Bruce Fink

Against Understanding

Volume 1

Commentary and Critique in a Lacanian Key

ROUTLEDGE

AGAINST UNDERSTANDING, VOLUME 1

Against Understanding, Volume 1 explores how the process of understanding (which can be seen to be part and parcel of the Lacanian dimension of the imaginary) reduces the unfamiliar to the familiar, transforms the radically other into the same, and renders practitioners deaf to what is actually being said in the analytic setting. Running counter to the received view in virtually all of contemporary psychotherapy and psychoanalysis, Bruce Fink argues that the current obsession with understanding—on the patient's part as well as on the clinician's—is excessive insofar as the most essential aim of psychoanalytic treatment is *change*.

Using numerous case studies and clinical vignettes, Fink illustrates that the ability of clinicians to detect the unconscious through slips of the tongue, slurred speech, mixed metaphors, and other instances of "misspeaking" is compromised by an emphasis on understanding the why and wherefore of patients' symptoms and behavior patterns. He shows that the dogged search for conscious knowledge about those symptoms and patterns, by patients and practitioners alike, often thwarts rather than fosters change, which requires ongoing access to the unconscious and extensive work with it.

In this first part of a two-volume collection of papers, many of which have never before appeared in print, Bruce Fink provides ample evidence of the curative powers of speech that operate without the need for any sort of explicit, articulated knowledge. *Against Understanding, Volume 1* brings Lacanian theory alive in a way that is unique, demonstrating the therapeutic force of a technique that relies far more on the virtues of speech in the analytic setting than on a conscious realization about anything whatsoever on patients' parts. This volume will be of interest to psychoanalysts, psychotherapists, psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, and counselors.

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TO HÉLOÏSE

The analyst must … know that his occupying the correct position is not contingent on the criterion that he understand or not understand.

It is not absolutely essential that he understand. I would even say that, up to a certain point, his lack of comprehension can be preferable to an overly great confidence in his understanding. In other words, he must always call into question what he understands and remind himself that what he is trying to attain is precisely what in theory he does not understand. It is certainly only insofar as he knows what desire is, but does not know what the particular subject with whom he is engaged in the analytic adventure desires, that he is well situated to contain within himself the object of that desire.

—Lacan, 2001a, p. 234

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PREFACE

Psychoanalysis is a field in which we can afford neither to understand nor not to. Thinking too quickly that we understand leads us to misunderstand our patients, whereas manifesting a total lack of understanding gives the impression that we are dense, slow on the uptake, or—worse still—not really listening.

Believing we have understood what is going on for our patients inclines us to overlook the almost fractal nature of human experience, in which ever-finer smaller substructures lurk behind larger, more visible ones. But if we are convinced we have grasped absolutely nothing, we will fail to highlight potentially crucial statements and intervene at significant moments in the treatment.

Psychoanalysts must thus muddle through in a murky, middle ground. We must constantly keep in check the all-too-human tendency to jump to conclusions—to think, or indeed wish, we have comprehended the crux of a theoretical or clinical problem—while constructing a flexible theoretical and clinical model that can guide our thinking and praxis without freezing it into a routinized, manualized treatment protocol.

Such is, I would suggest, the challenge facing psychoanalysts—to navigate between the Charybdis of believing we have grasped everything and the Scylla of being convinced we have grasped nothing. But much the same challenge faces analysands, the people who are undergoing psychoanalysis with us. Like us, they are ineluctably inclined to jump to conclusions, hoping to find quick and easy answers that will bring change and provide relief, but they are forced to realize in the course of analytic treatment that things are virtually always far more complicated than they initially seem. Life is multileveled and virtually every facet of it is overdetermined.

Can analysands be content with inescapably partial, provisional solutions? Will they come to the point of accepting that some formulations may just have to be deemed good enough at certain points in time?

The Satisfaction Understanding Brings

These questions point to a rather curious feature of understanding: understanding satisfies. This may sound appealing on the face of it, but in psychoanalysis we are required to ask: Who or what does it satisfy? If it satisfies the analysand's ego, we must be suspicious of the understanding in question, as it is likely to present a flattering picture of the self—in other words, the understanding arrived at is all too convenient. And if it satisfies the analyst, is it because it gives the analyst a gratifying sense of accomplishment, intelligence, or even mastery? If so, its importance must be impugned, it being preferable for the analyst to be surprised or taken off guard by a patient's enunciations. Better for the analyst to marvel at the ever-infinite variety of human experience and articulation, and to delight in the unexpected character of the patient's formulations.

The larger question is whether understanding ever satisfies anything other than the ego, ever gratifies us in any other way than by allowing us to believe we are the kind of people who can understand, the kind of people who are understanding (in common parlance, it gives us an "ego boost," bolstering our "self-esteem"). Is the unconscious—or what Lacan somewhat paradoxically calls "the subject of the unconscious"—satisfied by understanding?

Basing our response on Freud's work and clinical experience, it would seem far more likely that the

unconscious is gratified by puns, plays on words, and general linguistic silliness than by grammatically and logically well-formed statements. This would explain the laughter provoked when a *perilous* situation in an analysand's dream evokes a former lover named Perry, when a microphone in a dream evokes a neighbor named Mike, and when the analyst proffers—to a patient who had a great deal of tsuris around toilet training and who is complaining that he feels he has nothing to give when he writes or teaches—"You don't know shit."

The unconscious seems to delight far more in nonsense than in sense, to rejoice in enigmas, rebuses, and condensations rather than in comprehensible propositions.

If the goal of psychoanalysis were to satisfy, we would inevitably have to raise the question: Which facet of the person are we to satisfy, the ego or the unconscious? To satisfy the ego in its wish to see itself as master in its own home, to believe itself to have unraveled all secrets and overcome all obstacles in its way, is to short-circuit the treatment. It leads to precipitated solutions that often work for a limited time only, requiring the analysand to return to treatment (Freud [1963a] refers to these as cures that set in too early).[1]

Although we must encourage analysands to revel in the unconscious—instead of pushing it away and not wanting to pay it any heed—to derive gratification from its playful antics, were we never to go beyond the exploration of its mazelike pathways and harebrained lucubrations, we would seem (unlike Maimonides) to leave analysands in a state of continual perplexity without any guide.

Making Do without the Satisfactions of Understanding

Hence we are led to propose interpretations—and, naturally, it is better that we do so *after* we have gotten to know the analysand fairly well rather than right off the bat as many clinicians do to such clearly deleterious effect—even as we realize full well they are only partial and provisional. Why are they no more than partial and provisional? Because we never have all of the facts at our disposal. We never know every facet of the analysand's past—early childhood experiences, family configuration, family members' names, stories overheard, and events witnessed—not even after many years of analytic work at a frequency of several sessions a week.

I never cease to be amazed that, after five to ten years of very regular sessions, an analysand can still come out with expressions used or stories told by family members that seem intimately related to his or her greatest sources of suffering in life and yet that I have never heard before. These are often preceded by a comment like, "I just remembered something I've never told you," "I can't believe I never mentioned this," "I must've told you this before," or "I don't know why I never mentioned this before," and immediately strike the analysand as terribly germane to things we *have* talked about. It is as if we had never managed to say exactly the right word or set of words, as if I had never managed to ask precisely the right question so that this particular memory—something the analysand says he or she has never forgotten but simply has not thought about in ages or at least has never before thought about during a session—would be brought back to mind (as if one specific neuron had to fire for this to happen and we had somehow always skirted it). Such memories of painful, confusing, or striking events from the past are often key to unraveling symptoms and yet take years to get to.

This does not stop us from trying to make headway with those symptoms, and indeed it is often in response to our interpretations that analysands recall such events from the past—whether by way of confirmation or by way of refutation of what we have managed to put together (whether by deduction, induction, abduction, or dialectical reversal).[2] Interpretations that miss the mark are important because they spark such memories perhaps as frequently as interpretations that seem to be on target; the latter are

often, in fact, later viewed by the analysand as not quite so on target as they at first seemed, shedding light on only part of the picture. Thus we must realize that our interpretations help move the work along even when their truth-value is more than a little questionable.[3]

And given that new information often comes out even ten years into an analysis (for example, a suddenly remembered childhood experience that clarifies one of the analysand's longstanding symptoms), can we claim absolute truth value for *any* interpretation whatsoever made in the course of psychoanalytic practice?

That would be quite a stretch.

But perhaps we have no need for absolute truth value and can make do just fine without it. Indeed, perhaps we are better off without it, since it fosters the illusion of mastery!

What Is Understanding Good For?

Absolute truth value and the "perfect understanding" it supposedly brings with it are often thought to be the way out of the maze, the way beyond the conundrum posed by the infinite complexity of life. But is understanding the guide we need?

The overriding question, to my mind, is this: Has understanding ever helped anyone get better? Has supposedly understanding what is going on in one's love life, for example, ever stopped anyone from repeating the same unfortunate patterns or from getting into the same unbearable sorts of relationships?

I highly doubt it. Asked why he or she has allowed a certain style of relationship to develop yet again with a new partner, despite being aware of what the likely outcome would be the analysand is often led to reply, "Yes, *I know perfectly well* what is happening, but I can't help myself."

Which leads us to postulate that felicitous, curative effects can stem from interpretations that bring little if anything by way of understanding in their wake. The satisfaction they bring the analysand is *not* the kind supplied by understanding but by change—that is, by a new way of being and acting in the world. The proof is in the pudding: daily psychoanalytic practice in a Lacanian key provides myriad examples of such providential effects, effects that lead the analysand to feel "happy to be alive" (Lacan, 1976, p. 15). A sizable selection of them are described and elaborated on in the present two-volume compilation. May they bring the reader a *different* satisfaction than that of understanding.

Collection

Each of the papers reprinted or published for the first time here, spanning approximately 20 years, is an exploration of a particular topic or case, and each arrives at one or more limited, conditional conclusions, and proposes more or less tentative hypotheses about analysands' speech in sessions or analysts' writings. Yet each paper generally raises far more questions than it attempts to answer, and leaves many more questions open than it in any way closes, even provisionally.

Can I honestly maintain that I never make it sound like I really know what I am talking about in these papers? Certainly not. There have been times, especially regarding specific topics, where I no doubt came across as quite—and indeed overly—sure of myself. Nevertheless, I have, since the 1970s, remained a fan of Paul Feyerabend—to whom I tip my hat with the title of these volumes, and who taught me to be exceedingly skeptical about so-called scientific method—and a fan of Thomas Kuhn, who made me realize that a model in a particular discipline is anything but a truth for all times, Freud's and Lacan's successive models being significant cases in point.

I hope that the papers included here demonstrate that I have never completely lost sight of these oh-so-precious lessons.

About two-thirds of the articles included in these two volumes are appearing in print for the first time. Case presentations that might have logically appeared in books that published the proceedings of the conferences where I presented them—such as *Anxiety, the Affect of the Real* (Paris: École de Psychanalyse des Forums du Champ Lacanien, 2009) and *Lacan and Addiction: An Anthology* (London: Karnac, 2011)—were withheld at the time those volumes were being prepared since the cases were still ongoing. Other cases were discussed in small seminars or workgroups and, if the material worked up was ever published, it was in obscure places.

I continue to feel that students of psychoanalysis learn the most about the theory when it is seen in the context of practice, and yet there are often ethical and technical reasons for not presenting case material that directly portrays practice, even when it might seem supremely germane. Publication must generally be delayed and much material simply cannot be included. All identifying information has, naturally, been removed from the cases presented here, such that only the analysand him- or herself could know who the paper concerns.

I have not hesitated to correct here certain factual errors in my previously published papers, whether they involved matters of translation into which I have looked more closely in the meantime (I have lived in France for a total of almost five more years off and on since I wrote many of these papers, and have continued to translate Lacan's work)[4] or details of patients' histories that came to light after I wrote up the cases to present to groups of colleagues. I would not necessarily articulate certain ideas in these papers today exactly as I did at the time, but I have allowed the vast majority of them to stand much as they appeared in print or were given at conferences between 1991 and 2012, rather than trying to recast every formulation in the mold of my current thinking.

The style, structure, and tone of these papers vary considerably, reflecting both the audiences to which they were addressed—the constraints imposed by the journals to which they were submitted were sometimes considerable—and my own situation as someone striving to present Lacan's work at a particular moment in time. Lacan's reception in English-speaking circles has, to be sure, changed considerably since 1991!

What may at times appear to the reader as short shrift given in certain papers to a particular case or topic may reflect, not a lack of interest in it on my part, but rather the time slots allotted at many conferences, which often did not exceed 20 or 30 minutes.

Several older papers have been significantly reworked here for style and readability (for example, "Reading *Hamlet* with Lacan" and "Marilyn Monroe and Modern-Day Hysteria") and references have been updated throughout. Hence, the reader should not be surprised to find presentations given in the 1990s that refer to *Écrits: The First Complete Edition in English* (New York & London: W. W. Norton & Co., 2006); note that all page references to that work are to the French pagination included in the margins of the English edition.

Notes

1 Freud says, "We look upon successes that set in too soon as obstacles rather than as a help in the work of analysis" (1963a, p. 453).

2 To be effective clinicians, analysts need to hone their rhetorical skills and become proficient dialecticians. In particular, they need to learn to quickly turn many of the analysand's statements on their head. For example, when the analysand asserts that something is his biggest problem, we often must entertain the idea that it is his greatest jouissance; when he claims that he feels guilty for something, we must consider that this is precisely what he wants to do or enjoys most; when he complains of being depressed, we must wonder whether he isn't in fact incredibly angry; and so on. The very fact that an analysand vehemently affirms something should often tip us off that it is the

exact opposite that we should suspect. And, as Lacan (2007, p. 127) says, "Truth shows itself in an alternation of things that are strictly opposed to each other and that have to be made to go around each other": whereas the analysand may claim in one session to love his mother wholeheartedly and in another to just as passionately hate her, the dialectical process of analysis is such that no one statement can serve as a final stopping point, and we proceed through a series of dialectical reversals that never necessarily lead to any form of synthesis.

3 This should not be construed to imply that we are thus justified in making wild interpretations in every session just to get things moving (see Fink, 2007, Chapter 5). See, in this connection, Lacan's comments on Freud's interpretations in the case of the Rat Man (Lacan, 2006a, pp. 302–303).

4 Soon to appear are the following volumes: *The Triumph of Religion, On the Names-of-the-Father*, and *The Seminar, Book VIII: Transference* (New York & London: Polity Press, forthcoming).

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"Lacanian Clinical Practice: From the Imaginary to the Symbolic" was originally published in *The Psychoanalytic Review*, 92/4 (August 2005): 553–79, and is reprinted with the kind permission of the Guilford Press.

"Reading *Hamlet* with Lacan" appeared in an earlier version in *Lacan, Politics, Aesthetics*, eds. Richard Feldstein and Willy Apollon (Albany: SUNY Press, 1996), pp. 181–98, and is reprinted with the kind permission of SUNY Press.

"A Psychoanalytic Ethics of Translation" was published in a special issue of *CR: The New Centennial Review* devoted to translation theory, and is reprinted with the kind permission of Michigan State University Press.

"On Translating *Écrits: A Selection*" originally appeared as "At the Occasion of the New Translation of *Écrits: A Selection* (D. Noam Warner interviews Bruce Fink)" in the *Journal for Lacanian Studies,* 1/1 (2003): 129–48, and is reprinted with the kind permission of Karnac Books.

"Both/And Logic in a Case of Fetishism" was published, under the title "The Use of Lacanian Psychoanalysis in a Case of Fetishism," in *Clinical Case Studies,* 2/1 (January 2003): 50–69, and is reprinted with the kind permission of Sage Publications.

"Psychoanalytic Approaches to Severe Pathology: A Lacanian Perspective" was previously published (in an earlier version) in 2001 in the newsletter of the International Federation for Psychoanalytic Education, now known as the International Forum for Psychoanalytic Education (IFPE), and is reprinted with the latter's kind permission.

"A Psychoanalyst Has to Speak like an Oracle" previously appeared in Polish in *Kronos: Metafizyka Kultura Religia* in 2010 (1): 52–59, and is reprinted with the kind permission of the journal's editors.

A version of "Lacan's Reception in the United States" appeared in *The Leuven Philosophy Newsletter*, Volume II, 2002, pp. 20–23, and is reprinted with the kind permission of the Institute of Philosophy at the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven.

COMMENTARY

On Clinical Practice

1

AGAINST UNDERSTANDING

Why Understanding Should Not Be Viewed as an Essential Aim of Psychoanalytic Treatment

The primary goal of psychoanalysis with neurotics is not understanding but change. Psychoanalysis with neurotics, and with many of the people classified in contemporary psychotherapeutic settings as borderline, is concerned with getting people to say things that have a major impact on their psychical economies. Should we, as clinicians, be unable to guide them to say such things on their own, psychoanalysis is about our saying things to them that have a life-changing effect on them. In the best of cases, there is considerable give and take involved: we work from each other's cues and the analyst or the analysand ends up saying something that has a serious effect on the latter, the authorship and meaning of which are often not entirely clear.

We need not affect analysands' understanding or self-understanding to change how they experience the world, life, relationships, and their own impulses. Our goal is not to alter the way an analysand observes and checks his own behavior or fantasy life, but rather, to give an example, to *radically transform* a fantasy a man has had for decades about a sexual act he finds repugnant—being forced to perform fellatio on a guy bigger and stronger than himself—such that it is no longer at the core of his thoughts during sex or masturbation, such that it no longer plagues him in everyday life, such that it disappears, never to return.

Our goal is not to try to directly change the way he thinks about this fantasy, so that he says to himself, "Oh, here comes that repulsive fantasy again—but I have to realize I have the fantasy because I'm fixated on what happened with a guy I knew in my neighborhood when I was a boy, so I must try to turn it off before it turns me on." The goal in psychoanalytic work from a Lacanian perspective is *not* to cultivate an observing ego in the analysand (see, for example, Lacan, 1967–68) so that he can self-consciously catch himself in the act of having this fantasy that has bothered him for dozens of years, driving him to drug and alcohol addiction; the goal is *not* to lead him to contextualize it for himself, consciously downplay its importance, or talk himself out of being excited by it. The goal is to get at its root by uncovering all the early childhood material holding it in place and everything that has since been grafted onto it—which involves dredging all this material up and *bringing it to speech*.

Speaking this material aloud to someone else is not the same as understanding why the fantasy came into being. Understanding may at times accompany change, but it is not a necessary prerequisite to change and may in many cases constitute an obstacle to it. Bringing things to speech with another person is what is essential. As Lacan (2001b, pp. 139–40) put it,

> It is false to think that an analysis comes to a successful dénouement because the analysand consciously realizes something. […] What is at stake is not, in fact, a move to consciousness but, rather, to speech […] and that speech must be heard by someone.[1]

For the analysand, exploring all this material may well be slow, painful, and anxiety-provoking at times,

but when it is done the fantasy itself often disappears altogether. This happened for the aforementioned analysand after about three years of analytic work; but as his forced fellatio fantasy had been plaguing him for about 25 years, almost driving him to suicide on several occasions, his relief was considerable.

We talked about countless other things during those three years, of course, but we nevertheless devoted considerable time to embarrassing, humiliating memories that the analysand was initially loath to discuss. Before coming to me, he had spent many years in psychotherapy and analysis with several different practitioners who presumably preferred to focus on the present rather than probe the past, and the fantasies that disturbed and depressed him had persisted until the day we discussed a dream he had.

In the dream, he was in a shower. When I asked him to associate to that shower, he recalled a childhood scene, one he had never mentioned to anyone before, that he had perhaps indeed repressed up until the moment we discussed it in session. As a preadolescent, he had once felt *forced* to perform fellatio on an older boy in the shower; this older boy had remained prominent in his fantasies for decades, and we had discussed him often, but the childhood scene had never before come to mind.

Up until that moment, the analysand had always believed that he was fundamentally perverted and flawed for having *wanted* to do such things at so young an age. (He felt the same way about other sexual activities from his past as well.) Suddenly remembering the childhood shower scene during the session, he recalled that he had *not* wanted to be there, that he had *not* wanted to do what he was asked to do by this older, stronger boy. Although he had initially been curious, he had ended up feeling constrained and physically compelled to do it. A week later the analysand triumphantly reported that what had happened with that boy had been "at the core of my sexual fantasies, and now it's not." Period.

Did the analysand realize that he had been thinking of himself as a heinous criminal for having engaged in this childhood sexual activity, and others as well, and perhaps *wanted* to see himself as a criminal rather than accepting the fact that it takes two to tango? Did he realize that he perhaps preferred to see himself as a criminal in *this* situation than in earlier Oedipal scenarios, displacing his sense of guilt from the latter to the former? To my mind, it is not terribly important whether he realized these things or not, or whether he associated our work on this particular childhood scene with our previous work on other childhood scenes. Understanding what happened, why it happened, and how it changed is all well and good, as long as it does not get in the way of the change itself. Understanding should not be taken as an end in itself since it can serve as a resistance. In the case of this analysand, what was important was that he stopped being plagued by events from his past, and felt that a great weight had been lifted from his shoulders; moreover, the energy he had been expending to carry that burden suddenly proved to be available for other life activities.

Analysands rarely arrive at such new libidinal positions without going through a good deal of discomfort and embarrassment at having to talk about sexual fantasies at great length and in excruciating detail—sometimes again and again and yet again—until interpretations (which need not in any way provide meaning, as we shall see) that are transformative are alighted upon. But there is only so much discomfort and embarrassment we can spare them while still getting them to say all the things they absolutely must say in order for movement to occur. *For it is only by putting all of this into words that lasting change can be brought about*. We must not delude ourselves into thinking that the analysand can make progress without ever fully exploring such formative childhood events and fantasies, for we would then be doing our analysands a fundamental disservice.

Lacanian-oriented work with neurotics—let me emphasize again that I am not talking here about work with psychotics (a different approach is, I believe, required with the latter; see Fink, 2007, Chapter 10)—is not about providing meaning but, rather, about *putting the unspeakable into words*. It is about saying

what has always seemed unsayable (see, for example, Lacan, 1971–72), unthinkable, unacceptable, and/or unimaginable to the analysand. It is about saying what the analysand has always preferred not to admit to herself; it is about saying all those thoughts and feelings that she wishes did not even exist.

Saying all those things is not the same as understanding them, whether for the analysand or the analyst. One has to say them, first and foremost. *Understanding*—if it ever comes at all—*can wait*. Analysis need not provide meaning: for meaning is something the ego recrystallizes around, the ego using meaning to construct a story about who one is and why one does what one does. In a word, meaning serves the purpose of *rationalization*, which keeps the unconscious at bay. An emphasis by the analyst on meaning and understanding often leads the analysand to become very adept at finding psychological explanations of her behavior but does little or nothing to foster change in the analysand, thoroughgoing change such that she is no longer even tempted to feel or act as she has in the past.

Part of the analyst's job is to take meaning apart, to undermine understanding by showing that far from explaining everything, it is always partial, not total, and leaves many things out. Just as the Zen master's work is premised on the notion that enlightenment does not stem from understanding but is, rather, a state of being, the psychoanalyst realizes that the analysand's search for understanding is part and parcel of the modern scientific subject's misguided search for *mastery* of nature and of himself through knowledge (see Lacan, 1988a, Chapter 1). The analytic project, by contrast, involves reminding analysands—although not explicitly—that they are *not* masters in their own homes and that part of psychic health is giving up the obsession with mastery.

Our goal is to explore the unconscious, to bring as much of the unconscious to speech as possible, to get the analysand to hear himself say aloud all of the unthinkable, unacceptable things he has thought, felt, and wished for. However, this does not allow the analysand to somehow *master* his unconscious; to believe that it does would be to fall in with the analysand's desire to be completely in control of everything he says and does, to never do anything he has not planned to do and never say anything he might later regret having said. Although psychoanalysis clearly aims at the establishment of a new relationship between the ego and the unconscious whereby the ego no longer rejects and represses so many things, it most certainly does not seek to make the unconscious into the slave of an egoic master!

Hence, there is no need for us to summarize the work that has been done in the course of the session at the end of each one, emphasizing the meaningful connections that *we* see in it. We are there to shake up meaning and to remind analysands, though not in so many words, that they do not know what they are saying because they are inhabited by different voices or discourses that are often competing and contradictory. Our work "is designed to make waves" (Lacan, 1976, p. 35), to rock the boat, and not to smooth things over.

I can, of course, think of many examples of crisis situations my neurotic analysands have experienced where I definitely did *not* want to make more waves than were already lapping up on the shores of their lives. I am obviously *not* saying that we should seek to rock the boat in every single session with every single neurotic; however, most of the time, when the work is proceeding apace, I find that there is no need to summarize or draw all the threads together. With the analysand I mentioned earlier, we spent some time discussing his associations to the dream, including his recollection of the childhood scene with the older boy in the shower, and I ended the session when he said, commenting on some stuff on the floor of the shower in the dream that he rubbed off with his foot and watched go down the drain, "It's as if all that were going down the drain—not just gone, better than gone, sparkly clean underneath."

I did not see any need to state the obvious, that the analysand's wish was that such scenes had never happened in the first place, that his childhood had been innocent of all sexual exploration and knowledge.

His feeling was that all of that was going down the drain, so why not just let it go down the drain? I ended the session there (practicing, as I do, the variable-length session), with no explanations of any kind, and that is precisely what happened: it all went down the drain.

In doing so—in a way fitting for one so obsessive, even if the "stuff" on the shower floor was whitish, not brown—it stirred things up and generated new material. Without our knowing that it was connected, one of the topics that the analysand broached in subsequent sessions was his staying home from school starting at some point as a boy, pretending to be ill. When I asked for more details about *when* he started to skip school, it turned out it was at the same time that he felt roped into sexual experiences with this older boy whom he would occasionally see at school. The analysand had been a straight-A student up until that time, but became a terrible student thereafter, eventually dropping out, getting a GED many years later, and struggling with college, which he could never finish.

The abrupt change in his relationship to school seemed to have been due, at least in part, to that childhood sexual experience; and his failure to complete his bachelor's for decades had clearly held him back professionally. Even in his forties he would often want to play hooky from work, feigning illness, without really knowing why. His attitude toward academic work had begun to change quite recently in the analysis, but it had remained fraught with anxiety. After our discussion of the shower scene it changed more rapidly, and he stopped dreading going to work and ceased investing copious quantities of energy in thinking of ways to avoid it or be excused from it.

What I find in most such cases is that the analysand sooner or later reports having more energy or, in response to a question I ask about work, replies that feeling ill or pretending to be ill and staying home ended some time ago, he knows not when. In this case, the analysand professed to have no idea when or why things changed, nor did he even seem interested in the questions. It seems to me that the onus is on those who wish to say that he must have *understood* something (something about his past or some connection between his past and his present) to clarify what this *understanding* could possibly consist of if the analysand himself can say nothing about it. I would suggest that the analysand need not know, that he need not be able to formulate why or when as I have just formulated them here, if I am correct in assuming he was loath to see the older boy at school and began finding reasons not to go. *There is no need for the analysand to know in order to get better*, in order to stop sabotaging his life and his career.[2]

The Imaginary Is Centered on Understanding Meaning

Having highlighted the fact that psychoanalysis must go beyond the Delphic injunction (often associated with Socrates) to "know thyself"—conscious, articulated knowledge often standing in the way of change instead of facilitating it, the Socratic project fostering the illusion of the possibility of egoic self-mastery—I would like to briefly explain Lacan's concepts of the imaginary and the symbolic. (Readers familiar with Lacan's somewhat different use of these concepts in the early 1950s and his still more complex use of these concepts in his late work are bound to be dissatisfied with my cursory treatment of them here, but I believe they cannot be done justice in the space of a paper like this, which has decidedly practical aims.)

