions* of discursive materialities. According to this perspective, description is not a phenomenological or hermeneutical apprehension in which description indiscernibly becomes interpretation; such a conception of description implies, on the contrary, the recognition of the specific real on which it is based: the real of *langue* (cf. J.C. Milner, especially in *L'amour de la langue*). I say *langue*, that is, neither language, speech, discourse, text, nor conversational interaction, but rather what has been posed by linguists as its condition of existence (in principle) in the form of the existence of the Symbolic as Jakobson and Lacan understood it.

Certain recent tendencies in linguistics are rather encouraging from this point of view. Beyond Harrisian distributionalism and Chomskyan generativism, trends have emerged that call into question the primacy of the logical proposition as well as the limitations imposed on linguistic analysis as sentence analysis. Thus, linguistic research might begin to free itself from its obsession with ambiguity (meant as the logic of "either/or") in order to grasp what is proper to langue through the role of equivocity, ellipsis, lack, and so on. This play of differences, alternations, and contradictions cannot be seen as the softening of a logical hard core: the equivocity, the "constitutive heterogeneity" (the expression is J. Authier's) of langue corresponds to Milner's "articles of faith"[28]: "Nothing of poetry is foreign to *langue*"; and "No language can be completely understood without integrating the possibility of its poetry."

This compels linguistic research to construct procedures (modes of interrogating data and forms of reasoning) capable of explicitly grasping the linguistic fact of equivocity as a structural fact implied by the symbolic order; that is, the necessity of working up to the point at which logical representation (inscribed in the "normal world") ceases to be consistent. This is also the argument François Gadet and I developed in *La langue introuvable*.

The object of linguistics, that which is proper to langue, thus appears to be traversed by a discursive division between two spaces: that of the manipulation of stabilized significations, normalized by a pedagogical hygiene of thought, and that of the transformation of meaning escaping from any a priori assignable norms, the work of meaning on meaning, caught in the indefinite multiplication of interpretations. The frontier between the two fields is all the more difficult to determine as there exists a whole intermediate zone of discursive processes (related to the juridical, the administrative, and the conventions of daily life) oscillating around it. In this intermediary discursive region the logical properties of objects cease to function: objects both have and do not have such and such a property; events both have and have not occurred according to the discursive constructions within which the statements that support these objects and events are found to be inscribed.[29] The fluctuating and paradoxical character of the ordinary register of meaning appears to have almost completely escaped the philosophical perception of the structuralist movement. This register has been the object of a theoretical aversion that has enclosed it globally in the inferno of the dominant ideology and practical empiricism, as if it were the blind spot of a pure reproduction of meaning.[30]

In doing so, the structuralists were giving credence to the idea that the process of transformation internal to symbolic and ideological spaces is an *exceptional* process: the solitary, heroic moment of the theoretical and of the poetic (Marx-Mallarmé) as the "extraordinary" work of the signifier. This aristocratic conception, giving itself, de facto, a monopoly on the second field (that of logically-nonstabilized discursivities), remained the prisoner—even in its "proletarian" reversal—of the old elitist certitude that the dominated masses never invent anything because they are too absorbed in the logics of everyday life. Ultimately, the proletariat, the masses, the people, have such a vital need for logically stabilized universes that the play of the symbolic order does not concern them at all! On this precise point, the theoretical–poetic position of the structuralist movement is insupportable.[31] In failing to discern how humor and poetry are not the "Sunday of thought," but belong to the fundamental flexibility of political and theoretical intelligence, this movement had already given in to the populist argument of urgency, since it implicitly shared its essential presupposition: the proletariat has no (time for the luxury of the) unconscious!

From what precedes, it follows that any description (and it is irrelevant whether it is a description of objects or events, or a description of a discursive–textual construction, as long as we hold firmly that "there is no metalanguage") is intrinsically exposed to the equivocity of langue: any utterance is intrinsically

able to become other than itself, to split discursively from its meaning in order then to drift toward another (except if the prohibition of interpretation proper to the logically stable is applied to it). Any utterance or sequence of utterances is thus linguistically describable as a series (lexico-syntactically determined) of the possible points of drift, leaving room for interpretation. It is in this space that discourse analysis claims to work.

It is here that one finds, once again, the matter of disciplines of interpretation: because there is something "other" (*il y a de l'autre*) in societies and in history, a link (identification or transference) corresponding to this "other" proper to discursivity that there can exist a relation (of identification or transference) that opens up the possibility of interpretation. It is because this link exists that historical filiation can be organized into memories and social relations into networks of signifiers. Hence the fact that the "things to be known" mentioned before are never visible from above, such as the historical transcendentals or the epistemes in Foucault's sense. They are always entangled in memory networks that lead to identificatory filiations and never to a learning through interaction: the transference is in no way an "interaction," and the historical filiations in which individuals are inscribed are by no means "learning machines."

From this perspective, the primary problem is to determine in the practice of discourse analysis the place and time of interpretation in relation to those of description. To say it is not a question of two successive phases, but rather of an alternation or a pulsation, does not imply that description and interpretation are condemned to lose themselves in the indiscernible. Further, to say that any description opens onto interpretation is not necessarily to assume that it opens onto "anything." The description of an utterance or a sequence necessarily involves (through the detection of empty syntactical places, ellipses, the initiation of negations and interrogations of various forms of indirect discourse) some "other" discourse as the virtual space of a reading of the utterance or sequence. It is this other-discourse as virtual presence within the describable materiality of the sequence that marks from within this materiality the insistence of the other as the law of social space and of historical memory, and thus as the very principle of the social–historical real, a fact that justifies the use of the term "discipline of interpretation" employed here in relation to disciplines working within this register.

The crucial point is that, within the transferential spaces of identification, constituting a contradictory plurality of historical filiations (through speech, images, stories, discourses, texts, etc.), the "things to be known" coexist with objects about which no one can be sure of "knowing what one is talking about" because these objects are inscribed within a filiation and are not the product of learning—and this happens in the secrecy of the private sphere of the family as well as at the "public" level of institutions and state apparatuses. The fantasy of a "royal science" is precisely what comes to deny—at all levels—this equivocity by giving the illusion that one may always know what one is talking about—that is, if you understand what I mean—by denying the act of interpretation at the very moment it occurs.

This point leads to the final question of discursivity as structure or event. On the basis of the foregoing, one may say that the act consists of inscribing a given discourse in a series, in incorporating it in a corpus, always risking the absorbtion of the event of this discourse into the structure of the series insofar as this series tends to function as a historical transcendental, a grid of reading or of memory anticipating the discourse in question. The notion of "discursive formation" borrowed from Foucault has too often drifted toward the ideas of a discursive machine of subjection endowed with an internal semiotic structure and therefore doomed to repetition. At the limit, this structural conception of discursivity would lead to an effacement of the event through its absorption in anticipatory overinterpretation.

There is no question here of pretending that any discourse would be a miraculous aerolite, independent of networks of memory and the social trajectories within which it erupts. But the fact that should be stressed here is that a discourse, by its very existence, marks the possibility of a destructuring–restructuring of these networks and trajectories. Any discourse is the potential index of a movement within the sociohistorical filiations of identification, inasmuch as it constitutes, at the same time, an effect of these filiations and the work (more or less conscious, deliberate, and constructed or not, but all the same traversed by unconscious determinations) of displacement within their space. There is no completely "successful" identification; that is, there is no sociohistorical link that is not affected in any way by an "infelicity" in the performative sense of the term—in these circumstances, by a "tragic error" of "mistaken identity," concerning the other, the object of identification. This may even be one of the reasons why such things as societies and history exist instead of merely a chaotic juxtaposition (or a perfect supra-organic integration) of human animals in interaction.

The working position that I evoke here in reference to discourse analysis by no means implies the possibility of some calculation of the displacements of filiation or of the conditions of factual felicity or infelicity. It merely supposes that, through ordered descriptions of discursive constructions, it is possible to detect moments of interpretation as acts that emerge in the form of positions taken and recognized as such; that is, as effects of identifications that are acknowledged and not denied. Before endless interpretations in which the interpreter acts as an absolute point, without any other or real, it is for me a matter of ethics and politics: a question of responsibility.

Notes

1 Translated by Warren Montag. This is a re-translation of the article by Michel Pêcheux that originally appeared in English (translated by Montag with Marie-Germaine Pêcheux and Denise Guback) as "Discourse: Structure or Event?" in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, eds. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988: 633–650.

2 This tradition is represented in a series of publications, in particular in the review *Langages* and the recent collection *Matérialités discursives* (Lille: Presses Universitaires de Lille, 1981).

3 This is in contrast to the classical political chants of the 1960s and 1970s, which were based on a marching rhythm: *Ce n'est/ qu'un debut/ continuons le/ combat!* ("It's just a start, let's keep on fighting!") or *Nous voulons/ nous aurons/ sa/ tisfaction!* ("We want, we will have satisfaction!").

4 In spite of the cheers, the music, and the fanfare that accompany the action of the players, the direct nonparticipation of the spectators in this action remains the condition of the sports event.

5 It is, above all, a question of political stardom, which, voluntarily or not, is determined by the mass-media, electoral bipolarization of parliamentary confrontations: the psychologizing of conflicts through the rhetoric of disputation, suspense, and reconciliation goes hand in hand with the fact that constituencies receive information more rapidly through the television channel than through the hierarchical internet channels of their political or trade union organizations. All of this must be placed within the context of a profound crisis of the Left, of which the crisis of Marxism is only one echo. From the "New Philosophy" to the attitude of "it's all over" that appeared in 1978, there emerged a subjective and objective derision of "the political," which opened the way to its carnivalisation: for example, the role of the popular comedian Coluche, who announced his candidacy in the presidential elections of 1981, with the ironic and despairing support of a section of the intelligentsia. There were several stages in the evolution of the French High Intelligentsia. Intellectuals in the 1960s were engaged in their work in the way that one engages in war (ultimately, a civil war). Gradually, the central metaphor shifted from "political" struggle to that of wrestling with the angel in the solitary space of *écriture.* Today we think in terms of "performance" (most often solo, rarely in a team). To the athletic sense of "performance" is added the connotation of entertainment, of the spectacle. Such an evolution will not improve the rather uneasy relation that a substantial part of the American intelligentsia has traditionally maintained with those "incomprehensible" French intellectual productions, a relation marked by an equivocal oscillation between a reverence for the high priests of the intellect and a fascination with the comedy (deliberate or not) of the clowns of culture.

6 The object of discourse analysis, as it actually developed on the basis described, is precisely to explain and describe the construction and sociohistorical ordering of constellations of utterances.

7 We may observe here the implicit effect of a paraphrastic translation of "Mitterrand elected president" as "We won!" (*On a gagné*). In passing, the "we" is identified with Mitterrand.

8 Jacques Mandrin, *Le socialisme et la France* (Paris: Le Sycomore, 1983): 19.

9 In the celebration of the birth of the event of 10 May, 1981, there was (among other strange gifts) the paradox of the involuntary role of facilitator played by the leadership of the PCF, as if in unleashing a sudden polemic against the Socialist party, the Communist leadership accentuated its own loss of influence (as well as its ability to mobilize), thereby liberating the Left from the hypothesis of a seizure of power dominated by a more or less openly avowed pro-sovietism (a reference to the "positive global balance sheet" of the "actually existing socialism"). What follows is a government of the Left that engages in an audacious politics of deep structural reforms but without the mobilizations that *should* (according to classical Marxist politics) support and control the implementation of these reforms—as if the PCF and the CGT had largely lost their historical capacity for mobilization; and as if other organizations and movements of the Left were unable to take over this function. As a result, in France today it is largely the Right that is mobilizing.

10 Mandrin, *Le socialisme et la France*: 19.

11 I leave to the side the positions of the Right, amply illustrated in Jean Baudrillard's writings on the "socialist trance." *On a gagné* is interpreted as "We are treating

ourselves to the Left" (for a laugh) and then as "We are overcome by the Left" (as by a disease): "it is a monstrous protuberance which expends, which destroys," exactly like the monster in *Alien*. See *In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities* (New York: Semiotext[e], 1983): 80.

12 I refer here to the notion of "distance markers," which has been the object of recent research. In particular, cf. Jacqueline Authier, "*Paroles tenues á distance*," in *Matérialités discursives*. Cf. also Dan Sperber's analysis of the notions of reproduction, description, and interpretation in *Les savoirs des anthropologues* (Paris: Hermann, 1982).

13 The natural sciences grasp the real through the impossible that emerges at the intersection of regulated conceptual writing and technically-verified experimental construction. From this point of view, it is trivial to recall that mathematics is also an experimental science whose constructions are found to be writing itself. The real of the material technologies partially overlaps with the real of the natural science insofar as these technologies constitute an indispensable element in experimentation. At the same time, the massive use of technical objects surpasses the real of natural science: the relation to logical disjunction turns away from magical gestures (with their rites, taboos, and prohibitions). Concerning the real of the managerial sciences, which often presents itself as a technical real of particular type (the "social technologies"), it is fundamentally a prohibition even if it is based, especially in industrialized societies, on the real of the technologies, as well as that of the sciences of nature, finding there the means to manage both the immense register of production and the register of destruction.

14 "The practical law, derived from the motive of happiness, I call pragmatical (rule of prudence)" (Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*).

15 For work on the art of memory, cf. F. Yates, *The Art of Memory* (London, 1966).

16 Once the barn is set on fire, the conflagration spreads according to the structure of the building and its openings, according to the nature and disposition of the objects and materials that the building contains, to the direction of the wind, and so on, not according to the desire of the arsonist (for revenge, etc.).

17 "To justify" is not the same thing as "to produce." Scholasticism did not produce the Inquisition; Marxism did not engender the Gulag; neo-positivism did not invent voluntary servitude or the desire for universal scientific domination. However, the capacity of such philosophical systems for justification is incontestable.

18 It little matters, in passing, that these knowledges are denied: everyone takes them into account, just as a pedestrian crossing the street takes the cars into account in order to avoid being hit, even if he or she is a professional philosophical idealist!

19 Cf. the discontinuist perspective inaugurated by the work of Alexander Koyré in opposition to the continuism of Duhem.

20 Jean-Marc Levy-Leblond, *L'esprit de sel* (Paris: Fayard, 1981).

21 This question received an explicitly affirmative response in the framework of "historical structuralism" from Althusser's early work, which posed historical materialism as "the science of history."

22 I am alluding here to a recent article by historian Nicole Loraux, "*Thucydide n'est pas un collegue*," *Quaderni di storia* 12, 1980: 51–81.

23 This expression takes up the title of a book by D. Lindenberg, *Le marxisme introuvable* (Paris, 1975), which surveys some of the historical avatars of this game of hide-and-seek between the "scientific Marxism" of the university and "vulgar Marxism" (which produces catechisms for mass consumption). What is called "Anglo-American neo Marxism" is largely, in its present state, an academic phenomenon (linked in large part to the collapse of European political structuralism), that is, a Marxism "without organs," except intellectual organs—which is not to say that with the help of the "pragmatic" spirit of Anglo-American culture, this phenomenon will be without

repercussions in the cultural, ideological, and political fields, and that it does not hold some surprises for those who are celebrating "the end of Marxism!"

24 An expression like "the logic of capital" refers to a real about which there are "things to be known." But is it conceivable to respond with a "yes" or "no" to total questions such as "Is the current French government attacking the logic of capital?" Or even, "Have we in the exact sense of the term 'seized power?" ' See Jacques Mandrin, *Le socialisme et la France.*

25 L. Althusser, *Reading Capital* (London: New Left Books, 1979): 16.

26 Cf. Michel de Certeau, *L'invention du quotidian* (Paris: 10/18, UGE, 1980).

27 For more on current developments in discourse analysis in France, see the review *Mots* (4: 6) and the collection *Matérialités discoursives* (in particular, J.J.Courtine and J.–M. Maradin, "*Quel objet pour l'analyse de discours*," and A. Lecomte, "*La frontiere absente*").

28 Jean-Claude Milner, *Ordre et raisons de langue* (Paris: Seuil, 1983): 336.

29 Cf. earlier remarks concerning the possible associable referents of the statement *On a gagné*. We might develop similar remarks about such expressions as "the will of the people," "freedom" (of thought or of the market), "austerity" versus "rigor," and so on.

30 This problem constitutes one of the weak points of the Althusserian reflection on the ideological state apparatus, as well as of the initial applications of this reflection in the domain of discourse analysis in France.

31 A hatred of the ordinary gives rise to an anti-intellectual cult of this same ordinary: a certain esoteric structuralism nourished the hatred of philosophy expressed, for example, in the sociology of Pierre Bourdieu.

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Part II

DISCOURSE, AND THE ELABORATION OF CONCEPTS FOR ANALYSIS

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7

FROM THE SUPEREGO TO THE ACT

Analysis of the modalities of subjective positions in discourse

Marcela Ana Negro

Lacanian Discourse Analysis is a methodology that attends to the emergence of the subject of the unconscious. It is sustained by the claim that the subject emerges as an ontic category at the moment language trespasses upon the human being. A new form of being is born, definable and uniquely situated by the logic of the signifier. Lacan builds a concept of the subject that is unthinkable if it is not within discourse: the subject comes to life in language and circulates in discourse as one of its elements, being held by it in two senses: it is trapped in but also sustained by it.

Notions such as 'superego' and 'act' must be thought of as belonging to discourse and not to the subject. They are modalities of discourse. The subject is modified by them. The enunciation, being a linguistic category, is also an operator (Miller, 1997) that enables this methodology to search and find the subject of the unconscious.

This chapter proposes a hypothesis that discourse speaks alone, that it imposes itself (as superego) on the subject when he emerges from the enunciation in which he is born.[1] The recognition of his subjection to discourse, only verifiable in the enunciation, makes the transformation of the superego into the act possible.

The superego is discourse as received from and imposed by the Other. The act is an effect of the assumption, by the subject, of his position in the enunciation that says the truth of his existence. Both are related; we could say they are inversely proportional.

The direction of a psychoanalytic treatment sustained by the analysis of discourse of the patient, as it was described by Lacan, aims to reach the dimension in which the truth is hidden. That dimension is elided by the discourse itself.

The subject

Statement and enunciation are levels of discourse. Discourse always includes both of them; they are inherent to its structure. The statement is what is said, while the enunciation is the act of speaking; it is the dimension that announces the one who speaks, and the place of emission where the one who speaks is located, an indicator. The subject is harboured there. Lacan (1958–59, 03/12/58) says that, in discourse, the subject counts himself and nominates himself; that is why, if we pay attention to the enunciation, we may have the chance of locating the subject's position.

The enunciation is always elided in discourse as an effect of primary repression, which structures the psyche and constitutes the subject's division that installs the unconscious, so that the one that speaks, thinks he *is* what he *says*. As the human being does not know of the scission that constitutes the subject he is, that place of enunciation becomes superego. The superego is the impossibility of counting himself in his speech; it is the reason why he cannot see that he announces himself there. To locate the subject is to lodge him; it is the way to enable him to count himself as an exception in what he says, and to count himself in what he says is to pierce the superego. It is the way to introduce the exception to the universal rule.

The signifier is an element that characterizes itself as being oppositional, differential and relative (a definition given by Saussure for the phoneme that Lacan recovers to explain the signifier). Each element defines itself as being what the others are not; that is why the totality of them cannot be included as a whole and the set closed without leaving one outside to become the signifier from which the others distinguish themselves. This is the one that plays the part of the difference: the signifier is what is not itself; it is not identical to itself. Its function consists of being different to itself and therefore different to all the others. The logic of the signifier (on which the logic of the discourse is sustained) may be expressed as 'there is no universal that does not sustain itself in an exception that denies it' (Miller, 1988). There will always be one lacking that prevents closure of the set, because that is the condition of the existence of the signifier.

The subject is defined by Lacan as that which one signifier represents for another signifier; this is to say he is an element not identical to himself. No signifier may represent the subject. He identifies with the signifier not for what it means but for what it is: an element distinct in itself. The subject, because he identifies with the signifier, takes the place of the one that is missing. He is the exception.

The superego

According to Lacan, the superego is a concept not to be thought of as a psychic instance, but as related to the language instead. It does not belong to the subject; on the contrary, it is something the subject has to deal with. Lacan gives

different definitions of this notion, which could be organized into three variants: related to the language, to the *objet a* and to *jouissance*. That which connects the superego with language may be organized according to the tri-partition of signifier, speech and discourse. In this work, our interest is directed to the conditions that place it in relation to discourse. These can be reduced to three aspects: 1) the superego is the imposed discourse (1958–59, 19/11/58); 2) the superego is a statement that is discordant within the statements of the law (1975/1991); and 3) the superego is the interrupted discourse (1978/1991). Each one of these definitions is referred to the law, because the superego is the counterpoint of the law, the point in which some part of it becomes not understood (1978/1991) and insensate (1975/1991). The superego is to be considered a discourse imposed by the law of the Other, and it has the characteristic of being one statement among those in the law that is discordant with the subject's reality. Only after a change in the subject's position may that statement be recognized as having been interrupted discourse. The intercession of the superego is produced in the site of the enunciation.

What is being interrupted is discourse itself; its structure, the desirable circuit, is what has been broken. (The desirable discourse would be the circuit that gives birth to the discourse of the subject out of the discourse of the Other, the one that includes the subject in the signifier's dimension, recognizing him as a being made of language.) As this does not happen, the discourse of the Other continues speaking alone: 'it speaks', says Lacan (1958/59, 19/11/58). The realization of the subject remains suspended.

The law is the law of discourse. It is inherent to discourse, therefore it has two dimensions: statement and enunciation. The law is a demand. It presents itself as a command that is prohibition and impossibility at the same time. The saying of the law, the position from where it is being enunciated, has the condition of being something considered for everybody, something that is universal (Bassols, 2000).

This position of the law, which presents itself for everyone and does not take the exception into account, turns it into a series of incomprehensible statements, that is to say 'not understood'. Each time the exception is not being taken into account, what comes from the Other is experienced not as the sanction of discourse but the rejection of the very subject that supports it, supports the Other That repulsion generates the interruption of discourse that would otherwise continue up to the sanction that has now been imposed. The repulsion is the superego. The superego implies the rejection of the subject that takes place in the dimension of the enunciation; it implies the destitution of the subject.

The act

Lacan (1962–63/2006) defines the act as 'a manifestation of the signifier in which the state of desire is inscribed'; that is to say, it is the recovery of the signifying dimension in which the subject may be found. Lacan considers the act as a 'saying', as an act of speech (1967–68, 17/01/68).

The act is a break, a stop in the statement to integrate the enunciation. It includes the exception. The act accepts the inclusion of the enunciation (it being the place where the subject can be sought); this can only be produced in the incision of discourse.

The act has consequences; these are consequences in discourse. The act does not refer to an action; it is an incision in discourse. Lacan (1960) says that the superego structures and organizes reality; after the act takes place, the subject's reality is not the same anymore. The superego is what is reached and touched in the act, and it is perforated in its pretention of universality. Through the act, the subject responds to the superego with the exception; the act is the incarnation of this place of exception that is completely singular, personal and particular to each subject.

Discourse of the case

The patient is 22 years old, and she comes to see me because she frequently has blackouts, stomach-aches and headaches. Her doctor indicated to her that she should undertake psychoanalysis.

She says, 'I have no one to lean on', 'I don't know who I can count on'. Symptoms began when she was 11 or 12, 'when I worked'. 'Worked?' says the analyst. 'I meant to say "when I went to school".' With her slip she associates: 'That must be because my father pressed us very much in those days. That was when he lost his job. He began to quarrel with mom.' She continues, 'I was very fond of dad. I was with him all the time.' However, he began to say she had strange relations with her grandfather (with sexual connotations) and lesbian relations with her mother. He followed her everywhere and spied on her conversations.

The patient relates that her father began to kiss her and touch her and justified these actions by saying she had changed and now attracted him, or that she misunderstood his feelings. He also used to say, 'You are like my hand; I don't have to ask your permission to touch my hand.' While these things happened, she cried and felt nausea. Asked to indicate when this had begun, she answers it was when she was 11 or 12. The analyst says, 'The time when blackouts started.'

Symptoms begin to diminish as she unfolds what causes them in her discourse. A question arose: 'Why couldn't he control his instincts, why did he let it happen, why did he surrender to his wishes?'

The parents got divorced when she was 16 because her father treated her mother violently. The analysand states that 'My mother was his shade.' He threatened his wife with killing her or himself if she left him. The patient still continues the relationship with her father, and she goes once a week to have dinner with him. On these occasions she gets very distressed. Asked why she goes, she answers that it is because 'children must be in contact with their parents'. She adds, 'I do it for my mom and brother, so they don't get upset. If I don't do it they'll think I'm selfish. What does it matter to me?' The analyst

says, 'Children contact their fathers without minding the circumstances?' After a pause, the analysand continues: 'In those years my dad didn't let me go out; he said I was a girl to be at home and not one to be on the streets. He told me things like "I can give you anything you need".' She adds, 'Whenever he says to me "whore" I feel I lose the notion of reality. It gets to the centre of my being. I always think that I was wrong or that I was dreaming and I will wake up in any minute.' Asked why, she explains, 'I needed the image of a father, though I knew I couldn't have it. To talk about it is to recognize it is real. It makes me stop seeing him as a father. I am afraid to take off the mask. That is why I hadn't come to therapy until now. I was afraid I would become once again what I was then: someone who could not talk, who was sad and cried all day long.'

The question she had about her father and why he hadn't been able to control himself turns into an answer, the subject's answer: 'How confused he must be! To me, a man that does something like that is not a father, he is only a progenitor.' After this, she comes to one session saying, 'I've decided not to see him anymore.' That is what she did.

From then on, she starts to be afraid of encountering him in the street or of what would happen if he went to her house: 'If I see him, I can't be anymore as if nothing had happened.'

She asks herself how to get away from the effects of the abuse: 'I am not what happened to me.' She starts talking about her mother and her silence; she asks herself why her mother had covered up for him, why she had behaved as if nothing was happening. She has a dream: 'Dad rings the bell. I change my voice and say "wrong number". I know he knows, and he knows I know.' The analyst says, 'You've changed' (in Spanish, 'voice' is '*voz*' and 'you' is '*vos*'; they sound the same: *voz/vos* have changed).

Discourse analysis of the case

Everything in which the subject is involved is discourse; that is why the symptoms are also part of it. Apparently they do not divide her, however, as she is sent to psychoanalysis by her doctor. But the enunciation can be read in her statements: in the metonymy of the discourse, in the selection of the elements with which she builds her story, the relationship between fainting and the beginning of the abuse she suffered from her father may be found.

In this case, the trauma is evident, but what does it consist of? Is the trauma the fact of the abuse itself, or is it the discourse that wraps around her and traps her? The trauma, for this subject, is the discourse that accompanies her father's act: to touch her is to name her as a woman of the street that hands over her body. But, the only way she may avoid being a woman of the street is to turn into a girl of her home, which forces her to give her body over to her father. That is when her symptoms emerge: she gives up consciousness instead of her body. His discourse leaves her no choice but to be only his hand, she loses her existence as a subject to become a part of his body, pure object of the Other.

To listen to the enunciation in the statements enables us to find the question in which the subject is held, the one that the symptoms cover up at the same time they show it: am I a girl of her home or a woman of the street? What is really intolerable is the false option, the logical impossibility that arises, because either way, she turns out to be a whore.

On one hand, there is the nausea each time her father moves away from his role. On the other hand, fainting is the expression of what she prefers not to see or to know (in which she loses consciousness) of the way in which he looks at her (that makes her be a woman to him).

The enunciation is recognizable in slips and dreams, but also in the accomplished discourse. Whenever a law is enunciated that imposes a submission on the subject that is intolerable, there is always a subjective position behind it that does not recognize desire, the position of the superego.

Symptoms indicate the impossibility of integrating the subject's place in the enunciation; being unable to use it to locate herself as a subject, the enunciation returns to her as a command from the superego, as imposed discourse coming from the Other. This modality of discourse may be observed in various expressions: the ones that the patient brings as being those of her father, and the ones being those of her own. The most interesting form is the one that is enunciated as 'children must be in contact with their parents'. This statement presents itself as an unquestionable law, a rule that becomes insensate and incomprehensible to her because, in her case, the father does not behave like one. That is why this becomes a discordant statement. It is a part of the universal discourse that interrupts the circuit that could localize her in the discourse of the Other. 'Children must be in contact with their parents', presents itself as a discourse coming from the Other that is unquestionable and does not take her into account. The subject does not take her place in what is said. The only way to do it would be to accept herself as an exception to that statement, so that the superego would be pierced. Instead she obliges herself to get included in it (she must visit her father).

This discourse verifies itself as having been interrupted discourse – that is a definition of the superego – at the very moment the enunciation is included. The phrase that lodges the subject continues, 'except when a father does not behave like one'. The elision of the enunciation gives the sentence 'children must be in contact with their parents' a superegoic condition; it becomes an insensate law. The integration of the enunciation would conclude the sentence in a way that the subject could be included in the Other, recognized by the Other. The act explains this integration.

Only when the patient realizes, and therefore integrates, her place in enunciation, is she able to avoid obliging herself to conform to a law whose universality does not recognize her in her particularity, and hence she may find herself in the place of the exception to the rule 'children must be in contact with their parents . . . except when parents do not behave as a parent should do and do not treat a daughter as one'.

As the subject sustains the 'un-exception', symptoms arise. As the subject is localized, the patient can carry out a subjective rectification consistent with recognizing the exception to a rule that is lawless, and recognize herself as the exception to the rule.

'Children must be in contact with their parents' is the command of the law; but the sentence is interrupted; it lacks the part that locates the subject, which would be 'except when . . .' The suspension turns the law into superego. The superego is the interruption that detains the sanction of discourse by which the Other lodges the subject as an exception to the law. The accomplishment of the act indicates that the position of exclusion is recognized.

Where is the act to be situated in this discourse? The act is not the action of not visiting her father anymore. It is the break. The break is not in relation to the person of her father, but in relation to the indeterminacy of the subject: girl of her home or woman of the street. The act implies the emergence of a new subject. This can only be verified retroactively, in the change of the subject's position, which can be observed in the statements of the patient: on one hand, in the signifiers produced by the dream; on the other hand, in the variation of the discourse – from talking about her father to talking about her mother. It is also verified in her words 'I can't be anymore as if nothing had happened', that show the change in her position that signifies her attitude to the past, considering it an act of cowardice. She is now separated from what her father thinks of her: 'I'm not what happened to me anymore.' The change observed in her discourse verifies that the action that took place had the condition of an act. She is no longer the one who is mistaken, instead she considers him to be wrong. His calling her 'whore' does not touch her being anymore; it is part of his confusion. The dream shows the change in her subjective position.

In this case, the subject is placed in the certainty acquired in the 'except when' (except when a father does not act like one). The subject is there, in the 'except when'. The answer she gives herself (he is confused) to the signifier that comes from her father, 'whore', provokes a change in the demand, and gives a place to the emergence of the question and the indeterminacy that comes from the signifiers connected to her mother. As Miller (1997) says, the act fixes a point of reference for the subject.

Conclusion

We have defined the enunciation as a linguistic function that helps to localize the subject of the unconscious, the act as an incision in discourse that introduces a signifying inscription, the superego as a discordant statement, as an imposed discourse and as interrupted discourse. We have proposed that depending on the recognition or not of the enunciation, discourse oscillates between a superegoic function and a function in which desire is held. In the case studied we verify that the subject, being unable to distinguish the enunciation from what is said, stays subdued to an imposed statement; instead, when capable of recognizing her

place in the enunciation, she makes out, from the discourse of the Other, a discourse that recognizes and includes the subject she is, a discourse that assumes desire, one in which she can be located and lodged as an exception: the act is the proof of this.

Note

1 Editorial comment: The use of masculine form here reflects a series of assumptions about the formation of subjectivity in Lacanian psychoanalysis – the subjection of the category of 'man' to discourse, for example – and raises a series of questions that it is beyond the scope of this book to address (but need to be addressed). To simply translate these terms in 'gender-neutral' terms would foreclose such questions, and so we have retained specific forms of gender nomination in our translation of texts from Spanish.

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8

REPETITION, DISCOURSE AND THE EVENT

From Kierkegaard to Lacan

Daniel Gerber

In 1964, in his Seminar '*The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*', Lacan (1964/1973) specifies repetition as one of those four concepts. To do this he takes up some ideas formulated by Kierkegaard (a philosopher who has an important presence in this Seminar), which are essential in order to avoid confusion between 'repetition' and 'the reproduction of the same'. Repetition, from the perspective of the Danish philosopher, involves the production of something new, and this is what Lacan will emphasize when establishing the status of this concept in psychoanalysis.

Kierkegaard: passion and existence

Two main aspects are highlighted in the philosophy of Kierkegaard: a radical critique of the allegedly systematic nature of dialectical mediation central to Hegel, and locating at the centre of the pathos of the subject a search for a dimension other than that of the rational – this is presented as a leap that leads to a solitary encounter with God, one that leaves aside all forms of intellectualization.

Kierkegaard takes up a fundamental Greek category, that of *Kinesis* (movement), that contrasts with the forms of change characteristic of the Hegelian dialectic. Existence and human action require a real 'passion', he argues. In Hegel, according to Kierkegaard, everything refers to a plan of action, but not action as a new and free event in the world. Kierkegaard's opposition to the idea of system is accompanied – as an indispensable complement – by a critique of the conception of eternity of ideas proposed by Plato. Against Plato, Kierkegaard vindicates Socrates, because he manifested himself in his irreducible individuality, a notion that with the concept of 'reminiscence' Plato absorbs into the notion of the eternal. The system wants the identical; to exist, however, is to be outside of any system (to 'ex-ist'): to be present in a state of dissemination in time and

space. 'System' here refers to closed and complete totality, immanence, and existence, in contrast, has a quality of discontinuity and transcendence.

To speak of quality entails referring to the singularity of existence, the fact of not being a mere member of a class as may occur in 'the ethical stage'. Discontinuity means – unlike the union of opposites that belong to Hegelian notions of change, an 'or this or that' – the lack of coincidence with oneself, and entails permanent doubt about whether one is actually real. As for what is meant by transcendence, this eludes what is really the objective of existence, which is repetition that requires returning to a reference point outside of this world.

Repetition: difference, transcendence and seriousness

It is in his book *Repetition* that Kierkegaard (1843/1976) develops, in a very peculiar way, the fundamentals of this idea. His manner of presenting this concept can be seen as a way of performing the very argument he is making, as it is a text that consists of two parts, both of them called '*repetition*'. It is not the creation of one literary work under one title, since the two parts differ from each other, and it is really by virtue of the subordination of each one of them to the other that we see performed two states of existence. The first part of the book is in the domain of aesthetics, while the second is in the domain of religion. From the structure of the text, one can notice that repetition is to be conceived of as lying within the difference between these two parts of the book.

Kierkegaard (1843/1976) begins by asking himself about the possibility of repetition while also asking about the significance of this. In the first part he links this with reminiscence or memory, only to conclude that memory is actually the opposite of reminiscence: 'repetition in a retroactive way . . . of something that once was' is seen as differing from 'authentic repetition' (p. 330). These two modalities are related to two opposite and different kinds of love: reminiscence love is plagued with a sense of disgrace and overwhelming heaviness, while repetition love leads us to bliss and happiness. What then is repetition? It is 'the reality and seriousness of existence. He who strives for repetition has become mature about seriousness' (p. 154). Repetition gives way to the temporal dimension of the moment, which is decisive as a breaking point of choice, a decision that gives life all of its seriousness, the 'or this or that'. Everything that is decisive – whether it be anguish or repetition – overtakes, assaults existence in a moment abstracted from time, and to speak about a moment supposes without a doubt discontinuity: the function of repetition can be defined as taking charge of moments that had a place in the past, while emphasizing their own seriousness. Therefore, if reminiscence deals merely with that which now exists, which 'had already been', repetition affirms that 'which had already existed, begins to re-exist again' (p. 161). Nevertheless, it is subordination to what is aesthetic that leads the author to write as 'Constantin Constantious', one of Kierkegaard's pseudonyms, a deception that is necessary since he is convinced of the impossibility of repetition.

The idea developed in the second part of the book written under the same title, as has been previously mentioned, is to argue in favour of difference as a condition of possibility of repetition. In this way of thinking the only way in which repetition can be successful is by leaving behind immanence itself – the plane of the speculative achieved through excellence – to gain access to the plane of transcendence, which in Lacan's terminology could be thought of as the 'lack in the Other' that determines the inconsistency of any ostensibly complete closed system, a lack 'immanent' to it.

It is the 'leap' that characterizes the religious phase; this is absolutely the opposite of Hegelian *Aufhebung*, the synthesis that retains what it refuses and transcends. Nevertheless, there is in this leap a recovery of what was previously possessed, which brings it to an even higher level. How can this moment of repetition be reached? Kierkegaard's answer (1843/1976) is that 'in the exact moment in which all certainties and probabilities succumbed and couldn't . . . offer a logical answer' (p. 242).

It is during this moment in which a 'great storm' takes place, metaphorically speaking, that can be exemplified by a reference in the Old Testament in the book of Job, in which it is a storm that characterizes the link between men and God. Leaving this behind one can become oneself again, one comprehends all things and life re-lived 'appears more beautiful than ever before'; we thereby have an insistence that returns as a meeting point with the eternal, one lies within every individual rather than in a general way, always in a singular and concrete way for each one of us. This is 'to give birth to one-self' (Kierkegaard, 1843/1976: 275).

Repetition on the other hand is inseparable from the notion of 'seriousness', which is treated extensively in *The Concept of Anxiety* that was signed under the alias of Vigilious Haufniensi. With this text Kierkegaard (1844/1979) takes up again the position of Costantious to re-affirm that seriousness has to be understood as 'certainty and intimacy' (p. 171), to which he adds that it is the originality achieved by the spirit, that maintains 'the responsibility of freedom, reassured as justified in the enjoyment of happiness' (p. 172). It is due to this that, once caught and preserved in the originality of seriousness as a kind of gravity, there is repetition. If, on the contrary, there is lack of originality during repetition, habit makes its entrance. Finally, and as a conclusion to his reflections on repetition, Kierkegaard formulates an argument that can be taken as a real aphorism: the serious man is a serious Kierkegaardian character due to the originality with which he re-enacts repetition. One can note here that intimacy and certainty are forms of gravity, of seriousness, and it is there that repetition lies, where the transcendence of an instant occurs that makes connections with eternity.

Repetition: event, act and encounter

From conceiving of Kierkegaard's repetition, two aspects can be mentioned that end up being fundamental to the elaboration of this concept by Lacan, such that

the philosopher is acclaimed for being 'the most sharp questioner of the soul, before Freud' (Lacan, 1964/1973: 59). The first aspect is the clear questioning of repetition as mere remembrance, which in the case of analysis, takes on the form of indulgent enjoyment linked with the search for a memory reduced to mere 'comprehension' and limits itself to providing meaning to historical events without leading to a change or modification in the position of the subject that 'reminisces' about those events.

The second aspect relates directly to the notion of event in an analysis, when the Kierkegaardian passion calls for an 'original' opening in which the seriousness of the subject of certainty is not the consequence of 'resignification', a pure exercise of remembrance, but something that comes about by also questioning habit, and leads to the encounter with something real beyond what 'makes sense'. Kierkegaard (1843/1976) says something that could be applied to the psychoanalytic process:

> In such cases, when all things are paralyzed, and the thought stagnates, and the tongue mutes itself and all explications are useless, in such cases what needs to happen, necessarily, could not be something other than a great storm, with its horrid bursts and its untold havoc.
>
> (p. 262)

This moment, that according to Kierkegaard, is hard to conceive of by a human being, is not to be seen as a misfortune, being only an instant that opens the dimension for the repetition. This could then relate to the incidence of the encounter with the real in the direction of the treatment, very much so in moments of creative 'depersonalization', when the egoistic certainties of the subject on the plane of the imaginary remain 'in suspense', as in those moments in which a striking encounter occurs with the real beyond the tranquilizing significations that the symbolic provides. In both cases it is about an encounter with the lack in the Other, an encounter that calls for the act with its characteristics of 'no return' and being 'without guarantees'. An act that can make the subject other than what he was until this moment.

Kierkegaardian repetition can be conceived of as precursor to the psychoanalytic act if it is remembered that it is not without difference and without distress either. As it occurs in the experience of analysis, repetition is 'to seek', seek as 'ex-isting', which implies a relation with transcendence, with that which puts the subject 'outside of itself', in a position to be able to 'leap' beyond the symbolic coordinates that fix it to its habitual life. Kierkegaard knew to warn about the 'fear and trembling' that indicates of the approach of a 'real' dimension of repetition and its fundamental nucleus beyond its symbolic and imaginary aspects. This real dimension is what Lacan makes stand out as constitutive of repetition when he recognizes Kierkegaard as having renewed this concept, differentiating it so categorically from Platonic reminiscence. Lacan signals that there exists a difference between memory and remembrance since the first,

'rooted in the signifier' (Lacan, 1957), is characterized by an insistence of what returns precisely as significant, beyond what the subject can remember from within consciousness.

In this sense, Lacan recalls that it is enough to read Freud's (1905) 'Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality', coated for mass-consumption with so much pseudo-biologic gloss, to prove that Freud is concerned with the relation to the lost object as something that requires the dialectic of return to it. With this Lacan evokes the well-known statement by Freud (1905: 222) that 'the finding of an object is in fact a refinding of it'. In repetition, there is not a reproduction of 'the same', but the return of an always-failed encounter, of a failure that imposes the necessity of a new attempt.

Repetition: impossibility, freedom and eternity

Repetition verifies the existence of a certain kind of cul-de-sac characteristic of the structure of the subject, one in which the plane of immediate phenomena manifests itself by way of 'it is not that'. The refinding of the object as such is not produced, but there is something of the order of 'the same' that returns: the subject fails in the same way, as if 'by accident', and repetition always produces the same result, even though the phenomenal characteristics could be different. Here is where Lacan gives a fundamental value to the Kierkegaardian concept that permits a new reading of the Freudian text. Lacan says: 'Having begun with Hölderlin's [*nostos*] Freud arrives less than twenty years later at Kierkegaard's repetition' (Lacan, 1957: 432). The *nostos* – a Greek term that translates as a return in the sense of return to the same – is evoked by Hölderlin in some of his poems, and is impossible because language is such that every 'new' return will always be another; this impossibility is what Kierkegaard's text signals.

It is necessary to articulate the positions of the three authors – Plato, Kierkegaard and Freud – in order to formulate this paradox inherent to repetition: it always repeats at the same time as it is impossible insofar that each of the 'repetitions' is another in relation to the previous ones. It is important to remember that in Kierkegaard there is no subject of the unconscious – this subject that is precisely the consequence of the impossible return, impossible return that imposes upon them an appeal to a 'new' signifier and one more beyond that, and so on – for repetition is conceived of by him as an act of the free subject. Making explicit the bond between freedom and repetition does not impose on the subject something without him wanting it, but it is positive and in that it manifests liberty in 'act'.

Kierkegaard formulated it in this way from that fundamental episode in his own life when at 24 years of age he fell in love with a woman, Regina Olsen, younger than he was, to finally break up with her when the marriage had been agreed on, even though he still then considered her to always be his absolute love. After the break he still loved her, tormenting himself with guilt at having abandoned her. However, having to break his promise when he had already

agreed to consummate the marriage was not simply a typical cancellation, a kind of obsessional mechanism. The way in which he refers to it is very categorical, stating that something came between them, and this something that came between them was love itself. He considered himself to have been in love with love and, having understood this, he felt that marrying her would mean misery for the young woman, that the love he felt for her would make her unhappy.

There is indeed a cancellation of some kind, but this is about the dimension of cancellation that inhabits love: in extreme love, he argues, there is a cancellation of the being of the other because one characteristic of the sentiment of Eros is that at 'the instant' of the reunion with the other a subject experiences an emotion that breaks completely with his everyday life, a rupture between a before and an after. There in the instant of the reunion, it is as if life has ended. It has ended because, if in the instant of that reunion the subject experiences emotion of Eros, in the next instant he will necessarily be submitted to the nostalgia of the previous instant.

Kierkegaard says that the eternal instant is at the origin, and in this there is a religious connotation, but calling that instant 'eternal' points to the impossibility of recovering the first encounter, an encounter that disrupts the 'homeostasis' of everyday life and the subjectivity that was produced then. The commotion is so great that the subject has a relation with the reminiscence of that instant: 'The young man discovers that, not being able to leave her, he devotes himself to remembering her' (Kierkegaard, 1843/1976: 130). He does not remember her, he just remembers the loving commotion, and does not make of the repetition his wretchedness, even though it might be Regina's. He has an idea about repetition: 'Freedom fears that change has the power to disturb his eternal essence . . . When it comes to protecting the personality from this disturbance, the task of freedom is, as it were, brought into play' (p. 132).

It is from this experience that Kierkegaard elaborates what can be called an ethic of the repetition as an event. This is an affirmation of being in its singularity as opposed to the events of everyday life, its accidents that pass over this being, that put him at risk, that evaporate him, that disperse him. He establishes then an opposition between aesthetic choice, which consists of choosing the instant, its variety, the richness of life's successes, and what can be called the ethic of repetition, which is in reality an ethic of affirmation of being. Lacan (1953) will say that what is consumed in Kierkegaard's repetition is 'the exhaustion of being', in the sense of its full realization, because in it is the hour of good fortune of the subject (p. 242). This is because according to Kierkegaard (1843/1976), 'repetition is a beloved wife of whom one never tires' (p. 131). We only tire of the change in what is judged interesting, what we think is new: this is opposed to the kind of repetition that is diversion, the dispersion of being in the presence of the instances in life. To this repetition is opposed as an ethical choice.

This means that Kierkegaard situates repetition in what he calls 'the religious stage'. Here is where 'life recovers perfidiously everything that it has given

without granting a repetition' (Kierkegaard, 1843/1976: 131). In this sense, repetition is something desirable: according to translators, 'repetition' in Danish has a certain relation with recovery, in such a way that the accent does not have to be put on the internal failure of the repetition – in the sense of the failure that it implicates the subject in – but what is affirmed in the manner in which it is repeated.

It is important to highlight that Kierkegaard wrote *Repetition* in the same year that he left Regina, a decision that was the cause of a great social scandal. A little later he found out that she, in her desperation, committed herself to another man, a situation that made him fall into a gloomy rage, although this was not due to jealousy – according to his own testimony – but owing to the fact that with that behaviour she had betrayed repetition, moving on to another implicated turning towards life, towards instants, rather than her obeying an ethic of accumulated moments. With that attitude, she had betrayed, according to Kierkegaard, what he had erected as an absolute object of his love.

Lacan: repetition and separation

In 1964 Lacan indicated that Kierkegaard was essential to the comprehension of the Freudian concept of repetition in its radical difference from the notion of reiteration of the 'natural' cycles. He warns us here that

> Freud is not dealing with any repetition residing in the natural, no return of need, any more than is Kierkegaard. The return of need is directed towards consumption placed as the service of appetite. Repetition demands the new. It is turned towards the ludic, which finds its dimension in this new.
>
> (Lacan, 1964/1973: 61)

The 'turn to the ludic' is clarified by the reference Lacan immediately makes to the well-known observation by Freud of the game of his little grandson, with the cotton-reel that he throws out from the confines of his cradle to then bring it back to himself, a game accompanied by the modulation of two conflicting phonemes that became famous as 'fort' (gone) and 'da' (here). The game is performed by the child when the mother leaves him alone. However, according to Lacan, this activity does not have as its essential purpose a symbolic elaboration of the absence of the mother, for there is something more radical:

> The ever-open gap introduced by the absence indicated remains the cause of a centrifugal tracing in which that which falls is not the other *qua* face in which the subject is projected, but that cotton-reel linked to itself by the thread that it holds – in which is expressed that which, of itself, detaches itself in this trial, self-mutilation on the basis of which the order of significance will be put in perspective. For the game of the

> cotton-reel is the subject's answer to what the mother's absence has created on the frontier of his domain – the edge of the cradle – namely a *ditch*, around which one can only play at jumping.
>
> (Lacan, 1964/1973: 62)

Here is the nucleus itself of repetition and its possibilities for innovation; the subject breaks here from something that is part of themself as a condition for producing something different:

> This reel is not the mother reduced to a little ball . . . it is a small part of the subject that detaches itself from him while still remaining his, still retained. This is the place to say, in imitation of Aristotle, that man thinks with his object. It is with his object that the child leaps the frontiers of his domain, transformed into a well, and begins the incantation. If it is true that the signifier is the first mark of the subject, how can we fail to recognize here – from the very fact that this game is accompanied by one of the first oppositions to appear – that it is in the object to which the opposition is applied in act, the reel, that we must designate the subject. To this object we will later give the name it bears in the Lacanian algebra – the *petit a*.
>
> (Lacan, 1964/1973: 62)

Like Kierkegaard who left Regina, separating himself in this act from something of himself, in repetition the subject has to break from something of himself as condition for his constitution as a divided subject. He is divided between his significant existence and his being outside of the signifier, which is incarnated by that little piece of wood, the cotton-reel thrown away from him that becomes the cause of the desire that will make him dream, talk, and invent.

Conclusion

Repetition is that 'eternal' instant that stays 'out of time'. Kierkegaard does not situate it as what disturbs or crushes liberty, but as what accomplishes it. It is here that the existentialist philosophers found their inspiration to affirm what is manifested of being in the contingent existence of the first encounter. Psychoanalysis, from Lacan, takes up this consent to repetition, but to signal that what is repeated by a subject – the usual motive of a symptom – is often what causes them to demand the psychoanalyst put an end to it. This is, however, at the same time, something necessary by structure, something that 'does not cease to not write itself', the destiny of the *parlêtre* (the speaking-being).

However, there is something else in repetition that is not universal destiny, in so far as this affirms the singularity characteristic of the subject. This leads Lacan to insist upon the necessity of the analysand 'identifying with its symptom' at the end of the treatment; this implies consenting to and even of

assuming it, vindicating what each one has become as unique in their own particularity, even that it is by way of a singularity of suffering. Evidently this cannot be considered according to the rules of the 'normality' that characterizes contemporary discourse, and it is important to remember that this discourse leads to the exclusion of the subject that talks, who wants to make themself heard in a singular symptom. This exclusion of what is silenced causes a return of the repressed in the diverse forms of violence that threaten us with the destruction of the social bond today.

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9

THE UNCONSCIOUS IS POLITICS

Psychoanalysis and other discourses

Alicia Ruth Álvarez

The relationship between psychoanalysis and politics is a sensitive issue in our practice, and needs to be further analyzed. Very often this analysis has been repressed in the name of the neutrality of the analyst, but the repressed returns, so I would like to pinpoint how the issue of politics articulates with and disarticulates itself from psychoanalytic practice.

Also related to the psychoanalytic discourse is the possibility of examining the consequences of other discourses that are effectively practiced socially, such as the discourses of science and religion. In this case, this is not about aligning psychoanalysis with any political line—that would be impossible. It is not about the position that someone practicing psychoanalysis may hold as citizen, either. Rather, it involves analyzing the discursive relationship between these two fields.

There is an external relationship concerning history. We know that psychoanalysis could not have possibly emerged without science (to the extent that Lacan holds that the subject with whom psychoanalysis operates is the very subject of science), and we are also aware of the influence that war had upon Freudian thought. At present, this constantly leads us to wonder about the effects of the progress of technoscience, an investigation already begun by Lacan.

Furthermore, there is no doubt that both Freud and Lacan have situated the social and the political at the core of the unconscious. This places politics within the realm of the unconscious (evident in so many ways, despite what critics of psychoanalysis say about our practice being individualistic).

In this context, I would like to resume the title of this work, which is a statement by Lacan: "The unconscious is politics." Lacan (1966–67) pronounced this phrase, almost in a motto-like manner, on 10 May 1967, during his seminar *The Logic of Fantasy*. Lacan claims that he is not saying that "politics is the unconscious," but simply that "*the unconscious is politics!*" (Lacan, 1966–67: 205). He relates this statement to Freud's (1924: 178) statement that: "Anatomy is Destiny."

Analysis of the dictum "the unconscious is politics" may lead to a sound perception of what has been discovered by Freud; a sound perception in the sense that all Freudian development shows that determination is a consequence of the bond with the other. If we took the "anatomy is destiny" dictum without considering these developments, we might slip into biological determinism.

This chapter examines what is meant by "the unconscious is politics" and the orientation proposed by Lacan. If this is not looked into, only the motto remains, and the phrase becomes a sign that signifies itself.

Discourse and politics

In the lecture in which Lacan says that the unconscious is politics, he talks about what searching for acceptance and causing rejection means in the relation to the Other, and also highlights the paradox that rejection can be a benefit. Thus, the unconscious is politics as it is what binds and divides people to and from each other, under the form of acceptance and rejection. Politics implies exchange; it pertains to a relation, the part of the Other that exists in us. Here is the symbolic, which discovers its efficacy in the affirmation of the law, law being the substance that commands the structure of the discourse of the master. This phrase should be further related to other statements made by Lacan to be better understood.

Later, Lacan tells his students, in response to the assertion that "structures do not walk on the streets," that structures do descend onto the streets, pointing to the fact that the unconscious is politics. In the unconscious, it is a kind of knowledge whose importance nobody suspects, yet it talks, dreams, laughs. This needs to be given some logic. From this emerged the postulate of the four discourses, a topology of transference, but also of the political. This topology is of the relation to the other as ways of bonding, in the attempt of making do with the lack of absolute enjoyment, as widely developed in the seminar *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis* (Lacan, 1991/2007; see also Álvarez, 2005).

Another phrase that relates to the idea that the unconscious is politics is "*the unconscious is the Other's discourse*" (Lacan, 1956: 10). In this relation with the Other, there is a discursive dominance of the Other, a symbolic determination.

None of the four discourses is mentioned as "discourse of politics" (just as Lacan did not mention a "discourse of science"). Should we write other discourses? Should we see how the political articulates in each discourse?

We may initially say that if the discourse of the master is the discourse of the unconscious, it will be the discourse of politics. It is the discourse whose dominant substance is the law; a kind of knowledge that operates but does not know itself. Lacan refers to the slave's role as a kind of "know-how." Knowing how to do things is not the same as knowing that one knows. There is knowledge that is not known; besides, the self is a little master that thinks he knows. However, the more he does not know, the more he thinks he knows. From time to time, something erupts, which allows the analysis to take place. A lapse or a bungled action, "parapraxis," bursts into discourse, and it is revealed that there is

something he does not know. Lacan compares this with the slave's knowledge, as an unrevealed unconscious.

Yet, many objections can be made as well. Politics aims at totality: the master aims at knowledge being able to become a totality as well, and this is inherent to the discourse of politics. This could be thought of as the discourse of the modern master, bureaucracy, the discourse of the university in its formulation of totality-knowledge, and in its updated version of the capitalist discourse, as a closed circuit of enjoyment. In that sense, we would have the opposite of what the unconscious shows, since these discourses are held in the function of the loss triggered by repetition.

Moreover, the discourse of the analyst is the reverse of the discourse of the master, its politics the politics of the symptom. Lacan states that making a reverse turn tends to produce a new master signifier, which is less potent and less stupid. What can result from the discourse of the analyst is perhaps another style of master signifier. So, Lacan wonders: Am I granting enough importance to the impossibility of its position? Meanwhile, the analysis adopts the position of extracting the agent of the discourse from the impossible, the root of desire.

Politics and psychoanalysis

We thus see that the relation between psychoanalysis and politics is neither direct nor linear. In his text *Can Politics be Thought?* Alain Badiou (1990) makes a distinction between politics and the political, which might shed some light on the question:

> The political is in the retreat and absence, that is why it is analyzed in its essence. But there is liberation from politics, whose mobility, within the framework of the thought of Machiavelli and Lenin, has never more than the face without essence of the event . . . The political has never been but the fiction where politics produces the hole ("*trou*") of the event. Political philosophy is just the tardy torn apart account, the very fiction of a measure, the idea that the social place is measurable.
>
> (Badiou, 1990)

So, Badiou situates a crisis of the political in the fact that there can be no coherent unit, since social groupings are inconsistent and the possibility of representation is lost (he argues, for instance, that there exist no such things as "the French" or "the proletariat"). The political tends to be fixed; it is the established, it supports the State. Furthermore, the real aspect of politics is something you bump into by chance. It is repetition in the sense of encounter with the real; it is the event, something mobile.

Having made these distinctions very schematically, we may now consider these two dimensions related to the writing of two different discourses. We could then grant that the unconscious is politics: a discourse of the master, since

the master knows nothing about their desire, and that the political is the novel written by the discourse of the university, an account that seeks to establish the whole-knowledge of the political, blurring the impossible at play. Again, this discourse makes the totality of knowledge function as agent. In this sense, it is a discourse with a certain imposture: the imposture of totalizing knowledge is then at the service of concealing this impossibility.

When faced with the question as to whether psychoanalysis can make any contributions regarding politics, it is not so much a question about political stances analysts might have, but about the ability of psychoanalysis as a discourse to locate the consequences, impasses, and outcomes resulting from other discourses.

Freud, for instance, argued that he was politically independent, which did not prevent him from analyzing the politics of his times nor from coming out vehemently against the way passionate idealism can lead to the worst consequences, as shown in his analysis of President Wilson.

Passionate idealism is a theme resumed by Lacan (1986/1992) when he analyzes the role of left-wing and right-wing intellectuals. Lacan states that we need to think of the political sense of the ethics that we heirs of Freud are responsible for. There is the fool, who is an innocent person, retarded, and speaks up about truth. He is the buffoon, the left-wing intellectual. His value lies in that essential tomfoolery, a sort of nonsense or stupidity. Lacan opposes this figure to the knave, the villain, the right-wing intellectual, someone who won't step back in the face of the consequences of what he calls realism. This is the intellectual who sometimes also proclaims himself to be pragmatic and, when required, admits he is a crook. This position may be related to that of the "mad man" in the sense Lacan (1946) specifies it in his piece "Presentation on psychic causality."

However, Lacan also points out that the result of gathering crooks into a herd leads inevitably to collective foolishness, just like the tomfoolery of the left-wing intellectual gives rise to a collective knavery, as heroic truths are then expressed without paying the price. The ambition to speak the truth about the truth would be a vile trick. It would be to make-believe that there is a guarantee, that there is nothing of the impossible at stake. This is antithetical to the unconscious, which is supported by a hole in knowledge and by the analyst's desire, who can desire anything but the impossible. Precisely in order not to desire the impossible, he makes it agent of his discourse. This is related to the position that Lacan (1972) expects from the analyst: that of *docta ignorantia* ("learned ignorance," an expression taken from Nicolás de Cusa). Lacan tells us that this operates as the positive fruit of the revelation of ignorance, which is not-knowing. This, he says, is not a negation of knowledge, but its most elaborate form. That is to say, as ignorance is revealed, it becomes not-knowing and ceases to be a passion. Analysts should be well informed of this (as much as it results in not-knowing) experience of the signifier of the lack in the Other, in which the Other, somewhere, does not respond. At its extreme, this is then experience of the void of signification as a limit of what can be symbolized. If this not-knowing takes

its place in the discourse of the analyst as a cause, it is uttered with a letter that names the lack of object, surplus of the operation, object little a, by means of which it will still be possible to hold a discourse other than that of the university.

Politics of the symptom

In psychoanalysis, this knowledge does not give up the idea of capturing some truth, since analysis cannot be without a relation to the truth, but we can give it some place as non-totality. It is in light of the impossible that we can recognize the topology of our desire, as an incommensurable, infinite measure. Hence, it can be said that the politics of psychoanalysis is the politics of the symptom.

A politics of the symptom that can be put into play is when there is a turn from one discourse to another, which, given the inadequacy of each one, allows a change of reason, as Lacan points out, taking this notion from the poet Rimbaud (1895). This will be the politics of psychoanalysis:

> This is all the more important to recall that, if there is in Freud, to designate like that a certain tone, if there is in Freud something revolutionary—I already warned about the excessive use of this word—but it is certain that, if there was a moment when Freud was revolutionary, it is in the measure that he put in the foreground a function which is also the one, it is the only common element moreover, which is also this element that Marx contributed, namely, to consider a certain number of facts as symptoms. The dimension of the symptom is that it speaks, it speaks even to those who do not know how to hear; it does not say everything, even to those who know it.
>
> (Lacan, 1971/2009)

In this line of analysis, I want to examine some issues I consider characteristic traits of current psychoanalytic practice; but let us not take this for granted. Let us pose the question: Is there such thing as current practice? This question leads us to the complex domain of the particular discursive bond of our times, but it is not a question of looking at it as if from the outside, as if it is an issue not present in our offices in one way or another.

For better understanding, we should try to distinguish new from current. I would say that there is no new without history, so that there is indeed a difference between new and current. Current is a sign of a perpetual present, as a difficulty to situate past, present, and future, something that can remain frozen, showing a failure in the inscription of the role of the lack, as a rejection of the perishable, of impermanence.

As a correlate of these presentations, there emerges the insistent question about the existence or non-existence of new structures, related to the question of what the subjectivity of the era is. In my view, the answer lies not in trying to establish a new diagnostic system, but in the possibility of reassessing our work.

As regards what is "current," we should inevitably mention Freud and what he called "actual" neuroses. Freud makes a thorough distinction between actual neuroses and psychoneuroses (or neuroses proper). Only the latter are organized according to the logic of the symptom, and although there are often mixed "cases," Freud struggles to maintain this difference. In the case of actual neuroses, he ascribes the aetiology to a specific factor of sexual origin, such as masturbation or *coitus interruptus*, for instance. The economical problem is thus that of the *accumulation* of libido that does not find a proper discharge. We could think of this in terms of failures as regards the necessary renunciation of the drive. Repetition and repression do not function adequately. As can be seen, this is a more precarious presentation than that of the symptom, as there is no logic of substitution working fully (for there is, as we now say, failure at the metaphorical level). Let us analyze what Freud (1912: 249–250) says in 'Contributions to a discussion on masturbation' concerning the future possibility of the analytic treatment of these conditions:

> On the other hand, I will grant to-day what I was unable to believe formerly – that an analytic treatment can have an indirect curative effect on 'actual' symptoms. It can do so either by enabling the current noxae to be better tolerated, or by enabling the sick person to escape from the current noxae by making a change in his sexual régime. These would be desirable prospects from the point of view of our therapeutic interest.

This is a point of view that encourages us to work on these difficulties. The consideration of the time factor (*actual* neuroses) opens up the analysis on the dimension of time when a circular bond is implied: Will there be a pretension of a permanent present? In that sense, the illusion of permanence shows the failure in the operation of ascribing the failure, and the socially-promoted popular question of eternal youth.

Also in Lacan there are considerations as regards phenomena not located in the logic of the symptom, such as the psychosomatic phenomenon involving the holophrase (or pressing together of sense) $S_1 \rightarrow S_2$. If there is a holophrase, there is no subjective division; there is no signifier representing the subject before another signifier.

In order to analyze the current or actual status of the contemporary social bond, let us remember that in the writing of the capitalist discourse, as the terms are inverted, the fact that S_1 represents $\$$ before $_2$ is concealed. If the subject completely ignores this determination, he seems free of any effect of alienation, as Sade claimed; yet, he pays the price of being merely an instrument of enjoyment. In this notation, his only determination comes to him from the object, as there is no relation between the agent and the Other (there is no vector at work there).

So, if we are not to set up a new diagnostic system, we will try to situate some of the characteristics of how situations are present in our practice. In this

respect, I would point out that this is related to certain accidents in the Borromean knot. There is a precarious knotting because of the characteristics adopted in these times by the paternal role, which is also linked to its relations with the workings of law.

The question is the one posed initially: How are we to act in the face of these presentations? This preliminary work seeks to put the unconscious in function in the place where it has been rejected. It would be a step antecedent to the possibility of constituting the symptom as a place of the mark of a truth, which is enigmatic for the subject. In this task, which we could also refer to as an ethical command to give way to the necessity of discourse, the analyst will promote the emptying of such a position of the agent, an allegedly autonomous subject, or instrument apparently freed from responsibility (the two extremes of the same insanity), and its substitution for the S_1 representing him. Only in this way will it be possible to promote the hystericization of discourse, constituting the *semblant* function as not coinciding with the phantom, which is believed to be possibly achieved.

When Lacan encourages psychoanalysts to unite the horizon of practice with the subjectivity of our times, he also provides a particular characterization of that subjectivity. He even talks about psychosis at a social level. Thus, uniting the horizon of our practice with the subjectivity of our times implies working further towards the emergence of the subject hidden by the subjectivity of the times. This is my interpretation, and it is indeed related to the conditions of our practice (and note again that it is necessary to make a distinction between subjectivity and subject).

By subjectivity of our times, I mean what Lacan (1946) called "the modern man" who thinks he can do anything by means of his reason and that he is the best ever. This reflects a prevalence of the "I" and not wanting to know of any other determination amounts to an inflated narcissism, which in its most radical form is linked to madness.

Psychoanalysis, capitalism, and science

When referring to social psychosis, Lacan refers to *Verwerfung* at a social level, and he says it is the foreclosure of castration. Two moments of this development need to be highlighted: his work on the role of not-knowing of the "I," which is linked to madness, and his later work regarding the effects of capitalism and science.

To the ego-centered notion of the modern man, Freud opposes the I that is not master in its own home, that is, the split subject whose origin Lacan places in the *cogito*, as unrepresentable, as a kind of truth that is left out of the field of knowledge constituted by science.

As can be observed, this involves an encounter with other discourses, which weigh heavily in these times, and the way analysts sustain themselves in relation to them.

In my view, it is important to first situate the effects of science. Everything that is written has a silencing effect; that is the achievement of science with its consequent foreclosure of the subject. Promoting a belief in complete enjoyment also has a silencing effect; this is the logic of capitalism.

Mutually binding, science and capitalism are both 'discourses' that appear as if with no surplus. The role of the surplus (*a*) as trigger of discourse and as of corollary of the barred $ is excluded from these discourses. If this is the characteristic of the current social bond, what does the subject respond with? As we mentioned before, more and more often their response does not reach the status of being a symptom. There are returns in the real and disorders involving the imaginary as disentanglement of the body and of the act, and as a correlate, automatic anguish. Something similar takes place with the so-called panic attack where there is a predominance of the reaction to conserve the organism, and anguish is not oriented to anything in particular.

In consultations the incestuous is perceived too easily, little observed (this is obviously degradation of $ to an object position). There are responses by the cultural Other who could "confirm" the place of the object of the Other's enjoyment (of the enjoying Other) and there is no psychic representation (rejection of the unconscious). These are phenomena disarticulated from representation. As already seen, that is what Freud worked on as current neuroses. There is a lack of fiction, historicization (such as in the so-called panic attacks, passages to the act, phenomena in the body). This poses an initial obstacle to the installation of transference, as there is no question addressed to the other; there is no search for knowledge, no enigma. That enigma needs to be built.

At this point, I wonder how to hold a position so as to generate the conditions of discourse while refraining from acting (that is, being "abstinent"). This involves situations in which it seems necessary to 'borrow' some signifiers, 'invent' constructions, produce some sense; all operations aimed at the analyst entering discourse and remaining in it. This will eventually enable analysis. Would these borrowings be against abstinence? How can they possibly be done without coagulating certain forms of sense? Freud claimed that it is by the authority of the doctor that the subject is made to change enjoyment regimes. Is this authority close to suggestion? We also know that a lack in the Other is necessary if everything is not enjoyment, so that there is a division between enjoyment and desire. These are issues that need to be specified and further investigated.

Contrary to capitalism and science, psychoanalysis holds the position of producing the need of discourse. It is because of the failure of enjoyment that we speak. The analyst's work is to situate that failure and inscribe it in discourse; this involves setting a limit to the "everything is possible" dictum, which leads to the worst.

When the relation to the discourse is hindered to that extent, reality comes to pass as a phantasmal realization and prevents the subject bonding to the other. Instead of act, there is inhibition or acting. These are the consequences of the

ignorance of necessity, ignorance that cannot participate in the analyst's role (as Lacan points out). It is an ethical problem, since failure to recognize necessity is failure to recognize differences.

Thus, there is the need for a position (in my opinion, held in the desiring role of the analyst) that helps establish (build) the coordinates of discourse (that is, of the structure). Freud referred to this as rectification of the modes of satisfaction (enjoyment regime). This would mean a passage from the self-erotic to the object relation; libido mobilization, logics of the circulation versus stasis and drive adhesiveness. This practice of ascribing the surplus as a cause of discourse is opposed to the no-surplus notion of science and capitalism.

Conclusion

It is worth highlighting the way paved by Freud and its strict validity at present times, when a so-called discourse of the modern man is being established more and more strongly—a man who thinks himself autonomous and lives in the illusion of individuality and of rejection of the impossible. A clear example of this is the dominance of the discourse of science, a significant issue for the possibility of bonding. From here we can situate which responses are posed by, for instance, sexology (more linked to the discourse of science) or religion (in its endless search for meaning). Psychoanalysis, on the contrary, implies trying to activate the lack, ascribed as the cause of desire. That is, in view of the hegemony of discourses rejecting the impossible, it implies putting impossibility at play as a cause of discourse. It even means attempting this within the analytic community, further insisting on the question of how to bond without this immediately involving the characteristic traits of the mass.

When working on the impossible, Freud denounces those discourses that are proposed as totalizing, with no surplus, and urges the subject to desire for the impossible. Psychoanalytic discourse gives way to the impossible, situating it as an agent of discourse. It could be said that for science, this implies *saying precisely* (in an exact, mathematical way), for religion, *saying truly*, and for psychoanalysis, *saying well*. In my opinion, this should be our orientation, on the grounds that psychoanalysis should continue to be a symptom and an event in culture.

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10

FORMALISATION AND CONTEXT

Some elements of a materialist reading of Lacan's 'four discourses'[1]

Livio Boni

As my title indicates, I am less interested in exploring here the formal construction of Lacanian theory, starting around 1969 with the hypothesis of the four discourses in the Seminar *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis* (Seminar XVII), than the intellectual, political and ideological context from which emerges, in Lacan's view, the necessity to undertake an extension of formalisation itself. In fact, even if formalisation or the use of 'mathemes' appear quite early in his writings, for instance with the 'Graph of Desire' (Lacan 1957–58/1998; 1958–59), one can consider *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis* as a turning point, opening a period in which the emphasis on formalisation becomes dominant in his teaching, and will be extended beyond the analytical logic, so as to translate a general *logic of the social production of enjoyment*.

The new centrality acquired by the category of *jouissance*, between the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s (a trend that reaches its peak with *Encore*, 1972–73) forces Lacan at the same time to renovate and to extend his formalisations. According priority to the 'real' over the 'symbolic' Lacan does not give up on his attempts at finding a way of formalising enjoyment, but, on the contrary, feels a much stronger urge to do that. In one sense, both the symbolic and the imaginary structure of the subject appear much easier to formalise, through the linguistic or the optical schemes, for example. This is much harder in the case of *jouissance*. How to formalise that which is beyond the pleasure principle? How to formalise the work of the Freudian 'death drive' (*Todestrieb*) in the very heart of the real?

It is to this very question that Lacan (1968–69/2006) will strive to find an answer, from 1967 onwards at least, putting the question of enjoyment at the centre of his Seminar *D'un autre à l'Autre* (*From an other to the Other*), not from a strictly analytic point of view, but looking for a general theory of the production of enjoyment by the collective economy of discourse's productions.

What I would like to investigate is the role played by the historical conjuncture of May 1968 on this evolution of Lacanian thought. This is the reason why I will choose to approach the four discourses theory from its *margins*, looking at it as a kind of condensation of various themes and problematic grounds that Lacan shares with, or opposes to his contemporaries. In other words, I will try to propose a reading *in context* of the Lacanian theoretical decisions around 1968. Indeed, I have the feeling that most approaches to the Lacanian theory foreclose a very important side of his work and his teaching: their always being *in context*.

Lacan's insight into Marx

The question of the relationship between analytical theoretical production and its historical conditions is a difficult and fascinating one, which psychoanalysis has been confronting since the 1920s, with the birth of so called 'Freudo-Marxism'. One immediately thinks of Wilhelm Reich, and I have to begin my reconstruction by recalling, first of all, that the preliminary condition of the Lacanian theory of the four discourses resides in an encounter with Marx, and not just with Hegel, as one could be led to believe by according the priority to the master/slave dialectic developed by Kojève and Hyppolite, and largely employed by Lacan in *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*. Indeed, the encounter with Marx finds its climax in the previous seminar, *D'un autre à l'Autre*. This encounter revolves around a 'master signifier' in Marx's thinking, the concept of *mehrwert*, surplus-value as defined in Marx's *Capital*.

In the first lecture of *D'un autre à l'Autre* Lacan (1968–69/2006, 13/11/68: 19) establishes that 'The surplus-enjoyment is the renunciation of enjoyment by the effect of discourse.' This means quite a simple thing: the entrance of language opens necessarily *a new economy*, in which there is no longer any immediate satisfaction. Just as, in the case of Marx, merchandise alienates from the worker any use-value, because it contains a part of surplus-labour, when something becomes the object of language it also becomes the object of surplus-enjoyment, disconnected from any direct access to the enjoyment of the object itself. That is why Lacan continues – in that same first lecture of *D'un autre à l'Autre* – by stating that surplus-enjoyment introduces the 'objet *a*' (p. 19) The objet *a* is a function of language.

This is very close to the famous sentence '*Il n'y a pas de rapport sexuel*'. We find the first occurrence of this formula in the seminar *The Logic of Fantasy*, where Lacan (1966–67) affirms that 'The great secret of psychoanalysis is that there is no sexual act', immediately adding 'It is precisely because there is sexuality that there is no sexual act' (12/04/1967).

Of course, this kind of perspective is already a strong response to any ideology of 'sexual liberation', and one can observe quite easily how it appears in the Lacanian teaching as an answer to the mobilisation of psychoanalytic logic in a sexual revolution simply understood as the emancipation of the libido. Once again, we can think of Reich's (1942/1968) book *The Function of the Orgasm*,

very popular in the 1960s, or about the famous slogan '*jouir sans entraves*' written on the Sorbonne's walls in the spring of 1968.

This is also why Lacan refuses any pure energetic and quantitative reading of enjoyment: 'L'énergetique *n'est même pas concevable si ce n'est comme conséquence du discours*' ('The energetic is not even conceivable if it is not as an effect of the discourse'), he anticipates from the first lecture of *D'un autre à l'Autre* (13/11/1968: 32). He comes back to this dependence of every energetic construction on language in *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*:

> Are you unaware that, whatever the ingenuous hearts of engineers believe, energetics is nothing other than the network of signifiers overlaying the world? I defy you to prove in any way that descending 500 meters with a weight of 80 kilos on your back and, once you have descended, going back up the 500 meters with it is zero, no work. Try it, have a go yourself, and you will find that you have proof of the contrary. But if you overlay signifiers, that is, if you enter the path of energetics, it is absolutely certain that there has been no work. When the signifier is introduced as an apparatus of *jouissance*, we should thus not be surprised to see something related to entropy appear, since entropy is defined precisely once one has started to lay this apparatus of signifiers over the physical world.
>
> (Lacan, 1991/2007: 48–49)

These critical references to energetics in Lacan's seminars between 1968 and 1969 correspond to an implicit refutation of Reich's perspective, which was based on the idea of the repression of the libido by the bourgeois family, and on the ideal of a good employment of the sexual energy as means of political emancipation. However, Reich's work became quite popular in the 1960s, especially following the translation of Marcuse's (1955/1974) *Eros and Civilisation*, a book that revived criticisms directed at the libidinal economy of advanced capitalist societies and rejected the Freudian notion of the death drive. According to Lacan, these are good enough reasons to put 'enjoyment' (which is the Lacanian version of the Freudian death drive) at the very core of his own critique of libidinal social constructions. But Lacan wants to accomplish his own psychoanalytic analysis of the political conjuncture by means other than appeal to energetics. To follow this path, he had to propose his own perspective on Marx's contribution.

We find an interesting reference to Marx in one of Lacan's most important texts '*La science et la vérité*' ('Science and truth'), where he makes a critical remark about the well-known formula of Lenin: 'Marx's theory is all-powerful because it is true':

> In writing that 'Marx's theory is all-powerful because it is true' Lenin does nothing to come to terms with the enormity of the question his

> speech raises: if one supposes the truth of materialism in its two guises (dialectic and history, in fact one and the same) to be mute, how could theorizing this increase its power? To answer with proletarian consciousness and the action of Marxist politicos seems inadequate to me. . . . An economic science inspired by Capital does not necessarily lead to its utilization as revolutionary power, and history seems to require help from something other than a predicative dialectic.
>
> (Lacan, 1966: 349–350)

As observed by Pierre Bruno (2010) in his recent book *Lacan, passeur de Marx*, this quite caustic remark suggests that truth is not enough to build a materialist perspective. The real (*le réel*) finally wins out over the true; enjoyment triumphs over truth. This is the assumed ground of the Freudo–Lacanian conception; this is also the reason why Lacan will choose to tackle Marx's theory by means of the analogy between surplus-value and surplus enjoyment, and will eventually, in his last seminars such as *RSI* (1975), argue that Marxist logic completes the master's discourse without managing to turn it upside down, because of the privilege it still accords to truth, thereby forgetting the real (*la jouissance*).

For a detailed recognition of the occurrences of the proper noun of Marx in the work of Lacan, I refer you to the aforementioned book by Bruno (2010). The author insists on another crucial analogy established by Lacan, especially in *D'un discours qui ne serait pas du semblant* (1971–72), this time between Freudian and Marxist logic: the common importance given to the symptom. Despite the fact that Marx hardly ever uses this term (probably only once, in a speech in English in 1856, where he talks about 'symptoms of decay' associated with the enormous progress of the last industrial revolution), Lacan recognises a common symptomatic logic at work in both Freud and Marx. Moreover, he adds that this is the only real common point between Marxism and psychoanalysis: the fact that they offer a logic of the symptom (Lacan, 1971/2007, 20/01/71: 24).

A contested category of the 1960s: discourse

Let us return to the historical context of Lacan's fragmentary encounter with Marx. This encounter becomes evident during the last period of his teaching in the *École Normale Supérieure*, under the patronage of Althusser from 1963 to 1968. It marks the peak of his engagement with the new Marxist philosophers (*Lire le Capital* was published in 1968) but it also prepares the turning point of 1969, centred on the notion of discourse. Why does Lacan choose this notion to respond to the events of 1968?

Of course, one can easily observe how, in the second half of the 1960s, the notion of discourse had become more and more present in the French philosophical *milieu*, especially in Foucault's work. In fact, notions such as 'discursive practice' or 'discursive formation' are absolutely central in Foucault's (1969/1972) *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, published in 1969.

From 1966 Althusser also worked on the notion of 'discourse', trying to reconcile historical materialism with 'a general theory of the signifier', 'not just linguistic or psychoanalytical', attempting to describe 'every (significant) discourse' (Althusser, 1966: 111). This work, never published in his lifetime, is now known under the title *Trois notes sur la théorie des quatre discours*, and edited in his posthumous works on psychoanalysis.

As Jean-Michel Rabaté (2009) points out, the theory of the four discourses is Lacan's response to Foucault's archaeology as well as to Althusser's Marxism. However, if we consider things more closely, Lacan's four discourses are closer to Foucault than to Althusser, precisely because they do not want to describe a structure but an *economy of discourse*. We will pose the thesis that the four discourses theory aims at describing an economy of enjoyment in the order of discourse, but an economy emancipated from any energetic point of view, and solely founded on the logic of production of enjoyment through the function of transference.

For instance, in *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis* Lacan (1969–70/1991) presents the beginning of philosophy, with the 'conceptual personage' of Socrates, as a hysterical discourse in the sense that it 'animates in the master the desire for knowledge' (*il anime chez le maître le désir de savoir*, 17/12/69: 37). This is also why, at the end of the same lecture, he can call Hegel 'the most sublime of the hysterics' (p. 38). At the same time, Lacan does not forget how philosophy is at the very origin of the institution of scholarship – this is why he starts with the university discourse – or how the philosophical discourse can justify the master's one. This means that, for instance, there is no such thing as *a structure* of philosophical discourse. Even if its essence consists in causing anxiety to the master, it can hold any other place, marring the master's discourse (the Hegelian 'Absolute Spirit', for example) or the university's one (where the discourse becomes a ritual, a quotation, a pure work of reproduction, and, worse than this, what Lacan terms a '*canaillerie*'). This is not at all a particular status concerning only philosophical discourse, because every discourse, in the Lacanian sense, is a social and economic value, not a structure (scientific discourse can also work, for instance, as a discourse of the hysteric or as a discourse of the master).

So, the first reason for introducing the four discourses theory is that one must not mistake the structural difference between neurosis, psychosis and perversion – which are for Lacan structures of the subject – for the four discourses grid, which is much more like a topic of possible economies of *every discourse*. Of course, the fourth kind of discourse, the discourse of the analyst, seems to occupy a special place in this table, for the good and simple reason that it is a kind of *remainder* of the three others. However, Lacan never excludes the possibility that the analyst's empirical discourse could occupy one of the other positions. To educate, to govern, to analyse; these are, for Freud, the 'three impossible tasks'. Lacan just adds 'to make desire' to this list. His own contribution leads to the introduction of the discourse of the hysteric in the same circuit

in which Freud used to put his impossible tasks ('*Erziehen, Regieren, Analysieren*').

In other words, the discourse of the hysteric becomes a matrix beside the political, the pedagogical and the scientific ones. Here is a main characteristic of the Lacanian reception of the events of 1968, strictly marking the foundational role of the hysteric position for the psychoanalytical discourse, in a singular interpretation of Plato's dialogues. In this perspective, what is crucial is the transferential position of each discourse's production. The master's discourse is intended as the production of knowledge, starting from a master signifier, but it needs the slave's consciousness to find its consistency. The discourse of the university aims at accessing enjoyment through knowledge, but this requires the master to be lenient to allow this to arrive at an *impasse* concerning truth. The discourse of the hysteric is aimed at the master, it wants to cause anxiety in him and, for this, it needs to show the power of enjoyment. Finally, the discourse of the analyst is aimed at the divided subject, but it needs to navigate a huge reservoir of knowledge to reach a point of truth that will make a hole in knowledge itself.

Changing sites

I would also like to point out one more practical circumstance: 1969 is the first year in which Lacan takes his Seminar in the Law Faculty of the Sorbonne. In fact, he was excluded from the *École Normale Supérieure* in the Spring of 1969, and declared *persona non grata* by the new director. This kind of restoration of the discourse of the university in the temple of intellectual elites caused a change in his own position. He becomes much closer to the Maoist positions of most of his disciples, especially philosophers. If, during the high point of the political events of 1968 Lacan does not seem unhappy with some kind of identification with De Gaulle (Rabaté, 2009), now he prefers to play on an (imaginary) identification with Chairman Mao Tse Tung, deciding in a way to start his own cultural revolution. This is why he needs a radical critique of the economy of knowledge. The next phase of his work of formalisation, inaugurated with the four discourses theory, expresses this ambition of finding a new position in the field of the production of knowledge, as well as his famous sentence, pronounced in the new university of Vincennes in December 1969: '*ce que vous voulez c'est un maître. Vous l'aurez*' ('you want a new master. You will get one'); that means also (but not just) his agreement with this new role.

Many things could be said about this alliance between French Maoism, Lacanian teaching and radical critique of the reproduction of knowledge (Lacan 1969–70/1991, 03/12/69: 239). For the moment, I will content myself with a more specific remark: we can easily read the four discourses theory as a *topographical economy* of discourses. What makes for a displacement from one discourse to another? The simple fact that the *speech* changes *site*. Lacan

formulates this logic at the precise moment in which he makes a new experience of this change of site for his own speech. Indeed, one could say that in the first period of his teaching, when the site of the Seminar was *Sainte Anne* hospital, the dominant tone of his *speech* was the discourse of the analyst (1953–62); then, when he arrived at the *École Normale* (after his exclusion from the IPA) he played with idea of transference with philosophers, that is to say with something between the hysterical discourse and that of the university. Finally, bringing his teaching to address that of the function of the master after 1969 (in the last period of his teaching, which began around 1975), Lacan proposed a kind of imitation of the psychotic discourse, with the question of 'Joyce the symptom', leaving from then on the logic of the four discourses behind. Therefore, one possible definition of the Lacanian discourse is just this: the *site* of speech.

Discourse versus *speech* in the interpretation of May 1968: Lacan's reply to De Certeau

We can underline the Lacanian recourse to the notion of discourse from another point of view: I mean the well-known opposition between speech and discourse. This kind of opposition is obviously linked to De Saussure's distinction between *langue* (language) and *parole* (speech). The discursive system is in fact a kind of differential field in which the speech can work, and produce its own acts. In a way, discourse is the structural condition of the speech's possibility, and one could paradoxically consider that discourse is, finally, what cannot be altered by the speech. Even if one could think, for instance, that the discourse of the analyst presupposes an historical '*coupure épistemologique*' (historical break, rupture), produced by the 'Freud event', we must remember that in the Lacanian perspective the birth of psychoanalysis is not a teleological revolution, but something giving, *a posteriori*, a new intelligibility to many sequences of philosophical and scientific thought. This is the reason why Lacan can find in Plato's *Symposium*, and generally in Platonic dialogues, the source of the logic of transference, or the foundation of the ethics of psychoanalysis. In other words, the structural and the evental nature of the discourses are not in any contradiction, because only the events of truth can show something of the structural consistency at work.

However, in this case too, the final justification for the reactivation by Lacan of the opposition between *langue* and *parole* is not just theoretical, doctrinal or structural. What finally justifies his investment in the category of discourse is also a contingent reason, deeply linked to the ideological context initiated by 'May 1968', and strictly connected to the interpretation of this event itself. In fact, one of the most visible and successful analyses of the 1968 events was the one proposed, a few months after May that year, by someone very close to Lacan: the historian Michel de Certeau, in his book *La prise de parole (The Capture of Speech)*. This book proposes a quite simple interpretation of the events: what happened there was, for De Certeau, the liberation of speech:

> Last May speech was taken the way, 1789, the Bastille was taken. The stronghold that was assailed is knowledge held by the dispensers of culture, a knowledge held by the dispensers of culture, a knowledge meant to integrate or enclose student workers and wage earners in a system of assigned duties. From the taking of the Bastille to the taking of the Sorbonne, between these two symbols, an essential difference characterizes the event of May 13, 1968: today it is the imprisoned speech that was freed. . . . Something happened to us. Something began to stir in us. Emerging from who knows where, suddenly filling the streets and the factories, circulating among us, becoming ours but no longer being the muffled noise of our solitudes, voices that had never been heard began to change us. At least that was what we felt. What was incredible was just this: we started to talk. As it was the first time.
>
> (Certeau, 1968: 40)

Lacan (1968–69/2006, 20/11/68: 41) was sarcastic about this diagnosis:

> This was a great *prise de parole*, as somebody who has in my field a non negligible place stated. *Prise de parole?* I think that it would be a mistake to give this *prise* a homology with any *prise de la Bastille. Une prise de tabac et de came, j'aimerais mieux.*

However, there is much more than mere sarcasm in his seminar *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*. What I would like to make evident is that this need of formalisation is also an answer to blind faith in the word, in the '*prise de parole*'. Through the theory of the four discourses Lacan starts to pose the question of taking *a discourse without speech*. Of course, mathematics and mathematical logic are, in a way, a discourse without word. Facing a kind of inflation of the word's social value, Lacan takes the opposite course to the one you might expect. Psychoanalysis is not only the science of the *parole*, but also of the social production of *discourses*.

Discourse and event: the university as evental site?

I am, in a way, turning the point around, trying to suggest an exploration of the theoretical margins of the four discourses theory, visiting their periphery, or some implicit implications that they have, and I am not proposing at all a presentation of the theory itself. Nevertheless, let me try now a last *variation* on the contextual side of the formalisation of the four discourses theory.

I think that, from a political or a 'metapolitical' point of view, one can have a leftist interpretation of the four discourses, as well as a rightist one.

A kind of spontaneous reading of Lacan's intervention in the context of 1968 consists of saying that the 1968 movement just realises, under the appearance of a revolutionary desire, the accomplishment of the capitalist discourse. In this

perspective, the hystericisation of the students, themselves rebelling against the master's authority and its ancient forms, just asks, without knowing what it is really doing, for the inclusion of the reproduction of knowledge in line with the logic of the market. What the students finally aim at, by way of some kind of mechanism of disavowal, is a *valorisation* of their social position. Lacan will not hesitate to play on the irony of this, in many different ways, concerning this desire for valorisation: for example, in the famous improvisation in the Vincennes university, where the classes and examinations have been replaced by UV, des '*unités de valeur*' (units of value, or 'credits') (Lacan 1969–70/1991, 03/12/69: 232).

More generally speaking, Lacan wants to show that this dialectical movement, which looks like a subversion, is in reality just a kind of redistribution of tasks and places in the system. Knowledge must enter into the circuit of commodities, and their agents – the students, the researchers and the teachers – have to be considered as (re)producers of the system. This is the ultimate truth of 1968. The revolt against the master's discourse just means its translation into a 'capitalist discourse', which is not, for Lacan, a fifth kind of discourse, but a variation of the discourse of the master.

Now, if we satisfy ourselves with this kind of reading, we subscribe to something very close to the interpretation given by Adorno (1968), for instance, which considers the European students' revolution as nothing other than the paramount affirmation of the cultural industry. The ethic proposed by this reading, probably a preponderant one in the Lacanian galaxy, will be a kind of elitism for which there is no such thing as collective emancipation, but only an artistic one, reserved for a minority, however representing a type of accomplished humanity.

Another reading of Lacan's insight into the events of 1968 is also possible, and, at the same time, necessary too. The leftist reading should consist of underlining the recognition by Lacan of the fact that subversion in 1968 finds its origins and its site in the system of the reproduction of knowledge. This is something new in history: the students became the new main subject of the social body's division. This '*retour de la vérité dans la faille du savoir*' ('return of the truth in the faults of knowledge') – according to the Lacanian definition of symptom itself – is not just a 'ruse of Reason', but something revealing the very structure of the capitalist enjoyment. Socialist enjoyment (in the 'socialist' countries) is not Terror, but, says Lacan in *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*, bureaucracy. This is why, adds Lacan, 'what triumphs in the USSR is the discourse of the university'. This means a system founded on the foreclosing of every master signifier, a kind of permanent objectivity excluding every symptom, every truth's revelation in the grid of knowledge. In other words, Stalinism is not the ultimate truth of socialist states, and so the master's discourse is no longer the dominant enjoyment of socialist subjective economy. What is central, in the socialist realm, is the '*suture*' between knowledge and the truth.

This is why Lacan does not underestimate the Chinese cultural revolution (of 1966 to 1976). Not only because most of the Red Guards were students (coming

more from the secondary school than from the universities), but for the much more essential reason that the cultural revolution takes the discourse of the university and the general economy of the reproduction of knowledge as its main political target (there is priority of ideological struggle over the economic one, the suspension of any specific knowledge with the closure of the universities, protests against any kind of expert, the *Little Red Book* working as the only guide for the action and so on). Let me quote Lacan's main commentary on the Cultural Revolution:

> if there is something whose tone strikes me in the thematic called Maoist, it's the reference to the knowledge of manual labour. I do not claim to have an adequate view on this, but I will make one observation that struck me. The renewed emphasis on the knowledge of the exploited seems to me to be very profoundly motivated structurally. The question is knowing whether this is not something that is entirely dreamed up. In a world in which there has emerged, in a way that actually does exist, that is a presence in the world, not the thought of science, but science objectified in some way, I mean these things entirely forged by science, simply these little things, gadgets and things, which at the moment occupy the same space as us – in a world in which this emergence has taken place, can know-how at the level of manual labour carry enough weight to be a subversive factor. This is how, for me, the question arises.
>
> (Lacan, 1991/2007: 149)

Lacan seems to recognise in the cultural revolution a *double ambition*: on the one hand, it wants to break the tyranny of the discourse of the university as pure chain of signifiers, without any point of truth (*point de capiton*) – this is the Lacanian definition of bureaucracy – but on the other hand, the cultural revolution also wants to work against the new forms of the division of labour by way of a revaluation of manual labour. This second task seems to be utopian to Lacan, because the technical world does not allow any totalisation of work or of knowledge. The circulation of technical objects, and not just of commodities, results in a fragmentation of knowledge and of subjective experiences, and to try to counter this general movement seems to be quite an illusion.

It could be very instructive to go deeply into an analysis of this connection between the Maoist active opposition to the idea of a neutral and objective knowledge and the Lacanian idea that there is no such thing as a 'big Other'. The connexion between this ideological radicalism and the Lacanian option will be very influent in the French context (Cavazzini, 2011).

I will confine myself to saying that what could be the heart of a 'leftist' reading of Lacan's four discourses is an insistence on the link between subjectivity, knowledge and organisation. In 'late capitalism' the student's position is potentially subversive because it is the 'weak link' of social reproduction.

Nevertheless, student mobilisations can easily translate themselves into a demand for recognition by the master, a simple valorisation of their own position. The way chosen by Lacan, and by many Maoist and *gauchiste* organisations, will be a kind of *self-re-education*, a search for a new subjective connection between the transmission of knowledge and collective organisation. This is why it is not really surprising to observe how at the same time Lacan will look for his own solution to the problem of the connection between organisation and the transmission of psychoanalytical knowledge, formalising *la passe*.

The separation between the *passant* (the analysed who wants the candidate to become an analyst) and his analyst (who is not engaged in the *passe* process) aims at a dissolution of what Lacan calls, quoting Freud, 'the dark side of transference', which means: with what in the analyst's discourse can in some way work like a master's one.

Here I have proposed some elements to demonstrate the relevance of reading Lacan in context. This is only a sketch, a work to be pursued, to thwart any idea that the Lacanian subversion can content itself, including in the current context, with a position of taking a bird's-eye view free of any context whatsoever.

Note

1 This text is a revised version of an intervention at the Verso Laboratory 'Formalism and the Subject' (under the responsibility of Pietro Bianchi and Tzuchien Tho), at the Jan Van Eyck Akademie, Maastricht, 29 November 2010.

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11

THE DISCOURSE OF THE MARKETS OR THE DISCOURSE OF PSYCHOANALYSIS

A forced choice

Néstor A. Braunstein

In this chapter I present the conclusions of a work currently in press whose title in English would appear as *The Unconscious, Servomechanisms and Capitalist Discourse*. The book is edited by *Siglo Veintiuno Editores* in Mexico, and contains a review of the history of systems of domination as they relate to technique. The starting point of the analysis is the series of instruments and procedures that have been employed throughout the history of mankind since the discovery of fire, the earliest shrouded in myth, up to the most intricate equipment of contemporary scientific research. This defines a first level of analysis: that of 'servomechanisms', those 'extensions of man' that are present in all cultures and epochs.

These instruments (or 'means', *media*) can be grouped into sets – a second level of analysis – and constitute technical and administrative complexes that in each and every economic–social formation are intimately intertwined with legal dispositions that emanate from 'power' and thus respond to the interests of the master. These servomechanisms function from within institutions plagued by tactical and strategic struggles to control their 'services'. Following Foucault and Deleuze, I argue that these technical–institutional complexes can be denominated 'dispositives', though it is difficult to elaborate a strict definition of them (indeed, no one has defined them), and impossible to establish an exhaustive, empirical list because of the fuzziness characteristic of the frontiers that separate certain 'dispositives' from others.

At a third level, beyond that of servomechanisms and dispositives, our objectives also oblige us to consider, and take advantage of, the concept of 'discourse' that emerges from the teachings of Lacan, where discourses are conceived as forms of 'social bond' and can be formally classified into a total of just four mathematical expressions. After first identifying these four discourses (of hysteria, of

the master, of the university and of the analyst) structurally, we must then distinguish in one – that of the master – three distinct types of articulation; i.e. three historical forms that pertain to three successive forms of domination: a) *the classic master* with his counterpart, the slave; b) *the capitalist master* who puts knowledge into play and has his partner in the proletarian and c) *the impersonal master of the markets*, who acts through instrumental servomechanisms and whose counterpart is the subject foreclosed by science. These modalities of the discourse of the master are successive and have emerged in three different historical periods, but today they coincide and subsist in one and the same epoch. The co-existence – not always peaceful but always negotiated – of the three discourses of the master allows us to understand how, through their conflictual simultaneity, they organize the functioning of the different social 'dispositives', as well as the applications to which the multiple 'servomechanisms' are directed in each one. In other words, these discourses, all four of them – and including the three historical forms of the master – are the elements that serve to explain the complex relation between subject, power, knowledge and methods.

Subject, power, knowledge and methods

We must not lose sight of the contributions of important authors that hold keys to probing this problematic: Heidegger and his notion of *Gestell* (dispositive) that refers to the whole set of relations of people with technique, and with the exploitation of nature and other people; Mumford and McLuhan with their conception of 'media' as an articulated set that integrates all of humankind's prosthetic extensions and Althusser, who posited the idea of the 'ideological apparatuses of the State', a concept quite akin to Foucault's 'dispositives' – and taken up later by Deleuze – that make the exercise and action of power possible through primordially non-violent means. We should also remember Giorgio Agamben, who considerably stretches the concept of 'dispositive' by adding the entire set of servomechanisms and, finally, Bernard Stiegler, with his analysis of the new conditions of contemporary life concomitant with the deployment and generalized use of the technoscientific mechanisms of computers. The internet is now the servomechanism that allows the integral conservation of memory and determines the ways in which subjects remember – even perceive – their reality. Detailed analysis of these concepts establishes the necessary differences of level among them and makes it possible to elaborate an integrated vision of widely-diffused ideas concerning the changes that these new technologies entail for life in the culture of post-industrial societies (with the accompanying increase of 'civilization and its discontents'), all the while obliging us to conclude – amid this generalized feeling of 'revolutionary changes in life' – that little has been left unsaid and that always, in all periods, the technical conditions of existence have played a decisive role in alienating subjectification. Through the grace and action of language, the human species has always been technological.

As we carried out this review we discovered an essential, and still unrevealed and unrelieved, coincidence in the articulation of the positions of Lacan, as we mentioned with reference to the succession of the three discourses of the master, and Foucault, in his work on dispositives; one complemented with dazzling clarity by a contribution owed to Gilles Deleuze. To get to the point with no further ado, let us say that Michel Foucault ably elaborated a clear distinction between two modes of social organization: a) sovereign societies and b) disciplinary societies; to which Deleuze (1990), building on the ideas of W. S. Burroughs (1975), proposed adding c) societies of control.

As everything that needed to be said on this topic has already been expressed – and magisterially – by those analysts of the mechanisms of power, it is easy to show that this sequence of three societal organizations (which is valid at least for Western societies) coincides fully with, and is well adapted to, Lacan's observations on the metamorphosis that occurs in the passage from the classic master to the capitalist master (i.e. from Foucault's *sovereign* to *disciplinary societies*), and that Deleuze's notion of *societies of control* corresponds to our idea of adding the discourse of the markets, governed as they are by servomechanisms, the third modality of the discourse of the master. In sum, the scheme proposed is as follows:

a. Discourse of the classic master (Lacan) – Sovereign societies (Foucault) – Artisanal production of books and goods – Handwriting.
b. Capitalist discourse (Lacan) – Disciplinary societies (Foucault) – Industrial production of books and commodities – Printed writing.
c. PST ['pestilential'] Discourse (Lacan) [of the marketss] – Societies of control (Deleuze) – Cybernetic production of books and merchandise – Virtual writing.

Modes of social organization and the modalities of the master

Now we must ponder the succession of the three modes of social organization as they relate to the three modalities of the master.

For Foucault, 'sovereignty' is all of the following: a primitive form of government, a societal type and a dispositive that is opposed, point-by-point and on all levels, to the 'disciplinary' modality that appeared on the world stage at a later date – concretely, after the French Revolution – and carried it forward. Since the era of the Roman empire (the *persona* of the Supreme Pontiff) – not to mention pharaohs, Chinese emperors and all other incarnations of autocracy – but more clearly still since the Middle Ages, Western juridical thought has held as its central, magnetic figure that of the sovereign who exercises authority and is the source of all positive laws in representation of a transcendental entity: God. In the early centuries of Western Europe, law is royal law. The legitimate prerogatives of sovereignty and its counterpart, the legal obligation to obey, served to

define the forms of domination in both the administrative monarchies of the feudal epoch, and the parliamentary monarchies grudgingly installed with the emergence of liberal political currents. It was in direct relation to, and through struggles with, precisely those forms of sovereignty that the ensuing bourgeois revolutions of sixteenth and seventeenth-century England, France, Germany and the United States took place and, in time, installed another scheme for exercising power; the clearest manifestation of which can be seen in the representative bourgeois republic governed by a constitution; that self-styled 'expression of popular will'.

Sovereign societies are characterized by the permanent presence of 'royal' authority that is exercised over all goods and properties, including land, men and their products. Dominion is wielded over both territory and wealth (in the kingdom). Without doubt, this is a juridical organization in which law is imposed (by way of taxes) vertically, from the heights to the bases below, dogmatically. The supposed interests of the people are monopolized by an immortal entity, the monarchy, incarnate in the mortal body of the king, sustenance of the life of the State. After many centuries, due to increases in population and wealth and the incipient mechanization of production, a 'class' of intermediaries expanded and formed complex relations with the central power, regional power centres multiplied and tensions emerged between the cities (*burgos*) and the capitals, residences of kings. The hereditary nobility ceased to be a stable means of delegating and transmitting authority. The decision-making processes that impacted public life were revealed to be 'anti-economic', arbitrary and brutal, and it became imperative to implement 'rational', codified juridical procedures to organize and discipline the other social classes, including the fledgling – but growing – bourgeois class. It is in this sense that we understand Foucault's (1978: 722) affirmation that: 'discipline is the other face of democracy'.

The organic installation of the new disciplinary system did not take just a day or two; rather, it gradually came to dominate as a result of the political changes that emerged in England in the seventeenth century, though it did not become firmly entrenched until after the French Revolution. In this vision, the beheading of Louis XVI (in 1791) can be seen as the punctual, bloody episode that symbolizes the unprecedented changes that were cemented only a few years later with the promulgation of the Napoleonic Code (originally called the 'Civil Code of the French' of 1804), that complex corpus of thousands of juridical dispositions that represented the paradigm of the different regulatory ordinances that came into effect in the nineteenth century in national states and the corresponding bourgeois societies of the Western world. Those juridical documents are secondary to the changes demanded by the new system of exercising power that Foucault has rightly denominated *disciplinary society*. On the plane of domination, the decisive instance here is displaced from the possession and administration of land (from fields to mines) to dominion over bodies; a change reflected in political economy even before governing institutions through the transition from physiocratic doctrines (i.e. land as the source of all wealth) to economic

liberalism (i.e. wealth as a product of human labour), the latter of which had emerged as *the* hegemonic theory by the second half of the eighteenth century. In *sovereign societies*, people were seen as appendages of the land from which they extracted their means of survival. In *disciplinary societies*, which correspond to the industrial revolution and *laissez-faire* capitalism, people are to be formed as producers of the profits that permit capital expansion: thus, the bonded serf cedes his place to the proletarian obliged to sell his labour power. No longer is it land that is controlled (through slaves or serfs) but, rather, the 'free' men who transform raw materials by operating machines that multiply and potentiate the body's actions. The mechanisms of power based on heredity and rights of blood, together with the legitimation of dominion through ecclesiastical organisms, cede their place to 'e-ducation' (*e-ducere*, to govern from afar) through the family and its extension, the school ('one is no longer at home'), its successors, the military garrison and factory ('one is no longer at school') and, at times, the prison and asylum, where the occasional failures of those institutional mechanisms are quashed through the violent application of 'the force of law'.

These *disciplinary societies* configured the predominant model of bodies and consciences that held sway up to the end of the twentieth century. As Deleuze (1990) notes, they are not, however, our present; rather, they are what we now find ourselves in the process of ceasing to be. Today it is no longer necessary to control and discipline bodies because, thanks to technical implements, those authoritarian procedures of government, those 'dispositives', have been internalized and controls are exercised externally through servomechanisms endowed with the 'sensorial' and 'motor' functions that capture the state of living organisms and coerce them to opportunely perform certain 'imperative' actions. The individual is perfectly and permanently localizable in time and space with no need to exercise physical vigilance over them, or to build walls behind which to enclose them: electronics can take care of those tasks quite well. Dominion is injected through audio-visual means, historical memory is constructed and manipulated from remote satellites that orbit beyond the atmosphere and the required changes of subjectivity can be managed through calculations, courtesy of the pharmaceutical industry, genetic engineering, the regulation of free time and its activities, the manipulation of productive activity in the home; no longer are schools, factories or barracks required, nor is surveillance or ostensible manifestations of power. *Disciplinary society* cedes its place to the emerging *societies of control*. Are we thus witnessing 'progress', or an even more surreptitious and threatening reinforcement of the same thing? Deleuze does not dare to delve into this question, and neither do we:

> Comparison does not suffice to determine which of the two regimes is harsher or more tolerable, for freedoms and subjections must be faced in both, each in its own way. Thus, for example, in the crisis of the hospital as a means of confinement, it may be that sectorization, outpatient

> clinics, or homecare originally supposed new freedoms; but despite that, they also take part in control mechanisms that do not pale in comparison with the most terrible forms of confinement. There is no room for fear or hope, all one can do is look for new weapons.
>
> (Deleuze, 1990: 278)

Historical forms of domination

Returning to the tripartite forms of historical domination:

a) The *sovereign societies* that pertain to our characterization – and the Lacanian one – of the classic master, operated with simple machines: levers, pulleys, cranks, screws, looms, wells, all operated by the arms and muscular force of man or beast. To what extent did those 'means of production' determine social organization or, alternatively, were determined by it? This is but an idle distinction: both components – one technical, the other political – are reciprocally required.
b) The same occurs with the modern, capitalist master who dominates in *disciplinary societies*. This type of society, centred on the factory, operates through machines propelled by steam and electricity. The producer ends up being integrated into an assembly line, his labour time paid by a wage complemented occasionally by bonuses for overtime or advances in productivity.
c) *Societies of control* act through servomechanisms of a third type: informatics and computerized machines that decide at each moment, and with no intervention by anyone's muscles or brains, what is to be produced, in what quantities and with what features, costs and prices. Data on the progress of business is then fed back into production and activities, through statistics, to regulate consumption and determine the benefits that accrue to shareholders and CEOs, those high-level executives who, in turn, regulate the operative processes of those machines to which they are also subjected. Meanwhile, the elaboration of consumer goods passes to a second plane and is often farmed out as manual labour to be carried out in 'underdeveloped' countries, seats of 'emerging markets' where the (now) archaic *disciplinary* procedures still operate. The creation of wealth no longer results from the labour-generated transformation of raw materials, as occurred in the two earlier forms of organization; rather, it proceeds through the out-sourcing of products that then enter from diverse regions dependent on decisions and dispositions taken in transnational power centres, impossible to localize, for later commercialization over the internet to consumers who no longer have the ability to touch or even lay their eyes on the goods they purchase, though they do expect their merchandise to be delivered to their front door conveniently assembled and untainted by contact with human hands. Likewise, services are bought and sold with the payments and profits being

deposited automatically in numbered accounts, or accomplished by means of plastic, virtual or immaterial money. This is an incessant process, one that knows no rest, no slumber of uncertainty; producer and client are 'typified', and production and supply go hand-in-hand: 'The fellow who bought this product [or who] requested this information, later also purchased this other product, or showed interest in these other data, etc., and you are invited (intimidated) to proceed in this same manner in this *manthill* that we call society' (Braunstein, 2012).

The discourse of the markets

What – or who – is controlled in this new social organization (*control society*), that pertains to our idea of a third kind of master, 'the discourse of the markets'? According to Deleuze, it is the individual, and it is important to understand that the means of control is that most traditional of all: the word, slogans, the passwords that each of us must recognize and put into action when asked to prove our 'identity'. Complete control will be achieved when all resistance to the passwords and orders is finally and completely annulled. The controlled object is not governed (as in *sovereign societies*), nor is the subject tricked into believing that it is they who governs through his representatives (as in *disciplinary* democratic societies); no, here it is the individual that is used, and this represents the essential difference between *disciplinary* and *societies of control*. A more widely-diffused form, model and example of introjected authority, that is in the process of becoming hegemonic, for example, consists of implanting electrodes in the brain to create cyborgs and permit behaviour to be influenced through 'remote control'. Regulation by external servomechanisms comes to constitute the essence of what might once have been called a 'man', subject or individual, who maintained an illusion of autonomy. With such a 'device' inserted into the body, or attached to it as an indispensable appendage, the need to govern through coercive police forces or psychological slogans becomes superfluous. Power is exercised by organizing the sequence of commands issued by cybernetic, self-regulated governors of behaviour that are incorporated into the very organism itself to trigger the required actions and operations.

In this novel regime – that of 'the discourse of the markets' – we witness an irreversible transformation of capitalism. It is no longer property (in land, factories or the institutional apparatus of the State), that is essential, nor even commodity production. No, now the decisive element is the vertiginous flow, the unceasing rotation, of services and of the people deployed to provide them; the continuous assessment and permanent displacement of suppliers and consumers; the sudden transfers of masses of producers and consumers that negotiate in blocks without consulting the opinion of those who are impacted by their operations. We are tempted to write 'the interested parties' and would do so were it not that the 'interest' in these transactions surpasses individuals, their singularities and their physical bodies, convinced as they are that all resistance is useless.

The enterprise has replaced the factory (Deleuze, 1990: 280), and institutions administering leisure time, the arts, political parties and religions each offer their services to an invisible, omnipresent organization devoted to bringing about changes compatible with constantly-renewed, but ever-obsolete, 'new' technologies. The culmination of this control process is now in sight, while its apparatuses of action – servomechanisms – become ever smaller (now 'nano') and cheaper: localizers that make it possible to instantly learn the location of an object in space, the movements that each individual makes while producing, consuming or idling, and relations with other objects of the same kind. In synthesis, nothing is new under the sun: just the panoptic imagined long ago by Bentham, fictionalized by Orwell and taken by Foucault as the focal point of his reflection on the fate of 'Western man'.

The discourse of psychoanalysis

Could the unconscious – that Freudian machine of dreaming with its primary poetic processes of metaphor and metonymy – be the final bastion of resistance in the face of control? This, and no other, is the meaning of our proposal that ends by establishing the following stark choice: *the discourse of the markets* or *the discourse of psychoanalysis*. As in all such dichotomous options, one eventually reaches a decisive point that is ethical. The discourse of the markets places itself totally at the service of the master and propels the complete unification of the world under its slogans, something that neither ancient Rome, the world's great religions nor industrial capitalism with its associated colonial regimes were ever able to achieve. Its mechanism of action has already been denounced: the bribe. The subject is offered a quota, a plus of pleasure, a certain participation in the process of dominating men, nature, the planet, outer space, through ever more efficient and prodigious servomechanisms that produce imaginary, though at times quite real, demonstrations of 'power' and 'potency' that reveal and make evident infantile fantasies while converting passivity – i.e. the condition of having been seduced, violated, castrated, beaten – into the opposite. This is an activity mediated by 'scientific' knowledge and its instruments that allow the machine operator to delight in the power of that 'apparatus' that violates natural laws because of its ubiquity, telekinesis, reparative correction of different forms of impotence and capacity to produce 'profits' generated through cost calculations.

Numbers and calculations, those universal referents that transcend linguistic communities and standardize the users that follow the code of procedures of technoscientific industry, seem to dominate all things. This activity is nothing more than the mechanization of Freud's 'secondary processes', the object of classical psychology. This explains the renewed interest in consciousness that characterizes the cognitive-behaviourist theories now so much in vogue, and faith in neurophysiological data of a hard science that might unravel the mysteries of what some alleged retrogrades still call the 'psyche', subjecting mental

processes to an eventual absolute management by means of chemical resources. The psychology of consciousness, however – and this is where the Freudian discovery must be vindicated – can explain, even control, the 'how' of those processes but not the 'what' with its subjective repercussions. James L. McGaugh (2003), one of the most competent and widely-recognized researchers in the area of human memory through the use of the techniques of contemporary biology, can say, most relevantly, that he concerns himself with 'the cerebral mechanisms that make remembering possible'; i.e. neither memory itself, nor memories (p. 1). The essence of memory, as any reader who goes to Proust's *In Search of Lost Time* knows, resides not in the event that is recalled, nor in 'cerebral processes', but in the composition of the memory, its more-or-less casual and capricious appearance, in its articulation with the phantasms of the subject and in the narrative that one constructs of that which is evoked in order to tell it to someone else. It is Proust's 'involuntary memory' and Freud's 'unconscious memory' hammered by repression and forgetting, intertwined with desire, rooted in the *jouissance* that is putting memory into words. Concretely, it is all that which escapes neurocognitive objectification and calculation.

Conclusion

We have been able to demonstrate, through an analysis of the analogies and differences between the discourses of the markets and of the analyst, that both discourses share the same formula. However, the discourse of the analyst deals with something more: the balance, supplement or remainder that the discourse of the markets cannot absorb without exploding. That which is 'left over', not reducible to calculation, the unconscious, is what makes producing dreams possible, what puts poetic procedures in action, what allows paintings to be painted, what composes musical works, and the *jouissance* that is born in the spectator, in the dreamer, in those who experience the unforeseeable in unexpected encounters of words and bodies.

To explore this modality of a discourse without antecedents, always new, it does not suffice to have servomechanisms connected in a network that makes each individual a 'terminal' programmed to receive and emit the data that keep the universal informatic order functioning, a 'predictable' subject for that system. The 'system' is not endowed with intelligence; it operates automatically and spontaneously with no intervention by the 'person', it never fails and, therefore, aspires to be recognized as 'artificial intelligence', that supreme achievement of universal history, embodiment of Absolute Knowledge. But another system is required, another 'dispositive', one that takes as its model that of the transferential situation of psychoanalysis, which, in turn, is based on another model: that of the sensorial suppression required to achieve sleep. This is when words are freed from the coaction that organizes the 'normal' discourse of existence, and that 'other scenario', of dreams, comes into view, that of theatrical space, of all artistic creation, christened by Winnicott 'transitional space'. This

is when clock time is suspended, when the discourse of the markets comes up against a barrier that it strives, at all costs, to commercialize. The limit of the markets appears in the form of the 'primary processes' that it attempts to transform into spectacle, and then sell following certain *marketing* strategies. The analytical dispositive is an equivalent of that 'other scenario'. There, the door of the analyst's office functions as a 'practicable' that leads the subject into the terrain of representation, re-presentation in the theatrical sense of the word. In the transferential situation, the analysand finds a space where he can put his personage into discourse. He is there, on the stage, though when the session comes to an end he exits the stage to walk through a door that opens onto another scenario, the one of his 'real' life, where he performs his role and may discover that his lines of dialogue and the orientation of his actions have been dictated by that invisible Other, the Pirandellian author in search of his actors. There is an alternation of *on/off line* that is the opposite of that plugging into, and unplugging from, which characterizes the subject trapped amid the chains of the *web*.

The counterpart of the alienating servomechanism, its other face, the antidote that denounces the fictions that constitute reality, is the *dispositive* invented by Freud. There, the analyst (his discourse) takes the place of the countenance that addresses itself to the subject and enjoins him to produce the new master signifiers, S_1, that will be the indicators of their absolute difference and will permit the necessary separation of the master signifiers imposed by the markets in their campaign to annul the subject and achieve the unifying massification of consumers bribed by Aladdin's lamps, those 'magical' creations of cybernetic engineering. In other words, the stark, forced choice is: either the dispositive (*Gestell*) of the global economy in this third stage of the discourse of the master, market discourse that leads to subjective de-differentiation; or the dispositive of psychoanalysis, opposed to that foreclosure of the subject that the technosciences of calculation promote.

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12

CAPITALISM AND THE ACT

From content to form and back again

Jason Glynos

The 'act' has been invoked by Lacanian scholars as a useful device with which to engage in social, political and ideological critique. Key advantages of taking the act as an analytical and critical category include the shift in perspective it often promotes away from the *content* of an intervention toward the *form* of an intervention. Moving the act centre stage has thus tended to encourage scholars to focus on the *modality* of a political intervention rather than the content of its programme or vision (when, for example, appeals are made to a substantive notion of communism) and the *shift* that a political intervention produces rather than the agent of the intervention (e.g. the working class). Slavoj Žižek is widely acknowledged to be at the forefront of endeavours to elevate the act as a key analytical and critical category, drawing explicitly on Lacanian psychoanalysis to elaborate its formal parameters. This 'turn to form', however, is also expressed in the work of a range of other scholars including Alain Badiou, Jacques Ranciere and Ernesto Laclau. Nevertheless, Žižek's work has come under some considerable critical scrutiny as part of a broader effort to develop a more robust and defensible understanding of the act. In this essay I touch on aspects of this debate focusing on the work of Žižek, assessing how this category has been, and can be, invoked to develop a critique of political economy generally and capitalism more specifically. I begin by sketching out the formal parameters of the act. I consider how this understanding of the act has been mobilized by Žižek in his critique of capitalism, before raising some concerns and suggesting ways these can be addressed. In particular, I point out how the very determination of an act as formally authentic relies on an insufficiently thematized appeal to a descriptive–normative content, comprising the context within which it intervenes. I argue that critics are right to be suspicious of the more spectacular renditions of the act and capitalism proffered by Žižek. Even so, there are also hints in his work of a more nuanced, albeit underdeveloped, sensibility, and from which one can draw important lessons for Lacanian discourse theory and analysis.

The act as critical device

The act can be understood, initially at least, in relation to the (Lacanian) real: the *real as impossible*. Qualifying the real as impossible already signals its distance

from the *reality* of everyday phenomenal experience. The real, in fact, is in an important sense *opposed* to reality: the real is that which is *impossible* to assimilate into the reality of everyday experience.[1] Yet, far from suggesting that the impossible cannot take place, Žižek insists that 'the impossible HAPPENS' (Žižek 2001a: 84).[2] According to Žižek, the act proper is understood to *enact* just such an impossibility.[3]

But what, more precisely, can it mean to 'enact the impossible'? In order to better grasp what is at stake in the act, it is helpful to turn to the concept of 'fantasy' and the fantasmatic object in particular. From this point of view, we can say that for an act to succeed it must, in some way, strike at, or at least touch, the fantasmatic object *qua* real.

This fantasmatic object is 'impossible' in the sense that only its primal repression, its exclusion, materializes the full range of possibilities presented to us in any given socio-symbolic order. From the perspective of the socio-symbolic order, from the perspective of 'reality', the fantasmatic object can only appear as an impossibility. Folding the object into reality could only signal the imminence of a catastrophic event or a kind of suicide, a symbolic suicide. From this angle, then, any process involving a truly radical critique of the socio-political order would be perceived as making an impossible, even terroristic, demand.

A key aspect blocking efforts to seriously and critically engage with the norms governing current regimes of practice is what Lacan calls *jouissance* – an enjoyment structured by the excluded fantasmatic object-cause of desire. The social subject procures *jouissance* by keeping this object repressed, and thus at a distance from our officially sanctioned discourse. Therefore, the ethical, or authentic, act must aim to reveal the fantasmatic object-cause of desire in a way that drains the enjoyment it makes possible. The ultimate political or critical-ideological aim should be to 'search for ways to sap the force of this underlying fantasy frame itself – in short, to perform something akin to the Lacanian "going-through the fantasy"' (Žižek 1993: 213). The (social) subject, therefore, bears an unusual relation to the act because the fantasmatic object, in a precise sense, is foreign to the subject. As it strikes the 'impossible' object, the act coincides with it and thus appears alien to the (conscious) subject:

> [T]he authentic act that I accomplish is always by definition a foreign body, an intruder which simultaneously attracts/fascinates and repels me, so that if and when I come too close to it, this leads to my *aphanisis*, self-erasure . . . The paradox of the act thus lies in the fact that although it is not 'intentional' in the usual sense of the term of consciously willing it, it is nevertheless accepted as something for which its agent is fully responsible . . . Within the horizon of what precedes the act, the act always and by definition appears as a change 'from Bad to Worse' (the usual criticism of conservatives against revolutionaries: yes, the situation is bad, but your solution is even worse). The proper heroism of the act is fully to assume this Worse. This means that there is nonetheless

> something inherently 'terroristic' in every authentic act, in its gesture of thoroughly redefining the 'rules of the game', inclusive of the very basic self-identity of its perpetrator—a proper political act unleashes the force of negativity that shatters the very foundations of our being [as a subject of desire] . . . [T]he horrible experience of the Stalinist political terror should not lead us into abandoning the principle of terror itself—one should search even more stringently for the 'good terror'.
>
> (Žižek 2000a: 374–78)

The act, therefore, 'always involves a radical risk . . . it is a step into the open, with no guarantee about the final outcome' (Žižek 2002a: 152). This is not because of the supposed complexity of a situation, our inability to accurately predict the consequences of an intervention, but because 'an act retroactively changes the very co-ordinates into which it intervenes' (Žižek 2002a: 152) and so retroactively also creates (or fails to create) the conditions of its legitimation. It is for this reason that the same gesture can come to be seen as a genuine act or as a 'ridiculous empty posture', depending on whether and how the socio-symbolic co-ordinates have changed in the wake of the act itself (Žižek 2002a: 153).

Will Julian Assange's gesture of releasing information via WikiLeaks provoke terror and panic in the establishment? Will it be seen as a heroic act or as a well-meaning but naïve attempt to tell 'the truth', the effect of which is to endanger many innocent lives in the process? Or, to take a UK-based example, will [UK Labour Party leader] Ed Miliband's calls to review the norms and ownership patterns of the national media landscape come to be seen as just another instance of cynical posturing typical of opposition parties, or will it be seen as a suicidal-cum-heroic act?

We can further clarify the parameters of the act by noting its double subjective–objective dimensionality. On the one hand the subject must act in such a way as to suspend his or her faith that the socio-symbolic order is supported by a guarantor (God, Reason, History, Crown, Benevolent Elite, etc.). On the other hand, the coordinates of the socio-symbolic order undergo a significant shift. As Žižek puts it, the authentic act 'designates an intervention that changes the very coordinates of the reality principle'. An act 'is not only a gesture that does the impossible but an intervention into social reality that changes the very coordinates of what is perceived to be possible; it is not simply beyond the good, it redefines what counts as good' (Žižek 2000b: 671–72).

Two dimensions define the character of an act therefore. The objective dimension suggests that the act *shifts* the coordinates of the socio-symbolic regime: the act redefines what *counts* as reality in its descriptive and normative senses. The subjective dimension, on the other hand, suggests that the motivation of the act is ethical: the act is not motivated by pathological considerations. Among other things, this means too that such a motivation is not 'a matter of strategic deliberation' (2001b: 162) because such deliberation relies on a continuity of norms across time that the act interrupts. This does not mean, of course, that strategic

considerations are irrelevant, only that the subjective dimension of the act is not reducible to such considerations. The subjective *mode* of intervention, then, involves suspending our fantasmatic investment in the guarantor supporting the socio-symbolic order. Moreover, Žižek suggests that these two dimensions overlap in an authentic act: 'the inner and the outer, inner intention and external consequences, coincide, they are two sides of the same coin' (2000: 673).

The act and the critique of political economy

What is striking about this account of the act is the absence of any reference to content, whether fantasmatic content or the content of a specific regime. Whether one looks at it from the point of view of subjectivity or objectivity, it is the formal aspects of the act that are emphasized: the *modality* of the act, or the *shift* in the matrix of norms the act produces. The benefits of a formal account of the act can be appreciated by considering how Žižek invokes this category in the service of his critique of political economy. One advantage of focusing on the formal aspects of the act is that it does not require the *a priori* specification of the 'true' agent of revolution. What matters is not so much the 'who' of the act, as that there is a *shift* from one regime to another, a reconfiguration of the socio-symbolic order. Of course this does not necessarily obviate what we could dub the 'Martianization temptation' (Laclau 2006). Certainly there are occasions when Žižek appears to succumb to this temptation, for example in elevating the slumdwellers of third world nations into privileged revolutionary agents (Ozselcuk and Madra 2007: 100). But there is also evidence of a reluctance to move too quickly to such an identification (Žižek 2006: 268; 2008: 424–28).

Another advantage of focusing on the formal aspects of the act is that one need not presuppose a utopian telos, or the blue-print of an alternative to capitalism. Communism, understood formally, contrasts sharply with substantive conceptualizations of communism as 'the light at the end of the tunnel, that is, the happy final outcome of a long and arduous struggle' (Žižek 2009: 149). Instead, communism is better seen as 'the name of a problem: a name for the difficult task of breaking out of the confines of the market-and state framework, a task for which no quick formula is at hand' (Žižek 2009: 129). In emphasizing this formal aspect of the act, Žižek (p. 149) insists that its aim is

> not so much to unleash a new movement, as to *interrupt* the present predominant movement. An act of 'divine violence' would then mean pulling the emergency cord on the train of Historical Progress. In other words, one has to learn fully to accept that there is no big Other,

a view that resonates with Marx and Engels' understanding of communism:

> Communism is for us not a *state of affairs* which is to be established, an *ideal* to which reality [will] have to adjust itself. We call communism

> the *real* movement which abolishes the present state of things. The conditions of this movement result from the premises now in existence.
>
> (Marx and Engels 1845–46: 162)

But whether we focus on an (objective) shift or a (subjective) suspension of fantasmatic investment, it is crucial to note how these formal aspects acquire their sense and significance only against the backdrop of our characterization of the present regime, in this case the capitalist regime.

How then does Žižek approach capitalism? One oft-repeated claim is that its 'elementary feature . . . consists of its inherent structural imbalance, its innermost antagonistic character: the constant crisis, the constant revolutionizing of its conditions of existence' (Žižek 1993: 209). Elsewhere, he asserts that 'the limit of capitalism is Capital itself' (Žižek 1999: 358). Moreover, for Žižek, capitalism is beyond meaning, in the sense that it

> is the first socio-economic order which *de-totalizes meaning*: it is not global at the level of meaning (there is no global "capitalist world view:" no "capitalist civilization" proper; the fundamental lesson of globalization is precisely that capitalism can accommodate itself to all civilizations, from Christian to Hindu and Buddhist). Capitalism's global dimension can be formulated only at the level of truth-without-meaning, as the "Real" of the global market mechanism.
>
> (Žižek 2009: 25)

It is for this reason that

> the self-propelling circulation of Capital . . . remains more than ever the ultimate Real of our lives, a beast that by definition cannot be controlled, since it itself controls our activity, blinding us to even the most obvious dangers we are courting.
>
> (Žižek 2009: 37)

Capitalism is thus characterized as a force beyond our control. It is also characterized as totalizing in its nature, scope and reach, making it possible to speak about 'the global capitalist system *as such*' (Žižek 2009: 19). Characterizing capitalism in these terms generates the following question for Žižek: 'what is the "flaw" in the system *as such* that opens up the possibility for such crises and collapses?' (Žižek 2009: 19). Totalizing and abstract conceptualizations of capitalism thus point to equally totalizing and abstract questions: 'How . . . are we to revolutionize an order whose very principle is constant self-revolutionizing?' (Žižek 2009: 129).

Such totalizing renditions of capitalism and acts of intervention lead Žižek to oscillate wildly between pessimistic assessments about the prospects of social change on the one hand, and calls for spectacular acts that would bring about a revolution on the other. For example, Žižek suggests that it may not be possible to

undermine the global capitalist system, 'at least not in the foreseeable future' (Žižek 1999: 352). He nonetheless suggests that the current capitalist hegemony promotes a certain kind of subject, the subject of desire, whose fantasies sustain this hegemony. An ethical act, therefore, *is* possible so long as it effects a kind of 'crossing of the social fantasy' to expose the unquestioned 'treasure' of the dominant politico-economic discourse. Since '*the depoliticized economy is the disavowed "fundamental fantasy" of postmodern politics*', in today's global society, 'a properly political act would necessarily entail the *re*politicization of the economy: within a given situation, a gesture counts as an [ethical] *act* only in so far as it disturbs ("traverses") its fundamental fantasy' (Žižek 2000a: 355). Demanding negative growth and a higher quality of living would constitute such an act, according to Žižek, in a context where ideals of continued (and aspired) economic growth predominate (Žižek 2004: 74). Such an 'impossible' demand would no doubt provoke mixed responses of terror and patronizing finger-wagging, yet the wager is that, if 'well-said' (as Lacan puts it), such a demand might expose and destabilize the fantasies propping up such ideals and associated practices, including of course the enjoyment they make possible. To a large extent, whether such demands succeed in effecting a kind of 'crossing of the fantasy' or whether they are dismissed as ridiculous empty posturing will be a function of tactics and the relevant conjunctural events alongside which such demands appear.