Lacan draws a fundamental distinction between the imaginary and the symbolic—that is, between the imaginary register or dimension and the symbolic register or dimension. Working in the imaginary register—which in Lacan's vocabulary refers strictly to the realm of *images*, whether visual, tactile, or other, not to illusion as such—involves trying to understand other people as if they were just like myself, as if they thought the same way, or felt the same way about things, as I do. The imaginary involves looking at others and seeing myself, believing that others have the same motives, hang-ups, and anxieties I have. To the degree to which I consider their feelings at all, or consider them to have feelings, I think of them as just

like mine. If I see a small child my own age fall down, I may well cry. (This is, we might say, our default mode as human beings, it requiring a considerable effort on our part to attempt to begin to see things from another's point of view. Parents and teachers devote strenuous efforts to get kids to try to put themselves in the shoes of people who are different from themselves.) When I am operating in the imaginary register, I compare everything others say with my own way of thinking: I believe that it makes sense when it conforms to my own way of thinking and operating in the world, and I believe that it does not make sense when it fails to conform to my own way of thinking and operating in the world. I take my own beliefs and feelings as the standard with which I compare everything else, and view all differing beliefs and feelings as stupid, unreasonable, or frankly incomprehensible.

This way of stating it, of course, already assumes that I am able to recognize that others' thoughts and beliefs differ from my own, but the fact is that when I am operating in the imaginary register I am likely to overlook the difference between our views and simply see and hear what I expect to see and hear, not what is there to be seen and heard. In the imaginary register, I am focused on what I believe the other person is saying and trying to say as opposed to what the other is actually saying. Insofar as I operate in the imaginary register, I cannot hear a slip of the tongue, because I immediately correct it in my mind with what *I* believe the other meant to say. I do not really need to hear the other speak, because I think I already know what she is going to say in advance, believing that I already comprehend her point of view even before I hear it.

Everything the other says or does from then on is interpreted in light of the conclusions I have already drawn; all of the other's actions are interpreted as fitting into an inflexible frame, none of her statements or actions being able to call the frame itself into question. In such cases, my frame has solidified into an "established paradigm" and, as we know from the history of science (see, for example, Kuhn, 1962), well-established paradigms often lead us to overlook facts that do not seem to fit into those paradigms or to cast doubt on or try to invalidate purported facts that might call those paradigms into question.

The imaginary register brings with it a frame or paradigm of just this sort, a paradigm based on the analyst's own particular, personal way of seeing the world. It thus involves a kind of constitutional blindness and deafness: blindness to difference, to anything radically Other that does not fit into the analyst's preconceived frame, and deafness to ambiguities in speech or slips of the tongue that impede comprehension, that might thwart the analyst's efforts to fit what she or he is hearing into a pre-existing framework of meaning.

In a word, the imaginary focuses on understanding, which virtually always involves jumping to conclusions about things we do not yet fully understand, if we ever do (and I will argue that we don't); and it focuses on meaning, which virtually always involves predigested, prefabricated meanings that derive from our own view of the world and not from our analysands' views of the world. Understanding is, in most cases, the endeavor to reduce something to what we already know (or think we already know),[3] an endeavor that in psychoanalysis we must refuse to the best of our ability. We would do well to begin with the premise that we most likely do not understand what our analysands are saying or what is going on for them, and to attempt to defer understanding for as long as possible, as Lacan (1993, Chapter 1; 2006a, p. 471) often enjoins us to.

Nothing is harder than to grasp the specificity of what an individual analysand means by any particular formulation, often no matter how simple that formulation seems to be. If we naively believe we know that an analysand means she had coitus when she says she "had sex" with someone, it suffices for us to ask, "Had sex?" or "What exactly do you mean by that?" to have our naive belief exploded when she responds, "You know, we kissed and cuddled," or, "You know, oral sex." The latter response naturally still keeps us in the dark as to who gave oral sex to whom, and even as to what the analysand really means

by "oral sex." If we assume we know what she means, we are likely to be wrong nine times out of ten. Language is thus a medium through which we can potentially convey things to each other, but is also a wall—a wall between us—for we never entirely speak each other's language (Lacan, 2006a, p. 282). We have to work very hard to understand each other, but tend to jump to conclusions, to try to fit what others are saying into preconceived frameworks. (We think it saves time, but it very often gets us nowhere.)

The Symbolic Is Centered on Nonmeaning and Nonsense

If nothing is harder than to grasp the specificity of what an analysand means by any particular formulation, at least we have the symbolic register to help us stop trying to understand so precipitously. When we operate in the symbolic register, we are able to hear what the analysand actually says and consider it on its own terms, not simply on our own terms. This requires *free-floating attention*, not *me-floating* or *me-centered attention*, which is the kind we are so used to paying in everyday life. We are trained all our lives to find meaning in what people say, to fill in the gaps in what people say and find meaning when there is really none or only nonsense to be found (from a strictly semantic or syntactic standpoint), and this is a very hard habit to break. This training makes us habitually deaf to the sounds people actually enunciate.

For the meaning we are trying to discern in everyday life has to do with what it means "for us." We are rarely concerned with what it means in itself—we are concerned primarily with its implications for our lives. For example, when our significant other says something elliptically or somewhat ambiguously, our major concern is usually with what it means about his or her feelings about us, his or her love for us or lack thereof. We are generally uninterested in the exact syntactical meaning, the exact semantic signification of his or her phraseology. What we want to know is how it is going to affect us: will it impact us, and if so, how?

When a new law or tax is introduced, we generally want to know whether it applies to us: will it restrict our activities? If so, in what way? Will it raise our taxes? If so, by how much? Our concerns with meaning in everyday life are very pragmatic: when we say we are looking for the *meaning* of what someone says, we generally want to know what it means to us, about us, for us, in relation to us. Our interest is not in *signification* per se but in impact, not in what it means in its own right, but in the effect it will have on us.

By contrast, when we operate in the symbolic register, we do not constantly consider what the statement means to us, about us, or for us, but rather primarily what it says about the speaking subject who has uttered it.[4] We try as hard as we can to hear exactly what the analysand is saying (the letter of her discourse), even as we pay attention to the meaning she is trying to convey. This allows us to note ambiguities in the analysand's speech that suggest she is saying one thing while ostensibly meaning another, or is saying two contradictory things at the same time. Attentive listening is of the utmost importance in psychoanalysis; if we are focused solely on understanding (listening in the imaginary register instead of the symbolic), we will let an awful lot slip by.

One of my analysands spoke at one point about certain indications in his life that he perhaps wanted to play a submissive role in relation to women. "Whenever," he said, "I encounter a woman who wants to be r … " The sound with which he broke off the sentence clearly sounded to me like an *r* so I said, "An *r* word?" He replied, "Yes, and the word after it was going to be *up*." Since I was familiar with this man's reluctance to say anything aloud that might not be regarded as politically correct, my unspoken guess from the outset was that he had been about to say "roughed up," but had thought this too coarse or aggressive.

I gave him some time to fill in the ellipsis, but when he did not do so, I asked, "Roughed up?" He

replied that this had indeed been going through his mind (naturally, not every surmise is quite so on target), but also "Reined, like for a horse." He vouchsafed that "reined up" (a syntagm I would never have anticipated) did not make a whole lot of sense, but that the two expressions had been competing for verbalization at the same time. Nonetheless, "reined" led to a number of associations I could never have predicted: the horseback riding he did in summer camp, the domination of animals, sexual positions, and so on.

Had I failed to hear and repeat the *r* that preceded the breaking off of the sentence, the analysand would likely have chosen a different word or expression altogether, saying something like, "Whenever I encounter a woman who does not want to be treated with courtesy," his concerns about roughing up a woman and the reining in of a woman's passions might well have been left by the wayside.

They might have surfaced later, in another context, but there does not seem to me to be any good reason to wait weeks or months, if not years, when the material is right there under our ears, as it were, just waiting to be heard and highlighted—"punctuated," as Lacan puts it (2006a, pp. 313–14). Indeed, in many instances, the analysand beats around the bush in various ways, dropping hints of one kind or another to the analyst, waiting to see if the analyst really and truly wants to hear about things the analysand himself considers unsavory. If the analyst never picks up on such hints, the analysand often drops the subject altogether. What could be worse than that?!

It is the job of analysts to listen in the symbolic register, in other words, to pay careful free-floating attention so that we hear what the analysand actually says, not just what she intended to say or what we believe she meant to convey. For *what we believe she meant to convey is*, after all, *always a projection on our part*, and projection is part and parcel of the imaginary register. Just as the analysand may believe she knows precisely what we meant despite our deliberately having made a polyvalent interpretation (one that syntactically and/or contextually allows for several different readings), projecting onto us and our speech a single intended meaning, we too are projecting whenever we imagine we know what she meant. We form images of ourselves as the kind of people who are capable of performing the difficult task of understanding others. However, strictly speaking, all we can know is what was actually said and that there were likely to be competing intentionalities that led to the words actually uttered, all speech essentially constituting a compromise formation of sorts.[5]

One of the first things we notice when we pay careful free-floating attention is that a great many people rarely finish their sentences—not just in analysis, but even in everyday life. It is very important to get them to finish their sentences in analysis at least! Why do they break them off in the first place? Very often it is because they do not want to put into words what it was they were thinking. But this is precisely what we are trying to get them to do: put into words, bring to speech, as many of the things that go through their hearts and minds as possible.

We know that neurotic analysands are reluctant to put many of the things that they feel and think into words, and we commonly refer to that as resistance; but if we fail to help them fully express what they have made a first step toward putting into words, then we are the ones who are resisting the therapeutic process. As Lacan states, *the only resistance in analysis is the analyst's resistance*.[6]

Analysands give us myriad opportunities to pick up on what is being left out of the stories they are telling us (and perhaps even telling themselves), if we simply lend an ear to them. These opportunities include 1) pauses indicating that there are things going through analysands' minds that they are not saying and that we have to ask about; 2) speech that is broken off or aborted; and 3) unusual or polyvalent verbal images or phrases used by native speakers of the language spoken in the analysis.

One of my analysands had his mother visiting him for a week, and he said that during her visit he "made

a date" (this involved pretending he had one that he did not in fact have); he then lapsed into silence. "What was going through your mind?" I asked. "I don't know why, but the words 'to make her feel jealous' almost came out of my mouth." He was reluctant to speak them, since prior to that moment he had had no idea that he might have wanted to make his mother jealous and the words thus made no sense to him.

But, as most seasoned clinicians are aware, it is precisely with things that make no sense, and that the analysand is likely to characterize as stupid, irrelevant, or out of the blue, that we do analysis. We must be vigilantly on the lookout for such things, for it is the analysand's natural tendency to *not* bring them to speech since he does not understand them. Most neurotics have considerable self-censoring capacities and filter out a large number of things that come to mind that they consider ridiculous, unimportant, or downright stupid. As Lacan says, however, *it is with such stupidities that we do analysis* (Lacan, 1998, pp. 11–13).

We need not view this as bad faith or resistance on the analysand's part: social conventions in polite society dictate a certain amount of self-censorship, and it is up to us to break the analysand of the ingrained habit of not saying a vast number of the things that cross his mind. It is not enough to tell the analysand once or twice to try to say everything that occurs to him, and content oneself that he will free associate for the next five to ten years without any further prompting on our part. Free association is one of the hardest tasks imaginable, and it is our job to help the analysand associate as freely as possible. When we fail to help him do so, we ourselves are, in Lacan's view, resisting the therapeutic process.

If we did not resist the process ourselves, we would prompt the analysand and he would tell us—in the vast majority of cases—what we want to know, or at least as much as he is aware of himself. There are, of course, certain analysands who, because of their own inhibitions, will have to be persuaded, encouraged, and even cajoled into speaking their minds far more often than others; or who, because they are constantly testing the analyst's sincerity, may make a game of it, seemingly speaking their minds only when prompted—that is, only when they are sure the analyst really and truly wants to hear it. We have to let them know that we really and truly *do* want to hear it, even and especially when it may not be terribly pleasing or flattering to ourselves! Even and especially when it might be a disobliging thought, horrible image, or vituperative rant against us.

We can hardly expect the majority of analysands to spontaneously say things like, "I was thinking I'd like to see you dead at the bottom of the well like the person in my dream was!" Such things are *not said* in polite company, and seem absurd to the analysand who consciously believes you are trying to help as best you can and that he has no "logical" reason to be angry with you. We must make him realize that he can say anything in the therapeutic setting, that we are prepared to hear and even want to hear everything that crosses his mind, no matter how impolite, impertinent, crude, rude, or socially unacceptable. Not because we are masochistic (after all, we do not take ourselves to be the true target of such anger), but to foster working through.

The neurotic is often afraid of the hostility that inhabits him, but if we face it openly, often he can too, and this opens the door to exploring it through speech, destroying neither himself nor others in the process. Without necessarily becoming "logical," "rational," or "understandable," his hostility stands a chance of being more or less thoroughly articulated, which is integral to the process of working through. Working through requires that his hostility be spoken in all its different variations and keys, that it be articulated in relation to all the different figures in his life toward whom he has felt it (not all of whom will necessarily be projected onto the analyst) in their myriad contexts. In order for his hostility to subside, it is not enough for it to be repeatedly discharged or for it to be "understood," assuming that means something other in the case of affects than simply acknowledging their sources; rather, it must be

articulated as exhaustively as possible.

Analysands very often abort what they have begun to say. They begin a thought, "Well, … " and then change the subject; this is known in rhetoric as aposiopesis (deliberate incompleteness of a thought in writing or speech or a shift in grammatical construction). For instance, a female analysand of mine said, "My mother was sort of—Well, like I was saying before, she went with my father to the store that day and … " We must not fail to prompt the analysand to finish the initial thought. We must say, "Your mother was sort of … what?" before she gets too far into the next thought, because otherwise she likely will not remember what she had been about to say. Another analysand was talking about her father and said, "I feel … " and lapsed into silence. "You feel?" I queried, to encourage her to finish her thought. "I feel like killing him!" was her response.

I certainly could not have foreseen what would come after "I feel," and I did not ask so that I would understand her better (although how one could even *try* to understand without getting her to complete her sentence I do not know), but so that she would bring to speech the affect inhabiting her.

Analysands who are native or virtually native speakers of the language in which the analysis is conducted often use unusual or polyvalent verbal images or phrases that quite obviously amount to compromise formations (more obviously than most speech does). A male analysand of mine who often complained of erectile dysfunction was talking about a dream image of a woman, and proffered, "What really sticks out for me about her is … " Most native speakers would recognize "stands out" as the closest likely intended meaning. If the analyst repeats "sticks out," he or she is likely to evoke something else: something that was probably there in the choice of an expression that is not really correct, not really part of ordinary usage, even if most people will probably overlook the "corruption" of the more standard or more usual expression. The analysand may at first deny any meaning to such formulations, just as he denies any meaning to slips of the tongue and double entendres early on in the analysis, chalking them up to a habitually sloppy way of talking, for example. However, with a little encouragement, most neurotics (again, I am speaking here only of those doing analysis in their mother tongue or in a language they speak exceptionally well) can be persuaded to explore the possible meanings of slips, double entendres, and verbal compromise formations. Meaning is thus seen here not to be irrelevant but to be multilayered, ambivalent, and far too complex and overdetermined to ever be completely mastered.

Another analysand, who, given the context, was ostensibly seeking the syntagm "to save face," came out with the compromise formation "to cover face," suggesting possible interference from the vernacular "to cover one's ass." What such a compromise formation means is in no way immediately self-evident, but one cannot even begin to unpack a piece of "nonsense" like this unless one first hears it and notices that there is something out of joint in the formulation.

Whose Understanding?

To keep us from falling into the trap of understanding, of jumping to conclusions about what things mean based on our own experience and conceptions, and of conveying our own imagined understandings to our analysands, we should avoid putting words in our analysands' mouths. Speaking in their stead allows us to articulate our own experience, but thwarts their articulation of their own. We would do better to use only words that analysands themselves have introduced, as far as possible. (Although I don't believe Lacan himself ever said this explicitly, it strikes me as a simple extension of his caution not to be so quick to think we have understood what they are saying [see, for example, Lacan, 1993, Chapter 1].) We should strive to introduce little vocabulary of our own, since even everyday words such as "personality" and "relationship" imply a whole way of thinking about people and life that may be quite foreign to our analysands' ways of thinking about them. Younger analysands who think only in terms of "hooking up"

with someone or who avoid commitment like the plague will be put off by terms like *relationship*, and will feel either that we are trying to impose something on them or that we simply do not speak the same language they do (which is, of course, true at a deeper level, since none of us genuinely speak the same language, in the sense of being able to immediately and completely understand each other, an illusion many of us nevertheless have when, for example, initially falling in love).

If the analyst introduces a vague term such as "abuse" to characterize an analysand's experience, it is likely to almost automatically short-circuit all attempts on the analysand's part to explore any potentially subjective contribution to this experience. One of my analysands complained for a long time that as a child she felt forced to do whatever her parents told her to do, and forced to submit to their punishments. In her adult life, she similarly felt forced to attend meetings at which her colleagues expressed a great deal of anger at each other and that gave her terrible migraines, even though she knew very well she would not be fired were she not present at those meetings. She said she felt a responsibility to go to the meetings and state her point of view, but it was quite clear from her discussions of them that no one listened to what she had to say and that her participation seemed only to make matters worse for herself and her causes. Just as there seemed to be something masochistic about her adult work situation, so there seemed to be something masochistic in her attitude toward her parents.

Her mother had clearly raged at her for many things, and likely held her daughter at least partly responsible for her misery in life, but I never in any way conveyed that I agreed with her that there was absolutely nothing she could have done about her situation, absolutely no other approach a child could have taken in such a predicament to avoid being yelled at and spanked. I have certainly heard of cases in which children react quite differently to very similar forms of treatment—some withdraw, some run away, and others comply outwardly but rebel inwardly. I could have referred to her mother's behavior toward her as "verbal abuse" and "physical abuse," which the analysand might initially have appreciated, as it would have put all of the onus on her mother and validated her own sense that her mother was entirely at fault. But I never did so. I encouraged her to talk about all of those incidents and to vent her anger at her mother in sessions, something she was initially loath to do, and I even underscored her anger at her mother's behavior, especially since she so rarely expressed any emotion at all. But I never tried to assign all of the blame to anyone.

The analysand eventually told me that after a session she had been recalling some of her early childhood experiences of being punished, and shuddered when she realized that there was a moment at which she knew, even as a young girl, that she could have run away or struggled or proclaimed her innocence, but instead submitted to her mother's will by voluntarily crossing the room to where her mother stood—she walked over of her own accord to receive her punishment. Her mother did not forcibly catch her and spank her but rather waited for her to let herself be spanked.

When the analysand recalled this, what scared her most was her own submissive attitude, her willing subjugation of herself to her mother's will. This opened up the possibility of her exploring why she might have done such a thing, which allowed for myriad speculations: was it that she believed that if she did not submit, the punishment would only be worse? Was it that she believed that she deserved the punishment? Or did she somehow take the punishment as a sign of love and attention from her mother? Did she, more generally speaking, take people's anger at her and what she perceived to be their punishment of her as a sign of caring?

The latter struck me as very likely. It seemed to me that she construed and constructed numerous situations in her life in such a way that she could get herself punished, yelled at, criticized, and told what to do precisely because these were the only true signs of love she had ever really known. Had I agreed with her initial characterization of her predicament as a child as absolutely helpless and employed terms

such as "abuse"—which she herself did not use but hinted at—we might never have gotten to this point, which was, I suspect, an absolutely crucial feature of her being in the world, of her stance in life.

Terms like "abuse" from popular psychology and even everyday language bring a whole metapsychology with them that we would do well to avoid, not necessarily even repeating them when analysands introduce such terms themselves. For these terms generally obfuscate the situation; they generally simplify and reduce things that are far more complex than the terms would suggest. They exonerate the analysand, whereas analysands often feel at least partly to blame. Even if *we* think they are not to blame, their sense of being at fault is usually a sign that they feel at fault for something else, and that their guilt has become displaced from one event or wish to another.

As Freud (1955a, pp. 175–76) suggests, we should take their guilt as a clear indication of a crime they feel they have committed; we should not seek to exculpate them, but rather to determine the original crime in question, the original source of the guilt. In the case of the obsessive analysand mentioned earlier who dreamt about being in the shower with an older boy, his general tendency was to blame himself alone for *all* the early childhood sexual activity he had ever engaged in, with children older or younger than himself, never attributing any blame whatsoever to the other party. His "original crime" lay elsewhere, in early circumstances involving family members, not neighbors; indeed, he seemed to prefer to engage in activities with neighbors for which he could then reproach himself, rather than face the Oedipal crimes for which he felt irredeemably guilty. In the case of this female analysand, things were more complicated still: she tended to assign blame for her suffering to her parents and later to her colleagues, not seeing herself as subjectively implicated in her life story. Whereas the obsessive analysand saw himself and his own agency everywhere, she saw herself and her own agency nowhere. And yet she had clearly accepted her mother's claim that her daughter was responsible for destroying her life and that the mother would have been far happier had she never had children.

This analysand often wished, like Oedipus, that she herself had never been born, and resented her mother terribly—and even wished her dead—for having had a child who could be blamed for ruining her life. Was this why the daughter allowed herself to be punished for the little things her mother exploded about and for which the analysand felt blameless? Perhaps the daughter tried to expiate her guilt over wanting her mother dead by allowing her mother the kind of hateful, violent satisfaction the latter seemed to take in punishing her child.

The analysand could not fathom her submission to such punishment since the hypothesized connection (between reproachlessness for the little things she was punished for and her self-reproach for something much bigger and weightier) was unconscious. A conscious grasp of this connection was, in any case, of more use to the analyst in terms of the subsequent direction of the treatment than to the analysand, or so I would contend. The analysand herself needed to come to grips with her anger at her mother for having resented her daughter's very existence, and this she began to do shortly after her shock at her involvement in the two it took to tango toward punishment. For the analysand to have come to consciously understand that she made herself into a sacrificial lamb to atone for her death wish (if this was, indeed, true) would have taken her no further than what could have been accomplished through reliance on the observing ego: she would have learned to observe her own behavior and tried to stop repeatedly submitting to punishment with the thought, "I'm only doing this (e.g., going to this meeting or putting up with this kind of treatment from my colleagues) because I wanted my mother dead (and perhaps likewise want my colleagues dead)." This would have done little or nothing to remove the temptation to submit to punishment in the first place, nothing to work through the resentment directed at her mother that seemed to be the motor force of the repetition.

To believe that understanding the connection here (between guilt over wishing one's mother dead and

submitting to punishment in the present) suffices for change to ensue seems to me misguided. In and of itself, it merely dangles a bit of abstract knowledge before the analysand, around which her conscious sense of herself may recrystallize, but it rarely, in my experience, leads to fundamental change, to something that is felt in one's bones, as it were. Moreover, this connection is no more than a piecemeal explanation, for as I mentioned earlier, the analysand had also come to view punishment by others as a sign of love, care, or at least attention. She may well, moreover, have imagined herself as her mother when she submitted to punishment at her mother's hands, fantasizing that the roles were reversed and the daughter was taking revenge on the mother. All of our "understandings" must be viewed as provisional, subject to revision and indeed at times to reversal, and—given the overdetermined nature of human experience—partial, that is, only part of the story. Latching onto any one particular understanding as totalizing or all-encompassing is dangerous both for the analyst (who is led to harp endlessly on the same interpretations) and for the analysand (the very latching on suggests that there may well be something a little too convenient, self-serving, or gratifying about the understanding in question).

Some practitioners may retort that what *they* mean by understanding is something one feels in one's bones. I would simply point out that what is usually meant by understanding—outside of psychoanalytic circles, at any rate—is a conscious mental activity involving an *intellectual* grasp of something (as Webster's [1989] defines it, to understand is "to perceive the meaning of, grasp the idea of, comprehend; to be thoroughly familiar with, apprehend clearly the character, nature, or subtleties of; to assign a meaning to; to construe in a particular way; etc."). Mental activity of this kind clearly goes on during myriad psychoanalytic sessions without leading to any noticeable transformation in the analysand's symptoms. When, on the contrary, the making of a connection is accompanied by considerable affect—whether surprise, anxiety, or elation—then we may hope for change that *is* felt in one's bones, for change that obviates the need for vigilant self-observation and self-surveillance. In such instances, I would say that we have hit what Lacan terms the "real": we have made an impact at the affective, libidinal level, an impact at the level of the satisfactions available to the analysand—in a word, at the level of the analysand's *jouissance*.[7] The most profound effects occur at this level, which involves transforming the analysand's libidinal economy, not simply the analysand's self-understandings. Indeed, in numerous cases, profound libidinal change occurs without the analysand's self-understandings being affected at all—in such instances, conscious understanding is short-circuited or bypassed as irrelevant to the mutative process.

Some would maintain, no doubt, that life-changing impact and/or libidinal transformation is what is meant by "true understanding" as opposed to facile, incomplete, partial, or false understanding, which remains at the intellectual level alone. I would argue, on the contrary, that we are dealing with two distinctly different activities or processes here and that a great deal of confusion is created when an exclusively intellectual grasping of a connection or interpretation is called "false understanding," whereas the life-changing impact of speech on the analysand is called "true understanding," when *it is not clear that the analysand could formulate anything articulable about it whatsoever*, except to say that things are different now! Freud claimed that analysands who had successful analyses often could not say afterward what had happened or why, which suggests that to get better they did not need to be able to understand anything in the usual sense of the word (for example, to figure something out so that it could be explained or described to others). Insofar as transformation can well take place without understanding, it is confusing, as I see it, to refer to both activities with the same word, merely qualifying the one as "true" and the other as "false."

To take this a step further, I would argue that all understanding can be viewed as misleading if not outright false, since understanding is *always* partial, provisional, multilayered, incomplete, and projected

(imaginary). To believe that understanding can ever be complete is to lapse into Hegel's pipe dream of absolute knowledge, a dream discredited by virtually every contemporary philosophy and scientific endeavor (whether in the so-called hard sciences, whose "scientific revolutions" lead to the rejection of previous attempts at totalizing knowledge in a particular field, or in the social/human sciences). There is no such thing as "complete knowledge"—there can be no more than a fantasy thereof. Nor is it, I believe, an instance of complete knowledge to say "there is no such thing as complete knowledge"; it is merely a recognition of the limits of human knowledge. I myself have been known to speak or write on occasion as if I comprehended precisely what had led to a specific change for a particular analysand, but I nevertheless contend that it is at the very moment at which we are most convinced we have a complete understanding of something that we are most likely to be deluded. Indeed, I would be tempted to say that it is the very existence of the unconscious that *decompletes* any understanding we may have; in other words, the unconscious leads to a fundamental incompleteness theorem in psychoanalysis, akin to Gödel's incompleteness theorems in arithmetic.

The analyst inescapably works within the confines of limited knowledge and inevitably partial understandings. Nevertheless, that can and must suffice for the work to proceed. Note that, like the analysand, the analyst is often hard-pressed to say *exactly* what led to any particular change, reconstructing *ex post facto* the likely aspects of the analytic process that brought about the change. In other words, the analyst need not understand—any more than the analysand—precisely what is happening in order for the analytic work to be effective. Understanding is thus not a necessary element for either party to the analytic adventure.

If meaning and understanding are not to be our lodestar, what is to guide us in our analytic work? Lacan, although initially fascinated by the concern with understanding promoted by Karl Jaspers in psychiatry, later proposed that we take our bearings from jouissance, and it is precisely by listening so attentively to what analysands actually say (with all the slips, stumblings, double entendres, and compromise formations endemic to speech in the analytic situation), as opposed to what they mean, that we are able to home in on analysands' satisfactions and dissatisfactions. "What need can an analyst have for an extra ear," Lacan (2006a, p. 471) asks,

> when it sometimes seems that two are already too many, since he runs headlong into the fundamental misunderstanding brought on by the relationship of understanding? I repeatedly tell my students: "Don't try to understand!" […] May one of your ears become as deaf as the other one must be acute. And that is the one that you should lend to listen for sounds and phonemes, words, locutions, and sentences, not forgetting pauses, scansions, cuts, periods, and parallelisms, for it is in these that the word-for-word transcription can be prepared, without which analytic intuition has no basis or object.

Listening for these allows us to localize analysands' jouissance and ultimately have an effect on it, an effect on the real (namely, their libidinal economy).[8] Listening for meaning alone confines us to the imaginary level, the level of understanding; listening at the symbolic level for what makes speech go awry —whether making it lapse into silence when a thought that is too disturbing to be given voice is not completed, or forge a compromise formation when multiple and at times opposing wishes or points of view vie for expression simultaneously—helps grant us access to the real, for which understanding (the imaginary with its semblance of explanation) serves as little more than a cover and rationalization.