In my view this oscillation between pessimism on the one hand, and calls to spectacular revolutionary acts on the other, is not so much a product of affirming the formal parameters of the act, as they are a product of the way the capitalist regime is characterized. This implies that the judgment about whether the *formal* criteria of the act have been satisfied is contingent on the characterization, and thus *content*, of the regime or practice into which the act intervenes. The more homogeneous and reified this characterization, the more pessimistic and revolutionary the response.

Žižek invests the productive forces of capital with a relentless 'drive', a 'hardness' that cannot but augur pessimism. Capitalism, insofar as its essence is located at the site of production (as opposed to consumption, for example), is conceptualized in overly monolithic terms. Perhaps the problem, then, is that Žižek tends to locate subjectivity outside the moment of production in the circuit of capital. Hardt and Negri, for instance, suggest that such analyses 'will not be sufficient . . . because in the end they stop at the threshold of the analysis of subjectivity and concentrate rather on the contradictions of capital's own development'. In their view, '[h]istory has a logic only when subjectivity rules it, only when . . . the emergence of subjectivity reconfigures efficient causes and final causes in the development of history' (Hardt and Negri 2000: 235).

Hardt and Negri's line of reasoning may lead, then, to a more nuanced and less 'spectacular' approach that demands more detailed analysis and that does not necessarily call for 'radical breaks' of historic proportions.[4] For an act to be properly evaluated as an authentic act requires some reference to the context within which it intervenes. The paradox is that the determination of an act as *formally* authentic

(or inauthentic) presupposes that we have also ascertained the *content* of the regime or practice, particularly those norms we deem worthy of contestation. Without this as our elementary starting point, one can establish neither a *shift* from one socio-symbolic configuration to another, nor the *suspension of our investment* in the regime's fantasmatic support. How to characterize the political economic regime thus becomes a primary task in a Lacanian Discourse Analysis.

Characterizing capitalism: from homogeneity to heterogeneity

Critics are right to highlight the dangers of Žižek's 'irrational exuberance' *vis-à-vis* the formal purity of the revolutionary act (Marchart 2007; Johnston 2004, 2007; Laclau 2006; Stavrakakis 2010, 2011; Pluth 2007; McGowan 2010). What our analysis reveals is that this 'problem' has less to do with the formal purity he attributes to the act than with ignoring how our determination of the act as 'pure' or 'formal' relies on our characterization of the context into which the act intervenes and against which that formal purity gains its sense and significance.

Whether an act is qualified as authentic or not depends, then, on our characterization of the regime within which it intervenes. Without such detailed and patient work, the danger is that the judgment that an act is authentic will strike one as arbitrary and unconvincing.[5] No sooner do we frame the task in this way, however, than one finds in Žižek's writing another image of capitalism that appears more nuanced than the one painted previously. Just as Žižek insists that the idea of communism should not come with a fixed content, so too do we find evidence in his work that the idea of capitalism is not as homogeneous as some of his comments suggest. Not only is communism constitutively 'impure', so too is capitalism:

> The only *true* question today is: do we endorse the predominant naturalization of capitalism, or does today's global capitalism contain antagonisms which are sufficiently strong to prevent its indefinite reproduction? There are four such antagonisms: the looming threat of an *ecological* catastrophe; the inappropriateness of the notion of *private property* in relation to so-called 'intellectual property'; the socio-ethical implications of *new techno-scientific developments* (especially in biogenetics); and, last but not least, the creation of *new forms of apartheid*, new Walls and slums.
>
> (Žižek 2009: 90–91)

The identification and characterization of these 'logics' and 'counter-logics' implies that the resources for counter-movements and alternative normative visions reside in the interstices of the capitalist regime itself: 'it is not enough simply to remain faithful to the communist Idea; one has to locate within historical reality antagonisms which give this Idea a practical urgency' (Žižek 2009: 90). This means abandoning the abstract and homogeneous conceptualization of

capitalism (and the more spectacular conceptualization of the act this implies) in favour of a more nuanced version. However, just as the notion of a homogeneous capitalism can be deconstructed, so too can the notion of a montolithic state. If capitalism is not to be embraced or rejected in *toto*, so too the state need be neither embraced nor rejected *tout court*, but rather transformed in such a way as to promote 'new forms of popular participation', for example (Žižek 2009: 131). Greater attention to heterogeneity and its potentialities resonates also with the recent call by Yannis Stavrakakis that

> the Lacananian Left needs . . . to move in the direction of articulating an alternative conception of the act, one which may link Lacan's insights . . . with a radical democratic project, able to promote the idea of a continuous *re-enacting* of the act as well as to imagine and construct a . . . space where such *re-enacting* becomes possible here and now.
>
> (Stavrakakis 2010: 8)

This, then, suggests that the success of a revolutionary transformation 'should not be measured by the sublime awe of its ecstatic moments', but by the resilience of the changes to be found 'at the level of the everyday' (Žižek 2009: 154).

So a more nuanced approach to the act implies that we take on board a heterogeneous theorization of capital and the state, treating them as regimes whose interstices also harbour radicalizing potential. More generally, we can point to Žižek's claim that the act 'is always situated in a concrete context' and that 'the same gesture can be an act or a ridiculous empty posture, depending on this context' (Žižek 2002a: 152). This implies we cannot avoid the task of characterization and the detailed theoretical and empirical analysis this presupposes: 'Will the financial meltdown be a sobering moment, then, the awakening from a dream? It all depends on how it comes to be symbolized, on what ideological interpretation or story imposes itself and determines the general perception of the crisis' (Žižek 2009: 17). Alternatively, consider Žižek's description of the act in terms of a formal 'interruption'. The aim of such an act, if we recall, was 'not so much to unleash a new movement, as to *interrupt* the present predominant movement' (Žižek 2009: 149). However, qualifying an act as 'interruptive' presupposes we have characterized this 'predominant movement' in a persuasive way. Identifying the relevant fantasmatically-excluded narratives also presupposes our characterization of the practices that dominate our everyday experiences and interactions.

The critical and political significance of an act can thus be understood with reference to what Žižek calls the 'material force of ideology' (Žižek 2009: 34, 37), which can, in turn, be linked to the psychoanalytic category of enjoyment – more specifically, enjoyment as structured in fantasy. In order to understand the force and resilience of a practice or narrative one must probe and elucidate its fantasmatic underside. However, in order to ascertain this with any sense of confidence, one must also engage in detailed analysis to see how these fantasies sustain the *status quo*; hence the need to pay attention to two sorts of contexts

(or 'contents') in order to get a handle on the act construed as a critical device: the regime itself and its fantasmatic underside.

Lacanian Discourse Analysis demands detailed analysis in characterizing a regime, in particular those norms and logics worthy of public contestation. Such norms become key reference points in identifying the parameters of the fantasmatic narratives supporting the dominant logics of a practice.[6] It is in relation to this fantasmatic underside that we can then judge whether an act meets our formal criteria of authenticity. This whole process highlights the centrality for Lacanian Discourse Analysis of processes of characterization, judgement, theoretical and empirical analysis and persuasion. It also shows why it is impossible to avoid engaging normatively in this process of characterization, whether by conjuring interim futures (cf. Connolly 2008: 93–95) or by bringing relevant normative political theories to bear.

In conclusion, consider briefly Žižek's claim that '[i]n "postmodern" capitalism, the market has *invaded* new spheres which were hitherto considered the privileged domain of the state, from education to prisons and law and order . . . [N]ew domains, hitherto excluded from the market, are now commodified' (Žižek 2009: 144). The choice of the term 'invaded' (rather than, say, 'liberated') involves a judgment and normative position that is not explicitly thematized nor defended. Žižek assumes the reader accepts that there is something troubling about the fact, for example, that 'we no longer talk to a friend but pay a psychiatrist or counselor to take care of the problem; [or that] children are increasingly cared for not by parents but by paid nurseries or child-minders, and so on' (Žižek 2009: 144). He does not thematize or defend the notions of human flourishing informing these worries. The problem is not that there is an implicit (or explicit) normative theory at play here. The problem, rather, is that the work being done by this background normative framework is not sufficiently acknowledged in the characterization process. It is this background framework, however underdeveloped, that delimits our visual frame and serves as the (implicit) reference point when we come to identify the relevant fantasmatic narratives supporting the regime and thus form a judgement as to the authenticity of an act. It is not just a case of accusing Žižek of a kind of 'cryptonormativism'. It is to miss the potential analytical and critical potential of thematizing and engaging with these normative worries.

Conclusion

Seeing regimes as heterogeneous entities promotes a more nuanced and complex understanding of practices, alerting Lacanian discourse analysts to their 'combined and uneven' character. Such regimes comprise a range of social logics and counter-logics exercising different degrees of domination. Capitalism, for example, is seen less as an inert entity governed by an iron law or drive and more as an assemblage of logics that are 'performed' at different sites and moments with different inflections, mixing and jostling with other social logics and counter-logics. This has important consequences from a

Lacanian point of view, since it enables us to multiply the entry points for psychoanalytic understanding and critical explanation. It means, for example, that subjectivity, fantasy and the act can be understood in less pessimistic and spectacular terms not only from the point of view of consumption as Žižek is sometimes prone to suggest, but also – and importantly – in relation to other moments in the circuit of capital, such as production, appropriation, distribution and exchange.[7]

Notes

1 One could say that if it is experienced, its modalities range from moments of meaningless horror or ecstasy to a perhaps more modest nagging background 'noise' that tends not to receive the full attention of consciousness.

2 By linking the act 'proper' to the real *qua* impossible, Žižek distinguishes this act from a series of other acts: the hysterical acting out and the psychotic *passage a l'acte* (Žižek 2001a: 84–85; for an overview of Lacan's typology of acts, see also Evans 1996: 1–3, 136–37). Nevertheless, there are other times when affirming these boundaries appears less central in establishing the parameters of the act. In any case it is also worth keeping in mind how the very conceptualization of the act does not remain static during the course of Lacan's teachings (see, for example, Johnston 2007).

3 Actual and potential 'acts' considered by Žižek include Clinton's proposed Health Bill in 1993, largely because it flew in the face of the predominant ideal of a small state (Butler *et al*. 2000: 123), and Lenin's Bolshevik revolution, largely because it ran roughshod over Marxism's fundamental stagist precept. Other (potential and successfully enacted) acts and associated figures cited by Žižek include Mary Kay Letourneau (Žižek 1999: 381–88); Pope John Paul II (Žižek 2000b: 676–77); Antigone and Sygne de Coufontaine; the Slovenian avant-garde punk-rock group Laibach; Hugo Chavez (Žižek 2009: 102); the arrest of Pinochet in the UK (2001b: 169) and the arrest of Kissinger under similar conditions had this materialized (2002b: 265); the 1993 Khomeini revolution (Žižek 2009: 123–24) and the 1791–1804 Haitian revolution (Žižek 2009: 124). For discussion of some of these illustrations, as well as others, see Glynos 2003: 199–203; Stavrakakis 2011: 5–10; McGowan 2010: 11–18; Marchart 2007; Parker 2007.

4 It is worth noting here, however, that there is also the risk in Hardt and Negri's work of a kind of radical immanence that tends to underplay the hegemonic work that political and social transformation calls for (see Laclau 2001).

5 Consider, in this respect, Žižek's view of John Paul II as an authentic ethical figure:

> Even those who respect the pope's moral stance usually accompany this admiration with the qualification that he nonetheless remains hopelessly old-fashioned, medieval even, sticking to old dogmas, out of touch with the demands of new times. How can one today ignore contraception, divorce, abortion? Are these not simply facts of our life? How can the pope deny the right to abortion even to a nun who got pregnant through rape (as he effectively did in the case of the raped nuns during the war in Bosnia)? . . . [T]he pope reminds us that there *is* a price to pay for a proper ethical attitude. It is his very stubborn clinging to old values, his discounting of the realistic demands of our time even when the arguments against his stand seem obvious (as in the case of the raped nun), that makes him an authentic ethical figure (Žižek 2000b: 676–77).

The less the space devoted to specifying the dominant norms of the relevant regime, to engaging with their normatively problematic character or to elaborating the relevant fantasmatic narratives supporting the regime, the more arbitrary and less persuasive the argument appears.

6 See Glynos and Howarth (2007) for an account of 'logics' that can contribute to processes of characterization and critical explanation.

7 See also Gibson-Graham 2006; Resnick and Wolff 1987; Ozselcuk and Madra 2007.

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13

JACQUES LACAN, FROM THE EVENT TO THE OCCURRENCE OF TRUTH

Rosario Herrera Guido

My purpose in this chapter is to show that in the psychoanalytic experience, conceived as poetics and not as technique, we should not speak of event (which pertains to the field of duration, the imaginary time of being) but, rather, of *occurrence* (which concerns the instant of the unconscious). It is only beyond the subject of the unconscious that we can accede to the object; and, due to the lack of a signifier that designates the being of the subject in the symbolic order, there is only negativity, where the subject can affirm the object (*Il-y-a*) through the Heideggerian act of *Ereignis*, which I translate as occurrence: occurrence of the object *a*, as creation (*poíesis*) of the truth of the subject. We will share these three moments in the company of Freud, Lacan, Bergson, Kierkegaard and Heidegger.

From the duration of being to the instant of the unconscious

Allow me to posit a working hypothesis: to show the difference between event and occurrence on the basis of two distinct conceptions of time; that is, Henri Bergson's duration, and Sören Kierkegaard's instant. Bergson conceives of life as something that springs forth and develops from a single impulse (*élan vital*) with no discontinuities; the time of being as Freud's imaginary instance, which divides time into past, present and future, with no divisions (Bergson, 1908: 532). For Kierkegaard, 'The instant is an atom of eternity' (Kierkegaard, 1838–55/1972: 152). This difference allows one to posit that 'event' pertains to duration, while occurrence pertains to instant (the time of the unconscious and the analytic act, with its ethical burden of responsibility that makes history, in the future perfect tense: *it will have been*, resignifying the past from the present).

At various points in his work, Freud emphasizes the absence of time in the unconscious, thus stressing the latter's atemporality based on the psychic fixation of impressions that are preserved as they are received later, making it possible to re-establish memory. The unconscious experiences processes that

are not ordered in conformity with time and undergo no changes, as only the preconscious system is related to time. Freud denies that time and space are forms required, *a priori*, for understanding (as Kant argues), because unconscious processes cannot represent time. Later, Freud also states that the link to time is given to being through perception, which does permit the representation of time, because ego synthesizes its contents, a function that Id lacks.

Duration – according to Kierkegaard – divides time into present, past and future, but it is impossible to localize a fixed point in the succession of time; no one moment is present, past or future. There is a division of time, Freud adduces, that pertains to the work of synthesis of the ego, an imaginary, spatial time that is gained, spent or lost, in which succession itself is paralyzed. It is an empty present, a caricature of the eternal. In contrast, in the instant, time and eternity touch. Only the instant is a flash of light that illuminates that atom of eternity of which Kierkegaard speaks. An atom of the real that evokes the object *a, plus de jouir*, cause of desire, that falls when the word is cut, as a synthesis of the temporal and the eternal. In his *The Intuition of the Instant*, Bachelard encounters Kierkegaard when he observes that time has only one reality: the instant. The instant is tragic loneliness, that realizes an act that overflows creation by breaking with the past (Bachelard, 1932/1980). Gérard Pommier also warns:

> The vein that Kierkegaard offers in the compilation *The Instant* still deserves some attention. The instant interests us in its relation to the analytic act. It concerns the precise moment of the discovery of a knowledge, of the chiasma with the truth. The instant evokes the act . . . With reference to the analytic act, the instant is not ephemeral; it means the moment at which a subject apprehends what he has always known of his unconscious knowledge . . . That instant is ethical . . . The instant, the encounter, is that eternity that brings itself up-to-date. The spark, the point of the Real of a moment at which you can know . . . that the fig tree of Jesus' parable loses its miraculous veneer: you can know something of your presence in the world, can be born into the world right then, regardless of the circumstances, or even contrary to them . . . For this is the fruit it is worthwhile gathering; the fruit that is not holds the key to existence in the world.
>
> (Pommier, 1987: 143–144)

Lacan's starting point is his concept of logical time, with the retroaction and anticipation of time, one that questions the apparent lack of temporality and eternity of logic by showing that there are logical calculations that require a temporality beyond the clock, a product of logical articulations. Logical time is not objective, but nor is it pure subjective sentiment; rather, it is a dialectical structure formulated in mathematical terms. The structure of logical time, based on the sophism of the three prisoners, possesses three moments: 1) the moment of the gaze; 2) the time for understanding and 3) the moment of conclusion.

These three moments are not constructed as objective chronometric units, but by an intersubjective logic based on a tension between awaiting and precipitating, hesitation and urgency, an intersubjective time that structures the human act. This is a time that has consequences for clinical psychoanalysis: the variable duration with the scansion (the poetic style of the signifying chain). This is logical time with which Lacan anticipates his incursions into the linguistics of Ferdinand de Saussure, based on the difference between the diachrony and synchrony of language. Time is a stable synchronic structure, not a fleeting diachronic moment. This synchronic or atemporal structure leads him to affirm, like Freud, the inexistence of time in the unconscious. Later, Lacan suggests that the unconscious is a temporal movement of opening and closing (*aletheia*, in conjunction–disjunction with half-truth). But time can also act inversely, through retraction and anticipation, which generates the French expression *après coup* (retroactive, *a posteriori*). To translate the term *Nachträglichkeit* used by Freud, which the *Standard Edition* states as 'deferred action', is to express the notion that current events *a posteriori* affect past ones, since the past is a series of memories that are re-elaborated and re-interpreted in the light of present experience. Hence, the goal of analysis is the *complete reconstitution of the subject's history*, not the real sequence of past events, but the present synthesis of the past: history is the past historicized in the present. Discourse is structured as retroaction: it is not until the final word is uttered that the first ones acquire meaning. Lacan also writes that when Freud states that 'the unconscious is located outside time':

> It is true and it isn't. It is located outside time exactly like the concept, because it is in itself time, the pure time of the thing, and as such it can reproduce the thing within a certain modulation, whose material support can be anything.
>
> (Lacan, 1975/1991: 243)

This evokes the logic of Hegel: the concept is the time of the thing, and also the synthesis of identity in the difference that flows in Heraclitus' river. If the concept is the time of the thing, time is real. Hegelian logic – according to Jean Hyppolite – conceives of the concept in its materiality. For Lacan, however, the concept is not the thing, but its substitution by the signifier. If the thing is there, it is thanks to the concept, identity in difference: the relation of the thing to the concept makes the thing into a thing and renders the fact symbolized. Lacan elucidates: between the sun, which illuminates the universe of appearances, and a circle, there is an abysmal distance, for the sun as a circle has no worth, for the value of the circle lies in the fact that the symbol organizes the world of symbols.

Discourse is subjected to a lineal, temporal order because the signifiers must go one after another, through their displacement (*Verschiebung*), in a metonymic, diachronic, syntagmatic fugue. But when the subject stutters in its utterance, this atemporal dimension of which Freud and Lacan speak

emerges; the slope of condensation (*Verdichtung*), metaphorical, synchronic and paradigmatic.

Beyond clocks, the instant cuts the signifying chain, cuts the word. Because the signifier is of the order of the cut, where the subject vanishes it leaves a gap, a missing signifier, where the object as cause of desire (*a*) falls. The instant tears linear time when discourse stumbles or is cut, introducing occurrence, analytic act and blessing the (mis)speaking, unconscious utterance, advent of the truth of the desire of the analysand, who makes an act: creates a new signifier that forges a social bond.

Bergson opposes the philosophy of the instant: the intimate and direct experience of duration, as an immediate datum of conscience that depends on one single vital drive, making of the instant a nothing incapable even of separating past from future: duration joins past and future so as to be able to apprehend time as an indestructible unit in which the end is in the beginning, being and its becoming in the first drive.

With this in mind, how then do we explain the act? Only the instant is the doctrine of the beginning, the creating act in discontinuity. While the Bergsonian thesis is a philosophy of action, of occurrence, Kierkegaard's is of the act, an instantaneous decision like that of the sophism of the three prisoners: liberty or death! The act is instantaneous because only the instantaneous is current. The instant brings repetition, anachronism, resumption. Duration, to the extent of memory and interminable family sagas, supposes that the objective of analysis is the coherence of the subject's history, to defend himself against the unconscious, which is an unknowing that is absent from the subject's conscious disposition.

Despite the virtues that Bergson attributes to duration, its indestructible unity is the most fleeting of experiences. With Kierkegaard and Bachelard, I assume that the eternal is an aspect of the instant, for the time of the unconscious and the analytic act are made to the measure of the instant, which introduces discontinuity by fracturing duration. The analytic instant makes it possible to enter with eternity ahead, with the past that returns as present: *That which you have desired, you may know*.

It is the uncertainty before the impossibility of saying that produces the function of time, the instant of making (oneself) a being. The instant, the cut to make one being, is ethical and aesthetic, a desire and a creative act. Lacan (1978/1981) is suggestive in this respect:

> I remind you that in 1882, in a letter sent to his fiancée, Freud had already pointed out that which appears in dreams was not so much the grand concerns of the day, but themes begun and later interrupted; when you are interrupted.
>
> (09/03/55: 182)

Freud's interrupted conversation with his friend Otto creates *The Dream of Irma's Injection*. The cut in the signifying chain facilitates desire, and the

scansion confronts the subject with the truth of his or her desire. The instant in which the occurrence of the analytic act takes place comes to put limits on the subject's unending slide in the signifying chain, which keeps him or her in the inconsistency of language and doubt. Because of the occurrence that is produced in the instant, it can be affirmed that being is not said, it is done; like birth, with which *poiesis* has long been identified: the cause that makes that which has not come to be.

Tekne-poiesis, from event to the occurrence of truth

Here it is indispensable to begin with Heidegger and the original sense of the Greek *tekne* as *poiesis*, that ever since Socrates, in *The Banquet*, has denoted the vastest dimension of creation:

> the concept of 'creation' is something very broad because, without doubt, everything that is the cause of something, whatever it may be, [that] passes from non-being into being is 'creation', hence all the activities that enter into the sphere of all the arts are creations and their artisans, creators or poets . . . From the total concept of creation one part has been cloven, that relative to music and metric art . . . 'Poetry', in effect, is the name given only to the latter, and those that possess that portion of 'creation', 'poets'.
>
> (Plato, 1974a: 585–586)

This concept takes us to Heidegger's query as to *the essence of technique*, as a means of acceding to the Greek *tekne*: 'we will never experience our relation with the essence of technique as long as we limit ourselves to representing only the technical, and fostering it, while resigning ourselves to technique or evading it' (Heidegger, 1953: 9).

Heidegger, however, writes, 'nor is the essence of technique in any way something technical' (Heidegger, 1953: 9). There is an ontological affirmation here, the essence of technique as revealing of being. The anthropological–instrumental consideration is correct with respect to the technical phenomenon – Heidegger affirms – but it cannot reach truth, nor is it able to perceive what it is that makes it be, its productive cause: *poiesis*.

True, there is nothing more frightening than man, not only because of his power over nature, but also due to the mystery of his violence: both the violence he wreaks and because he is violated by power. Heidegger calls this violence *Ereignis* (which I translate as occurrence), distinct from *Ereignet* (event), to propose the signifier – *(a)cae(ser)*[1] – of ontological truth, which appropriates man and being through their radical (co)pertinence. The signifier *(a)cae(ser)* allows me to return to the Greek *poiesis* as 'the cause that makes that which is not, to be', to think from Lacan of the fall of the object *a* (object cause of desire, lost object), in the Latin sense of cause, *causus*, that which falls.

Thus it is possible to propose a working hypothesis: the essence of psychoanalytic technique is the manner in which we make use of this *(a)cae(ser)*, as *tekne-poiesis, to know how to do* with the subjective tearing, due to the exile of *jouissance* that the law of culture imposes, after prohibiting incest. A *poiesis* of psychoanalysis, as occurrence, is to bring the truth of the subject's desire from non-presence to presence, the *aletheia* of psychoanalysis, that illuminates being, brings it to light, causing it to be born.

Between the essence of psychoanalytic technique and psychoanalytic technique there lies a radical difference in (pro)duction; for psychoanalytic technique reaches the technical subject that is reproduced, objectified in process, system and way of doing, including bureaucratization and the *standard*, in order to psychoanalyze like Freud, Klein, Lacan or the analyst themself. Psychoanalytic technique as a device is based on the assumption of the 'analyst's' power over the analysand's unconscious. This is where the mystery of violence (*Ereignis*) enters, the disquieting power (*Un-heimliche*) that places the patient in distress, saturating him with univocal interpretations that by easing primordial repression (*Überverdrängung*) from its sinister unshrouding situates the analysand in the anteroom of psychosis. For instead of (ins)cribing *poiesis* in *physis*, the latter is placed and displaced by technique, exposing the subject to the dominion of the lord or master.

Psychoanalytic technique also generates the ontological relation claimant–volunteer, what Heidegger calls *Ge-stell*, the connector, device, calculating thought, *the structure of emplacement* (Heidegger, 1953: 21), the diverse modes of technical placement: dis-pose, ex-pose, com-pose, im-pose, etc. This is a technique that one must overcome because the *tekne-poiesis* of psychoanalysis strives to do just the opposite: depose the analyst, which entails the fall of the subject's assumption or knowing. All modes of situating constitute a system of adjustments.

Technique endows the device with an objectivist, compulsive sense – as Karl Otto Apel notes – because when the human being adapts the world to ontologically-conceived science, the former is adjusted in its self-understanding by the latter (Apel, 1973/1985: 126). The being is devoured by the device. As destiny (*Geshick*), technique is not an instrumental action at the service of the human being, for in it they find themselves dis-posed, which complicates their liberty; only one who is open, who can grasp the subject torn by the signifier, can be reached by destiny, the subject of the unconscious.

Technique is the abandonment of being. It is not an action on something, for it suffers a destiny (*Ge-shick*) that escapes from its grasp. To paraphrase Herbert Marcuse: technocracy and bureaucracy, social and pedagogical engineering, the orthopaedics of being, behaviour modification, are all forms of destiny that produce reified subjects (Marcuse, 1964).

However, technique is not the threat; rather, it is the essence of technique as device (*Ge-stell*). Danger emerges from the destiny (*Ge-schick*) of self and the *(a)cae(ser)* of truth, its unshrouding; it is the abandonment of being. But because

being hides in the abyss for all beings, it can only be inter-viewed in the experience that each mortal suffers in the face of the flutterings of truth, the presence that retreats under a shroud of absence, half-truth, erroneous interpretation, poetics.

The penury of psychoanalytic technique is its very absence of penury, the concealment of its own vacuum of being. But, as Heidegger reminds us – along with Hölderlin – where danger is present that which is saved grows (Heidegger, 1936). Only the essence of psychoanalytic technique, an open question for technique, permits the recovery of that which has been lost from the original experience of the *tekne-poiesis* of the analytic act.

Heidegger also intertwines technique with aesthetics as complementary aspects of device (*Ge-stell*). Moreover, the analytic act, from the essence of technique, tends to overcome the fissure between *poiesis* and *tekne*, because in another time – Heidegger affirms – *tekne* meant to illuminate truth in beauty. Poetics – according to Plato's Phaedrus – is that which 'glows', as the fabulous (re)enchantment of the world. In contrast, technique denies the thing being because, by believing that it attains its true self, it destroys it.

The idea is not to surpass technique, but to super-impose oneself upon it. Limits must be placed on the pretensions of technique, through the encounter of *Ge-stell* (the device) with *Ereignis*, the *(a)cae(ser)*.

In *Being and Time*, Heidegger draws attention to the spatial dimension of time, its essential co-pertinence with being, as it is necessary to forge a path towards the *physis* of being. This path (*Weg*) is not an open way that precedes it but, rather, the path that is opened along the way. *Weg* is the movement that blazes a trail. The *a priori* of space is movement (*Bewëgung*); the principal (*arché*) of time and space. Thought, then, has its *physis*. To address it, this being-to-be, one must read the signs along the path, the only ones that teach, as Heidegger suggests, on the path towards speech (Heidegger, 1954). The signs are like the scribbling of Octavio Paz that are not committed to the sign that always implies the relation between signifier and meaning (though the latter may slip). Signs address what is real, being. The real, as we saw in Lacan, is difficult to approach because it is the impossible, the impossibility of saying everything. The real is not said; the real is created, requiring a *poiesis* of truth.

However, one cannot expect divine revelation from the fundamental fantasy. Both Freud and Lacan take interpretation as their starting point to reach an insuperable limit. Late in life, Freud (1937) wrote 'Constructions in Analysis'. As is well known, up to that point in his opus, he had been working on interpretation, but then realized that this may be something that relapses onto the repressed (that which though once preconscious is now repressed and unconscious) and relieves repression (making the repressed preconscious once again), but there is something that the subject never knew and so never forgot: the core of the fantasy, that element that the subject does not recall. This is no longer about relieving repression, but about a construction of the analyst who erects a time of the fantasy that the subject does not remember having experienced or lived, but

that according to Freud is what gives coherence to the fantasy that the analysand does recall.

Instead of constructing in analysis, I propose the need to deconstruct – inspired by Derrida – in order to approach the *poiesis* of psychoanalysis; a deconstruction that stems from a permanent change of style, like that of Nietzsche. A language freed from the classic, metaphysical thought of representation, a de-centred, equivocal language that renews the interpretative techniques to which it is subjected (Derrida, 1972).

For Derrida, Nietzsche is a paradigm of deconstruction because he changes style: prophetic sentences of Zarathustra, dithyrambs to Dionysius, aphorisms, dialogues and poems. In *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche writes that he flies thousands of miles beyond all that up to now has been called poetry; a change of style that approaches the essence of psychoanalytic technique: *poiesis* of psychoanalysis. Deconstruction of language points to the real, overflowing the symbolic. Recall that in his misnamed 'Papers on technique' (1911–15), where one expects to find a code of rules for analysis, the truth is that Freud does not essentially propose anything more than learning a great deal and not attempting to teach, which means renouncing the role of lord and teacher.

From *physis* to the real

The *unconscious structured as language* seems to suggest that everything is reduced to language; though Lacan later finds that not all of the subject can be understood in relation to the chain of meaning. This is because there exists the un-nameable of the sexual relation from Freud, Lacan's starting point for his theory of the object *a* (object cause of desire), which must fall for the unconscious to be and for phallic meaning to be put in place; the symbolizable rests upon a real that is prior to meaning. However, that real cannot be retrieved in analysis because it is the real of the fantasy (S<>a).

The signifier can only skirt the real, like a frontier that vanishes, where the symbolic and the real may encounter one another, thanks to a deconstruction that allows traversal of the fantasy, the goal of all analysis, so that the subject can reconsider his place in the Other (as object *a*) as a passage of the subject from unconscious to the position of analyst (*a*). Thus is the end of analysis reached: when the analysand becomes the desirer and his own object, object *a*, and the analyst becomes object *a*, and falls as an object *plus de jouir*.

Although for psychoanalysis truth is unsustainable, as an effect of the signifier, the real is always present. Truth is an absolute that escapes us. The *poiesis* of truth and the truth of *poiesis* is produced based on a symbolic deconstruction that aspires to skirt the real, that impossible encounter of word with object, for the word is always at a disadvantage, ever since Socrates' dialogue *Cratylus* (Plato, 1974b).

This is why Lacan indicates that there is no subjectification of sex, for the subject as a sexed being cannot but be spoken of as man or woman, through a

semblance, as sex is inscribed in the signifier; for beyond phallic *jouissance* there is another: *jouissance* of the Other. The subject emerges from his exclusion from where it is found, determined by the signifier that represents him. But, where is the being of the subject? Nowhere. Thus he asks for his being and defines himself as a question. This is the passion of neurotics, the question directed towards the signifier that divides the subject into S_1 (the signifier that represents the subject) and a remainder that is *a*, the place of being, where I am, and am not, represented.

In this way one reaches the *physis* of *poiesis*. The real is the starting point of the symbolization process, the referent that the signifying net attempts to grasp; but the real is a remainder of the symbolization process, an extra that escapes symbolization. However, an anteriority of the real is not chronological but logical, as only through words, retroactively, can I say that being was there. That which was there is the logical premise, condition and limit of all symbolization. It is in the heart of the real that the *jouissante* substance beats: the *jouissante* body as logical foundation of the word, elusive referent of the signifier, though as truth it does not reach everything but produces an unrecoverable remainder (the object *a, plus de jouir*), separate from body and lost, that pushes towards desire. Finally, through the scansion of the chain of meaning and the subject, the basis of the analytic act, comes the occurrence of the truth of the subject.

The fantasy is a response to the desire of the Other, for the subject to sustain ignorance of the Other as desirer. Through desire of the Other, through its absence, it is destined to vanish into being due to its absence. The fantasy withstands the absence of the Other, and conceals the division between subject and the desire of the Other. A subject is divided for it knows not what the Other desires. Penetrating the fantasy entails passing through this simulacrum: a response with no signifier, an impossible of the Other that undermines the gap through which the desiring subject is ejected (distinct from the subject of the signifier). In the instant of this sectioning of the Other, illumination of the object that will have been (in the future perfect tense) is produced, instead of the absence of the signifier of the Other to name my being.

Lacan goes beyond signifier and negativity at the instant of affirmation: *Il-y-a*. A journey from the *unconscious structured as a language* to the object *a*, to the real, to Id. An escape from the uncertainty of meaning to the act (*Ereignis*), the *(a)cae(ser)*, that makes present that which is beyond the unconscious, the truth of *poiesis*: object *a*.

But analysis does not stop there. The suspension of the signifier, a negation reached through slippage in the chain of meaning, leads to the silent affirmation of the urge that can only be surrounded by the utterances of the analysand, who always speaks of the same thing, of being as inaccessible: *the sexual relation does not exist. Speaking of the same thing* is of the order of being, of the real, while the Other is of the order of the signifier, symbolic order. Thus, interpretation is neither true nor false, only equivocal, and this is due to the inconsistency of the symbolic. In addition to this, as the subject cannot speak of being, they

must make themself a being, create one, as an instantaneous, poetic act that foreshadows the fall of the truth of the subject's desire.

A clinical vignette will illustrate most clearly the instant of the fall of the truth of the analysand's desire. A 35-year-old man arrives and requests analysis after burying his father, for ever since he has been having visions that terrify him (seeing his friends and himself with their flesh torn away) and ravage his body (anxiety, vertigo, severe gastritis and colitis). Moreover, he has been unable to perceive the sun for five years (just 'a gray sky with dark rags hanging from it'). After just a few sessions he utters that at the age of 13, early one morning his elder sister (then 15) forced him to penetrate her and, though he did not impregnate her, he suffers anxiety every time he is about to penetrate a woman. Later he mentions that he seduced a woman named Hilda, whose husband is a police officer and might kill him. Afterwards, he seduces another Hilda, whose husband is away, working in the United States. During the session where I hope to demonstrate one of the key moments of this analysis, he expressed his desire for a third Hilda, a married woman abandoned by her husband, but there is an obstacle: she appears uninterested. He recounts that one morning, while driving his car, he saw that Hilda (the third one) on the street, and honked his horn; all he wanted was for her to get in his car and accompany him to a hotel. Upon seeing him she flees down a one-way street in the other direction, and he loses her; but he drives around and sees her every time she hides. The key moment of analysis comes when he says: 'Once I realize I have lost her, I must park [the car] for I almost faint, almost have a heart attack, almost die.' At that moment I intervene and say: 'almost/Hilda' (in Spanish *casi/Hilda*); 'We'll leave it there'. Upon departing he tells me: 'Everything said was very good.' To better capture this analytical intervention, I must add that the analysand's mother's name is Casilda (*casi/Hilda*), and she has been blind for five years due to diabetes. After the recently recounted analytical act, the analysand sees the sun again and experiences various desires that had been dormant.

Note

1 Translator's note: The author makes an interesting use of the Spanish verb *acaecer* (to occur, to happen), writing it as *(a)cae(ser)*, which means, roughly, that the object *a* 'occurs' – *acaece* – to 'being' (*ser*, Spanish for 'to be'). Obviously, such a construction cannot be translated directly into English.

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14

THE BORROMEAN KNOT AS OPERATOR OF PHILOSOPHICAL COMPOSSIBILITY

Discourse, structure and event in Lacan, Foucault and Badiou

Roque Farrán

> Writing, I dare to say, changes meaning, the way of what is at stake, the philia of wisdom. It is not very easy to argue wisdom if not with writing, with the bo[rromean] knot – so that, I apologize for my infatuation, with my bo[rromean] knot I attempt to accomplish the first philosophy that seems to hold.
>
> (Lacan, 1975–76/2006; 11/05/76: 143)

Lacanian discourse presents the mode of overlapping of the three registers of the real, symbolic and imaginary, making use of the Borromean knot. This re-elaboration allows us to investigate the mutual connection between structure and event that we find in both Badiou's philosophy as well as in the last Foucault. Lacan redefined the materiality that allows us to think the knot as follows:

> One thing surprises me, it is that there are not three dimensions of language. Language is always flattened, and this is precisely why I introduced my knot of three, which is a chain, and it is thus surprising that it can be flattened. With respect to the Real, which is required to be identified with matter, I would propose instead to write the three-side-soul [*l'Âme-a-tiers*], consistent with the other two. Someone called Sanders Peirce was surprised by the fact that, strictly speaking – language does not express the relationship, that language does not allow a notation such as xRy, for to express that it would take a ternary logic and not a binary one. This is what authorizes me to talk about 'the three-side-soul' as something needing some kind of logical relationship.
>
> (Lacan, 1976–77/1988, 11/01/77: 23)

In general, language is clearly oppositional and differential, so much so that the limits imposed by thought can be felt, for example, in the terms within which current debates are developed about the historical or structural determination of discourses; about the discursive and non-discursive (Foucault, Derrida);[1] the ontological and the event (Badiou, Žižek). In order to problematize the dual distributions that language operates, Lacan proposes the Borromean knotting, whereby the *Real* (material) is not only just another register (*dit-mensión*) inextricably linked to the *Imaginary* and the *Symbolic* but, as the quotation suggests, it is the knot itself. It is in this way perhaps that we can then think of the intimate link between event (real) and structure (symbolic–imaginary) without falling into static dichotomies or a mere descriptive typology. On the other hand, the infinite referral of the game of signifying difference as proposed by Derrida would also be avoided (Lacan, 1975–76/2006, 11/05/76: 142). In short, we would enable a more complex conceptual philosophical game that would imply at the same time the closing of the signifier, the signifying opening and real knotting.

As is well known, it is the main distinctive property of the Borromean knot that it takes a cord to be cut loose for the whole knotted set to disperse and/or scatter away. What Lacan explores through this topological structure is the unique way of consistency that it presented in multiple terms; although in principle (at least) three distinct registers (real, symbolic, imaginary) are needed, which bind together with one another without any one outweighing the other two. The mutual involvement of the terms linked shows thus a pattern of consistency that is based on their *strict equivalence* (Lacan, 1973–74/1988, 04/12/73: 43), without however eliminating their respective differences. Each of the three registers are irreducible (heterogeneous) among themselves, but mutually support each other. In this sense, we could speak of the properly ontological dimension of the Borromean knot, in that it accounts for the minimal consistency necessary so that multiple terms are held together.

Lacan

Lacan (1953: 15) presents the different registers 'essential to human reality' as the *Real*, the *Symbolic* and the *Imaginary*. He does so in the framework of his 'return to Freud', in order to promote a certain re-ordering in the conceptualization of the psychoanalytic experience. In the 1970s Lacan spent the last years of his teaching thinking about the articulation of the three registers in the basic topological structure displayed in the Borromean knot. We will now present the three registers and their reciprocal overlapping (or *ensemblage*) using Badiou's meta-ontology as well as the details provided by Jean-Claude Milner (1983/1999).

The *Real* (R): it presupposes the primary fact that makes it possible to state that, before anything, 'there is'; it is logically prior to every qualification of properties whether by name or discernment – it is about the *impossible*. In other words, the *Real* is about the impossibility/inability to symbolize (or to count)

and therefore to imagine (or represent) something that, being pure inconsistent multiplicity, *will* only *have been* in the suspension of the structure/law (as counted one-by-one) and the retroactivity of a supernumerary nomination (ultra-one); in other words, the *Real forces* the structure to count the uncountable (multiple generic). Such inconsistent multiplicity can only be regulated by axioms (in a consistent theory of inconsistency) or thought of without concept in artistic, political or amorous events.

The *Symbolic* (S): it involves the passage to the 'there is one', thus already denoting a signifying register and hence difference as such, that is, the effect of structure that introduces the count-as-one or the law; it is thus about what allows the discernment of – and by – the names, even before any qualification by properties or classification of multiplicities takes place. The *Symbolic* determines the pre-predicative membership of multiplicities as counted-as-one.

The *Imaginary* (I): it is the 'there is one-one' that conceptualizes the second count operator (count-of-the-count) and registers the parts of the multiple-situation or sub-sets. This is the state of the situation or metastructure corresponding to the register of meaning and the re-presentations (manipulated reality), for it separates submultiples into classes according to the properties of similarity and difference, and by doing so it operates with inclusions and exclusions.

As already pointed out, however, according to Lacanian theory these three registers of experience are mutually tied together like the loops of a rope in a Borromean knot. This *necessary* mode of overlap between the three different registers, Milner (1983/1999: 13) describes masterfully as follows:

> Nothing escapes the Borromean necessity that the knot represents, not even the knot which as can be seen is equally *Real* (since the unknotting is marked by an impossibility), *Symbolic* (since the loops are designated with the letters R, S and I), *Imaginary* (since some loops of rope can turn it into a reality that can actually be manipulated). Moreover, each ring, R, S or I, is in itself, *Real* (since it is irreducible), *Symbolic* (since it is one), and *Imaginary* (since it is a circle). Therefore the knot has, in each of its elements, the properties that it enunciates as a whole (set); yet reciprocally, every one of its elements names a property that affects both the whole set considered collectively as well as each of the other elements considered separately.

These operators are purely conceptual (philosophical), for they allow us to guide ourselves in some way through the experience of analysis, whether at the empirical, theoretical or meta-theoretical level. Our Lacanian approach to discourse here will thus be meta-theoretical, for we will discuss the philosophical perspectives of Badiou and Foucault from the logic of the Borromean knotting and their respective registers. However, taking into account these registers, our task is not simply to classify whatever is presented to us in a rigid and automatic manner by

describing what is real, symbolic or imaginary about them. On the contrary, our proper task is to find, in each case, the singular mode of knotting that takes place on its own terms. This requires always drawing the mutual implication, the knotting and the interdependence between terms and instances, without presupposing any a priori *arche* (origin), *telos* (end) or hierarchical structure; which is how and why we will evaluate the material and *nodal consistency* of the set by means of co-implication.

However different their discourses and references, Foucault and Badiou, as well as Lacan, establish a fundamental philosophical relationship between the terms and the concepts they present in which, strangely enough, they seem to agree. Notwithstanding what or which these terms are, how they are defined and what role they play in their respective theoretical systems, what we want to emphasize here is the (un)common way they relate to each other, perhaps without knowing it. We assume, and this is our hypothesis, that this has to do with a (material and structural) characteristic feature of philosophical thought itself.[2]

Foucault

In his research Foucault finds an irreducible knot between three different discourses, whose mutual articulation and differences characterize philosophical practice, he claims, from Greek antiquity to the present. This is how he succeeds in providing us with a proper definition of the structural and materialist philosophy that emerges from a purely historical point of view. Foucault (1984b/2010) discusses the passage and transformation of *parrhesia* – as a special form of truth telling – from its failure in policy implementation to it becoming ethical practice (self-care and care of others). In the same work there is a brief interlude of only three pages in which he gives a macroscopic view of Western philosophy and thought (pp. 82–86). This enlightening fragment is part, of course, of his reassessment of the *Aufklärung* (Englightenment).

In this sense, it is worth following the movement of thought Foucault carried out in all his works, moving from particular historical detail and almost forgotten practices to large structural (general) frameworks spanning entire eras of thought and human practice. These historical and structural trajectories retained, of course, their strict singularity. This is how Foucault expresses what generality consists of in his findings:

> *Generality*. Finally, these historical-critical investigations are truly particular in the sense that they always refer to one set of materials, one time, one body of determined practices and discourses. But at least on the scale of Western societies from which we come, they also have their generality in the sense that they have kept recurring up to our times . . . However, if I mention this generality it is not to describe it in its meta-historical continuity through time, nor to follow its variations.

> What we need to grasp is that what we know about this generality, the forms of power that are exerted on it and the experience we have of ourselves in it, are nothing but historical figures determined by some form of problematization that defines objects, rules of action, ways of relating to oneself. The study of (these types of) *problematizations* (i.e. of what is neither anthropological constant nor chronological variation) is therefore the way to analyze singular questions of a general reach in their historically unique form.
>
> (Foucault, 1984a/1996: 109–110)

Oddly enough, the above vision of a historical–philosophical conception by Foucault is close to that of Badiou, who also thinks of the historicity of the various *generic procedures of truth* as non-philosophical, and thus allocates the domain and the handling of being to mathematical ontology. In the debate between Foucault and Derrida on the specificity of philosophy,[3] Badiou sides with Foucault in reasserting the heterogeneity of discursive practices and validating, in turn, the (originally Leibnizian) philosophical operation of '*compossibility*'. Badiou thus gives up any ontological search for 'the sense of being' (set out now as it is in the primordial senselessness of mathematical axioms) and refuses to do so even by means of some special form of pseudo-poetic writing. But let us return to Foucault's last lesson.

Foucault distinguishes three discourses, realities or poles that are irreducibly linked together, although each retains their own specificities; these are *alétheia, politeia* and *ethos*. The first defines the forms and conditions of truth-telling (or veracity), the second the institutions, rules and forms of government and the third the modalities by which a moral subject is constitued. Here indeed comes the interesting part, which is the following strong thesis by Foucault:

> *Alétheia, politeia, ethos*: I think that the essential irreducibility of the three poles, and their necessary and reciprocal relationship, the structure of attraction towards one another and vice versa, *sustained the very existence of all philosophical discourse from Greece to this day.*
>
> (Foucault, 1984b/2010: 84)

In other words, philosophical discourse, in its specificity, is not mixed up with any of the other discourses (there is no 'suture' in Badiou's terms), for philosophical discourse results from their mutual knotting and, at the same time, from the opening and interrogation of each one from the perspective of the others. Let us pay special attention to the simultaneity involved in the philosophical point of view as shown in the following extensive yet enlightening quote:

> What makes a philosophical discourse different from each of these three discourses [*alétheia, politeia* and *ethos*] is that it never raises the question of truth without interrogating *at the same time* the conditions

> of this very truth-telling, be it [from the side of] the ethical differentiation that gives the individual access to such truth, [be it otherwise from the side of] the political *structures* within which this truth-telling shall have the right, freedom and duty to pronounce itself. What makes a philosophical discourse be a philosophical discourse, and not simply a political discourse is that when the question has arisen of the *politeia* (the political institution, the distribution and organization of power relations), it raises *at the same time* the question of truth and truthful discourse from which these power relations and their organization may be defined; and it also raises the question of *ethos*, that is, of the ethical distinction to which those political *structures* can and should give way. And finally, if philosophical discourse is not simply a moral discourse, this is so because it is not limited to the claim of forming an *ethos*, to pretend being the pedagogy of a moral or the vehicle of a code. Philosophical discourse never raises the question of *ethos* without *at the same time* interrogating itself about truth and the ways to access truth so it may be part of that *ethos*, and about the political *structures* within which it may assert its singularity and difference.
>
> (Foucault, 1984b/2010: 84)

We therefore see in the recurrence of terms and expressions such as 'structures' and 'at the same time' that philosophy, rather than being a *structure of structures* (discursive metastructure or absolute knowledge), is instead the constant questioning and problematization of each of the discursive poles through that of the others. While Foucault does not use the term 'knot' or 'knotting', he nevertheless speaks of 'tying together' or 'uniting', and he also tries to make a combinatorial link between four different (structural–historical) ways of 'regrouping' three discourses.[4] We could in fact talk of four ways of knotting, and we argue that the logic of Borromean knotting clarifies this mutual and irreducible overlapping of the terms in question (in the absence of any essential, hierarchical or unifying relationship).

This duly structural and materialist combinatorial operation of philosophy supports the four forms of veracity that Foucault pinpoints in a historical trajectory, these being prophecy, wisdom, technical teaching and *parrhesia*: 1) the prophetic attitude in philosophy, 'promises and predicts' the final reconciliation between *alétheia, politeia* and *ethos*; 2) the attitude of wisdom also seeks the unification of the poles under a homogeneous discourse, but it points to a common ground; 3) the technical approach or that of teaching in philosophy aims instead to clearly distinguish each discourse and place emphasis on their separation and heterogeneity; and finally 4) the *parrhesia* attitude in philosophy is 'the one with reference to the question of truth which [along with the other forms and investments mentioned above] attempts, persistently and always returning to the beginning, to reintroduce the issue of the political conditions and ethical differentiation which give access to such truth' (Foucault,

1984b/2010: 86). The idea of beginning all over again, of restarting, of constant questioning and problematizing the limits, is what points to Foucault's material position and defines a *critical ontology of ourselves*. It is not just to imagine a counter-power against established power (with all that there is in this attitude that is imaginary and specular), nor is it to oppose that power with epistemic or ethical considerations, but it is rather to question and/or to challenge one sphere through the others (ethical, epistemological, political) simultaneously; to show, in other words, their irreducibility and triple contingent articulation in order to destabilize the set/knot that they form: the materiality in question. In finding points of failure, overlaps, folds and so on, philosophy *qua* critical ontology shifts its limits and possibilities and operates the displacement of the devices *among* themselves; because for philosophy there is no outside, although this does not mean either that everything is the same.[5] To question doing (*politeia*) through truth-telling (*alétheia*) and the mode of being (*ethos*) and vice versa, that is what *thinking* (philosophy) is. Thus, a critical ontology of ourselves is not a separate discourse, more fundamental, original or transcendental, but this critique is produced inter- and intra-discursively by way of questioning the limits of what we can do, what we do and who we are.[6]

Here is how Foucault ends up showing us the way in which we should perhaps understand Lacan's phrase 'there is no sexual relation' in philosophy:

> This is what the *parrhesia* attitude and discourse consist of in philosophy: the discourse of the irreducibility of truth, of power and ethos, and at the same time, the discourse of their necessary link, of the impossibility in which we find ourselves able to think truth (*alétheia*), power (*politeia*) and *ethos* without an essential relationship, which is fundamental to them.
>
> (Foucault, 1984b/2010: 86)

To begin again is to (re)commence each time in different spheres of thought and discursive levels, under different terms and procedures, to problematize and question both the homogeneous unifications of meaning as well as the naturalized and rigid compartmentalization of heterogeneous meanings. Meaning is thus thought of as an evanescent supplement, found and lost each time in a relentless interrogation of the discursive limits instituted. Philosophical veracity does not identify itself with any of its conditions, rather it runs diagonally, as it were, across them. This is why for Foucault the question is not, as Agamben (2009/2010) suggests it should be, to privilege the performative dimension of language through verification (or truth saying *qua* veracity). This privilege given to the *evental* dimension of language may then lie in a transcendentalism that ignores the multiplicity of modes of truth-telling, its historical procedures, problematic articulations and, above all, the specificity of the philosophical discourse that both Foucault and Badiou hold to.

Badiou

With Badiou, we find a unique mode of articulation between (structural) being and (historical) event that radically recomposes the usual order of discursive regimes. This is so even though most critics (such as Bensaïd, Laclau and Žižek) fall again and again into the commonplace attempt of finding a rigid dichotomy between being and event, which is what they wish to find, but does not reflect Badiou's own complex conceptual articulations. Against such common schematic views of a complex conceptual framework such as that presented in Badiou's materialism, Bosteels (2007: 18) points out the following:

> we can already infer not only that the materialistic trend finds itself in an unequal and asymmetrical relationship with idealism, but also that because of this disproportion, the impure definition of theoretical practices and its *relationship of internal exclusion* with other practices constitute, altogether, the substance of all materialist philosophy.

From our point of view, however, such a relationship of internal exclusion between practices involves more than the return to dialectical materialism; in other words, it involves their Borromean knotting (or what we call a *nodal materialism*).[7]

Badiou maintains that philosophy is a sort of knot between non-philosophical conditions: art, politics, love and science. These conditions are what he calls *generic procedures of truth*, of which philosophy thinks together (simultaneously), and so makes it '*compossible*' without, however, constituting itself a production of truth. According to Badiou (1989/2007: 16), this creates two problems: one refers to its effectiveness and the other to the question of its multiple articulation:

> What relationship does this alleged unity maintain with the plurality of conditions? Which is this knot of four (the generic procedure, matheme, poem, political invention and love) with the one (philosophy)? I will show that these two problems have the same (one) answer, contained in the definition that considers philosophy to be an *ineffective truth under the condition of the effectiveness of truth*.

There are a number of interlocking concepts that explain the complexity of these claims that, for reasons of space, we will only briefly dwell upon here. Some minimal references are to follow.

The truths circumscribed by Badiou's philosophical thought originate in contingent events that supplement normal conditions and their rules of order (knowledge and language); therefore these truths originating in contingent events have a disruptive and dislocatory nature. Mostly, however, from the very

moment of their nomination (intervention-subject) and circulation (inquiry), these truths organize a new temporality (which is retroactive) and another instance of the multiple (as each multiple under enquiry is considered in its generality and not by way of its particular features, so that hierarchies based on these differentiations are thus altered). In this context:

> The task of philosophy is to propose a unified conceptual space, where nominations of events *find their place* that serve as a starting point for the truth procedures. Philosophy seeks *to bring together all the added-names*. Philosophy deals in thought with the *compossible* character of the procedures that condition it. Philosophy makes no truth, but provides a place for truths [. . .] The operators of philosophy, whichever they might be always tend to think 'as a whole' (as an ensemble) to configure in an unique exercise of thought, the historical disposition of the matheme, the poem, the political in(ter)vention and love (or the evental status of the Two).
>
> (Badiou, 1989/2007: 17)

We therefore argue that such tasks assigned to philosophy – *to collect, to render compossible, to make possible* – find their paradigmatic figure in the Borromean knotting of generic procedures of truth. In this way, philosophy is not just another space (immanent: a truth; or transcendent: metalanguage), but the very knot itself that ties together the four historical conditions (Farran, 2010, 2011a). For what prevents philosophy becoming a stable absolute knowledge ('encyclopedic' in Badiou's words), a mere sum or aggregation and totalization of knowledges and truths is, precisely, the heterogeneity and contingency of events that condition it. Hence, philosophy must be constantly engaged in reworking its conceptual operators; philosophy is open to the 'gap of time' and relies constitutively in 'precarious, nascent conditions' (Badiou, 1989/2007: 18). Echoing Heidegger, Badiou (1989/2007: 18–19) states the following:

> Partially anticipating the reception and protection that these fragile procedures offer to thought, and understanding as compossible trajectories, those the mere possibility of which are not yet firmly established, the task of philosophy is to *aggravate* the problems . . . Philosophy has as its 'aggravating' function to provide the generic procedures in a dimension which is not of their own thinking but rather the outcome of a joint, common historicity.

Badiou always suggests the idea of the knotting of conditions, but never explicitly defines philosophy as an effective Borromean knot; and yet, we argue, this is what allows us to formulate this non-topological space, which is neither transcendental nor immanent to the truth procedures, because philosophy *is the very operation of its incessant networking* restarted over and over again.

Conclusion

By taking the Borromean knot as the operator of philosophical compossibility, we are not saying that it alone signals a characteristic feature, a model or ideal of thought that would find replicas according to the logic of similarity. For, as we pointed out, what could possibly be presented in such a *prima facie* manner in the formulations of Lacan, Foucault and Badiou? Yet, the *Imaginary* register cannot be ruled out completely, since some resemblances have been put into play (that is, some correspondences have been captured *a posteriori*). The same can be said about the *Symbolic* register: it is not about finding structural similarities or isomorphisms, as if different terms fulfill the same function (and hence are able to be formalized) in their respective systems. In this respect, although the nodal co-implication is a relationship in common, this nevertheless does not point to any logical totality of the system (it points only to a part, a single knot). Finally, the *Real* does not refer to an identification of a fact (*factum)*, but requires the act of affirmation signaling that the different registers are co-implicated; an act that is itself an additional excess, which is not reducible to specific features or partial homologies. Without depending exclusively on any of these registers or on their eclectic summation, Borromean knotting requires a mutually complex articulation of them. This is what theoretical intervention implies and is all about.

Notes

1 See Foucault (1976/1992: 189). It is in this sense that Badiou's wager unfolds; one does not only define and assess different events, but also affirms their irreducible heterogeneity, despite their compossibility, and the complex mode of overlapping between the structural and the *evental* through truth thought of as a multiple generic procedure.

2 This is perhaps a more general thesis than the one Foucault presents, as we will see.

3 This debate began with a discussion of the Cartesian cogito in his *History of Madness* (Foucault, 1961/2009) carried out by Derrida (1963) in his lecture *Cogito and the history of madness*, to which, in turn, Foucault (1972) answered, a decade later, in *Réponse à Derrida* and *My body that paper that fire*. Meanwhile their own theories evolved and, perhaps implicitly, they continue with this endless debate. A recent reconstruction of such debate can be found in Romanutti Garcia (2011) and Campillo (1995).

4 In 'What is Enlightenment?' Foucault (1984a/1996: 108–109) tested this mutual overlap of practices in slightly different terms:

> Systematic. These practical sets depend on three major orders: the relations of domination over things, relations of action on others, relations with oneself. This does not mean that there are three orders totally strange to each other. It is well known that control over things needs the relationship with the other, and this always involves a relationship with oneself, and vice versa. But these are three axes the specificity and intricacy of which must be analyzed: the axis of knowledge, the axis of power, the axis of ethics.

It could be said that in a slightly different sense, Badiou (1989: 40–41) also appreciates the systematic approach to philosophy:

> If you mean by 'systematic' as it should be done, the requirement for a full configuration of the four generic conditions of philosophy (which I repeat, does not require at all that the *results* of these conditions are displayed or even mentioned), according to an exposition that also exposes its rules of exposition then . . .).

Badiou and Foucault reject the idea of a philosophy identified or sutured to one of these conditions, and it is precisely that which defines the complex systematic approaches of their philosophical practices (an exposition that reveals its rules).

5 Or as Deleuze (1986/2008: 148) put it, the inside and the outside overlap in an ontological fold: 'the outside fold constitutes one in itself, and outside fold constitutes a coextensive inside. One had to go through stratum-strategic crossing to reach the ontological fold.'

6 'Three domains of genealogy are possible. First, a historical ontology of ourselves in relation to truth, through which we constitute ourselves as subjects of knowledge; second, a historical ontology of ourselves in relation to the field of power through which we became subjects acting on others, and third, a historical ontology in relation to ethics, through which we constitute ourselves as moral agents' (Foucault, 1983: 62). Aurora Romero (2011) has recently worked with this Foucaultian perspective.

7 We have described this in *Nodal Ontology: a materialism of the encounter* (Farrán, 2011b: 195–235).

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15

SIGNIFYING ORDER AND ALEATORY ENCOUNTER IN LOUIS ALTHUSSER'S POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY[1]

Natalia Romé

This chapter takes up some central theses in Louis Althusser's thought in order to evaluate the importance of his contribution to the current field of discussions about Lacanian Discourse Analysis.

In previous writings (Romé, 2012), I characterised the Althusserian theoretical constellation as an agonistic tie between two problematic planes that can be termed '*conjuncture*' and '*conjunction*', identified by Matheron (1994: 19) in one of Althusser's manuscripts. This is a process of theoretical production that describes the contours of the pursuit of the 'materialist position in philosophy', whose constitutive tension has been described by Balibar (1990: 99): 'to be at once a total philosopher and a total communist, without sacrificing either of these terms for the other, this is what constitutes Althusser's intellectual singularity'.[2]

The Althusserian problematic is inscribed in a profound connection between philosophy and politics, not in the sense of the 'regional' or disciplinary scope of so-called 'political philosophy', but in the ontological and procedural sense of the exercise of philosophy itself as a diagonal between knowledges (Badiou, 2004/2007: 49–51). In this exercise, Althusserian Marxism and Jacques Lacan's psychoanalysis embrace a similar effort to make the articulations between thought and intervention thinkable (Romé, 2009).

This chapter will focus on one specific point: a consideration of the *paradoxical* nature of the link between signifying order and event. As I will show, this is not a matter of secondary importance, but rather a central dimension of the Althusserian philosophical problematic.

Theory in excess

As Balibar (1988: 81) points out, Louis Althusser was never a (Marxist) theorist of society, but rather a philosopher concerned with 'transformation' in

philosophy. If there is such a thing as Althusserian thought, the core of its systematic unity must be characterised, with respect to this horizon of transformation, as inquiry into the *materialist position in philosophy* (Romé, 2011). This path connects the early task of reconstructing the philosophy present 'in a practical state' in Marx's theory (Althusser, 1965/1969: 32) with troubling displays of *aleatory materialism* (Althusser, 1982). Pursuit of the materialist position coincides with the disarticulation of the hegemonic code of the idealist philosophical tradition in the modern West, guided by the omnipotence of thought, which is impotence of action (Althusser, 1988: 217).

Idealism 'is absolutely incapable of foregoing its own discourse, which is the very presence of Truth as Logos' (Althusser, 1988: 267). Here materialism is nothing more than putting in place a limit, the location of a *void*[3] in the (ideological) fullness of a territory already occupied by the idealist tradition (Matheron, 2004/2005). It is a political thought that 'shatters the phantasms of the denegation in which philosophy tells itself . . . that it is above politics' (Althusser, 1969: 67). The materialist position thus displays its inherent *paradox*: developing in torsion between the theoretical and the political, it takes up the deficiency systematically denied in the history of philosophy, 'that philosophy does indeed have an outside; more precisely, that it exists through and for this outside. This outside, which philosophy likes to imagine that it has brought under the sway of Truth, is practice, the social practices' (Althusser, 1988: 275).

This crossroads between theory and politics takes on the form of a tension between discourse and its limit when Althusser puts forward his notions of the 'theoretical problematic' and 'symptomatic reading' in the context of a rejection of the philosophical theses that, equating truth and discourse, formulate the problem of knowledge as a problem of its 'guarantee', in a circular scheme 'linked to the specular structure of fantasy' (Badiou, 1967: 19). *Symptomatic reading* is based on the consideration of a theoretical discourse in its *blind alleys*; that is, in those areas where imaginary formulas are inevitably interwoven in their texture, in an attempt to invest spaces of *impasse* with ideology. These spaces, alluded to by the presence of ideological elements, indicate the *limits* of discourse and, as a result, constitute the points of greatest theoretical vitality (Althusser & Balibar, 1965/1970). Hence, using a formula provided by Pierre Macherey, Althusser and Balibar (1965/1970: 44) highlight the *paradoxical* movement he puts forward as the theoretical matrix: 'every science, in the relationship it has with the ideology it emerged from, can only be thought as a 'science of the ideology' (p. 44):

> the paradox of the theoretical field is that it is an *infinite* because *definite* space, i.e., it has no limits, no external frontiers separating it from nothing, precisely because it is *defined* and limited within itself, carrying in itself the finitude of its definition, which, by excluding what it is not, makes it what it is.
>
> (Althusser & Balibar, 1965/1970: 27)

With the notion of 'problematic', Althusser makes this 'finite' condition the materialist conception of *the theoretical*. The theoretical is organised in 'conjunctures' because for Althusser it is, by definition, *not-whole*. 'Conjuncture' is the name of a *combination* or *articulation* of elements, and this, in turn, implies thinking about it as a 'mechanism' of *transformation* and as a *singular* 'result', whose apodictic character does not constitute a juridical rule of scientificity 'in general', but a rationality that is immanent to concrete *theoretical practices*. To conceive a theory as a *conjunctural formation* is to make the links between the 'theoretical practices' in which it is interwoven with *other* practices thinkable. A conjuncture is a combination of *heterogeneous* elements, in which non-homogeneity is another form of *incompleteness*.