We do not come to *understand* the analysand's jouissance thereby, but merely to detect and work with it. Jouissance is, after all, what many analysands complain about at the outset of treatment: they feel they are not getting enough satisfaction in life or that they find themselves obtaining primarily forms of

satisfaction they find distasteful and painful—in a word, dissatisfying.

Not surprisingly, Lacan proposes that interpretation be unexpected, jolting, and unsettling ("oracular," as he puts it)[9]: "Analytic interpretation is not designed to be understood; it is designed to make waves" (Lacan, 1976, p. 35). Interpretation—as employed in cases of neurosis, not psychosis—should, in his view, seek to shake up meaning and deconstruct the analysand's self-understandings.[10]

Beyond Understanding

In our endeavor to avoid imposing *our own understandings* (that is, imaginary projections) on our analysands, we should strive to refrain from asking leading questions—that is, from steering analysands to characterize their experiences in ways they themselves would not have characterized them had we asked more open-ended questions. If an analysand says, "So I went out with this guy and then we spent the night together," and we want to know what happened during that night spent together, we are likely to receive very different answers if we ask, "You had intercourse?" or if we ask something along the lines of "Spent the night together?" or simply "How do you mean?" In the first case, if intercourse had in fact been on the menu, we might simply be told "Yes," even if intercourse was just one small item on the menu and hardly the most important one to the analysand's mind. Introducing the term *intercourse* seems to suggest that all *we* are interested in is intercourse—that is, in whether they had intercourse or not—so why should the analysand bother to tell us about all the other things they might have done?

By asking open-ended instead of leading questions, we are likely to hear far more details, and it is generally the circumstantial and tangential comments people make—both in analysis and everyday life—that are the most revealing. There are obviously times when very pointed questions need to be asked (see Fink, 2007, Chapter 2)—for example, in instances where an analysand is very reluctant to talk about a fantasy or an early childhood sexual experience—but even those questions should not be leading. For the whole point is to encourage and prompt the analysand to put into words what has never been put into words before, and we will defeat the purpose of this exercise if we put our own words in the analysand's mouth.

A young man came to me complaining of many things, the most distressing of which was a constant ringing in his ears that kept him awake at night, leaving him exhausted all day long. This ringing was due, he believed, to having repeatedly played his musical instruments far too loudly, even when he was aware it was hurting him. The condition had been diagnosed by a physician as tinnitus, and the analysand was aware there might well be a certain *psychological* component to it—he told me he had read that musicians who were prone to panic attacks and separation anxiety were more likely to suffer from this condition than other musicians who played their music just as loudly—but he had sought only *medical* attention and remedies for the condition for several years prior to contacting me.

For quite a long time I was unable to elicit from him any description of this phenomenon other than that there was ringing in his ears, *ringing* being the consecrated word used in English by most people. When I finally managed to get him to talk in greater detail about the noise or sound that was keeping him awake at night, he referred to it as "a crushing sound." When I repeated "crushing" with a questioning inflection in my voice, he added that it was like the sound of teeth or bones being crushed. "Teeth or bones being crushed?" I asked. What immediately came to his mind was the biblical expression "gnashing of teeth," which he associated with hell, where there will, he said, be "wailing and gnashing of teeth." Hell, he added, rhymes with the first syllable of one of his mother's names.

"When, in your view, do people gnash their teeth?" I asked.

"When they're angry," he replied. I ended the session there, and discovered a month later that he was no

longer hearing the same sound in his ears, and indeed was hearing a sound in only one ear now, not both. The sound that had been bothering him for years *seemed* to have changed owing to our discussion of it, for he was engaging in no other treatment of it in the interim and he himself mentioned that it changed shortly after the session in which we had discussed it. (This still does not allow us to know precisely what it was that occurred in the session that led to the change.)

"What does it sound like now?" I asked him.

"It no longer sounds like a Dantean hell," he proffered. It was more like "an insect sound," he indicated, tangentially mentioning that he did not like the word "bug" because of its connection with "bugger," which he knew was a slang term, although he professed not to be sure for what, but what he heard in it was "bug her" (did he want to bug, or even bugger, his mother, I wondered to myself, for reasons that will become clear; or was his nose and/or mucus somehow involved here?).

"What kind of insect?" I asked.

"I think they're called 'acadas,'" he replied, and I could have immediately tried to correct him by offering *cicadas*, but instead I asked him when he had heard them before, which led to a discussion of his childhood in the South.

At the next session he indicated that shortly after the end of the preceding session he had realized that the correct word was *cicada*, and he associated several things to it, including *sick* and *AIDS*, which he had been terrified of contracting for many years even though he almost never had sexual contact with anyone. A bit later in the session I asked him when it is that cicadas make the sound he hears in his ear, my assumption (based on my own limited experience with the insects) being that it would be when it is hot outside. Nevertheless, I did not state this but rather asked an open-ended question. To my surprise, he answered that he thought they made that noise during the "mating season."

I had surmised that we would get to sex, sooner or later, with all this, as we had with so many of the analysand's other symptoms, but we got there far more quickly than I had anticipated. This analysand had grown up in the South and had slept on a cushion alongside his parents' bed in their bedroom every night until late adolescence. He had done this for a wide variety of reasons, including the fact that he had been "terrified" to sleep alone as a child and his mother had constantly invited him into the parents' bedroom. He no doubt also did this to prevent his parents from having sex and producing another child, who would have usurped his special role as an only child. His presence in their bedroom had effectively cramped their style, but over the course of the years they had nevertheless made love on several occasions when they thought he was asleep. He had, however, actually been awake on at least some of those occasions and had tried to lie as still as possible and *strained to listen intently*, his heart pounding, while they did so. These circumstances were at the crux of many of his other symptoms, including his often being convinced that he was about to have a heart attack, that his heart was skipping a beat, and that if he did sports and got his heart racing he would have a heart attack and die.

It may well have been that the cicadas were most frenetically contracting and relaxing their internal tymbal muscles to produce their "song" just as his parents were feeling the effects of the balmy summer night air and trying to mate without awakening him (these insects apparently do their most spirited singing during the hottest hours). Perhaps his parents' teeth were even clicking together or gnashing, and perhaps he thought they were crushing each other or angry at each other—these hypotheses remain to be confirmed or refuted in the course of the analysis.[11]

In any case, I could not possibly have predicted in advance that the "ringing in his ears" would be accessible to psychoanalytic treatment, much less that it would be associated with all of these things. It

was only by asking numerous questions that did their best not to suggest any answers of my own that I was able to get the analysand to produce the material necessary to loosen the grip of this symptom and set it on a path that might lead to its at least partial demise.

This does not mean that he will ever understand precisely why the symptom formed or that I will either. As Freud (1955a, pp. 213–14) taught us in the case of the Rat Man—where the words *Raten*, *Ratten*, and *Spielratte* came together to create the debilitating "rat complex"—there is often something nonsensical and haphazard about symptom formation whereby phonemes, words, phrases, and even letters that sound or look alike develop connections ("verbal bridges") among themselves. Lacan (1998, p. 44) introduced the term *lalangue* (translated somewhat ungracefully into English as "language") to designate the level at which the unconscious assembles such sounds and letters, whose only connection with each other may be alliterative (e.g., sick, AIDS, cicadas)—that is, not meaningful, sensible, or knowable. Full understanding or total knowledge, if such a thing could even possibly exist, is necessary neither on the analysand's part nor on the analyst's.

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ABSTRACT: The current emphasis on understanding in psychoanalysis—on the analysand's part as well as on the analyst's—is excessive, if we assume that the most essential aim of psychoanalytic treatment is change. Situated within the Lacanian register or dimension of the imaginary, the process of understanding can be seen to reduce the unfamiliar to the familiar, to transform the radically other into the same, and to render the analyst hard of hearing. Our ability as analysts to detect the unconscious via slips of the tongue, slurred words, mixed metaphors, and the like is compromised by our emphasis on understanding and can be rectified only by taking as our fundamental premise that we do *not* understand what our analysands are saying. The emphasis on understanding can also do a disservice to analysands, who learn to observe themselves and to explain their feelings and behaviors to themselves and others in sophisticated terms without necessarily changing. But change can perfectly well occur in the absence of understanding, which in fact often impedes change.

Notes

1 In another context, Lacan (2006a, pp. 254–55) distinguishes verbalization (or putting into words or speech) from Sartre's "conscious realization" (*prise de conscience*), the latter implying a sudden realization of something, a sudden taking cognizance of something (intrasubjectively). Lacan indicates that, as we see in the case of Anna O., conscious realization is not necessary for symptoms to disappear. What is necessary is the forcing into words, into a language that other people can understand, even when the speaker is hypnotized. Anna O., as she told her story to Joseph Breuer, had to tell it in words comprehensible to her interlocutor. By symbolizing it aloud to another person, her symptoms disappeared without any conscious realization, without any conscious understanding—indeed, without any consciousness whatsoever.

2 Nor was there a need for me to know *exactly* why things changed for him. It sufficed for me to suspect a possible connection between the topic raised in the sessions immediately after the one in which the dream of the shower scene was discussed and the shower scene itself, and to ask *when* he began to skip school.

3 As Freud (1958a, p. 549) put it, "To explain a thing means to trace it back to something already known" (see also Freud, 1963a, p. 280).

4 Readers familiar with Lacan's discussion of the symbolic in the early 1950s may recall that Lacan speaks there of the symbolic as helping us grasp meaning and even allowing for intersubjectivity—which, in that context, he understood as the mutual understanding of meaning by two different people, that is, our ability to understand each other. By 1956 already (see Lacan, 2006a, p. 471), however, and increasingly in the 1960s, Lacan came to believe that human language made much more for misunderstanding and misrecognition (*méconnaissance*) of other people's meaning than for mutual comprehension. He turned his focus away from meaning-making to what is

nonsensical in the analysand's speech (see, for example, Lacan, 1978, where nonsense or nonmeaning is discussed at considerable length). I would propose that the turning point comes in "The Instance of the Letter in the Unconscious," first published in 1957, where the importance of the bar between signifier and signified is emphasized by Lacan (2006a) to such a degree that he ends up diverging from Saussure in claiming that the signifier (language) and the signified (meaning) are radically separate, independent realms. The signified becomes associated for Lacan with the imaginary, the signifier with the symbolic, and the letter with the real. For a detailed discussion of "The Instance of the Letter," see Fink (2004a, Chapter 3).

5 To believe one has achieved "true understanding" of the analysand's speech by appealing to agreement with her *intended* meaning and asking the speaker if one is right in one's interpretation is pointless from a psychoanalytic perspective in that the speaker may well not be aware of the competing intentionalities that fused in her enunciation, or may not be willing to admit to them. In other words, "confirmation" of one's understanding by the speaker is no proof of the veracity of one's understanding of the speaker's meaning. To think that it is requires an implicit endorsement of the notion of self-transparency and a rejection of the notion of the unconscious (that is, of split or divided subjectivity). This calls into question the usefulness of attempting to see things exactly as the analysand supposedly sees them, and attempting to understand the analysand's meaning exactly as the analysand does, for the analysand is (like all of us) a multileveled, divided being whose conscious self-understandings are necessarily partial and deceptive.

I do not believe Lacan ever endorses the idea that we can harness or advantageously use the imaginary in our work with neurotic analysands. Although he obviously believes that their projection onto us of knowledge that can be of some use to them (that is, their viewing us as subjects who are supposed to know what is wrong with them, how to fix it, and all kinds of other things as well) constitutes the motor force of transference, he is very clear that we must not be lured into thinking that we actually know, as flattering as it may be to us to have analysands attribute such knowledge and insight to us.

6 Lacan formulates this on several different occasions as follows: "There is no other resistance to analysis than that of the analyst himself" (Lacan, 2006a, p. 595); "The patient's resistance is always your own" (Lacan, 1993, p. 48); and "Resistance finds its point of departure in the analyst himself" (Lacan, 1976–77, January 11, 1977).

7 "Jouissance" refers to the kind of enjoyment or satisfaction people derive from their symptoms, about which Freud (1963a) says, "The kind of satisfaction which the symptom brings has much that is strange about it…. It is unrecognizable to the subject, who, on the contrary, feels the alleged satisfaction as suffering and complains of it" (pp. 365–66). It is not a "simple pleasure," so to speak, but involves a kind of pain-pleasure or "pleasure in pain" (*Schmerzlust*, as Freud, 1961b, p. 162, puts it) or satisfaction in dissatisfaction. It qualifies the kind of "kick" someone may get out of punishment, self-punishment, doing something that is so pleasurable that it hurts (sexual climax, for example), or doing something that is so painful that it becomes pleasurable. Most people deny getting pleasure or satisfaction from their symptoms, but "outside observers" (those around them) can often see that they enjoy their symptoms, that they "get off" on their symptoms in a way that is too roundabout, "dirty," or "filthy" to be described in conventional terms as pleasurable or satisfying. Lacan even goes so far as to say that "jouissance bothers the hell out of us!" (Lacan, 1973–74, November 13, 1973). Jouissance is not necessarily something one deliberately seeks out, that one decides to go out and get, so to speak. A good deal of our jouissance simply happens to us, often without our knowing why, being handed to us on a silver platter, as it were by Providence or God's grace, coming when we least expect it and not coming, on the other hand, when we most expect or crave it. For further discussion of the term, see Fink (1997, pp. 8–9).

8 See, for example, Lacan (1973b, p. 30).

9 See, for example, Lacan (2006b, January 13, 1971; 2006a, pp. 106 and 588; 1973b, p. 37; and 1975, p. 16).

10 For a detailed discussion of Lacan's approach to interpretation, see Fink (2007, Chapter 5).

11 The patient subsequently told me, in association to a sound a special keyboard could make in a dream he had, that his parents often played a compact disk of a thunderstorm—complete with *hissing* rain—when they went to bed at night, no doubt to mask for him the sounds they themselves were making. The hissing sound he complained of hearing constantly in his everyday life kept him reliving his earlier nights in their bedroom.

2

LACANIAN CLINICAL PRACTICE
From the Imaginary to the Symbolic

My goal in this chapter is to provide a schematic account of Lacan's very different approaches to the treatment of neurosis and psychosis. I will start by presenting his structural model of diagnosis that begins with the very basic idea that there are at least two fundamentally different dimensions to human existence: the imaginary dimension and the symbolic dimension. Those familiar with Lacan's work are aware that his later diagnostic schemas involve three dimensions (imaginary, symbolic, and real), but I will confine my attention here to the first two he introduces, starting in the late 1940s and early 1950s.

Rather than introduce the imaginary dimension by starting with the mirror stage, as Lacan does, I will discuss a number of its salient features, beginning with the all-important fact that Lacan does not call it *imaginary* to emphasize the dimension of illusion, the dimension of that which does not really exist, but rather to emphasize the importance of images—whether visual, auditory, olfactory, gustatory, tactile, or other—in the animal kingdom and for human beings.

Lacan stresses the formative role of images in the animal kingdom, pointing out that visual images are important in pigeons: the female does not develop to sexual maturity without seeing an image of another pigeon like itself (a mirror image will do, or even a crude drawing or cutout, but not the sounds or smell alone of another pigeon). The same is true for certain kinds of grasshoppers (*Schistocerca*); for asocial grasshoppers to become gregarious, which is a significant developmental process, they must see something: an image of a member of their own species.

Images are of crucial importance in aggression too. As Konrad Lorenz (1966) shows with many examples in his book *On Aggression*, species are generally "far more aggressive toward their own species than toward any other" (p. 15). The Darwinian explanation of intra-species aggression is to keep a species evenly spread out over all the available territory so as not to exhaust its food supply, which would lead to extinction of the whole species. This implies that an aggressive response is often elicited when an animal sees a member of its own species.

Seeing a member of its own species does not always lead to immediate aggression, of course. Most animals, such as dogs, adopt certain postures that announce their propensity to aggression, indicating how dominant they are (for example, dogs crouch in front of each other to show submission).[1] Such postures are signs to other members of the same species, indicating that individuals are ready and willing to fight or are submissive.[2]

The visual size of the adversary is crucial here. A lone hyena will attack animals that are smaller than it is or that seem more or less its own size, but is less likely to attack animals that seem much larger. *In the imaginary, size really does matter*.

In this dimension, another member of one's own species is essentially the same as oneself, operating on the same principles; indeed, there is nothing that would allow one to recognize the other as *qualitatively* different from oneself; there is only quantitative difference at this level: *the other is larger and stronger or smaller and weaker*. Alternatively, if the other is about the same size as oneself, one gauges the other

in terms of whether it is more aggressive or less aggressive than oneself. The question here seems to be that of domination or submission: either the other is a threat to oneself or is not, but there is no *recognition* of the other as possibly operating on altogether different principles than one's own.

There is something fundamentally mimetic involved here, which is that one grasps another's motives only on the basis of one's own. If one is feeling attacked the other must be aggressing one;[3] if one is starving, the other must be motivated by hunger.

Among African hunting dogs, the female of the species usually has more pups in a litter than she has teats and her young pups fight for the right to nurse from the most tender of ages. This is a genuine struggle for survival, for those pups that do not nurse remain small and far weaker than their brethren who grow larger and stronger and who eventually wrestle and fight with them until they become crippled and die. The same pups may be happy to play with and cuddle with each other when it is not feeding time, but when hungry nothing stops them from simply pushing others out of the way so that they can eat or drink their fill, even if that involves using all of their nascent strength.

The aggression shown in such situations knows no limit—it is not as if the animals said to each other, "Now it's our little brother's turn to drink: it's only fair, we've been nursing for ten minutes already." It is not as if the animals said to themselves, "That's enough horsing around, we're really starting to hurt him." Just as there is no *recognition*, in the imaginary dimension, of the other as operating on principles different than one's own, there is no *recognition* of limits to what can be done to a rival.

A young lion reluctantly moves away from a freshly killed antelope only because the larger lions in the pack leave it no choice. It does not give them the place of honor out of respect or deference to its elders—there is no such notion in the animal kingdom; in other words, there is no such notion in the imaginary dimension. *The imaginary dimension is the one that reigns supreme in the animal kingdom.*

And there are no limits in the imaginary dimension: there is nothing that tells the animal to stop doing what it is doing. There is nothing but its own feeling of satiety or bloatedness that stops it from eating even though it may no longer be hungry and there are other hungry members of its own species around. (This even happens occasionally in human families with numerous children. The "Freud Man," an analysand discussed in volume 2 of this collection, bitterly complained that his mother allowed the other children in his family to eat all of certain dinner items before he managed to get to the table.) And there is nothing that stops it from biting and hurting other animals that try to muscle in on the animal carcass it is still eating beyond all hunger except the sheer size and aggressiveness of the interlopers.

Nothing except instinct, that is: one animal will often stop harassing another animal as soon as it feels the animal is no longer a threat, because it has moved far enough from its territory or is sufficiently wounded not to be back anytime soon. In the case of human beings, however, instinct does not come into play much; it does not give us much guidance.

Now, the lack of limits characteristic of the imaginary dimension can be found in the human world as well. Saint Augustine, who is occasionally quoted by Lacan (2006a, pp. 11–15), mentions a two- or three-year-old boy who became pale with envy at the sight of his foster brother being nursed—to his mind, someone else was moving in on his territory (i.e., his primary caretaker's breasts). He had not yet developed the notion of sharing, of each having equal rights to things. And even if he had to some degree, it might not have stopped all of his venom.

The latter can at times go as far as murderous rage, and it is far more likely to arise between members of the same species than between a child and the family dog, for example. The responses and reactions an animal has while hunting are clearly distinguished by ethologists and wildlife biologists from the anger

signals and signs seen in fighting within species. A certain species of fish will allow ten members of certain other species to inhabit its territory, but not a single member of its own species. Those other species do not compete with it for the same resources. Children in a family, on the other hand, compete for the same parental resources (Sulloway, 1996). A parent's time, care, and love are limited and children compete with each other to get them, especially at the outset. Teaching children to share is one of the most difficult tasks parents face, enduring as they do requests to take the new baby back to the hospital or even attempts, when the parents' backs are turned, to throw the baby out in the garbage or "accidentally" lose the baby in the park. Few struggles in a young child's life elicit so much hateful passion and rivalry as does the struggle with siblings. (One of my analysands shoved his baby sister into a dresser drawer when he was a young child, hoping she would be forgotten about.)

Now how does the imaginary passion to destroy the other like oneself become mediated? How do limits on behavior come in? In the animal kingdom, it seems that instinct provides some boundaries, though often they seem insufficient. Consider the fact that a male bear will often kill a female's cubs so that the female will become fertile again, even when there is a chance that the cubs might be his own (he cannot recognize them); and if the female defends her cubs quite vigorously, he may even kill her, treating her momentarily like another male bear competing with him for reproductive or fishing rights. *This seems to be a futile, non-species preserving adaptation*. (Nature is not always as efficient as certain biologists like to think it is.)

What is it in the human world that introduces limits to intra-species competition?

The Two Axes: Imaginary and Symbolic

Let me sketch out the imaginary dimension and try to conceptualize it better.

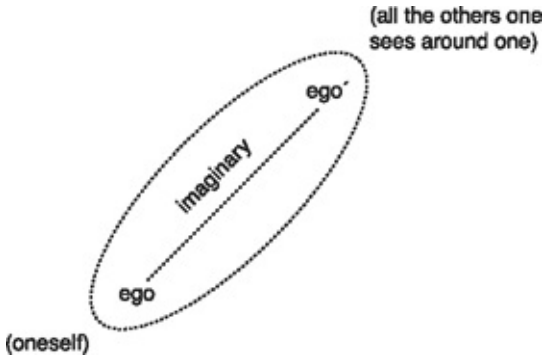

Figure 2.1 Imaginary axis

In this illustration or representation of the imaginary dimension, we have *one's own ego* and all the others one sees around oneself. Note immediately that this suggests that, in the imaginary dimension, *there is no distinction that one makes in the perhaps enormous set of people one finds around oneself*—they are all situated at the exact same level.[4]

What is that level? It is the level at which one sees them as similar to oneself, as motivated by the same things as oneself, and as struggling for survival in the same way one is. Here one believes everyone functions in the same way as oneself, regardless of species: everyone else's motives are like one's own. There are no innate limits here to what can be done in the course of the struggle for survival: if one does not vanquish one's rival, one's rival will vanquish oneself.

Freud might be said to introduce the dimension that limits the imaginary in the form of the Oedipus complex. Prior to Oedipalization, when the imaginary dimension has virtually full sway, the child struggles with the other children in the family for parental love and attention but, according to Freudian

theory, the child struggles just as vigorously with one parent over access to the parent of the opposite sex; whether it is actually always with the parent of the opposite sex, or always the mother, or simply depends on the situation is a matter of much debate. In the standard Freudian model, in any case, the child's hatred of the parent of the same sex *knows no bounds*.

The child is prepared not only to send back to the hospital or hurt and even destroy the newly arrived child who takes the mother's attention away from him; he is equally prepared to lock the father out of the house so that he can be alone with the mother, wish the father would stay away on business forever, and would do the father in if only he knew how or was strong enough (I'm using the example of a boy as it is so much simpler in Freudian theory). Even though there may be positive feelings for the father, when the father gets in the way of the child's activities and pleasures with the mother, the father is wished dead and may even be hated at times with an intensity, with a kind of *infinite hatred* or bottomless loathing, known rarely beyond childhood.

The imaginary dimension roughly corresponds to what is known in psychoanalysis as the preoedipal. When a child at this time in life loves, its love knows no limits; when the child hates, its hatred knows no bounds. There is no such thing as ambivalence here, strictly speaking: the child is not tortured by conflicting feelings that make it hesitate between one course of action and another, as contradictory as its behavior may be from one moment to the next. It may cuddle with its mother one moment and fly into a rage against her the next; but the one moment does not to seem to be tempered or tainted by the memory of the passion felt in the moment that preceded it. We need not refer to the *preoedipal* as a stage, that is, as something that one might "be going through" and soon "grow out of." It might be more helpful to think of it as a dimension: the imaginary dimension.

Dimensions	*Stages*
1) Imaginary	preoedipal

Oedipalization introduces a level of complexity into one's feelings about virtually everyone, due to the fact that it brings the unconscious into being. Once Oedipalization occurs (assuming it does), one has one's conscious feelings as well as one's unconscious feelings (so to speak), and this leads to an element of ambivalence or mixed feelings in virtually all of one's relations with people. One's passions tend to become moderate and finite in quantity, even if they become more extended over time—for example, a grudge, which at age two might have lasted two minutes, may now last two days, although its intensity is probably diminished.

It is with Oedipalization—which need not be associated with an exact period of time, as Freud sometimes tried to suggest, usually pointing to the period between ages three and five—that a qualitative difference between certain people and certain other people in the world around one comes into being. There are now different types of people, different types of others: the type that is like oneself with whom one struggles, rivals, and competes openly and the type that is fundamentally Other or different that one must respect and honor (outwardly and at least to some degree inwardly). Lacan provides a specific terminology for this: the other with a lower case *o* versus the Other with an upper case *O*.

Dimensions	*Stages*	*Relations*	*Agency*
1. Imaginary	preoedipal	others (all alike except for quantitative differences: bigger, stronger)	ego
2. Symbolic	Oedipal	Other (qualitative differences too)	unconscious

Nevertheless, even one's relations with others like oneself change at this point in time, for with the advent of this new dimension of experience, limits are placed on all of one's relations with people—limits that may take the form of the precepts and rules and laws repeated to one by one's parents, which are internalized in the form of the superego.[5] Oedipalization is precisely the point at which Freud suggests the superego forms in a durable fashion: the voice of conscience forms when one takes into oneself what was at first the voice of one's parents. (This is the point at which the fundamental sanctity of human existence is usually impressed upon us.)[6]

I have said nothing about how Oedipalization actually occurs, who its agent is, or why it occurs. Thus I have in no way attempted to explain the why and wherefore of the symbolic dimension. I am simply trying to sketch out two dimensions that we encounter in human experience and consider the effect of the one on the other.

Let me now illustrate the second dimension.

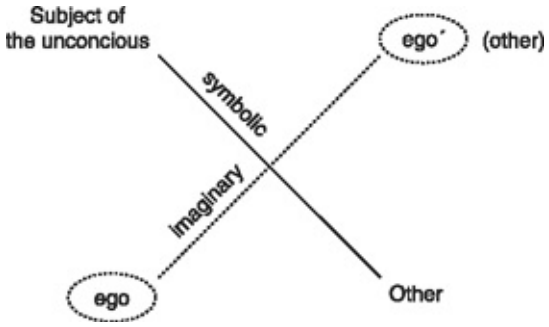

Figure 2.2 L schema (imaginary and symbolic axes)

This is one of the earliest diagrams Lacan (1988b, p. 243) provides (I have simplified it here). We should note right away that the way in which Lacan draws the L schema suggests that *the symbolic interrupts the imaginary dimension*, that it places a limit on it in a certain sense. Prior to the advent of the symbolic, the delimitation of myself (ego´) is not clear; there is no essential barrier between what I call me and what I call you (ego), because I perceive and construct who I am only on the basis of what I see in you,[7] and I perceive and construct you only on the basis of my own self-perception and self-construction. I assume that if I am angry you must be angry, and when you fall down I cry as if it were me who had fallen down. Lacan refers to this as "transitivism," borrowing the term from Wernicke and Bleuler.[8]

According to Lacan, transitivism only appears at a very young age because ego boundaries, as they are often called—that is, the boundaries between myself and another person—are not yet very clear: no limit has yet been established.[9] Once a limit has been established through Oedipalization, transitivism declines markedly, if it does not disappear altogether. After Oedipalization, I may empathize with my brother when he falls down or with my best friend when he cuts himself, *but I do not react exactly as if the same event had happened to me*. In other words, I do not "feel his pain" (or his joy either) in the same way as I might have prior to Oedipalization.

We are able, at times, to put ourselves into the other's shoes, but after Oedipalization, this is a more *arduous* process for many of us, not spontaneous as it had been earlier on. Before this, I took the other as a model for myself, I did not know where he or she left off and I began. Now, suddenly, we are more distinct, perhaps hopelessly, irremediably distinct; indeed, I may wish to undo what has been done and have a connection with others that is closer, more total. I may have nostalgia for a less isolated time, before the Cartesian cogito, for a kind of Rousseauian state of nature.