This framework underlies Althusser's move toward psychoanalysis – a search that to some extent Elizabeth Roudinesco (1993/1999: 301) has explained, not without irony, by pointing out that '[Althusser] thought he could convert Lacan, not to communism, but to a philosophy that would go beyond the idea of structure'. For Althusser, 'beyond' structure are the not-at-all secondary problems of *imagination* and *action*; in other words, of *ideology* and *politics*. These are not problems of 'social theory'; rather, they are *philosophical* problems – herein lies Roudinesco's insight.

From the Lacanian field, Yannis Stavrakakis (2007: 8) has clearly mapped out this issue, stating that, 'Psychoanalysis as a discourse and a practice constitutes one of the privileged terrains from which it is possible to reflect on this constitutive tension between knowledge and experience, symbolic and real.'[4] The potential of Lacanian psychoanalysis lies in assuming the power of an interplay between theory and theoretical failure. If Lacanian psychoanalysis thus constitutes a 'privileged terrain' for interrogating its ties to politics, Marxism is, without a doubt, the other such terrain.

Gisela Catanzaro (2003: 71) marks the presence of this problem in Marxist writings:

> What is it in the phrase, in the totality, that can be interpreted as an excess with respect to its positive identity and, at the same time, as something else, with deep and essential content? Is it possible to pose this Marxian question about excess in terms of Hegel's philosophy of history?

For Althusser (1978), it is its *limited* condition that makes Marxist theory a radically *non-Hegelian* theory. Far from any teleological or panlogicist guarantee, the power of Marxist theory lies in its *openness* to history's excess. The key to Marxist theory is that of knowing itself to be always *in excess* of history:

> Only a 'finite' theory can be really 'open' to . . . its aleatory future, to the unpredictable 'surprises' that have continued to mark the history of the labour movement; open and therefore, attentive, able to take

> history's incorrigible imagination seriously and to come to terms with it in time.
>
> (Althusser, 1978: 12)

It is, says Stavrakakis (2007: 10), about theory itself:

> Instead of repressing the recognition of their limits, of their ultimate failure to capture the real . . . we can start incorporating this destabilising element within our theories. Instead of repressing the paradoxical relation, the tension between knowledge and experience that marks our lives, we would be probably better off acknowledging this tension.

It is no different than what Althusser maintains based on a definition of the theoretical as 'limited' by *its exterior*. However, this is incomplete if we do not come back to it from the problem of *the political*, which, resisting its symbolisation, overflows theory and pushes philosophy toward a new form of *necessity*. The irruption of the political in the theoretical field is in itself a transformation in philosophy.[5]

Overdetermination: theory and history

Althusserian development of the Freudian notion of *overdetermination* aims to establish the foundation for the materialist question about history, following dismissal of a Hegelian 'Philosophy of History'. Althusser moves toward this notion in pursuit of a necessity that does not entail closure, that sustains instead of annulling the tensions between *signifying order* and *event*. Hence, he suggests pursuing the philosophical rationality immanent to Marxist theory not only in Marx's *theoretical discourse*, but in the labour movement's *practices of struggle*, in its concrete experience:

> If it is true, as Leninist practice and reflection prove, that the revolutionary situation in Russia was precisely a result of the *intense overdetermination* of the basic class contradiction, we should perhaps ask what is *exceptional* about this 'exceptional *situation*', and whether, like all exceptions, this one does not clarify its rule – is not, unbeknownst to the rule, *the rule itself*.
>
> (Althusser, 1965/1969: 104)

The answer emerges in the formula of *overdetermination*, which, by situating reflection within the very contradiction of its conditions of existence, enables circumscription of the challenge of a philosophy that wants to think of itself *within* history. By dismissing the organisation of the link between *history and concept* according to a *simple internal principle*, the overdetermined contradiction resists

the subordination of the concrete life of a historical epoch to the abstract, imaginary and concentric form of that epoch's consciousness (Althusser, 1965/1969: 103).

In *overdetermination*, in this formula with Freudian roots, Althusser finds the means to situate the materialist code in the concept of the 'effectivity of a structure on its elements': the effectivity of the decentred disposition (the very reflection of its conditions of existence) on the contradiction (Althusser & Balibar, 1965/1970: 29). It is a principle of rationality, a code that uses a 'detour' to think about its commitment in *existence*. This is why Althusser (1965/1969: 179) seeks this principle not only in Marx's theory, but in the political strategy of Lenin, in the very field of his experience of struggle:

> [in] the analysis of the structure of a *conjuncture*, the displacements and condensations of its contradictions and their paradoxical unity, all of which are the very existence of that 'current situation' which political action was to transform, in the strongest sense of the word, between February and October, 1917.

What Althusser situates in the supernumerary heart of overdetermined contradiction is the ontological void of *the political*. Lenin's role is to embody a thinking about *the political* that is not the thinking of a theorist *about* politics. His role is 'to make the dialectic into a revolutionary method, rather than the theory of the *fait accompli*' (Althusser, 1965/1969: 180). The Althusserian solution is concentrated in this space of 'excess' and 'the present' where the political is located as the *other* of theory. Overdetermination pushes the problem of *necessity* – and thus of the theoretical – into the uncertain realm of *(political) practice*, making room for the irruption of *the unexpected and the singular*. In these 'blind alleys' that symptomatic reading can identify, theory meets its *limit* and opens up to *the political*. The Marxist theory of history knows itself to be *flawed*, and precisely because of this, it makes room in this search for another inevitable dimension, that of *political practice*.

The question of *political practice* corresponds to the space of becoming[6] (*conjunction/conjuncture*), because if a 'conjuncture' can be interrogated in terms of a structural code, its ontological mood is not that of a 'structure'. Althusserian *overdetermination* not only shows the figure of the void of 'structural causality', but it purports to place the relationship between *event, formation* and *process* at the core of philosophical reflection. This is not a 'dialectical' interrogation, in some materialist non-Hegelian sense,[7] nor is it Lévi-Straussian in the sense of an 'ontology of binarity' (Althusser, 1963: 60).

In the dialectical knot of the agonistic bond between *conjuncture* and *conjunction*, Althusser (1970: 65) identifies a 'disjoint unity' previously identified by Marx. It is the paradoxical tie between two radically heterogeneous practices: *theoretical practice* and *political practice*. 'To distinguish between the two practices is the heart of the question' that concerns Althusser (1965/1969: 179).

The *political* relationship does not exist

The political dimension is visited in two ways in the Althusserian problematic: one focuses on the more classical problem of the articulation between *politics* and the *State*, which is part of a *concrete social conjuncture* (bourgeois society) and its specific way of *functioning* (Althusser, 1970b). The other approach to the same political dimension focuses on *political practice*, which always indicates the limit to this structural functioning because, as *practice*, it produces transformations 'which are not knowledges, but a revolution in social relations' (Althusser, 1965/1969: 75–76).

For Althusser, the notion of *political practice* coincides with the space of *the political*, on the margins of *the social*. Its temporality, at the edge of the present, points to the ever-fleeting instant on which the attempt at closure of all social formations founders. We have here, in Althusser, a conceptualisation of the political dimension that responds to what different contemporary theorists have pointed to as the *difference between politics and the political*: '*As difference*, this difference presents nothing other than a paradigmatic split in the traditional idea of politics, where a new term (the political) had to be introduced in order to point at society's "ontological" dimension, the dimension of the institution of society' (Marchart, 2007: 5).

Althusser's (1982: 167) view of the problem of *the political* as *practice* finds its ontological interrogation in his theses of *aleatory materialism*. A 'materialism . . . of the rain, the swerve, the encounter, to "take hold" [*prise*]' based on the thesis of 'the primacy of disorder over order . . . and in the welling up of order from the very heart of disorder to produce a world' (pp. 189–90). It is a philosophy of the 'beginning' that dismisses the idea of Origin and situates a *void* there in which an *encounter*, a '*clinamen*', some unpredictable course of events, suddenly takes place.

More than pointing out the void in the foundations, it is a matter of thinking about the articulations between *world* and *beginning*. Once the atoms have ' "taken hold" . . . they enter the realm of Being . . . there emerges in them a structure of Being or of the world that assigns each of its elements its place, meaning and role' (Althusser, 1982: 192). They acquire consistency – says Althusser – 'they take shape' as elements *of that* already come-about *world*, they enter into the structural order; but this confers on that *world* and the *structure of its relations an order (for ever) in second place* (p. 192). We have a necessity for a (second place) order, in tandem with an ontology of the aleatory 'encounter'. From the point of view of the *clinamen*, the consolidation of an order, its structure and its legality, depend on the 'duration' of the encounter. Althusser (1982: 197) says:

> Marx . . . explains that the capitalist mode of production arose from the encounter between 'the owners of money' and the proletarian stripped of everything but his labour-power. 'It so happens' that this encounter took place, and 'took hold' . . . lasted . . . inducing stable relationships

> and a necessity the study of which yields 'laws'—tendential laws. . . . What matters about this conception is less the elaboration of laws . . . than the aleatory character of the 'taking-hold' of this encounter, which gives rise to an accomplished fact whose laws it is possible to state.

The 'encounter' situates the problem in the constitutive moment or the 'Machiavellian moment of the political' (Marchart, 2007: 8), and not by chance do we find this problem again in the Althusserian reading of Machiavelli: 'It is necessary to begin with a New Prince and a New Principality: that is to say, literally and ultimately, with nothing—not "nothingness", but emptiness' (Althusser, 1976: 68).

In every case, it is about the staging of an *ontological problem* that points to the limit of a structural matrix: a point of *non-sense*. If (materialist) *philosophy* consists of the effort to make this problem thinkable, this is because its function is precisely that of bringing theory into relation with *the political* (Althusser, 1969), not with *politics* as a region of social life, but with *the political* as ontology.[8]

In contrast, the problematic space of the conjuncture and of *its politics* is the space of the 'world' that, as mentioned previously, always implies *second-order* relationships. Thus, the ontology of the aleatory beginning allows us to revisit the theoretical place of *ideology* in the Althusserian problematic: the 'second-order nature' of the 'world's' relationships indicates the *ideological/imaginary* character of the objectivity of this already come-about world. As Althusser (1965/1969: 233) points out, 'ideology is a matter of the *lived* relation between men and their world . . . a relation between relations, a second degree relation'. At this level – of the conjuncture come about and lived as the 'world' – thinking about *politics* necessitates moving theory beyond Marx, but following him along the path of the 'materialist position' of the *critique of economy*. *Politics* can only be theoretically interrogated with a 'critique of politics in the form in which it is imposed by bourgeois ideology and practice' (Althusser, 1978: 14).

As a region of social life, politics is in itself a product of the mode of capitalist production. It cannot be theorised without locating its structural relation at its conjuncture. Its intellectual organisation materialises around the division between 'political society' (politics) and 'civil society' (the social). Politics

> is constitutive of its ideology and of its class struggle. Through politics, the general will, as a product of individual wills, and expressed by the universal vote and represented by parliament, is imposed as evident by the political ideological state apparatus.
>
> (Althusser, 1978: 14)[9]

This way of thinking about *politics* – as bourgeois by definition – sheds light on the link between the Althusserian concern for the state and his conception of politics as a predominantly – though not exclusively – *ideological* device, as presented in the theory of the *Ideological State Apparatuses* (Althusser, 1970b: 145).

This is not about the 'problem of the beginning' of the state, or in more classical terms, about the *foundation of the city*, but rather about politics as a dimension of social life, in its structural connection with an *already-come-about* order, in this case, the social capitalist formation. Once this field is located in its relation to the ontology of the 'encounter', politics can only be thought of as *the* politics of *this* world.

My thesis is that the problem of *politics* (of concrete politics as a bourgeois-juridical device) constitutes, in some way, the problem of the (impossible) articulation between the political and ideology. Or, in other words, for Althusser there is no *political relation*, strictly speaking, but rather *the political* trapped/lived in the imaginary relations of *politics* (which are bourgeois by definition). The political 'relation' here does not correspond to the problem of the *institution of a state* (the ontological problem of the beginning). Rather, it concerns the problem of the *duration of a state*, and in this sense, it is 'always-already' imprinted in the *ideological* matter of the 'social bond'.

The political and ideology, or where is the subject?

The duration of a state appears as a problem stemming from the very thesis of the aleatory encounter between elements without pre-existing meaning. It only becomes visible as a 'problem' if we accept the non-founded ontological nature of all social orders. The *duration* of the state thus also becomes the question about *identity*, because it does not exist prior to the encounter. The *signifying order* that ties subjects and objects together is the *becoming-necessary of contingency*, and the 'evidence' (of the unchanging nature of necessity, the conviction that the world was always 'this way') becomes the key to its durability, its ideological function.[10]

Ideology is the fabric in which the *State* and *Symbolic Order* become coextensive. It is a machine that produces *identity*. The (ontological) precariousness of each *conjuncture* is what confers upon *ideology* its specific historical efficacy. Providing *evidence* of the identification between *being* and *subject* produces the coordinates that adjust *beings* to this *world*: 'the man who believes himself to be the centre of the world . . . master of the world's meaning (the cogito)' (Althusser, 1985: 6).

Althusser finds in Machiavelli an aporetic figure, useful for thinking about the impossible relation between subject and constitutive power (*potentia*):

> The foundation of a state . . . or the complete reformation that is also an absolute (re)commencement of the course of history . . . requires the absolute solitude of the reformer or founder . . . In order to derive a state from nothing, the founder must be alone; that is to say, be everything: omnipotent—omnipotent before the vacuum of the conjuncture and its aleatory future.
>
> (Althusser, 1976: 64)

The image of *omnipotence* works, if it is understood in terms of the conjunctural 'mechanism' of *politics*, as a founding myth, as a primordial monad. It is the limit of what exists, its 'absolute a priori question' (Althusser, 1964: 23). However, in terms of the ontological problem of the conjunction (that is, beyond the symbolic order, in the non-symbolisable space of *the political*), we find that this 'limit of what exists' is the site of *constitutive power*. For Althusser, the 'one man alone' – stripped of all significant relations – is *omnipotent* (Althusser, 1976: 64).

The figure of the 'man alone' or 'man of nothing' points to the constitutive power with which City and Founder 'take on consistency' in a *clinamen*; they take shape in a reciprocal movement in which a new conjuncture is instituted. Here there is no *founding subject*; the Prince is himself an *effect* of the encounter. Althusser (1985/2007: 149) takes up Lefort's expression concerning the 'void of the subject in power' to think about the *political subject* in itself, under the structure of a paradoxical 'encounter' and a 'determined absence' (p. 149).

The Prince is 'uniquely and exclusively defined by the function he must perform—that is to say, by the historical vacuum he must fill—the Prince is a pure aleatory possibility-impossibility' (Althusser, 1976: 26). As a *political subject* though, his problem is not only that of the 'encounter', but fundamentally that of 'duration':

> to aim *beyond what exists* . . . to aim above all existing principalities, beyond their *limits* . . . the process of becoming-the-Prince and becoming-the-Principality are one and the same: the process of the new development, the beginning. The Prince does not precede the New Prince. They must begin together.
>
> (Althusser, 1976: 73)

Conclusion

'*Political practice*' is at once *event* and *process*: constitution of an individual (historical singularity) and subjective displacement (processual transformation). The constitutive moment is a meeting of meaning-less parts that nonetheless preserve the union – a *clinamen* that 'lasts';[11] hence Althusser's discussion of Lacan: from the Althusserian point of view, there is not, strictly speaking, a subject *of* the void. Where Freud finds an *Ich Spaltung* and Lacan sees a 'subject of unconscious', Althusser sees something entirely different: 'alongside the *Ich* there is a *Spaltung* . . . his abyss is not a subject, but that which opens *alongside a subject*' (Althusser, 1966: 78).[12] The relationship is *paradoxical,* as I have mentioned above, because it is not just a *Spaltung*, but an interplay between *Spaltung* and *Ich*. Thus, for Althusser, the political subject has the structure of the encounter.[13] This condition, at once contingent and interwoven in a symbolic order, constitutes the *paradoxical* nature of the political subject. Spinozistic philosophy allows us to think about this simultaneously *eventmental* and *procedural* nature of historical singularity with the idea of 'perseverance in existence'.

A concrete singularity acquires consistency in an 'individual', understood not in empiricist terms, but as a system of integration and internal differentiation of its constitutive parts (Chaui, 1988: 146). Singularity is constitutively shaped by *conflict* (conflict with external forces and conflict between its constitutive parts). What is more, it is a conflict of forces that puts the dynamic of *desire* into play, and that, as a consequence, cannot take on any plan or philosophical meaning beyond the avatars of this dynamic of desire (Balibar, 1993). This is Althusser's 'fundamental ontological proposal' – that which identifies the notions of 'struggle' and 'existence': 'the class struggle and the existence of the classes is one and the same, . . . identity is an *always-already* division' (Balibar, 1988: 62).

Political practice indicates this point of torsion between *discursive order* and *event*; the paradox of a 'detour without rules'. Precisely because of this, the 'individual' (singularity) is the 'political moment' of *clinamen*, and the 'subject' (identity) is 'process', *duration*.

A *political subject* resists dissolution; it is a unique process of perseverance in existence. The political subject is a paradoxical crossroads, the 'exception' to *theory*, the 'curse' of *politics*.

Notes

1 Translated from Spanish by Shana Yael Shubs and Ruth Felder.
2 Translation of this and all other original Spanish passages for which there is no authorized translation published is by Shana Yael Shubs and Ruth Felder.
3 Translators' note: Different translations and treatments of Althusser variously use 'void', 'emptiness' and 'vacuum' for *vide*. Here we use 'void' unless directly citing a text that uses a different term.
4 Symptomatically, Althusser is a 'present absence' in the map of the 'Lacanian left'.
5 Argentina turns out to be a good example of this: political singularity erupts as the 'populist abomination' in idealist theories about good democracy and good revolution. An unexpected practical rationality is interwoven into the concrete experience of Argentinian democracy. It is hard to recall similar challenges here that motivated as much original theoretical scholarship and politico-philosophical debate as that created by the dark and incomprehensible Kirchnerist moment. Néstor Kirchner assumed the presidency with an extremely low percentage of votes (22 per cent) following the resignation of his opponent in a context of profound economic and social turmoil and a so-called 'crisis of representation' in politics. Nearly ten years later, his wife won a second mandate, with very high levels of popularity in a context of remarkably vibrant political participation.
6 Translators' note: This term, from the French *avènement*, is variously translated as 'coming about', 'advent' and 'becoming' in English translations and texts. Here, unless citing a text that uses a different term, we use either 'coming about' or 'becoming', depending on the structure of the original passage.
7 In Althusser's (2003: 238) own words 'to the extent that it is possible to abstract from the teleology in the Hegelian conception of history and the dialectic, it is still true that we owe Hegel . . . the conception of History as a *process*'.
8 Again, the Argentinian case is an example of this. The coming about of an order and the forcefulness of its emergence in the 'empty' space of a broken semiosis: 'out with all of them' (*que se vayan todos*), the famous chant entoned during the social crisis of December 2001, reveals itself as the aporia of the meaning-less.

9 It is no wonder, then, that in Argentina, as in other Latin American countries such as Bolivia, Venezuela and Ecuador, the political space of socially-conservative tendencies is organised around 'parliamentarist' discursive positions relying on a liberal matrix of 'political representation', in which deliberative spaces are presented as the specular image of 'civil society'.

10 For example, what does the Kirchnerist identity consist of? Whatever it may be, its present depends upon its duration. In a sense, what Kirchnerism *is* today depends upon what it becomes in the future.

11 At what point did Kirchnerism become Kirchnerism? We cannot define a precise moment. It is a political identity that consolidates itself as 'threatened' and that draws its power from this threat of dissolution. Currently, there are formulas such as 'there is still more to do' (*todavía falta*) and 'never less' (*nunca menos*). [Translators' note: This latter expression plays on the Spanish opposites *más/menos* (more/less) and the expresión *nunca más* (never again), which is both the name of the famous report by the National Commission on the Disappearance of Persons that investigated the crimes of the military dictatorship of 1976–83, and an expression of broad popular sentiment that the crimes committed by the state during the dictatorship must never be repeated.] They are statements whose principal function is not to affirm a 'theoretical truth' but, instead, to find a vehicle to support the duration of an order that will only be what it is if it lasts.

12 From the Althusserian position, it is not possible to identify a subject of 'out with all of them'; 2001 can only be thought of as the abyss next to which the Kirchnerist subject has risen.

13 Once again, Kirchnerism offers several examples of this, because it articulates previously non-existing elements in its politically 'frontist' *image.* What elements comprise 'transversality'? What discrete demarcation might be put to work to acknowledge the 'youth' that join Kirchnerism? The Kirchnerist 'relationship' does not exist.

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16

DISCOURSE ANALYSIS AND SUBJECTIVITY WITHIN LACANIAN AND POST-STRUCTURALIST THOUGHT

Matías González

This chapter will attempt to meet two objectives: the first, to analyze certain aspects concerning the configuring process of post-structuralist thought and its relationship to concepts such as event or immanence; the second, to present a case study in which discourse-analytic categories will be tested specifically against long-term conceptual processes – considering, in this respect, an example coming from a historical approach with regards to the modern notion of 'creative' subject.

An approach to post-structuralist problematics

This first part of the chapter is based on a synthesis and a review of a previous study (Gonzalez, 2007), where some dimensions concerning the configuring process of post-structuralist thought were considered on the occasion of recent receptions of the posthumous work of Althusser (1994, 2002, 2006).

More precisely, we will observe certain aspects of Ípola's (2007) study of the posthumous and *post-Althusserian* Althusser, suggesting traces of a possible indeterminacy with regards to relevant aspects of a post-structuralist problematic. An archaeological analysis will complement this review, allowing us to highlight some possible consequences that will be illustrated in the contrast between different types of emphasis on a recent understanding of ideological processes based on the Lacanian graph of desire, on the one hand, and a type of sensitivity that attenuates the performative role of language, or contemplates it within a subtle process regarding the determination of the emergence of a truth and the type of reconfiguration that *may* follow from it, on the other.

As is often pointed out, the recent appearance of the posthumous work of Althusser has led to the recovery of one 'last' and until recently unknown 'philosophy' of the French author, which should paradoxically be approached or understood as *post-Althusserian*, referring here to 'Althusserism' as the

collective political theoretical 'classic' project generated around Althusser in the 1960s. According to Ípola's (2007) main thesis, this 'second' philosophical elaboration did not only appear more clearly during the last years of his author's intellectual production, that is, in his 'solitary' days, but would cross out, as if to render mute, all works from his earliest writings, generating various effects. This would provide, according to Ípola, an indispensable key to address the whole Althusserian legacy, which would be affected or traversed by this duplicity of thought in the form of unexpected disruptions and fractious elaborations.

Here, the main emphasis on the variation, which allows the contrast between the two Althusserian philosophies, and the novelty of its latest version, will be related mainly to an examination of the tension between the attempt to 'reconstruct historical materialism' as 'science of history' of social forms (classic Althusser), and the introduction of contingency and history in a 'post-Marxist' sense (the last Althusser) to try to think 'politics'. At the same time, this first thesis is articulated with a second one: briefly, that the core problematic of post-structuralist thought (and therefore the last Althusser), one whose horizon of understanding is still theoretically productive now, would have had its initial configuration a decade before its most important mentors (Lacan, Badiou, etc.) were devoted to exploring its potential in various fields. In other words, the structural logic of the term 'with a double function' would have been raised (and 'point by point'), the argument goes, in the early texts of Lévi-Strauss concerning some insights into the 'zero signifier'. If the first thesis serves as a guideline for the contrast between the two philosophies of Althusser, allowing Ípola to reconstruct the 'philosophical journey' of the French author, the second one, in coordination with the issue of 'structural causality' and other similar theoretical proposals, allows him to reconstruct some constitutive moments of a post-structuralist 'philosophical space' traversing the writings and interpretations, positions and differences (Badiou, Althusser, Lacan, etc.) within the French intellectual scene of the 1960s.

Although unable to reconstruct the details of our previous consideration concerning this reception of the posthumous work of Althusser, it can be noted that part of our critical attention is focussed on the notion of *the subject*. Illustrating this synthetically, Ípola highlights the 'tension' that would occur between the never-abandoned Althusserian concept of history as a process without a subject, and his last philosophical elaborations. In reviewing the sequence of Althusserian texts on Machiavelli, Ípola (2007: 91) draws attention to the fact that against 'the constriction of the structure' Althusser will 'contrast [in his later philosophy] the strength of will, virtue and individual fortune'. Then, in discussion of his notes on the theory of discourse, Ípola also argues that from the final contributions of Althusser there could follow a certain need to reintroduce the notion of the subject.

If Ípola's general argumentation is presumed to be settled within a post-Althusserian and post-structuralist horizon of thought, our own argument with

this sequence was based on an effort to display some distinctions that may allow us to observe a shift towards a certain type of indeterminacy.

Archaeological perspectives

The approach we took at this point considered some recent studies that have thrown light upon the structuralist critical approach to the category of the subject, based on a fundamental epistemic distinction – which even Foucault (1966/1973) in *The Order of Things* could still conceive of, while he was based on such critical premises – namely, the one operated in the late-nineteenth century with the dislocation of evolutionary ideas concerning history. From this point of view, it would also be necessary to draw attention to the operative system of the opposition between science and ideology, while distinguishing between the various notions of subject that were involved at that time. As has been observed in recent intellectual-history research, the subject persecuted by Althusserism as his 'shadow' was not so much the 'subject' that he intended to fight (embodied in the Hegelian concept which would have faded by the end of the century), but already a very different one, derived from the kind of Being that was certainly the non-thetic Husserlian subject, epistemically involved in a horizon structured by a tension between self-regulated systems and intentional action. It would be this kind of subject, in fact, that would be the one to delineate the paradigm of thought that would then come to be broken, above all, by the post-structuralist problematic (see Palti, 2005).

Heidegger's emphasis on 'The image of the world age' was built upon the association between 'subject' and 'modernity', that is – and here identified with Descartes – the 'link' between *subjectum* (as the unitary substrate underlying the changes of forms) and the Self. Reconstructed by these means was a 'fundamental conceptual rupture' that would lead to the 'age of representation'; mankind is now that which 'represents the world', thus giving rise for the first time to a 'world image' strictly speaking, characteristic of modernity as an epoch. Within this reading, the contribution of Foucault (1966/1973) consisted of plotting some essential nuances. That is, Foucault took up and discussed this epistemic model, introducing a distinction between what he called the 'classical' episteme (whose symbol would be Don Quixote at the key point of the break with the medieval world) and the 'modern' episteme, which emerged towards the end of the eighteenth century, and whose figure would be the 'properly modern' Hegelian subject Foucault refers to as a 'kind of Being from which interiority derives its history' (Palti, 2003: 33).

In this context, recent contributions by Palti would allow us in turn to thematize a new conceptual distinction: Foucault's model has left us without analyzing at the same time a relevant epistemic break, produced in the late-nineteenth century, with the dislocation of the evolutionary concept of history, which would result in a very different regime of knowledge. It was, to put it emblematically (and for the natural sciences), a rotation from a 'physics of elements'

towards a 'physics of fields', here described as the age of 'form'. If the modern subject, as Foucault observed, was 'paradoxically' empirical and transcendental (in his being, 'beyond knowledge', but by very virtue of this, a 'condition' of it), a *transcendental objective*, 'the underground generative force, the hidden principle that makes things be', the notion of the subject in the age of 'form' is subordinated to 'a plurality of systematic relationships' in which it can eventually be articulated, while these forms, contingently articulated 'do not obey any genetic pattern of successive formation' (Palti, 2003: 38). There would be a reduplication of the regime of representation here (as distinct from the representation referred to by Foucault), turning on its own constructive mechanisms, bending around upon itself. This would be connected with the revival of metaphysics, because 'form', on the one hand, will refer to a second order level of objectivity, both *a priori* and contingent and, on the other hand, it will involve the underlying (below the ideal objectivities) of the primary 'institutive act' by which it would be articulated as 'the given field'. Without further deepening of this argument here, it is enough to mention that the Husserlian *ego* (unlike *subjectum* and the Subject), as it will be related to the concept of *world*, will lead to a confrontation with the radical contingency of our ways of understanding the world and ourselves.

In the phenomenological horizon, therefore, the transcendental subject (locus of *intentional* action) would not be a guarantee of order (a *subjectum* or a 'unitary substrate') to become that which destroys 'any identity in history, what breaks the linearity of evolutionary processes', introducing *contingency*, becoming its own 'origin'. If structuralism, in turn, would have deprived us of such an instance, it could not finally explain the emergence of the contingency – presupposed, however, in its concepts – that is, the transformation between historical configurations. The various *epistemes*, concludes Palti (2003: 44), are in Foucault 'particular historical formations that are not themselves truly historic; while *forms* are perfectly self-contained and self-regulated, temporality (change) is, in short, something that "comes from outside" ' of them. This will explain the oscillation between structuralism and phenomenology that characterizes this particular archaeological ground (which will then unfold in a myriad of well-known derived dichotomies), and in which there remains a lack of differentiation between the issue of 'agency' in history (the gap between a state and its consequent) and the question of the subject. As we have briefly observed in Ípola's (2007) argument, his conclusions could finally lean on one 'possible answer' to the question of temporality in history. The type of premises of his opposition between science and politics would mitigate the alleged 'novelty' that was designed to defend the 'last' Althusser.

Finally, and this may be a key to understanding the irradiating power and subsequent influence of French intellectual concerns of the 1960s, an archaeological approach such as the one indicated here would show that at that time (and soon after the publication of *The Order of Things*) a new epistemic shift started to be produced, leading to the emergence of a 'neo-structuralism' (Frank, 1989), in

which 'the radical historicity of social systems' would be subject to a mode of conception in which they are never completely self-regulated, but rather that 'in its centre there is a void which determines a permanent disjunction with regards to themselves' (Palti, 2003: 45). From this point of view, 'the *ego* could no longer be conceived as an agent of change, as something prior to the structures (the pure constitutive act), but neither as a mere effect of structure, as postulated by structuralism, but rather, as an *effect of des-structure*' (ibid.). Finally, in this new regime of knowledge, temporality will no longer be something that comes 'from the outside' of the 'forms', but would be located within them, in their simultaneous necessity and impossibility to constitute themselves as a *self-contained* objectivity. Palti concludes that this would demonstrate that the answer to the issue of 'agency' addressed by way of the transcendental subject, would be the only way to address the question of change in history. In fact, one of the characteristic features of neostructuralism would be to break the link between the two questions, settling itself in the heart of this 'ontological gap in which the *ego* can emerge' (that is, moving the discussion to the field prior to the distinction between subject and structure).

Some consequences for the post-Althusserian field

> That's why we want to question the exclusive nature of the choices you pose, or subjectivity as the passive effect of the structures, or subjectivity as self-determination. This alternative remains entirely within the context of the traditional conception of identity.
>
> (Laclau, 1990: 210)

Let us briefly recall the sequence of 'quilting' underlying the Lacanian graph of desire: in the spoken chain, the association between signifiers and their meanings are produced retroactively, that is, at the end of the signifying chain. 'A discourse', said Lacan, is not only matter, a texture, but it requires time, has 'a dimension in time, a certain density' (Lacan, 1957–58: 8). This is related to the 'staying behind of the signified with respect to the stream of signifiers' (Žižek, 1989: 102). The signifiers 'follow one another' and then, at a certain point, one of them fixes retroactively the meaning of the string (p. 101). Following Žižek's post-Althusserian consideration of the concept of ideology, an example of 'ideological quilting' would be: 'In the ideological space, float signifiers like "freedom", "state", "justice", "peace", and then their chain is supplemented with some master-signifier ("Communism") which retroactively determines their (Communist) meaning' (Žižek, 1989: 102). Real freedom only comes about through the abolition of bourgeois formal freedom; the state is an instrument of the ruling class, and so on. Democratic-liberal 'quilting' would produce a very different articulation of meaning; the same can be said of the conservative one, and so on. Let us consider the elementary form of this diagram:

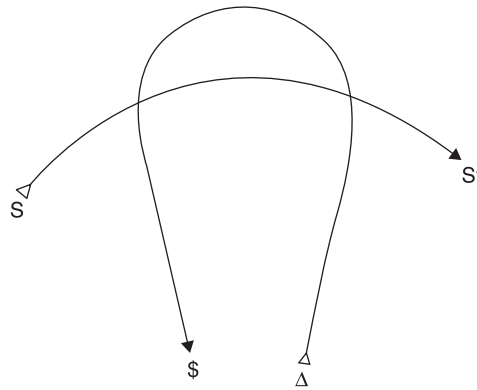

Figure 16.1 Lacan's graph of desire – elementary cell

As indicated by the arrows, there is a double movement in which the signifying chain S–S′ is crossed by a vector departing from a 'mythical presymbolic intention', which quilts (in its first intersection with the string S–S′) the signifying chain. Therefore, the 'message', the meaning, is represented by/at the second intersection of the vectors (allowing us to appreciate the retroactive dynamics of any effect of signification). Observe how the Žižekian elaboration apparently does not cover or does not enable us easily to think through a question concerning the ways in which a process presupposed by its concept may be effectively carried out; that is, in the level of analysis involved here, the fact that *not every* act of nomination produces a new 'quilting', in a post-Althusserian sense. At this point, without detracting from the merits that this approach has offered to social analysis, I want to emphasize the way in which these retroactive dynamics appeared within another Lacanian-related horizon or field of work. This time, I will be following Badiou (1988/2005), in the tension between moments of disruption on the one hand, and contingent subjective processes based on them on the other. In this context, one could argue that in the case of Badiou, without neglecting the retroactive instances of meaning production, he was able to invert the process such that there was now an emphasis on a proactive dimension, or, so to speak, a 'forward' orientation, focusing on a register of 'consequences', and inquiries that are illustrated in his 'forcing' theory.

The *confidence*, Badiou suggests, 'in itself' (as subject), under the promise guaranteed by the ultra-one of the event – with regards to the inquiring trajectory – is a *sapient* kind of belief. The finite fragment of a generic procedure that the subject is, generates or 'composes' restructured nominations, which are out-of-phase with regards to the established meanings of the situation, 'liberating' its referent, but does so based on the available resources of the situation, its (encyclopedic) language, its multiples. The (released) referent of nominations would be situated at the future perfect; they are subject to a supplementation of

the situation by an indiscernible truth from which the *trajectory* (of the subject) is its local fragment. In other words, the topic here would be that not every nomination is articulated to the production or *generativity* (which is the term that better encompasses Badiou's thought) of a truth procedure.

Now we turn to an example from conceptual history, which might serve as an outline of a way to extend aspects of discourse analysis onto the historical text.

Τέχνη

Perhaps a special case of discourse analysis is linked to a hypothesis about its utility for research deployed on a plane of long-term sequences, on the analysis of phenomena that may become apparent only within a temporal background of certain extension. Our example here will be addressed at a conceptual history discourse register. We will consider a study by Blumenberg (1981) to highlight the possibility of reading it under an analytical–discursive kind of concern (whose conceptions will also approach those recently observed and to emphasize not so much performative signifying effects, but how a disruption from within a space of knowledge or language requires other operations that recover that disruption of the process of discursive reconfiguration).

Our case departs from considering Foucault's genealogy in the same sequence or in connection with post-structuralist concepts (e.g. in Badiou or Laclau). Based on these concepts, and notions such as contingencies, disruptions, consequences and 'failures in knowledge' (Parker, 2005; Pavón-Cuellar, 2010), we can try to read this case, condensed here for reasons of space.

Taking contributions from the (Freudian) Blumenberg 'metaphorology', this would be a way of reconstructing the immanent process of 'decoupling' of the long-standing assumed congruence between Being and nature, which had assumed that the human being's creative ability in the world should be conceived of within the classic notion of mimesis. In other words, it would assume an internal disjunction at work in the process and transformation of ways of representing the world and the way the human subject participates 'in the essential' relation that man could have with the topic at stake. It may be noted here that there is a first emphasis on the 'effects of des-structure', so to put it, in the fabrics that *work* (*travail*) the case concerned.[1]

One of the ancillary interests of this problem relies on the force with which the congruence between Being and nature – or its imaginary regime – continued to operate even beyond its decomposition in the late Middle Ages, reabsorbed and re-emerging as a *pattern* with which to structure or canalize experiences that could share very little with that conception, as in the example of Wright after the invention of the aeroplane. When trying to explain himself, he appealed to the old motif also present in Leonardo's account of his 'imitation' of the flight of birds (although the principle of rotation of the propellers was one of his *creations* that did not actually have such correlates in nature, and had been possible, in short, through a long process of decomposition of the inherited ontological

assumptions concerning flight). It is important to remember that the Aristotelian formula that apparently prevailed for two millennia in the possibilities of self awareness of what man was able to do in the world, used the term τέχνη, with which the Greeks designated more than our current notion of technology [*Technik*], summarizing all the abilities of man to create or give form to reality, and which did not made a distinction between art and artifice.

Through *the idiot* character of Cusa, it is possible to find an early formulation of the problem at hand, and a historical–conceptual premise to retain, namely, that the idea of the primal 'original creation' – God's *ars infinita* that this spoon carver imitates – is not associated with the creation of this factual world, but the creation of the idea, which has no model, a completely new *eidos* that had not previously occurred in nature.

Blumenberg (1981) draws on Plato to highlight, in the context of his criticism of representative arts (not for their effects but for the ontological foundation of a third degree of copy), how the definition of invention as the begetting [*hervorbringt*] of the model appears to be implied. It will also be noted that Plato always uses two different notions for the type of relationship between copies and models, translatable as: participation or *methexis* on the one hand, with a positive connotation, and imitation or *mimesis* on the other, with a negative value in relation to the non-derivative. It will be the later history of Platonism that will accentuate the notion of mimesis, although Plato would emphasize the other possibility, and that becomes apparent if one takes the controversy against the Sophists into account, where the thought of a 'sheer making' [*absolute Setzung*] may have been conceived for the first time. But this concept, Blumenberg (1981: 26) notes in discussion with Henrich, still lacks almost everything that characterizes the concept of the 'creative' [*shöpferische*] in question. The state, language, customs are 'placed' there by man according to sophistry; even 'history' first appeared as a result of human activity. But they did it without a 'spiritual subject' to be given such metaphysical award. What else had to happen to provide that range to the representation 'of the complete spontaneity of human activity'?

Among the historical sequences of these interwoven representations and presuppositions, which will push into new consequences or leave open certain historical possibilities, certain contingencies could be recovered inherent to the process by which such representation, transplanted into a theological substrate – and even because of this – will be able to condensate such *force of attraction* of wills in the history of man's self understanding. One may begin to get an idea of the process of 'theological incubation' of components that will later set up the *sublimity* deposited in the works of human spontaneity, but such displacement is still far from here. The primary question for Blumenberg (1981: 27) is not when something like the idea of the authenticity of the human work was first conceived, but where it came to acquire a 'metaphysical status', enabling it to organize and give form to the conditions of an entire epoch of thought.

A second element would be whether Platonic metaphysics allows for a question as to the origin of ideas, or a notion of the creative act. In this respect, from

the tenth book of the Republic, Blumenberg recovers the presence of the notion of a god 'begetter' of essences, which, strikingly, would not be echoed in the Biblical historical reception that based its notion of creation, on the contrary, in the myth of the Demiurge; this means that the interpretations will be carried forward from within the imitation structures, allowing them, along the way, to regain some links with the incubation of creative-mimicking human activity. This aspect could perhaps partially reduce the 'striking' of such 'forgetting', as long as one is disposed to employ the force of a notion of truth related to concepts that were not available at the time.

In fact, the long-standing notion that insists on there being something 'creative' in the human being would lead to the historical and spiritual background displaced into his artistic activities, also soaking its concretions under the heat of its value of 'confirming' the truth of his self conception 'decided' in the late Middle Ages. The articulation of this process, carried out after the entry into the spiritual history of a subject that may be granted with major 'metaphysical awards', will provide the framework of assumptions that will lead to the association of the notion of historical *availability*.

We should point out one last element of relevance in the history of the concept of *possibility* in the Platonic Timaeus, one that leaves open other variants with regards to the issues raised in the Republic, namely, that the Demiurge performs his work of *reproduction* of matter, not as he pleases, but under a principle of 'optimal effect', so that the world he produces is *kallistos ton gegonton*, 'the best of things that have become', or the best possible (Blumenberg, 1981: 29). The *ethical*–ontological role of the ideas means that these are not only plans for the manner in which the work *can be* fashioned, but rules that dictate it *ought to* be this way, leading to the uniqueness and consummation of the cosmos as compatible with the ideal model: all that is possible 'is already there', leaving no space for the original human creation. This much can be found in Aristotle as a total correspondence between reality and possibility, where a closed self-sufficiency will deprive any kind of *will* from power over the Being of something; it is then not even possible for God to 'enrich' what already exists. After some variations in the idea of mimesis in the Hellenic period and the Stoa, a counterpoint between Posidonius, Tertullian and Seneca will leave us in an area of increased activity with regards to the history of decomposition in question. Briefly, while Posidonius erases the boundary between nature and art, Tertullian attests both to the sharp distinction between divine and human work that can be found in the patristic, and its extension to a regular controversy:

> There is nothing that God found pleasing, that he did not himself bring forth. Was he incapable of creating purple or steel blue sheep as well? Even though he was capable of doing so, he did not want to do so; what God does not want to make, man must also refrain from making.
>
> (Blumenberg, 1981: 33)

As Blumenberg observes, a key element in this context is given by the gradual increase of the *will* factor introduced into cosmogony since the Hellenistic period, but that may be found operating with particular intensity in authors such as Augustine. As for the essence of a valid understanding of the Being available at the time, the Biblical doctrine of creation in principle will not have any need for change, nor result in any incongruity. The binding character of nature would be even stronger because it would be a 'manifestation' of the creator's will. The problem that only later would start to emerge is geared towards the fact that the foundation of such a binding act of *will* will bring to the fore a question about the *necessity* of the given world. As Tertullian would state in the quotation given previously: 'Not only did God create what he did not want, but also He did not want what He did not create.' But what is the un-wanted and not-created? A possible kind of Being still not present in nature? (Blumenberg, 1981: 35).

While in Augustine, resting on the old ontology and the idea of totality of the *mundus intelligibilis*, the act of will could only be understood as the transposition into the *mundus sensibilis* as a whole (that is, only the 'that' of creation but not the 'what', which is taken as fact), the historically-reconstructed subsequent meeting of the notion of *will* and the concept of *infinity* will mean the generation of a new disturbance within the old assumptions – and with it, on the ancient congruence between nature and Being. In Buenaventura, the act of divine will, 'communication' in his work will involve an accent in which from the treasury of the possibilities, God would choose 'many' of them, but not all, leaving a prudent, loving rest; while Ockham will subsequently intensify the attention on the other pole of the question, the 'many' of the non-wanted unrealized. Blumenberg (1981) will delve into the process of displacement of this focus, through Cusa and Luther, among others, emphasizing the force of such a dynamic opened by the concept of infinity, which follows a clear lead into the modern world, establishing in this context a historical diagonal among various 'testimonies', from Descartes, Leibniz, the *Sturm und Drang*, until Klee, among others, as part of a process by which a concept will make its way.

What stands out, in short, is related to the reconstruction of the historic 'adventures' of the ontological assumptions on which the modern concept of creation will be sustained with its particular modulation and spiritual intensity.[2] A central question in this context, one that can perhaps be extended to much of Blumenberg's work, in his words, would be how new ways of experience could 'break through' the meshes or under the preceding assumptions and meanings (Blumenberg, 1981: 23, see also 1997/2010: 5).

Conclusion

We have developed a brief discussion of the possibility of extending and applying some conceptual framework foundations or premises within the Lacanian

field of thought in the context of studying discursive processes across broad historical periods. Due to the type of objects of interest, the whole plot development has moved upon temporal dynamics with regards to meaning processes. A first part made it possible to reconstruct a series of conceptual assumptions around notions such as subject and immanence, central to Lacanian contexts, in this case, through an analysis related to Althusserianism, and a second has tested these Lacanian and post-structuralist premises within a case study taken from 'metaphorology'. Ultimately, the example provided here could be used to interrogate the possibilities of articulating discourse analysis to notions and works on a conceptual historical level, that is, the study (here simplified) of the substructure of discursive formations within a historical dimension. We refer here to the tracing of processes and truths sometimes subtle and difficult to locate, given its length, but operative and plausible of analysis under a similar kind of *logics*.

Notes

1 Blumenberg (1981: 23) argues that the end of the first search arrives at a dead end: '[m]easured by its historical effectiveness, this attempt to see the modern period as an immanent product of the Middle Ages [. . .] did not succeed'. Indeed, this example perhaps illustrates the dimension of immanence, while that of subjectivity may appear in less detail. For a consideration of the importance of both in Blumenberg, see Gonzalez (2010).

2 'Do we believe in the immutability of sentiments? Though everyone, especially those that seem most noble and disinterested, have a history' Nietzsche stated (Foucault, 1971: 160, my translation).

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17

CREATION IN THE VORTEX OF THE REAL

Badiou and discourse analysis

Carlos Gómez Camarena

> Our epoch can be said to have been stamped and signed, in philosophy, by the return of the question of Being. This is why it is dominated by Heidegger. . . . When all is said and done, there is little doubt that the century has been ontological, and that this destiny is far more essential than the 'linguistic turn' with which it has been credited.
>
> (Alain Badiou, *Deleuze, The Clamor of Being*, 1997/1999: 18)

The purpose of this chapter is to show the possible contributions of the French-Morrocan philosopher Alain Badiou for discourse analysis; this will be an antecedent for the use of the ideas of the Rabat-born. It is possible to list these contributions as following: the real as creative power, a new conception of being, discourse analysis for Badiou's four conditions in philosophy and the poetic status or nomination of the event. What is written here takes up the critique made of Badiou by Ernesto Laclau (2008: 11):

> The limits of his analysis [Badiou's] are given, from my perspective, by what I consider an insufficient exploration of that which is structurally implied in a radical interruption. This is the point where my hegemonic approach differs from his, based on what he qualifies as 'fidelity to the event'. It is also the point where his ontology – mathematical – differs from mine – rhetorical.

It is not my task here to take sides in this dilemma between rhetoric, language and mathematical ontology, but to make more explicit how mathematical formalization in general and Badiou's thinking in particular may contribute to discourse analysis. Let us say that, strategically, the starting point for tackling Badiou's contribution to discourse analysis is a dilemma concerning language and ontology.

To achieve this, we will not undertake a long journey through his philosophy; instead we will present an outline of the most important aspects of his work to settle this issue. We will assume the reader has had general contact with his work or will make their own effort to make what is coming intelligible to them.

Badiou's ontology

The German Philosopher Martin Heidegger (1927/1962) denounces what he called 'oblivion of being', that is to say, the way that each time philosophy asks about being, it answers with an entity, with a thing. Physics, God or Reason were three answers in ancient Greece, the Middle Ages and modernity respectively, to the question of being. For Heidegger, the only way to not 'entify' or objectify being, is by activating the powers of language, not through recourse to primitive myth – as in the pre-philosophic antiquity – but now through poetry. Poetic language can scratch or almost touch being without thinking of it as an entity, without objectifying it.

After Heidegger, philosophy has been faced with the challenge of creating a thought that does not fall into this oblivion of being, into metaphysics. To be clear, as far as Heidegger is concerned, metaphysics is something to be refused. For his own part, Badiou follows Heidegger in his critique of the metaphysics of identity and presence (as variations on the entification of being). For Badiou, however, there are other types of metaphysical threats that are just as important, if not more so, such as the metaphysics of 'One' and of 'sense'.

Badiou's suspicion is that the attempts to free philosophy from metaphysics by means of poetry are, precisely, what makes Heidegger fall into the metaphysics of sense, and all metaphysics of sense is therefore a metaphysics that resides in the One, the one of sense.[1] For this reason Heidegger ends up in searching for the sacred and crying out for a return of the gods (Badiou, 1998/2006: 34).

Our philosopher, Badiou, will as a consequence oppose more and more the 'linguistic turn' and instead opt for an 'ontological turn', which he considers more essential. He claims that the only way to affirm a true ontology without falling into metaphysics is to found this in mathematics, to such an extent that leads him to formulate the following equation: ontology = mathematics (Badiou, 1988/2007: 15), or even to talk about the 'ontological vocation of mathematics' (1998/2006: 59). But what does this mean?

For Badiou, philosophy had to wait for modern (post-Cantorian) set theory to be able to deploy a subtractive ontology; in other words, an ontology not based on identity, the One, sense, presence or any form of entification of being. This means that for him the fundamental substratum of reality (*being-qua-being*) is multiplicity. This multiplicity is not constituted by some 'one' or from atoms but from a void. Starting from theorems and axioms it is possible to postulate, even seize, the inconsistent pure multiplicity or *being-qua-being*.

But from this inconsistent multiplicity we can only have an indication of what is at stake by means of a different kind of mark, what Badiou terms the

'count-as-one'. For example, a person can be taken as a unit, but can also be a group of organs and the organs can at the same time be a group of cells, and so on. In the last term, there would be a multiplicity of multiplicities until we reach a final reality, that of a void set. All multiplicities are multiples of voids. To 'stabilize' this inconsistent multiplicity, void has to be taken as a mark:[2] 'it would be in this instance of the letter – an instance borne out by the mark of the void – that the thought "without-One", or without metaphysics unfolds' (Badiou, 1998/2006: 42). The mark allows us to turn inconsistent multiples (voids) into consistent multiples. This is the presentation, the symbolic structure that allows handling with the inconsistent multiplicities by making them consistent.

However, at the same time as making a presentation of the inconsistent multiplicity, it is possible to represent it. Here is where the figure of the 'State' appears, that is to say, the linguistic regime that reduplicates presence (it re-presents it), legislating what counts and what does not count. This means there are multiples that, even though they exist, are not accounted for by the State, the regime. The concept of State does not refer only to the political but to any institution, discourse, regime or established order that legislates what is accountable and what is not.

This explains why, for example, immigrants (which do exist) are not accounted for by the State laws under which they work: they are presented (since they clean bathrooms and take care of the nation's children) but they are not re-presented (since they don't count for the State). Having said that, it should be noted that for Badiou three types of multiples exist (Farran, 2010: 82): multiples that are presented and re-presented, called normal; multiples that are presented but not re-presented, called singulars and multiples that are re-presented but not presented, called excrescences.

In the third case, there is a dislocation between the structure of 'reality' and the excess of re-presentation. We will call this dislocation 'lack' or 'failure', which is lived as something excessive, an excrescence. In Badiou's terms, this is what is called 'event', that lack in the ontological structure that allows it to change its own coordinates, that allows for making unexpected heterogeneous connections, the realization of a sequence by the chance encounter.

From all this derives the claim that there are three levels of 'reality': the ontological–mathematical, the situational–logical–ideological and the eventual–generic. These three levels do not match completely with the three types of multiplicities discussed so far, but rather refer to another way of explaining how change and novelties occur. What is important is the ontological foundation necessary in order to account for the emergence of an event in the sphere of art, science, love or politics.[3]

These three levels of 'reality' (what is, how it appears and how change happens) can be thought of, as Farrán suggests (2010), as a Borromean knotting (*à la* Lacan) in specific situations but never as a fixed theory that could account for everything: Badiou's proposal is a systematic but open philosophy, and failures, dislocations and discontinuities are productive. We will come back to this point in due course.

Ontology, linguistics and Lacanian registers

We can find heuristic value in the three Lacanian registers (of the real, imaginary and symbolic) and then be able to appreciate the differences between ontological and linguistic approach to discourse analysis. We will differentiate, through the Lacanian registers, the theory of discourse in the work of Laclau and of that which allows for Badiou's philosophy.

Laclau assumes that social practices and relationships are configured by signifying structures, and this means that political discourse analysis should be expected to account for the way symbolic reality and political effects are structured. From there, it is possible to explain the political changes in terms of change and discursive structure. Contrary to social constructionism, for Laclau discourse coincides with the structure, which, on the other hand, has an internal limit (or antagonism).

Laclau claims that his approach to discourse analysis is separated from essentialism as political reality is constituted by a signifying structure (as described by Lacan in the 1950s), but at the same time these structures place a limit on all forms of relativism. This limit, which he terms 'antagonism', he (writing here with Chantal Mouffe) describes like this:

> The limit of the social must be given within the social itself as something subverting it, destroying its ambition to constitute a full presence. Society never fully manages to be society, because everything in it is penetrated by its limits, which prevents it from constituting itself as an objective reality.
>
> (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001: 127)

This argument concerning an internal limit is something we can compare to and connect with the notion of the 'real' in Lacan, as that which cannot be symbolized. Any attempt to build diverse discursive formations founders on such a limit where the symbolic meets its own internal contradiction and cannot then move forward any further. We should add that this internal limit is also a condition for preventing the symbolic from solidifying.

It is in this way that discursive formations configure our relationships and social practices. As for Freud and Lacan, a dream, an image, phrase or word articulates or condenses diverse meanings, so the significant structures that configure our social relationships are precarious and thus starting from multiple internal contradictions that allow for the 'determination' (in multiple senses of the term) of meaning; these are articulations that can always overflow their own limits and be reconfigured. The sense and no-sense that allows the organization of a new sense are always at stake in the structures. But there is another cause of such no-sense: antagonism. For Laclau, antagonism is that which is found in the register of the real; that which is presented as an absent cause (the socio-symbolic is structured and turns around a traumatic fissure) and as an internal limit (but a limit nevertheless).

Badiou's point here is that in the articulation of the Lacanian registers, *two* elements of the order of the real are at stake: the ontological–mathematical structure and the evental–generic dimension. Both elements of the real are thinkable through mathematics; not just any kind of mathematics, but through literalized mathematics (that which is based on the power of the letter). We will come back to this point further on. For now we can say that Badiou's (2011a) main concern is the question of change, of novelty. Change can only be produced through a failure in the structure, in the appearance of a multiplicity or excrescence that he calls *event*.

There are multiple inconsistencies at the ontological–mathematical level, which are later presented as being what Badiou calls the *'count-as-one' operation*. This presentation is later re-presented, so now we are at the symbolic level, that which counts for the State, for a hegemonic discourse or regime, in such a way that as the presentation is re-presented there are also necessary structural failures, which produce excrescences that speak of a real beyond discourse. This real of the event enables change in its own structure and, therefore, a new re-presentation: the event is something from the order of real that modifies the coordinates of the symbolic.

It can be said that the ontological–mathematical real works in a similar way to the antagonistic real in Laclau (this is, absent causes and internal limits); but the real in the event has another function, the creation of novelty through the production of an unknown that inaugurates new sequences.

This is why the ontological turn is more important and fundamental for Badiou than the linguistic,[4] since the latter is incapable of accounting for (or even avoiding) the emergence of a risky supplement, if not always liable to fall into the metaphysics of sense. The mathematical *forcing* technique and creation of generic sets that Badiou proposes would avoid such mistakes. This means, in practical terms, that the only thing discourse analysis based on the linguistic turn can aspire to is to move within the limits of existing signifying combinations. The real would only be that which would allow the change from one discursive regime to another, from one structure to another, but could never allow for the emergence of unprecedented structures. The 'new' will always be within the horizon of the symbolic and as a combination of the already existent.

This is where it is important to highlight the difference between 'signifier' and 'letter'. The signifier is defined by the place it occupies in the system and so it is impossible to displace it, but it is possible to displace a letter because it is a trace, therefore the operation of the letter is by way of a permutation of a particular kind (Milner, 1998: 135). There is a more basic change when there is permutation of letters than when signifiers are exchanged in a simple process of combination. But that is not all: the letter, being a trace and mark (which can be erased, crossed out or abolished) has access to the ontological structure.[5] The letter allows us to make the inconsistent multiples (voids) into multiple consistency by producing the one starting from the void ('marking' the void). The mathematical letter allows for ontology outside the One:

> If we were now to refer to Lacan, it would be in this instance of the letter – an instance borne out by the mark of the void – that the thought unfolds, that is, the thought 'without-One,' or without metaphysics, of what lends itself to mathematical exposure as an immemorial figure of being.
>
> (Badiou, 1998/2006: 42)

But what about the 'evental' dimension and the place of the letter in it? If ontology is a dimension of the real touched, ploughed through the letter, then, the evental dimension (and also of the order of the real) appears as a rupture or impasse localized (traceable) by the letter. Here Badiou follows Lacan:

> The real can only be inscribed on the basis of an impasse of formalization. This is why I thought I could provide a model of it using mathematical formalization; in as much as it is the most advanced elaboration we have by which to produce signifierness. The mathematical formalization of signifierness runs counter to meaning, I almost said '*à contre-sens*'.
>
> (Lacan, 1975/1998: 93)

This is how, contrary to what may be assumed, mathematics does not constitute a body of full knowledge, but one that is constantly at breaking point. This encounter with the impasse, with the unknown is equal to the advent of the unexpected at the cut and interruption of sense. In those moments the possibility of creating something new and unexpected in the breaks of the ontological structure exists: 'As we know, these moments are conventionally termed "crisis" or "foundation crisis" ' (Badiou, 1998/2006: 50).

Where the structure fails, where the interruption in the sense occurs, there is the occasion for thinking, for making a decision in a moment in which knowledge is completely indeterminate. Other possible aspects of such decisions include suspending the structure, proposing an axiom, making a bet, creating a new concept that did not exist before the situation or a Mallarmean throw of the dice. We should be clear here that thinking is not a 'cognitive' ability, the construction of an argument starting from an existing knowledge or a conclusion deduced from any chain of ideas.

Some examples from the field of mathematics include the paradoxes of set theory, the irrational number in Pythagorean mathematics, the problem of the manipulation of infinitely small numbers, the un-decidable character of Euclid's postulate about the nature of parallels or the appearance of larger infinite numbers. At these moments, mathematics has to come up with or create something unexpected, to make a decision without guarantee and to assume the consequences. Success or failure can come from there, but only in retrospect is it possible to say. If it was possible to calculate the consequences, that would merely indicate that we still find ourselves within the coordinates of

actually-existing knowledge or within the previous ontological structure, and therefore there is then a denial of the unknown and the unexpected. Mathematics rigorously shows the breaking point, the cut in the sense and an act of thinking should be made there: it can therefore be said that there are moments when mathematics, abutting on a statement that attests in a point of the impossible to come, turns against the decisions by which it is orientated (Badiou, 1998/2006: 54).

In the case of the evental–generic dimension, mathematics shows the power of the letter such that an impasse is discovered, a moment of localization inaugurating a new sequence, producing unprecedented relations (which is what the creation of generic groups through the *forcing* technique points at). *The real does not remain as an internal limit or absent cause, but as a place for the creation of unprecedented new forms of knowledge, unedited sequences and new relations*. This is what Badiou (1992/2008: 196, 227) refers to when he talks about the function of 'humanity' and castration or the 'phallic' function. Our philosopher emphasizes the construction of a new generic group or the incorporation of an evental supplement to the impasse or event.

Subject and ontology

Badiou's claims about creation from the real has a new correlative type of subject; this subject is not the same as that presumed by Laclau. For the latter, the subject is the place taken in a discourse and therefore is an effect of the structure. Since discursivity is contingent and experiences hegemonic and dislocation moments, identity is always precarious. For Badiou, on the other hand, the subject, even if it is a structural effect, is not reducible to the structure. The subject is the effect of a bet and a thinking decision; the subject is what arises in retrospect as if a throw of a dice might modify the coordinates of the symbolic; the subject is, as Badiou (1985: 101) likes to say, the result of 'fidelity to the event': '[a subject] is what an event represents to another event'.

Following from this, and so depending on the way the relationship between the real and symbolic is thought, there would be different types of subjects. Even if Laclau and Badiou share the idea of a subject that is opposed to that of an autonomous self, their concepts of subject differ. While Laclau's subject is over-determined by the subjective structure, Badiou's subject is the effect of a 'leap in the dark', an unguaranteed decision.

Let us use the Zapatista Movement in Mexico as an example. In the case of Laclau's notion of 'hegemony', the empty signifier 'indigenous' organizes in a nodal point a chain of equivalences starting from a dispersion of fragmented demands (homosexual struggles, immigrants, unemployed, battered women, etc.), which acts as a point of opposition to another chain of equivalences and so threatens the prevailing order. Starting from a combination of signifiers, discourse changes (a new master-signifier establishes a new configuration or equivalence between other signifiers).

From Badiou's perspective, on the other hand, Zapatism not only shows a fissure or failure within the structure but also constitutes a thinking decision, an unguaranteed bet about how a society should be organized out of thin air, almost from nowhere. Zapatism finds an impasse, a risky supplement to which new parts are added (environmentalism, technology, feminism, fights for immigrants, etc.) to raise the stakes of the bet higher: any multiplicity that wants to share the same adventure will be subjectively stated. Badiou could even say Zapatism is a series of inquiries or researches pertaining to the 'communist hypothesis', whose third sequence (the first one consisting of the Paris commune and the second of State communism) expects a communism with no State (Badiou, 2007/2009). Nobody knows how this communist organization will exist, but each of these shares the same wish and the same adventure of creating a series of inquiries to create new kinds of social bonds, a new kind of social organization.

Contributions from Badiou's thought to discourse analysis

This is how we find in Badiou some elements that could be explored for discourse analysis: the real as creative power, a new conception of being, a poetics of the event and discourse analysis for Badiou's four conditions of philosophy.

Concerning the real as creative power, we have run ahead of ourselves in the previous sections of this chapter. To this creation starting from the encounter with a risky event, to this unguaranteed bet we said there belongs a new kind of subject. We have to add that for Badiou, there are four places where this new subject can emerge: love, art, science and politics. This subject is not in any way an individual: the subject in art is the work of art (painting, sculpture, building, etc.); in love it is the couple; in politics it is the mass and in science it is a corpus of knowledge (laws, theories). These subjects are an effect of the event rather than an effect of the structure.

We have seen that mathematics based on the letter encloses or delimits the number of readings possible and then encounters an impasse in the structure, so a bet can then be thrown from there that is constructed from real. This procedure is crystal clear in mathematics for Badiou, but it would only be about the formal writing of the location-forcing operation. It would seem to us that this formalization would also point to a new way of thinking about discourse analysis, to a way of mathematicizing discourse analysis. This reading, which would comprise formalizing operations and the location of the rupture, can of course be used in the four conditions of philosophy; of art, love, science and politics. It would then be possible to carry out an analysis of the loving, artistic, scientific and political discourses, both to find the impasse and to show, in retrospect, how new sequences emerged from bets taken without any guarantee.[6]

Finally, there is the question of poetics or the nomination of the event. It is not that Badiou does not take into account the power of language, but he

subjects poetry and language to the power of the letter and what ontology can open. In his recent seminars, he speaks about a double rupture:

> This first rupture, systemic, is a critical rupture that identifies as such the ontological field (the dominant regime of opinions and appearances). The second rupture involves in itself an act, the act of going out to encounter a little of the real, an act which requires a certain dose of violence (specially on oneself) and whose nature is evental. It should be possible right here and right now for the vanity of representations to be itself represented, the borrowed linguistic paradigm is poetic and no longer mathematical, because what this is about is that something should begin. The language of the event is poetry; poetry is the intensification of language adapted to the nomination of the impossible.
>
> (Badiou, 2009)

When a bet is thrown in the vortex of the real, it is made through a nomination first: a poem nominates what before was impossible. Naming, already since Heidegger, does not imply putting a word to a thing, but the creation of a fiction with discursive effects. But for Badiou, this nomination signals the gap in the structure and is necessary for the creation of new sequences (of new generic sets).[7] This would imply that the nomination of the gap is in the register of the imaginary. How is it possible that the imaginary has effects in the ontological structure? In one of Badiou's (2010: 5) recent talks on communism he states the following: 'the communist Idea is the imaginary operation whereby an individual subjectivation projects a fragment of the political real into the symbolic narrative of a History'. This leaves the door open, as has been signalled by Farrán (2010), to a Borromean knot, which also allows one to use the three Lacanian registers and the notion of the Borromean knot for discourse analysis. Let us also note, incidentally, that the proposal of a structure including the three Lacanian registers is something that characterizes the kind of 'hyper-structuralism' that Milner refers to.[8] Borromean knotting is one of these types of structure, that is to say, an ontological structure that you can access through a literalized mathematics (through topology).