The psychotic, on the other hand, for whom Oedipalization has not occurred (as I shall argue), may well still feel the other's pain as his or her own; one of my psychotic analysands feels she dies to some degree whenever a criminal in the state she lives in is given a lethal injection. *For psychotics transitivism persists indefinitely*, at least in some measure.

This is why psychoanalytic work with the psychotic aims, from a Lacanian perspective, to strengthen the ego—firm up ego boundaries, make clearer where the psychotic's ego leaves off and others' egos begin—whereas psychoanalytic work with the neurotic aims to loosen up the ego's overly firm boundaries, making room in the ego for that which was formerly unconscious (that is, Other). These are radically different projects for which different techniques are indicated, only a few of which I will have space to describe below.

The Other

What is the new kind of Other brought into existence by Oedipalization—that is, by the symbolic order—who is different from the other like myself? For one thing, this new Other seems to operate according to motives that differ from my own; in other words, there are qualitative differences between us, not just quantitative ones. This Other operates on the basis of knowledge that I do not have. This new Other is, in a word, *opaque*. Whereas the other who is like myself—also known as the "semblable," because he or she *resembles* me or seems like me—is believed to be transparent, in the sense that her motives are taken by me to be no different from my own and thus just as immediately knowable to me as my own motives are, this Other with a capital *O* seems to be moved by other forces, motivations, and desires. This new Other is involved in a world that goes beyond the household, the nursery, and the school yard to which my own world as a child is in some sense confined, is involved in a world that is beyond my ken, beyond my wildest imagination. There is something unknown there, something mysterious, something opaque. This Other knows something about the world that I do not know, this Other has a knowledge of things that I do not have (indeed, this Other might be understood to be the model for what is referred to as the all-knowing or omniscient God in a certain number of religions).

When you find that your patient assumes that you, the analyst, have some kind of knowledge that he or she does not have (and not just a knowledge of which medication works better in which case or how to sleep better at night), you can be pretty sure that you are being situated by your patient as this second kind of other—that is, as an Other with a capital *O*. The knowledge we are presumed to have by certain patients is often quite far-fetched, we may feel: a knowledge of what a certain element in a dream might mean before we have even heard the patient's associations, a knowledge of what event or series of events may have triggered a particular relational style or symptom in the patient, things that we usually cannot possibly know without years of work with the patient (and even then!), but that may nevertheless be attributed to us by the patient right from the very first session.

As Lacan (2006a) puts it, "this illusion […] leads the subject to believe that his truth is already there in us, that we know it in advance" (p. 308). This is the origin of Lacan's (1978) well-known notion that the patient takes the analyst as a subject who is supposed to know (pp. 230–43), as a subject who supposedly knows what ails him, what the secret origin of that ailment is, and how to fix it.

This belief in the analyst's omniscience may be registered in the passing remark, "But you've already heard all this before," or in a comment a patient might make after lapsing into silence and being asked by the analyst, "What's going through your mind?": "I was wondering what *you* thought of all this."

If we pay close attention to such statements and do our best to elicit such thoughts even when they have not yet become statements, we will be struck by the total absence of them in certain cases. In other words,

we will become aware of the fact that certain patients are simply not concerned by what we therapists know or think. Whereas one class of patients repeatedly mentions that they are worried we think they are crazy or think badly of them, another class seems not to be preoccupied by such questions. Even though this latter class may wonder about *their own sanity* or whether they are going crazy, the crucial point is that *they do not wonder whether we think they are crazy*.[10]

They may think we can help in some way—that we are helpful when we recommend a change of jobs, more exercise, a different diet, or whatever—but they do not attribute any sort of special insight or knowledge to us regarding their childhood, inner conflicts, or true feelings, for to their minds we are fundamentally no different from them, we are an other, not an Other, to them. We are not qualitatively different: there is only quantitative difference here.

We have here a simple means by which to assess whether or not the symbolic dimension exists for a particular patient. According to Lacan, *there is a relationship between the symbolic dimension and knowledge*. There are, of course, relations between imaginary and image and between symbolic and language, but they are not as obvious as they might seem. This may seem curious at first, but let us try to tease out some of the clinical manifestations here.

With Oedipalization, the unconscious is created: a part of myself becomes opaque to me. When my parents oblige me to set limits to my behavior toward my brothers and sisters, for example, some of my hatred toward them becomes repressed—suddenly I become extra nice to them, perhaps even excessively doting. With the repression of some of my love for the parent of the opposite sex, I may display mostly hatred toward that parent now, or some love and some hatred. My former hatred of the interfering parent may now turn to love or to a mixture of love and hate.

Through the introduction of ambivalence, owing to the existence of conscious wishes alongside unconscious wishes, I do not always know what I want, I do not always know why I do what I do—at some level, I sense that some knowledge of myself is inaccessible to me. At the same time, however, I tend to assume that the knowledge that is inaccessible to me is accessible to someone or something else. "God only knows" goes the expression, suggesting that this knowledge is situated in something beyond myself, in something that transcends me. This knowledge is found in an elsewhere that is often identified with or transposed onto the analyst once analysis begins.

In other words, the knowledge that seems inaccessible to me is still considered to exist but in some other locus, some other place or person. As an analysand, I do not say to myself, "This knowledge is actually contained within me in my unconscious"; instead, I attribute this knowledge to some kind of all-knowing Other. Even when it becomes clear to me that my parents do not have all the answers, I am inclined to believe that someone else must have them, that some higher power must have them. In this sense I situate the knowledge of myself that I do not have in the Other, and when I go to analysis I confuse my analyst with this all-knowing Other.

This should not be taken to imply that anyone who believes in an omniscient God is automatically neurotic. The crucial question is whether or not this presumption of a knowledge of the subject that exists beyond the subject can be transferred onto the analyst, in other words, whether the patient is able to view his or her analyst as this all-knowing Other. In other words, *it is the patient's ability to situate the analyst in the place of knowledge that allows us to rule out psychosis*.

The patient can only even potentially do this, however, if the analyst allows this to occur by not protesting that he or she is ignorant and only knows what the patient tells him or her. This is a common maneuver in our times, engaged in by many contemporary therapists in the hope of undoing the power relations inherent in the therapy situation, in the hope of downplaying the hierarchical relationship

established between the supposed scientific subject of knowledge and the unknowing patient.

I would suggest that such maneuvers inevitably fail in that one of two things can happen: either 1) the patient thinks the therapist doth protest too much, because the relationship is socially defined and inextricably defined in his or her mind as hierarchical anyway, and the patient comes to think that the therapist is simply denying the reality of the therapy situation; or 2) the patient accepts the notion that the therapist knows nothing and fails to project the place of inaccessible knowledge onto the therapist; this leaves the patient's inaccessible knowledge no one to be identified with, in other words, no place to go in the therapy situation, no body to embody it. This usually means that the therapy becomes a place where the unconscious, which consists of this inaccessible knowledge, is simply ignored.

To lend him- or herself to being situated in the place of knowledge by the analysand, the therapist need not (and, indeed, must not) *adopt* the position of master of knowledge, dress like Mesmer with cape and cane, and pronounce seemingly masterful interpretations. It is more a question of neither accepting nor rejecting the analysand's projections of knowledge, neither claiming to know nor not to know. It is this kind of stance that allows the neurotic patient, for whom Oedipalization has occurred, to confuse the analyst with the place of knowledge.

Now what about cases in which Oedipalization has not occurred? In that case, no split has formed between conscious and unconscious, and if I come to wonder why I did such and such, why I feel such and such, or why I became such and such, things remain at the level of an *enigma. I do not assume that anyone else knows why and thus I do not project this knowledge onto anyone else*; I do not assume that this knowledge, which is inaccessible to me, is found or contained in someone or something else, in some other locus.

The fundamental diagnostic distinction to be made here is that neurotics are the people for whom the symbolic dimension has come into being and psychotics are those for whom the symbolic dimension has not come into being (see Figure 2.3, where only the imaginary dimension is represented for psychosis, and Figure 2.4, where the two dimensions are represented for neurosis).[11]

What I hope is clear already is that, at least in certain cases, very clear clues as to the patient's diagnosis at this structural level may be present right from the outset, and in many cases after a fairly small number of sessions. Admittedly, it is usually far easier to detect the presence of the symbolic dimension than the absence thereof, for the therapist can always wonder if he or she has simply not succeeded yet in soliciting or eliciting convincing signs of the symbolic dimension. Nevertheless, I hope to indicate "positive signs" of the absence of the symbolic dimension, which may be useful in making a differential diagnosis.

Figure 2.3 Psychosis

Two Different Ways to Speak a Language

Rather than discuss how it is that a child's parents and larger entourage manage to instate the symbolic

dimension (a complicated topic that I have addressed elsewhere [Fink, 1995; 1997]), I want to turn to the implications of the presence or absence of the symbolic dimension for the way people speak. For psychotics—those for whom the symbolic dimension has not been instated—speak very differently from neurotics. Indeed, I will suggest that there are essentially two different ways to speak a language: the neurotic way (in which both imaginary and symbolic dimensions are present) and the psychotic way (in which only the imaginary dimension is present).

I suggested that when a child internalizes the prohibition against treating its siblings in a certain way and against possessing the parent of the opposite sex, *repression occurs*. The child's desire or wish to be with that parent does not disappear altogether—it is not simply eradicated. It is, according to Freud, repressed, and that which is repressed *continues to exist* and to exert a certain influence, though not in the same way as conscious wishes. Repressed wishes manifest themselves in slips of the tongue, bungled actions, and so on. What is repressed insists: it keeps coming back.

Slips of the Tongue

A slip of the tongue occurs when, in the course of speaking, an unconscious wish interrupts one's conscious intention to communicate something, leading one to say something that is often the exact opposite of what one meant to say, though more often leading one to say something substantially different from what one consciously meant to say. When one associates to the word or words one unintentionally said, this leads off in a rather different direction than the direction one had been intending to go in. This is why working with slips of the tongue can be a very useful tool in analytic work with neurotics: it leads us beyond what the analysand had already thought about and was already aware of—in other words, it leads us beyond the story being told as he or she already understands it to something else.

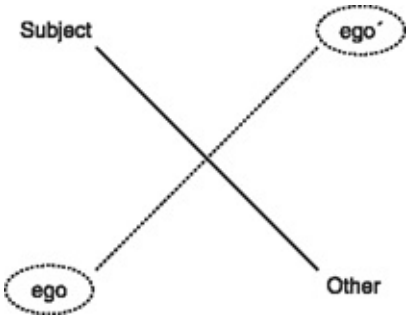

Figure 2.4 Neurosis

When there has, however, been no internalization of parental prohibitions, there is no repression of wishes. The kinds of wishes that the neurotic might try to conceal are often openly revealed by the psychotic analysand who feels no embarrassment about them or reluctance to talk about them (at least for those psychotics who have not yet been through the psychiatric mill and are not yet aware that saying certain things will get them hospitalized involuntarily; in other words, they have not yet learned to stop saying them). A more rigorous way of saying this is that *there is no unconscious in psychosis, strictly speaking*—nothing repressed.

The first thing to note about slips of the tongue in work with psychotics is that they make very few of them. The neurotic patient typically makes several slips in the course of a session and often many more than we could possibly explore in the course of a single consultation. With psychotics, on the other hand, I often find that, even when I listen very attentively, there appears to be only one slip a month, for example, or even less frequently. Nothing seems to be insisting, to be trying to break through from an elsewhere; nothing seems to be trying to overcome repression.

Moreover, the productiveness of highlighting slips in therapy is very different with neurotics than with psychotics. Neurotics can usually, with smaller or greater degrees of prompting, be made to associate to slips of the tongue, to provide associations that suggest why the unintended word perhaps appeared, even if certainty as to why it appeared is not achieved. With psychotics, on the other hand, very little tends to be elicited by way of associations to slips of the tongue, and intentions or wishes that had previously been kept out of sight in the therapy are rarely revealed by such discussions. Little or no new material is elicited in this way.

Such easily detectable unconscious formations as slips of the tongue, which can be heard in ordinary conversation as well as in therapy with a small amount of practice, can be an important tool in helping us make a diagnosis of neurosis versus psychosis. At the most basic level, this can help us avoid taking psychotic patients into therapy, if we do not feel comfortable working with them, allowing us to refer them to colleagues who are better equipped to work with them. *For rather than generalizing psychoanalytic technique such that it is suitable for working with both neurotics and psychotics, Lacan would seem to suggest that different techniques should be used in the different cases*.

What Kind of Other Is the Analyst?

When the symbolic dimension is missing, knowledge is not attributed to the analyst as it is in neurosis. *Psychotics do not spontaneously have the impression that we must see something in what they have said that they themselves do not see, which is absolutely classic in neurotics*. If we insinuate that an expression they used was ambiguous and could be interpreted in a number of different ways, they often dispute this and are loath to credit the legitimacy of our seeing something in what they said that was not intended. A neurotic may be annoyed at the insinuation or jubilant that we have found him out at some level, but will rarely dispute the potentially ambiguous nature of what he said—especially after a certain amount of therapy. The neurotic is not likely to say, "No, what I said was very clear, and it does not grammatically allow for any misinterpretation, indeed, for any other interpretation at all." He is not likely to deny the possibility of any and all *equivocation* (whether homophonic or grammatical).

The neurotic may well attempt to change the subject quickly when we highlight an ambiguity, by slipping associatively to a related expression or thought less charged than the one we highlighted, but this defensive measure can be understood as an indication that the patient has heard or grasped what we were getting at, at some level—in other words, *a denial or an evasion implies avowal or admission at some level*. Note that this generally does not occur at all in psychosis—there is no obvious denial, evasion, or defense but rather simply a failure to grasp what we are getting at, noncomprehension, and confusion. Should we be so maladroit as to insist, the psychotic may come to feel we are persecuting him and become extremely uncomfortable. The neurotic, in therapy, often comes to feel that the most helpful thing in the whole of therapy is when we hear something he did not hear, when we highlight a slip, or underscore an ambiguity or "unintended" double entendre. Let me provide a few examples here:

An analysand of mine had a dream in which she had been assigned a new office at her job; all of her office furniture and files were being moved in the course of the dream and she kept repeating the phrase, "I'm being moved." With this particular analysand it was quite easy to extract this phrase from its context and situate it in the broader context of things she had been talking about for several weeks in her therapy: her own questioning about whether her current boyfriend was able to move her or not in the emotional and sexual sense. It was possible to play on the different meanings of the expression and thus bring out a wish to be moved, if not by the present boyfriend, perhaps by another.

Such a maneuver would not have been possible, or would have been utterly fruitless, had the patient been psychotic. Why? Because the work with the neurotic required her to be able to make use of the

literal *and* figurative meanings of being moved, both the literal and metaphorical meanings. Psychotics, on the other hand, are "blind to metaphor." One may succeed in getting them to grasp unfamiliar metaphors if one explains them in detail, but the neurotic will usually grasp them quite spontaneously. This is not to say that psychotics do not use metaphors that are already part of the language as everyone around them does but, rather, that they cannot hear the literal and figurative meanings of an expression simultaneously.

Language Is Ambiguous

A million such examples could be provided from work with neurotics, but let me provide a somewhat different example, where it is not so much the double meaning of an expression that is at work as a homophony.

One of my analysands said that the thought came to him that if a woman he was interested in found someone else before he finally made his move, he would be "a wreck." Given the way his interest in women seemed to be dictated by the interest shown in them by other men, I heard this "a wreck" in another way as well: as "erect." The patient was very struck when I repeated back the words "you would be erect" and found it to be a very useful intervention; we should never underestimate the importance, in obsession, of another man's desire in the selection of the object of the obsessive's affections (Fink, 1997, p. 142). This analysand had never before realized that this kind of triangle, involving competition with another man as in the original Oedipal configuration, played a role in his love life.

Now had the patient been psychotic, he would likely have thought that I had simply misunderstood what he had said. Insofar as the psychotic takes words as things, we cannot simply modify them a little or slip a little from one sound to a very similar sound. With a neurotic, we can suggest that his choice of words was perhaps dictated by similar sounding words, or if not dictated at least influenced or supported by such similar sounding words. Even if one does not believe that there can be any causal relation between "erect" and "a wreck," the usefulness of playing on such homophonies is often worth exploring with neurotics, and will generally be found to be nil with psychotics.

Such particularities of the psychotic's approach to language are summarized in a rather vague term in contemporary psychiatry where the psychotic's speech is said to be "concrete." This term renders, of course, an aspect of the psychotic's speech, but it seems to contrast it with the fluidity of the neurotic's speech, which is, it seems to me, to put the emphasis in the wrong place. We must not confuse defensiveness or guardedness with psychotic speech. "Concrete" also seems to emphasize an absence of imagery, and that is not necessarily the case either in the psychotic's speech. The more crucial difference would seem to be the ability to see only one or several different meanings in one and the same portion of speech. This brings us to the relation between speech and meaning—in linguistic terms, between the signifier and the signified—which is very different in neurosis and psychosis.

The signifier is what you hear when someone speaks: in other words, the signifier is essentially the sounds produced by a patient in speaking, and the signified is what those sounds mean. A court stenographer records the *sounds* of words, and those sounds can at times be divided up differently, leaving the meaning of the text ambiguous (should, for example, the sound that can be written "disciplined answers," be understood instead as "discipline dancers," a syntagm pronounced in a session by one of my analysands?). The "ribbon of sound," as Saussure calls it, can be broken down in a number of different ways in certain instances.

But to the psychotic, meaning and sound, signified and signifier, are inseparable: the signifiers that the psychotic intended to pronounce are indissolubly attached, in his mind, to the meaning he intended to convey with them. There can be no slippage here, no other meaning in what he said than what he intended,

no other way of reading the same words differently, or cutting up "the ribbon of sound" differently so that it means something else. The signifier and the signified are soldered or welded together here: there can be no gap between them. The psychotic cannot say one thing and mean another.

The neurotic feels that he often fails to convey what he means in speech. He has an idea in mind, and he may very well feel that he has not adequately conveyed it in speaking to someone else. He has said more or less than what he wanted to say; his words somehow did not live up to the idea he had in mind.

What we can say most generally is that *two fundamentally different levels* have come into existence for the neurotic—word and meaning, or signifier and signified—and they have a tendency *not* to be as closely tied together as he would like:

- What he says ends up being ambiguous and he and his interlocutor both realize that what he says can be understood in different ways.
- What he means is not so easy to put into words and he is often frustrated at his own inability to put it well, to say it forcefully and elegantly, in a way that seems to do justice to the thought.[12]

There is no such gap for the psychotic between meaning and expression. The psychotic cannot say one thing and mean another. This is why there is no such thing as intentional irony in a psychotic's speech. Language is two-faced for the neurotic—the neurotic can say one thing and mean another—but language is only one-faced for the psychotic. The neurotic is very aware of her ability to deliberately use language to dupe others, by saying the exact opposite of what she means or by using irony to insinuate the exact opposite of what her words semantically mean. Some time back I went into a bakery in Paris and took out the equivalent of a 20-dollar bill to pay for a loaf of bread; the woman behind the counter said to me, "You don't have a bigger bill to pay with?" all the while clearly wanting a smaller one. (The example says as much about French shopkeepers as about the ironic use of language!)

This two-faced use of language is not available to *the psychotic, who does not employ irony*. The duplicity language affords the neurotic—the social use of language to be very polite when annoyed at someone or to say the sweetest things when the angriest—is not available to the psychotic.

One consequence of this is that the psychotic generally sees no difference between the outer person (or social self) and the inner self. Ludwig II of Bavaria, for example, could see no difference between an actor in his stage role and in his everyday life; if the man acted nobly on stage he had to be noble in real life—the German ruler could not separate out the two.[13] He even went so far as to prohibit a certain play from being performed when he heard that a "noble actor" would play the part of a villain in it. For Ludwig II, there could be no split between the persona (or public face) and the inner self, no distinction between a social facade and the inner core.

$$\frac{S}{s}\ \frac{\text{persona or public face}}{\text{inner self}}$$

There was no possible slippage between signifier (S) and signified (*s*) and thus no gap between someone's ego (facade) and someone's unconscious (inner core).

This gap is, however, flagrant in neurosis. The *neurotic is likely to be struck by the noncorrespondence between his image* (in the mirror or in pictures, or even in how others perceive him) *and what he feels he is*. The neurotic virtually always characterizes himself as a *fake* or a *phony* at some point: people believe he is something he is not or do not see him for what he truly is. In his world, the slippage between signifier and signified is rampant.

For the neurotic, it is usually fairly easy to establish movement in the meaning to be attributed to any

particular enunciation (which I will abbreviate here as S, for the "signifier" as what is spoken); this movement is depicted in the following formula by the slippage or displacement from s_1 to s_2 to s_3—that is, from the first signified to a second signified to a third signified.

$$\frac{S}{s_1 - s_2 - s_3}$$

For the psychotic, on the other hand, S and s_1 are glued together, as it were, and s_2 and s_3, if mentioned by the analyst, are not likely to be accepted as possible meanings of S by the analysand.

A man once came to me for therapy after leaving his previous Lacanian analyst, complaining that the previous analyst was always stressing the words the man used and their double meanings, which he could not understand and indeed found distressing. His previous analyst had obviously failed to realize that the man was psychotic. When in doubt as to a patient's diagnosis, we can occasionally try to underscore certain ambiguous phrases the patient uses to see how he takes them up, but we should certainly not make a habit of doing so in cases where this fails to lead to anything useful. After highlighting ambiguous phrasing or pronunciation a few times with a patient whose history otherwise inclines us to suspect the presence of psychosis, and finding that it leads nowhere and perhaps even disturbs the patient, we should desist and take it as one further confirmation of psychosis.

Ambiguous phrasing and playing on the multiple meanings of words and phrases is at the crux of a great deal of humor, punning in particular. First using a word in one context and then in another, the two contexts requiring very different meanings, is what leads to laughter. I was at a ranger station in the Blue Ridge Mountains one day in the midst of an all-day downpour and, to while away the time, chatted with the rangers there. After getting a bit chummy with an elderly ranger, he told me that in his youth he had enjoyed a great deal of success with the ladies, as he put it, and one of his jealous friends told him he should become a meteorologist. When he asked why, his friend replied that he always seemed to be able to tell whether. The ranger's joke obviously plays on the two different meanings of the sounds that can be written as either "whether" or "weather." Even if this example is perhaps best considered a "groaner," much humor is based precisely on ambiguities of this kind.

Psychotics are remarkably devoid of humor. They may laugh angrily, be sarcastic, or laugh in imitation of other people around them, but plays on words and double entendres lead nowhere with them. While neurotics may occasionally laugh at the ambiguities they hear in something they catch themselves saying (or even were about to say), that does not occur in psychosis.

Meaning Is Determined in the Place of the Other

Even the neurotic who ostensibly refuses to situate the analyst in the position of any kind of authority figure or Other who knows at the outset of the treatment is eventually virtually forced to situate the analyst there as long as the latter keeps quiet for the most part and gets the neurotic talking.

Why is that? It is because, as most of us realize to at least some extent, whether or not what we are saying makes any sense is generally determined by the person we are speaking to. We ourselves may feel that we are making sense when we speak, but without some kind of affirmative or comprehending gesture —which in the everyday world of human relations and professional meetings often involves a nodding or shaking of the head—after a while we may feel the need to stop and ask for confirmation. In other words, we assume, in a certain sense, that meaning is being constituted in some other place than in ourselves, a place that usually involves the other who hears or listens (or who occasionally listens without wanting to hear…).

What something I say means to me is not necessarily what it means to you. Teachers know only too well that often, when they think they have conveyed something very clearly to their students, it is not at all so—the students have heard the opposite, or something else altogether. Analysts have probably all had the experience of saying something during a session only to hear it reported back by the analysand in a very different form in a later session—analysands often give what we say very different meanings than we intended. Politicians learn early on in their careers that everything they say will be understood in a hundred ways, usually all different from the ones intended; they are made painfully aware again and again that meaning is constituted by the listening public (whether well-intentioned or not), not by the speaker.

The psychotic, however, does not think that it is the listener who determines the meaning of what he says; the meaning, he feels, is determined by his words themselves and they cannot be construed to mean anything other than what he intended them to mean.

Recognition and Meaning in the Other

> In madness, of whatever nature, we must recognize […] the negative freedom of a kind of speech that has given up trying to gain recognition.
>
> —Lacan, 2006a, p. 279

The neurotic, in speaking to the analyst, wants to be understood and holds out for herself the belief that she can be understood, even if she does not always express herself well or says more or less than she meant to say.

Do psychotics share this feeling or conviction? I would suggest that they do not, that things operate differently in psychosis. For the fact is that to be understood by someone is to be recognized in a certain sense by that person—indeed, we often slip in our usage of the very term "understanding" from the idea that someone grasps the meaning of what we say to the idea that someone agrees with us: to be understood is thus to have someone agree with you, sympathize with you, or take your side. When someone does not come over to our side, we often say, "But you still do not understand what I am saying." When someone does come over to our side, when someone adopts or endorses our view, we feel recognized by that person, acknowledged.

It does not, however, seem that the psychotic seeks to be recognized by the Other, to be fully understood by the Other. One of the things that very often arises in work with *neurotics* is that the patient early on would like to bring in his or her spouse or lover so that the analyst can really see what the patient is up against. The patient feels that the analyst must encounter this impossible partner in his or her life in order to understand, fully grasp, and sympathize with his or her plight in life.

Should the analyst refuse to meet with the partner, the neurotic may resort to bringing in pictures, tape recordings, letters, and so on as evidence of his or her plight. Somehow, the analyst must be made to feel the same thing the patient is feeling, see things from precisely the same perspective that the patient sees them from, in order for the analyst to fully appreciate the patient's predicament. (This is often accompanied by the statement that it is not really the patient him- or herself that needs therapy but rather the partner.)

Virtually none of this occurs in psychosis. There is rarely if ever a concern on the psychotic's part that his or her description of the situation has been *inadequate* to convey to the analyst a proper appreciation of the patient's plight—indeed, the analyst is often far more worried about the patient's situation than the patient is. The neurotic would like to convince the analyst of a certain kind of personal drama, which the

analyst is perhaps perceived as taking too lightly, whereas the psychotic is far more likely to matter-of-factly recount situations that shock and trouble the analyst. To the psychotic, his words are always adequate to convey what he has to say. *While the neurotic feels that the analyst does not realize how terrible things are for him, the psychotic does not seem to realize how terrible his situation sounds to the analyst!*

It is of course important for the analyst to register a certain amount of surprise and skepticism regarding the neurotic's story as it is told, for there is usually a portion of the story that is not being told that perhaps does not so obviously justify the neurotic's indignation or sense of injustice. The neurotic keeps plenty of things out of sight, some deliberately, some unintentionally because they are unknown to him. By making sounds or gestures of surprise, the analyst is often able to elicit more details from the neurotic, details that reduce to some degree the neurotic's demand that the analyst agree with him. Here there is an acceptance of the idea that meaning is constituted by the analyst, not by the patient's conscious intention in speaking.

Such gestures and sounds of skepticism or noncomprehension or finding something extremely striking are contraindicated in work with psychotics. A certain sense of persecution may arise if they are repeated often enough, as well as the sense that the analyst does not accept the psychotic's good faith or honesty. By insinuating that there is something more to be told, perhaps some seamier side of the story, the analyst gestures toward some other motive, some other train of thought that simply is not there. Repeated attempts by the analyst to bring out that other motive or train of thought, that other space associated in work with neurotics with the unconscious, is likely to destabilize the psychotic patient, possibly pushing toward the introduction of a third term where there is no place for one. This is tantamount to an attempt to bring something into "symbolic opposition" (Lacan, 2006a, p. 577) with the imaginary: in a word, the analyst here tries to triangulate or introduce an outside into a dyadic relationship. As Lacan puts it, the analyst here attempts to "situate himself in a tertiary position in a relationship based on the imaginary couple [ego to eg′]" (p. 577). This amounts to the attempt to instate the symbolic dimension when it is too late to do so (see Figure 2.4).

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Notes

1 In the realm of human behavior we refer to this kind of display as "posturing"; it includes bearing or display behaviors such as strutting and posing.

2 Note that, to the best of our knowledge, these postures are never used to *dupe* the adversary: a dog never adopts a submissive posture to lure another dog into being off guard, only to attack it a moment later.