Conclusion

I have offered the reader a few inklings of what discourse analysis from Badiou's philosophy could look like, making use of the three Lacanian registers. I have also shown how the real is conceptualized in Laclau's theory and how Badiou considers that the real is not only an internal limit, but a place to construct something from. For the real to be conceived of as the place from where it is possible to build something new, it is necessary to make the real equivalent to an ontological impasse, a rupture in which novelties are produced, and this is made much clearer by way of mathematics based on the 'letter' than on the

signifier. This argument has the effect of producing a new conception of the subject, of the emergence of truths based on what Badiou calls conditions of philosophy (art, love, politics and science), and in poetic nomination as a way of forcing what is real, that is to say, naming the impossible. This could be a first step to Badiousian discourse analysis.

Notes

1 'Nothing ties me more to Lacan's teaching than his conviction that the ideal of any thinking is that aspect of which can be universally transmitted outside of sense. In other words, that senselessness [*l'insensé*] is the primordial attribute of the True' (Badiou, 2006: 522).

2 Each set has at least one element, this element is void: Ø. To produce number one, you have to build it starting from void, which is represented like this: {Ø}. This means that by the void, there's a trace (the letter) that surrounds it, the result is one. We can then say that 1 = {Ø}. Number two is built like this: {{Ø}}, a void with double trace. If 2 = {1}, then 1 = {Ø}, and therefore 2 = {{Ø}}. It can be observed how all numbers are built starting from multiple voids.

3 This concerns what Badiou calls philosophy's 'conditions'. For Badiou, philosophy does not produce events (truths) but philosophy, to stay up to date, has to humble itself before these events that emerge in other places. Philosophy creates concepts and makes thinkable what happens in these other four fields. Badiousian philosophy is an excellent example of it: it submits to the Cantor event (set theory) to think and make a new philosophy possible.

4 Badiou's position on this point is clear in the Project in *Cahiers pour l'analyse* journal where he criticizes Jacques-Alain Miller (1966) article, which he calls 'the first great Lacanian text not to be written by Lacan himself' (Badiou, 1990/2008: 25), precisely on the point of 'logic of the signifier' (1969). For Badiou (2002: 119–120), logic has to be mathematicized or it will incur the same mistakes as the linguistic turn.

5 That the letter can touch the ontological structure is one of the characteristics of what Milner (1998, 2002) calls 'hyper structuralism'.

6 See how Badiou (2011b/2012) treats riots in Europe and uprisings in the Arab world as possible new sequences.

7 For detail about the relationship between structural failure, event, nomination and generic group creation (or sequences starting from a risky event), see the chapter 'Conference about subtraction' from the book *Conditions*, specially the *gamma scheme* (Badiou, 1992: 121).

8 This hyper-structuralism, according to Milner (1998, 2002), is a result of the inquiries made in the *Cahiers* journal project, where the opposition between the linguistic and ontological turn began, but is also the time that Althusser and Pêcheux tentatively propose a form of discourse analysis (Williams, 1999: 103). This will even have effects on the four conditions of philosophy in Badiou, as mentioned by Livio Boni in his contribution to this book.

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Part III

EVENT, AND ANALYSIS OF INDETERMINACY IN DISCOURSE

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18

PERMUTATIONS OF THE COMBINATORY

Derek Hook

I have two basic objectives in this chapter, both of which inform the procedures and conceptualization of Lacanian Discourse Analysis (LDA). In the first half of the chapter, I develop a series of arguments in respect of how we need to understand that most elusive of psychoanalytic notions, namely the Lacanian unconscious. Doing so will set the scene for a practical example of how one might utilize LDA in respect of narrative texts. The narrative material I draw on here stems from the Apartheid Archive Project. My attempt here is not to develop a series of methodological steps for a version of LDA, neither is it to become bogged down in the theoretical minutia of Lacanian jargon. My agenda is rather to explore a series of implications of Lacan's important conceptualization of the unconscious, which will, in turn, open up practical possibilities for a psychoanalytic analysis of textual material.

The signifier's mechanisms

How are we to understand Lacan's declaration that 'the unconscious is structured like a language'? Bearing in mind that Lacanian theory ultimately aims to inform clinical practice – a fact sometimes overlooked by Lacan's more abstruse commentators – it seems worthwhile to offer to explore some practical applications of this idea.

One way of exploring Lacan's maxim is with reference to Bill Clinton's infamous insistence 'I did not sleep with that woman'. We might find support from an unlikely source here, namely discursive psychology's attempts at a revised understanding of 'Freudian repression' (Billig, 1999). Proponents of discursive psychology emphasize that

> it is possible for an audience to hear in . . . expression[s] things other than what the speaker . . . intends . . . This possibility of unintended hearing arises for the dual reason that all expressions leave some things unsaid and what is said can be understood in more than one way . . . Expressions do not exhaust the possibility of their meaning.
>
> (Durrheim, Mtose & Brown, 2010: 174–175)

Although many such social psychological engagements with the notion of repression are explicitly anti-Lacanian (Billig, 1999, 2006), the above understanding fits with a Lacanian notion of the inevitable split between statement and enunciation. This incommensurability between statement and enunciation, that is, between the *content of a given communication* and the *performative conditions of its utterance*, is irreducible in Lacanian thought, and it provides a helpful place to start a discussion of LDA. More simply put: the breadth of how I might be interpreted always exceeds the more delimited field of what I intend to say, whether by virtue of the tonal variations of my voice, the 'materiality' of how I speak (patterns of pronunciation, enunciation, etc.) or the related bodily gestures present in the moment of expression. The fact of this gap or irreconcilability – an instance of the Lacanian 'real' – cannot be overcome, it qualifies all communication and it ensures that a minimal entropy characterizes each instance of speaking. This cues us into a particular way of listening: not to attend to sense, to intended meaning, but to the 'real' of the continual mismatch between enacted enunciation and apparently intended meaning.

An attention to such mismatches between enunciation and form; to unintended meanings, mis-hearings and unexpected implications; to variant interpretations or understandings latent within what is expressed; each of these signals an important analytical opportunity for LDA. Language, we might say – practices of the signifier – provides the necessary condition of possibility, or, as we might put it, the *operating system* that enables unconscious desire to function.

What clinical psychoanalysis seeks to facilitate, and what LDA is particularly attentive to, are those disruptive or surprising 'openings of the unconscious' where Other possible meanings can be read out of an expressive attempt at communication. Here, importantly, the unconscious is not tantamount to 'the divinities of the night', or 'the romantic unconscious of imaginative creation' as Lacan (1977: 24) puts it. Seshadri-Crooks (2000) makes this argument to great effect: the unconscious must not be grasped as a subterranean space opposed to consciousness, as an inchoate, swirling mass of repressed contents. It is neither a primal, archaic function, nor a set of unorganized drives and repressed contents. This unconsciousness is activated in the operations and performances of language, by virtue of the subject's attempt to make sense of their place in the symbolic order; this is an *external unconscious* (Pavón-Cuéllar, 2010). That is to say, do not look beyond language to seek some or other form lying behind the unconscious. As Žižek (1989) puts it in his discussion of the manifest dream content in Freudian dream theory: unconscious desire is not deeply concealed within manifest contents; it is decidedly 'more on the surface', consisting *entirely of the signifier's mechanisms*.

'I did not sleep with that woman'

'You did not sleep with *that* woman. What woman *did* you sleep with?' This would be one imaginable response to Clinton's statement. Another: 'You say

you didn't *sleep* with her. What then *did* you get up to with her?' The response of the suspicious listener: 'The force of your denial that YOU DID NOT sleep with that woman makes me think that you probably did.' A more humorous reply: 'I believe you that you didn't actually *sleep* with her . . . what worries me is that you probably *had sex* with her.'

Any communicative statement conveys along with it a matrix of alternative readings of what is being said. Or, differently put, there is a framework of intelligibility that comes with any statement, a framework that encompasses multiple grammatical permutations, and thus affords different possible hearings, readings, interpretations. We might put it this way: a received message comes within parentheses. How it connects up to the context within which it is being relayed; how it is related to the imagined intent of the speaker; the conditions of exactly how it is uttered, performed and why – all of these considerations mean that a message remains, even if perfectly legible and understood, 'incomplete', open to scrutiny.

Lacan (1988) offers us the notion that the return of the repressed and the repressed are one and the same. This assertion is strictly correlative to the idea that the unconscious is not a depth psychology, an internal space or mentality, but is instead fashioned with, made possible by, the utilization and arrangement of signifiers. How then to approach Lacan's paradoxical idea? By taking seriously for the moment the possibility that in speaking I create the possibility of a repressed (or, more accurately, of a potential 'return of the repressed').

I once invited a famous colleague to a dinner-party, aware that her presence would make a memorable night for my other guests. Afterwards I felt guilty, because my colleague had to suffer the overbearing attentions of my friends. I was resolved to apologize to her, until I realized that to apologize would alert her to the fact that I had something to be guilty about. 'Why would he apologize?' she may have asked herself. After all, it may not have entered her mind that I had anything to apologize for. The inappropriate behaviours of my friends wasn't something that I was necessarily responsible for, *unless* of course I had contrived the situation precisely to impress those friends. To let her know that I felt guilty would be to indicate something of my complicity in the situation. This calls to mind the cliché of the guilty husband whose gift of flowers makes his otherwise trusting wife suspicious.

The beauty of these examples is that my famous colleague, like the wife receiving flowers, may not have had *any idea at all* about the 'guilty truth' in question. There was no inner psychology, no 'intra-psychic' repressed material: it was only by virtue of what was said or expressed that a 'repressed' was created. To be clear on this point then, in Lacan's understanding of 'the return of the repressed' – and here the previous examples are potentially misleading – there needs be no existing 'dirty secret'. All that need be involved is a signifier that causes one to start questioning its true and/or broader significance. The act of speaking, the subtleties of communication, the fact of signifiers in operation, this is all that is required for a 'repressed' to come into play. Such signifiers are

condition of possibility enough to ignite a thought, a suspicion, a question, and once this is in place (a 'return of the repressed') then there effectively *will have been* – that is to say retrospectively – a repressed.

A matrix of latent combinatory meanings

Any communicative instance might form the basis of the 'return of the repressed'. Signifiers might provide the 'material', the apparent evidence – the tiny giveaway sign between two people that they were once intimate, for example – that brings a repressed possibility to light. Following this logic, and this odd temporality – the 'repressed' here effectively did not exist as 'repressed' until it came to light – Lacan attempts to understand the repressed not as a psychological quality or function, but as a potentiality within the field of signifying operations around us. To put language into play then is simultaneously to allow for a variety of different substitutions and extensions of what is said, substitutions along a metaphoric axis, extensions along a metonymic axis, which in and of itself, is enough to supply an unconscious.

For Lacan (1981), conveyed meaning is never complete, static, but is always subject to further articulation, indeed, to the question 'Why are you telling me this now, in the particular way that you are?' Any communicative utterance is, to some degree, held in 'suspense of finalization'; any signifier is, potentially, accompanied by a further question as to its further meaning of purpose. Take for example the uncertainty following a statement that may or may not have been sarcastically delivered, the seemingly sincere compliment accompanied by a gesture, which calls you to call that compliment into question. Any receiver of a communication is continually taking into account a variety of possible meanings within a communicative utterance.

This is not to consign LDA to a psychological model of communication. The factor of potential re-articulation is a property of signifiers: the meaning thus attained is differential, a function always of relations between signifiers. The possibility of such substitutions and extensions is present – despite our intentions as listeners or speakers – simply by virtue of the shared linguistic competence of the involved communicators. That a given message ('I did not sleep with that woman') brings with it a grid of multiple grammatical permutations is easy enough to demonstrate. As suggested earlier, we could subject this statement to substitutions of object and verb (i.e. 'I did not sleep with "a" [but with b]' (change of object); 'I did not "c" with that woman [but I did "d" with her]' (change of verb)).

Likewise, we could suspend the negation in such a statement changing 'I did not sleep with . . .' simply to 'I did sleep with . . .'. We need to bear in mind, furthermore, that a statement unfolds in time and that the first clause of a sentence cannot be properly understood until we hear what follows on from it. We could as such ask ourselves what effects of meaning are put in play by positing a conjunction ('I did not sleep with that woman *but/although/and then* . . .') or

simply by suspending the 'closure' of ending the sentence, and experimenting with what might emerge: 'I did not sleep with that woman . . . ["although I did constantly think about it"].'

In this brief discussion we have of course by no means exhausted the elaborative permutations for variations of Clinton's statement. (The possibility of an active/passive reversal regarding the verb of the statement gives us another humorous way of responding to Clinton: 'You did not sleep with that woman. . . but did she sleep with you?') I hope here simply to have indicated some of the complexity that emerges even in view of a straightforward assertion, preparing us in this way to think of the great range of generative possibilities for a 'return of the repressed' that follows on from far longer stretches of text.

Bridging disjuncture

One of the themes in the above discussion has been the idea that the unconscious is never simply evident. I have tried to emphasize in fact how it may be necessary to employ a matrix of latent meanings to make guesses at what is 'repressed' within a given utterance. I want now to extend something of this idea by considering the possibility of staggering seemingly discontinuous narrative elements.

The case of two seemingly disconnected scenes that need to be overlaid if any indication of unconscious desire is to be gained is something familiar to analysts. A personal example suffices. I started a session (as an analysand) complaining about a work colleague who had (I thought) unfairly snubbed me. I discussed some other banal daily experiences and then recalled an incident in a prison where I used to work as a lay counsellor. A prisoner had recently told me how he never lost his temper. Should someone do him an injustice he would patiently bide his time, wait until the person was totally at ease, then stab him in the back. No great analytical ability is needed to pose an interpretative hypothesis here: I, presumably, wanted to do just this to the work colleague, to stab him violently in the back.

This is of course a crude example, and the tentative reading I have suggested remains open to different interpretations. One might speculate that the desire in question was far more paradoxical or masochistic in nature, that, for example, I may have wished to be stabbed in the back. It is worth stressing this point so as to avoid the pattern of formulaic interpretations that the worst of psychoanalysis is infamous for (i.e. the superimposition of a series of caricatured themes, penis envy, Oedipal desire, castration anxiety, etc. as pertinent explanatory scripts for virtually any situation).

What the stabbing example brings home is that unconscious desire is never simply stated, afforded first-person propositional form. It emphasizes the importance of attending to the *form* of what is being said. A prospective truth of desire is not simply pictured, given obvious possessive expressive form ('I want to . . .'); it appears instead, rather as a result of the combination of elements. This is

one way of understanding Lacan's insistence that 'half-saying is the internal law of any kind of enunciation of the truth' (p. 126), namely that we need to ask what hypothetical idea emerges 'in between' two apparently unrelated narrative fragments once juxtaposed.

We may even pose this as a methodological maxim for LDA: treat the effect of intercalation – the insertion of an implicit connection, a posed relation between two disconnected narrative elements – as a modality of unconscious expression. Freud's description of dream-pairs proves a helpful means of expanding upon this idea. If a dream-wish has as its content some forbidden behaviour towards an individual, says Freud, 'then that person may appear in the first dream undisguised, while the behaviour is only faintly disguised' (1932: 27). In the second dream however we would expect that '[t]he behaviour will be openly shown . . . but the person made unrecognizable . . . [or] some indifferent person substituted for him' (p. 27). Leader (2003) points out that Lacan's thesis, following the influence of Lévi-Strauss, is an advance on Freud's. It is not simply then the case that a forbidden thought would be disguised, hidden via means of substitutions of subject, object or indeed act itself – although presumably one would want to keep such a possibility open – it is rather that the forbidden thought 'only exists . . . as a slippage between the one and the other' (p. 44). The example Leader provides is instructive:

> A man has two dreams . . . In one, he loses a blood-soaked tooth and stares at it in absolute horror. In the other, his penis is being examined in a medical test and no problems are found. Neither of the dreams represents castration as such, but it is in the relation between the two that the reference to castration is situated.
>
> (2003: 44)

Leader's conclusion? 'When something cannot be expressed as a meaningful proposition, it will take the form of a relation between two sets of elements' (p. 47).

Apartheid narratives

I want now to turn to an extract drawn from the Apartheid Archive Project (AAP). Before doing so, it is necessary to add a few contextualizing words on this project and thus provide a framework for the analytical undertaking in question. The AAP is an ongoing research project that aims to collect narrative accounts from ordinary South Africans about their experiences of racism during apartheid and to understand the ongoing effects of these experiences in present-day South Africa (for more on the project see http://www.apartheidarchive.org/site/). The project aspires not just to record these narrative accounts but also to engage analytically and theoretically with this material. In these ways the AAP encourages both a commitment to personal remembering and a joint intellectual commitment to interrogating

narratives rather than taking them at face-value. The range of narratives collected by the AAP is broad: participants were asked to write down and describe their earliest significant experience of racism. The task, then, was relatively open-ended and different narrators approached the task in different ways.

My own engagement with the narrative materials of the AAP took several forms (Hook, 2011a, 2011b). What I want to focus on here is what I took to be a particularly puzzling aspect shared by a number of the narratives contributed by white South Africans: the role of an animal in their discussion of racism. The animal in question seemed often to play an important mediating role, the function of which was not immediately obvious. My question then was: what type of mediator is the animal in these narratives, or, more directly, how did it link the white and black characters in the respective narratives; what relation does it support? I quote at length from the narrative I wish to focus on:

> It is . . . Sunday afternoon . . . I need to ask Phyllis something. I burst into her room. The door was half shut . . . but I have no respect for her privacy, there are no boundaries between her space and mine. The scene on the bed is a surprise to me, I live in the sexually repressive days of apartheid . . . The beautiful tall man enmeshed with Phyllis becomes the hero of my novel written . . . in the long hours of the weekend and evenings. . . .
>
> Of course I am the heroine, but I am myself, not Phyllis, a bit older though as I want to be enveloped in his arms too. We are having a relationship across the 'colour bar'; he is a young activist . . . It is 1976, he is becoming increasingly politically active. He is a leader. I am in love with him, and of course I am against apartheid. He is murdered . . . at the brutal hands of those masquerading as public protectors. I survive, to join the struggle, to tell the tale. Phyllis also plays a role in the book, a small part . . .
>
> Notions of 'us' and 'them', difference and 'otherness' are central to my early constructions of the world . . . The community I grow up in is so tightly woven, based on notions of a shared history, religion, culture, we only know each other . . . I hardly ever meet or even speak with a member of an 'other' community. . . . [A]partheid and other discriminatory practices are woven into the fabric of our day to day lives, but my primary sense of difference is about who is part of my community and who is not.
>
> There are always Black women living with us. Not a part of the family, but living on the premises of our home. They perform the submissive role of servant, yet I know they have power too. Since my mother is absent, all of us know where we can get our comfort, enfolded in the large warmth of our 'nanny's' arms . . .
>
> Besides my sister [Phyllis] . . . is my favourite person in the world in those years – she is young, beautiful, full of fun . . . She brought the

chicken to our house, which became our pet as it raced around our garden clucking. When it disappeared one day, only to reappear on our dinner table, my long commitment to vegetarianism began!

Sometimes, as we rough and tumble, I catch a hint of the sweet-sour scent of Phyllis' addiction to alcohol. She also died young, just like my hero, ultimately a consequence of the same violence. I found this out much later. I never knew her story. I never asked her. Just wrote my own.

Undecidable attachments

The narrator in the previous extract bursts in on a sexual scene, which spurs on a fantasy scenario. The author sees herself, a little older, as the beautiful tall man's lover. There is something cinematic to this imagining ('I am the heroine'), which is clearly indexed as fictitious (he becomes 'the hero of my novel'). Importantly also, there is an element of appropriation here; the beautiful man is now *her* lover and Phyllis is reduced to a minor character. Phyllis, in short, becomes the imaginative vehicle that enables the narrator to live out the romantic vision of a heroic woman against apartheid.

The mid-section of the narrative provides some of the socio-historical context (a 'tightly woven' white community in which 'we only know each other') explaining why difference becomes such a fantasmatic (and indeed *sexual*) preoccupation. What also becomes apparent here is the necessity of a mediator – an object of sorts – to manage a relationship between the narrator and the black domestic worker, a relationship that is both in certain senses intimate and yet nonetheless contractual. As has often been noted, the conditions of apartheid led to such contradictions, the prospect of loving attachments ('comfort, enfolded in the . . . warmth of our nanny's arms'), even of erotic attraction, occurring within oppressive, racially-structured social relations.

The problem that is constituted by the relationship with Phyllis is underscored by the narrator's comment that her 'primary sense of difference is about who is part of my community and who is not'. Phyllis, who is both a part and not a part of the narrator's family, thus seems difficult to place. I should add here the obvious qualification that the nature of this relationship and Phyllis's potentially ambiguous status within it were of course very well defined within the symbolic framework of apartheid itself, which provided the discourse and associated social norms of 'nannies', 'domestic workers'. As many of the AAP narratives make abundantly clear, the apartheid *habitus* was thoroughly ingrained within white South African children who understood their prerogatives all too well. Crucial to grasp however is that apartheid ideology nonetheless exhibited clear social contradictions that could not always be explained away, and that – as in this narrative – inevitably sparked a type of fantasy, which we can understand in a Lacanian way as an attempt to mediate, make sense of, social roles and identities.

These considerations go some way to explaining what at first seems an anomalous component in the unfolding narrative: the chicken that becomes the family pet and that abruptly turns up on the dinner-table, igniting thus the narrator's commitment to vegetarianism. Although this may appear a relatively arbitrary component of the narrative, there is much of significance in this seemingly trivial element. The chicken is a *pet*, a designation that places child and animal in appropriate domestic roles and that affords a familiar and thus stable familial 'object-relation'. The chicken is owned and yet – so it would seem – loved. There is a proprietorial relationship in place, which has not precluded the development of ties of affection. The text implies that the narrator was saddened by the loss of the pet, although this loss nonetheless benefits her. The animal serves an important purpose even in its demise: it becomes the basis of the narrator's ideological commitment to vegetarianism.

The link between Phyllis and the chicken is not only metonymic (the chicken is an extension of Phyllis who 'brought [it] . . . to the house'). 'Phyllis also died young' the text tells us, introducing an ambiguity: who might the 'also' refer to (the young hero no doubt, but also, given its proximity in the text, the chicken?). There is a parallel between Phyllis and the pet here in view not only of their sudden deaths, but in terms of how each benefits the identity of the narrator; each is the basis of a type of appropriation. As noted above, Phyllis provides the materials of a story that the narrator crafts about herself, a story that would appear to be crucial to her formative political identity. This is a non-reciprocal and an unequal borrowing. Phyllis provides the imaginative basis for the narrator's story about herself; she becomes essentially a device in the narrator's own self-fashioning, her own perspective, her own 'real' story never being involved ('I never asked her. Just wrote my own').

What does such an associative link tell us? Is this a case of the disguise-by-way-of-substitution that Freud discusses in dream pairs? Or are the narrative elements in a Lacanian manner as suggestive of an unconscious idea that exists only as a possible intercalation between components? The task then is to consider what the result would be of superimposing these narrative pieces. Such a conjunction, I think, provides one way of telling us something about the relationship to Phyllis that cannot otherwise be admitted. As is by now evident, Phyllis is 'owned' by the family, the narrator has certain 'rights of privilege' over her as a condition of such an unequal relationship. Phyllis cares for, gives happiness and love to these children, yet seems ultimately to be discarded by the white family ('she . . . died young . . . I found this out much later') who appear to have known little about her life ('I never knew her story').

This is not to cast aspersions on the genuine love and affection felt by the narrator for Phyllis. Then again, the nature of this affection should be qualified. We might say then, following the implication of overlaying these narrative components, that Phyllis's relation to the family is akin, in many ways, to that of a pet. As disturbing as such an association as this is – one that remains necessarily speculative, based on a provisional reading of the 'unconscious' of the text – it

is not particularly surprising given the racist social conditions of apartheid itself. Mbembe (2001) for example lists a series of such unspoken assumptions made of the black subject of (neo)colonial servitude, who, in varying circumstances, is considered as equivalent to an object, a form of property, an animal, a type of natural resource and so on. Gordon (1995) moreover warns that the presence of love on behalf of whites for blacks by no means eradicates all traces of racism; one can love another in the same way, he notes, as one loves an animal.

My aim in analyzing this material is not to pin a charge of racism on the author. A discourse analysis is by definition focussed on the broader discursive currents animated within the language productions of the speaker, not on the singular speaker themselves. My objective is to show how the text might be said to speak beyond itself, to extract something that is *implied* but *not explicitly said* by the text. These methodological provisos in place, it is nonetheless necessary to stress again the problematic epistemological status of what I am asserting of the text (i.e. the idea that Phyllis's relation to the family is akin to that of a pet). This idea is nowhere stated in the text; it cannot as such be ascribed to the author. The argument could just as well be made that this idea exists more *in the mind of the interpreter* than in the author of the text; as Pavón-Cuéllar (2010) warns, this is often the lure of imaginary understanding in attempts at discourse analysis, that one's 'findings' are essentially a projection *of the analyst's own* reading.

To read for the 'unconscious' of a text is then perpetually to risk 'wild analysis'. Textual interpretations of this (psychoanalytic) order are thus clearly ethically problematic, and not only for the reason that they are very often more a function *of the reader* than of the discourse of the text itself. Such interpretative attempts utilize a set of clinical strategies for material over which the reader has no clinical warrant. If such interpretations were to be utilized in the clinical context they should not – I would hope – take the form of definitive declarations on the part of the analyst. If such an interpretative association were to be eluded to, it would presumably be hinted at far more gently, enigmatically perhaps, in such a way that the analysand could take it up, respond to it. This then poses a series of ethical challenges for the prospective use of LDA, challenges that need to be considered and responded to within the life of any given research project.

Endless desire

By way of conclusion I would like to offer a comment on the previous extract, which responds to the earlier distinction between Freud's theory of dream-pair substitutions and Lévi-Strauss's (1963) claim that one needs to look for *a relation between elements*. What emerges in the text is not simply a case of substitution. Yes, there are a series of telling parallels between Phyllis and the pet, and questioning what such a substitution might mean or imply would perhaps be a useful analytical exercise. As in the 'stabbing in the back' episode cited earlier, such an initial substitution (the prisoner's actions as my own desired actions)

opened things up, it enabled further questioning of what might be repressed. Other possible extrapolations of desire were made possible. To fix upon a single substitution as the key would, very possibly, have closed down additional interpretative possibilities; my own possible desire to be 'stabbed in the back' would not have come to light in this way. A further interpretative leap was required here; the initial substitution was just the springboard for a hypothesis that required elements of both apparently disconnected narrative components, but that ultimately proved greater than the sum of their parts.

Lévi-Strauss's (1963) emphasis on the *relation between elements* within the study of myths proves so important to psychoanalysis because it suits an engagement with the over-determined nature of psychical material. Lévi-Strauss famously asserted that there is no one totalizing version of the Oedipus myth; there are only variants, and the only regularity we can trace within the matrix of versions we might plot is that of certain types of relations between components. The link to the work of psychoanalysis seems clear: the prospects of re-interpretation of any over-determined psychical material means that there is never one singular, triumphant interpretation. This provides an important ethical guideline for LDA: we do an injustice to the complexity of the material in attempting to extract a single over-arching message.

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19

THE BLINDNESS OF THOSE WHO SEE WHAT DOES NOT MEET THEIR EXPECTATIONS

Discursive indications of an unanalysable event

Mario Orozco Guzmán, Jeannet Quiroz Bautista, Flor de María Gamboa Solís, José Martín Alcalá Ochoa and David Pavón-Cuéllar

When explaining to Freud why she failed to confess that she loved her employer, Lucy R. said 'I didn't know or, rather, didn't want to know' (Breuer & Freud, 1892: 117). Freud believed these words describe the 'curious state in which one knows something and at the same time doesn't know it', and evoke a memory in which he himself saw something that 'didn't meet his expectations' and made him 'prey to that blindness that so surprises us in the attitude of mothers towards their daughters, in husbands towards their wives, of rulers towards their favorites' (*ibid*.).

In the blindness of those who see what doesn't meet their expectations, which is the same as in the lack of knowledge of those faced with the knowledge that they don't want to know, we believe we can discern the discursive indications of an *event* that is not exactly the *falling in love* of Lucy R.; neither is it what this falling in love *allows us to see and know*, and by which *it doesn't allow itself to be seen or known*, but the fact that it *lets us see it and know it*, that is, the *discovery* of that which we represent here as a specific historical truth that is never the same but that always refers us to an implacably specific subject of the unconscious. The symptomatic discovery of this subject of the unconscious is what would happen, from our point of view, in the falling in love of Lucy R. and in other experiences studied by Freud and those who follow his practice. In all the areas psychoanalysis enters the discovery in question is an event that will effectively occur but that cannot be named and that will therefore go unnoticed in the immanence of each era, its discourse and its knowledge.

In the immanence of the 'things-that-must-be-known', the discovery of the truth would be one of those 'events' that appear as 'objects about which nobody could be certain of knowing what they are talking about' (Pêcheux, 1983: 322). Nobody

would know what is at stake in this event that would effectively transcend the immanence of what can be known, positioning itself beyond the historical horizon of knowledge just as this unfolds in the transindividual discourse that can be analysed using a Lacanian method (Parker, 2005, 2010, Chapters 3 and 4 of this volume; Pavón-Cuéllar, 2010a). The method would therefore impede analytically broaching something such as the *Freudian discovery* that would not cease to be performed, differently each time, in the field of psychoanalytic practice. This event, in which perhaps we can identify an essential aspect of all historical events, would be totally or partially averse to our analysis for the simple reason that it would not allow itself to be enunciated in the discourse under analysis.

Freud's discovery

Refusing to allow itself to be assimilated by discourses expressed in psychoanalytic practice, the Freudian discovery will only announce itself in them, directly, by means of a decontextualised void, an unprecedented fault, an absolute, unconditional and indeterminate absence, that will occupy no place in the signifying structure of presences and absences that relate to each other, that relativise each other, that are reciprocally conditioned and determined, and can be analysed by being known, seen, and eventually anticipated. The invisible and unforeseen irruption of the truth will appear to us as an unanalysable phenomenon. There will be no way to analyse the discovery in question, only the traces it leaves within that field of discourse in which Freud and his followers have tirelessly sought the subject of the unconscious.

In the jungle of language as the place of the unconscious, our analysis can only follow the discursive tracks of the subject, the subject of the unconscious, which will fade as soon as it appears with the Freudian discovery. Now, if there really is a Freudian discovery, this is because the subject of the unconscious appears even when it is destined to fade as soon as it appears. Even though there is no place for the truth in the knowledge inherent to discourse, the symptomatic irruption of the truth occurs in this knowledge and its discourse. It is here, in the discursive and ideological field of the symbolic system of culture, where the real of the absolute absence, the unprecedented fault, the decontextualised void suddenly opens up. The real of the dysfunction is in the functioning of the symbolic system, and when this functioning is solidified and reified, the laceration of the resulting imaginary reality comes in reality itself. The blindness in question is that of those who see despite their blindness: those who cannot see directly are still able to recognise something of which they are blind. Similarly, faced with the event, the Lacanian discourse analyst should be able to deal with, whether indirectly, negatively, through mediation or laterally, this same event in which something unanalysable is recognised. Why not assume this contradiction openly and responsibly, and recognise that the unanalysable can be analysed, analysed at least as 'the unanalysable', as that which resists our discourse analysis? In doing this, the 'failure' of our analysis of the event can be transformed,

as the 'focus of our analysis', into a 'productive failure' (Stavrakakis, Chapter 2 of this volume).

When we fail in the analysis of an event our failure is already a form of analysis of the unanalysable. Our blindness already sees what we cannot see; our ignorance is a *docta ignorancia*. We could say that the unanalysable event is analysed through our difficulties in analysing it in discourse. After all, when analysing it in discourse we are analysing it in the very place it appears. When we analyse a discourse we are in effect analysing a 'scene of language' in which 'history' is not only 'written' but 'made', and in which the 'event' is 'engendered' at the moment it is 'lived' and not only when 'remembering' it (Lacan, 1953). In fact, an authentic 'event', as Deleuze (1969: 34) has shown, 'essentially belongs to language'. We could say that the unconscious structure of language includes and produces an event that transcends the unconscious structure of language even when it appears to be merely included in that structure, and should be removed to be produced. The exception proves the rule. Each personal or social era, with the unconscious structure of language that characterises it, should last until an event, until a discovery of the subject of the unconscious, which still forms part of the era in question. This completes it, but also concludes it, marks its outcome, finalises it because it is beyond the historical horizon of perceptible entities such as knowledge, thoughts, beliefs, evidence, realities, possibilities, etc. It is therefore true that the discovery of the subject of the unconscious goes unnoticed in the immanence of an era and discourse. In this discourse of the Other, the discovery of truth is a true event and not just one fact among others since it is something that cannot be enunciated, a blind spot in vision, a lack of knowledge in knowledge, the unanalysable in the analysable. But this does not mean the unanalysable, such as that which our analysis faces, ceases to consist in the analysable, such as that occupying our analysis.

By existing in the discourse where the analysable unfolds, the unanalysable event should not be passed over in a Lacanian method of discourse analysis. This analysis should at least contemplate or consider the event it cannot analyze and the reality of that which cannot be denied. Here we have one of the most notable caprices by which Lacanian Discourse Analysis distinguishes itself: it does not discount the unanalysable and at least attempts to deal with it, examine it and detect its effects, for example, by indirectly approaching 'the real' through its 'articulation through the other two registers' of 'the imaginary and the symbolic' (Parker, 2010, Chapter 4 of this volume). This is precisely what we will attempt to do below when tackling the Freudian discovery by means of the analysis of the previously cited discursive segment in the case of Lucy R. Faced with such an eloquent trace, our analysis should point to the discovery of the subject of the unconscious, to this 'pure event' in 'its eternal truth' and 'independent of its space-time accomplishment', as something 'simultaneous and permanent to come and already gone' (Deleuze, 1969: 172). This event is the unanalysable we will attempt to track in the drama of Freud's patient, in her condition as a woman, in her hysteria and the surprises knowledge provides, as well as a comparison of her enigmatic blindness with that of mothers, husbands and rulers.

Women, hysteria and psychoanalysis

If Freudian analysis originates in something we can describe as 'an event', this would be the discovery of the subject of the unconscious, which, not by chance, is made in the light of a hysterical passion historically linked to women. In one sense, and perhaps even in all senses, it was women who were discovered as subjects of the unconscious. If the origins of Freudian psychoanalysis are in fact to be found in this event, the merit for this origin goes to those women, at times called 'witches' or 'sorceresses', who allowed themselves to be possessed by a diabolical, infernal, unhealthy desire that had to be purified by the medieval and religious fire of the holy spirit. It was these women who discovered for themselves that they were subjects of the unconscious the moment they were called 'mad', not in the psychiatric sense of madness but in relation to deceit, seduction and the 'histrionic' personality.

For medicine in the era of Freud, a diagnosis of hysteria was synonymous with simulation since the psychiatrist could not find an organ that would serve to objectivise the disease of hysteria and for this reason would eventually say 'there is nothing wrong with you, you're just seeking attention'. How many times is this repeated today, in different institutional contexts, all of which attempt to name a desire that does not end just because it is named or known, because knowledge is not wanted? Freud's great merit was to name this unspeakable and ignored desire on the basis of its discovery, that of the subject of the *unconscious*, with *the unconscious* understood not only as *the unconscious*, as the opposite of the conscious, but as an active and independent psychic system with its own laws of composition and functioning.

The Freudian discovery of the subject of the unconscious subverts the concept of the *subject* in psychology, psychiatry, philosophy and science. For these disciplines the psyche is synonymous with the conscious, judgment and reasoning. For Freud, the psyche, and therefore the subject, is inseparable from the unconscious. In effect, they are how the unconscious is formed, through slips, jokes, parapraxis, misunderstandings, errors, mistakes, symptoms in which the subject appears and is expressed. It is in the hysterical symptom that the subject of unconscious desire appears, the *true subject*, and in which a knowledge of *truth* is expressed, a truth about which the subject *doesn't want to know anything*.

Freud (1915) defines the symptom as a '*compromise-formation'* (p. 154), a compromise between the unconscious desire to know and the desire that does not want to know anything about this unconscious knowledge. Now, if they do not want to know anything about *that*, it is because in some way *they already know without knowing*, and this is said while maintaining silence since it appears in the very discourse that attempts to conceal it. We therefore understand that the Freudian invention of the unconscious arises from the clinical practice of listening to a discourse, from *discourse analysis* in the strictest sense of the term, beyond medical observation, suggestion and the formation under hypnosis of hysterical phenomena. It is not on the basis of the meaning attributed externally to hysteria,

but on the basis of the discourse of hysterics that Freud constructs a method of investigation, a method of treatment and a theory of the psyche; that is, he constructs the theoretical–methodological framework of psychoanalysis. To return to Freud is to return to his case studies, in particular his *Studies on hysteria*, where we can once again walk side by side with his constructions and interpretations of the discursive knowledge that has appeared in relation to truth and to desire.

Hysterical knowledge, in its discursive form, is constantly produced from the desire and sexuality, which are its causes. For this reason, in his structure of the discourse of the hysteric, Lacan (1969–70/1991) locates 'knowledge' in the place of 'production' (17/12/69: 31–42). Knowledge is effectively the product of hysteria. If there is anything that produces hysteria via its symptoms and discourse, it is knowledge of sex, knowledge about sexual difference, knowledge about the truth, knowledge about the subject of the unconscious, a knowledge about which this same subject wants to know nothing.

In his analysis of Lucy R., what Freud manages to discover is that which the patient discovers in their discourse, that is, a truth that can be known, that is already knowledge, but *knowing without knowing* since this knowledge is not wanted: 'I didn't know that or, rather, I didn't want to know that' (Breuer & Freud, 1892: 117). From this Freud, in a footnote, says: 'I was afflicted by that blindness of the seeing eye which is so astonishing in the attitude of mothers to their daughters, husbands to their wives and rulers to their favourites' (*ibid*.). What would this blindness of the subject be where undesired perception fails to leave any symbolic psychic mark? Is this *unknown knowledge* the nucleus of an unconscious that will not yield to the analysis of a discourse inseparable from knowledge? Does this blindness indicate an authentic event that occurs before our very eyes, an unanalysable historical event, as decisive as it is traumatic and located in the real since it escapes the laws of the signifier?

If the Lacanian axiom of the definition of the subject is *a signifier that represents it for another signifier*, then the blindness of the subject could be the effect of the absence of the signifier in which the subject is represented. This absence, in turn, would imply a certain failure of the symbolic register of the signifying structure, which is the psychic register of which Freud speaks. However, the failure of this register does not necessarily mean it does not have its effects in the psyche. One of these effects, the effect par excellence, could be the event itself in such a way that the event would occur precisely where a very precise signifier *is absent*. The absence of the signifier of the lack of the Other (sA) would produce the event, and this reveals the discourse of the hysteric and their truth, the truth of the subject of the unconscious, which is the truth that irrupts with the Freudian discovery.

The surprises that are born of knowledge

In the nucleus of the discovery of the subject of the unconscious, we stumble upon a truth that appears to exist outside knowledge, but not without deconstructing it.

Here we face the question of what Lacan (1970–71/2008) terms 'discoveries of language' (10/03/71: 78). In these discoveries something unprecedented imposes itself through a hysterical discourse. The hysteric adopts a paradigm of the subject of the unconscious, exceeded by the word, overtaken and relaunched by a signifier that threatens to discover its truth. The discovery is of the 'order of the surprise, for which reason the rebound effect is indicated', in which 'the way truth and knowledge are linked' is defined (17/02/71: 65).

The surprise tears up all conjecture, allowing something in a non-formulated state to occur, something that inaugurates in Freud the dimension of the subject of the unconscious. One case in which this paradigm of surprise that finds and digs out the truth in knowledge is embodied is that of Lucy R., where Freud does not use hypnosis or 'cures' (Rodrigué, 1996: 259), demanding only that the subject removes the criticism of ideas that appear by pressing the forehead of the patient with his hand. Freud calls for concentration on emerging thoughts. This is what happens, for example, with the *smell of burnt pudding*. Freud is at a crossroads since, on the one hand, he asserts that the patient has 'completely lost the sense of smell' (Breuer & Freud: 107), while on the other he must accept she is pursued by distressing olfactory stimuli. She smells nothing, but does smell, and what she smells is as horrible as it is persecutory, that which would perhaps give us motive to consider the smell, attached to the real scene of the trauma, as a variety of 'object *a*'.

But it is Freud who smells something strange in this whole matter, and what he smells is the presence of an unspeakable amorous passion. How does he know? Because the very same patient has said so in a message the import of which she herself fails to realize. At the death bed of the mother whose children she was taking care of, Lucy had promised: 'to devote myself with all my power to the children, that I would not leave them and that I would take their mother's place with them' (Breuer & Freud, 1892: 115). But this *substitution of the mother* would also imply a certain form of *substitution before their father* and the promise of this second substitution could indicate the falling in love of the substitute in her relationship with the father. At least this is what Freud *said he knows*, which is subsidiary to the word of the subject, a word that would give away not only the commitment to the daughters but also to their father.

It is perhaps the same furrow of the committed word that has fertilised the desire Freud says he knows. Freud simply transmits to Lucy the leap of passion of the given word. She knows the given word but knows nothing of this leap of passion, or if she does know she does not know how to speak it. With Freud, with the master signifiers of Freud, she knows how to say it. Freud has expressed this as a suspicion: 'I believe that you are in love with your employer, the director, though perhaps without being aware of it yourself, and that you have a secret hope of taking their mother's place' (Breuer & Freud, 1892: 117). Said in this way, of course Lucy R. did not know. It is Freud himself who verbalises an unknown knowledge, an amorous knowledge, the knowledge of a love that the subject does not know they know. But Freud's verbalisation is soon

confirmed by that of Lucy R. This verbalisation is a discovery, a discovery of the subject of the unconscious, which has the magnitude of the category of the event. We therefore understand that it has been possible to propose psychoanalysis as a 'science of the event' (Nassif, 1968). Psychoanalysis operates, in effect, as a science of the event that irrupts into history. The chain of history is suddenly broken by the link of hysteria that becomes the depository of a knowledge from which the truth is torn.

It is Freud who uses mediation in order for the truth to acquire the conditions of knowledge, of a knowledge where the subject splits, surprised. It is knowledge of the unconscious, *surprising knowledge* since it comes from the discourse of the Other. This is, again following Lacan (1968–69/2006), 'the truth interrogated in the unconscious as the weak creator of [it]' (23/04/69: 275). It is from the Other, from the discourse of the Other, that this patient seizes herself as truth, she seizes a truth that appears so strange yet so close. She is therefore divided when faced by what happens to her, from what Freud says, in the event of the word. Only in this way, through Freud, is it that Lucy seems to recognise the startling scope of what she herself says: 'Yes, I think that's true.' – 'But if you knew you loved your employer why didn't you tell me?' – 'I didn't know – or rather didn't want to know. I wanted to drive it out of my head and not think of it again; and I believe latterly I have succeeded' (Breuer & Freud, 1892: 117).

Even before the event Lucy had established distance from the compromised word; the word she knew without knowing it committed her to occupy the place of the wife of the employer and not only that of the mother of his children, a place of loving commitment, but also of death. We can locate on the horizon of possibilities what it already is. It is the phrase from Pindar: 'Become what you are!' (Pythian 2).

Lucy has come to occupy the place of the mother. She is crossed by the ghost of an amorous substitution. The knowledge that refers to Lucy is also crossed by the *ego that doesn't want to know it*, that is, by a desire not to know that it already involves the subject. Lacan points out this peculiar state that Freud describes in a footnote as that 'in which one knows and does not know a thing at the same time' (Breuer & Freud: 117), and proposes that this condition of unknown knowledge, introduced by psychoanalysis, is what represents a subversion in the function, 'in the structure of knowledge', and for this very reason the abrupt dimension of the event, in the field of truth (Lacan, 1971–72, 04.11.71).

The blindness of mothers, husbands and rulers

The peculiar and curious condition of *unknown knowledge* evokes in Freud a structured memory in the form of a series that appears towards the end of the same footnote for illustrative purposes: 'I was afflicted by that blindness of the seeing eye which is so astonishing in the attitude of mothers to their daughters, husbands to their wives and rulers to their favourites' (Breuer & Freud, 1892: 117). This serial structure that illustrates Freud's surprise when faced with the

unusual in what Lucy R. says also announces another dimension in which the truth comes to life or it is possible to know something of its structure, appealing to a metaphor based on the other sense organ that is not hearing with its function of listening, but the eye and the dysfunction of blindness.

Something in the attitude of mothers to their daughters, of husbands to their wives and of rulers to their favourites, unfolds in the grip of the weakness of the gaze, filling it with shadows. There is something that mothers, husbands and rulers do not know about their mental attitude regarding the other – daughter, wife, favourite – with whom they maintain a relationship crossed intersubjectively by the discourse of the Other, since all of these are relationships that play, with their different nuances and forms, at the level of the dialect of the master and slave, and for this reason are described in terms of the guidelines established by the power that institutes them (Hegel, 1807/1977). Mother, husband and ruler represent three forms of authority, three fundamental pillars that support the Law, guaranteeing compliance with this law and its tireless and unrestricted application. These three representatives of the Law are three sumptuous faces of the master, representatives of the truth framed by the discourse of the Other, but at the same time, as visualised by Freud, brushed with blindness.

One of Lacan's (1955) conjectures concerning the registration of truth is that this is really located 'in the foundation of intersubjectivity', emphatically adding that 'it is located where the subject cannot grasp anything except subjectivity itself which constitutes an absolute Other' (p. 20). This is what speaks in Freud's serial memory, as we shall see.

'Grasping nothing' is equivalent to seeing nothing, to being blind, and being 'blind' is a term Lacan uses as a figure of speech in a number of passages of his work to demonstrate the subjective reaction or 'attitude' to manifestations of the unconscious, or rather, to name the very place of truth. In Lacan's seminar *The Ego in Freud's Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis*, for example, 'blindness' is used in a metaphoric sense to establish the place of the truth in the protection mechanism with which the queen in Edgar Alan Poe's story *The Purloined Letter* keeps the uncomfortable content of the letter from the knowledge of the king: 'ambiguous protection is the protection given in the sense that the husband gives help and protection to the wife, and is also the protection she owes to her blindness' (Lacan, 1953–54, 17.11.54). With a little more clarity, and in a definitive manner, this same sense of the term 'blindness' as the place of the truth appears in the *Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter'* (Lacan, 1955), when 'blindness itself' is 'needed to occupy this place' (p. 34). On the basis of these approaches we see that the place of blindness implies the place of the truth, or in other words, *the place marked by blindness is the place of truth*.

For the above reasons, it could be said that *mothers, husbands* and *rulers*, to the extent they are given an originary and fundamental place in the constitution of the subjectivity of that other who radically signifies *daughter, wife* and *favourite*, respectively, can only see their own subjectivity constituted as 'an absolute Other'. This is the way it is, although the three monuments erected to

the truth occupy a place that is unstable, a position of absolute weakness, because this place is absolutely imaginary, 'but not for those who generally make themselves believe' (Lacan, 1955: 34). Mother, husband and ruler are those who are believed capable of everything. We can put ourselves in the place of the mother through the use of a literary example.

In the novel *De chica quería ser puta (Since I was a girl I wanted to be a whore)* by Elena Sevilla (2007/2009), a daughter bitterly complains about the implacable words of her mother when the latter hears she is leaving the 'great' man the mother had chosen to be her future husband:

> She shouted at me how stupid I was many times, *ignorant* because I didn't know how to treat a man of such a high level. She cried, begged me not to leave him. Everything was in vain. I left him. But this situation left me with incredible resentment towards my mother . . . Why didn't she want me to leave him? Isn't it a mother's duty to look after her children?
>
> (p. 78, our emphasis)

It would seem there are no words more powerful for a girl in terms of her destiny, in the plan of her becoming a woman, than those of her mother since a mother always knows everything and she is prepared to do anything to ensure her knowledge is not doubted, or her word questioned, and much less the word that encodes the 'wellbeing' of the daughter. The word of the mother is a living oracle. An architect of suffocation, the mother as the absolute Other establishes the subjectivity of the daughter, but in reality she re-establishes it in the deepest darkness by transmitting to her not only an unsatisfied desire, but also a truth brimming with abundance before which the daughter lacks knowledge and is left hanging from 'imaginary impregnations' (Lacan, 1955: 11) that cast a shadow over the signifying chain of her subjectivity and with which she inscribes her symbolic existence as other.

The blindness in the attitude of the mother towards her daughter consists of not seeing that the daughter also knows, although her knowledge does not have access to a representation because it has been marked in that way by the discourse of the Other, as knowledge lacking knowledge, as ignorance. 'You? What do you know?' a mother says to her daughter. It is this blindness in the attitudes of mothers to their daughters (and husbands to their wives and rulers to their favourites) that Freud relates associatively to the unspeakable amorous passion of Lucy R. that left her blind to herself because these are also the tricks of intersubjectivity that unfold against a background encoded by a lack of knowledge of which nothing wants to be known, knowing it, and which Le Doeuff (1993), alluding to a well-known colloquial saying 'the truth doesn't hurt but it makes you uncomfortable', considers inherent to what 'makes you uncomfortable' (p. 20). When referring to the philosophical perspective adopted by Aristotle when denying the slave can enjoy happiness because if they could

enjoy it 'it would be necessary to "attribute them with human existence", which is clearly impossible', the feminist philosopher believes this indication suggests major blindness, an 'obtrusive blindness' in the face of something that would considerably undermine the absolute power of the master (Le Dœuff, 1993: 20).

What is uncomfortable is 'seeing' or having knowledge about the daughter (wife and favourite) that elides and disconcerts the speech of an absolute Other. What leads to discomfort is something that cannot be seen since it is seen too much, something artful that only shines obliquely because 'the true can only emerge obliquely' (Braunstein, 1988: 214, citing Serge Cottet), and because revealing itself in its voluminosity would lead to digging and, from there, the instability of the discourse of the Other. What is uncomfortable, and for this reason it does not come to light unless sheathed in a cataract, is knowledge that the discourse of the Other, which is the basis of the intersubjectivities alluded to by Freud, is also in the lack of knowledge.

Conclusion

Without the possibility of true knowledge in language as the symbolic structure of culture, there can be no effective argument that impedes the real of the event and detains the motor of history. The march of history cannot be obstructed by the ideology of a precise moment that attempts to inhibit any change by imposing its eternity, the apparently definitive eternity of the end of history, which is simply the extremely brief provisional eternity of the synchronic structure, the eternity of the moment, of the present as Augustinian present, the present of the past and the present and the future, only presence of memory and ideals, only time of all times.

Against the only time without time of the absolute Other and its attempted absolute knowledge, the time of time arises, the time that relativises everything, the wrong time, the essential discontinuity of the event that disturbs everything with the force of its evidence. It is rupture as more than enough reason for rupture. It is the lack of knowledge by which the symptomatic and always subversive truth of history and hysteria suddenly peeps out. It is the discovery of the subject of the unconscious. It is Lucy who discovers herself before the absolute Other. It is the daughter who suddenly becomes visible to the mother, or the wife who crosses the blindness of the husband, or the favourites who finally manage to surprise a ruler, *their* ruler, who only loves in them what was never permitted to be loved. That which *was never permitted* is what can only be permitted after the event, after the timeless time with which the event ends, after the eternity in which there is only room for the *never* always defeated by history.

Never say never, popular wisdom tells us, and by saying this it demonstrates historical awareness, *class consciousness*, 'consciousness of the unconscious' that allows it to launch itself at what is conscious (Pavón-Cuéllar, 2010b), towards 'the unconscious' that 'is history', and in this way move beyond the eternal ideological knowledge of every moment in history (Lacan, 1966). This

commonsensical ideological knowledge *will always say never* because it will never be prepared to know what it still does not know. It will never see that which it dare not see. Fatally blind and ignorant, this knowledge should limit itself to knowledge of itself, to only know what is known, see what has been seen, see it again, and think about it and rethink it as many times as is necessary to convince itself that there is no way to achieve *Pensée Unique* (single thought). In order to confirm this beyond pure speculation all that is required is a good discourse analysis that knows how to exclude everything that escapes the immanence of the knowledge inherent to the discourse analysed. The analyst will exclude the truth, and also, of course, its irruption and the event of its irruption. All of this will simply be unanalysable. It will have to be ignored because I won't want to know it while knowing it. I will have to deny its existence because it will blind me when I see it. It is better not to see it. Is not that exactly the decision made by those analysts of discourse, discursive psychologists and other fanatics of the dominant ideology who cling exclusively to what they see in the discursive immanence without daring to see all they can see without seeing it because they do not have permission to see it? And isn't this precisely the opposite of what Freud taught us when dealing with the case of Lucy R. and making a discourse analysis that is the precursor of what we call today Lacanian Discourse Analysis?

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20

AGONISTIC DISCOURSES, ANALYTIC ACT, SUBJECTIVE EVENT

Daniel Koren

Since its beginnings, and except for certain rare and short-lived moments, psychoanalysis has generally not been accepted by the public, and neither will it be accepted in the future for reasons of structure as Freud so clearly explained. Both Freud and Lacan knew (and had no illusions concerning the matter) that the very existence of psychoanalysis, as praxis and cultural phenomenon, implied an ongoing battle to resist attempts to eliminate it and guard against the risks of deviation and compromise. It is not an exaggeration to say that today we face a new avatar of this reality.

The period covered by the final years of the past century and the beginning of the current century are characterized by a series of general changes that have led some commentators to speak of a change in civilization. While these changes have had an impact on subjects, the question we need to ask is what these changes mean and which subjects we are talking about.

The term 'subject' has a number of definitions, many of which are contradictory. The teachings of Lacan have conferred on this term an irrefutable epistemological consistency. The nucleus of the Freudian invention of the unconscious displaces the subject of the ego of the conscious and situates it as an effect of factors that escape consciousness: will, perception, knowledge or awareness one believes they have of themselves. This subject has no 'essence' other than language. The elements forming the unconscious, dreams, lapses and above all symptoms, appear as irruptions of an Other form of knowledge that brings into play, in the form of an enigma, the truth of that which has operated in the formation of a subject.

As a result the subject appears essentially divided: between the conscious and the unconscious according to the classic Freudian formulation, but also between the enunciation and the statement, between knowledge and truth, between pleasure and *jouissance*. In psychoanalysis, symptoms appear in the form of the enigmatic emergence of an 'interior foreign body' indicating an ignored truth. Psychoanalysis was established as a conflictual praxis, not only in relation to 'intrapsychic conflicts' as they were initially called, but also in relation

to social ideas found at the very root of human societies.[1] In response, psychoanalysis does not reject these ideals but critically questions, *in extension*, all that constitutes the human being to the extent that its practice consists, *by intension*, of the creation of a space where this conflictuality spreads to permit the liberation of enclaves of *jouissance*. These mutations eventually permit the passage to another subjective position; that of turning 'neurotic misery into ordinary unhappiness' (Freud), or to a '*savoir faire* with the symptom' (Lacan), options that mark a reorganization of desire and a modification of the economy of *jouissance*.

'Civilizational change' and 'new subjects'

Now, concerning the subject in today's world (whether contemporary, postmodern, or hypermodern), we are witnessing a textual operation that presents itself as a double 'evolution', but which, it appears, represents a regression in relation to what psychoanalysis represented, from its beginnings, as an opening.

This supposed double 'evolution' can be characterized according to its source: external or internal. *External*: the overwhelming development (which could be called manic in clinical terms) of a technocratic society ruled by a neoliberal economic model with its concomitant ideology. This implies a 'culture of constant performance' (for example, Ehrenberg, 1991/1996, 1995/1996, 2000, 2010), in which the subject is objectified in even the most insignificant details of their existence, including their personal life. Limiting ourselves to certain aspects that concern us directly in this text, this is translated into the promotion of all kinds of 'psy' practices that lead to the adaptation of the subject to new social demands[2] at the same time as advances in the biological sciences, neurology and the medical imaginary, together with the unrestricted dominance of the pharmaceutical industry, induce an unbridled neuro-biologicization of psychiatry. The most obvious result is the promotion not of a subject, but of simultaneously 'neuronal'[3] and 'behavioral'[4] humans, whose utmost expression is to be found in the Bible of North American psychiatry (which extends its influence throughout the rest of the world), that is, the famous DSM, of which version 'V' appeared in 2013.[5]

The *internal* source is the sustained tendency by a certain number of psychoanalysts who maintain that the previously mentioned 'civilizational change' is producing (or has already produced) a 'new psychic economy', which will generate 'new pathologies' and 'new subjects'. In my opinion, these positions contradict clinical practice and lead to the promotion of a form of psychosociology related to the culturalist movement that appeared and reached its height in the 1940s (Koren, 2010).

The Lacanian theory of discourse

The reading offered previously represents a huge regression with respect to the conceptual and practical tools provided by the teachings of Lacan; in structural terms it returns us to a sociological-descriptive reading of solidly intelligible

phenomena based on the *Lacanian theory of discourse*.[6] This theory permits the rigorous articulation of the transformation of the subject in terms of the 'effects of civilization' (to the extent that they are also discursive effects) as well as the practical articulation of the analytical act. This crossover of registers locates the subject *at the crossroads of an agonistic relationship between discourses*.

Psychoanalysis as practice is inscribed in the context of a structure and a history. The structure determines a series of necessary relationships between a certain number of factors that produce differential forms of discourse, which are jointly and conflictually linked (the master, the university, the hysteric and the analyst). These four discourses (just four, Lacan stated . . . prior to contradicting himself)[7] create a conflictual tension that could be defined in a broad sense as '*politics*', which is understood here as a synonym for the agonistic relationship between discourses. In this context psychoanalysis occupies a paradoxical position. In effect, psychoanalytic discourse opposes and challenges other discourses (in particular the discourses of the master and the university), while at the same time, due to its specific nature, psychoanalytic discourse 'makes us listen' to that which other discourses avoid.[8]

Discourse theory allows us to rigorously position psychoanalysis within what Freud called 'civilization' (*Kultur*). The formulation of the four discourses allows analysts to shape the logical articulation of the ties the act establishes and, at the same time, locate these ties in relation to the other three discourses it is inseparable from. An example would be where Lacan offers the Marxist concept of surplus value to specify the status of the object (*a*) to the extent this is produced by the discourse of the master, with the result being *plus-de-jouir*. It is the place of this object that allows us to understand the loss of *jouissance* that all social ties bring into play. The need for *plus-de-jouir* is a 'hole to be filled' (Lacan, 1970: 434). Marx, by means of surplus value fills this hole and that is why Lacan calls surplus value 'Marxlust', the '*plus-de-jouir* of Marx' (*ibid*.). Surplus value is the cause of the desire that the capitalist economy makes its principle, that of the production of excess. The capitalist economy demands increasingly greater consumption: if this production leads to a form of consumption susceptible to such *jouissance* in such a way that there were a reduction in this uncontrolled production then consumption, the cycle, would be interrupted. If it does not happen this way, that is because the economy, due to an inversion Marx failed to perceive, leads to a reduction of *jouissance (manque-à-jouir* or *want-to-enjoy*). This is why, paradoxically, the more we consume the greater the distance from the subjective *jouissance* of this consumption. The law of the capitalist economy is therefore similar to drive; the more you drink the thirstier you are. The more you consume, the more objects you 'need'.

Effects on subjects

Thanks to discourse theory, what was previously considered in terms of 'subjectivity' (and even 'intersubjectivity') is translated into a new writing by Lacan

that provides the subject with a different status, taking to its ultimate consequences the thesis (unchanged since its initial formulation in 1961) by which 'the signifier represents the subject for another signifier', a formulation that makes it very clear that the subject not only speaks but is spoken. The theorization of discourse extends previous reflections on the subject, providing them with a new status: it allows us to read them in terms of 'effects on subjectivity'.[9] These 'effects' are the result of exchanges between words and the discursive structures in which the subject is trapped while at the same time forming them. In this way discourse theory allows us to specify the formal conditions of analytic experience (the analytic 'device') at the same time as it confers a precise status on the other forms of social ties and its diverse subjective effects.

In this way psychoanalysis makes it possible to offer a critical reading of both subjective becoming and the basis of politics. It therefore comes as no surprise that Lacan stated that *the unconscious is politics*: 'I do not say: "politics is the unconscious", but simply that "the unconscious is politics". What I mean to say is: *what ties men together and what opposes them* is precisely an aspect of what we are trying to articulate' (Lacan, 1966–67, 10/05/67).[10]

Based on the above it is understood that the position of psychoanalysis depends to a great extent on the position psychoanalysts wish to maintain in the conflictual and agonistic circuit of discourses and in this way define a 'politics of psychoanalysis'. This assumes a critical definition of psychoanalysis that is today more necessary than ever: it means recognizing that analytical discourse is involved in a structural tension and a debate with other discourses, quite apart from the eclectic solutions seeking to mask them. Now, the psycho-sociological thesis by which the 'new psychic economy' produces 'new subjects' affected by 'new pathologies' leads to the most confusion. It uses statements referring to psychoanalysis by simultaneously importing concepts generated in diverse discourses (generally from the human sciences, but not exclusively). We find ourselves facing the imperialist enthronement of these technocratic discourses, which represent a specific trait of the 'contemporary world'. The logic of the market in the neo-liberal era occupies the space of the lives of individuals and groups, of bodies and their representations. Giving form to the constitutive fictions of the individual and groups, defining the public as the object of educational or health policies (not to mention commercial policies), produces a subject that thinks and 'administers' their life in terms of financial investment, all of which is achieved by means of the immense production of statements from the human sciences, in which psychology occupies a prominent position.

This forces us to ask which effects of subjectivity are produced by our 'post' or 'hyper' modern culture. What are the effects induced on subjectivity by the procedures of social normalization that elevate economic reason and organizational reason (and a certain form of medical rationality of behaviours) to the range of anthropological values in the past reserved for religions, the reason of the State or major ideological systems?[11] How are we to understand the emergence of this medical–economic civilization of the human being that reduces

psychic suffering to little more than a behavioural disorder destined to be sedated through the use of psychotropic drugs or corrected by cognitive-behavioural therapies?

'Mental health'

'Mental health' has become a matter of the preventive management of public 'risk' scenarios, in the process transforming psychiatric care into a technical–administrative health device designed to ensure social normalization. Is it necessary to remind ourselves that, independently of their claims to 'scientific rationality' and leaving aside their status as 'professional practices', both medicine and psychology are essentially social practices?

From this perspective, the 'medicalization of existence' (Gori & Del Volgo, 2005) participates in what Foucault (1976/1981, 1975–76/1997) termed 'biopolitics' or 'biopower'. It is necessary to clarify here that sciences themselves are not questioned, only the technocratic devices of social normalization that subsume their institutions. The health sciences, as social practices, are currently inscribed in a logic of control, of the bureaucratic appraisal of practices, acts and conduct, and smother with their dark ideological authority their own dilution into a political economy whose dominance expands indefinitely. All of this is done in the name of the wellbeing of an individual defined as 'self-managing', open as much to performance as competition, and who is expected to display a series of behaviours supposedly as *jouissif* as they are socially conformist. Neoliberalism has produced this ideology of the 'behavioural man' conceived as an economic mini-unit, an 'element' of social life to which models, strategies and market forces can be applied.

We are therefore witnessing a 'transvaluation of values', as Nietzsche would have termed it, although inverted: why complicate ourselves with concepts such as 'psychic reality', 'desire', 'anxiety' or 'guilt', when you can impose behavioural profit techniques, 'management' strategies for conduct, that the hypermodern subject should opt in this 'brave new world' to govern themselves according to the rationality of their 'own' interests? The *pathos* of ancient Greece, psychic suffering, is reduced to nothing more than a behavioural disorder or a chemical imbalance in the nervous system that can be remedied by the taking of a multitude of miracle pills designed with regular and implacable frequency by the pharmaceutical industry.[12]

We must remember here the lucid warning of Hannah Arendt (1958/1999: 400–401): 'the trouble with modern theories of behaviourism is not that they are wrong but that they could become true, that they actually are the best possible conceptualization of certain obvious trends in modern society'. The clearest manifestation of this today, its equally paradigmatic and caricatural example, is perhaps the practice of the new 'psychological' technique called 'coaching' (Gori & Le Coz, 2006). This practice can be conceptualized as a true pedagogy of technocratic ideology. Coaching is intended to provide today's subjects with

the instruments needed in this era of 'managerial' organization. It represents an attempt to promote those values glorified by the performative society: competitiveness, performance, profitability, productivity.[13] This practice expresses the triumph of 'business thinking', the transformation of human beings into a simple stock of psychic resources at the service of the socio-economic imperative. Subjects who receive *coaching* go through a process in which they must learn what is expected of them. More than forty years on it is necessary to once again ask the question formulated by Canguilhem, with a slight modification (1958): How can psychologists allow themselves to be instrumentalized in a world that treats human beings as instruments?