3 Certain therapists seem to take this as a rule of thumb in their interpretative strategy with patients, as do certain politicians in their foreign policy; they can be understood to be trapped in the imaginary dimension, in this respect, not situating their work at the symbolic level.

Regarding nonrecognition of qualitative difference in the animal kingdom, note that a lion in the wild will not "interpret" a child's gesture to pet its face as fundamentally nonaggressive. If it resembles an act of aggression coming from a non-lion species, it will be "read" that way in all cases. Even lion tamers who have worked with their lions for years have to be very careful not to get too close to a lion; they must not inadvertently get into a lion's attack range, based on its fight or flight instinct (when an enemy is far enough away, a lion will run, when the enemy has snuck up too close, it will attack [Lorenz, 1966]). The lion does not shift attitudes and come to regard the lion tamer as fundamentally a friend who should be allowed all things. All individuals encountered are viewed as ultimately the same: *sameness here means that every individual encountered is sized up in the same way*—that is, in terms of dominance and submission.

4 Here we might say that the self includes both the ego (*a*) and the other (*a′*), in a sense, there being little that allows one to distinguish between the two.

5 When the symbolic dimension comes into being, the imaginary (or preoedipal) dimension does not suddenly disappear, but it is radically transformed, constrained, and even "overwritten"; imaginary phenomena abate in intensity at this time and psychoanalysis, insofar as it is pursued at the symbolic level, leads them to abate still further.

6 To draw an anthropological analogy here, this corresponds to the moment in human history at which graves appear, at which human existence is honored and sanctified as precious—even the existence of one's enemies. As anthropologists are wont to say, human history or civilization begins with the burying of one's dead. A certain status is given, from this point forward, even to those I hate, suggesting *a barrier or limit to my hatred*: even my enemies are worthy in some way, brave warriors, dauntless knights, respect-inspiring soldiers. Obviously, this is not a historical progression that all of humanity advanced to at once—indeed, there are many for whom the sanctity of their enemies remains completely unknown. Neurotics are those who are traumatized by the lack of sanctity accorded to people's enemies (violation of the Geneva convention, for example), whereas certain psychotics might not be traumatized by that.

Metaphorically speaking, the internalization of the superego—a sort of bringing "inside" of what was initially "outside"—might be understood as that which closes off the ego, creating a well-defined "inside" for the first time, well-defined ego boundaries that were not there before. Although one can speak of the superego in psychosis, it remains "outside" ("superego voices" are often attributed by the psychotic to sources outside of the subject, for example) in an important way, not "inside" as we find it in neurosis. See Fink (1997, pp. 79–111, especially note 40), for a detailed account of this (reference is made there to the ego-ideal instead of to the superego, but they are closely related terms in Freud's vocabulary).

7 In the absence of mirror images, I may use my sibling's image as a model for my own self-image; Lacan (2001b, pp. 36–45) refers to this as the "intrusion complex."

8 I would suggest that transitivism is the only concept in Lacan's work that is in any way related to a very popular notion in psychoanalytic and psychotherapeutic circles these days, that of "projective identification."

9 The absence of a clear boundary between self and other can, naturally, also lead to the kinds of cooperation and so-called altruistic acts that have been noted in animals by contemporary ethologists.

10 Those who wonder whether they are crazy are far more likely to be neurotic than those who never wonder about it at all. The wondering itself can serve us as a useful diagnostic barometer.

11 The symbolic is not the ability to speak per se, but language operating in a certain manner.

12 Indeed, Lacan considers this to be one of the goals the neurotic analysand eventually sets him- or herself: *le bien dire*, to put it well.

13 I am borrowing this example from Didier Cremniter and Jean-Claude Maleval (1989, p. 86), "Contribution au diagnostique de psychose," *Ornicar? 48* [1989]: 86.

3

A LACANIAN RESPONSE TO FOUCAULT'S CRITIQUE OF PSYCHOANALYSIS

Over the years, psychoanalysis has been accused of quite a number of things, and many of those accusations are valid. In the name, supposedly, of "making the unconscious conscious," as Freud might have said, or of restoring the subject's memory of his or her own history, psychoanalysts have embraced all kinds of notions and done a colossal number of things that have little if anything to do with the most basic goals of psychoanalysis. Last year, in the panel several of us here today put together on "Psychoanalytic Ways of Knowing and Politics" at the 1999 Boston APA meeting, I addressed a few of the poststructural, LGBT, and feminist critiques of psychoanalysis, taking the admittedly easy approach of applying all of those critiques to American forms of psychoanalysis, suggesting that Lacanian psychoanalysis was not open to the same kinds of critiques. I'd like to briefly summarize a few of these points before turning to the more difficult task of addressing some of the poststructural, LGBT, and feminist critiques of Lacanian psychoanalysis itself.

American psychoanalysts, I argued, many of whom were trained in Europe and found themselves adapting for better or for worse to the American situation owing to the Diaspora, came to emphasize the adaptation of the human subject to the prevailing social, economic, and political environment; seeking recognition by the American medical establishment, they diligently excluded all those who might potentially jeopardize their good reputation in the public's mind—above all, those persons of "dubious" sexual orientation and practice.

Having striven to adapt to their new environment, these American psychoanalysts came to see it as part of analytic therapy to teach their analysands how to adapt to their own environments. They came to conceive of illness as the inability of the analysand's ego to adapt the analysand's id impulses to the analysand's reality. The analysand's ego was too weak for the task of adaptation, and had to be encouraged to identify with the analyst's supposedly strong ego.

This is, in a nutshell, how Lacan describes the development of the trend known as ego psychology that began with Anna Freud in the late 1930s in England and flourished on American soil in the 1940s and thereafter. Ego psychologists often made it an explicit goal of treatment to turn homosexuals into heterosexuals and generally excluded them from analytic training altogether.

While Freud's published views on homosexuality were certainly not always laudable, I know of no passage in his work where he makes it a goal of analytic treatment to change a homosexual into a heterosexual (for the opposite perspective, see, for example, Freud, 1955c), or says that homosexuals should be denied analytic treatment. Indeed, he opines that "the exclusive sexual interest felt by men for women is also a problem that needs elucidating and is not a self-evident fact based upon an attraction that is ultimately of a chemical nature" (Freud, 1953, p. 146, footnote added in 1915)—in other words, he believed that psychoanalysis should investigate heterosexuality and homosexuality equally, neither being altogether biologically determined.

Consider the following two letters Freud wrote. The first, jointly written with Otto Rank, was sent to Ernest Jones in 1921, regarding the British Psycho-Analytical Society's denial of admission to psychoanalytic training to an applicant owing to his sexual orientation. Freud and Rank wrote,

> Your query, dear Ernest, concerning prospective membership of homosexuals has been considered by us and we disagree with you. In effect we cannot exclude such persons without other sufficient reasons, [just] as we cannot agree with their legal prosecution. We feel that a decision in such cases should depend upon a thorough examination of the other qualities of the candidate [just as with any other candidate].
>
> (cited in Frosh, 1997, p. 224)

In a second letter, this one written in 1935 to an American mother who had written to Freud out of her concern over her son's homosexuality, the latter wrote that homosexuality "is nothing to be ashamed of, no vice, no degradation, [nor can it] be classified as an illness" (Freud, 1951, p. 331). In his *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, Freud (1953) says that "Psycho-analytic research is most decidedly opposed to any attempt at separating off homosexuals from the rest of mankind as a group of a special character" (p. 145, footnote added in 1915).

The point is not to whitewash Freud completely on this subject, but to indicate the difference between his attitude, in his better moments at least, and that of many of his followers. For despite Freud's disagreements with the British and American institutes, many homosexuals have been turned away by analysts, or have been subjected to manipulation or suggestion by English-speaking analysts—so often that, in my own practice, many of the homosexuals that come to see me are at least at first justifiably afraid that I will try to make their discontinuation of homosexual activity a goal or even a condition of our work together. Those of them who wish to become analysts themselves after working with me are often worried—and once again, justifiably so, given the American context—that I will somehow discourage them or try to thwart them from going on to become practitioners.

One could argue that the theory and practice of psychoanalysis in America today has only just begun to distance itself from many of the values embraced by its early medical practitioners in the United States. French psychoanalysis followed a rather different trajectory regarding the treatment of homosexuals, especially in its Lacanian manifestations, but was nevertheless harshly criticized, above all in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, for its views of women, and for a number of other significant theoretical and practical reasons.

Deleuze and Guattari focused, to some degree, on French psychiatric and psychoanalytic practices in institutional settings, and critiqued the centrality of the Oedipus complex in psychoanalytic theory. Irigaray stressed Freud's misogyny and Lacan's view of women as not-whole. Given the short amount of time available to me today, I have decided to present and address some of Michel Foucault's criticisms of psychoanalysis as presented, above all, in his *History of Sexuality,* volume 1. Volumes 2 and 3 articulate things a bit differently, but volume 1 provides the most direct critique. Foucault provides so many different critiques of psychoanalysis that I could not possibly hope to address them all in one brief talk. He also has a lot to teach psychoanalysts. I will merely focus here on what strike me as his more debatable critiques.

Foucault's Critique of Analytic Power Dynamics

Foucault (1978) begins by criticizing the power dynamic inherent in the very setup of the psychoanalytic situation. He likens it to the Catholic ritual of confession; in both, he says,

> the agency of domination does not reside in the one who speaks (for it is he who is constrained), but in the one who listens and says nothing; not in the one who knows and answers, but in the one who questions and is not supposed to know,

which is an obvious reference to Lacan's "subject supposed to know." "This discourse of truth finally takes effect," Foucault continues, "not in the one who receives it, but in the one from whom it is wrested" (p. 62). According to Foucault, the analysand is forced to avow everything, to make a complete confession, and yet the analysand is not considered by the analyst to be able to formulate his or her own truth.

Foucault continues:

> The truth did not reside solely in the subject who, by confessing, would reveal it wholly formed. It was constituted in two stages: present but incomplete, blind to itself, in the one who spoke, it could only reach completion in the one who assimilated and recorded. It was the latter's function to verify this obscure truth: what is revealed through confession has to be coupled with the deciphering of what it said. The one who listened was not simply the forgiving master, the judge who condemned or acquitted; he was the master of truth.
>
> (pp. 66–67, translation modified)

Foucault's view of the psychoanalyst as the supposed master of the analysand's truth stands in stark contrast to the analytic situation as conceptualized by Lacan and even by a number of other contemporary American psychoanalysts. Yes, Lacan believes that the *creation* of the analysand's truth—and it is not a revelation, but rather a creation—requires the presence of another person, a person who agrees to occupy a certain position. But Lacan qualifies that position as one of *semblance*, not of *mastery*. If I am the analysand, I may well initially believe that the analyst knows something, something that might be useful in alleviating my suffering. That belief allows me to tell the analyst about myself, about my fantasies and dreams, and to associate to them. After a while, however, I notice that the analyst keeps frustrating me and never tells me the secret, never gives me the key. It slowly dawns on me that, in fact, she knows about me only what I tell her—the analyst is not clairvoyant, not a master of knowledge, not a genius of some kind: the analyst is mere pretense, semblance, imposture. She is a master only as long as I see her in that way. Actually, I am the one who knows; or, rather, the knowledge is written in me in some form and I have to do the work of finding it and speaking it. I will not be freed by my analyst's brilliant interpretation—whatever little interpreting she does is often off the mark, clumsy, even stupid at times. Maybe if she just keeps her mouth shut long enough, I'll say what it is I need to say for my symptoms to go away…

That, I would suggest, is far more reflective of the analysand's experience in any analysis worth its salt. Yes, it plays off the power relationship already existing in the analysand's mind prior to beginning therapy, but it progressively undermines that. Interpretation comes from me, the analysand, and seeks to uncover desires within me that I'm unaware of or don't want to see.

A number of contemporary American psychoanalysts seem to concur on this point: Nancy Chodorow says that she believes analytic theory will never be able to cover all of a patient's experience and that it is the analysand who leads the analyst, not vice versa. Nancy McWilliams (1999) makes a very similar point in her book, *Psychoanalytic Case Formulation*.

Power dynamics are present in virtually every form of psychotherapy, due to the very fact that a client comes to talk to someone who is supposedly some sort of expert or authority in dealing with human problems. Yet this power dynamic is played out very differently in the different forms of therapy: in therapies where advice is freely given—or rather not so freely, since one still pays the therapist—it has the obvious power of suggestion. I pay this person to tell me things about myself, so I should believe her; I pay her to tell me what to do, so I should follow her advice. My future actions and beliefs are thus based directly on the power dynamic that grows out of suggestion.

In other forms of therapy, in which the therapist employs behavioral or cognitive techniques, I as a subject am apparently short-circuited altogether, and the treatment administered is akin to that given me by a psychiatrist when I take a drug prescribed to me: I am changed without undergoing any kind of *subjective* exploration or transformation on my own. I do not, thereby, acquire the sense of being able to change myself, should I need to at some time in the future, of being able to handle things—I simply return to the cognitive-behavioral therapist or the psychiatrist for a new dose of mental, behavioral, or physiological manipulation. The therapist remains the expert and I remain the poor schlump who is unable to get on with his life without help. This is a far cry from the analysand's position in Lacanian psychoanalysis!

A Misguided Notion of Power Relations

A more far-reaching critique that Foucault offers in his *History of Sexuality* concerns what he considers to be a significant shift in the way power is exercised in the Western world. According to him, since the eighteenth century we have essentially left behind the juridical model of power relations, a model of power relations in which coercion—whether it came from the king or a parliamentary body—always appealed to law and to the legal system as a whole. Prior to that time, power was exerted in the name of the law, and changes had to be made to the legal system in order to justify new uses of power. Starting in the eighteenth century, however, with the expansion of sociology, demographics, and medicine, power began to emanate from a whole variety of different discourses and disciplines, all of which appealed in one form or another to norms and standards—in essence, to a mean and to deviations from the mean. This led, in Foucault's view, to a proliferation and dissemination of power sources that no longer needed to appeal to laws passed by any sovereign body.

According to Foucault, psychoanalysis has, since the outset, conceived of sexual desire in terms of juridical power relations, and in its Lacanian incarnation, as intimately related to the enunciation of the law. Law leads, according to Foucault, to a set of clear distinctions between what is licit and what is illicit, and between the legislator and the obedient subject. In psychoanalysis, "Sex is to be deciphered on the basis of its relationship to the law," Foucault (1978, p. 83) says; psychoanalysis, in its conceptualization of sexual desire, does not call into question the idea "that law had to be the very form of power" (p. 88).

Now, to Foucault's way of thinking, the juridical model of power relations "is utterly incongruous with the new methods of power whose operation is not ensured by right but by technique, not by law but by normalization, not by punishment but by control" (p. 89). He suggests that, given the shift in the form of power relations that has taken place since the eighteenth century, we must find a way to conceive of "sex without the law" (p. 90), a way to conceptualize sexuality that does not hark back to the notion that sexual desire forms in relation to prohibition. Psychoanalysis is, according to Foucault, "a historical 'retro-version'" or anachronism. He argues that "We must conceptualize the deployment of sexuality on the basis of the techniques of power that are contemporary with it" (p. 150), not those that are outdated.

Foucault's critique raises a number of interesting questions. By way of response to it, I would argue, first, that the juridical model of power relations has not been *entirely* jettisoned in our day and age, and that what we see today is a legal model coexisting with an ever more elaborate normalization model fostered by psychological, psychiatric, medical, and educational discourses. Foucault in fact admits to the coexistence of these different models of power relations at certain points in his book. Indeed, it would be difficult to sustain that there is no longer any prohibition of behaviors and practices of the kind generated by the juridical model, given the uproar created by certain propositions in the State of California and referendums elsewhere, not to mention Supreme Court decisions and the like. Notions of normality and

abnormality have not entirely supplanted the distinction between legal and illegal or licit and illicit—not by any stretch of the imagination. Nor must we confuse juridical law with rules and prohibitions enunciated and/or enforced by parents at home with their children.

As regards the effect of the kind of prohibition brought about by law, Foucault seems to accept the point of view expressed by a theory he rejects in other regards, namely, the repression hypothesis. Repression theorists, such as Wilhelm Reich and Herbert Marcuse, argue that the development and expansion of capitalism required considerable sexual repression and that the time has come to liberate some of the surplus or excess repression we have been subjected to over the last two or three centuries during the development of capitalism. The repression hypothesis seems, when understood reductively as it is by Reich and Marcuse, to suggest an either/or model of sexuality: repression gives rise to the disappearance or absence of libido, whereas without repression we witness the appearance or presence of libido.

This reductive understanding of the repression hypothesis stems from certain of Freud's hydraulic metaphors, whereby prohibition is said to lead to the "damming up" of libido. Likening the flows of libido to the mechanics of fluids seems to suggest an all or nothing model whereby libido either flows or does not flow. Freud, however, points to the ways in which libido finds other outlets when prohibited from flowing in one particular direction, outlets that in turn become highly eroticized. Georges Bataille and other twentieth-century writers influenced by psychoanalysis (including Deleuze and Guattari) have often emphasized the way in which prohibition, far from damming up the flow of libido, redoubles its intensity and leads to the creation of new libidinal dynamics and new erotic objects.

Both Freud and Lacan emphasize the ineluctably eroticizing effect of parental and superego prohibitions, the way in which such prohibitions cathect power relations with erotic feeling and create new objects toward which positive and negative passions are directed, leading to such phenomena as "identification with the aggressor." The eroticizing effects of prohibition are often considered to be unintended consequences of prohibition, but they are *no less effective* at steering sexual energy into new and different channels than the discursive procedures of medicine and psychiatry that Foucault describes in such detail.[1]

What I am trying to suggest here is that the juridical model of power relations, in which prohibition is based on the enunciation not of a norm but of a law, is perhaps not as simple as it might seem at first glance: it does not give rise to a sexual system in which libido is simply either on or off, present or absent. To take the example of a form of prohibition made much of in psychoanalytic theory, the prohibition of a child's close relationship to its mother at a certain point in its development, the result of this prohibition by the father's enunciation of the law of separation—if and when it occurs—is quite complex. In theory, *it is this very prohibition that creates the child's desire for the mother*, which prior to its prohibition or thwarting cannot be properly understood as a desire at all. For when an infant wants something and is given it immediately, it does not seem to have a chance to form what in psychoanalysis is referred to as a desire. Human desire, in order to form, must seemingly meet with some obstacle, some delay between impulse and satisfaction, some at least momentary lack of the object. (Note that Foucault, in volume 2 of his *History of Sexuality,* quotes Plato, in *Philebus* 44e and following, as saying that desire is based on lack [Foucault, 1984, p. 52]; the same thesis is obviously found in Plato's *Symposium* 200a–201c, suggesting that it is hardly a psychoanalytic invention).

Prohibition, in this case, constitutes an obstacle and brings the child's impulses toward the mother into being as a *desire* for her, a desire that must, in theory, become unconscious. Rather than damming up the child's libido, prohibition here fixates the child's libido on an object that is now connoted as inaccessible. The child consciously comes to believe it could not care less about its mother on the erotic level—indeed, certain forms of closeness with the mother often become consciously experienced as

disgusting, disgust being a very common marker of repression.

Accompanying this repression, which renders unconscious the child's desire for its mother, is a new *conscious* desire on the child's part for someone or something else, indeed often a whole series of desires for new friends, new partners, and new activities. In that sense, this particular prohibition, while leading to one particular fixation, simultaneously gives rise to a shifting, polyvalent, multifaceted desire, characterized in Lacanian theory as *a desire for something else*. The endless proliferation of human desires and fantasies begins, according to Lacan, with just such an initial prohibition.

Unlike certain other analysts, Lacan takes into account all kinds of social and cultural elements in the formation of these endlessly proliferating desires and fantasies. He by no means ignores the degree to which "human desire is the Other's desire" (see, for example, Lacan, 2006a, p. 628), by which he means that our desires form on the basis of the desires and fantasies expressed by those around us, the desires and fantasies portrayed in movies, magazines, music, literature, and so on. Indeed, he says that "the unconscious is the Other's discourse" (Lacan, 2006a, pp. 16 and 379), implying that the unconscious is full of the dominant discourses and images in our society, overflowing with the hegemonic and not so hegemonic discourses, images, and fantasies being broadcast all around us.

Lacan's portrayal of the unconscious as permeated and penetrated by all of the discourses around us, whether medical and sociological or cinematic and literary, has seemingly endeared him to many cultural and poststructural critics. And, indeed, he may be understood as having made the unconscious more palatable to certain phenomenologists by virtually equating the unconscious, in certain people's minds, with language, or more generally speaking, with culture itself. While this inclusion of culture served as an important corrective for many psychoanalysts—who were often inclined to reduce all of an analysand's desires and fantasies to the Oedipal complex or to three or four such complexes in psychoanalytic theory, ignoring the influence of culture altogether—it allowed phenomenological critics to believe that Lacan had effectively evacuated something they found unpalatable in Freud's view of the unconscious: namely, his insistence on the dynamic unconscious, that is, on what is actively repressed.

This leads to the curious acceptance by some thinkers of the notion of the unconscious but not of that of repression. They balk at the idea of repression as something that creates a hole or a lack, a structural lack that might set a whole economy in motion. To refer back to the example I gave earlier of the father's supposed prohibition of the child's relationship with its mother, psychoanalysis postulates that this prohibition (if and when it actually occurs) gives rise to a lack—the loss of a primary erotic object—and that this lack displaces and remains at the root of the many displacements of desire to come. According to Lacan, human desire is always based on lack, on the loss of this fundamental object, the mother. Hence, lack is immanent in desire and desire is always empty in some sense, having been created by prohibition.

Now this is not at all how desire is portrayed in Foucault's work. Foucault rejects the notion of lack, seeming to prefer to view desire as something quite different, something full in and of itself, we might say, something that can be understood as existing prior to prohibition and independently of prohibition. Lack would seem to be problematic from his point of view because it might suggest an absence, a negativity that could suggest a point at which a kind of truth, a subjective truth, might be located. Lack, owing to repression, might introduce the notion of something that is hidden, something that is an explanatory principle of certain formations—a notion Foucault (1978) argues against throughout volume 1 of his *History of Sexuality* (see, for example, pp. 34–35).

Repression implies that something is missing from consciousness, that not everything that is can be seen on the surface, whereas Foucault sings the praises of the surface and surface phenomena: sexuality, he says, has nothing to do with an "underlying reality on which we might try, with difficulty, to get a hold, but

[has to do] rather [with] a great surface network" (p. 105, translation modified).[2] In the same vein, he suggests that the notion of depth (or of sex as truth) is a "mirage" (p. 157) and a "shadow" (p. 159).

Admittedly, "surface" and "depth" constitute a binary opposition that warrants deconstruction and the dynamic unconscious has hardly been adequately theorized. Freud often appealed to the metaphor of depth, and many of his followers such as Jung extended the metaphor still further, suggesting in this sense that the unconscious is something very difficult to find and encounter, whereas in fact it is constantly seen on the surface in very striking ways. For example, I have already made several slips of the tongue while reading my text today, slips that can be seen right on the surface of my discourse, so to speak. Those slips are plain for all the world to see, if not their why and wherefore; according to psychoanalytic theory this means that we find manifestations of the unconscious, or interference by the unconscious, in everyday speech. Similarly, slight hesitations and elisions may suggest interfering thoughts that I have chosen to keep hidden, out of sight.

Another way of saying this is to say that I have excluded these thoughts from the chain of my speech. Lacan introduces the notion of speech as a chain that is determined by what it excludes. In the therapeutic setting, this implies that when I, as an analysand, talk on and on about a particular subject, I may well be beating around the bush or skirting the issue, my speech avoiding precisely what it is I do not want to say. In that sense, what I don't want to say, what I am excluding, determines the detours my speech makes, in effect determining what I do say. This amounts to conceptualizing the situation in terms of what is "inside" the chain of my speech and what remains "outside" the chain, or excluded from the chain. While circumventing the surface/depth metaphor, it nevertheless introduces an inside/outside metaphor of its own, even though it takes the two to be inseparable and mutually determining.

Now we would be mistaken to infer that everything included in the chain is determined solely by what is excluded. Indeed, Foucault reminds us just how much what is *included* in the chain is determined by the plethora of normative discourses circulating around us. Psychoanalysts have a tendency to overlook that, and this is precisely why Foucault's work serves as a useful corrective to much psychoanalytic discourse. Nevertheless, I see no reason to emphasize only one of the chain's determinants at the expense of the other. Must we assume that *all* of the chain's determinants are accessible to a form of discourse analysis? Doesn't it seem from extensive clinical experience that there are not only things the analysand is loath to say or ashamed to say, but also things that the analysand finds it very difficult to put into words? That which is so difficult to put into words for the analysand goes by various names in psychoanalysis: the repressed, the unconscious, the real, trauma, and the traumatic real.

No dialogue is, it seems to me, possible between analysts and Foucauldians if it is not made quite clear that they are operating with fundamentally different conceptions of the human psyche. For the Foucauldians, the psyche is structured by a multitude of political, economic, social, and cultural discourses—a point of view that psychoanalysts would do well to endorse and integrate—but is not itself multileveled; paraphrasing what Foucault says about sexuality, the psyche itself is for him "a great surface network" (p. 105). The conception embraced by most psychoanalysts, on the other hand, is that the psyche is itself composed of multiple levels or structures (for example, agencies such as the unconscious, conscious, and preconscious, or id, ego, and superego): it is multifaceted and, like a Möbiusstrip, has at least two locally distinguishable surfaces.

In the early days of psychoanalysis, clinicians were obviously struck by the degree to which sexuality was skirted by analysands and how difficult it was for them to put it into words—despite what Foucault refers to as centuries of encouragement to put sex into speech, to transform "sex into discourse" (p. 22). Their reading public was clearly struck and shocked by the degree to which analysts associated sexuality with the unconscious and trauma, and found it hard to accept the idea that sexuality could be so central to

human existence. The fact remains that the primary concern at that time and since that time has been to encourage the analysand to put everything that he or she is loath to say into words and to symbolize everything that initially presents itself as unspeakable or unnamable in his or her experience. Hence psychoanalysis' imperative to say whatever comes to mind, no matter how scabrous or irrelevant it may seem, in order to bring into speech what has always been excluded.

Foucault considers this imperative to be no more than the continuation of the longstanding Catholic and scientific imperatives to put all of one's sexual experience into discourse—an imperative he believes began in 1215 with the Lateran Council, which required full confession by all believers on a weekly basis, and continued in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries with the ever greater medicalization and psychiatrization of sexual experience. He does not seem to me to emphasize the degree to which this same imperative has progressively been applied to many facets of experience, not simply to sexual experience. Especially in the twentieth century, we saw this imperative to "transform into discourse" expanded to include such traumatic events as train wrecks, airplane crashes, spousal abuse, verbal and physical violence to children, gay bashing, school bombings, natural disasters, and so on. If Foucault is against this putting into discourse in general, he would seemingly find himself in a precarious position, that of criticizing his own endeavor to transform into discourse our contemporary experience of power relations, for indeed his work can be understood as an attempt to symbolize the newer forms of power relations that affect us as human beings.

However laughable certain interventions by psychologists and other "disaster specialists" may seem on specific crime scenes, *the project of symbolizing all forms of traumatic experience* seems quite unstoppable (whether or not it is undesirable). But there are at least two different ways in which traumatic experience can be symbolized:

1. In the first, it is symbolized from the outside, as it were, simply by laying a predefined grid of supposedly scientific terms on it, as is often done in psychological interventions (one is told, for example, that one has an "addiction" or a "neurological imbalance"); this simply leads to the subject's ever greater alienation in the Other's discourse. Psychoanalytic discourse can contribute to this as well, and many analysands come to therapy already having reduced their own experience to a handful of jargonized catch-phrases (such as "it's all because of my Oedipal rivalry with my father").

2. There is another level of symbolization possible, which although it must inevitably work from the analysand's own discourse—permeated as it is by dominant cultural discourses—does far more than simply *code* the analysand's trauma in new terms: it leads to a genuine working-through of the trauma. It is true, however, that our cultural discourses are often an obstacle to this form of symbolization. But aren't they ineradicable?

Newer medical and psychological discourses have come to structure our experience but, as Foucault himself shows, that experience was already structured by religious discourses. The Greeks in fifth-century B.C. Athens had already constructed elaborate moral and aesthetic discourses about sex.