Political power trusts psychiatry with the task of developing standards and defining deviation from social norms. Foucault (1974–75/1999: 131) described this in the following way:

> It is a question of the disturbance, of the disorder, of the danger, which is posed to the psychiatrist in administrative terms. Psychiatric analysis, research, classification [*quadrillage*] tend to move from what the patient thinks to what they do, from what they are capable of understanding to what they are capable of doing, from what they can consciously want to what could appear involuntarily in their behavior.

Foucault (1974–75/1999: 148) goes on to add that:

> Psychiatry no longer needs madness, or dementia, or delirium, or alienation to function. Psychiatry can psychiatrize all conduct without referring to alienation. . . . Psychiatry sees opening before it, as a field of possible activity, as a field of its symptomological evaluations, the total domination of all possible behaviour.

The objective is to discover, as soon as possible, any signs of deviation from the social norm in order to monitor, control and correct them. One recent and dramatic example is the aberrant idea, which appeared in France, of drawing up a list of 'psychologically dangerous' children over the age of three, as demonstrated by the collective appraisal of the government institution INSERM (National Institute of Health and Medical Research) concerning the early diagnosis and prevention of mental disturbances in children and adolescents and that recommends controlling action from the age of 36 months.[14]

Conclusion: the analyst's discourse

The difficulty of the analyst's discourse, as indicated by Lacan (1969–70/1991), is that it 'should oppose the at least acknowledged will to dominate. . . . *that at least acknowledges* not because it should be concealed but because, after all, it is always easy to slide towards the discourse of domination' (11/02/70: 79).

For its part, the analyst's discourse implies an act: the *analytic act*. This is not the act of the analysand, it is the act of the person occupying the place of an agent of discourse who interrogates the subject concerning their desire and this allows the discourse of the subject to move from submission to the master signifier by means of an interrogation of the desire that motivates it. This interrogation presupposes a questioning of this alienating submission and the *jouissance* it brings. In this sense, the analytic act is not a 'simple' question of method or a technical application, it is also a political act in the sense that we have previously emphasized: what is it that joins people? Or more precisely: what about the desire that encourages me, which elements of my past, which genealogical inheritances, which unacknowledged phantasy, what unknown jouissances have brought me here, to accept these situations, to console myself with these objects, to repeat these impasses? Political, therefore, not in the sense of an ideology or indoctrination, of a value system or direction of consciousness, of the pursuit of 'concrete' objectives: but political in the sense of non-submission, of a possible opening to something beyond super-egoic, blame-inducing or masochistic submission.

Psychoanalysis is not decided beforehand; its results are subject to the possibility of a cure. Each cure is a commitment to discover the possibility of the advent of a subject that, freeing itself from the enclaves of *jouissance*, opens new paths for their desire. If psychoanalysts manage to sustain their impossible position, if they remain alert to the critical dimension that should never be lost, if they manage to avoid sliding into the clutches of the sirens of perverse knowledge (that is, knowledge wielded by power), they will remain open to the possibility that the subjects who bring into question their word as part of a cure arrive as subjects of their enunciation, recognizing the effects of a discourse that has constituted them, opening a door to desire rather than to repetition. We refer to a *subjective event* in the sense of passing to a new subjective position.

Faced with the deleterious effects of mercantile–liberal logic, the instrumentalization of 'psy' knowledge, psychoanalysts, as agents of eponymous discourse, have a specific political responsibility. If psychoanalysis is involved in the Enlightenment Debate this is because its practice provides analysts with the knowledge that the border between civilization and barbarity, just like that between madness and 'normality', is finer than is generally thought. That rationality (or what claims to be such) is capable of creating its own monsters with alarming ease.

Notes

1 Lacan's introduction of the figure of the Other provides Moebian continuity between the 'intrapsychic' and the social since both are the product of discourse.
2 The paradigmatic example, to which we will return later, is 'coaching'.
3 According to Jean-Pierre Changeux (1980) in *L'homme neuronal*.
4 The expression is from Roudinesco (1999).
5 Two US authors classify the DSM as the 'Bible' (cf. Kirk & Kutchins, 1992).

6 We believe the theory is sufficiently well known to not require further explanation here. It was explained in detail in *Seminar XVII* (Lacan, 1969–70) and in 'Radiophonie' (1970).

7 Without going into the details of a particularly complex debate, we refer here to Lacan's introduction to 'capitalist discourse'. For current purposes we can limit ourselves to its assimilation, as Lacan himself does, to *the modern form of the discourse of the master*: 'what operates in the transition from the discourse of the old master to the new master, who is called capitalist, is a modification of the place of knowledge' (Lacan, 1969–70, 17/12/69: 34). Lacan (1972) then insisted that capitalist discourse was 'a substitute' for the discourse of the master. I have more fully developed this point elsewhere (Koren, 2008). Néstor Braunstein (2011), for his part, speaks of a process of transition and, more recently, of a change from 'capitalist discourse' to 'market discourse' (pp. 94–100), see Chapter 11 of this volume.

8 'The intrusion into the political can only be achieved by recognizing that there is no discourse, and not only the analytical, that is not a discourse of jouissance at least when awaiting the work of truth. The characterization of the master's discourse as possessing a hidden truth is not to say that the discourse hides (but that) it is something that demands to be displayed to become legible' (Lacan, 1969–70, 11/02/70: 90).

9 The expression is from Chaumon (2009) and allows us to clearly identify the effects that social changes have on subjects without confusing these with the appearance of 'neo-subjects' (a structurally erroneous concept). In this way the expression allows us to maintain the structural effect while also indicating the historical transformations.

10 This allows us to insist that 'politics is the unconscious' and not 'the social is the unconscious', as affirmed by theorists of the 'new psychic economy', invoking a non-existent quote, a phrase that Lacan never used but which allows them to affirm sociological positions. We refer to J.P. Lebrun and in particular C. Melman.

11 We mention in passing that this did not escape Lacan's perceptive eye (1969–70):

> The sign of truth . . . should be produced by that which has replaced the old slave, that is by those that are themselves products, 'consumables' as they say, as much as the others. *Consumer Society*, they call it. The *human material*, as they called it at one time.
>
> (17/12/69: 35)

12 Which they manufacture with the same implacable regularity as the 'epidemics' their products are designed to remedy. This is how it is with depression and hyperactivity (Pignarre, 2001, 2003; Lane, 2009).

13 Which sounds like something Lacan (1969–70) indicated was a consequence of collusion between the master's discourse and university discourse: the 'I-ocracy' (*Je-cratie*) (21/01/70; 11/02/70: 71; 91). Also see Lasch (1978).

14 The French government is currently preparing a crime prevention plan that advocates in particular early detection of 'behavioural disturbances' in children that it is assumed would move towards crime. In this context, the recent report from the INSERM (National Institute of Health and Medical Research) advocating the detection of 'behavioral disturbances' in small children is particularly important. Professionals are invited to indicate prenatal, perinatal, genetic or environmental risk factors linked to temperament and personality. In relation to small children these include, for example, 'character traits such as emotional coldness, a tendency to manipulate, cynicism' and the idea of the 'genetic inheritance of behavioral disturbances' (INSERM, 2005). The report insists on the need for early detection, from the age of 36 months, of the following signs: 'indocility, heteroagressivity, lack

of emotional control, impulsiveness, a low morality index' etc. (*ibid*.). Promoted by political figures and with the alleged purpose of preventing social disorder and criminality, this initiative produced a strong and massive response headed mostly by psychoanalysts, who were joined by certain sectors of psychiatry, psychologists, social workers and teachers who formed a protest movement that used the Internet and held meetings throughout France (Various Authors, 2006) that finally led to the (temporary?) abandonment of this project.

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21

SUBJECTIVITY IN LACANIAN DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

Trauma and political speech

John Lloyd Roberts and Kareen Ror Malone

Approaches to discursive psychology following the postmodern turn in the human sciences recognize that language does not transparently reflect social relations but builds them (Wetherell, 2001; Hepburn & Potter, 2003), and that "the subject of discourse cannot be outside discourse . . . [or] power/knowledge as its source and author" (Hall, 2001: 79–80). One cannot, as Vygotsky (1978) might promise, do anything to escape the necessary formations of subjectivity, an awareness of which defines postmodernism. This subjectivity, though said to be socially sedimented in historical practices of public talk and writing, maintains an untheorized integrative aspiration "towards a particularly social *phronesis*" (Malone & Roberts, 2010). Through the adoption of particular language games over others, and the generative interposition of one social code against another, these approaches simultaneously mount an external critique of representation as epistemological limit, while problematically preserving for the interiority of the subject an invisibly undivided presence. The pragmatic orientation within postmodern discursive psychology—wherein subjects attain a kind of Lockean fashioning of "punctual selves" (Taylor, 1989) writ large—ignores that epistemic failure of representation, which for Foucault (1966/1973) occurs at the end of the eighteenth century, and results in finitude as a structural vanishing point in the formation of the modern subject.

The early Foucault (1966/1973) writes of counter-sciences (psychoanalysis and ethnology) providing an especially penetrating analysis of the representations of the human sciences, attributed to a subject whose realities are ultimately regulated through principles of Death, Desire, and Law. As Gutting (1989) notes, Foucault (1966/1973: 374–375) clearly has Lacan in mind as he writes that

> psychoanalysis advances and leaps over representation . . . When one follows the movement of psychoanalysis as it progresses, or when one traverses the epistemological space as a whole, one sees that these

> figures are in fact . . . the very forms of finitude, as it is analyzed in modern thought.

As suggested, Lacanian approaches to analysis may, thus, scaffold discursive possibilities for such representational depictions because psychoanalytic thought *traverses the epistemological space* through a structural accounting of the unthought of the cogito that poses the limit for the subject's self-possession. Psychoanalytic expressions reveal defining points of a different sort of subjective structuration, which is differently possible. From a Lacanian perspective, the presence of science as a formalizing, decentering, and privileging structure over consciousness entails a linking of modernity and a certain epistemic constraint to "reading" this subject (see Milner, 1991; Parker, 2011). Equally attuned to the break of modernity so fruitfully exploited by Foucault, Lacan's works newly conceptualize the diachronic and synchronic constitution of the subject; the effects being dependent on the inherent structure of language itself. The subject is not only depicted in language, but—more fundamentally—is temporally structured through language. Unlike approaches to psychological *topoi* within discursive psychology (e.g. Gergen, 1994), which submit the subject's presumably agentic and synchronic speech to acts of social ventriloquism, which are then deconstructed in paralogisms, Lacanian Discourse Analysis attends to these discursive fissures as revealing a traumatic subject of diphasic enunciation, one made possible by the knotting of images, signifiers, and the unsayable as the logic of a retroactive and failed temporality.

In what follows, we elaborate modern subjectivity as traumatically finite, before speaking to Lacanian subjectivity, what the failure of symbolization portends for discourse analysis, and to reflexivity. To finish our analysis, we offer a Lacanian reading of a narrative with psychological, political, and ethical implications, the confirmation hearings of United States Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor. We hope to demonstrate the necessity of approaches to discourse that not only note enunciated social significations, but also the conundrums of the enunciation itself as bringing forth inherent impossibilities within speaking and one's ethical assumption within such impossibilities. In particular, we listen for symbolic centers of gravity around which cultural and historical impasses circulate—here, relating to the democratic projects of fairness and equality—making possible a critical subjectivity resistant to the pretensions of politically hegemonic and tautological discourse.

Modernity and traumatic subjectivity

The subversive potential of a Lacanian discourse analysis partially rests on its specifically historical grasp of the subject of modernity and science. Indeed, for Lacan (1975/1998), science "is a subversion of knowledge (*connaissance*). Prior to that, no knowledge was conceived that did not participate in the sexual link" (13.03.73: 82). Cosmologies indicate where and how knowledges linked

imaginary instantiations of the subject and reality. The link is established in the inscriptions of antiquity conjoined—sexually and otherwise—by God, where there is no place for Freud's Copernican decentering, and the Lacanian separation of truth from knowledge.

As Foucault (1966/1973: 34) argues, the theme repeats; in the Renaissance, resemblances are secured through the signatures of a language—"whether they are woven into nature itself or exist in lines on parchments and in libraries—that are everywhere the same: coeval with the institution of God." The epistemic discontinuity of the seventeenth century disrupts the possibility for truthful inscriptions bearing resemblance; however, in what follows, intelligibility is re-instated by manifestly unproblematic Cartesian representation, by horizontal correspondence of the world with the set of identities and differences now governed by the height of an ideal conceptual space.

Yet, this objective vantage point—still nostalgically clung to in scientistic knowledge—turns out to be vacant, or impossible to assume. Representation, thus, comes to crisis as grounded in something other than itself, and the subject of this epoch imagining an invisible position above knowledge is unable to account for itself in representation. The particularly modern question of how the human subject as a finite object of empirical science may him or herself constitute the world of objects is notably addressed by Kant (1781/2007), who answers that the very factors limiting our knowledge are transcendental conditions of possibility for knowledge. Problematically, according to Foucault (1966/1973), this "analytic of finitude" does not satisfactorily account for the human being as simultaneously transcendental subject and empirical object, because mutual and continuous deferral creates an excess that escapes theoretical or positive circumscription. As with Foucault, Lacan (1950: 677) presciently reminds us that a gap continues to separate speaker from its speech, and "there may be no signifier of the enunciating subject in the statement."

For the modern subject, it becomes precisely this question of how to bear the traumatic void authorizing the enunciative space between itself as transcendental agent, and itself as reflexively sedimented through its own significations. The disjuncture between thinking and being, which—from a Lacanian perspective—amounts to "a split between two forms of otherness" (Fink, 1995: 46) is described by Foucault (1966/1973: 326) as "the unthought . . . [that] is not lodged in man like a shriveled-up nature or a stratified history; it is in relation to man, the Other . . . it is both exterior to him and indispensable to him." As a result, subjectivity is divided between the inhabiting Other of language, over against the Other of the externally vectored or particular instantiation of being, which is called the object *a* by Lacan. This refers to the remainder of the Other, wrapped as a semblance, as one's own sense of being, marking what could be called partial objects of the drive, where the rim of the body and the object are linked as what makes an outside and an inside. Such moments *qua* objects are posited variably as meanings, experiences, qualities, states of facts, etc. As Lacan argues, the point of reference, or tethering for representation, has been lost in Copernican de-centering

of the subject in relation to the unconscious (Chapsal, 1957). The suspended agreement between subject and world is no longer supported outside of itself, and an incredible burden falls on the traumatized subject herself. In Žižek's (1999: 185) words, "*Epistemological limitation* of our capacity to grasp reality (the fact that we are forever perceiving reality from our finite temporal standpoint) is the positive *ontological condition* for reality itself."

For the suffering subject of modernity, the failure of representation is repositioned within the subject's own being as alienation in language, allowing the subject to exist as a nothing, in submission to the signifier that assigns a place but leaves a void. There is no longer the possibility that the subject would preside over reality in general, or be reduced to its inverse in the madness of abject sacrifice or illusion; however, as the subject is ontologically traumatized by its division in grammatical time, a void within reality offers itself not as a privileged position but, rather, as a reflexive space between exteriorities.

The ontogenesis of the subject, its decentering, is implicated in the timing of the subject within language, putting its organic body within the effects induced by language itself, the retroactive logic of failed temporality. Such belated timing of the subject is definitional of trauma, where a bleeding between real, symbolic, and imaginary dimensions hammers out the beats of a subject, whose meanings will be accrued yet still relate to another scene. The structural impossibility of trauma grounds the time of speaking, forged within the contingent but figuring subjective necessities within its positional and particular articulations. The failure of an integral temporality is thus implicated in the Other's intervention in the subject's embodied reality, which is retroactively anchored as a fantasy of—*inter alia*—the subject's origin, as a Kantian transcendental illusion that fills the gap between necessity and impossibility. As Freud notes about babies figuring out their origins, one encounters a limit of knowledge.

The structural pre-conditions that define the traumatic event—the one authorizing the subject's being—*cannot* itself appear within the field that it opens, and *must* always be imagined. Trauma is always, like sexuality, diphasic, requiring the second movement to render it within history and, in a sense, give the subject the possibilities of time. For subjectivity as ontologically traumatic the deferred action of *nachträglichkeit*, or *après coup*, has the interrupting alterity constantly receding, and also being prospectively constructed according to later events. *Deferred action* is the retroactive production of a new meaning related to a second scene, concerning a first scene that occurred earlier chronologically. We must note that punctuation in a sentence has the same structure as deferred action; it introduces a cut that brings about meaning, a meaning that retains part of its enigma (Chatal, 1995).

The position of Lacanian Discourse Analysis

For a Lacanian Discourse Analysis that attends to the subject of enunciation, it serves as a historical reminder that strategies for suturing the division in the

modern subject—eschatological or philosophical renderings, and the *techne* of positivist knowledge—are unable to escape the unthought that is opaque to transparent reflections of the cogito. In contrast, the Lacanian subject, removed from the scene of reconstructed meaning, or the uninvolved height from which it is deconstructed, is itself materially governed through the grammar of speech, which is that of the trauma itself, a diphasic articulation that links the synchrony of subjectivity founded within the address and structures of language and the diachrony of what is impressed from the Other contingently—one the letter "carrier" of the other. Thus, the subject lives in the future perfect tense, always about to arrive, or will have arrived at a later date. The subject of Lacanian Discourse Analysis, ontologically traumatized through its alienation in language, becomes separated and split from its anchoring in the originary event (or signifier) through deferral to another predicated event (or second signifier), which only makes *post hoc* sense of the first. As Pavón-Cuéllar (2010: 102) writes,

> Through the making of history, or the enunciation of discourse, the signifying social structure retroactively creates each one of its subjects . . . So, to be present, they must wait for their future. But his future is *never yet* present. In this future, the subjects are *never yet* present.

The modern subject—divided in its enunciation—is no longer guaranteed in its present and past through a *closure of the future*, as embodied in the teleology of pre-modern language (wherein meanings march towards the rational inscriptions of the divine into the world), and in the more contemporary discursive resurrections of this aspiration, as previously noted, where signifiers circulate around—if not shared cultural, theological, and economic ends—metaphors of "self-mastery" that underwrite the projects of the human sciences as crypto-theologies of selfhood.[1]

To be somewhat polemical, though not dismissive of the local importance of the work carried on in the fields of hermeneutics and discursive psychology, the position of a Lacanian discourse analysis arises as part of an immanent critique of post/modern subjectivity that would avoid the imaginary and representational doubling of the human being by taking the *suffering subject* seriously. Psychoanalysis begins and ends with trauma. The actual intrinsic structuring of subjectivity, its timing, its relation to the Other, and to language itself (unconscious knowledge) are discoveries about trauma (Mieli, 2001). As previously suggested, the modern subject of trauma exists on several levels. There is the modern, ontological subject of trauma, alienated in language, which chronologically poises the subject for later ontic trauma, that typically worked through in the clinic. Yet, there is still the discursive subject of trauma, historically bearing its fundamental alienation in language but also the residue of social and collective trauma. In other words, irrespective of every subject's particularity, discourse itself carries with it the imprint, the scars of what has wounded the flesh of the socio-cultural body. Historical time, as an integral or ideal temporality

disrupted, therefore bears the *trace* of Otherness, of the manifold significations formed "within the hollow" of *différance* (Derrida, 1974). Not surprisingly, then, ontological trauma may also be said to be co-constituted through a particular historical genealogy of its formation through the intervention of certain exteriorities, or differences. For a Lacanian discourse analysis, it is just this position—offered to us by the suffering of others across history—which opens for us a place of resistance and an analytic distance. Put otherwise, one cannot operate outside of the transference (Lacan, 1958).

For modernity, through Freud's (1895) earliest works, the hysterical subject—in her historical appearance—symptomatically manifests an emergent embodied questioning of gender as stable social category that would transcend any symbolically constituted difference. Concerning her interrogation of the discourse of mastery, and its surrogates, Lacan (1974: 19) writes that "scientific discourse and the hysteric's discourse have almost the same structure." Lacan's words tell us that the hysteric's position is just a starting point as she or he still accedes to a master discourse, which attempts to squelch her various queries. Nonetheless, as is noted throughout Lacanian commentary (e.g., Fink, 1995), that the hysteric presses the master (analyst), exposing the deficiencies, the lack in his knowledge of her being, squares with a post-positivist vision of science founded upon ever more penetrating questions, aiming at falsification, rather than discovery of a presupposed, unified reality anchoring the master's discourse. Significantly, it is the hysterical subject's divided or traumatic status—revealed in her concrete nineteenth-century, lived resistance to Victorian patriarchal determinations regarding gender ("Am I a man or a woman?")—that enables her to truthfully, and critically confront power ($a/\$ \not\rightarrow S_1 \downarrow S_2$). The discourse of the hysterical subject, as the discourse of science, is prioritized by Lacan because "it is the discourse that underlies any discourse. It is the discourse implied by language" (Pavón-Cuéllar, 2010: 267), language that alienates as a condition of providing understanding.

Such a critical and subversive position for the subject, related to the condition in which the alterity of speech is structural to being, hystericizes the analysis of discourse, allowing: (1) attention to the enunciating act, which would forestall the mesmerization by what is enunciated, thereby revealing subjectivity as grounded in opposition, gap, lack, repetitions, parapraxes, and (mis)understanding; (2) examination of the significations, predications, supplements that fill out the void; (3) interrogation of retroactively manifesting social structure, and the subjectivities arising from these structures, which demonstrate how knowledge circumscribes and fixes the subject; and (4) attenuated access to the effects of the Real of the Symbolic. Such effects are correlative to the space carved out through symbolic structuring, implicated in traumata. At this juncture, ideologies, and collective (legal, political, economic) institutions intermix with fantasy, producing objects that resonate numinously, and promising an ideological return to wholeness and fulfillment—often through death (of somebody).

Importantly, the hysterical positioning of the subject of discourse analysis, unlike other discourses Lacan outlines (master, university, psychoanalysis/perversion) is

located in alienation from self (not in a master signifier, university knowledge, or enigmatic desire), which tends to reflexively open the space of knowledge from our particularly modern perspective—"what functions as an absence in the text" (Parker, 2005, Chapter 3 of this volume). In consequence, knowledge that closes the future of the subject—through its appeal to pre-modern experience of wholeness, or more modern, but no less impossible, assumptions of God-like points of vision—prevents the analysis of this production. These knowledges instead perform the function of ideology, which offers not "escape from our reality but . . . the social reality itself as an escape from some traumatic real kernel" (Žižek, 1989: 45). In contrast, assumption of traumatic division responsibly locates our struggles historically and materially, providing possibility of the traversal of the fantasy where the Other of our political, legal, or economic lives – demanding obedience to its edicts and instantiations of self-hood – will finally be satisfied and fulfill its promise of restoring plenitude.

Political discourse and the modern subject: the United States Senate confirmation hearings of Judge Sonia Sotomayor

As an analysis of critical subjectivity at work in contemporary political speech in Western democracy, it may serve to pay some attention to a notable instance of public debate around the role of judging in legal institutions, which raises the collective stakes for the positioning of the subject in discourse. American legal culture is widely known for its embrace of the public spectacle, which includes not only periodic media installments of celebrity cases but also the staging of democracy concerning its fairness, and continued relevance in the lives of its consumers. Of these televised "glimpses" into the machinery of liberal democracy, the United States Senate confirmation hearings in July, 2009, of then Federal Appellate Judge Sonia Sotomayor for Associate Justice of the United States Supreme Court continue the tale of those wayfaring Enlightenment ideals of fairness, equality, and judicial restraint. It may further heighten the dramatic tension to remember that Sotomayor, who would become the Court's first Hispanic justice and only third female justice, had been suspected of having a left-leaning judicial philosophy, despite her service as criminal prosecutor and corporate lawyer. The evidence for such orientation, presented by her conservative opponents, involved several public addresses in which she spoke to the significance of her Latina heritage for her capacity to judge, and the rejection of a notion of absolute impartiality. One particular speech, given at a symposium at UC Berkeley School of Law, stood out to her interlocutors in the Senate, where she had—in playing from a statement attributed to Justice O'Connor that a wise man or woman would reach the same judicial result—remarked, "I would hope that a wise Latina woman with the richness of her experiences would more often than not reach a better conclusion than a white male who hasn't lived that life" (Sotomayor, 2001, October). Such a statement, indicative of Enlightenment universality and its reversal in embodied perspective,

brought to the fore in the second day of hearings by Senator Jeff Sessions (Republican), discloses a political return of the repressed. As will be seen, this symptomatic arrival opens rather than seals a future, because the hysterical subject's reflexive partition in language, whose "misrecognition of the traumatic Thing, embodying the impossible *jouissance*" (Žižek, 1989: 79), underwrites the very possibility of the occurrence of neutrality, fairness, and equality in jurisprudence as a negative space (rather than a positive condition in the network of Being)—and a particularly modern spaciousness for the subject.

Language, as the unconscious structure in which culture deploys its exteriority, its incommensurability with embodied existence, historically aspires—nonetheless—to positions of metaphysical certitude. For Lacanian Discourse Analysis, the discourse of the Other that structurally conceals the lacunae of reality most rigorously is, of course, that of the master ($\$/S_1 \rightarrow S_2/a$). As such, the master's discourse orients itself around a deficiency in jouissance related to what may be produced on its behalf by its signifying surrogates (Lacan, 1975/1998, 13.02.73: 54—55). Identifying itself with the master signifier (S_1), the master's discourse—characteristic of moral and political discourse— "gets off" on its consolidation of an air-tight fabrication of social reality, but can only do so ironically by deferring it through the fault-lines of other signifiers (S_2), and suppressing its division ($\$$). In the Senate hearings, in opposing Sotomayor's former remarks that a judge's "background and experiences" can and should affect a judicial decisions, Sessions invokes the totemic, foundational language of the American Republic: "I think it goes against the American ideal and oath that a judge takes to be fair to every party" (Confirmation, 2009: 69). In such classical master discourse, the chosen signifier (S_1) "American ideal and oath"—bearing the metaphorical resonance of the political state, the exercise of power, the self-authorizing force of the sovereign—dominates but is predicated on another signifier (S_2), or "fair(ness)", calling forth dispersal into other signifiers recalling an egalitarian civil society. As (S_1), the "American ideal and oath" thus occupies the position of master signifier, staging conscious American identity, but masks its figurative incompleteness as relying on (S_2), "fair(ness)" that separates the subject ($\$$) from him/herself as these demands that are contradictory. More specifically, an "oath" is a kind of vow, an "ideal", an elevated value, while "America" is a geographical and socio-historical location; but to be "fair" is a consequence, an outcome (unrelated to place, intention, or promise), and the "American ideal and oath" thus involves not geography, but a kind of cultural promise that remains unfulfilled. To identify with such a seemingly originary metaphor, the subject must deprive himself, cut himself off from his sustained American identity. His or her vow involves *a project, an outcome of fairness*, which always arrives from the future. In this way, the discourse of the master takes its form in the Other. Only the Other, as contingent, will confirm fairness, equality, unless such master discourse falls into tautology, at which time its authority as democratic, ideal, etc. becomes highly problematic. Consequently, the position of truth in such master discourse is the split subject, the master signi-

fier who is reduced to the confirmation from its slave signifiers—*What is fair*? The discourse of the master, however, constantly masks this traumatic division by synchronically closing the gap, stepping closer to tautology and the invocation of the interchangeable terms of "equality", "justice", etc. The impossibility with which one is faced is concealed through political/ideological discourse, which, if uttered often enough, even arouses the suspicions of the governed. While on the surface, the testy exchange between Sessions and Sotomayor appears as just another installment of American political drama, their encounter textually implicates the difference between "American ideal and oath" and "fair(ness)." This real remainder is division itself, unknowable in symbolic terms, but—crucially—from the standpoint of trauma it points temporally to the receding collective, historical event that makes "fairness" an impossibility as predicated by American identity, but still an outcome that can be futurally attempted, a remedy to a historically foundational unfairness.

Sessions, whose mesmerizing and repetitive discourse on "fairness" borders on tautological, seemingly puts Judge Sotomayor in a difficult rhetorical position, as American political subjects are widely known to cling to obfuscating ideological discourse as a way of preserving economic stability and faith in social and legal institutions. In response, Sotomayor becomes not the fascinating object of the Other's desire as exotic minority, but places herself within the contingency of law itself, within its structural necessities. As a rather wise Latina woman, she manages to diachronically occupy two positions simultaneously. As such, she adopts the position of the hysterical/critical subject, one scaffolded historically through embodied, symptomatic resistance—a questioning rather than a suturing of knowledge. Indeed, her access to jouissance, supposed by her interlocutors, is related to "what we see in our own time—the law is being called into question as a symptom" (Lacan, 1991/2007, 14.01.70: 43). In efforts to silence the symptom, involving the precise historical correlate of the law's division, Sessions attempts to eradicate her position as speaking to the law itself (rather its aberration) through pinning her down to (1) impartiality, or (2) bias/experience; however, she responds:

> What I was speaking about in that speech was – harkened back to what we were just talking about a few minutes ago, which is life experiences to influence us, in good ways. That's why we seek the enrichment of our legal system from life experiences. That can affect what we see or how we feel, but that's not what drives a result. The impartiality is an understanding that the law is what commands the result.
>
> (Confirmation, 2009: 71–72)

In this bit of text, the agent of speech is the divided enunciating subject ($\$$) herself who challenges the power of the "legal system" (S_1), whose product is ultimately "life experience", which is not coincidentally similar to "fair(ness)", *supra*, as they are both signifiers with pragmatic sense. In this position, the truth

that underlies the structure involves—similar to Sessions's discourse—the impossible rift between "legal system" and "experience." At the level of language, there is a deconstructive revolution of one term around the other, because something abstract and universal is dependent on the concrete, empirical experiences of subjects. However, at the level of the subject, it is the truth of this impossibility that ignites the subject's futurally vectored search for a justice that would *have been* true to life experience ("Justice will have been served" only in its concrete application). Sotomayor's speech brilliantly exposes the seemingly paradoxical truth that—as enunciated or enacted— justice can only be found in partiality, in bias, in the experience of living in the world of perspective. It is only in registering perspective, or life experience, that anything like "the legal system" can do its work. Sotomayor's subjective relation to trauma, both contingent and essential, positions her within a hysterical ethics, but one that shifts to assume division itself, over being an object for another or seducing the master. To further grasp Sotomayor's position of parrhesiast, which eschews manipulation or deception, one adopts neither the dialogical or hermeneutic engagement with the meaning of "fairness", (the resonance of which repetitively collapses speech into the identity of master discourse), nor the almost geometrical distance employed by discursive psychology. The latter, as university discourse (S_1/S_2→*a*/$), undoubtedly would catalogue discursive accretions socially and contextually produced in varying speech-acts, resulting in division as a theoretical outcome; however, agentically, it does not identify itself in division, thus concealing the master discourse, its silent partner. These approaches yield something important—the felt experience of conscious identification, or a distant view of the structure of language as a system of differences—yet either approach seeks a suturing of modern subjectivity, and, hence, a historically regressive, partial deception.[2] In contrast to structural concealment or exhaustive notation (or the post-modern reveling in its play, or emptiness), Sotomayor—in response to Sessions's cross-examination regarding her judicial oath requiring impartiality—does not merely speak about the theoretical or jurisprudential lacunae or difficulty in the discourse she is espousing. Rather, she *ethically embodies this space herself*:

> So I was trying to play on her words. My play was—fell flat. It was bad, because it left an impression that I believed that life experiences commanded a result in a case. But that's clearly not what I do as a judge. It's clearly not what I intended. In the context of my broader speech, which was attempting to inspire young Hispanic, Latino students and lawyers to believe that their life experiences added value to the process.
>
> (Confirmation, 2009: 73)

In Sotomayor's back-pedaling explanation, a parapraxis occurs—"My play was—fell flat"—as a block or stutter in speech interrupts the seamless

signification, and in this gap resides the unthought, the non-knowledge that separates "My play was" from "falling flat." It could be read that the "play", the tactical irony, or linguistic argument "fell flat", or became unheard, unheeded. If it is a sort of joke or irony, one that falls flat, its failed appeal invokes a third party that would mediate between the wise neutral one and a particular wisdom. Strikingly, the gap or "—" in Sotomayor's speech ends up as a failure in symbolization; not ironic, it falls out of an impass of the Real – one that begins with S_1 ("My play was") but ends prematurely with no S_2, yielding the possibility for the arising of both justice and the political subject of democracy. In this conundrum around wisdom, the historical conditions for equal access for Hispanic and Latino students, the signifier is missing because it is impossible to utter. Instead, retaining its subaltern position, her voice – interrupted by the traumatic Thing *qua* promise of Democracy – remains unintelligible to the designs of impartiality, which precisely requires a non-identification (a lack of intimacy, if you will) with its litigants to hear competing claims. As a consequence, only an ethical appropriation of the historically modern, hysterical subject of trauma—as the vanguard position for the discourse analyst—may stake a credible claim to the opening granted through the unfinished system of non-knowledge, that of universality. In doing so, she identifies with her (our) symptom, which—in legal and political terms—amounts to asserting "the point of inherent/exclusion, the 'abject', of the concrete positive order, as the only point of true universal order" (Žižek, 1999: 269). She must operate within the transference, so to speak. The perpetual and productive misrecognition of the Event(s), the foundational injustices retroactively redressed judicially, are released from their transcendental illusions of plentitude or absolute neutrality by the stutter, the silence, where the subject flashes through the symbolic void of non-knowledge, the space of reflexive possibility.

Notes

1 It should be noted that, though beyond the scope of this paper, psychological trauma manifesting in clinical discourse (i.e., that described by Freud, Janet, Caruth, van der Kolk, and others)—as the collapse of memory, temporality, and language—conceals the subject's traumatic ontology as well as the exteriorities implicated in historical or ontic traumas. The absence of an absolute guarantor of meaning in external representation is repositioned into the subject's interior and pathologized, giving social authorization to fill the subject's void with narratives promising selfhood, a "real" past, etc. The integrative projects of psychology negatively imply trauma as the ontological condition of their possibility.

2 Concerning post-modern or psychoanalytic discourse ($S_2/a \rightarrow \not{S}/S_1$), the agentic identification parallels that of perversion: the object for the Other. Though this form does address subjective division, its enigmatic and rarefied form is suited to confines of the analytic frame, and of Derridean play in Joycean texts. In other words, it does its own creative work against its addressee; however, its agentic position is not that of the subject, which may account somewhat for the fascination in post-modernity for the "post-human."

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22

THE AUTHOR AND THE ACT*

Calum Neill

Tim Crouch's 2010 play, *The Author*, is a play without conventional action. The play is performed without a stage and, thus, without a fixed focal point. Of course there is action in the play, but the lack of stage and the dispersion of actors throughout the audience emphasises or magnifies what is already the case in all other theatre; much of the action takes place outwith the acted action. Much of the action, that is, takes place in the head of the audience. Looking back on the play, with the mind's eye, what one remembers, what one sees, is what was not there. What one sees, what one remembers is what was brought in through the script. In this way, the play resembles a radio play or the act of reading, although it differs too from both of these in that the audience here are physically contained.

Having no stage, the space of the theatre is composed simply of two tiers of seating facing each other. No real space exists between them. The audience are alerted from the off, then, to the fact that something unusual, unconventional is at work here. We sit. We wait. Some in the audience talk nervously. We wait. We shuffle. Then an audience member who is clearly now not an audience member speaks. The play unfolds in this way, from within the audience, with different actors vocally erupting from their seating positions. No one moves, they just speak. They don't speak to each other. There is little dialogue as such. Voices speak, interweaving, working together to paint the story. And so the action emerges, in our heads.

The play

The story tells of the staging of a previous play by Tim Crouch. The previous play – a fictitious construct of the current play – concerns the story of a father who viciously abuses his daughter. The exact details of the play within the play are left vague. Impressions emerge. The play is set in or concerns a part of former Yugoslavia; Bosnia, Croatia, Kosovo. It is not clear. The father has lost

* **Please be advised that this chapter contains graphic material of a sexual nature, which some readers may find upsetting.**

his wife. The daughter has lost her mother. Caught in the destroyed aftermath of a war, the father and daughter are thrown together. We are told that the daughter demands a new start from the father. We are told that this is not something he can provide and this 'is why he starts to abuse her' (Crouch: 47). The violent abuse is painted vividly but in sudden brief glimpses, which allow an unfolding through the description of its depiction. It is vivid and yet removed and evocative. Pavol, the father, rapes his daughter with a broken bottle (Crouch: 27). Afforded a glance, with the actors, behind the scene, we are told how the effect is created. Esther, the actor playing the daughter has a bag of raw liver strapped to her thigh. Vic, the actor playing Pavol, tears open the bag and pulls out the liver, giving the impression of having torn out her womb.

This account of the story and performance of the play, which may or may not be called *The Abuser,* is woven through the telling of the wider story of the preparation for and aftermath of the play. As such the action and violence of *The Abuser* functions as a central axis around which the narrative turns but it is in two moments that follow the performance of *The Abuser* that we encounter the narrative focus of *The Author*. In preparing for the performance of *The Abuser*, the author/director has the cast expose themselves to various horrific images and experiences by way of research. They watch internet footage of an al-Qaeda style beheading. Esther finds and interviews a woman who, like her character, had been raped by her father. They find and decorate the rehearsal space with images, such as one of a man whose head has been crushed by a tank. The director pushes the actors further and further into the world of the play until the violence of the drama begins to infect them. Vic starts to become haunted by, possessed by, Pavol. He can no longer leave him in the theatrical space.

On the final night of the performance, a member of the audience has an epileptic fit. After the show, as the cast are leaving he tries to approach Vic, to apologise for disrupting the play and to thank him for the performance. In his fit, however, he has bitten his tongue and Vic doesn't understand him, doesn't understand what he is saying, why he is coming so close. Vic is still infected with Pavol. He puts out his hand to stop the audience member who takes hold of this hand. Something snaps. He – Vic, Pavol – attacks the man, kicking him to the ground and then continuing, kicking his body, his head. Nobody intervenes. Nobody stops him. He cannot stop himself.

The other narrative focus of the play, the other key point to which everything moves, occurs at a post-performance dinner party. The dinner takes place at Tim Crouch's home some time after the show has closed. The cast are all there, with partners and some other friends. They eat, chat, drink. People leave or go off to bed and Tim Crouch, the author, is left alone. He pours himself a whisky and goes to his study. Shortly before the performance, Esther had had a baby, Finn. The baby is sleeping in a travel cot in the study.

> I check my emails and then sit in front of my screen and just meander, really, drift, not really thinking. Not thinking. I type in my password. I

am tired but don't feel like going to bed. Images of flesh! I'm not proud, but we've all done it, haven't we? Haven't we? Finn is fast asleep in the travel cot by my side. It's a warm evening. I'm a bit drunk. I feel myself getting big. My throat is dry. I take myself out and just begin to gently fuck myself, you know. We've all done that, at the end of a long day. Haven't we? A couple of clicks.

A couple of clicks before bed!

I see a baby. This baby has a dummy in its mouth.

I have the choice to continue.

I have the choice to stop.

Everyone in the house is asleep apart from me. This baby's skin is damp with sweat from the evening heat, presumably, in this strange house. The image is grainy. The sound of voices from outside, maybe, from the street. A television somewhere. The room is cramped and untidy. I'm a little shocked with myself.

I turn down the volume.

I decide to continue. Just like that. In a second. Less than a second.

Click. Click.

The baby's dummy is removed and I look at the shadow cast on it. I watch the penis just gently being placed against the baby's mouth and then slowly being pushed in.

Not violently, actually. Actually quite gently. Quite lovingly.

I decide to continue.

Everything is muted. My heart is racing. I pull harder. This baby stirs but it does not wake. It does not wake. It has no idea what is going on. It has no idea. When I come, a small amount of cum goes on the edge of my computer screen. I quickly wipe it off, wipe myself. And join Jules in bed, curling around her lovely warm body and kissing the back of her neck. I am asleep in seconds.

In my meanderings, I forget to log off, forget to shut down, to Delete History.

Of course, when Esther wakes early because her baby is crying. Crying in the box room.

Lights slowly fade up.
ESTHER gets up and leaves the auditorium.

I thought about taking out my eyes. At first, I thought that would be the thing to do. The offending articles. Ha ha. The guilty party. But this is better. Less classical. Here in the dark. In this warm salt solution.

I press a blade into my neck.

(Crouch: 57–59)

The fiction is underscored at the end of the play. The author is dead. The author sat here with you speaking. The author, who has just left the auditorium, is dead. Words, then. It has all been words. Nothing but words. But how are we to understand these words? The Barthesian manoeuvre, heavy handed or inevitable, underscores the focus, emphasising the fact that the play is co-authored, the words always operating in conjunction with the imagination of the one who watches, who listens; the audience member. Always, ultimately, singular.

The symbolic and the imaginary

Discourse, in Lacanian terms, is composed of three indissoluble elements: the symbolic, the imaginary and the real. What is out there, what is common, what is drawn upon is the symbolic. The words spoken, the grammar employed, the conventions of theatre, the allusion and evocations, these all rely upon a pre-existent symbolic matrix. We sit, we listen, we understand and can follow what is being said because we are already immersed in this matrix, already constituted in relation to this matrix. The very possibility of thought arises as an effect of this matrix. The very possibility of *I* arises as a possibility of this matrix, which is to say, then, that *I* does not encounter the weave of the symbolic as if from the outside. *I* can only ever hope to find itself within the matrix.

But there is no meaning in the symbolic. The symbolic signifies. Each signifier only ever points to another signifier. As it does so, it implicates the subject, the *I* who would encounter it. It implicates the subject but without ever pinning this subject down, without ever mastering or totalising it: 'a signifier is what represents the subject to another signifier' (Lacan, 2006: 694).

In such a chain, with each signifier signifying something to another signifier, something must halt the process or be seen to halt the process. If not, then nothing is represented. This halting takes place by virtue of a signifier, not the subject. The subject is the something represented, and it is represented for another signifier. This latter signifier is that which would allow the possibility of something having been said, it allows the coherence of some sort of sense. It is important here to distinguish sense from meaning. The two operate in different registers. The movement of signifying, from signifier to signifier, seeks sense and anchors sense in the operation of this ultimate signifier to which all signifying speaks. Meaning, on the other hand, accrues in the realm of the imaginary. As the subject emerges through representation from one signifier to another, the subject imagines itself and 'imagines himself to be a man merely by virtue of the fact that he imagines himself' (Lacan, 1964/1973: 142). Each encounter with language thus produces both a sense, which allows signifying to unfold with a stability of its own, and meaning, which would be the subject's encounter with its own emergence in language.

This is to understand the self, the *I,* as unstable, never quite, always fading, aphanitic. We can discern in the passage of *The Author* quoted above the instability of the *I* with regard to the performed author.

> I'm not proud, but we've all done it, haven't we? Haven't we? . . . I'm a bit drunk. I feel myself getting big. My throat is dry. I take myself out and just begin to gently fuck myself, you know. We've all done that, at the end of a long day. Haven't we?

The apparent reflexivity here, while seemingly adhering to a conventional, coherent Cartesian self, actually points to the incohesion and division of this self. The declared lack of pride gives way to a subsumption of the *I* in a wider field. *I* becomes a facet of *we*. Then *I* slips into metonymy where, appealing to a conventional euphemism, *I* becomes synonymous with the sexual organ. Convention and euphemism aside, *I* is split here between a body part and the actor and split again by the fact of speaking. I am telling you that I am touching myself. Again, this is subsumed under a supposed collectivity. It is not only *I* who does this, these words speak for you too, all of us. This inclusivity signals what is already apparent in any discourse. The subject implicated, the subject that comes to emerge in the discourse, is not only, cannot be reduced to, the subject who speaks. In his second seminar Lacan refers to a story by H.G. Wells to illustrate just this point. Three scientists land on Mars where they are surprised to discover that they can understand the language of the Martians. However, when the three scientists come to discuss this, one has understood the Martian to be speaking of electronic physics, one understands that it has been speaking about what constitutes solid bodies and the third understands he has been speaking about poetry, metre and the function of rhyme (Lacan, 1978/1991: 281). Each has understood the same utterance in absolutely different ways. The point is that language operationalised as speech requires not only a speaker but a receiver, and that, crucially, meaning accrues on the side of the receiver. Whenever one speaks (or writes), we might assume that one means something. But neither are we the master of language nor is language the mere vehicle of the meaning we would have to convey. Language is produced and, in being produced, it constitutes those for whom it would have meaning. This meaning then is situated on the side of the one who receives the discourse. Even when *I* speak, *I* must receive the message of that speech before *I* can begin to construe meaning in it; 'the question of meaning comes with speech' (Lacan, 1978/1991: 286), where, here, we should understand speech as a phenomenon distinct from language.

When the author then begins to describe the scene with the baby, what is essential to grasp is that the sense of what is conveyed remains vague. The meaning of the scene is painted in the imagination for and, therefore, by each of us.

The presentation of two babies in what is revealed, in what the words say, serves on one level to draw an obvious parallel and thus presents a claim about implication and a purported uncontainability to representation. Within the world of the play, there is a baby here and now in the room, on the same diegetic level as the author. Then there is the baby on screen. We might understand the didactic point here to concern a contemporary divorcing of screen from reality

wherein the digitised, mediated image is somehow less real than the tangible experience of our own lived existence. By juxtaposing the two babies in the text and allowing the demonstrative pronoun and definite article to slip, the author effectively blurs the distinction between *this* baby and *the* baby. There is no *that* baby. *That* baby would be further removed. Both babies are drawn into proximity with each other.

When we are told that the author sees a baby, the fact that this follows from 'a couple of clicks before bed!' suggests that he is referring to a baby on screen. It remains, however, plausible that he sees a baby in the room in which he sits. There is one there, after all. We have already been told that it is a warm evening, so when we are told that 'This baby's skin is damp with sweat from the evening heat' we are drawn back to the baby in the room. This movement is problematised within the same sentence by the reference to 'this strange house'. The 'strange house' is presumably not the familiar, family home in which the author sits. The reference to the 'grainy image' in the following sentence throws our imagining back more firmly to the screen baby. The effect of this oscillation is not only to secure a parallel between the two babies, to disturb the diegetic levels and to imply a further conjunction between the masturbating author and the on-screen abuser. In watching, in spectating, Crouch, the author, seems to be telling us, we are all already implicated. Where the diegetic distinction between abuser on screen and the voyeur before the computer are dissolved, so too the diegetic distinction between these two and the audience member sat listening to, consuming, these words, constructing this scene in their head also begins to dissolve. Who is the abuser here? Where can the moral lines be drawn? 'I have the choice to continue. I have the choice to stop'; which is to say we too, the audience, have the choice to continue, the choice to stop.

What allows the scene to work on more than a simple didactic level is the very blurring of what is depicted. That is to say, the fact that the scene being portrayed is left undetermined necessarily draws the audience more actively into its construction. It is thus that the subject of the play emerges not as the author composing the words or the character of the author made to speak the words, but as the audience member who supplements the words with meaning, imagining the scene which exists nowhere other than in the imaginary.

The imaginary is, of course, the realm of identification. The subject does not exist to then encounter the world. It is through encountering the world that the subject first establishes an idea of itself. It is an idea, however, which is always incommensurate and consequently fragile. This is the fragility of the ego, an idea of what *I* would be, which is to indicate two important points. First, there is always a process at work here. Identification is never complete, is always ongoing, always to be remade. Second, in this ongoing anticipatory lurch towards identification, the *I* is always that which fades, which escapes our grasp. In encountering the world, then, the subject seeks to make the world fit but it also, then, seeks to fit into the world that it makes. In so doing, the subject imagines itself but it also imagines the world; 'all the objects of his [or her] world are

always structured around the wandering shadow of his [or her] own ego' (Lacan, 1978/1991: 166).

This inseparability of identification and imagination is what provides the ultimate force of the play. Of course, if identification is always at work in the function of the imaginary and the imaginary is what allows the possibility of meaning, then this claim is true of all discursive encounters. What is remarkable in *The Author* is its foregrounding of the intertwining of the imaginary dimension of identificatory meaning, the symbolic structuring through the materiality of language and the real of an act.

The real of the act

An act, in Lacanian terms, refers to a subjective moment or movement that exceeds both the strictures of the symbolic and the imaginary. This would be to say that an act can neither be contained nor accounted for in terms of an existent order or knowledge, nor can it be accounted for in an existent idea of what *I* would be and how *I* fit into the world. Lacan illustrates this in his eleventh seminar in the course of a discussion of repetition. If mere behaviour is that which conforms to a prescription, the following of a pre-established path, then it might seem that repetition is precisely a case of behaviour rather than an act. Lacan's point is quite the opposite. An act is neither something that merely happens to a subject, nor is it something that emerges from nowhere. Lacan is clear to point out that an act 'always has an element of structure' (Lacan, 1964/1973: 50) but this is not simply because it emerges from or responds to the symbolic. An act always has an element of structure because it always concerns 'a real that is not self evidently caught up in it' (Lacan, 1964/1973: 50). In order for the act to be an act of the subject, it must relate to the symbolic, for without the symbolic, there is no subject to act. Likewise, it must be refracted through the prism of the imaginary, for without the imaginary, there is no subject. The crucial dimension here, for Lacan, lies with the real as this points to the fact that in the act something decisive is brought into play. The term Freud used for repetition is *Weiderholen*, which means to fetch or, as Lacan reminds us, to haul again. It is the hauling that is significant here insofar as repetition is understood as the hauling into the here and now. This is to say that repetition has a signifying function but the act of repeating cannot be reduced to something that is already significant. Repetition clearly entails the re-enactment of something that has come before but here the point is that each re-enactment brings with it something new simply by virtue of the unconscious choice to repeat. Repetition entails the hauling into the here and now what has not yet been grasped in the symbolic domain. An act, then, is not reducible to a reaction so much as a response. An act is informed by what precedes it, but it is the element of the real in the act that distinguishes it and forces a moment of subjective emergence that cannot be reduced to imaginary identification.

Discourse or speech, according to Austin's (1975) speech act theory, can be understood in terms of three effective modes: locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary. The locutionary dimension of an instance of discourse refers to the utterance itself; what is said and that it is said. The illocutionary dimension refers to what it is the speaker is doing or can be understood to be doing in uttering this particular utterance. This is not to say that illocution marks the speaker's wish. Austin's point appeals to an idea of convention rather than intention. From a Lacanian perspective, this would be to locate both the locutionary and illocutionary on the side of the symbolic. Such a translation, from Austinian to Lacanian, also however unsettles the neat division of speech act theory and allows us to appreciate the radical inseparability of symbolic and imaginary. To determine the convention activated by and in the illocutionary dimension always requires a minimum of interpretation. The symbolic aspect of the illocutionary appeals to a convention more or less embedded in the utterance but there is always a need to recognise the convention to determine or decide which convention is at work. If someone in the UK were to say 'How are you?' the illocutionary sense is likely to be of a mode of greeting. There remains a possibility, however, of the utterance carrying the sense of a genuine enquiry.

The illocutionary dimension of the excerpt from *The Author* reproduced above is, in this way, harder to pin down than the extant locutionary dimension of the script itself. On a simple level we can understand that the illocutionary mode here is that of telling. The author tells us that he watches as the baby's dummy is removed and that he sees a penis being inserted into the baby's mouth. In the next line, he tells us 'Not violently, actually. Actually quite gently. Quite lovingly'. Here the simple categorisation cannot hold. Here this cannot be simple description, if such a thing can ever be said to exist in the first place. What is being described is already a violent deed in that it would be understood as a violation. It is difficult to imagine such an act being done lovingly. Such an interpretation, however, necessarily appeals to a convention and a comprehension of the social mores of acceptability. As unacceptable as it may appear to acknowledge, a baby has no comprehension of body parts and the socio-sexual meanings we, conventionally, designate them with. A penis has no more meaning for a baby than a finger. That we would recoil from the image of a penis being inserted into a baby's mouth but unthinkingly accept the image of a finger being inserted, requires that we have already been sexualised, requires that we have already moved beyond what Freud terms polymorphous perversity and have come to accept the designation of a certain significance and, therefore, limit to certain body parts. We can then understand that the scene Crouch depicts functions with a more complex illocutionary force. Beyond telling and describing, the line is also questioning, positioning the audience with a series of implicit questions: Do you accept this? Do you accept this even as artifice? Why do you not accept this? Why do you accept this as artifice? Where, exactly, do you position yourself in relation to this? And also, in the carefully structured

context of the play, is this any more or less acceptable than the violence you have already imagined? Why?

It is this uncertainty on the level of illocution that opens up what Austin terms the perlocutionary force of the utterance; or, in our Lacanian terms, it is what institutes the necessity of a real act. A common response to this section of the play is to get up and walk out. This response is even primed by the character Esther getting up and walking out, a direction clearly marked in the script. In this way we can say that the real action of the play is that taken by the audience, but we should not confuse this too readily with an act. The play works to force the audience to act, but the act is not necessarily an action, is not necessarily the act of walking out. By staging itself in such a way that the symbolic foregrounds its own indeterminacy and by refusing to supplement this with overt opportunities for imaginary identification, *The Author* forces the audience to, quite literally, imagine the action. This heightening of the imaginary dimension serves to implicate the audience in the play and thus to identify themselves in relation to what they 'see'. Although this is obviously not a free imagining, being, as it is, perpetually tethered to and pulled by the symbolic of the script, neither is it markedly determined. It is this apparent separation and at the same time foregrounded juxtaposition of symbolic and imaginary levels that implicate the subject so fully in what is being experienced. The discourse becomes that of the audience (or reader) and this negates the possibility of passive reception. The only choice the script allows is to act. This is to say that the audience or reader must choose for themselves how they respond, must choose for themselves how they position themselves in relation to what they have heard or read and what they have imagined, precisely because it is they who have imagined it. The real act in the play, the hauling of the real into the discourse, is never reducible to walking out, closing the book, watching the performance out, reading to the end. The real act in the play, the real in the discourse, is the subjective response, which is to say the constitution of oneself as subject as a response to the discourse. The real act of the play, the real act of any discourse is always who you are in what comes next.

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23

BECOMING OTHER TO ONESELF

Misreading the researcher through Lacanian Discourse Analysis

Lisa Saville Young

Psychoanalysis and discursive psychology have been in conversation with one another through the work of critical social psychologists for some years now, from Walkerdine, Lucey and Melody's (1991) *Growing up Girl* to Hollway's (2008a) research on becoming a mother for the first time, to Parker's (2010, Chapter 4 in this volume) Lacanian reading of an 'interview' from the film *The Negotiator*. This body of work, spanning two decades, has been brought together under the terms 'Psychosocial research' or 'Psychosocial studies' to specify an approach or way of theorising that challenges the traditional divide between the social and the psychological/individual. The term 'psychosocial' aims to capture an emphasis on how the social and the psychological are interwoven, both mediating the other such that it is impossible and undesirable to theorise them in isolation (Frosh, 2003). The moebius strip is frequently evoked as a metaphor for the way in which the psychological and the social are 'underside and topside' of the same thing (Frosh & Baraitser, 2008: 349). The notion of concentric objects has also been drawn upon as a useful way of understanding how psychosocial perspectives all share the same axis – frequently a text that is the focus of analysis – but do not necessarily have the same radius, with each concentric reading drawing reflexively on social theories or psychological theories to produce polyvocal readings that take different perspectives and yet remain concentrically 'inside' one another (Saville Young & Frosh, 2010).

In particular, psychoanalysis as a body of theory has been consistently drawn upon to make sense of this concentricity, with its emphasis on language and the construction of meaning through language as a point of continuity with discursive work. What psychoanalysis brings to discursive work is an emphasis on the affective realm and a rich vocabulary for capturing intersubjective encounters without limiting the analytic gaze only to what is said. Rather, what is absent and yet structuring of the present is equally important in understanding

subjectivity. Psychoanalysis, with its emphasis on the unconscious as that which always hides and yet finds expression in some altered form, has been an important way of addressing critiques of discursive work as devoid of the psychological so that one is left with 'empty' subjects that parrot social meanings.

However, drawing on psychoanalysis has also led researchers down difficult paths, particularly as psychoanalysis itself is not a unitary body of theory. *Which* strand of psychoanalysis one draws upon in a psychosocial reading of text has an impact on the effect produced. Drawing on Kleinian theory, for example, has seen participants understood as being positioned in particular discourses and negotiating and resisting their positioning due to a (frequently unconscious) need to defend against particular biographically unique anxieties (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000; Hollway & Jefferson, 2005). Participants' discourses are understood as being consistent with paranoid–schizoid splitting, for example, which unconsciously serves to protect the self by projecting split off or bad parts of the self elsewhere. Good psychosocial colleagues have come to blows (Frosh, 2008; Hollway, 2008b) over the extent to which such a reading furthers or detracts from the psychosocial project that hopes to concern itself with ideological issues in psychology and with always maintaining a critical stance (Frosh, 2003). Such a psychosocial reading has been accused of being top down, pathologising and individualising (Frosh & Emerson, 2005; Spears, 2005; Wetherell, 2005) such that subjectivity, while drawing on social discourses, becomes largely about one's oedipal conflict or depressive positioning with an exaggerated emphasis on family biographical details at the risk of overlooking educational biographies, for example (Wetherell, 2003). There is a danger of caricaturing a Kleinian-oriented psychosocial reading here and overlooking rigorous attempts to ground such psychoanalytic interpretations of text in linguistic manoeuvres and the research relationship (e.g. Frosh & Saville Young, 2008) in an attempt to temper the heavy handedness of the psychoanalytic frame. Nevertheless, the subjectivity that is produced through such a reading corresponds with Elliott's (1994) 'Post-Freudian self', one that is constituted by others (and is therefore deeply psychosocial) but one in which there is still a falling back into what is inside and what is outside with fantasy in between. The difficulties of holding onto the psychosocial as 'two sides of the same coin' are palpable here. Furthermore, the emphasis on autonomy and on integration in these psychosocial readings is a pull back to modernist conceptions of the self – it is clearly better to be a participant that draws on the depressive position in one's investment in a particular discourse than to be a participant that resorts to paranoid–schizoid splitting – making a conversation with discursive psychology seem particularly forced.

In light of these critiques, there has been a move towards employing Lacanian theory in psychosocial readings in an attempt to replace understanding participants (sometimes better than they understand themselves) with disrupting subjectivity including the subjectivity of the researcher (Saville Young, 2011; Saville Young & Frosh, 2010; Parker, Chapter 4 in this volume). Elliott (1994: 28) succinctly describes the Lacanian stance as follows:

> The distinguishing feature of poststructural psychoanalysis is the launching of a sustained critique on the very notion of 'self'. The problem of contemporary experience, it is argued, is not located in the failure of autonomy itself but rather in the idea that a stable, personal self is attainable at all. What this means, at least in its more thoroughgoing versions, is a complete deconstruction of subjectivity. In contemporary psychoanalytic perspectives, the deconstruction is characterized by unconscious contradiction, dislocation, and polyvalency.

The effect of a psychosocial reading that draws on Lacan is therefore necessarily critical of the extent to which psychoanalysis itself structures what is found in the text. In this deconstructive mode, the researcher doing the psychosocial reading therefore always steps back to reflect upon the political, theoretical and institutional positions from which the reading is being conducted (Parker, 2005, Chapter 3 in this volume). The starting point for such a reading is Lacan's mirror stage, which he argued was formative of the I function: the infant seeing him/herself in the mirror identifies with this image. Lacan (1949: 76) argues that this is experienced as a 'transformation'; in opposition to the experience of the self as an amalgamation of non-unitary desires and impulses, the infant is presented with a coherent, unified gestalt. Lacan (1949: 76) makes it clear that this form presented to the infant from the outside 'situates the agency known as the ego . . . in a fictional direction' and is the first of many instances of misrecognition, providing the illusion of autonomy. Importantly, the mirror stage also covers over a lack of being which returns at the level of the unconscious:

> We sense that we are not beings like the other unified beings we see around us; there is as yet nothing we can point to as a discrete total being (something that can be counted as a One). Instead, there is a conspicuous lack of being; being as such is missing prior to the anticipatory action of the mirror stage (which creates a One where there was none). This is why Lacan tends to associate the ego with false being.
>
> (Fink, 2004: 100)

This ego is a distortion or misunderstanding, covering over the infant's experience of him/herself as an uncoordinated conglomeration of emotions and sensations. Following from this, Frosh (2008: 11) argues that narrative interpretation of research material leading to a fantasy of integration and wholeness is illusory, rather 'interruption' should replace 'interpretation' where 'what is offered is not a sense of holistic closure, but rather a set of provoking questions'. A further point at which we become alienated from ourselves, according to Lacan, is through the introduction of language:

> (O)ne cannot even speak of a code without it already being the Other's code; something quite different is at stake in the message, since the

> subject constitutes himself on the basis of the message, such that he receives from the Other even the message he himself sends.
>
> (Lacan, 1960: 683)

Here, Lacan is referring to the way in which we become subjects through language; however, in using language we adopt something external to ourselves, something from the Other. The interweaving of the psychological and the social here is clear, as is the notion that we are fixed or determined through the language we use, which inevitably leads to a split in the subject. By anchoring a signifier (language) to a signified (our experience) we are limited or delimited as there is always something that escapes words, something that cannot be said: 'the person is forced to give up some of his being' (Fink, 2004: 116). Lacan names this 'jouissance' – that which is 'unthinkable' (1960: 694).

Therefore, a psychosocial reading that draws on Lacan does something quite different to one that draws on Klein in that it resists the line of the imaginary in making sense of the participants' language, which only serves to limit and fix the other in an illusory way. Rather, a Lacanian reading always deconstructs but also focuses closely on the way language works in and around the researched, the researcher and the phenomenon, to 'the cat and mouse game with the Other (which) could be, provisionally at least, located as subjectivity itself' (Malone, 2000: 83).

It seems to me, from this very brief overview of two approaches to psychosocial research, that each approach facilitates particular kinds of research questions that we can ask of text (and in this chapter I am chiefly concerned with the Lacanian approach). Whereas a Kleinian psychosocial reading can ask *why* particular participants might draw on particular discourses in their talk, producing possible answers that frame participants as both socially and psychically invested in their talk, a Lacanian psychosocial reading holds more firmly onto the promise of psychosocial studies as a critical approach. In what follows, I hope to demonstrate one possible way in which a Lacanian psychosocial reading might ask something of a particular text that, while clearly psychoanalytic, remains firmly embedded in the social realm. Where this is particularly useful is in getting psychology, more specifically psychoanalysis, to take a critical look at itself and 'the contribution psychology itself makes to the construction of its own subject' (Frosh, 2003: 1556). Below, I will apply aspects of Parker's 'Lacanian Discourse Analysis' to a psychosocial reading of an interview text that appeared in Frosh and Saville Young (2008). Consistent with attempts elsewhere to be concentrically reflexive (Saville Young & Frosh, 2010), the *analysis* rather than the original research interview is subjected to a 'misreading' with the aim of disrupting the subjectivity of the researcher. The emphasis is on cutting the analysis, becoming other to oneself, and drawing attention to the effect of the analysis on the researcher. In particular, I am interested in what a psychosocial reading does to subjectivity (that of the participant as well as that of the researcher). Interrogating the work of language in and around the researcher aims to encourage a contextualisation of

subjectivity when employing psychoanalysis in social research, while also elaborating on the 'act' of analysing and reading text. The hope is that such an analysis of an analysis will contribute to ways of moving psychosocial research methods forward to new ways of thinking about and working with text.

Reading and misreading

Before I introduce the extract, let me briefly say something about my analytic strategy, which I have detailed elsewhere (Saville Young & Frosh, 2010) but here try to link more closely with Parker's Lacanian Discourse Analysis (2005, 2010, Chapters 3 and 4 in this volume). While holding on to a Lacanian sensibility, I will be applying an approach to text that is to attend sequentially (and gradually more 'psychoanalytically') to *content, structure, interruptions, linguistic formulations* and *reflexivity* in the material. These layers of analysis might be thought of as concentric, involving first a reading of the text based on its content. In Lacanian terms, master signifiers are identified in the text – recurring metaphors or discourses that define and limit what can and cannot be said, making certain subject positions possible while denying others. In particular, I am interested in the way in which discourses or subject positions structure our relationship to knowledge in particular ways. Second, the form or structure of these master signifiers is also important, in particular, the patterns or connections between them 'that differentiate them from each other and hold them in tension' (Parker, 2005, Chapter 3 in this volume). Third, the analysis focuses on narrative breaks, interruptions or ruptures that point to emotional work or 'jouissance' – to qualities of the text that are irreducible and nonsensical (the 'real') specifying 'the role these nonsensical elements play in organising and disrupting the flow of the text' (Parker, 2005, Chapter 3 in this volume). These interruptions may not only be present in the form of incoherences but could also manifest as absence in the text, as what is unconscious to the text but operates to structure it. Fourth, the analysis takes a closer look at recurring signifiers or metaphors in the text, which serve to lull us into the illusion that *we* use language when rather what it is doing is using *us* to deflect and avoid other ways of meaning making. This reading therefore plays close attention to linguistic formulations. Finally, the reading looks at the knowledge producing relationship, documenting the relationship of the researcher to the text and thereby informing a reflexive analysis. In particular, I am interested in what my analysis leads to and by what it is constrained, acknowledging that 'we speak not from within a metalanguage but from a position . . . in relation to the text' (Parker, 2010, Chapter 4 in this volume).

Text

The text that I analyse is a psychosocial reading/analysis that I conducted in 2008 with Stephen Frosh (Frosh & Saville Young, 2008) of Tom, a participant

in my PhD research on brothering. The entire psychosocial reading is too long to reproduce here and so I have chosen an extract from it, with the risk/aim of misrepresenting the analysis as it is taken out of context. What this move does, from the outset, is emphasise the ways in which texts that we subject to analysis are dislocated. This has significant implications from a Lacanian perspective where signifiers only have meaning in their relationship to other signifiers. The act of sampling changes the meaning of the text and emphasises the intimate relationship between the meaning of the text and the researcher: the convergence of the text and the researcher brings the analysis into existence as a dynamic entity that is not reducible to the text or to the individual doing the reading (Iser, 1972). The contingency of the text and the analysis is therefore highlighted from the outset.

The extract below (taken from Frosh & Saville Young, 2008: 124) draws on notions of transference and countertransference within the interview relationship to understand Tom's highly ambivalent investment in the 'new man' discourse.

Perhaps what happens here is that having identified the interviewer as South African, and therefore familiar with the 'macho male', Tom's expectations of the interview context shift from being one in which 'new men' are valued. Instead, the context is an interview with a female whose national discourse is one of hegemonic masculinity and yet who is requesting him to open up the conversation in an emotional way. It is almost as if Tom begins to experience the interview and interviewer as emasculating. The field notes draw attention to the interviewer's impressions of a certain irritation or hostility from Tom: 'As an interviewer I felt criticised for the type of questions I asked.' This research interaction could be interpreted as a mirroring of Tom's relational experiences. The interview felt populated not just by Tom's brother Gareth, but also by South African men and previous research participants, all of whom Tom seemed to compete with by asserting himself as different. However, he also positioned the interviewer as aligned with these other men, by assuming that she was familiar with 'macho males'. Significantly, Tom expressed disappointment at the end of the interview, claiming that it had not met up to his expectations of catharsis. Like his mother in the oedipal relationship, the interviewer fails Tom by emasculating him and associating herself with hegemonic masculinity. Importantly though, she also treats Tom as unique and different enabling him to hold onto his place by asserting his difference from other men, by becoming a special case.

Analysis and discussion

Beginning at the level of content, with identifying master signifiers, the text employs a discourse of difference that constructs subject positions along particular binaries – macho male, new male; female, male; hegemonic masculinity, non-hegemonic masculinity; South African, British. This discourse works to

polarise the subject positions that are made available for Tom, the interviewer, Gareth, other participants and South African men, such that the multiplicities of positions available are closed down. There is also a clear valuing of one pole over the other with the macho male, hegemonic masculinity and South African positioned as barred from knowing. In contrast, the new male and the non-hegemonic subject are positioned as liberated or enlightened.

We also see a discourse of affect being drawn on throughout the text as the interviewer is described as 'requesting him to open up the conversation in an emotional way' (line 5–6) and mention is made repeatedly of feelings (referring to both those of the interviewer and the participant) of irritation (line 8), hostility (line 8) and disappointment (line 16). This discourse works to hold up the emotional nature of knowing. It also serves to privilege the affective world of the interviewer, as despite the interview being with Tom, the interviewer's feelings have an immediacy to them. Her affect is reported on 'from the inside' (e.g. [line 11] 'The interview felt populated . . .'), which serves to garner empathy for her, particularly in the light of the participant's reported criticism.

Finally, a psychoanalytic discourse is drawn upon towards the end of the text through reference to 'catharsis' (line 17), 'the oedipal relationship' (line 17) and 'case' (line 21). This can be understood as the discourse of the master as expert knowledge is drawn upon and the researchers, by drawing on this discourse, are hailed as those who know. This psychoanalytic discourse serves to converge the relationship between Tom and the interviewer with Tom's personal relational history (drawing on the idea of transference) constructing a stable self with particular patterns of relating that manifest in the interview context (if not pathologically then certainly not in a liberating way). While the researchers are constructed as knowing subjects, both the interviewer and Tom are constructed as not knowing, suggesting first that through expert knowledge we can know others better than they know themselves, and second that our relationship to knowledge can change. Certainly, the interviewer's position to knowing changes with the 'right' tools (i.e. psychoanalysis) and hindsight is important, as she later becomes one of the researchers who uses psychoanalysis to understand what happened in her encounter with Tom.

Paying attention to the structure of these master signifiers, to the way in which these discourses are drawn upon in relation to each other, involves further meanings. The discourse of difference, which is drawn upon at the beginning of the text, is contrasted with the discourse of affect. We see this in the conjunctions 'and yet' (line 5) where the binaries that are put to work in the discourse of difference are placed next to the discourse of emotional work, which is then foregrounded from this point on. The psychoanalytic discourse later in the text seems to serve to offer the discourse of affect some credibility by bolstering it in relationship to a body of theoretical knowledge (specifically the oedipal complex). What the text seems to be doing is employing a particularly powerful and well-versed discourse in research (the discourse of difference) alongside one that is not commonly drawn upon in research contexts (the discourse of affect),

one that constructs the interviewer and participant as affective beings whose emotional lives mediate the interaction in particular ways. To legitimise this, the ideological power of psychoanalysis is employed (through the discourse of psychoanalysis), which serves to hold up the complexity of the analysis but at the same time to take away both the agency of the interviewer and Tom as they are subjected to an oedipal arrangement that they are both unaware of. Clearly, though, this oedipal relationship is constructed as belonging to Tom and not the interviewer and perhaps therefore this discourse serves the same function as the discourse of difference: shutting down possibilities – that the oedipal relationship may be the interviewer's transference, for example – so that we can clearly 'know' and 'understand' Tom.

Let us turn now to the narrative breaks, ruptures or interruptions in the text. Emotional work in an interview, in contrast to written work, is often signalled by pauses, breaks in turn-taking, laughter and so forth. As this is a written text rather than a spoken text it does not require the researchers to manage the intersubjective context of an interview, for example. This text is much more considered and clean. However, there are still moments, I want to argue, that point to nonsensical elements in the text such as the use of the words 'male' (line 2) and 'female' (line 4). Certainly, using the word 'male' to describe a macho discourse (line 2 and line 15) adds sense or meaning as this discourse frequently draws on biological explanations for why men are like they are and the word 'male' can be seen as a biological term. The use of the word 'female' is difficult to make sense of, referring not to a discourse but to the interviewer. Why is 'woman' not used? How might this slip be taken forward to produce something new in the reading?

I will return to this question in a moment, but before I do so I would like to turn my attention to a reading that is not only interested in nonsensical presences but also absences that work to structure the text. We might think of these as the unwritten parts of the text, which nevertheless stimulate the reader's participation (Iser, 1972). While the interviewer is very present in the text, she is referred to in the third person, except for when an extract from her field notes are provided. This may be because there are two authors of the text, making the use of the personal pronoun 'I' clumsy. Nevertheless, this has the effect of pushing away our awareness that the interviewer is also one of the researchers. Creating an elision between the interviewer and the researchers serves to obscure the subjective perspective this necessarily entails. Why has this been repressed from the account? I want to argue that what this repression allows is a distancing of the interaction and transcript between the interviewer and Tom in order to provide a reading that can be constructed as a commentary on what is going on, an outsider's perspective. The 'slip' described above serves simultaneously to objectify the interview as 'female', evoking essentialist associations of precision, facts, hard truth. Perhaps this is particularly important given the emphasis on the subjectivity of the interviewer elsewhere in the text, particularly the emphasis on her affective state, which very much offers an insider's perspective on her emotional milieu. These absences and slips might be understood as

working to structure the text by covering over threats to the credibility of the reading, a reading that is already 'vulnerable' through its emphasis on the affective realm and subjectivity so often considered to be inimical to psychological research.

If we take a closer look at recurring signifiers in the text, what is particularly striking is the move from uncertainty to certainty as the text progresses. Whereas sentences begin with the tentative 'Perhaps' (line 1), 'it is almost as if' (line 6), 'could be' (line 10) and 'seemed' (line 13) in the first part of the text, these disappear into assurances in the second half: 'Like his mother in the oedipal relationship, the interviewer fails Tom' (line 17–18) and 'she also treats Tom as unique and different' (line 19–20). What language seems to do here is initially dupe the reader into a sense of the tentativeness of interpretations, particularly around the affective world. However, as the discourse of psychoanalysis is drawn upon, so this uncertainty is dispensed with and the psychological assumption that we can know Tom through psychoanalytic theories begins to do its work.

Finally, documenting the relationship between myself and the text is complex as this is an analysis of an analysis with the text constructed by both myself and Stephen Frosh. Previously I have worked with text from interviews in which I participated and therefore have included myself in the analysis in terms of thinking through how my own unconscious might have contributed to the performance of the encounter – thinking about transference and countertransference in particular. However, elsewhere (Saville Young, 2011) I have noted that Lacan (1958: 494) recommends that in analysis the analyst avoid interpreting transference: 'this interpretation, if he gives it, will be received as coming from the person the transference imputes him to be'. What he seems to be saying here is that we can never step outside of the transference, just as we can never step outside of language, or as Fink (2004: 30) writes, 'One is always already situated'. Choosing an analysis from a research chapter means that I cannot but be tempted to think about my own 'countertransference' feelings. From this exchange the conditions for transference are missing, which forces me to include myself as an analysand. I do this now at two levels, first in thinking through myself as author of the text – what does my narration lead to and by what is it constrained? Certainly, through much of the analysis above, I hope to have been attending to these questions. Second, I want to think about the reading produced of the text thus far: What does *this* analysis lead to and by what is it constrained?

I have been arguing that the narration represented in the extract employs particular discourses that work to close down multiple interpretations of the text, prioritising an emotional reading that privileges the interviewer's perspective. While 'doing' provisional analysis, the text serves to limit Tom to a particular relational pattern (oedipal) while at the same time professing to 'do complexity' by paying close attention to Tom's affective investments, which we can only come to know through the emotional experiences of the interviewer. Thus, while

working to represent Tom as not simply an automaton who takes up particular discourses because they are socially powerful, representing him as uniquely positioned and invested in these discourses, drawing on psychoanalysis at the same time serves to take the text into an ideological realm that fixes Tom, despite itself. We can see the way in which this works 'unconsciously' through the slip of 'female' and the absences of speculative language as the text progresses, both working to pull the text towards modernist leanings so that the reader is led increasingly to an interpretation in which Tom is understood 'better' through such a psychosocial lens.

Stepping back now to include myself as author of *this* current reading in my reflexive analysis, I want to think through the political, theoretical and institutional positions from which this reading is being conducted. Taking a Lacanian position clearly leads to this analysis being critical of readings that draw on psychoanalysis to *make sense* of participants. Perhaps one could describe this as a political position of critical engagement, where the reading serves as a reminder of the risk of 'castrating' psychoanalysis of its critical edge. This deconstructionist position has its power in always claiming to reflexively critique even its own interpretations, but what ground does this leave us on? Can anything be said about subjectivity, about the process of reading and writing that has productive or provoking effects?

I want to argue that there *are* transformative moments in this analysis in which something unexpected takes place that points productively to the ways in which we are always misread through language. These transformative moments lie in a particular relationship I have to forge with myself. Here, I am referring to what has been particularly challenging about analysing an analysis; the extent to which it plays with the traditional boundaries between inside and outside, boundaries that psychosocial studies sets out to challenge. I am reminded here of a point made by Parker (1997) that our analysis is informed by our place in the text. As the researcher analysing my own analysis I am both outside and inside the text. Discursive conditions structure the positions that I take up as interviewer, narrator of the text, researcher of Tom, analyst of the psychosocial reading and author of this chapter. While language allows me at times to separate these positions, to write about each in turn, I occupy them all concentrically and taking up any position only superficially separates me from the others. Perhaps my subjectivity can be more helpfully thought of as arising in the conversations *between* positions. What this points to, I argue, is the way in which reading is a transformative process both in terms of how my reading of the text through a Lacanian lens serves to surprise and unsettle, but also in the way in which you, the reader, will find your own moments of transformation – moments where you are inside the text, where the words you read seem to become your own, and moments where you are outside of it, excluded or barred from knowledge.

In other words, tracking my subjectivity as interviewer, narrator, researcher, analyst and author serves to split and prevent me from ever settling on a subjec-

tive perspective that lasts. But, there is a further split that the analysis illuminates in the writing of it but also covers over. The fifth position of 'reader' is always nagging at the margins, as I read my own analysis and in writing another analysis, I frequently 'forget' about you, the reader, who works similarly to read out these words as I read out mine. What you do with the reading is not limited to these words, nor is it limited to what you bring to the reading, but it is always dynamically between the two.

The reading I have produced here has a retrospective effect on the text – as you read my analysis so your reading of the text will retroactively be worked upon. But the text also acts like a mirror, as words always work to fix or define an outline; there is always a drive to understand. Perhaps the best we can hope for is holding onto what is not captured in the outline, such as the reading process of this analysis, which will always happen outside of my writing of this and yet will work to structure my writing in significant ways, hopefully also working to uncover some of the imaginary that my writing no doubt succumbs to. Holding onto this misreading may allow us to try and look at how an analysis always covers over with something outside of ourselves. We might call this process here 'defamiliarisation' to borrow a phrase from Iser (1972) in his paper on the reading process in which he argues that good literary text 'relies on interruptions of the flow to render it efficacious' (p. 293). It is in becoming other to oneself that one is able to locate subjectivity in social, cultural and historical contexts, allowing what is deeply personal to resonate in and through the social, creating a new experience that will always hold onto some opacity in its resistance to being known.

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24

EMERGENCE OF THE TRUTH IN HISTORY AND LAW

A Lacanian Discourse Analysis

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To speak about a 'Lacanian Discourse Analysis' requires a revitalization of all manifestations of subjective truth – whether these are individual or collective – by breaking them down into distinct psychic instances and mechanisms that transform them into feasible reading.[1] This may be done through a correlative repositioning of the subject-reader, which is not necessarily founded on the vanishing of repression, but rather – as in the historiographical Lacanian reading that is discussed later – deals with non-therapeutic practices. Here the practices should be studied from the perspective of a psychoanalytic conceptualization, which defends the notion that the unconscious is *structured as language*. Concurrently we take Foucault's (1984/2007) distinction between power and domination, with the understanding that a productive dialectic assumes that tensions between discourses, whether – as previously stated – these are singular or collective, *disciplinary* or *interdisciplinary*, will not result in a transforming force that transcends utilitarian criteria when the tensions are locked into a logic of *domination* among players.

Our fields of study are history, law and institutions. As we move through these areas, our purpose is, first, to avoid the route proposed by so-called *analytic philosophy*, which uses analysis as a means to clarify the significance of statements, sidelining the effects of the unconscious and claiming that a single statement possesses, beyond its *surface grammar*, a logical structure that could be rigorously analyzed to determine its meaning, which is to be linked at all times to the conscious rationality. Here the words are taken together as a whole, on the premise that they are organized into sentences constructed in accordance with rules of a given language, to the detriment of the true *meaning* (and *significance*) that these sentences take on in various departures from those rules as determined by the unconscious and its particular operations.

Second, strictly on an epistemological level, the *Lacanian* screen, when applied to speech analysis, is of particular interest to us as a *causal* device in so far that arguments not only assert statements, but in fact are built as reason for or a basis to affirm or invalidate the first set. Those are considered as *outbreaks of truth*; these, on the other hand, are regarded as *symptomal signs*, reiterating that addressing the symptom and its radical potential is not carried out here to explain those facts starting with prior reasons and/or through established guidelines, as would be the case in analytic philosophy. To recognize an *event*, a *rupture* or *breakdown*, means that which does not march in accord with the structure of a situation, whether it is historic, legal or institutional, and in sum is present in all speeches from which we believe we can make intelligible all phenomena that may arise.

That which *does not flow* and that is stated on the outside of the thinkable – and therefore exceeds it – requires inventing new devices for the construction of knowledge that goes beyond – with its departure from simple perceptions and ideological interests – established knowledge. We relate this issue with the place of truth as in the so-called 'four discourses' by Lacan (1991/2007).[2] These speeches are how we distinguish the main functions of the social bond. The four speeches also allow for the deployment of structures of truth to which each every single one is committed.[3]

A *Lacanian historiography* applicable to the construction of the history of psychoanalysis in Mexico?

In this first part of the chapter, we focus on the relationship between history and psychoanalysis, particularly on Lacan's discourse. This relationship has been widely addressed, and relatively enlightened by psychoanalysts, but not necessarily so by historians.

The relationship with history, for psychoanalysis, appeared from the beginning of time, from its prehistory. Both conceptions, of 'symptom' and 'therapy', presuppose a historical overview, that is to say, these processes are embedded in time. History is at the heart of psychoanalysis, Freud's theories on trauma and the phantom and, as a result, in the theory of subjective constitution. Different versions of the Freudian Oedipus – tragic, mythical, historical – are traversed by history. The death drive, while it *historicizes*, deepens this rapprochement between history and psychoanalysis, although it enters a notion of time and repetition antagonistic to the evolutionist view, with which, until then, Freud was collaborating.

The craving of unconscious desire, led by psychoanalysis toward the subject, reaches the subject at the figure of the historian. This has meant, for history, to think differently about the complex relationship between the subjectivity of the historian and the subjectivity of the historicization. Starting from Freud and Lacan, a different way of thinking about history would be proposed, based on the consideration of a radical theory of the subject and the inclusion of the issue of death.

The Mexican historian Miguel León Portilla (1995) considers that 'implicitly, any historical work is the result of a sort of dialogue between the consciousness of the historian and the voices of the past – better or worse perceived – through the original documents' (p. 14). We wonder, from Freud's perspective, what is the historian's unconscious participation in this fruitful dialogue?

Moreover, concerning the conception of temporality in Freud: the reproduction of phylogenesis in ontogenesis, consistent with both the tragedy of Sophocles' Oedipus, coupled with the myth of the murder of the father, as occurred with Moses the man, could provide food for thought in putting together a Freudian historiography,[4] to be applied to historiographical objects which, in fact, has fuelled history projects.

The relationship between historical and psychoanalytic disciplines becomes apparent, inextricably, in the historiography of psychoanalysis. This field was opened by Freud (1914) himself when he produced a historiographical text with which he focused upon the legitimacy of psychoanalytic knowledge.

In Lacan, like Freud, the relationship with history and all things historical is present from the very preliminaries to his entering the field of psychoanalysis: his thesis on psychiatry. If Aimée's frenzied attack dissipates the delirious, then surely, Lacan (1932/1985) concludes, madness is embedded in the density of a story.

It was during the privileged period of registration of the symbolic that the importance given by Lacan to history is found in the role assigned to an instance of epistemological legitimacy for psychoanalysis. His relationship with history – not sufficiently developed – is evidence of various distinct moments, different significant knotting points. These range from reliability and support to the story told, all the way down to disappointment. Mexican analyst Helí Morales (1999) has worked on establishing how Lacan's work relates to history and argues that this relationship occurs in four stages: first, in the text 'Function and field of speech and language in psychoanalysis' (Lacan, 1953); second, during his seminar on *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis* (Lacan, 1986/1992); third, during the course of his seminar *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis* (Lacan, 1969–70) and a fourth moment, which actually was a shift in the Lacanian conception regarding what place history holds in psychoanalysis, during his seminar R.S.I. (Lacan, 1975, 18/02/75).

The importance of time in psychoanalysis is what makes its relationship to history inescapable. Addressing all the tension that Freud generated during the era for repetition, coupled with the drive for evolutionary-continuity, development and a phylogenetic approximation of subjective constitution, Lacan (1945) produces a distinct temporality from that of Freud: logical time as anticipated certainty covered in his analysis of error by the three prisoners. This new temporality in the constitution of the subject, introduced by Lacan together with one more concept, would give us grounds to think of a historiography based on a Lacanian analysis of discourse. Furthermore – and this is what surrounds our chief concern – if we presuppose that, can we then apply its guidelines to the

construction of a history of psychoanalysis in Mexico? This brings us back to the field of historiography of psychoanalysis, where this becomes an object of historiography.

The question regarding Lacanian historiography is suggested in an article by Omar Acha (2004), in which the author suggests Lacanian historiography as a guideline for conducting empirical research: 'Well, what I propose is to highlight the possible relevance of Lacanian historiography through a brief discussion of a psychoanalytic approach to classical Peronism (1945–1955) which is the subject of my own *empirical* research.' Perhaps it would be prudent, as the author himself later said,[5] to dissolve this demanding combination: Lacanian historiography, regarding the issue of whether or not it is possible to have Lacanian notions operate in the construction and interpretation of historiographical objects. If one of these is psychoanalysis itself, perhaps an even more relevant question, especially considering the consistency involved in the action of psychoanalysis, would be to apply its own methods, which are eminently historical.

For us, as part of the task of building a history of psychoanalysis in Mexico, the aforementioned Lacanian concepts open up a path that we will attempt to follow in our immediate research work. For now, with the historical reconstruction made so far (Capetillo, 2011), we have been asking ourselves primarily about the implementation of the paradigm of the three Lacanian registers in a reordering of our data.

We postulate a time period of average duration in which the emergence of psychoanalysis in Mexico took place. This period runs from 1910 to 1957, which goes from the opening of the Asylum La Castañeda in 1910 to the completion of the first two psychoanalytic institutions in 1957: the Mexican Psychoanalytic Society and the Mexican Psychoanalytic Association. We have divided into three stages the period of the emergence of psychoanalysis in Mexico: 1) reception, 2) implementation and 3) institutionalization (in the sense of institution building). We have refrained from identifying these three moments too hastily in relation to the three stages in the sophism of the three prisoners: 1) the instant of the gaze, 2) the time for understanding and 3) the moment for concluding. We prefer to define the three stages of the emergence of psychoanalysis from the basis of certain discursive events and wonder, in an effort to justify the points in the time chosen, if each of these stages would correlate to a distinct subjectivity, a unique subjective conformation among the players involved. The application of the Lacanian notion of the three registers allows us to answer this question from the consideration that the historical difference, the subjective difference, would be given by the various ways in which the subjects relate to one another, records that are symbolic, imaginary and real as pre-existing discursive modes.

So, among the psychoanalytic concepts that can be set up to operate on a historiographical work based on Lacanian Discourse Analysis are the concept of time suspended by collective logic, and the three registers: the imaginary, the symbolic and the real. We would add to these concepts the following: theorizing

about the four discourses; both the symbolic's and the imaginary's inability to sift the real; the promotion of discontinuous history and anti-historicist history and the privilege granted to the excess of understanding about traditional history.

In a first essay where we interpreted data that resulted from the above vectors, we concluded, for example, that there are not alternate subjective positions by the players of the three periods of the emergence of psychoanalysis in Mexico, but, that there is a single position for which, in any event, its distinctiveness will arise as a result of designating a specific end date: 1957. Both ambiguous reception and implementation (whereby the Freudian reference is not total) concluded in the creation of two institutions, which fought for control of the Mexican psychoanalytic field, disputing possession of the Freudian legacy. At those times in which psychoanalysis finally grew in Mexico, what is distinctive, in terms of the prevailing subjectivity, was the lack of recognition of psychoanalytical practice given its Freudian originality (M.F. Sosa, personal communication, September, 2011). The Frommian Institute (Mexican Psychoanalytic Society), on the one hand, broadcasted and exercised its practice separated from the fundamental assumptions of Freudian theory; the association affiliated to the International Psychoanalytical Association, the Mexican Psychoanalytic Association, on the other hand, promoted a medicalized psychoanalysis and was subject to the strategy of strengthening the ego.

The merger between truth and error: a function in the phylogeny of the subject?

We now turn to our conjecture about the possible use of Lacanian elements as applied to a reading of historiographic discourses whereby psychoanalysis seeds its headquarters in our country, to the development of some reflections that bind together our main categories of study and analysis to the field of law. So, *truth* and *speech* are to be discovered interspersed in intimate ways as of their historical recovery around a given empirical object of this practice of Social Sciences. As a result, the manner in which it bursts through the logical *flaw* in which the theory and practice of the law established for the regulation of social ties in culture, is seen as a form of *offence*.

In response, Foucault (1980/1996) restored several forms of *evidence* that the guilty subject should take account of various times in history to indicate to the community his or her innocence or, conversely, his or her guilt. It has come to be accepted that by the eleventh century (under the old law of Burgundy) it was sufficient that twelve witnesses took an oath, not regarding the innocence of the subject, but regarding his or her social significance. Personal *testimony* was moved into evidence, which is, moreover, the annulment of the word of the victim and the accused himself.

From there attention shifted to verbal type tests, which, linked to the dimension of the game, were posed as formulas for the defendant, or a representative, in the event that the defendant was either a woman or a minor: 'An error of

grammar, a change in words, invalidated the formula *and not the truth* of what was being intended to prove' (Foucault, 1980/1996: 60). More than Foucault venturing here with the hypothesis that it is precisely through this practice that the figure of the lawyer is born, we want to emphasize that it is through an expiatory management of guilt for the accused in which he is expropriated of his word that we move on to a recognition of the importance of this in its real dimension. *Re-presentation* is important, but trusting the grammar directly would be a sufficient condition for the enunciation of subjective truth that expresses guilt in the face of the crime. It is here that our argument concerning the subject is installed with full force around the explanatory possibilities of analytic philosophy or semantics.

As a third step, the author refers to the *ordeal*, which is the way in which tests performed on the body were designated. These struggles of the subject and his body against the natural elements are, for Foucault (1980/1996: 61): 'a symbolic transposition whose semantics should be studied on the basis of the struggle of individuals to one another'. Symbolic activity and semantics, for psychoanalysis, are based on the *intra*-subjective struggle, and not the struggle *between individuals*, which appears as the stakes driven by vectors metapsychologically and oddly predisposed as default.

In this brief overview, we can see that the truth was not located at a place of something *to be known*, but rather of something *to be proved*, in terms of *prestige* in the first case, and *skills* in the second – or 'skills and competencies' as they say today. So, what role is played in the phylogeny of the subject, of the merger between *truth* and *error* in a given historic period? If what this is about is to experience that *the presence of a third party is not necessary to close the gap* opened by the difference between truth and error, the bottom line is what these strategies point to, to blatantly ignore the Other as far as language and law are concerned. Otherwise, in the automation of the proposed examination of subject–society or subject–nature, we are privileging sadistic enjoyment.

One would expect that with the rise of psychoanalysis, society would have set up, in contemporary times, a change to dislodge the perverse structure that to some extent characterized the operation of justice in those days, *justice* that carries on being the object of study of this socially-organized practice known as *law*. But the low penetration in terms of the enactment of all available devices, not theorizing, makes it possible to formulate the relation between law and psychoanalysis, and this notion gives us faith in the face of all the forces that remain valid to our days, albeit with different veils, in the emergence of *truth* in this field.

Truth and psychoanalytic discourse: a discourse without words?

Finally, we need to remember that history is not a simple succession of events, and that it is rather the location of the event within a symbolic network with a given temporal logic; how could we think of its materiality, through speech?

How to think also the phenomenon of crime within the limitations of a semantic philosophy, which precludes the subject of desire and reduces discourse to its conscious status? In discourse, history and offence emerge, which as truth show the paradoxes, oddities and intricacies of a subject and its forms – structures – of *apparent* relationship. Speech is the element that links the three Lacanian registers – symbolic, imaginary and real – in the condition of a speaking and spoken subject. A split subject in their speaking being, determined from that place, overtaken in their quest for unity is *barred*. A subject that, as Lacan would state – in Braunstein's (1999: 20) portrayal – occurs as a joint function between two Others: 'the Other of the signifying system, of language and law, on the one hand, and the Other that is jouissante body, unable to find a place in the symbolic exchanges, appearing between lines of text, pretended'. In terms of the word, all this is about that first Other. This Other that Lacan refers to is inscribed in the symbolic order as a place where the word is constituted. The Other as a fundamental element of language, and, as a result of all things symbolic, marks the entrance to the place of difference thus precisely to found desire. It is the Other as the unconscious, the Other constituent. On the other hand, however, it is placed there too, in a topology, enjoyment, in reality, in the unbearable:

> 'Other' within oneself, a representative of the One resigned to enter the world of trade and reciprocity. A mole, inaccessible to the subject which houses it and, by reason of the outside Other internalized, it must be carefully exiled . . . it is not a question of words, nor about the unconscious. It is not foreign to the language that is excluded and it is only through language that we can sift it . . . It is not words, it is letters, writing to decipher.
>
> (Braunstein, 1999: 21)

In Freud's words, given that repression does not destroy ideas and memories, but rather confines them in the unconscious, it is always possible for the repressed material to emerge from or return in an often distorted shape. In other words, if one forgets, it is because memory is present.

For Lacan, primal repression is a structural feature of language, that is, the inability to tell *the truth about the truth*. Secondary repression is structured as metaphor and always involves the return of the repressed. Then, the repressed is always a signifier. This account emphasizes the supremacy of the signifier, and suggests that meaning is the effect of a set of signifiers at play. The meaning could not be an *a priori* category, the meaning is not given, it is produced, it is a posteriori, the signifier is primary and produces meaning.

The signifier, according to Lacan (1964/1973), is that which represents a subject to another signifier. This differential nature implies that the signifier can never have a single meaning, for a signifying order assigns various locations. Language, as a system of signs, differs from assumed language as exercised by the individual, because he makes it an instance of discourse. Here, the signifier,

the material support of speech, acts independently of its significance. Meaning is the common sense to all of an experience referred to in speech. The network is the set of diachronic meanings of all speeches, which historically acts upon the network of signifiers. The significance of a sign will depend on the words of the sentence and the code, so that the sign appeals to the media, and the signifier to the expression of the unconscious. The signifier is, then, the constituent unit of the symbolic order.

However, considering the counterpart of the symbolic, reference is made to the instance belonging to others and excluded from the language to be deciphered. This is what serves as the foundation of speech. This is why Lacan (1969–70) characterizes 'discourse' as a necessary structure that far exceeds the 'word'. Speech goes beyond the words: it can survive without them.

In discourse, the truth about the subject is played out, a truth that returns anyway in a continuous return of the repressed, truth that makes history. In this story, words are not the ones that make up all the truths. The ambiguities of the subject's language and his acts are those that imprint the truth of the subject, hence the offence spells out some subjective truth. What is not said in words, emerges as a slip, as a symptom, as an act, expressing the truth about a subject prey to his condition of enjoyment.[6] This truth, for Lacan, is also the veil that covers castration. It is the image of impotence, because the relationship between the symbolic and the real has been mediated by the face.

The Lacanian theoretical framework has meditated upon the question of truth, and has reached a point where vagueness and uncertainty are the necessary elements to think about a subject who is shaped with the passage of life, without essences or accurate substances. All of it is a constitution that is constructed and deconstructed in his own journey.

Lacan was not the only one who problematized the matter of subject and truth: so did Foucault. However, it is clear that the latter is caught in the conjecture of the symbolic, when he proposed truth as an *askesis*. Certainly in his hermeneutics of the subject, Foucault (1982/2004) notes that the truth is never awarded to the subject in its full right, and in this notion one can almost think of a match between psychoanalysis and the place of truth. However, Foucault's reference to spirituality reveals the intention of a certain Puritanism in relation to the truth. Spirituality, says Foucault, suggests that the truth is not given as an act of knowledge but rather it requires that a subject works on himself, is transformed, that he moves to distance himself and thus be entitled to access the truth. There will be no truth without a conversion of the subject. In this movement of the subject, Foucault places *Eros* and love, whereas Lacan placed joy.

On the other hand, it is important to emphasize what Foucault (1982/2004) identifies as a consequence of Cartesianism, the relegation of spirituality and established hegemony of reason as a condition of Western philosophical thought, where positivity is taken to characterize objectivity and truth, leaving spirituality outside, which could well be called *subjectivity*, and will be linked to Eros, with passion, sexuality and therefore also with madness, disease and

disorder. This Cartesian reason, as conceived by Foucault, is based on a type of logical principle, the principle of contradiction, unlike principles that come from Heraclitus, where the struggle of opposites is permanent and gives birth to movement. This contradiction is possible in an integration of opposites where you engage with the spirituality of being, that is, subjectivity is where the subject emerges.[7] Here in this place of opposites, is perhaps the place of the primal Other and also of that which is Other, the unconscious, and the enjoyment that would reveal in the subject the place of truth.

Foucault (1982/2004) also proposes that anyone who wants to write the history of subjectivity is thereby making a history of relationships between subject and truth. When this story is done, we observe that subjectivity appears on the philosophical stage, which on the one hand modernity cancels and relegates to a lesser position, and on the other psychoanalysis recovers a way, not only to think of the subject of the unconscious, but to think of the social stage and its complexity. In this analysis, Lacan proposes three ways of thinking about subjectivity, from the intricacies of language, as the three registers of the symbolic, the imaginary and real. Lacan proposes a relationship between this particular subject and the truth and history, and a necessary and obligatory reference to the dimension of discourse, which will always involve a vacuum, a gap, which calls for a topological account of what is real.

Conclusion

Against analytic philosophy, we acknowledge the participation of the unconscious in the facts of discourse, which have been approached from three angles: history, law and institutions. We observed the relevance of the use of vectors developed by Lacanian theory for a historiography of psychoanalysis applied to a particular object, its institutionalization in Mexico. The path we choose, the reflection on temporality subverted by Lacan, remained open to the possibility of thinking of crime as a form of exposition of singular historical truth, which is opposed to the category of 'error', as it has been handled within the practice of law since ancient times and thereby leaves aside the possibility of a structural institutional reading by nullifying through mirror games the incidence of the Other.

Notes

1 Formations of the unconscious that generate in a *symptomatic* way can be recuperated from the diverse discourses, either in oral or written form (Braunstein, 1975).

2 It is important to recall that there are in Lacan at least three ways of writing the four discourses, including the one we just referred to in his seminar *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis* (1969–70). Another example, in *Radiophonie*, adds the word 'impossibility' to both the master's discourse and the analyst's discourse in their upper side, and the word 'impotence' at the lower vector of both the university's and the hysteric's discourses (Lacan, 1970). The one at the Milan Conference produces a capitalist discourse or the 'fifth' discourse (Lacan, 1972).

3 Starting from here, we may arrive at the idea of *structure*, which would account for diverse positions of individuals in relation to their desire, their fantasy, their object and their ideals, which do not lead only to the three domains of existence to which we reduce our concerns at this moment.

4 A little later, with reference to *Lacanian historiography*, we will discuss this conjunction.

5 'The historicity proper to Lacan leads us to the impossibility of defining historiography in just one theoretical framework. Just as a "Marxist historiography" does little justice to Marxism as a philosophy of history, so a "Lacanian historiography" does little favour to those who seek to expand its critical effects in the social sciences. This is precisely to delimit our transference to Lacan. His theory does not coincide with the real of history.' (Acha, 2004).

6 As mentioned by Braunstein (1999: 11), 'there is only enjoyment in the one who speaks and because he speaks'.

7 Aristotle inaugurates the principle of *contradiction*, in which 'nothing can be present and absent at the same time'. Cartesianism takes up this logic and makes it its own predicate. Against this, psychoanalysis offers the principle that something can simultaneously be what it is and the opposite. This logic, which already existed in Eastern and Mesoamerican cultures, can be found in Freud, for instance in his drive theory and in his ideas about ambivalence.

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25

IN THE BEGINNING THERE WAS REPETITION

Reflections on the word of the Montoneros

Gonzalo Barciela

Introduction: structure

Modernism has left as its legacy one of the biggest speculative battles based on the opposition of the subject to structure or its variant, with history striving against structure. In an effort to make a brief contribution, it is important to remark that the abovementioned juxtaposition involves a particular configuration concerning theoretical as well as historical and political aspects. Montoneros is a name that stems from the upheavals that occurred in Argentina in the mid-nineteenth century and established itself through its invocation and circulation at the centre of the emancipationist fights of the late-twentieth century. What is then the Montoneros *ethos*? A mere exultation in its discourse, or condemnation of it that reduces it to a series of determinations that presuppose a subject that cannot be accounted for seem insufficient.

Mentioning the word 'structure' and its symbolic occurrence evokes images of its inertia, lacking alterity. However, penetrating the dimensions of Montoneros identity and its singular enunciation implies the establishment of a disjunctive relation between the anonymity of the structure and the course of the political–military organization. Therefore, the universe of Montoneros places itself at the core of the question about foundation and tradition. The attempt here is not to assert the survival of this universe in its residual nature, nor its permanence under the disguise of the aforementioned inertia; on the contrary, it relates to a path towards the formulation of the question about the manner in which to grasp the *housing* of the political word.

Subject and event

On numerous occasions, whether it is as a notion or a concept, the subject has been presented as one of the Enlightenment through which a certain epoch filters or concentrates its political vocation. The well-known archive of self-

consciousness together with the *pathos* of totality place the cardinal points of location of the subject within phenomenological hardships, equalizing it to a consciousness, the rooting of which is history.

The subject, history and idea present themselves as words, the fate of which depends on the possibility of experiencing connections, closeness and the occurrence of encounters. The interpretation of a certain text points to the localization of a subject that manifests itself rather than pursuing the proclaimed intention of that subject. That interpretation forces itself to spot the utterance inserted interstitially in the speech.

It is important to take note of the fact that reading involves making use of interpretation rather than simply denouncing the way it is often manipulated. Following this reasoning, the question of who produces a text makes us immediately think of the *what* in the intersubjective field, as the word of the Other sealing its fate.[1] Homi Bhabha (1994: 190) observes that:

> To what end does the series of events tend if the author of the outcome is not unequivocally the author of the cause? Does it not suggest that agency arises in the return of the subject, from the interruption of the series of events as a kind of interrogation and reinscription of before and after? . . . is there not that kinetic tension between the contingent as the contiguous and the indeterminate?

As has been suggested by this post-colonial thinker, we also need to attend to the place of the *who* that does not perfect itself in its immediacy. The aspect of the event, which is always outside of the text, throws it into the hardships of temporariness, of being caught in the gap between the fact and its eventuality. Then, the subject is neither homologized to the cause nor the cause it identifies with, it fixing the agent in the result of the uttered word.[2]

Before jumping to conclusions, we would like to address the relationship between subject and event. In Meditation 35 of Badiou's (1988/2007: 393–396) *Being and Event* we read:

> What the proper name designates here is that the subject, as local situated configuration, is neither the intervention nor the operator of fidelity, but the advent of their Two, that is, the incorporation of the event into the situation in the mode of a generic procedure. The absolute singularity, subtracted from sense, of this Two is *shown* by the in-significance of the proper name. But it is obvious that this in-significance is also a reminder that what was summoned by the interventional nomination was the void, which is itself the proper name of being. Subjectivization is the proper name *in the situation* of this general proper name. It is an occurrence of the void . . . the subject is constituted by encountering its matter (the terms of the enquiry) without anything of its form (the name of the event and the operator of fidelity) prescribing such matter. If the subject

> does not have any other being-in-situation than the term-multiples it encounters and evaluates, its essence, since it has to include the chance of these encounters, is rather the trajectory which links them. However, this trajectory, being incalculable, does not fall under any determinant of the encyclopaedia.

Based on the strictly ontological orientation that Badiou gives to its own thought, the *subject* emerges with the underlying condition that an event has taken place. In this sense, it is also *subject* to its contingent occurrence.[3]

The in-significance of the proper name pointed out by Badiou clearly demonstrates how the S_1 master signifier bears the meaning, allowing the subject to enquire into the multiples of the situation. The emergence of the subject and even the possibility of its localization is signalled by the possibility of thinking of the gap between identification and subjectivization. If Badiou is right then it is only possible to think of the subject as an operator and consequently of a *topica* that gives rise to the multiplicities upon which it works. Hence, the subject ought to be thought of in terms of the disparity between the *who* and the *what* without overlooking the fact that it cannot be reduced to a reciprocity or identification in respect of the structural flaw, that is to say the so-called Lacanian barred subject as a figure of the eclipsed, or its retransmission by way of the militant subjectivism of the invention.

I partially agree with the conclusion arrived at by Roque Farrán (2010: 74), who explains that

> the subject is the *dystopic* point of the tension and partial resolution between the structure (law) and the hazardous supplement (the real). Therefore, it is not one but multiple and it requires several conceptual operators to confine it to each and every situation.

The *dystopic* condition of the subject clearly gives us notice of the impossibility of reducing the subject to a *locus*, that is to say, to something that represents an instance. However, the fact of considering its recurrence leads us to think of the singular features upon which it acquires consistency and its historical–political efficacy. Based on the abovementioned concept, it is necessary to approach the subject as divided otherwise the subject results in an entity that possesses a localization, however lacking an extension. The division of the subject is also referred to by Jacques Rancière, in the observations he formulated on the Greek word *arche*. If that word implies the origin or the beginning of everything as a law of communal transmission and the power of mastery as a bonding force, subjectivization will be regarded as the operation that denaturalizes the subject of its localization and its correlative identity, assigned to a specific social group.

At the same time, this one-time disciple of Louis Althusser makes a blanket statement as follows:

> Generally, a political subject is the performer of the splitting of the *arche* since it carries out the disidentification. Its name is not the manifestation of its identity. Its name is a singular name that one more time divides the *arche* through a new counting method of those un-counted. A political subject is a way of subjectivization that maintains a gap between two identities, one is the subject oriented to an enunciation of the 'We' belonging to the political statement and the other is the name given to a singularized universal.
>
> (Rancière, 2009: 48)

The improper fashion assumed by the name demonstrates the gap between the *who*, the enunciation and the singularized universal (the 'people' or the 'Montoneros', which is the case here), whose nomination is intended to amount to the revision and re-inscription of an agency in the symbolic fiction, in other words, the intersubjective mediated by the Other. So far, we suppose that the subject precipitates itself in the signifying chain, not being the cause of the event but rather being subject to it. In other words, the subject of the event is determined by the logical possibility of inducing a subject or by the judicial variant of prescribing it. It is our understanding that the condition as a single element is necessary but not sufficient. Therefore, the subjectivization becomes a major gesture of inclusion as Badiou (2010) points out. Subjectivization places us in the double condition assumed by a subject: on the one hand, the subject bears the consequences of the event, and on the other hand, it requires the lucid acquisition that the decision claims as a gesture that shows that the event requires a subjective figure to gain consistency without being able to engage in its own self-foundation.[4] Again, the double valence of the Latin term 'subject' emerges as *subjectus* and *subjectum* being exposed, as succinctly and provocatively described by Homi Bhabha (1994: 65) as follows:

> What remains to be thought is the *repetitious* desire to recognize ourselves doubly, as, at once, decentred in the solidary processes of the political group, and yet, ourself as a consciously committed, even individuated, agent of change – the bearer of belief. What is this ethical pressure to 'account for ourselves' – but only *partially* – within a political theatre of agonism, bureaucratic obfuscation, violence and violation? Is this political desire for partial identification a beautifully human, even pathetic attempt to disavow the realization that, *betwixt and besides* the lofty dreams of political thinking, there exists an acknowledgement, somewhere between fact and fantasy, that the techniques and technologies of politics need not be *humanizing* at all, in no way endorsing of what we understand to be the human – humanist? – predicament. We may have to force the limits of the social as we know it to rediscover a sense of political and personal agency through the

> unthought within the civic and the psychic realms. This may be no place to end but it may be a place to begin.
>
> (Bhabha, 1994: 65)

The synecdoche of Montoneros: the whole, the part and the subject

In a close reading of a document published in the magazine *Cristianismo y Revolución*, the title of which is 'Montoneros speak', and explores its genealogy, it can easily be observed that the subject only comes into existence when attaching itself to the signifier. If the connection between a subject and a signifier here becomes an *encounter*, it is precisely because it is unthinkable that an existence and a consistency have taken place before that connection.

In the beginning of the text the following is stated:

> from our first communiqué we have identified ourselves as Peronists and Montoneros. We do not believe that we should be the starting point of the popular struggles but we think we are the final synthesis of a historical process that started out a hundred and sixty years before. This process moves forward enduring alternate upward and downward movements to finally consolidate itself on October 17th 1945. Throughout this process, two important political currents developed. On the one hand, the liberal oligarchy clearly anti-national and unpatriotic [*vendepatria*], and on the other, the people identified with the defense of their own interests which are the interests of the Nation against the imperialistic assaults of each historical circumstance.
>
> (Ahumada, 1970: 11–14)

Based on the conclusion arrived at by the Argentinean writer Beatriz Sarlo, we will focus on her interpretation of this document:

> First, birth and assumption of their heritage. The Montoneros came into existence in a political family that is not identified with Peronism as a whole but only that of radical and popular Peronism. Montoneros were born to be the expression of a historical trend. Afterwards, the organization will be known in its political fronts as the 'Tendency'. Logically, by assuming this heritage those young people become polarized between being comrades or being enemies within their political framework. Part of this political playing field is inherited . . . These young people embrace a characterization of the situation that preceded them.
>
> (Sarlo, 2003: 146)

As can be observed, the disjunction between birth and heritage in this characterization of the Montoneros centres itself on the problematic embrace of a legacy without any particular material benefit, an 'inventory' of the heritage. Once again, the formal gesture of conversion suddenly emerges and gives room to be included within a certain universe of identity and the frontiers it builds subsuming that identity. Then, it is not so much the absence of 'inventory' that is important, but the realization of a kind of 'balance sheet' of the heritage that, in their own account, made the Montoneros appear. That balance sheet allows the *periodization* of Peronism, a periodization that worries Sarlo.[5] Such periodization refers to a violent syntagm 'People-Oligarchy', which forces itself into a particular exercise intended to find the *locus* of Montoneros – not only in its wandering performance but expressing itself in a specific political universe as the Peronist. Hence, the following question arises: what displacements produce that aforementioned embrace?

It is our judgment that the first and foremost displacement is the relation of contiguity between Montoneros and Peronism, with the focus being on Peronism as the people's experience more than on Peron as such. Moreover, the relation of contiguity and its syntagmatic proximity leads us to think not only of the performance of a particular 'synchrony', but also of its permanence as it enters the course of history. Therefore, that syntagmatic proximity will almost invisibly become a metaphorical substitution within the paradigmatic dimension, that of history. This is in line with Gérard Genette's (1972) principle that states 'whoever resembles it assembles (and reciprocally)'. In other words, Peronism and Montoneros become one in their own formula of a 'final synthesis of a historical process that started out a hundred and sixty years before' (Ahumada, 1970). The Montoneros thus repeat the gesture of inclusion attached to the imaginary bond that is at the root of Peronism.

The 'oneness' of the name 'Montoneros' only exists here if it clings to a representational bond, as a kind of Hegelian 'determining reflection'. For that reason, the retroactive location of the organization in its external conditions is not enough – 'the people's experience' in the name of which the Montoneros appear as a synthesis – it must find itself present in its conditions by presupposing its exteriority. Then, the return to its external conditions coincides with the return to its foundations or the 'thing itself' – 'discovering the real nature of their identity'. In this manner, the external relation of the presupposition – the fundamental presupposes the conditions, and vice-versa – are surpassed by a purely formal gesture and void. That tautological gesture adds no new content but it asserts the presence of the 'thing' – here the armed organizations of the Montoneros – as conditions if its own existence. In the act of returning to their conditions, their identification with the 'people's experience', the Montoneros return to themselves, in this way experiencing the 'return' to their own roots of their true identity. Therefore, the empty gesture as something that is entirely symbolic permits the armed organization to enter the Peronist discursive universe.

Sarlo's (2003) reflections thereby liquidate all remains of the Montoneros' self-claimed historicity to show the 'scandalous' syntagmatic embrace, and even own its strange introduction, self-constitution. We see here the operation by which the part *institutes* itself as a whole. In our view, this is the problem that is present in the representation of the political field as studied by Ernesto Laclau in his theory of hegemony and then extended to his most recent reflections on populism.[6] It is sufficiently well-known that, in Laclau's view, the socially intelligible horizon is structured in the political field. Hence, the social field is given shape by way of the articulation of the differences and logics of equivalence rather than by any pre-existing topological disposition. Laclau confines the possibilities of the political to the symbolic register, considering this register as being a signifying structure of assigned places. The play of difference and its diacritical, oppositional character thus avoids the central question Badiou refers to as '*mettre en consistance*', to 'become consistent'; that is to say, the manner in which a subjective figure acquires efficacy and historical permanence.

Laclau suggests that there is an articulation between emptiness and fluidity – of the play of 'empty' and 'floating' signifiers – which is designed to work across the forms of displacement in the necessary flawed structure of the symbolic. With regard to this play of differences, Laclau explains that the 'real' presents itself as a vanishing performance oriented to pointing out the gap between the element and its location, pertaining to any structuralism; however, this account is not capable of thinking how the 'real' itself is invested with consistency. By way of this, we move from the realm of signifier to the topic of the Borromean knot. The knot enables us to produce further suggestive readings pertaining to the relation between 'Peronism' and the 'Montoneros'. That is possible because the knot discloses the mutual interdependence of the Lacanian registers of the real, symbolic and imaginary (R.S.I.), and, at the same time, their irreducibility from *one* to the *other*. On that point Milner (1983/1999: 13) reminds us that

> In this sense, 'Peronism' should not be reckoned with by way of an aggregative logic of equivalence and difference that is determined in the last instance by the empty signifier (S_1) with the floating that takes place being considered as a logic of displacements. If we were to limit the analysis to only one register, that of the symbolic, an immediate consequence would be the reduction of politics to a dispute over a *locus* of enunciation, which conveys a particular distribution of titles of community; that is to say, an exercise of what Badiou calls 'count-as-one'.

Borromean structure of Peronism

It is possible to affirm now that a Borromean knot structure is to be found in Peronism since any reality becomes intelligible by virtue of the knotting of the three Lacanian registers. The following is an illustration of these concepts, and

concerns Emilio de Ípola's reading of a speech given by Juan Domingo Peron on 17 October 1945 to a workers' mobilization:

> It is about the following: in the phrase by which 'for the first and last time' a General Strike is summoned, Peron with admirable subtlety indirectly but clearly points to the new institutional place granted by the legitimacy and the authority with which that summoning is invested. That place is not yet and could never have been a governmental position, that is to say, the Welfare and Labour Secretariat. It is a strictly new place, whose positivity has supposed and has sanctioned a rupture of the political space being in place until then, and the beginning of a new restructuring which conveys new cardinal points. That restructuring took place due to the massive and abrupt appearance of two protagonists in the core of Argentinian society and politics – Peron and the workers – and to a new conjuncture that was *unclassifiable* in the terms of traditional politics.
>
> (Ípola, 1982: 183)

In this quote it can be observed that Peronism builds itself around the three Lacanian registers. The symbolic dimension refers to the emergence of a *locus* of enunciation as well as a founding grasp: *there is One*; in other words, there are the names 'Peron' and the 'workers' appearing as such. In addition, the sudden outbursts of the two protagonists in the real are irreducible and have no possibility of being absorbed within the terms of the preceding encyclopaedia of knowledge, as Badiou (1988/2007) would say. Their own emergence heads towards the preceding situation and retroactively points to the *lack* of their existence, and at the same time requires a *forcing* of that preceding literality so that there is a necessary restructuring 'based on other cardinal points', as de Ípola puts it.[7] We find here the constitution of a bond that authorizes the group 'workers' to stand together, giving place to a constitutive unfolding of the name 'Peron' as symbolic in the imaginary, as the specular image of Peron bearing the identity between the rulers and the ruled. The former is a full gesture of communal inclusion and the latter the first among equals, that 'Very First Worker' mentioned in the lyrics of the party song.[8]

The Montoneros, as a political movement that names itself, places itself *ab initio* in this knot of real, symbolic and imaginary because their emergence, they say, is contemporary to Peronism itself. As has been suggested by Julián Melo (2009), the problem of this emergence presupposes the question of how it expands the inscription of subjective, personal experiences. As has been shown, the Montoneros as a subject with agency arises and perfects itself as such in the posited return of Montoneros, as a subject that re-inscribes itself in an interruption of a series of facts and establishing a *before* and *after* of that inscription. Nonetheless, that break does not ontologically exhaust itself within the logical and mathematical coordinates it presupposes but requires an *eventalization* of

the knot through the inscription of the *caesura*. Peronism does not cease to perform such retroactive effects '*rétroactions différées*' (Badiou, 1982/2008), and along that trace of the relation between symbolic, real and imaginary the word of the Montoneros perfects itself.

Conclusion: politics and performativity

What is in a name, then? The reading of Slavoj Žižek (1989) on anti-descriptive criticism undertaken by Laclau (2005) suggests that there is a performative condition of the word in respect to the object, that is to say, there is productivity in such naming.

Émile Benveniste (1974) reminds us of the singular character that the performative assumes (in Austin's illocutionary act). That is possible based on its self-referentiality. In other words, the performative takes itself to be the one that refers, acquiring by its mere enunciation the efficacy of an act. However, as observed by Agamben (2000/2005), the original relation between words and world supposes that the performativity of the enunciation requires the suspension of the denotative condition of the language concerned. For that reason, the ritual form of the *dictum* emerges as one that opens up the relation between words and world based on the fact of taking an oath concerning what it claims to be the case. It is that oath that allows the multiplicity to stand together. Thus, not only the grouping condition is fulfilled as an agreement concerning the function of the master signifier, but also the transition from the multiple to the One makes the group able to acquire a *consistency* that is spoken.

The Montoneros is part of what Jean-Claude Milner holds up as a *political vision of the world*. It is that view that rests upon a unique axiom, the non-existence of the 'beyond' of the grouping. That becomes possible since the subjects can be gathered by a single 'shred of the language' (Milner, 1983/1999: 81). Hence, there is no politics other than that which is for and by speaking beings.[9]

We have demonstrated that an agent constitutes itself by a process of retrieval as well as a repetition around a break between before and after, a *caesura*. This is what Badiou (2006) refers to as a 'trace' in his book *Logiques des mondes*. Nonetheless, the retrieval to which we refer, and to which the subject refers in the process of their own self-constitution, does not exhaust itself in the mere interruption it performs but must run along the knot around which a political identity inscribes what is *before* and *after*. The Borromean knot gives us the opportunity to think of the simultaneous constitution of the three registers and also the real character of it, stressing the impossibility of thinking of an ontological priority or hierarchy of one above the others.

Notes

1 The Other (*Autre*) is none other than the recipient of the treasury of the signifiers.
2 As has been remarked by Badiou (1991), a subject is neither a result nor an origin.

3 'The statement "There is subject" (*il y a du subject*) is uncertain or haphazard: it is not transitive with respect to being' (Badiou, 1991: 27).

4 Concerning this matter, Badiou's thought is in line with Carl Schmitt's criticism of judicial positivism. The latter is based on the self-founded condition of the norm and its infinite retrieval towards the '*Grundnorm*'. On the contrary, the gesture of personalization of sovereignty arises as the condition of efficacy as well as the bonding force of the judicial. At the same time, Foucault's enunciative function is divided between a relatively determined place being void and a determined individual, with the subject being the condition of possibility that allows the sign to be carried to the sense.

5 'This version of history possesses an integral quality: all of the different events are explained as variations stemming from the same principle and scenarios where the same actors are repeated (people, oligarchy, imperialism, and the intellectuals who represent the pro-foreign left and being known as insensitive to the national culture)' (Sarlo, 2003: 175).

6 Needless to say, Ernesto Laclau has pondered on populism, at least, in academic terms, ever since he wrote his opening text 'Towards a theory of populism' (Laclau, 1977).

7 The Real criss-crosses the Imaginary as a description of similarities and dissimilarities concerning lack. According to the abovementioned facts, the headlines appearing in *Crítica* –the newspaper with the biggest issue rating at that time – are illustrative regarding the mobilization that happened on 17 October 1945. They proclaimed: 'Isolated groups unrepresentative of the authentic Argentinean proletariat try to intimidate the population' (quoted by Hernández Arregui, 1970: 253). The outburst of groups that came from industrial districts into the capital erases the image of the workers that the situation had until then. However, that imaginary fracture marks the symbolic distance between the name of a totality – People or Workers – and the part-of-no-part sum of the uncounted, including themselves as a Whole. The *Crítica* headlines unsuccessfully attempt to undermine the assumption of that mobilized group as a *populus*, reducing it to a mere *pleb* as a wandering remainder with no place. For a detailed description of the concepts of *populus* and *plebs*, and its specific articulation, see Laclau (2005).

8 The discourse renders a bond so long as it lies on the line of the imaginary. Hence, there is no discourse other than the visage. In the same way, the imaginary is the spot of the representation of the *dyade* that involves the rulers and the ruled.

9 Thesis inaugurated by Aristotle in his *Politics* where it can be read:

> Only man among animals possesses the verb (*logos*). The voice (*phone*) is undoubtedly the means to express suffering and pleasure. Hence, it is granted to all other animals. Its nature does not go beyond that: they possess the feeling of suffering and pleasure and are able to pass it around. Contrary to that, the verb exists to manifest the useful and the harmful and consequently the fair and the unfair. This is the intrinsic characteristic of men in respect to animals: man is the only creature who possesses the feeling of good and evil and the just and the unjust. It is the reunion of those things that makes the family and the city.
>
> (Aristotle, *Politics*, I, 1253a)

This thesis by which mankind gains access to its condition crossed by the *logos*, from which the city is born according to J. P. Vernant, allows the theoretical productions of Hannah Arendt as well as of Jacques Rancière, only to mention two of the contemporary writers that animate today's debates. In the face of this *thetic* postulate, the proficient effort of Fabián Ludueña Romandini (2010) is pertinent. He undertakes an archaeology of the *anthro-tecniques* as *technologies of power* oriented to dealing with the substratum of animality that *inhabits* the human condition.

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26

THE RUPTURE OF THE REAL

Resistance and recuperation in recent Serbian cinema

Sean Homer

Cinematic depictions of the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s have almost invariably portrayed the conflict as a resurgence of ancient and repressed ethnic hatreds that were simply waiting to erupt. Films such as Emir Kusturica's *Underground* (1995) or Srđjan Dragojević's *Pretty Village, Pretty Flame* (1996), while both critical of the Milošević regime in many respects, eventually fall back on traditional clichés of the Balkans as a region of ancient and repressed hatreds. What is absent from this account is any sense of the internal resistance to ethnic nationalism and authoritarianism during this period (see Cohen, 2001; Gagnon, 2004; Gordy, 1999; Lazić, 1999; Thomas, 1999). In repeated surveys of the population of the former Yugoslavia, the majority of people never identified themselves in ethno-nationalist terms and Milošević's Socialist Party never held a majority of the votes (Gagnon, 2004; Gordy, 1999; Woodward, 1995). Balkan film scholars have also reflected on the way in which non-nationalist voices in the conflict were silenced or ignored, forcing writers and filmmakers to take sides, if they wanted to be heard at all (Iordanova, 2001). In relation to the most protracted and violent of the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia, Levi notes, the recognition of the three ethnonational parties as the sole representatives of the Bosnian people after the 1990 elections effectively negated the existence of a fourth faction, 'the significant and certainly not all too easily dismissable segment of the population consisting of all those who refused to be labeled exclusively in ethnic terms' (Levi, 2007: 2).

A number of recent Serbian films, including Goran Marković's *Cordon* (2002) and Dušan Kovačević's *The Professional* (2003) have focused upon the internal resistance to Milošević's regime and in particular what has become known as the '100 days' or 'Egg Protests' of 1996–97.[1] Both films, however, are marked by a certain ambivalence or ambiguity around the protests and it is this ambiguity that I want to address in this paper. Drawing on Alain Badiou's notion of the 'event' and the distinction that he elaborates between the 'masses' and the 'mass movement', I will explore the potential of the urban resistance

that swept Serbia in the mid-1990s and also its limits. The masses is a term that Badiou deploys in his early work *Theory of the Subject* (1982/2009) and it largely drops out of his later ontological vocabulary in *Being and Event* (1988/2007). The masses designate one of the two essential parameters of the first cycle of modern emancipatory politics, the other being the party.[2] As Hallward observes, in *Theory of the Subject*

> the masses figure as the dynamic, inventive and 'vanishing' term of history, an evanescent causality that comes to 'consist' insofar as a suitably organized Marxist-Leninist party is able to purify and sustain the revolutionary force of its eruption.
>
> (Hallward, 2008: 100)

Theory of the Subject also contains Badiou's most sustained engagement with Lacan to date and in particular with Lacan's understanding of truth and the real. I will come back to Badiou's reading of Lacan below, so let me now turn to the films themselves.

The politics of montage

Kovačević's *The Professional* and Marković's *Cordon* are unusual (at least as far as films that have received international distribution are concerned) to the extent that both are structured around the mass protests of the 1990s. *The Professional* and *Cordon* both utilize documentary footage of the actual protests and in both texts this has a distancing effect.

The Professional is inter-cut with footage of a series of mass protests, beginning with the October revolution in 2000, which finally brought Milošević down: the March 9, 1991 protests, when the opposition posed its first real challenge to the regime and the '100 days' protests of 1996–97, when the opposition coalition Zajedno (Together) and Student Protest Committee sustained four months of continuous protest between November 1996 and March 1997 over the electoral fraud of the government in the local elections of 1996. At the height of the protests 250,000 people were on the streets of Belgrade. Although this material was shot in the 1990s, it is always shown in sepia, as if these are images from the turn of the century and the early days of cinema rather than of the very immediate past. It is as if the protests were relics of a bygone age. Moreover, when the scenes shift from a sepia tone to full colour there is an instant cut and we see the documentary footage not directly on the screen but now mediated by a bank of screens in the offices of the secret police. Furthermore, when the image changes from sepia to full colour the content also undergoes a significant transformation. We no longer see mass mobilizations of people coming into Belgrade, violent confrontations with the security police and army or the occupation of government buildings, but two young women at a celebratory rock concert. The potential violence of the protests is domesticated

and the film formally instantiates a separation between its primary narrative, the relationship between Teja (a former dissident intellectual and now factory manager) and Luka (a former colonel in the secret police and now taxi driver), and the historical events that are its conditions of possibility. It would appear as if these images cannot be directly represented on the screen and must be distanced from the spectator in some way.