Does Foucault want us to return to a time before such discourses, as if we could get back to some primary experience prior to discourse? Is there some sort of primary sexual experience as such that is compromised or tainted by being put into words, transformed into discourse? Isn't this but another version of the notion of the Fall from Grace or from Rousseau's State of Nature?

This paper was given on August 8, 2000, at the annual international convention of the American Psychological Association (APA) in Washington, D.C. as part of a panel on "Psychoanalysis and Sexualities." There it was entitled, "Analytic Responses to the Poststructural Critique."

Notes

1 He characterizes the consequences of these discourses as “both intentional and nonsubjective” (Foucault, 1978, p. 94), intentional insofar as they benefit a certain group or class, but not necessarily intended by any individual doctor or scientist.

2 Foucault nevertheless agrees with Lacan that anatomy is not destiny, contradicting Freud.

4

COMPULSIVE EATING AND THE DEATH DRIVE

> Desire is neither the appetite for satisfaction nor the demand for love, but the difference that results from the subtraction of the first from the second, the very phenomenon of their splitting.
>
> —Lacan, 2006a, p. 691

Eating, drinking, weight, dieting, and nutrition have become dominant themes in popular culture, and psychology has once again proven its abiding respect for common sense by introducing a whole new category of psychological problems to cash in on these popular concerns: "eating disorders." So-called "eating disorders"—anorexia, bulimia, and their binge-purge combination—have long been recognized by psychoanalysts, and indeed Freud noted many such problems among the hysterics he treated over a century ago. They are thus, classically speaking, symptoms, not clinical categories, and, most generally speaking, they are symptoms characteristic of hysteria.

Not just characteristic, however. Consider what Freud (1963a) says in his *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*:

> It seems as though, for unknown reasons, *hysterics must vomit*, and as though the precipitating causes revealed in a patient's history by analysis are merely pretexts which (if they even exist) are exploited by this internal necessity.
>
> (p. 336, translation modified)

Symptoms involving eating and food are closely related to the very early "definitions" of hysteria Freud (1985) provides in his letters to Fliess, the gist of which are that the hysteric reacts to a primal experience of pleasure with revulsion.[1] While Freud's letters provide a variety of definitions of hysteria, all of those definitions involve metaphors taken from eating—disgust, revulsion, distaste, nausea, repulsion, and so on—used to characterize someone's feelings about an experience of pleasure.

Pleasure usually cannot be enjoyed by the hysteric, as strange as that may sound. The phrasing comes from a male analysand of mine, who noticed in a recent sexual encounter that for once he *was* able "to enjoy [his] pleasure." The neurotic, in general, is *not* able to do so. The hysteric, in particular, instead of enjoying her or his pleasure, is disgusted by it. Certain symptoms related to disgust thus seem to take us to the heart of Freud's definitions of hysteria.

I am not going to try to define hysteria any more precisely here (see Chapter 13), but what I have already said, in and of itself, implies that there are two levels:

1. an experience of pleasure;
2. a stance adopted regarding that pleasure, or what Lacan would call a "subjective position": a positioning of the subject with respect to that experience of pleasure.

Those two levels correspond to Lacan's matheme for fantasy: ($\$\lozenge a$); the subject is a stance adopted with respect to an experience of pleasure, a stance involving the maintenance of the right distance from it: not

getting either too close or too far away, for example.[2]

But subjective positioning does not always occur; not every activity we engage in involves subjectivity, and that is precisely what is at issue in some of modernday hysteria's major symptoms: compulsive eating or compulsive vomiting. The very use of the term "compulsive" to talk about eating or vomiting suggests that the experience is somehow beyond the subject's control. Indeed, Lacan refers to such processes as headless or "acephalous" (or "acephalic"),[3] implying the drives, first and foremost, desire coming in only secondarily. It is not so much that the individual in question "wants" to eat, for example, but that it is uncontrollable, uncontainable, unstoppable.

Desire versus Drive

Such compulsions, like all symptoms, require that we distinguish carefully between desire and drive (which is more easily said than done). My hypothesis here is that compulsive eating, for example, *originates* in the non-dialectical operation of the drives, implying a *short-circuiting of the dialectic of desire*. Secondarily, however, desire reinforces the operation of the drives, such that, in the vast majority of cases, a symptom such as compulsive eating can never be fully understood on the basis of the drives alone. It is perhaps only in the case of autism that something like a "pure drive" can be observed. To complicate matters still further, in neurosis, desire gets worked into the drives or imbricated with them. Lacan's formulation is that desire "*est agi dans la pulsion*," an unusual construction that might be translated as "is put into effect (or activated or affected) in the drive" (Lacan, 1973a, p. 220).

In the remainder of this paper, I will attempt to provide a tentative articulation of the intertwining of demand, desire, and drive in a particular case, without, however, going into detail about the specifics of the case.[4]

Example of an Anorexic

Let me begin with an example in which we see occasional compulsive eating within a larger clinical framework of anorexia. It is the case of a young woman whose mOther's most basic demand might be abbreviated as "Get out of my way!" A longer formulation might be, "I didn't want a child when I got pregnant with you; so just be still, be quiet, act dead, so I can get on with my life."

The daughter obeys her mother and eats as little as possible.[5] Taking her mOther's demand as the object in her fantasy, her fundamental fantasy (which would usually be written as follows: $\$ \lozenge a$) is constituted instead as a drive ($\$ \lozenge D$), and quite patently here as a death drive. Were this drive operating in isolation, executing the mOther's demand for the daughter to die, it would long since have done her in. Thus it cannot be the whole story.

We observe that the daughter compulsively counts every calorie she eats, to be sure that she is not eating "too much" and to prevent bingeing, which she guards against. Thus there seems to be a hidden desire: to protest against her mother's demand for her to disappear by eating everything in sight, by consequently taking up more space. The stronger the daughter's desire to eat—that is, the stronger her desire to protest against her mOther's unfair demand—the more compulsively she counts calories and controls her intake, keeping the oppositional desire at bay.

In many cases of anorexia, the subject simply claims not to be hungry. Here, however, anorexia takes on a compulsive character, suggesting that unless calories are constantly counted, something else will appear or express itself.

And that something else does occasionally appear, as the daughter sometimes binges; *but her bingeing*

also has a compulsive character.

How can we explain that? The anorexic phases that execute the mOther's demand are reinforced by the daughter's desire to forcibly raise the question of desire by foiling her mOther's demand: she can put her mOther to the test by putting her life on the line, seeing just how important she is to her mOther by casting her all in the balance, by playing for keeps. This, according to Lacan, is the question at issue in separation: if she really starves herself, she will get a rise out of her parents and find out what she really means to them; but to do so she has to stake everything: her very life. In other words, she has to truly starve herself.[6]

In that sense, the bingeing is tantamount to giving in, to giving up on her desire—hence it is accompanied by guilt. Not for gaining weight, as she thinks, but for having given up on her desire for desire (for the Other's desire, not the Other's demand). If she binges, she does not put her mother to the test, she cannot separate from her mOther's demand, and she feeds into her mOther's secondary demand that appearances be preserved: that the daughter seem healthy at least to the outside world. Her bingeing signals a giving up on her own desire, allowing herself to be commanded by her mOther's demand that face be saved. Hence even the bingeing—originally a protest at the level of desire—is rendered compulsive via the Other's demand. (The Other rarely makes only one demand, and the mOther's demands need be no more internally self-consistent than her desires are.)

Why is it that she gives up on her own desire? Her desire is by no means decided, and she seeks a sanctioning of her desire by the Other's demand: if she can get the Other to order her to do something she wants to do, she can enjoy it while taking no responsibility for it. One of the mother's demands—the demand that she preserve appearances—sanctions one of the daughter's desires: in this case the desire to rebel against the mother's demand for her to die.

Here we see the potentially lethal intertwining of demand and desire, and of the drive and desire. Carried to an extreme, either compulsion—to starve herself or to binge till she drops—can be fatal.

The Drives: Se Faire …

This very brief case description already brings out what, in common parlance, would be called a "perverse" relation to food, but it also brings out a number of the main characteristics of the drives, common to neurosis and perversion, according to Lacan.

At the outset, and perhaps most radically, the drive is headless, acephalous: the subject is not there to begin with, the problem being how to bring the subject into being where the drive was. Where it was, the subject must come to be.

The "it" here is the Other's demand. What is that demand? In the case of the abovementioned anorexic, it is "get out of the way," "be still," "be dead" (a traumatizing demand, to say the least).

All drives can be understood as potentially lethal—that is, as death drives. They execute a command that knows no measure or limits. And virtually any activity taken without limitations—without any sort of symbolic regulatory mechanism that says when enough is enough—will sooner or later do you in. If the superego (the Other's demand as internalized) commands you to "Enjoy!" (*jouis*!), it does so with no regard for your well-being or continued existence. It is a pure command or imperative, not a self-regulating principle of some kind, not an ethical agency requiring something along the lines of "moderation in all things."

The satisfaction obtained from drive activity must then, it seems, be credited to the account of the demanding agency: the Other (as demand) or superego. At its most radical level, only the superego

benefits from the operation of the drive; an attempt is nevertheless made via the drive to wrest that satisfaction from the Other, refusing to let the subject's alienation[7] serve the Other—that is, refusing to give the Other satisfaction.[8] Via the drive, the neurotic child attempts to bring forth lack in the Other, lack of jouissance, attempting to show that it is not the Other who wins in all cases, who reaps the benefits regardless of what the child does.

In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud (1955b) explores a number of different explanations for repetition compulsion, one of which is that an attempt is made by the psyche to insert anxiety into a traumatic experience. In the case of someone who was shell-shocked, Freud hypothesizes that the repetitive reliving of the traumatic situation in dreams, for example, is designed to retroactively change the experience: if the person had had the time or chance to expect or anticipate the explosion, anxiety—which is an essential component of preparedness—would have been generated, and the experience would not have been as traumatic. We can, perhaps, reinterpret that using Lacan's (2004) equation of anxiety and subjectivity in his work on sadism (when you succeed in making your partner anxious, you know that you have touched him or her to the quick in his or her subjective division): the drives involved in compulsive repetition of the traumatic scene (in dreams or daydreams) seek to insert the subject in some way, to bring the subject into being there where formerly there had been no subject.

At its most radical level, compulsion involves an attempt to subjectivize an experience of pleasure/pain that has been forced upon one or commanded. As long as it is not subjectivized, it sits like a foreign body within one, and leads to a compulsive attempt to make it one's own. Thinking of compulsion as come-*pulsion*, a drive (which is *pulsion* in French) to come, an attempt to make oneself come via another, we can conceive of the drives as employing or even exploiting the Other's demands to command the subject's jouissance. Getting oneself to come (to enjoy something), using the Other to obtain jouissance, provides a subject position of some kind. In this way, in the guise of obeying and thus satisfying the Other, one procures a certain satisfaction for oneself—one manages to trick what Lacan calls *l'Autre de la demande* (which one might render as the demanding Other, the Other who demands, or even the Other as demand).

Part of the sleight of hand involved in drive activity is that *we get our parents to demand things of us*; that is one aspect of Lacan's (1978) expression *se faire* for the drives: *se faire demander*. We interact with our parents in such a way that they demand that we do something (as in the expression *se faire prier*: play your cards in such a way that people beg you for something, implore you to do something). The neurotic seeks to have his or her desire commanded by the Other: "Tell me what I should want!" cries the neurotic. The neurotic's desire becomes sanctioned—ratified, legitimated—if he or she can get the Other to demand it. The Other's sanction or stamp of approval removes all doubt regarding what he or she *should* desire (desire being in accordance with the law). Since the neurotic's desire is not, in and of itself, a decided desire (*désir décidé*), the neurotic seeks to get the Other to demand that he or she do what he or she wants to do, all responsibility for the success or failure of the endeavor thus being cast on the Other. ("S/he made me do it!" is the child's first line of defense when challenged.)

Thus if what Freud calls "repetition compulsion" is related to the attempt by the drives to subjectivize traumatic experiences of satisfaction, this is not the whole story. For desire is *agi* in the drive: it is implicated, worked over, executed, and affected. The drives are rarely found in any kind of a "pure" state. The Other's demand is enlisted to command the neurotic subject's desire, to prop it up, to put it into effect, into action, to make it happen. It seems that it often cannot be executed without that support.[9]

This was part of a longer paper entitled "Perversion and Food: From Compulsive Eating to the Death Drive," presented at a conference on "Impulses of the Perverse" held at SUNY Buffalo April 29–May 1,

1994, sponsored by the Center for the Study of Psychoanalysis and Culture.

Notes

1 Consider the following remark by Freud (1985, p. 212): "hysteria is not repudiated sexuality but rather *repudiated perversion*." Freud here seems to be referring to the repudiation of another person's (the seducer's) perversion.

2 Too close, and the veil that flatteringly clothes the object (that is, *i(a)*) is lifted, and the object appears as a piece of rotting meat or gross white spots full of pus (as seen, for example, in Irma's throat in Freud's (1958a) "dream of Irma's injection"); too far away, and desire fades, the drives perhaps being called upon to revive the object …

3 Lacan's (1973a, p. 165) term is *sujet acéphale*, "acephalic subject." See also Lacan (2001a, p. 258, and 2006b, p. 147).

4 Lacan (1961–1962) illustrates the intertwining of demand and desire with two interconnected toruses (see the classes held on March 14 and 21, 1962).

5 As Lacan says, the child, strangely enough, takes the Other's demand as her desire.

6 As Lacan (1973a) says in Seminar XI, "The first object [the subject] proposes to this parental desire whose object is unknown is his own loss: 'Does he want to lose me?' [*Veut-il me perdre?*]. The fantasy of his death or disappearance is the first object the subject must put into play in this dialectic, and indeed he does so—we know that he does so from a thousand facts, if nothing else from that of anorexia. We also know that the fantasy of his death is quite commonly brought to bear by the child in its love relations with its parents" (pp. 194–95).

7 Another way to state this, with Lacan, is to say that there is a refusal to let the subject's castration (that is, petrification by the signifier of the Other's demand, S_1) serve the Other.

8 Indeed, this is what the neurotic most abhors: giving his or her parents satisfaction. Even as he or she does something the parents wanted, he or she refuses to tell them: "I wouldn't want to give them the pleasure of knowing."

9 This explains the oftentimes compulsive nature of the obsessive's actions: he or she remains paralyzed 99 percent of the time, but when he or she finally acts, it is impulsive, brutal, and enacts one versant of the obsessive's ambivalent affects. In the case of the Rat Man, most of his compulsive activity involves this enlisting of a superego command in the fulfillment of a desire (usually too many strands of his feelings are involved in any one activity to say that it is one single desire that is put into effect).

On Reading Lacan

5

A BRIEF READER'S GUIDE TO "VARIATIONS ON THE STANDARD TREATMENT"

Our main topic at this workshop will be an introductory reading of two of Lacan's clinical papers, which I suspect you have all had a chance to read by now [the second paper was "The Direction of the Treatment and the Principles of Its Power"].[1] I hope you will come away with a better preliminary sense of what Lacan is up to in these articles. The historical context and other of his texts obviously shed light on what he says here and we will touch on them to some degree. Like all commentary, mine here will be partial, focusing on what I think I have managed to decipher, which should not be taken to imply that I consider the rest unimportant. I'll invite you to bring up topics that I leave out.

My overarching trajectory here is a bit more all-encompassing, in that I hope to show how these papers shed light on the analytic trends that currently dominate psychoanalytic thinking. By 1958, when Lacan wrote "The Direction of the Treatment," a great many of the tenets of object relations theory and of newer approaches to psychoanalysis, like relational psychology, had already been sketched out and Lacan takes the opportunity here to critique them. Although it might be thought that his papers from the 1950s are of no direct help to us in understanding and situating contemporary approaches to psychoanalysis and psychotherapy, I will argue that they are.

Nevertheless, Lacan is not of help to us in situating these new trends exactly in the way he claims to be. For a very long time, he presented his teaching as a return to Freud, but many of you are aware that Lacan glimpsed things in Freud's work that no one else had ever seen before or even sees today without Lacan's help. Moreover, Lacan's Freud, like everyone's Freud, is a bit selective: Lacan embraces all of Freud's work, at some level, but embraces some parts more than others. In light of how Freud was taken up by Lacan's contemporaries, Lacan isolates, out of all the strands that can be found in Freud's works, what he considers to be the most genuinely Freudian strands and draws consequences and conclusions from them that Freud, to the best of my knowledge, never drew.

Lacan's strategy seems to be one of claiming to reveal to us the true Freud, everything else being deviations therefrom. Those deviations ultimately constitute fundamentally different paradigms—including a kind of classical interpretation of Freud's work, known as ego psychology, as well as object relations—and Lacan's own evolving paradigm can be seen to form in response to these other paradigms. Stated differently, his path is not simply that of a return to Freud, but a going beyond that tries to dialectically respond to other interpretations of Freud's writings.

I recently came across a book entitled *Time-Limited Dynamic Psychotherapy* that simplistically opposes the classical interpretation of Freud—which the author, Hannah Levenson (1995), refers to as the "historical" model of psychoanalysis—to a more object relations view of psychoanalysis (which she calls "modernist"), as though the former were the thesis and the latter the antithesis (pp. 32–33). Not being a Hegelian by training or predilection, Levenson did not see the degree to which she was just begging for someone to propose a "dialectical synthesis"—a sort of Lacanian third paradigm. (See the "Summary Comparison of Psychoanalytic Paradigms" I prepared for this workshop, included at the end of this volume.)

I realize it is rather reductionistic to cast things in such Hegelian terms, but I will try to flesh out this notion of differing paradigms somewhat as we go along for a couple of reasons:

- One always gets a better sense of a theory by contrasting it with what it is not.
- There is a tendency in many fields to try to assimilate aspects of an author's work, techniques, or insights, without asking whether they are compatible with one's own general orientation. My sense is that Lacan's insights and techniques grow out of a paradigm that is often diametrically opposed to that of object relations theory. In other words, they would make very strange bedfellows indeed! I am no expert in this area, so I will ask those of you who are better versed in other traditions to help out here and correct me should I mischaracterize them.[2]

If and when there is some compatibility between these paradigms, it is perhaps in the area of the treatment of psychosis, for which Lacan recommends a thoroughly different technique than the technique he recommends for neurosis. There has been in object relations theory a tendency to efface sharp distinctions between neurosis and psychosis; the latter are viewed there along a continuum and it is often claimed that there are psychotic moments or a psychotic core in most neuroses. In that school of psychoanalysis, treatment has, to the best of my knowledge, come to look very much the same across the diagnostic spectrum.

While Lacan might agree that some of the techniques recommended by object relations theory make sense for the treatment of psychosis, I suspect he would not agree that they make sense for the treatment of neurosis. If object relations theory is to "assimilate" Lacan's work, a sharper distinction between neurosis and psychosis may have to be made there.

Section I

In 1953, Lacan was commissioned by the editors of the *Encyclopédie médico-chirurgicale* (Medical/Surgical Encyclopedia) to write an article with the title "Variations on the Standard Treatment." It was to be a counterpart to an entry entitled "The Standard Treatment" that was assigned to another analyst.

The entire first section of Lacan's article (I assume henceforth that the reader is following along with me in the text) is devoted to debunking the title he was assigned. The title, he suggests, is a pleonasm because to talk about a *standard* treatment already means that there are deviations from or variations on the standard. It is a normative idea, based on the notion that treatments can be grouped under a standard Bell curve, those within one or possibly two standard deviations from the mean being considered normal or standard, the rest not.

Lacan proposes that the variations in question in the title he was assigned could, in theory, have been thought to deviate from the norm in a non-pejorative sense. The "standard treatment" could have been viewed as suitable for a class of patients with specific diagnoses, other forms of treatment being viewed as more suitable for others. But Lacan (I refer throughout this paper to page numbers found in the margins of the 2006 English edition of *Écrits* that correspond to those of the 1966 French edition, followed by paragraph numbers to make passages easier to find) suggests in the second paragraph (p. 324,2) that this was not what was meant by the analysts who came up with the title: "For the term 'variations' [does not imply] the adapting of the treatment to the 'variety' of cases, in accordance with empirical or even clinical criteria." Lacan implies that he was considered by those analysts to be giving deviant treatment (including practices such as the variable-length session and oracular interpretation) to "standard," ordinary patients.

Thus the variations at stake in the title Lacan was assigned deviate from the norm in a straightforwardly negative sense: the standard treatment is the tried and true one, which the analysts preparing the encyclopedia obviously thought *they* were providing, whereas the variations involved treatment strategies that were not pure in their "means and ends" (p. 324,2). The idea behind this is not necessarily bad, Lacan suggests, if it implies a rigorously pure notion of psychoanalysis, anything else being mere psychotherapy. In other words, he would be happy to entertain the development of such a rigorously pure notion of analysis, but he would prefer a "more meritorious" label for it than that of "standard treatment" (p. 324,2) —perhaps "genuine psychoanalytic treatment," for example.

Regarding such a pure notion of psychoanalytic treatment, Lacan suggests that there has thus far been no rigorous formulation of it "because it has been confused with a practical formalism" (p. 324,4), a set of rules "regarding what is done and what is not done." In other words, rather than formulating exactly *why* one should conduct the treatment in a specific way, justifying this conduct in terms of psychoanalytic theory, as Freud does in his papers on technique, analysts of Lacan's time were simply claiming that one should conduct the treatment in way *x* because *that's the way it's done*: that's the way it has to be done if one is to become a member of a certain institute and rise up in its ranks. In "The Situation of Psychoanalysis and the Training of Psychoanalysts in 1956" (also in *Écrits*), Lacan savagely critiques the mode of functioning of the analytic institutes of his time, ironizing at length on the degree to which candidates advance best by keeping their mouths shut and not demanding too many theoretical explanations for recommendations regarding technique made to them by their supervisors and teachers.

A Bat Question

The "extraterritoriality" (meaning the possession or exercise of political rights by a foreign power within a state having its own government, such as the rights countries have over their embassies in foreign countries) of psychoanalysis comes up repeatedly in Lacan's work in the 1950s. With this term, Lacan is referring to the fact that analysts seem to simultaneously claim that their work is situated within the larger endeavor of science and that psychoanalysis nevertheless constitutes a private domain, complete with its own conceptual apparatus (dynamic, topographic, and economic), which others can admire and borrow from, but which analysts feel they have no need to explain to people in other scientific fields. "All validation of its problems" (p. 325,4) is thus dealt with by implicitly asserting the following: psychoanalysis is neither a science like the other sciences, nor *simply an art*, but is, when it is convenient, able to be friendly with both. Psychoanalysis is thus rather like the bat in Aesop's fable, as Dan Collins reminded me, which has dual membership in the animal kingdom, being a bird insofar as it can fly, and like a beast, in that it is a mammal.[3]

When the scientist says, "justify what you are doing," the analyst replies, "I don't need to because my field is not like yours." But when the analyst wants legitimacy, he goes in search of scientific references, such as behaviorism, or, in a more contemporary vein, neurology; as Lacan (2006a) ironizes in "Function and Field," psychoanalysis is like an employment agency because it is always in search of "good references" (p. 273). Lacan even goes so far, a bit further on in "Variations," as to suggest that analysts feel their work is sufficiently grounded or justified simply because people in other fields are interested in psychoanalysis and borrow from its conceptual apparatus. Analysts are, in his view, trying to have their cake and eat it too and need to espouse a clearer position.

Therapeutic Criteria

Since analysts have refused, Lacan argues, to formulate their practice in terms of psychoanalytic theory, they provide no theoretical justification for most of their therapeutic criteria—that is, the goals of treatment and the practices that are thought to lead to those goals. Edward Glover, one of the few analysts Lacan almost always praises (seeming to appreciate Glover's general skepticism and stylistic flair), says that this is because the theoretical stances adopted by analysts are far too different for there to be any consensus on these matters.

Different theorists try to reconcile opposing positions (p. 328,6), Lacan comments, referring to the "middle group" in England between the Anna Freudian and Kleinian groups, but it leads, he claims, to pointless syncretisms—that is, mishmashes of viewpoints.

In a number of texts, Lacan provides his own diagnosis of the then modern trends in psychoanalysis, attempting to bring out a certain dialectic in their historical/theoretical evolution.[4] Here he suggests that in addition to the "misunderstanding which […] obstructs psychoanalysis' path to recognition" (p. 329,3)—presumably by other disciplines—psychoanalysis also misrecognizes its own movement, as well as its own foundation in what he at the time calls "intersubjectivity."

Section II

Returning to the critique of the title he was assigned, Lacan remarks that since analysts are unable to justify treatment criteria in terms of psychoanalytic theory, it seems that the call for a "standard" must be related to the *person* of the analyst, to something about the analyst as a person (as "a real man," p. 330,2).

What about this person? He must have certain gifts, gifts that either one has or one does not have—from birth even (pp. 252–53)! Only analysts who are lucky enough to have these gifts—which usually remain undefined and are discussed only by the inner circles of recognizably gifted analysts—can try to dispense their "secrets" (p. 330,4) to others, even if they are unable to theorize them. These comments reflect Lacan's enduring concerns with the transmission and transmissibility of psychoanalysis; to suggest that analysts must have certain innate gifts, and that analytic technique can only be passed on through some inarticulable communing in the gifted analyst's presence, is to immediately impugn psychoanalysis' even potentially scientific status. It shifts the focus from a standard approach to treatment, to a standardization of talent among analysts, who—as Lacan quips ironically in "Direction of the Treatment"—heal not by what they say and do but by who they are (p. 587). A training institute's goal is thus to standardize who they are, to standardize their so-called personalities.

Freud's warning to us "not to form too lofty an idea of [the analytic] mission" (p. 330,5) has been misunderstood, Lacan tells us: it does not mean we should form *no idea whatsoever* of our mission. It does not mean we should refrain from theorizing what we do, effectively making it incommunicable thereby. Analysts' supposed humility actually covers over their sense of themselves as endowed with exceptional gifts. They are anything but humble.

Intersubjectivity

Lacan now begins to attempt to theorize what we as analysts do in our practice by entering into a discussion of intersubjectivity, indicating that *the analyst determines who is speaking in analysis* by the way she welcomes the analysand's discourse. She can choose to welcome only the "other that [the analysand's] discourse delivers to the listener as constituted" (p. 331,1): that is, the image of the alter ego (often abbreviated as *i(a)*), little other, or semblable that is at the core of the analysand's ego—in other words, the already constructed image of himself that the analysand presents from the outset. To welcome only the "other that [the analysand's] discourse delivers to the listener as constituted" amounts to buying the story that the analysand tells about himself—about himself as if he were an other—a story he has generally been telling himself and others for many years.

If the analyst does so, she adopts the model of speech as communication: the analysand emits a bit of information and the analyst receives it, creating a circuit that suggests that the analyst can be affected by what the analysand says and that the analysand can be affected by what the analyst says, but not that the analysand is affected by what he himself says. Lacan's main claim here is that there is a very important level at which we constitute ourselves through speech: we change ourselves by addressing another, well before or independently of the fact that the listener responds in some way. Speaking is a constituting or constitutive process, not something engaged in solely to carry bytes of information from point A to point B, to convey specific information from one person to another.

On television and in films we often see a character who sits down at a bar and spills his guts to someone who is not even listening, but the character speaking comes away with a new take on things or a resolution about what to do. The minimal presence of another person is necessary for the speaking to occur, but comprehension by the other—who is often depicted in such shows as completely preoccupied

with his own problems, if not simply as an inflatable dummy—of specific information is utterly superfluous. Emphasis is placed even in such inane vignettes on the noncommunicative and instead constituting nature of speech.

If the analyst welcomes only the "communicating subject," it is tantamount to welcoming only the ego as already constituted, only the story that has already been told and retold about one's *self*. To welcome the *constituting* subject is to open the door to far more. The "ambiguity" Lacan mentions repeatedly in these pages (e.g., p. 331,2) is that between "constituting speech and constituted discourse."

The emphasis on countertransference, which was trendy already by the 1950s and has lost little of its fervor, does *not*, Lacan argues, put the emphasis on speech as *constitutive* for the speaking subject. Rather, it continues to emphasize a model—like that provided by Saussure (1959, p. 11)—where it appears that it is what person A says that affects person B and vice versa, but that A himself is not sculpted, formed, or transformed by what he says in B's presence.

The focus on countertransference emphasizes a circuit that had been largely ignored, but in its concern with the analyst's feelings and reactions, it ignores the powers of speech that go beyond the simple conveyance of information about emotions or the simple eliciting of emotions. By devoting so much attention to the effect of the analysand's tone, body postures, and physical size on the analyst, it tends, according to Lacan, to altogether overlook the nature of speech, its rhetoric, and its existence as a *compromise formation* that is not under the control of the ego alone.

The analyst who focuses on countertransference begins to think that the analysand's truth lies in the relationship itself (as certain research studies have even set out to prove empirically) and not in something the analyst needs to say by way of interpretation (Lacan, 2006a, p. 332,1). Indeed, here, as in "Direction of the Treatment," Lacan maintains that analysts of his generation (and I suspect it is even truer today) were having an increasingly difficult time articulating exactly what constitutes an interpretation—that is, distinguishing interpretation from confrontation, explanation, gratification, response to demand, giving insight, and so on (pp. 592–93; his "definition of interpretation" is found on p. 593).

Lacan agrees, at this point in time, that when the patient resists the analyst's *solution* to his symptom, the analyst has to analyze the resistance (p. 333,3); unfortunately, he says, people began looking for this resistance *outside of speech* instead of in speech itself. According to Lacan, resistance is encountered by speech in the attempt to put one's experience into words—that is, in the attempt to symbolize the real. Otherwise stated, he locates resistance in the relationship between the symbolic and the real (see also Lacan, 1988a, on this topic).

He alludes here to Freud's notion that there is a pathogenic nucleus (in Lacan's own later terms, a traumatic real) and the closer we come to speaking it, the greater the repulsion, the greater the force pushing us away from it. The resistance is "inversely proportional to the distance between the nucleus and the chain [of memories and signifiers] being remembered" (p. 334,1). The closer we get to the nucleus, the greater the resistance.

To interpret such resistance is, in Lacan's view, to attempt to move "from one chain to another 'deeper' chain" (p. 334,2), a chain that more closely approaches the pathogenic nucleus, a chain that gets closer to reaching or hitting the traumatic real.[5] My sense is that what Lacan means here by interpreting resistance is not the same as what other practitioners mean by it; he explicitly states that "interpretation [of resistance] operates on the very text of [the analysand's] speech, which includes its elusions, distortions, elisions, and even holes and syncopes" (p. 334,2). I suspect that operating on the text of speech—insofar as it attempts to track down moments at which the analysand seems to be avoiding saying something by changing the subject, using a euphemism, toning down his language, or simply eliding something—does

not very closely resemble what other analysts refer to as interpreting resistance (which amounts at times, or so it seems to me, to simply accusing the analysand of resisting the process). Indeed, operating on the very text of the analysand's speech seems to fall under the general heading of interpretation in Lacan's work.

In ego psychology, the ego is taken to be the constituting agency (p. 335,1). Unconscious discourse—or what Lacan calls the subject's discourse, which may be a lure insofar as it is not necessarily truthful—is dismissed by ego psychologists in favor of something about the patient's speech that is considered unassailable: "its flow, its tone, its interruptions, and even its melody." Primary importance is given to the patient's "presentation in his approach and gait, the affectation of his manners, and the way he takes his leave of us" (p. 337,3). Let us not forget his body posture, so dear to certain phenomenological psychologists. As Lacan puts it, "It seems that [analysts will soon prefer] any other manifestation of the subject's presence" to his potentially lying speech (p. 337,3). Recall how scandalized analysts were when Freud (1955c) indicated, in his case discussion of the young homosexual woman, that dreams could lie;[6] analysts had obviously latched onto dreams in part because they thought they were necessarily more truthful than the analysand's speech. Now they have, Lacan says, turned away from dreams, which means that

> an attitudinal reaction in the session will hold [their] attention more than a syntactical error and will be examined more in terms of its energy level than its gestural import. An up-welling of emotion and a visceral gurgle will be the sought-for evidence of the mobilization of resistance, and the idiocy of the fanatics of lived experience will go so far as to find the crème de la crème in smelling each other.
>
> (p. 337,3)[7]

Analysts have, Lacan argues, turned their attention to something supposedly nonsymbolic and not subject to pretense; for they believe *the body tells the truth*. As if actors on the stage, and all of us actors on the stage of everyday life, were unable to hide the truth by making certain bodily gestures and giving off a certain body language! *And as if body language were itself self-evident!* The fact is that it is not, and that, to understand it, we have to ask the analysand what it means, which implies that we have to ask her to speak. Body postures and gestures cannot be read like animals' postures and gestures—for example, submissive gestures by one dog to another. Human postures and gestures form a true language tied to human language. Stated more accurately, there are many different gestural languages in different countries that are tied to the different languages spoken in those countries.[8] Although in search of something surer, more objective than speech, analysts still have to rely on speech to ascertain the meaning of bodily postures and states.[9]

There simply is no getting around the use of speech in analysis; and speech comes with a whole dialectic of what Lacan, at this point in time, calls *intersubjectivity*. Before we turn to this term, let me indicate that it is a term Lacan later leaves aside, and I suspect that his use of it has very little in common with Jessica Benjamin's use of it, for example.

According to Lacan, the attempt to move away from speech and rely on objective data or indices, led analysts away from the constitutive power of the analysand's speech and toward ever-greater reliance on the constituted body of knowledge found in the analytic literature. Instead of encouraging the patient to transform herself through speech, the analyst trotted out tidbits of psychoanalytic knowledge accumulated over the course of several decades, forgetting Freud's claim that each case has to be approached separately, as if it were the first, as if it were utterly unique. Problems arose because when patients were

provided with psychoanalytic interpretations based on the extant literature (like that given to Lacan's North African patient with hand problems, the patient's first analyst attributing them simply to masturbation),[10] they often did not accept them as true in any but the most abstract, intellectual manner. The analyst's speech thereby lost any transformative power it might have had. Lacan comments here that analysts "cannot claim they have, in this way, left behind an intellectualist form of analysis, unless they admit that the communication of this knowledge [e.g., "knowledge" of a specific problem or symptom found in the pre-existing psychoanalytic literature] to the subject acts only as a *suggestion* to which the criterion of truth remains foreign" (p. 337,4; emphasis added).

Richard Sterba, who Lacan refers to here, repeatedly says that his goal is to ally one part of the patient's ego with the analyst, to bring about in it a contemplative role: that of "intellectual contemplation, reflection, and correction by the standard of reality" of the remainder of the analysand (1934, p. 122). Sterba also indicates that, for his kinds of interpretations to have an effect, you have to repeat them "constantly" (p. 123), which suggests a kind of forcible colonization of the analysand's ego by the analyst. Let me simply indicate that a great deal of contemporary work in psychoanalysis relies heavily on the fostering of this objectifying, observing ego—assumed to be outside the analytic game and even outside the struggle of intrapsychic libidinal and repressive forces—which is somehow thought to adopt a metaposition and even to come to understand and analyze the situation along with the analyst,[11] learning to view the situation precisely as the analyst does (this might be viewed as a form of brainwashing, especially if the same interpretations are constantly repeated *à la* Sterba). Lacan critiqued the belief in the usefulness of fostering an observing ego at some length in "Direction of the Treatment."

At the end of Section II of "Variations," Lacan says that the typical analyst of his time neglected the "foundation of his relationship with the subject in speech"—in speech as constitutive (and we might add "in language," insofar as language encompasses both analyst and analysand and is that which mediates their interactions)—and neglected unconscious formations like dreams because they might be untruthful. Such an analyst, he concludes, "can communicate nothing to [the analysand] that the analyst does not already know from his preconceived views or immediate intuition—that is, *nothing that is not subject to the organization of the analyst's own ego*" (pp. 338–39; emphasis added). Lacan calls this an aporia, the "aporia to which analysis is reduced in order to maintain its core in its deviation" (p. 339,2), to maintain a core despite its deviation—its deviation from Freudian principles of practice, presumably. The analyst is reduced to working on the basis of his own ego and his own sense of what is real and what is not.

In summary, Section I of "Variations" leads us to an impasse over the question of variations on the standard treatment. The "standard treatment"—if it implies a rigorously pure analytic treatment—is never theoretically explained or argued for, and thus variations cannot really be entertained. Variations are simply that which is *not* done, it being bad form; in a word, variations are no more than deviations. Section II leads us to the following aporia: the contemporary analyst welcomes only the analysand's previously constituted discourse and, perhaps not unsurprisingly, can tell the analysand nothing the analyst does not already know, nothing but what is based on his own ego as already constituted. The analyst, in this situation, can learn nothing, the analysand not being able to teach the analyst anything. The analyst works only on the basis of prior psychoanalytic knowledge, as found in the literature, not on the basis of the analysand's *constituting* speech.

Section III

In the next section, we find an offhanded critique of empathy (*Einfühlung*), which Lacan translates into French here as *connivence* (connivance in English). He thereby takes a direct snipe at Karl Jaspers and an indirect snipe at all clinicians who believe that they in some way assist a patient when they empathize with him. To empathize with him requires them to *identify* with him in some way. They feel they can help someone only insofar as they *resemble* or are *like* that person in some respect—for example, they too were "betrayed" by a friend, went to "Vassar," or suffer from "acrophobia." This means that they strive to isolate a signifier in the patient's history or current experience that can also be found in their own. Lacan suggests here that this merely leads them to "connive" with the patient—perhaps excusing or pitying him—which is hardly the same as bringing the patient to symbolize and subjectivize his troubling experiences.

Lacan refers next to the old notion of the "communication of unconsciouses." Why? Because it at least maintains the notion of the Other (p. 339,5): it preserves a place for the revelation of the analysand's unconscious by leaving room for the Other in both analyst and analysand (see his further comments on the "communication of unconsciouses" in Lacan, 2001, Chapter 13).

He also mentions Sandor Ferenczi's emphasis on the analyst's own subjectivity, criticizing the fact that the only thing Ferenczi offers by way of signposts along the path of analytic treatment are recommendations regarding "the order of subjectivity that the analyst must bring about in himself" (p. 340,7). Lacan nevertheless celebrates the fact that Ferenczi at least also emphasizes *nonknowledge*: the fact that the analyst does not know everything in advance and must thus learn from each new analysis he conducts.

Confusing the Imaginary and the Symbolic

In examining Wilhelm Reich's (1972) views, Lacan enunciates a sort of "deconstructive" method, which he occasionally uses: "Let us follow the path of a kind of criticism that puts a text to the test of the very principles it defends" (p. 341,2). In other words, we apply the principles laid out in the text to the text's own argument and see what we come up with (the same approach is promulgated in his rhetorical question, "Is there, in fact, a better critical method than the method that applies to the comprehension of a message the very principles of comprehension that the message itself conveys?" p. 381).

What does Lacan say about Reich's notion of character and character armor? He seems to suggest that the latter is tied up with the imaginary—that is, with one's narcissistic image. For he says that the notion of armor suggests a defense against something that is repressed (hence armor is structured like a symptom), whereas what we deal with in psychoanalysis is, rather, an armorial, coat of arms, or set of heraldic signs (*armoirie*).[12]

Heraldic signs are designed to visually impress people and display one's prestige, and are used to determine precedence in public ceremonies obeying a certain protocol, based on social rank. Lacan obviously associates this with display behavior (in reproduction rituals and aggressive territorial determinations) in animals, but emphasizes their embryonic symbolic component.

As a result of Reich's way of practicing, Lacan suggests, the subject ends up carrying around the weight of his defenses even after treatment, the mark bordering on the symbolic that they formerly bore having simply been effaced, since the symbolic dimension is ignored by him. Thus, their origin and lineage are effaced.

What is Lacan's deconstructive reading here? Whereas Reich interprets everything as a defensive move, Lacan interprets Reich's refusal of Freud's concept of the death drive—which is a proxy for the symbolic in Lacanian terms—as itself a defense. If Reich's principle is to read everything as a defense, his refusal of the symbolic—that is, of the mortal mark we as beings of language bear—can itself be read as a defense. A family coat of arms brings one into being within a certain tradition and family line, but it also seals one's fate. One will live and die in the service of x, y, or z, in the name of the family name (or Name-of-the-Father).[13]

Tracking the Structure of Desire

Lacan sets out next to "return psychoanalysis to a veridical path" by clarifying the nature of the ego. But first he comments that if psychoanalysis was able, in its early years, to reveal so much about human desire it was because it tracked the structure of desire, which proves to be structured a bit like a mathematical algorithm, where one variable is raised to its own power: x^x (i.e., desire$^{\text{desire}}$). Psychoanalysis stumbled upon the notion that "man's desire is alienated in the other's desire" (p. 343,3), insofar as what man wants is to have his desire recognized. x^x means desire for desire, that is, desire to have the other desire me. Lacan does not really argue this point here, although he does so in his discussion of the butcher's wife in "Direction of the Treatment" (2006a, pp. 620–27).

He goes on to suggest that we cannot understand the theory of the ego in Freud's work in the 1920s until we examine it against the backdrop of his work in the 1910s, which comes to fruition in the concepts of primary masochism, the death drive, and negation. He claims that if we follow this progression, we will understand Freud's "growing interest in aggressiveness in transference, in resistance, and even in *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1961a), showing that the kind of aggression we imagine to be at the root of the struggle for survival is not what is at stake in them" (p. 344,6). Rather than demonstrate Freud's progression here, he simply goes on to explain the origin of aggression, resistance, and malaise in mirror phenomena (pp. 344–45). This is classic Lacan: he gives us a homework assignment but does not show us that he has done the homework himself. If we did not have his Seminars, we might be inclined not to believe him, but as we do have them, we can consult Seminar II, *The Ego in Freud's Theory* (Lacan, 1988b).

Regarding the mirror stage, let me simply comment here that, as Lacan has not yet taken the mirror stage a step further—as he does in Seminar VIII (2001a) with the addition of the person who holds the child and makes an approving gesture that leads to the instating of the unary trait in and by the child—he is led to continue relying here on an idea he came up with in the 1930s, which is that human beings' preoccupation with and fear of death enters *not* with language, but as follows:

1. The human infant is born prematurely and thus, unlike other species, suffers for a prolonged period from its inability to achieve motor coordination—that is, from the lack of unity of its bodily movements.
2. The infant uses the image of another member of its species as a *prop* to allow it to form and assimilate a prosthetic image of itself (no other species seems to need that: indeed, Lacan says here that, in the animal kingdom, "subjectivity is not distinguished […] from the image that captivates it"). Animals are captivated by images of members of their own species ("congeners"), but have no need to internalize those images; in their cases, such images merely trigger mating or aggressive behavior (Lacan, 2006a, pp. 189–91).
3. The human subject is forever after engaged in a master/slave struggle with this other who is more like myself than I am (insofar as I have borrowed his image, using it as a sort of prosthetic device with

which to construct my own ego or sense of self) and who usurps my place. The dialectic of death is thus introduced through a Hegelian maneuver here, at the imaginary level, in a struggle with the other like myself, not through the Other.

Lacan is thus left without any real explanation as to why humans, unlike chimpanzees (which are also born "prematurely"), internalize the image of the other (the image of another person like themselves or their own image in a mirror). At this stage, Lacan thinks that humans do not need anything more to internalize this image than competition with the other like oneself. (By 1961, in Seminar VIII, he changes his tune.)

Man's prematurity at birth, bringing on prolonged powerlessness, is what Lacan associates here with Hegel's "fruitful illness, life's happy fault," which leads to our "dehiscence from natural harmony" (p. 345,3)—which leads, in other words, to *the introduction of lack*. If some sort of "natural harmony" between need and satisfaction existed, the dialectic of desire could never come into existence. It is the absence of such a natural harmony, due to our inability as newborns and infants to tend to even the slightest of our biological needs, that Lacan sees here as introducing lack, which serves as the trigger or motor force of desire.

Now, according to Lacan (p. 346,3), the subject imposes on or projects onto the other his own experience of impotence—that is, his experience of being at the mercy of others to attend to his vital needs because he is too uncoordinated to attend to them himself. He does this in analysis too, says Lacan (p. 346,4), once he is freed from the threat of being utterly and completely rejected for doing so—that is, when the analyst stresses to the analysand that he must say whatever comes to mind even if it is an *ad hominem* attack on the analyst, even if it would be utterly unacceptable in polite society. The analysand projects his own impotence onto the analyst (as does Lacan's patient who is impotent with this mistress—see "Direction of the Treatment," pp. 631–33). The couch is useful here in allowing such projections to develop more freely. The image of the other or alter ego (a') cannot be called to mind very freely when one has the image of a specific person in front of one.

The analyst must circumnavigate the appeals made to him in this imaginary mode (a—a'): to respond is to elicit love, to not respond is to elicit hatred. If, in accordance with the analysis of resistances, the analyst takes the projected a' seriously, as an object ("I am this kind of person, with traits *x, y*, and *z*"), he will help set it in stone for the subject instead of shaking it up, and will inevitably get caught up in the projection just as he gets caught up in his own a'. (This is why a—a' overlap in the L Schema for two people.)[14] As Lacan puts it here, by targeting the analysand's ego, "the analyst falls under the sway of the illusions [the armorial] of his own ego, no less naively than the [analysand] himself does" (p. 347,3); he thereby becomes mired in the imaginary relationship.

The shaping of the analysand's ego recommended by ego psychologists, involving the instilling in the analysand of an observing ego modeled on the analyst's (observing) ego, turns out to be a mere exercise in narcissism on the analyst's part (p. 347,4).[15] It has nothing to do with helping the analysand see "reality" more clearly, or have better "reality contact," unless "reality" is admitted here to be nothing more than the world the analyst himself believes in, based on the structure of his own ego and on his fundamental fantasy that serves as the lens through which he views the world and its workings. The ego has been confused (no doubt because Freud hypothesized that it mediates between the id and the superego) with some sort of "reality function," whereas it is thoroughly subject to illusion, fantasy, imaginary rivalry, and misrecognition.

Section IV

Speech must not, according to Lacan (p. 351,3), be viewed as the meaning of meaning—that is, as some third term outside of the signifier/signified system that grounds the system's reality, as in Richard and Ogden's (1945, p. 63) triangular representation. Language is not primarily designed to convey information about reality but to be evocative. And "an analysis changes nothing in reality but 'changes everything' for the subject" (p. 350,3), thanks to speech, but not by conveying/communicating something objective about the analysand to the analyst.

True Speech versus True Discourse

Speech that strives to be objective by corresponding "to the thing" (p. 351, 6) is what Lacan calls "true discourse," and the latter is juxtaposed here with speech that allows one to recognize one's own being via the other: for example, I declare to someone that she is my wife, thereby declaring that I am her husband. "But each of the truths distinguished here [the truth of speech versus the truth of discourse] is altered when it crosses the path of the other truth" (p. 351,6).

True discourse analyzes promises and says they are false since one cannot pledge the future when it is uncertain. For example, a 9/11-like event might recur and make one's corporate promissory note impossible to repay, since one's company may no longer exist. True discourse also claims that promises are "ambiguous": the vow "to honor and cherish as long as ye both shall live" outstrips or goes beyond the being it concerns. *True discourse thus attempts to critique true speech*.

Yet true speech simultaneously examines true discourse and notes that, try as it might to designate a specific thing, it is doomed to the endless deferral of all language. I may point to the table we are sitting at and say "this," but you cannot know if I am referring to the fake wood, its color, its solidity, or its coolness to the touch. And if I say I mean the color, you and I may not perceive the color in the same way if I am a bit colorblind or if the light in the room reflects it differently for me than for you. Even if neither of these are the case, you still will not know if I mean the muddiness of the color, the indescribability of it, the variations in it, the specks, or the shininess; and every adjective I add will itself be open to ambiguity and lead to further questions. This is why even the best driving directions or written instructions are difficult to follow and we often still make a wrong turn or put a piece of furniture together incorrectly.[16]

We are all led to adopt an intermediate discourse, Lacan suggests, one including both true discourse and true speech. We try to avoid the pitfalls of each, "navigating between the Charybdis and the Scylla of this interaccusation of speech," where each accuses the other of lying or error (p. 352,2).

Lacan claims that speech is all the more true, all the more genuinely speech, "the less its truth is based on […] its 'correspondence to the thing.'" "True speech" concerns the mutual recognition of subjects by one another. "True discourse," on the other hand, "is constituted by knowledge of reality" (p. 351,6).

True speech involves a speech act that commits, that promises something (however "unrealistic"). True discourse, however, shows such speech to be lying speech: how can one pledge something about the future when no one knows what the future will bring (p. 351,7)? True speech seems, nevertheless, to aim at something beyond—that is, at future being—whereas, the signification of true discourse is found only in the constant deferral of one signification to another, as in a dictionary (p. 352,1).

In analysis the analysand is forced to adopt this "intermediate discourse": he wants to be recognized, to have his desire recognized, but must simultaneously take "into account what he knows of his being as

given"—that is, of his ego as constituted. Lacan suggests that he is forced to *proceed " by way of ruse"* (p. 352,2; emphasis added).

The speech involved in recognition "is open to the endless chain—which is not, of course, an indefinite chain, since it forms a closed loop—of words in which the dialectic of recognition is concretely realized in the human community" (p. 353,3). Recognition goes on in clearly defined loops. I say, "You're my best friend," and my own message comes back to me from the other as, "You're *my* best friend."

The analyst has to learn to recognize the analysand's "authentic speech" in the analysand's "intermediate discourse"—that is, she has to learn to see through the intermediate discourse to the authentic speech. To do so, she has to silence the intermediate (*a—a'*) discourse in herself (p. 353,4). Lacan here uses Heidegger's "jargon of authenticity," as Adorno (1973) dubs it, but generally avoids it after this period in his work.

Lacan points out that one of the most far-reaching interpretations Freud (1955a) made to the Rat Man neglected some important historical facts—"true discourse"—but still served as true speech by hitting and dismantling a cross-generational chain (of events and signifiers) responsible for the Rat Man's obsession. Freud was able to make this interpretation, says Lacan, because it was related to the truth of his own history: like the Rat Man, Freud too had been advised to marry a rich woman … As we shall see, the analysand's truth corresponds here to the analyst's truth.

Whose Truth?

What Lacan calls the "last stop" in his discussion in "Variations" is "*the contrast between the objects proposed to the analyst by his experience and the discipline necessary to his training*" (p. 355,3). This is never conceptualized or formulated, says Lacan.

What are the objects proposed to analysts? My hypothesis is that this refers to the infinite variety of human experience to which the analyst is exposed in her decades-long practice. The variety is such that no codified "knowledge base" or "data set" could ever prepare her for psychoanalytic practice. Hence it is not "fact-heavy" training that makes sense here.

What form did the analyst's training take in 1955 when Lacan wrote this article? It was increasingly untheoretical, and certainly not research oriented. Unlike some authors who called for more "introspective"[17] candidates and less structured training, Lacan called for less "predigested knowledge," saying that the latter is "of no value in training analysts" (p. 357,2).

Predigested knowledge of particular "types" (e.g., obsessives have repressed anger, hysterics act seductively) or of supposedly general analytic truths is essentially imaginary, for "it concerns only the deposit [the accumulated, constituted knowledge], not the mainspring" (p. 357,4)—that is, it does not teach us how to get at anything new, how to get analysands to transform themselves by speaking. It focuses on generalities, whereas psychoanalysis is a practice subordinated "to what is most particular about the subject … Analytic science must be called back into question in the analysis of each case" (p. 358,2).

The analyst has to recognize that her own constituted knowledge (*savoir*) is a symptom—a compromise formation (including the return of the repressed)—involving the repression of truth. The will *not* to know the truth (repeated in Lacan, 1998, p. 1) is a passion for being, a passion to exist as an ego or self. (And where there is being, there is no real thinking—that is, no unconscious thinking—as Lacan repeats again and again in the 1960s.) The passion *not to know* or passion for ignorance "structures the analytic situation" (Lacan, 2006a, p. 358,4)—it structures the analysand, naturally, but it structures the analyst too. This implies a will on the analyst's part not to be troubled, to be able to simply go on with her life, get on

with the business at hand, and not be forced to shake up her thinking. Freud was not so subject to it, Lacan suggests, since he discovered *his own truth* in what his patients said—this, says Lacan, is what is necessary.

If the analyst feels she has finished once and for all with her own engagement with truth in her personal analysis (which Lacan does not distinguish from her so-called training analysis), then she will not likely maintain a will to know in her analytic work with others. The "desire to know" that a new patient comes to analysis with is not, in effect, a will to discover where his own satisfaction comes from, but rather a will to be provided with and a willingness to be satisfied with already formulated knowledge. The analyst's challenge is to turn this desire for pre-established answers, for predigested knowledge, into a will to know something about his own truth. An analyst has to maintain a stance of nonknowledge; she will not be able to foster constituting speech or true speech if she thinks she already knows what he means, if she thinks she knows what any particular analy-sand has to say (p. 359,2). Such an analyst offers *pat* interpretations, which do not contain the analysand's very particular truth; indeed, Lacan goes so far as to submit that "in order to unite two subjects in its truth, speech requires that it be true speech for both of them" (p. 359,2).[18]

The analyst's interpretation must aim at that, and if she is successful, she will, at the end of an analysis, hear the analysand "pronounce before [her] the very words in which [she] recognizes the law of [her] own being" (p. 359,3).[19]

Having arrived at the end of my sketch of the general outlines of Lacan's argument in "Variations," I will open the floor to your questions and in particular to your comments on the parts of the text that I have overlooked or deliberately left aside, having failed to grasp them.

The material presented here was prepared for a weekend workshop of the Affiliated Psychoanalytic Workgroups (APW) held at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh on October 25–26, 2003. A second paper, "Direction of the Treatment," was also discussed that weekend; a write-up of that discussion can be found in Fink, 2004a, Chapter 1.

Notes

1 A draft translation of "Variations on the Standard Treatment" was distributed to all workshop participants several weeks prior to the meeting.

2 I have since taken further the work of comparing and contrasting Lacan's approach with other paradigms in Fink (2007).

3 Recall that in Aesop's fable, "The Bat, the Birds, and the Beasts," a great conflict was about to take place between the birds and the beasts. When the two armies had gathered, the bat hesitated as to which army to join. The birds that passed his perch said, "Come with us," but he said, "I am a beast." Later on, some beasts who were passing beneath him looked up and said, "Come with us," but he said, "I am a bird." In the end, peace was made and no battle took place; so the bat came to the birds and wished to join in the rejoicings, but they all turned against him and he had to fly away. He then went to the beasts, but soon had to beat a retreat or else they would have torn him to pieces. "Ah," said the bat, "I see now that he who is neither one thing nor the other has no friends."

4 Regarding the history of variations in the psychoanalytic movement, Lacan psychoanalyzes psychoanalysis itself or, more specifically, psychoanalyzes the historical evolution of new trends in psychoanalysis since Freud's time. Lacan at times reads the history of analytic theory the way Hegel (1900) reads history. Lacan does not do so because he believes analytic history is somehow inexorably tending toward Truth, the way Hegel believed history was pursuing its most perfect course, but in order to "get out of this true impasse, which is both mental and practical, to which analysis has now come" (1988a, p. 24). (Cf. his discussion of the "rigorous logic" governing analysts' "intellectual productions" in Lacan, 2006a, p. 316.)

He hopes that, by analyzing the various changes in direction within the analytic movement, he will be able to overcome the impasse to which these changes have led. Lacan (1988a) seems to suggest that since analysis "is a detour for acceding to the unconscious" (p. 24)—that is, analysis is a roundabout path that avoids and circles around without going to the heart of things (namely, truth)—there must be a logic to its detours and avoidances, a logic to its tangents and new directions. He says, "[W]e must posit that the evolution and transformations of analytic experience teach us about the very nature of this experience insofar as it is also a human experience that is hidden from itself" (p. 24). The logic at work in the unconscious is itself responsible for the evolution of our attempts to come to grip with

the unconscious.

The attempt to understand the internal logic of the series of twists and turns within psychoanalysis—the major ones Lacan takes up being ego psychology and object relations (Reich's "character analysis" also gets occasional billing, as in "Variations," pp. 337–43)—is a theme Lacan returns to again and again: we find it in Seminar I, "Function and Field of Speech and Language," "Variations on the Standard Treatment," and "Direction of the Treatment," to mention just a few of the places where this project is discussed.