Cordon utilizes a rather different but no less estranging technique. The documentary footage in *Cordon* is in black and white as opposed to colour and it is more seamlessly segued into the main narrative of the film. There is, however, a marked change in the quality of the image when the film shifts from documentary to fiction. The image changes from a very grainy quality and jerky handheld camera movements to a high definition image and steadier movement. Marković was a supporter of the protests[3] and previously he produced a documentary, *The People Gone Mad/Poludeli ljudi* (1997), using footage shot by the protestors themselves. In marked contrast to this documentary, though, *Cordon* explores the perspective of the police (Zivković, 2007). The film focuses on the tensions and conflicts within a police unit over an extended weekend shift. As the weekend progresses, the men get increasingly tired and tempers begin to fray. The police unit itself is a microcosm of tensions and conflicts between different groups within Serbian society in the 1990s: between Serbs proper and refugees from the Serbian populated regions of the former Yugoslavia, the country and the city, the educated urban population and the uneducated rural incomers; between those committed to the regime and the inertia of the indifferent who are merely following orders. The police unit is directed from one part of the city to another by the disembodied voice, Danube, over the radio, endlessly chasing shadows in what appears to be a futile attempt to stem the tide of protests. The *mise-en-scène* is very dark and claustrophobic as much of the film is shot at night and within the confines of the bus. An overall sense of confusion and disorientation is reinforced through the camera work, as it frequently adopts the point of view of the men in the bus. As we look out through the extremely restricted frame of the wiremesh and dirty windows, we see blurry and threatening images outside. So, although it is always the protestors who are on the receiving end of at times extreme violence, the camera work and *mise-en-scène* create a strong sense of the vunerability of the police officers. Our sympathy for their plight is enhanced through a pervasive use of close-ups of their silent pensive faces, as they wrestle with their personal dilemmas and demons in these difficult circumstances.

The focus on the internal dynamics and psychology of the group is reminiscent of Vietnam war films from the 1980s, such as Oliver Stone's *Platoon* (1986). The use of the acousmatic voice, Danube, enhances the sense of disorientation and powerlessness of the police unit. As Chion writes, the unseen voice becomes invested with 'magical powers' and these powers are 'usually malevolent, occasionally tutelary' (Chion, 1982/1999: 23). The acousmatic voice takes on the powers of ubiquity, panopticism, omniscience and omnipotence,

thus rendering the police unit exposed and vulnerable. There is another, more troubling, similarity between *Cordon* and Vietnam films, however; the demonstrators are often in the shadows, at times reduced to disembodied voices themselves, or they are simply blurry images that we can hardly make out. That is to say, they occupy the position of the omniscient and invisible enemy (see, for example, *Apocalypse Now*, 1979) as well as intra-diegetically a similar position to that of the controlling and directing voice that comes over the radio.

In both films, then, we see a marked ambiguity towards the protests. How might we account for this ambiguity in two directors who were both sympathetic to the movement itself and opposed to the regime? Let me here turn to the work of Alain Badiou and Jacques Lacan.

The real as rupture and destruction

As I mentioned above, in Badiou's early work the masses function as the historical materialization of inconsistency: 'The masses are not the substance of history but *the prohibition to repeat*, which brings to being the aleatory subject that Marxism puts into discourse' (Badiou, 2009: 136). The masses in Marxist discourse duplicate the structure of the subject of the unconscious in psychoanalysis. Insofar as the subject of the unconscious, the subject of lack, 'leads to nothing' (p. 134), Lacan effectively subverts the metaphysical opposition of being and non-being and thus 'the unconscious resembles the proletarian politics according to the Marxist, which *is its effect (its ef-fect) of not being*' (p. 134). We must take seriously, argues Badiou, Lacan's claim that the real is impossible[4] and if for psychoanalysis this is the impossibility of the sexual *qua* relation (Lacan, 1975/1998), then, for Marxism, this is the impossibility of class relations: 'There are no such things as class relations' (Badiou, 2009: 127). Class relations are defined by a relation of non-relation or 'antagonism' (p. 127). Badiou, in other words, draws on the Lacanian notion of the real to formulate a conception of the masses as the real of history, as 'the real of the cut' (p. 173), at the same time as he carefully distinguishes his own conception of the real from Lacan's. *Theory of the Subject* was one of the first texts to elaborate on the distinction between the early (Structuralist) and late (theorist of the real) Lacan, that is to say, on Lacan moving from 'the primacy of the symbolic to the consistency of the real' (p. 133). For Badiou, Lacan is divisible between 'the one of the lack of being' and 'the one of the ontology of the hole, of the nodal *topos*, and, consequently, of the being of lack' (p. 133). From Badiou's perspective Lacan only theorizes half of the subject, the subject of lack, and fails to account for that which gives being to lack, the 'more than real' (p. 141), which he defines as destruction:

> Destruction is that figure of the subject's grounding in which loss not only turns lack into a cause, but also produces consistency out of the excess. . . . Through destruction, the subject latches onto that which, in

> lack itself, survives the lacking and is not repetitive closure of the effect to the presence of the cause.
>
> (p. 140)

Every subject, in Badiou's sense, 'stands at the crossing between a lack of being and a destruction, a repetition and an interruption, a placement and an excess' (p. 139).[5] For Marxism, the masses designate this destructive excess that can erupt onto the stage of history and can change everything. The impossible 'event' of the Marxist real is revolution itself, 'the destruction of that which did not exist' (p. 128) and the truth of which can only be retroactively secured through a subjective fidelity to its name.

In a later short essay, 'Politics Unbound' (2006a), Badiou notes that there are two standard criticisms of the use of the term the 'masses'. The first is that it is a pure signifier, the function of which is to make intellectuals submit to the injunction 'join the masses'. The second is that it is not a pure signifier but something real and uncontrollable that functions as an imaginary bond coalescing idolatry, cruelty and folly around itself, finally resulting in disillusionment and renunciation (p. 68). In both cases, argues Badiou, the terms operate under the aegis of 'the primordial bond' (p. 69), and as such become terms of enslavement and decomposition. The problem here, notes Badiou, is not with the terms themselves, the masses and the party, or with politics as such, but with the forgetting of politics and the re-articulation of its key signifiers through the figure of the bond. Any form of social bond, for Badiou, be it the bonds of solidarity of a mass movement or the administrative bureaucracy of the State, only serves to totalize, and thus bind, the particularity of the political event.[6] The social bond, he argues, depoliticizes these signifiers by re-articulating them not in terms of their own being, that is to say their inconsistency, but in terms of their submission to the 'supreme being' of the State (p. 70). We may then be led to the conclusion that any form of mass politics gives rise to submission to a bureaucratic and authoritarian State. For Badiou, this is not inevitable, if we refuse the logic of the primordial bond:

> The way in which the theme of the bond enters into the consolidation of the 'masses' is through the substitution of this term for another, quite different one, which is the 'mass movement.' The imaginary attributes of gathering, cruelty, folly, and so on, are ascribed to the masses insofar as they rise up, join forces, riot. It is solely from the movement of the masses that we infer that mass politics exists through the totalisable figure of the bond.
>
> (p. 71)

Insofar as a mass movement binds the disruptive force of the masses in new imaginary relations we must reject the notion of the mass movement in favour of the unbinding of the masses. A 'mass movement,' in Badiou's sense, is an

historical phenomenon that *may be* an event for politics but is not, strictly speaking, political in-itself.[7] Politics, as the possibility of a moment of rupture with what exists, is rearticulated by the mass movement through the signifiers of the existing order, ultimately reinforcing the existing social bond. Let me elaborate on this a little further through the '100 days' protests and the films.

Breaking the social bond?

While the '100 days' protests were remarkable in many respects, not least in their duration and non-violent character, they also encapsulated many of the limits and contradictions within the opposition movement. Cvejić (1999) notes that the protests were democratic, civil and above all non-nationalist in character but, at the same time, their demands were liberal rather than radical in orientation. Indeed, as many of the commentators who studied these protests have observed, the demonstrators were overwhelmingly middle-class, well-educated, anti-authoritarian and pro-Western, not to mention politically conservative. A majority of the students, for example, claimed to be on the Right and almost 10 per cent on the extreme Right (Kuzmanović, 1999). The protestors placed a disproportionate faith in the electoral process, which ultimately turned out to be a failure (Ilić, 1999).[8] In a comparative study of the student protests of 1992 and 1996, Popadić (1999) observes that there was a significant lessening in the protestors' demands between the two protests. Whereas in 1992 the students had demanded the resignation of Milošević, the disbanding of the Serbian parliament and government and finally the scheduling of elections, the students in 1996 were merely asking for the immediate establishment of an electoral commission and the replacement of the University rector and student-vice-rector. In this respect it was relatively easy for the regime to recuperate the energy of the protests. By simply recognizing the election results and by allowing Zajedno into power the regime effectively neutralized the opposition and it almost immediately fell apart. For the students, on the other hand, the University needed only to accept the resignation of the rector and student-vice-rector, which it did on March 7, for them all to return to their studies and leave Milošević in power for another four years. In short, the student and protest movements of 1996–97 remained within the constraints of the existing social bond rather than forcing a break with it, or, to put it in Žižek's (1999) terms, the protests represent political activity rather than an authentic political act or event.

An event emerges from a specific situation but is not determined by that situation, insofar as the situation is 'pure indifferent multiplicity' (Badiou, 2005: xii). The site is a potential for an event; it is 'a *condition of being* for the event' (p. 179). A site, therefore, opens up the possibility for an event but does not determine whether or not one will happen; a site only becomes *evental* when it is retrospectively qualified as such by the occurence of the event. As with the psychoanalytic act for Lacan, an authentic event emerges 'as if' ex nihilo

and, as Žižek (1999) puts it, it is the truth of a situation that makes visible what the official discourse has had to repress.[9] An authentic event is something that breaks with an existing situation and imposes itself on that situation, radically restructuring its signifiers. The protests of the 1990s were *not* such an event.

The structural limit of the protests was their investment in and refusal to break with the existing socio-symbolic order. In *The Professional* and *Cordon* this investment is displaced from the political to the familial domain, in the sense that both narratives turn on a personal relationship linking the security forces of the regime directly with the opposition. This relationship is also marked both in terms of gender and generation. In *The Professional*, Luka sets out to destroy Teja's political, professional and personal life and he tries to kill Teja by running him down; this puts Teja in hospital and effectively ends his political aspirations. Luka gets Teja sacked from his position as a Professor at the University by reporting his relationship with a female student to the Dean. He then sends photographs of them together to Teja's wife, destroying what remains of their marriage. The student in question, however, is Luka's own daughter, Ana, and when she discovers that her father has her lover under surveillance he is forced to switch from trying to kill Teja to keeping him alive. It is this same father/daughter relationship that forms the axis of *Cordon*. The police have been pursuing a young cameraman throughout the film and when they eventually catch up with him they discover scenes of him making love to the daughter of the commander of the unit (known as 'the Dragon') on his camera. After the police beat the young man almost to the point of death, Zorica, the Dragon's daughter, telephones her father to ask him to find and help her boyfriend. As with Luka, the Dragon is forced to turn from trying to kill the young man to saving his life and as with *The Professional* this precipitates a break between father and daughter. This relationship indicates something about the gender politics of the protest (Blagojević, 1999) as well as their generational aspect (Mali, Čičkarić, and Jojić, 1999). It also indicates, however, a certain structural relationship between the opposition and the regime; they are intimately linked together at some level. In both films, the representatives of the regime, the very force that sets out to destroy the opposition, ends up protecting the opposition in order to sustain it.

Recuperation

The initial protests in the early 1980s against the old League of Communists attempted to articulate a Federal, socialist and non-nationalist solution to the economic and political crisis facing the former Yugoslavia (Magaš, 1993). By the mid 1990s, however, nationalist discourse increasingly came to dominate the rhetoric of both the regime and the opposition. As Milošević's Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS) was the successor of the former League of Communists and its socialist heritage, the opposition differentiated itself through its

nationalist and royalist credentials. In order not to be out-manoeuvred by Milošević, the opposition 'became more royal than King' (Woodward, 1995: 357), adopting ever more extreme forms of nationalist rhetoric in order to oust the nationalist government. Through adopting the emblems and signifiers of the existing order, the opposition and student protests did not signify a rupture with the existing order but its continuation by other means.

Writers on Serbian politics and culture in the 1990s have noted a number of strategies employed by Milošević's regime in order to retain its grip on power despite its utter failure in just about every area of social and political life and its lack of popular support. According to Gordy, Milošević was only able to retain his hold on power by systematically destroying any credible alternative, thus creating a situation of 'habituation, resignation and apathy' (1999: 7).[10] Gagnon (2004) has called this strategy demobilization, in the sense that any serious challengers to the regime were silenced, marginalized and demobilized. This strategy was in no small part helped by the 'failures and inconsistencies' (Gordy, 1999: 59) of the opposition movement itself, as it was riven by disputes and disagreements of its own. The weakness and divisions within the opposition movement also allowed Milošević to co-opt certain factions from it, especially the extreme right and nationalist wings of the movement, and thus retain power long beyond what should otherwise have been the case. In short, there was something of a symbiotic relationship between the regime and sections of the opposition (Thomas, 1999).

As *Cordon* also reveals, the '100 days' protests were very much politics as carnival, a 'diverse, Dionysian, ironic and auto-ironic, innovative, revolutionary, festive' outpouring of anger (Vujović, 1999: 196). For weeks, the students and opposition 'walked' around the city making noise, laughter and play, symbolically reclaiming it from the state. The protestors carried flags from all over the world, reinforcing their slogan 'Belgrade is the world!' in opposition to the isolation of the regime. Laughter, noise and irony became the weapons that the students used to undermine the legitimacy of government. Protest as carnival, however, has always been something of a double-edged sword, and the official sanctioning of carnivalesque transgression allows for its easy recuperation once the energy has been dissipated. This certainly seems to have been the case with the '100 days' protests. Levi (2007) observes that the protestors challenged the blatant acts of media manipulation through the production of brute noise. In short, the silence of the media concerning the electoral fraud was confronted through the production of noise by the demonstrators. While in the short run these carnivalesque demonstrations appeared to result in the victory of the opposition, 'in the longer run it also became clear that in some sense they actually helped extend the rule of the established political order' (p. 137). The carnival acted as a safety-valve, allowing the protests to run their course while the regime slowly reasserted its control. In other words, the carnival is an act of sanctioned transgression that can be easily contained and reconciled to the existing power structure. Despite the serious acts of resistance, notes Levi, 'the

protests largely remained within the confines of ethnic collectivism and national patriotism' (p. 138). The 'sonorous haze' of noise production served to mask the genuinely anti-nationalist voices and thus 'concealed everything that had to remain unspoken, or at least muted, so that the consistency of the ethnocollectivist ideational framework could be maintained even during the period of social unrest' (p. 139).

Conclusion

As with other Kovačević scripts, there is a certain postmodern irony and self-referentiality to *The Professional*, as the film's main narrative commences with the statement 'This is the end!' and the concluding scene takes us back to the beginning. There is circularity to the film's narrative and, behind this, of history itself; here we can see the conservatism of Kovačević's politics.[11] History is repetition and there appears to be no way out; this is underscored by a third narrative strand running through the film.[12] The meeting between Luka and Teja takes place against a backdrop of renewed militancy from the factory workers, against the management's decision to privatize the firm. In his complete disregard and contempt for the work force, Teja appears to be no better than the apparatchiks he has replaced. Indeed, not only have the former dissidents been co-opted but the repressive state's apparatus continues much as before, just under a new name. Do the striking workers offer an alternative to the politics of the regime and opposition, then? It would seem not from Kovačević's perspective. While Teja is in his meeting with Luka, the leader of the strike committee is also pressing for a meeting with him. At one point Jovan bursts into the office to demand an immediate meeting and recognizes Luka, who takes him to one side and asks him to postpone the strike and return the workers to the shop floor, which he does. It appears not only that Jovan is currently an informer for the secret police, but he was also one under the previous regime; moreover this strike is being orchestrated by the secret police. It is here that we can see the pessimism of Kovačević's politics and that an unbinding of the social bond or 'opening' in Badiou's sense is not possible in this ultimately conservative and fatalistic view of history.

Cordon offers us a similarly unsatisfactory resolution. As the police unit brings the young cameraman into hospital, the Dragon meets his daughter searching for her boyfriend. On seeing the semi-conscious Aca, Zorica tells her father she will never see or speak to him again. As she disappears down the corridor, the Dragon has a stroke. The film ends with an aerial shot of the protests and Zorica pushing her father back home through the crowd of protestors, the political, social, generational and gender conflicts either resolved or simply drowned out in the sonorous haze of noise. From Badiou's perspective it is only through a complete break with the existing order of representation that change can come about. The masses have that potential insofar as they can impose themselves on the situation and create new possibilities of restructuring the

socio-symbolic field. In order to do this, however, they must break not only with the symbols of the present but also with the emblems of the past.

Notes

1 The protests were so named after the demonstrators' habit of throwing eggs at public buildings. For a detailed analysis of the '100 days' protests see Lazić (1999). See also Levi (2007) and Thomas (1999).
2 This first cycle, for Badiou, is the emancipatory politics we associate with the names Marx, Lenin and Mao.
3 As were Dušan Kovačević and Emir Kusturica (Thomas, 1999).
4 'The real is distinguished . . . by its separation from the field of the pleasure principle, by its desexualization, by the fact that its economy, later, admits something new, which is precisely impossible' (Lacan, 1964/1973 [1973]: 167).
5 In *Being and Event* Badiou accepts that he overstated his case regarding destruction in *Theory of the Subject* especially with regard to its intrinsic link to novelty (2007 [1988]).
6 Badiou (2008) makes a crucial distinction here between a 'singularity' – a novelty that appears intensely but has few consequences – and an 'event' – a singularity whose consequences come to appear as intensely and powerfully as possible and thus have duration. The eruption of the masses in the social order has the potential to become an event in this sense.
7 For Badiou, politics is a truth procedure that is at once singular and universal. The essence of politics, he writes, 'is the prescription of a possibility in rupture with what exists' (2006a: 24), or, as he has put it more recently, politics is 'collective action, organized by certain principles, that aims to unfold the consequences of a new possibility which is currently repressed by the dominant order' (2008: 31).
8 See Badiou (2006b) for the limits of electoral politics.
9 Lacan (1966–67) disitinguishes between 'acting out' and the act proper. The act is equivalent to repetition and the repetition intrinsic to every act is 'only permitted via the effect of retroaction' (p. XI 11).
10 Gordy (1999) explores the destruction of alternatives in four fields: politics, the media, popular culture and everday life.
11 Kovačević is a royalist and member of the Crown Council of Aleksandar Karadordević. Both Kovačević and Kusturica supported the opposition protests in 1996–97 (Thomas, 1999).
12 On the conservatism of Kovačević's script for Kusturica's *Underground*, see Žižek (1997) and Levi (2007); while acknowledging the conservativism of such fatalistic and circular views of Balkan history, I have argued against the grain of these readings in Homer (2009).

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27

FROM THE WORD TO THE EVENT

Limits, possibilities and challenges of Lacanian Discourse Analysis

David Pavón-Cuéllar

Lacanian Discourse Analysis may not go beyond the narrow limits of the discourse articulated by the Other. This Other is the only one with whom we deal in discourse, and it is just a signifying structure of language. However, this structure offers unfathomable possibilities for our analytical work, for instance, by analyzing the transindividual place of discourse, it is possible to penetrate into the symbolic system of culture that underlies, governs, organizes and unifies what we call 'society'. Now, if this system embraces our analyz*ing* discourse and not only the analyz*ed*, how can we make our analytical work without being in complicity with the system and with its knowledge? How can we deal in our analysis with acts that are not simple systemic activity, events that break the functioning of the system, symptomatic irruptions of un-analyzable truth and resultant disruptions of analyzable knowledge? These challenges, as well as the possibilities and limits of Lacanian Discourse Analysis, will be illustrated in this chapter through the analysis of *narco-messages* left with bodies of people killed by drug cartels in Mexico.

Limits

The war among rival drug cartels and the Mexican government has killed more than 40,000 people in the last four years. Bodies are found everyday and everywhere. Many of them present signs of torture. They are mutilated, dismembered, decapitated and even skinned. Bodies and heads appear in streets and squares, and are often accompanied by short messages addressed to other cartels, to society, to the police or to the Mexican government. These *narco-messages* are written on walls or pieces of paper, next to the bodies or nailed to them, occasionally written with blood or carved into the skin. They are directly related to the murdered people, who may be mentioned in the messages, for instance by

explaining who they were or why they were killed. Several messages are anonymous, but some are signed by a cartel.

One of the most important drug cartels in Mexico is *La Familia Michoacana* [The Michoacán Family]. As with other cartels, this one seems to attach importance to its name. Take for example the following narco-message found next to a body: 'This is what happens to you for presenting yourself as La Familia and for extorting and kidnapping innocent people' (from *La Jornada*, 09/12/06, http://www.jornada.unam.mx). According to this text signed by 'La Familia', the name of 'La Familia' is one of the reasons why the man is dead. He has been killed, not only for 'extorting and kidnapping', but also for 'presenting himself as La Familia'. At least this is *what we know from what is written*. Of course, it is not written that the man has been killed, but there is a dead man who takes part in the narco-message's discourse. This discourse includes the murdered man, as well as his death, since it explicitly refers to the man and his death when it says 'this is what happens to you'.

The dead man intervenes in discourse, and *what happens to him is to be dead*. The man and his death complete the sentence 'this is what happens to you'. This sentence does not refer to something outside discourse. The discourse of the narco-message is not only written in the piece of paper, but it is also written in the body of the dead man. Actually, discourse has been also written by killing the man. This is a good example of 'the symbol' that 'kills the thing' in our Lacanian perspective (Lacan, 1953: 317). In this perspective, the symbolic value of discourse will always be obtained at the expense of a real thing such as a living body. This thing turns into *the letter*, the literal body, the material support of the symbolic value. Thus the corpse, just as the piece of paper, carries the narco-message, its discourse, but also the knowledge inherent in this discourse.

We know *what happened* through the killed body, and *why it happened* through the piece of paper. These material things are the only things through which we can know something in our materialist perspective. In this perspective of Lacanian Discourse Analysis, we can only know that which is present in the real and perceptible materiality of discourse, in its literal words and evident relations between words. In the afore-quoted narco-message, for instance, we know that the signatories *present themselves as La Familia* when they show what happens, according to them, precisely to those who 'present themselves as La Familia'. To be sure, we know what is written, but not what it means. We cannot know the personality, thoughts or feelings of those who wrote the narco-message. We cannot know if they were psychopathic, narcissistic, paranoiac or simply aggressive or bad-tempered. We cannot know if they were angry, lost control and killed a man because he usurped their name. We cannot know if they value justice and they really have a negative attitude towards the extortion and kidnapping of 'innocent people'. Nor can we know if they act strategically and only want to frighten us and keep us away from their territory. In short, we cannot know anything that a conventional psychologist would like to know with regard to this narco-message. All this psychological stuff is not said. It is not

included in the knowledge inherent in the narco-message's discourse. Therefore it cannot be accepted as the meaning of discourse in a Lacanian Discourse Analysis. It is beyond the limits of our analysis.

Lacanian Discourse Analysis imposes narrow limits on the analytical work. These limits are the ones of the analyzed discourse. It is this discourse itself that restrains its analysis. We cannot go beyond its literal words, and evident relations between words, with the aim of discovering a supposed hidden meaning. Lacanian Discourse Analysis, as argued by Parker (2010), 'is not a reading that claims to unlock the secrets of the text or of those represented in it' (p. 156). These secrets are beyond the remit of Lacanian Discourse Analysis because they are outside the literal words found in discourse. When doing a Lacanian Discourse Analysis, we are not entitled to understand these words, give a sense to them, or *supposed to know* what they mean. Here, for us, the only authentic knowledge is the one inherent in the words. We cannot go beyond to discover either the ideas or feelings that would motivate discourse, or the subject who would be feeling or thinking something while expressing discourse. But this does not matter, because for us, in our Lacanian perspective, the subjects who express discourse are just a kind of spokesperson. They are not authors of their discourse. This discourse is not, strictly speaking, *their discourse*, but the *discourse of the Other*, which is just expressed by the subjects. The subjects do not consciously decide what is expressed. Even if they express discourse, they do not create, generate or articulate it. The one who articulates discourse is not the subject, but *the Other*, the Lacanian big Other, who is not *someone*, but *something*, a signifying structure of language, a symbolic system of culture.

The Other is the only one with which we can deal in discourse. It is mindless and heartless. It has neither ideas nor feelings. It only has words, but words without meaning, without an intellectual or motivational meaning, without a mental or cognitive meaning, without a psychological meaning; *the Other lacks a psychology*. It is nothing more than words, language, signifying structure of language. Such a structure is the only place of discourse, which is the limited place for Lacanian Discourse Analysis.

Possibilities

The place for Lacanian Discourse Analysis is quite limited. There is no room, in this place, for an individual or social psychology. Yet, paradoxically, there *is* room for something that transcends individual and social psychology, something that may be called *transindividual* and *meta-psychological*, something that offers unfathomable possibilities for our analytical work. Through our Lacanian Discourse Analysis, by analyzing the transindividual place of discourse, it is possible to penetrate into the symbolic system of culture that underlies, governs, organizes, unifies and simultaneously breaks up what we call 'society' (Pavón-Cuéllar, 2010b). By scrutinizing this meta-psychological system, we may get important information about what manifests itself through the psychic phenomena studied by

individual and social psychology. We may explore the exteriority of the unconscious, of the Other's discourse, that determines the contents of consciousness and embraces the analyzed discourse as well as our analysis, our analyzing discourse, which is just the peculiar curvature of the interpretative process, by which the Other's discourse analyses itself from the position of each one of us in the signifying structure.

Now, from the standpoint of my structural position, which is exclusively mine and overdetermined by all the signifiers that represent me, the signifying structure unfolds before me in a singular and unique way. It is a *structure-for-me*. Since this structure of language articulates every discourse for me, every discourse can only be articulated before me and be analyzed by me in my way and no other. Therefore, the same transindividual discourse of the Other is not exactly the same, and cannot be analyzed in the same way, from the viewpoint of two individuals situated in different structural positions. Each one, as a good analysand, will analyze an unconscious that concerns only them and not their neighbour.

If two individuals analyze the same discourse, neither will this discourse be the same for both, nor will their analysis be the same. Nevertheless, in a Lacanian perspective, we will assume a kind of *transindividual continuity* between both analyses and both discourses. After all, even if there are different analyses and different discourses from different individuals, these individuals share something, a culture or a language, and their discourses and analyses may be conceived as complementary performances of the same symbolic system of culture, of the same transindividual and meta-psychological system of language, which is *the same system in itself* despite being *a different system from different viewpoints inside the system*. Actually, this system that sees itself from all the viewpoints, this Other that only produces monologues about itself is that which analyzes itself when we analyze discourse. When we explore the structure of a narco-message, it is the signifying structure of language that is exploring itself through our exploration. This structure is not the same for each one of us, granted, but we must insist that it may be conceived of as the same in itself and for itself, for all of us or for all of our structural positions.

It is possible to explore the transindividual structure in itself by exploring what it is for my individual structural position. By analyzing the unconscious that concerns me, I can analyze a culture that permeates all of the exteriority of what is not merely the unconscious, but also a symbolic system of culture, a discourse of the Other, an articulation of language that concerns many people. All this may be analyzed through my analysis of the way all this is articulated for me.

Through my Lacanian Discourse Analysis, for instance, I may analyze, from my standpoint, the Other that articulates narco-messages. It is the symbolic system of a culture dominated by capitalism and some of its master-signifiers: 'profit' or 'benefit', 'money' or 'wealth', 'market' and 'merchandise', 'prices' and 'competition', 'partners' or 'associates', 'consumers' and 'robbers', 'property' and 'prosperity', 'business' and 'enterprise' and so on. These master-signifiers (S_1) are

connected with other important signifiers (S_2) that may be in contradiction with capitalism, or at least not necessarily inherent in capitalism, such as the Spanish word for well-being, 'bienestar', which means in English, not only 'well-being', but also 'welfare'.

Take for example the following narco-message next to a body riddled with bullet holes: 'This is what happened to me for stealing and kidnapping', which is signed by 'The enterprise, caring for the welfare of Acapulco' (from *Diario 21*, 23/12/10, http://www.diario21.com/). Here the 'welfare' (S_2) is preserved by a drug cartel identified with the capitalist master-signifier of 'The Enterprise' (S_1). Instead of a 'welfare state', we have a sort of 'welfare-enterprise'. This deserves a brief discursive contextualization of the words 'welfare' in Mexico.

After the destruction of the so-called 'welfare state' in Mexico, around the beginning of the 1990s, we entered a neo-liberal period in which everything was privatized, government deflated, social security undermined, and the 'free' market protected by all means. From this time, paradoxically, the word 'bienestar' has turned into a rhetorical keyword in Mexican politics. First it was the slogan of the president Zedillo. Then, with the presidents Fox and Calderón, it has been used by a number of neo-liberal politicians. At present, as evidenced by the aforementioned narco-message, the 'bienestar' has also become the slogan of a drug cartel. Yet, this cartel is not a political party or a public institution, but it is a private criminal enterprise whose name is precisely 'The Enterprise'.

It is 'The Enterprise' that is claiming to 'care for welfare'. We may detect here the functioning of a capitalist symbolic system in which only 'The Enterprise', with capital letters, has the power to 'care for welfare', given that the post-welfare liberal state, ironically obsessed with 'welfare', cannot pretend to care anymore, for the very reason that it is no longer a welfare state. Instead of the state, it is 'The Enterprise' (S_1) that 'cares for the welfare of Acapulco' (S_2). But note that at stake here is 'the welfare of Acapulco' and not 'the welfare of people in Acapulco'. In other words, the enterprise explicitly cares for the welfare of the golden signifier of 'Acapulco', but not necessarily for the welfare of all these miserable people who remain always forgotten behind this signifier and who live in the poor suburbs of Acapulco, far away from the beaches and the luxury hotels.

When we confine ourselves to The Enterprise's discourse written on the piece of paper, we may only know that 'The Enterprise cares for the welfare of Acapulco', which would be threatened by people who supposedly 'steal and kidnap'. But when we analyze the dead body next to the message, we also may know who the people who supposedly steal and kidnap are: they are modestly-dressed and poor people. Taking everything into account, we may say that *the enterprise kills poor people of Acapulco when it cares for the welfare of the wealthy city of Acapulco*.

The welfare of Acapulco (S_2), reducible to the symbolic value of large amounts of money, is preserved at the expense of the real life and the real enjoyment of the life of the poor people who live in Acapulco (*a*). In a sense, this *real*

Table 27.1 The Enterprise and Welfare

S_1: 'The Enterprise'	S_2: 'Welfare'
$\$$: poor people, hired assassins, labour force	*a*: real enjoyment of life lost by poor people

thing is killed by the symbol of 'Acapulco', which is inseparable from its symbolic 'welfare'. Thus, in Mexico, thousands of people, called 'criminals' by the government, have been killed in the name of a 'bienestar' that has nothing to do with the real life and the real well-being of the real people who are killed everyday and everywhere. These people don't mind. They have to be killed by 'The Enterprise', which is not only a drug cartel, but a master-signifier that dominates a number of discourses in Mexico.

The Enterprise kills poor people with the help of other poor people ($\$$) identified with the master-signifier of 'The Enterprise' (S_1), that is, hired assassins who make the work of the enterprise, the work of the entrepreneurial capitalist system ($S_1 \downarrow S_2$), the work that preserves the symbolic welfare of the system (S_2) at the expense of the real life (*a*) of poor people ($\$$). These people are *proletarianized* in the sense that their real life is reduced to the exploited labour force of the symbolic system. As they write narco-messages, they are the enunciating workforce of this Other, but they also are its killing, stealing and kidnapping workforce. They are killed for being that. When one of them expresses 'this is what happened to me for stealing and kidnapping', he is referring to the already dead body, of course, but he is also, in the first person, prophetically referring to what will probably happen to himself for being the killing, stealing and kidnapping workforce of the Other.

Although the Other is responsible for what we may call the *killing, stealing and kidnapping work of the unconscious* – which may thus be also described as *discourse of the Other* – it is always the unconscious real worker who must carry out the work and pay for it. It is always the poor man who pays for 'the welfare of Acapulco' and for all the other wealthy words or signifiers that we will analyze in our Lacanian Discourse Analysis.

Words are the only thing that may be analyzed in a Lacanian Discourse Analysis that does not enable us to imagine what words mean, but only to explore the knowledge inherent in them. As I already said, we cannot go through this knowledge to discover either the questionable truth of the ideas or feelings that would motivate discourse, or the unquestionable truth of a subject who cannot impeccably and harmlessly express the discourse articulated by the Other. This truth is not our business. However, unlike other forms of discourse analysis, Lacanian Discourse Analysis will not close its eyes to the unanalyzable truth and its symptomatic irruption in the Other's discourse. Actually this irruption can be analyzed, but only in the way it affects the Other's discourse. The enterprise's narco-message, for example, is affected by the first

person of the narco-message 'this is what happened to me for stealing and kidnapping', meaningfully signed by 'The Enterprise', *as if the enterprise was what it really is*, a 'stealing and kidnapping' enterprise. All this clearly reveals the truth of the poor people killed for being just the workforce that does the work of 'The Enterprise' and the other drug cartels, which usually and logically appear as the only signatories, as they indeed are, as devices of the symbolic system, the masterminds of the crimes recognized in the narco-messages.

Challenges

The signatories of narco-messages are not the real subjects who wrote them, but masterminds, master-signifiers that symbolically represent the real subjects and master them, and may be the name of their cartel, such as 'The Enterprise', 'The Family' or 'The Line'. These names are nothing but names, granted, but it is *in the name of* them that people are killed. To be more specific, people are killed for the symbolic value of the names, which may be the value of entrepreneurial money, familiar fraternity or anything else. This value must be known through my Lacanian Discourse Analysis; but it can only be known when the analyzed words make sense for me, when I have the knowledge inherent in them, or, to put it more correctly, when this knowledge *has me*, when I am possessed by it, or alienated in it (Foucault, 1969). Because of this alienation, it is the Other, the transindividual knowledge, which reflexively analyzes itself through my Lacanian Discourse Analysis. Therefore, what I call 'my analysis' is made by the symbolic system of culture, by the signifying structure of language, but always from the unique viewpoint of my position in the structure.

In the structure, I am a part, and I can only make a partial analysis made by the structure. I cannot get outside of the structure in order to analyze it externally; actually, there is not an outside of the structure of language. Hence, there is no place for a metalanguage. There is no Other of the Other. This is why Lacanian Discourse Analysis can only be made by the Other. This is also why Lacanian Discourse Analysis is nothing but another partial, tendentious, ideological discourse of the Other.

My analytical discourse can only be articulated by the structure, and only through my viewpoint in the structure, which is never neutral, as it is always implicated in the structure. But how can we justify such an analysis that gives up the pretension to neutrality and cynically presents itself as implicated in the structure, as a partial, tendentious and ideological discourse of the Other? How can we distinguish our analyzing discourse from the analyzed discourse when both are articulated by the same system? How can we carry out analytical work without doing the work of the system and without thus being in complicity?

It seems to me that Lacanian Discourse Analysis can only avoid complicity with the system by trying to reveal its failures, the gaps and inconsistencies in the system's knowledge, not for the purpose of repairing or curing them, of course, but rather in order to demonstrate how the normal knowledge does not fit

the abnormal truth of the subject alienated in it, how the particularity of this subject resists the supposed universality of the system's knowledge and how the articulating work of the system is symptomatically disrupted by its enunciating workforce. In so doing, we will not be in complicity with knowledge, but we will rather take up the position of its truth, which is the truth of the subject exploited by knowledge, the dissident truth whose concealment justifies hegemonic knowledge, an unknowable truth that necessarily refuses to go along with existing knowledge. However, as this truth refuses to go along with knowledge, it cannot be shared through the analyzable knowledge inherent in discourse. So it cannot be analyzed in discourse. It is an un-analyzable truth for us precisely because it is an unknowable truth for the system. The fact remains that it disrupts the system's knowledge, and this disruption offers a possibility of analysis.

Although Lacanian Discourse Analysis does not serve to analyze the disruptive truth, it can be effectively used to analyze the event of disruption of knowledge, as this knowledge is inherent in discourse, and its disruption is a disruption of discourse. Actually, when we Lacanianly conceive the human universe as a symbolic sphere of discourse, we must also conceive the discursive disruption not only as *an event*, but as *the event*, the event as is, the event by definition. When we consider that this event is inseparable from a necessarily imperfect enunciation by a particular subject, we must also conclude that *the disruption of discourse is inseparable from its irruption*. We thus come to *the definition of the event as the analyzable disruptive irruption of discourse*. This conception is based on two ideas that must be justified.

1 *An event is always an analyzable irruption of discourse*. Without an irruption of discourse, there cannot be any event. An event, such as the event of 'what happens' to a man 'for presenting himself as La Familia', is inseparable from the discourse we may analyze, from the words of the narco-message, from the exteriority of language. This exteriority opens the only environment where we can find, beyond 'natural situations' with 'facts', the 'historical situations' that Badiou (1988) conceives as conditions of the 'event' (pp. 193–204). If the Badiouian event 'concentrates the historicity of the situation' (p. 199), this 'historicity', for Lacan (1966), depends on the 'structure' of 'language' (p. 4). It is language that performs the 'historicisation' that creates and recreates 'the event' (Lacan, 1953: 258–259). Therefore Bakhtin (1924: 55–56) was right when he insisted that the event is not 'beyond words', but always potentially 'expressible' through language. Lacan (1953: 258–259) radicalizes this idea and insists on the fact that 'the event' always appears in 'the scene' of language. This is why this scene of language intrinsically 'fits' the 'event' (Cf. Bakhtin, 1924: 56). After all, the event emerges in language, and language embraces the event. The 'event', as Deleuze (1969) has already noticed, 'essentially belongs to language' (p. 34). Outside the language of the narco-message, there is only the wound, the bullet and the flesh, the 'mix' of the two 'bodies'

(pp. 14–15). All this *is not* the event, it is not 'what happens' to the man who 'presents himself as La Familia', but the real correlate, *the result of what happens* and not *what happens*, the *mark of the event* and not the event itself. The event itself is what happens to the man and not the man himself or the bullet in his body. The event does not lie in the body of the man, but in what happened to it, in the narco-message written through it, in the analyzable discourse, in the signifier. Lacan (1959–60/1986) rightly remarks that 'the event' is 'introduced into the world' by 'the signifier' (01/07/60: 308). Actually this *introduction of the event* is the *event itself*. The event is the particular discourse that involves the event. Simultaneously, however, the event is an element of this discourse. Just as in the 'event's *mathème*' of Badiou (1988), the 'event of the multiplicity' of a particular discourse is 'composed' of 'the elements of it', but also of 'itself' as that which is involved by discourse (p. 200). The event of the abovementioned narco-message thus consists of all the elements of the narco-message, including the element of 'what happens', but 'what happens' reflexively refers to the event of irruption of the narco-message with all its elements. As *all the elements* and *only one of these elements*, the discursive irruption is *what happens*, 'the event itself', the 'discursive event' (Guilhaumou, 2006: 124), which Foucault (1968, 1969) describes as the 'historical irruption' of 'discourse' (1968: 706; 1969: 43).

2 *The analyzable irruption of discourse is an event because it always entails a disruption of discourse*. We may agree with Foucault (1969) when he finds an 'event' in the 'historical irruption' of any 'statement' (p. 43). We may also agree with Bakhtin (1924) when he looks for 'the event' in any 'full word' (p. 57). In our Lacanian perspective, the 'enunciation' of a 'full speech' is an event of *historical irruption of discourse* because it always entails a *disruption of discourse with historical implications* (Lacan, 1953: 254). Discourse, with its inherent knowledge, is always disrupted by its irruption, as this irruption is itself altered by the historical place of irruption, the place of a singularity, which never perfectly fits that which is discursively known of it in universal terms. Discursive knowledge tries to naturalize, stabilize and normalize that which happens in the historical place, but this 'place' of the 'historical', as Badiou (1988) has noticed, is essentially 'the place' of 'the ab-normal, the instable, the anti-natural' (p. 193). All this alters the irruption of a discursive knowledge that cannot naturalize, stabilize and normalize the truth. This is why, for Bakhtin (1924), 'the truth' (*pravda*) escapes the supposedly inescapable 'theoretical knowledge' (pp. 24–52). It is impossible to know a truth that only appears through the flaws, gaps and insufficiencies, in the continually flawed appearance of a discourse that pretends to know everything. So, in a sense, each *enunciation of this discourse of universalistic knowledge* is a *singular event of denunciation of this universalism of knowledge*. The universe of possibilities of knowledge is essentially questioned by each event of discursive manifestation of the impossible

> knowledge of the truth. Take, for instance, the manifestation of *a correlation between the death of poor people and the welfare that is offered by The Enterprise to a wealthy city*. It is not possible to know such a thing in The Enterprise's capitalist universe of possibilities of knowledge, so it is also impossible to manifest it. Its manifestation is an event because it is an impossible manifestation. It is an impossibility that becomes a new possibility through its own discursive irruption. Therefore this irruption is an event in the Badiouan sense of the word, as that which 'creates a possibility' that was still impossible, unknowable, 'invisible' and 'unthinkable' in the universe of possibilities deployed by the knowledge of discourse (Tarby and Badiou, 2010: 19–20).

What I am presenting here is an incipient and still debatable conception of the Badiouan event as a Deleuzian *event of language*, as a Foucaultian *discursive event*, as an *enunciation* of the Bakhtinian *full word* or the Lacanian *full speech*. All these analyzable modalities of irruption of discourse would involve a Badiouan event because they would entail a historically relevant disruption of the knowledge inherent in discourse, as we see from the disruption of the common-sense knowledge of 'welfare' in the above-mentioned narco-message, in which *welfare offered by The Enterprise to a wealthy city can be known through the death of the poor inhabitants of the city*. This new *possibility of knowledge* can *really be known* through the analysis of the discourse in which the common-sense knowledge of 'welfare' is disrupted by its truth. Thus, by analyzing this discourse, Lacanian Discourse Analysis may contribute to the 'truth process' that turns the new 'possibility' of knowledge into a dangerous 'reality' of knowledge (Badiou & Tarby, 2010: 19–24).

Lacanian Discourse Analysis may play a part in the *truth process*, but it cannot reach the *truth in process*. Everything leads us to believe, in fact, that this 'truth' of 'the act' cannot be analyzed 'from outside' by the analyst *of* discourse, but only 'from inside' by 'the participant' *in* discourse, by the subject of the act, by the killer who imperfectly expresses that which is articulated by knowledge, who cannot express 'the object' of *welfare* without symptomatically expressing the particular historical truth of his own pathological 'responsible' and 'participating' relationship with it (Cf. Bakhtin, 1924: 39, 52–53). This *sick subject*, as sick as any other real subject, would then be the only one who may analyze the truth in question, for instance on a couch, as an *analysand*. This might be right, of course, but only insofar as we are attending to the individual symptomatic truth. It is nevertheless the case that this truth is not the only one. Besides that, there is 'the truth' of what Lacan (1974) describes as 'the only social symptom, namely, that each individual is a proletarian' (pp. 186–187).

Each individual is reduced to its enunciating workforce as labour force of the unconscious, of the Other, of language, of the symbolic system of culture (Pavón-Cuéllar, 2010a, 2010c). So the work carried out by the individuals will never be their work, but the work of the unconscious. The discourse expressed

by them will be the discourse articulated and possessed by the Other, *the discourse of the Other*, of the system in which they are alienated and exploited 'proletarians' who 'have no discourse of their own to make a social link' (Lacan, 1974: 187). This truth is universal and underlies every particular truth. Now, precisely if the particular truth can only be analyzed by the one concerned with it, the universal truth can be approached by someone else through a Lacanian Discourse Analysis.

Through a Lacanian Discourse Analysis, for instance, we can analyze how narco-messages are not related to the individuals who wrote them, but rather they concern their cartel and its enemies, the signifier with which they identify and the other signifiers. It is a discourse of what may be called the *Narc-Other*, a discourse by cartels and about cartels, a discourse of the cartels or at best of the members of them. These people exist only as members of the cartels, insofar as they belong to the cartel and incarnate its name. They only appear as the signifier, but they disappear behind this signifier that represents them for other signifiers, among them those signifiers of another cartel, in the discourse of the Narc-Other.

The discourse of the Other unfolds through the message, but the truth of the subject who expresses this discourse is always missing. This universal missing character of the truth is the only thing we may know of the truth when we use a Lacanian Discourse Analysis to analyze a discourse not expressed by ourselves. Of course, we may also know the disrupting consequences of the individual truth in transindividual knowledge, but these consequences do not elucidate anything about the truth, even if they paradoxically say a lot about the truth.

In Lacanian Discourse Analysis, we acknowledge the enigmatic intrinsic nature of the truth, which may be seen, for instance, in the narco-message 'send more stupid people to clean', signed by 'The Cleaner' (from *Milenio*, 16/11/08, http://www.milenio.com/). This 'Cleaner' is the one who cleans those who are 'sent to clean', cleaners like him, as if the cleaners were the dirtiness that has to be cleaned. But cleaners can only be cleaned by cleaners. Dirtiness can only be eliminated by dirtiness. This says a lot about the killers, their dirty structural position, their function as cleaning workforce of the system, and how they are intrinsically divided ($\$$) between this cleaning function (S_1) and the dirtiness of this function (S_2), which is, in fact, the dirtiness of 'the dirty one' to which is addressed another message from the same 'cleaner' (from *Milenio*, 16/11/08, http://www.milenio.com/).

What we just said is rather enigmatic and does not elucidate anything about the truth of the cleaner. This truth is rather concealed by the narco-message, which shows an ingredient of transindividual knowledge about cleanness and dirtiness that is only disrupted by the ambiguous divided position of the one who wrote the message, as cleanable dirtiness and cleaning workforce of knowledge. But does our cleaner *know* all this? We guess not. His work is to clean and not to know. Actually, just as class consciousness is dangerous for proletarians, knowledge seems to be dangerous for the cleaning labour force of the cartels. This may be illustrated by the unambiguous narco-message found with a body in a

black bag: 'this is what happened to me for knowing so much' (from *Milenio*, 06/11/09, http://www.milenio.com/).

Conclusion

Narco-messages are certainly not ordinary pieces of discourse. If I choose them to illustrate the limits, possibilities and challenges of Lacanian Discourse Analysis, it is because they disclose important discursive features pointed out by Lacan and often obscured or attenuated in everyday discourses. For instance, narco-messages show how bodies are exploited and alienated in the discourse articulated by the Other, and how they can only express the messages of this Other by being ill-treated, wounded, injured, tortured, mutilated and ultimately killed. Narco-messages also show how discourses are always discourses of the Other, and not of the people who express them, who are only represented in them by the signifiers of the Other, by 'The Enterprise' or 'La Familia', just as I am represented here by 'Lacan' or 'psychoanalysis'. In both cases, the real subject is concealed. He or she cannot appear because there is no place for him in the symbolic system. This is why he or she must be killed. Actually this is the only way he or she may be totally symbolized or integrated into the symbolic system of culture.

In the symbolic system, the only totally integrated people are dead people such as those whose bodies are included in the narco-messages. As for living people, they are not integrated, but segregated and persecuted. They are criminals because they are still alive. Like the hired assassins of the cartels, they can only be forgiven after their death, because their life is their crime. Life is always a crime unless it becomes the workforce of the system. Now, when it becomes this labour force of the Other, life is not life anymore. It is not anymore the clandestine, criminal, illegal 'drive', which is the only real form of life from our Lacanian point of view.

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CONCLUSION

Lacanian domains of practice and forms of event in analysis

Ian Parker and David Pavón-Cuéllar

The arrival in the academic world of Lacanian Discourse Analysis could itself one day be considered to have been an 'event'. For now, we cannot be sure, though our attempt to name this arrival and inscribe it in the circuits of scholarly production is with a view to what it might become. The chapters in this book mark this event, and our argument that it may one day be recognised as such, draws attention to a key feature of the event. That is, the event is something that takes form for us within the symbolic 'after the event' according to the logic of 'deferred action', '*après coup*', what Freud originally spoke about as '*Nachträglich*'. This is a peculiarly psychoanalytic conception of time, a looping back and activation of what has already occurred, and the investment of that first event with a significance that turns it into what it will later always already be. It changes the symbolic coordinates by which we once mapped where we thought an event would happen, and opens up a new field of meaning, so that our own experience of that event at the level of the imaginary is of it as necessarily having taken the form that it does now for us. That incorporation of what we will now recognise to be an event (in our imaginary apperception of it) into a legitimate framework (in our symbolic reproduction of it as something that must have been significant for it to figure as it will do) successfully tames, even we might say betrays, the event as an irruption of the real (of something hitherto incomprehensible, unthinkable).

The psychosocial turn

Before we can ask what 'event' this arrival is, we need to say something about the symbolic field into which it arrives. In particular, it is necessary to map a new field of academic research in which Lacanian Discourse Analysis is attempting to co-exist with, intervene in and trouble that which is called 'psychosocial'. The term 'psychosocial' covers a diverse range of research studies, and is used to signal a shift of emphasis to questions of subjectivity. Psychoanalysis has been a

key player in these debates, and researchers have adopted positions on a spectrum ranging from enthusiasm for what psychoanalysis can reveal to suspicion that a more wide-ranging 'affective turn' in the human sciences is being hijacked by one limited methodological perspective and the role of psychoanalysis as an ideological form overlooked.

'Psychosocial studies' emerged not so much as a unified body of theory, but rather as 'a name for a currently enlivened phrase invoked by people doing interesting work who might want to talk to each other' (Burman, 2008a: 377). It is now, we might say, a discourse. Debate over what the phrase actually means has sometimes led to heated exchanges between participants that then takes the form of what has been called 'excitable speech' (Baraitser, 2008: 423). This is the kind of speech that the feminist theorist Judith Butler (1997) describes as operating at the uneasy intersection of the body and language, between what we feel and what we say. There are those who think that there are feelings swilling around under language, and that psychoanalysis helps us to access those feelings if we notice them as 'countertransference' (e.g. Hollway & Jefferson, 2000: Froggett & Wengraf, 2004). Lacanians will recognise this field as underpinned by precisely the kind of psychoanalytic assumptions he broke from, and that is another reason why we take 'psychosocial' research seriously in this conclusion to our book. It is then understandable that criticisms of their own ideas should be described as 'hurtful' and that those who are being hurtful are being macho; this because historically it is men who have refused to acknowledge feelings and women who have experienced them (Hollway, 2008). This kind of link between different kinds of language – between feelings, feminism and psychoanalysis – illustrates how important these issues are.

We can notice here, and even feel it as we are drawn to take sides in the debate, how a discourse about feelings, feminist discourse and psychoanalytic discourse, each mobilise different universes of meaning and position those involved. It also illustrates how closely intermeshed are the 'psycho' and the 'social', even to the point where a hyphen between the two – as in 'psycho-social studies' – itself then becomes charged with significance (Hoggett, 2008; Hollway, 2008). This approach is problematic for researchers who want to find a way to redefine qualitative research into human subjectivity outside the grip of traditional psychology (e.g. Frosh, 2007), and defended by others who champion deeper and more efficient psychological investigation into pathology outside the grip of language (e.g. Jones, 2004).

There are at least three sources of the 'psychosocial' turn in research. One is to be found in the journey through a version of discourse analysis that was influenced by feminism, Marxism, post-structuralist writing and psychoanalysis (Henriques *et al.*, 1984). There has, in this tradition of discourse analysis, always been an attention to subjectivity as well as ideology (e.g. Wetherell & Potter, 1992; Burman *et al.*, 1996; Parker, 2002). Each theoretical framework utilized in that work is riven by disagreement, but these theoretical frameworks have been occluded as a shift of attention to what the researcher 'feels' came to

be set against the discourse-analytic aspect of this research tradition. It should be noted that this shift is very different from the 'affective turn' that adapts phenomenological or Deleuzian frameworks to explore emotion (e.g. Ahmed, 2004; Clough with Halley, 2007). There then appeared somewhat of a caricature of discourse analysis as having no room for individual subjectivity, and 'psychosocial' (or 'psycho-social') is now the new banner under which underlying feelings became valued again (Hollway, 2004). There are some key turning points that mark this journey in which there is an oscillation between a focus on discourse (discourse in interview texts supplemented with diary entries) and a focus on experience, on the feelings of the researcher (Hollway, 1989). Now, in hindsight, it is possible to appreciate the way an opposition was surreptitiously being set up between the two – between feelings and discourse – which has now been resolved in favour of a Kleinian attention to internal mental processes over Lacanian characterisations of discourse. There is, however, a question here about whether the terms of the debate should really have been organised around this kind of opposition, and a question about the importance of keeping alive the tension between different positions as themselves constructions (Frosh & Baraitser, 2008).

A second source of the psychosocial turn is the impact of the British 'Tavistock' tradition of social research in which versions of psychoanalysis were applied to organisations and other settings outside the clinic (Walkerdine, 2008). These proponents of versions of psychoanalysis reflecting the influence of the dominant Kleinian, Object-Relations and Ego-psychological strands of work in the English-speaking world often referred to their work as 'psychosocial' (Frosh & Baraitser, 2008). In England the very few academic departments that use the term psychosocial have usefully been allied with this tradition, and have tended to be rather evangelistic about it in the same measure as they have been hostile to Lacanian psychoanalysis (Rustin, 2008). This is background to reactive Lacanian 'often completely ill-informed critique of all other psychoanalytic positions' (Walkerdine, 2008: 342). It is important to recognise the positive contributions of these other psychoanalytic positions to radical research in psychology (e.g. Hoggett, 1996) and of other psychoanalytic currents to psychosocial research (e.g. Layton, 2004; Stopford, 2004). Lacanian fundamentalism can be just as dualistic – setting the individual subject against social context – as other forms of psychoanalysis (Sondergaard, 2002), just as problematic (Hook, 2008a), for that theory is sometimes used as a grid to provide what seems to be a complete and definitive interpretation. We have to draw the lesson here that every form of psychoanalytic explanation needs to be treated with care, treated as a construction with certain truth effects.

A third source of the psychosocial turn is the increasing psychologisation of contemporary culture, which leads to the reduction of the level of explanation for distress to individual trauma, and to the development of treatment that essentialises the descriptions that people give of their distress so that context is treated as operating on already-existing predisposing factors (Parker, 2007).

Here, 'psychosocial' intervention in 'man-made' disasters, for example, has gained currency to effectively wipe away social causes and intensify the search for psychological reasons (Burman, 2008b). Psychosocial research often proceeds in the same way, trying to cut through the contradictory accounts that people give of exploitative conditions and focusing attention on why they really feel what they feel (Hollway & Jefferson, 2005a, 2005b). There is a danger here of an attempt to circumvent the necessary ambiguity of accounts, speech acts produced in the particular context of a research interview (Spears, 2005). Those who insist on this contradictoriness of language against psychoanalytically-oriented 'psycho-social' interpretation have been trying to keep on the research agenda some of the key lessons of discourse analysis alongside an attention to subjectivity (Parker, 2004; Wetherell, 2005). There are more open and flexible scholars of psychoanalysis in the discursive tradition that have also been sidelined by the psycho-social psychoanalytic evangelists, and it should be pointed out that for these scholars Lacan also, with reason, threatens yet more mystification and reduction to internal psychological processes (Billig, 1999).

It is in this specific context that we can understand the turn to 'feelings' in psychosocial debate. Kleinians in the British tradition have made 'countertransference' a centrepiece of their work, and an attention to defensive processes such as 'projective identification' led them to believe that they really could sense the feelings of others and access their own emotional responses to those feelings (Bott Spillius, 1988). Once this step has been taken, the psychoanalyst, and then the researcher who takes the analyst as their model investigator, is taken out of the realm of the social altogether, and this tradition of work then becomes the site of intense psychologisation (Miller & Rose, 1988).

We can note a series of oppositions at work in these debates; between the inside and the outside of the individual subject (Frosh & Baraitser, 2008), between some notion of depth of interpretation and the supposed shallowness of linguistic ascription (Billig, 1999), between individual experience and the way it is described (Wetherell, 2005) and between truth and construction (Jefferson, 2008). These contraries have been supplemented by another series of oppositions that have served to intensify rather than question dominant binary ways of thinking about human subjectivity; between psyche and the society, an opposition retained by those who insist on hyphenating 'psycho-social' (Hollway, 2008), between Klein and Lacan, which has served to divide researchers into different camps and has obscured some more important analytic questions (Frosh & Baraitser, 2008) and between psychology and psychoanalysis, and here there has been an unfortunate reduction of 'psycho-social' research to what is going on inside individuals as opposed to a 'psychosocial' approach, which grounds who we are in our relations with others.

There is another option that we take in this book, which is to use psychoanalysis in a genuinely psychosocial way, that is, to use psychoanalysis as a method to open up a text in such a way as to draw attention to connections without simply replacing the text with psychoanalytic explanation as such. To claim that

we can unearth what an interviewee really felt, for example, and to characterise them as 'lying' or 'splitting' and suchlike, is to colonise a text instead of analysing it. Instead, we need to keep on the research agenda the way that the theoretical frame is also operating as a discourse, psychoanalytic discourse (Parker, 1997). The stakes are just as high if we are using Lacan as if we were using Klein, and so the analytic task is simultaneously a theoretical task of showing how something can be of the psyche as well as being of the social, that does not reduce one to the other, that is open to the 'event'.

The event and its recuperation

Have our contributors defined in a convincing, inclusive and exhaustive way what an 'event' is that satisfies you? We hope that they have not, and we must admit that this failure (and, in some cases, stubborn refusal) brings us some satisfaction, satisfaction that is at odds with the assumptions usually made about good quality academic research. Instead, the book has opened a field of definitions of 'event' that might be traced according to a logic appropriate to the clinic, to politics or to research. We might insist, for example, that an event must be something that 'explodes' and the logic of this reinterpretation of an event is that we would expect it to destroy something, perhaps with the hope of redeeming a hope for something better. We could hazard a guess that an event could be something that 'disrupts' a state of affairs, in which case we might also imagine that this has occurred in order that what has been disrupted might be reconfigured and reformed. Or we may say that an event is something that 'pierces' through something, so that the logic of that piercing is to enable us to evade the worst and navigate a symbolic field more efficiently. To assess the value of each of these different ways of interpreting 'event' (and these three possibilities are but suggestions to question the supposition that we should indeed exhaustively define an event) would be to launch us into moral evaluation of whether or not the event has been sufficient to its name. A 'piercing' of the symbolic order as event or 'act' in the clinic, for example, may be quite sufficient for an analysand, the 'disruption' of a political system may be welcomed by those in power if it facilitates reform and the 'explosion' that may seem the most radical option will be quite useless in the world of scholarly debate. You can juggle these possibilities, and more, across the different symbolic fields to appreciate even better the point we are making about the necessary indefinabilty of what counts as an 'event'. How you name it will turn it from being an event as such into an event named by you.

The arrival of Lacanian Discourse Analysis, if it is an event, is also, therefore, the arrival in the academic world of a name for what arrived; and that name, 'Lacanian Discourse Analysis', is the effacement rather than the representation of what it pretends to capture, a murder of the thing we anticipate will be argued through, time and again; those who are faithful to it (here, for example, our contributors to this book with their very different points of view) pit their various

theoretical readings of Lacan and of 'discourse' against each other and against the academic recuperation of this event into something that becomes, perhaps, a mere methodological device. What might be the tell-tale signs that such recuperation has occurred, has already, perhaps, begun to occur?

First, that Lacan is domesticated so that his work is reduced to the frame of 'discourse analysis' as it has taken form in a lineage (stretching back, some would say, to Zellig Harris). When that is the case, we will find Lacan as the site of many kinds of disruption in the field of psychoanalysis, social theory and culture turned into someone who assists in the intuitive reflexive work of discourse analysis as, in the broadest definition of it that it is possible to give (and one which smoothes over the contradictory histories of it), a 'sensitivity to language'. That recuperation would effectively cover over one of the most important points reiterated by our contributors again and again from their different vantage points, that Lacanian Discourse Analysis could be characterised, instead, as *insensitivity* to language; that is, Lacanian Discourse Analysis does not 'interpret' in such a way as to elaborate an understanding of a text, to reassure the reader that everything there can be put back in place. Rather, our contributors have emphasised that we attend to what breaks through, what emerges in the gaps, that which disrupts what we expected to find. Our reading must be insensitive to the flow of meaning so that we are ready to grasp those moments that are of the order of an 'event'.

Second, in a tell-tale sign that will be all but invisible to those who do not already participate in one of the distinctive niche markets of academic production that are institutionalised as 'disciplines' or sub-disciplines, we can expect recuperation to proceed through the marking of territory and even the formulation of 'criteria' by which only those who speak the same language will be able to speak of Lacan (and what is taken to be his understanding of an event). One way, for sure, that this recuperation will occur (and we can be more certain about this than about agreement that what we have here in this book will be an event) is through the reconstruction of the disciplinary boundaries that this book, for a moment, disturbed. We noted in the introduction to the book that discourse analysis takes different forms, and it writes its own history in various academic disciplines in such a way as to prescribe what can and cannot be said. It sets in place a trajectory for the discipline in each separate realm (a canon, specific reference points, a constellation of conferences and journals) of the symbolic. The murder of the thing that was the event through the seizure of the name 'Lacanian Discourse Analysis' and a definition of it acceptable to a particular discipline would in this way betray what has already been achieved in this book as the production of an authentic interdisciplinary space that brings into the world something new; 'To do something interdisciplinary it's not enough to choose a "subject" (a theme) and gather around it two or three sciences. Interdisciplinarity consists in creating an object that belongs to no one' (Barthes, 1986: 71).

Third in our series of tell-tale signs that recuperation of what we marked as the site of an event in this book will have occurred is the territorialisation of

fields of activity that are broader in scope than academic disciplines but no less efficiently segregated in a world that treats an 'event' as a threat to business as usual, and anxiously, repetitively turns events into 'themes' or new subjects that can be explored and interpreted with sensitivity, turned from something of the real into an object of significance and experience (once again into something of the symbolic and the imaginary). Notice the claim made by many of our contributors (an important claim with which we concur by the way) that Lacan's work was formulated around the domain of the clinic. It was not an 'interpretation' of language, nor was it the development of a new social theory or political programme. With respect to what we call 'event' in this book, Lacan was concerned with the 'act' of an analysand in the psychoanalytic clinic; an 'act' that ranged from reflexive human activity that is usually obscured in a day-to-day routine, to the 'act' that surprises the analysand themselves as they disturb the taken-for-granted coordinates of their lives, to the 'act' that may turn an analysand into someone who clarifies their desire and assumes the position of analyst. There is a link with politics here – an 'act' will break and establish different social links – and with research, for the 'interpretation' of the world becomes, in the 'act', something that is very different, that is, it becomes something that also changes the world. The clinical psychoanalytic reference points for our discussion of 'event' then have implications for the way we think about the place of the clinic in relation to politics and academic research. Talk of an 'event' in Lacanian terms is an 'event' that disturbs the boundaries between those realms, and recuperation proceeds through the sealing off of each realm from the other.

Clinical psychoanalysis, theories and cases

We need to beware of a simple appropriation of Lacan by academic researchers of whatever discipline. That would have the effect of closing down what may be understood in and by his work, and closing down its character as event. Worse, it would then threaten to confine it to the contours of actually existing research and its preoccupation with clearly defined and replicable methods. For this reason, warnings about the perils of certain strategies for reading Lacan – the appeal to psychoanalytic theory as such, the presentation of an alternative psychology and the extraction of linguistic techniques – are as important as the emphasis on the different components that need to be taken seriously; Lacan's own writing, clinical work in the Lacanian tradition, cultural analysis linked to the Lacanian clinical tradition, and attention to the specificity of each case when analysis is conducted. There is a paradox in this translation of ideas of Lacanian clinical practice to the realm of critical readings of texts, a little caveat that any good deconstructionist will quickly recognise as the point at which the theoretical work carried out in this conclusion can be picked at so as to unravel the whole thing; when a discourse analyst interprets a written text using Lacan's work they are, in effect, more like an analysand than an analyst, but an analysand faced with chains of signifiers in a text that are not their own.

There is another lesson from clinical psychoanalysis here. Lacanians, like other psychoanalysts, refer to 'cases', but know that there is really no such thing as a 'case' at all. Analysis is conducted 'one by one', and the discourse of the analyst is underpinned by a theoretical account of what the parameters might be by which to interpret what is going on, an account that must always be ready to mutate in the face of each new case. This is why every good description of a 'case' is also an elaboration of theory. The same applies to Lacanian approaches to discourse. Each reading of Lacan and of Lacanian writing about discourse will need to be a rewriting of their reading when it encounters each new text.

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