5 The same ambiguity (between "constituting speech and constituted discourse") arises here anew: we can take the *resister* as constituted (fixed ego) or as constituting. In Freud's discussions of *Ich* (that is, I, me, or ego) in the 1910s, he had situated *Ich* as the agent of resistance. The ego resisted unconscious knowledge. In the second topography, however, elaborated starting in the 1920s, Freud, according to Lacan, specifies "that resistance is not the privilege of the ego alone, but also of the id and the superego" (Lacan, 2006a, p. 334,4).

6 Lacan (1994) comments on the case at length in Seminar IV, *La relation d'objet*, chapters 6, 7, and 8.

7 The reference here is to an institutional incident that obviously scandalized Lacan, as he returned to it on a number of occasions:

> It was to everyone's pleasant surprise that a novice once recounted to us [that is, to the training analysts at the Société Franaçaise de Psychanalyse], in several modest and unembellished pages that were a great success for him, the elegant solution he had found to a recalcitrant case: "After so many years of analysis, my patient still could not smell me; one day my no-less-patient insistence prevailed: he perceived my odor. The cure lay there."
>
> (2006a, p. 465)

> For these are the very people who, making their objective what lies beyond language, react to analysis' "Don't touch" rule by a sort of obsession. If they keep going in that direction, I dare say the last word in transference reaction will be sniffing each other. I am not exaggerating in the least: nowadays, a young analyst-in-training, after two or three years of fruitless analysis, can actually hail the long-awaited advent of the object-relation in being smelled by his subject, and can reap as a result of it the *dignus est intrare* of our votes, the guarantors of his abilities.
>
> (2006a, p. 267)

8 As Lacan (1988a) says in Seminar I, "a human gesture is more closely related to language than it is a manifestation of motor activity" (p. 255, trans. modified). Here is a short list of books that indicate how different human gestures—whether hand, facial, or bodily—are in different cultures:

- *Italian Without Words*, by Don Cangelosi and Joseph Delli Carpini
- *The French Way: Aspects of Behavior, Attitudes, and Customs of the French*, by Ross Steele
- *Body Language in Business: Decoding the Signals*, by Adrian Furnham and Evgeniya Petrova
- *Cultural Intelligence: Living and Working Globally*, by David C. Thomas and Kerr Inkson
- *Understanding Cultural Differences: Germans, French and Americans*, by Edward T. Hall and Mildred Reed Hall
- *Culture Shock! Korea*, by Sonja Vegdahl Hur and Ben Seunghua Hur
- *Cultural Anthropology*, by Conrad Phillip Kottak
- *Gestures: The Do's and Taboos of Body Language Around the World*, by Roger E. Axtell.

9 The same might be argued for the coming "neuropsychoanalytic" tools, which will measure the analysand's brain waves during sessions—we will still have to ask the analysand what he was thinking or feeling and will not be able to bypass speech.

10 See Lacan (1988a, pp. 196–98), and Fink (2004a, Chapter 1).

11 See, for example, Levenson (1995).

12 For an example of an armorial, see the paper in volume 2 of the present collection entitled "Lacan on Personality from the 1930s to the 1950s."

13 One might add that Reich overlooks the signifier's writing on the body: an erect body posture can signal an identification with the male member; uprightness in posture can also suggest a grafting onto the body of a parent's moral admonitions or an identification with a parent's moral stance. Reich takes the body that is written with signifiers as if it were a natural thing (being hunched over as a protective phenomenon, a self-defensive "character," as it might be in the animal kingdom, and as we would see it in most people if punched in the stomach) or as pure resistance, instead of as manifesting unconscious identifications with one's ancestors or the taking on of one's family crest.

14 See, on this point, Fink (2004a, Chapter 1).

15 Lacan goes on here to critique Balint's strictly dyadic approach to analysis, suggesting that it could, nonetheless, work out if the analyst strips his own ego of all forms of desire and presents only the face of death to his analysand (p. 348,4), thereby introducing the third term—which should be the symbolic—into the relationship by hook or by crook. Since death is not an object, emphasis on it leads toward subjectivity and away from the ego (p. 349,2).

Note that death, like the internalization of one's own mirror image, is introduced here without bringing in the symbolic register. It is

introduced as the Other of the imaginary register, as it were, the Other of the ego-to-ego relationship, but Lacan does not yet seem to articulate that it is only language that allows us to conceive of death—as opposed to simply suffer it as do species that do not speak.

Death is introduced into a one-dimensional situation (ego-to-ego analysis) to dialectize it, set it in motion, and shake it up in such a way that it can go beyond itself.

The analyst's ascesis—his coming to grips with his being-toward-death—allows the analyst to "respond to the subject from the place he wants to respond from, but he no longer wants anything that determines this place" (p. 349,3). (This is what will become the place of death itself, the place of the Other as the dummy or death itself in the L schema.) Assuming the analyst has acceded to his own "being-toward-death," he no longer wants anything related to the analysand's ego, no longer wants the analysand to come to grips with reality as he sees it, or wants the analysand to succeed in any particular manner as understood within any particular society: hence he becomes "expectant," not active at that level (p. 349,2–4).

The notion that a successfully completed analysis requires the subjectification of one's own death, of one's own being-toward-death, remains foremost in Lacan's work. In the "1967 Proposition" (Lacan, 1968) and even later, when he discusses what it means to have traversed one's fantasy, he refers to a character in Jean Paulhan's novella, *Le guerrier appliqué* (1930), who has, apparently, achieved the same state. Perhaps it is not surprising that this character is a soldier who faces death daily.

16 As Lacan (1988a) says, "If someone points to a wall, how do you know he is indicating the wall and not, for example, its characteristic of being rough, or green, or grey, etc.?" (p. 253, trans. modified).

17 Lacan certainly did not think increased "introspection" would be of any use to future analysts.

18 This is probably related to the "communication of unconsciouses."

19 I suspect that, in light of Lacan's later work, we should be careful not to take this too literally or too far by in any way suggesting that this requires the analyst and analysand to be *alike* in profound ways (or requires the analyst to believe that they are).

Lacan goes on to add that the analyst can only be herself in speech (p. 359,4). If the analysand "finds his own identity" (p. 360,1) in the analyst *qua* other, it is because this is the law of speech: one receives one's own meaning in an inverted form (I am your wife = you are my husband). This is *not* narcissistic identification à la Balint (p. 360,2), which leaves the analysand exposed to the analyst's superego, making him into a follower of established, predigested knowledge (p. 360,3).

6

READING *HAMLET* WITH LACAN

Lacan's reading of *Hamlet* constitutes a kind of encounter, although perhaps not exactly a chance encounter. It occupies seven lectures in his 1958–59 Seminar VI, *Desire and Its Interpretation* (unpublished),[1] a seminar in which Lacan was working on a number of problems, among them the following: how desire comes to be constituted and what is involved in symbolic castration. Few people approach literary texts looking for insights concerning such subjects, and that may account in part for the apparent strangeness of the way Lacan goes about exploring this Shakespearean text.

Lacan does not set out to analyze the author of the play—Shakespeare himself—as have other psychoanalytic interpreters. He adopts a rather different approach here, as he does in his work (2006a) on Edgar Allan Poe's "The Purloined Letter" and in Seminar VIII, *Transference* (2001), where he takes up Plato's *Symposium*. His intent is not to read psychological structures that have already been identified into poetic works, but to seek new psychoanalytic insights in poetic works. He says that the latter *engender* psychological creations more than they reflect them. There is a sense in which Lacan simply applies his "Graph of Desire" (2006a, p. 817) to the play, showing how Hamlet, the character, can be situated on it, but his reading takes him beyond a simple application of his own pre-existing notions.

His intent is thus not so much to interpret the play as to learn from it. The play, he says, teaches us something about human desire and something about the phallus: it at once illustrates for us the demise of the Oedipus complex through the intervention of castration (a notion Freud [1961c] had developed in "The Dissolution of the Oedipus Complex"), but also—and herein lies its originality—how something comes to be equated with symbolic castration and serve the same purpose as the latter in a case where it had not taken place at the age at which it is generally considered to occur.

Hamlet's very particular equation or substitution allows Lacan to develop a theory of how such substitutions are generally possible. As always in psychoanalytic work, "the particular is what has the most universal value" (Lacan, 1981, p. 12).

Substitution is a fundamental concept in Lacanian psychoanalysis, and it is related in some sense to notions such as compensation and supplementation. Consider Lacan's view of the treatment of psychosis: the latter is defined by Lacan in the 1950s as a problem with the symbolic order as a whole—something is said to be missing therein, which leads to a skewing thereof. The symbolic thus needs to be shored up: something has to be used to compensate for the deformed workings of the symbolic, something has to be found that can hold some semblance of structure together (structure here consisting of the three intertwined orders: symbolic, imaginary, and real) when an essential link that should be there is not. Some other register must be developed in such a way as to cover over the hole in the symbolic, and keep the three registers functioning together.[2] In the treatment of psychosis, one of the analyst's primary goals is to make the imaginary register serve as a prop or even as something of a stand-in for part of the symbolic order—a sort of building up of one order around another that is defective or failing in some respect.

In the case of neurosis we could make out the claim, on the basis of what Lacan says about Hamlet, that one way or another *symbolic castration must come about if the "problem of desire" is to be resolved*, if,

that is, the subject's desire is to be somehow "freed" from the Other's desire. And if it does not come about on its own, in the course of life, perhaps something can come to serve the same purpose—that is, substitute for it—through analysis. The two questions Lacan was puzzling over before devoting himself to a sustained reading of *Hamlet*—how desire comes to be constituted and what symbolic castration is all about—can be seen here to become intertwined in the course of his reading.

The mOther's Desire

"What Hamlet is faced with […] is a desire […]. This desire is far from being his own. It is not his desire *for* his mother, but rather his mother's desire" (Lacan, 1982, p. 20). Lacan thus begins his reading by stressing that it is not Hamlet's *own* desire that is a problem, but rather another person's desire *insofar* as it has been incorporated by Hamlet, yet never assimilated, subjectivized, or made his own.

While most critics seem to have emphasized the stasis or knots in Hamlet's desire or will, Lacan shifts ground, pointing to how *Hamlet is captivated by his mother's desire*: in a certain sense her desire constitutes a space within which his movements are confined.

Lacan focuses in particular on two exemplary scenes, isolating two crucial moments in the development of the play and of Hamlet, the character. The first is the scene following the one in which the traveling troupe of actors has put on a play involving a murder. Hamlet goes to see his mother in her "closet" (as it is called in the play, Act III, Scene IV). By this time, Hamlet has not only the word of his father's ghost but also Claudius's reaction to the play within the play to convince him of Claudius's guilt. Hamlet's intention now is supposedly to kill Claudius. And yet, summoned by his mother, he decides to work on her:

> Soft! now to my mother.—
>
> O heart, lose not thy nature; let not ever
>
> The soul of Nero enter this firm bosom:
>
> Let me be cruel, not unnatural:
>
> I will speak daggers to her, but use none;
>
> My tongue and soul in this be hypocrites,—
>
> How in my words soever she be shent,
>
> To give them seals never, my soul, consent!

Then, to his mother he says:

> Come, come, and sit you down; you shall not budge;
>
> You go not till I set you up a glass
>
> Where you may see the inmost part of you.

He opts to lecture her and to thereby try to bring her back into the fold. He sings the praises of her former husband, upon whom

> every god did seem to set his seal,
>
> To give the world assurance of a man;
>
> This was your husband.— Look you now, what follows:

Here is your husband, like a mildew'd ear

Blasting his wholesome brother. Have you eyes?

Could you on this fair mountain leave to feed,

And batten on this moor? Ha! have you eyes?

You cannot call it love; for at your age

The hey-day in the blood is tame; it's humble,

And waits upon the judgement: and what judgement

Would step from this to this?

Despite her protestations to the effect that he is killing her with his remarks, despite her entreaties for him to stop, culminating in her exclamation, "O Hamlet, thou hast cleft my heart in twain," he continues,

O, throw away the worser part of it,

And live the purer with the other half.

Good-night: but go not to mine uncle's bed;

Assume a virtue, if you have it not.

That monster custom, who all sense doth eat,

Of habits devil, is angel yet in this, —

That to the use of actions fair and good

He likewise gives a frock or livery

That aptly is put on. Refrain to-night;

And that shall lend a kind of easiness

To the next abstinence: the next more easy;

For use almost can change the stamp of nature

And either curb the devil, or throw him out

With wondrous potency.[3]

Hamlet's whole sermon seems up until this point to aim at convincing his mother to leave behind her sinful lust, to let good judgment regain the upper hand, and to little by little turn Claudius, the usurper, out of her bed, heart, and life. All along his mother has been protesting, saying stop, enough, please, I can't take any more. But—after this whole lesson in morality and Hamlet's profuse demand that she try to rectify what has been done to however small an extent—when Hamlet says,

So, again, good-night.—

I must be cruel only to be kind:

Thus bad begins and worse remains behind.—

One word more, good lady,

the queen unexpectedly replies, "What shall I do?"

The queen suddenly acquiesces, in a sense, to Hamlet's demand: she seems to give in and request his counsel as to the course of action she should follow. How does Hamlet react? He backs down.

Lacan, while emphasizing the reversal in Hamlet's attitude, does not pinpoint it in this exact passage (at the end of Scene IV), suggesting instead that it is the ghost's earlier intervention in the same scene that brings on the about-face in Hamlet's approach, leading him to back down. The ghost tells Hamlet to talk with Gertrude, to

> step between her and her fighting soul.—
>
> Conceit in weakest bodies strongest works.—
>
> Speak to her, Hamlet.

And Hamlet begins lecturing his mother anew on how she should behave in a fashion befitting a queen. Lacan thus attributes the turn-around to the dead father's appearance on the scene—the son thus being unable or disinclined to do his father's will—but Hamlet can also be seen as backing down at the very moment at which his mother says, "What shall I do?"

Whereas Hamlet has been insistently demanding that she clean up her act, thrust aside lust, and "assume a virtue, if [she has] it not"—in a word, that *she give up on her desire*—he suddenly backs down. He seems to do so at the very moment at which he senses her acquiescence, and no doubt precisely because she seems to be acquiescing.

Hamlet makes a demand upon her—"throw the toad out"—and yet as soon as she begins to yield, he says, "forget it." In response to her "What shall I do?" he replies: "Not this, by no means, that I bid you do."

Shakespeare here provides us a fine illustration of Lacan's distinction between demand and desire. Hamlet makes a quite explicit demand on his mother, but *his desire is for her to say no to his demand*.

- His *demand*: Throw the bugger out, agree to my request, give in.
- His *desire*: Say "No."

Hamlet apparently could not bear for his mother to assent to his demand,[4] for that would give him the lion's share of space in his mother's desire. He would become the main focus of her desire, the main occupant of her heart (see Figure 6.1), meeting with untimely success in his Oedipal struggle.

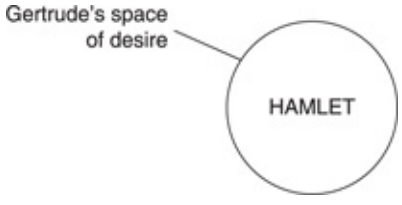

Figure 6.1 Hamlet's place in Gertrude's desire

There is never any suggestion here that Hamlet's "development" is so stunted that he could actually return to some sort of mother-child dyad, willingly filling all of the space of his mother's desire. Alienation, the first operation of symbolic castration, has clearly taken place for Hamlet as a speaking being.[5] What Lacan claims is that Hamlet's submission or subordination to his mother's desire remains very great, overpowering, in fact, until he is able to construct for himself something that can complete his castration—and I would suggest that this construction involves a form of separation.

Lacan refers to this moment in the play as "a time of oscillation": Hamlet's appeal to his mother "fades

and vanishes as he consents to his mother's desire. He lays down his weapons before this desire which seems ineluctable and unmovable to him" (1982, p. 21). Consider this in relation to the Graph of Desire (2006a, p. 817). A child's needs (associated with the small triangle at the point of origin of the horseshoe-shaped arrow running from the lower right to the lower left) must be interpreted and recognized or consented to by the Other, or mOther in this case (A on the Graph), in order to take on any kind of social existence. Need has no existence in the world of speaking beings until it has been translated, assimilated, and absorbed into language, and thus into the Other as language (or linguistic Other, as we might translate Lacan's "*l'Autre du langage*"). Need thereby becomes something foreign and alienated, loosely speaking (see Figure 6.2).

Desire here is conceived of as something that goes beyond the alienation inherent in the absorption of need into the symbolic order. Desire may be viewed as a sort of utopian moment wherein one somehow gets beyond subjugation or domination by the Other (illustrated by that part of the Graph that rises above and beyond the circle containing the Other). And yet, the very dictum Lacan repeats again and again, "man's desire is the Other's desire" (see, for example, Lacan, 2006a, p. 814), indicates that desire itself can be alienated in the sense of not being one's own, being instead some foreign extraneous thing grafted upon a living being—or, to use Bergson's metaphor, "encrusted upon the living (being)."

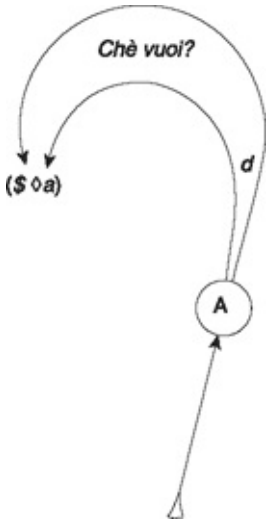

Figure 6.2 Utopian moment of the Graph of Desire

However, in Lacan's discussion of Hamlet, there seems to be something more redeeming about it: "fully-fl edged"—in other words, "decided"—desire is endowed with the ability to get beyond the Other, to "break on through to the other side," as it were, and become autonomous or free from the Other's clutches.

At the very next stage of the Graph of Desire, however, a complex kind of loop seems to develop, closing off this "utopian" escape from the circuit. Jacques-Alain Miller has shown that the Graph of Desire can be derived from group theory diagrams, and that it is a fairly direct spin-off of the α, β, γ, δ Network found in *Écrits* (Lacan, 2006a, p. 57), this network representing the autonomous functioning of the symbolic order in the unconscious. The Graph indicates that there is but a limited number of permutations possible, and thus only certain directions allowed in running through the circuit. While there seems to be an out, exit, or opening towards freedom at the *Chè vuoi?* stage of the Graph, it seems to evaporate when Lacan proceeds to the next stage of the Graph (two short pages later in "The Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire in the Freudian Unconscious" in *Écrits*).

Why does this utopian moment—designated by the placing of fantasy ($◊ *a*) at the end of the hopeful arrows in the *Chè vuoi?* diagram—vanish? As a first attempt to explain why, we might consider the

clinical observation that, after a longer or shorter period of analytic work, analysands are often able to remember fantasies that had clearly been forgotten or unconscious, and are terribly dismayed to realize that they correspond detail for detail to fantasies recounted by their parents and/or other relatives. They are likely to be outraged and disgusted[6] at the realization that not even their "innermost" fantasies are their own. Their sense is that these important others (avatars of the Other) have been so invasive as to attack even their "own" most "personal" fantasies. Not even repressed fantasies are really one's own: they too are colored or tainted with otherness.

Desire and fantasy are thus brought back into the circuit, the circuit of the complete Graph of Desire, corresponding, in some sense, to only those permutations and combinations allowed by the symbolic order.

The move beyond the Other illustrated by the *Chè vuoi?* arrows amounts, according to Lacan, to the real or ultimate question a child asks its parents. The child's multiple and repeated questions, "What do you want?" and "What do you want from me?" boil down to "What is my place in all of this?" Hamlet's "question,"[7] and Lacan views this question as being posed in Hamlet's long tirade to his mother in Act III, Scene I V, is "Where do I fit in?"

Lacan's discussion here seems to imply that there are essentially two kinds of answers the neurotic can receive to this question. In other words, the mOther can respond in two different ways. Graphically speaking, she can respond at a higher or a lower level, she can elevate or bring down her neurotic child. According to Lacan—and this is one of the points in his interpretation with which I do not agree, but it nevertheless illustrates the working of his Graph of Desire—the response provided by Hamlet's mother to Hamlet's "Why don't you throw the toad out," is as follows: "I just can't, I'm a sex maniac—that's just the way I am, I need a man all the time."[8] Lacan situates this response on the Graph at the level of *s*(A), the signification that comes from the Other: the meaning given by the mOther, the explanation provided by the mother *about herself*. Gertrude's response, as Lacan sees it, does not concern Hamlet—she does not, for example, say, "Why don't you mind your own business?" or "You are not enough for me, I cannot live without someone else in my life"—but rather simply describes Gertrude herself: "That's just the way I am."

According to Lacan, however, Hamlet was for once seeking an answer at some other level, or even no response at all. Lacan maintains that the neurotic must be confronted with the fact that there is no signifier in the Other that can answer for (*répondre de*) what the neurotic is (1982, p. 32). "*Répondre de*" should, I think, be understood quite forcefully here. Suppose that a number of French-speaking people are involved in a conspiracy to kill the president, and one of them mentions that if they don't bump off the vice-president at the same time, the situation will be even worse than it was at the outset. Another of the conspirators then turns to the group and says, "*Je réponds de lui*." It will be immediately understood that the latter is taking upon him- or herself the responsibility of putting the vice-president six feet under. He or she is telling them, "I'll take care of him, I'll take responsibility for that particular detail." Similarly, when Lacan says that there is no signifier in the Other that can *répondre de* what you are, he doesn't simply mean "answer for," but "account for" or "take responsibility for." The signifier at issue is one that would not merely tell you what you are, but that would take you under its wing, define you, protect you, and constitute your *raison d'être*.[9]

There is no such signifier, but not every mother helps her children realize this. Some mothers lead their children to believe that there *is* such a signifier and that it's called mom. When, according to Lacan, Hamlet surreptitiously slips Gertrude the question, "What's my place in all this?" she doesn't say, "Damned if I know, and anyway you're old enough to figure it out for yourself." Hamlet's mother never

answers his questions with a "How should I know?" Instead she says, at least these are the very words Lacan puts in her mouth, "I am what I am; in my case there's nothing to be done, I'm a true genital personality—I know nothing of mourning" (1982, p. 23).

The point is that the mOther's discourse here has to do with herself, her own identity and her own characteristics. It concretizes something about the mOther—and it is plain to see that it concerns lack: according to Lacan, she says she has to be "getting it" all the time. But the answer is incommensurate with the question as Lacan understands it. If you ask your mother what you mean to her, and she answers by saying she loves petting cats and, every time your discourse is a fairly transparent cover for the same what-do-I-mean-to-you type question, she answers in the same general way, talking about herself, then she gives a particular kind of meaning to your question, and the meaning of your speech is always determined retroactively. You may think your questions are about some sort of larger life-related issue, but the type of response you receive may prove them to be "about" something else. Your mOther here decides the meaning of the question you formulated, using the code made available to you by the Other as language; your enunciation comes into being as some particular message on the basis of her response to it.

Thus, according to Lacan, Hamlet's mother converts Hamlet's discourse, Hamlet's repeatedly expressed desire to know where he fits in, into demand pure and simple—that is, into a demand for attention and love. All speech, ultimately, according to Lacan, makes a request or demand, and all demands are, regardless of their apparent content, demands for love. By converting Hamlet's desire into demand, Gertrude flattens it out, bringing it down to the lower level of the Graph.

Some other kind of response might have been able to bring Hamlet face to face with "the signifier of the lack in the Other," finally separating him from the symbolic order—that is, from the Other as language. This signifier of lack in the Other, $S(\not{A})$, is for all intents and purposes equivalent here to the signifier of (the Other's) desire, Φ, lack and desire being coextensive. Hamlet looks to the Other for an answer about who and what he is. Instead of being given an answer at the level of meaning (as in the case in which Gertrude, according to Lacan, responds by talking about the kind of woman she is), he would, in the best of all possible worlds, be led to encounter the signifier of desire that just is—having no rhyme or reason, no explanation, justification, or *raison d'être*. The budding desire (*d*) that we see precariously perched on the "ladder" leading to the upper level of the Graph would become full-fledged due to its encounter with Φ as the signifier of desire—that is, as signifier of the Other's desire. And a type of jouissance would become possible that is correlated with symbolic castration (see the upper horizontal arrow in the complete Graph, p. 817).

The concept of Φ, the so-called phallic signifier (or signifier of desire), in Lacan's work is related, at least in part, to triangulation: the need for a third term if the danger inherent in a dyadic parent-child relationship (potentially leading to psychosis) is to be obviated. There must be a third term in the primary caretaker's (in contemporary society, usually the mother's) discourse: not necessarily a god, spouse, lover, or what have you, but a place reserved for someone else, someone other than the primary caretaker and the child.

Now since man's desire is *the same as* the Other's desire, it adopts as its object the same third term or object desired by the Other, mysterious as that object may be (assuming there is some such object, that is, some third term in the mother's discourse). If we refer to that object as an *x*, an unknown, we see that a child's desire mimics its mother's desire.

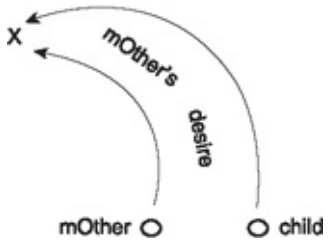

Figure 6.3 Man's desire models itself on the Other's desire

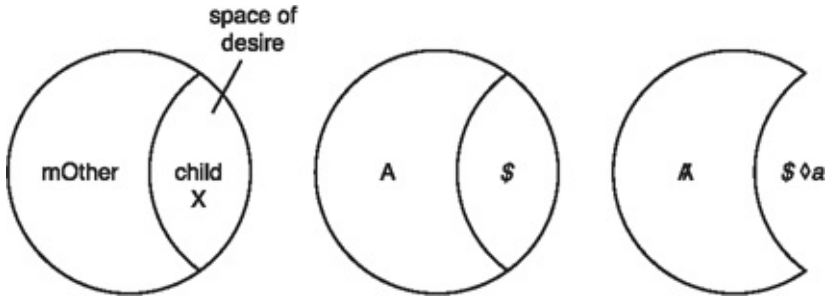

Figure 6.4 Beyond alienation

In such a case, there is a third term that simultaneously occupies the space of the mother's desire in which the child has come into existence as a barred subject. Try as it might, the child cannot occupy the whole of her space of desire.

Hamlet's mother does not, according to Lacan, make mention of that third-term placeholder. Hamlet can thus be understood to remain caught within her space of desire. Alienation has clearly taken place: Hamlet *has* entered the Other's world (something autistic children seem not to do) and assimilated the Other's language and the desire with which it is ridden, but separation has not occurred. Momentarily associating that *x*, that unknown object of desire, with object *a* instead of Φ, we can see that Hamlet (as barred subject) has yet to split off from the Other, taking object *a* with him, as it were (see Figure 6.4).

For separation is not simply a breaking away from the mOther, but a decompleting of the mOther as the child comes to be in relation to an object that functions independently, in some sense, from the mOther. Whereas this object may have been intimately related to the mother's *desirousness* at the outset, through separation it takes on a life of its own, in a manner of speaking.[10]

What Lacan refers to in his work on Hamlet as accession to the upper level of the complete Graph—which involves an encounter with the signifier of the lack in the Other—translates in his later terms as the advent of object a and the subject's separation. No longer "*à l'heure de l'Autre*" (Lacan, 1983, p. 14), subjugated by the Other's will, swept along by the Other's every whim and fancy, and unable to initiate any action of his own, Hamlet, when he fi nally reaches this stage (which he does, according to Lacan), is able to act.

The Final Act

In his classes on *Hamlet* in Seminar VI, Lacan attempts to account for Hamlet's actions, his ability to bring on symbolic castration resulting in the passing of his Oedipus complex, and his reincorporation of Ophelia as an object of desire, all on the basis of his rivalry with Laertes. This may seem rather odd, at first, as after all it is Lacan who tells us that rivalry of this kind is indicative of specular/imaginary relations, and that imaginary relations *interfere* with symbolic ones—one of the goals of analysis being, in a sense, to clear away or deflate these imaginary antagonisms and relations, and establish ever clearer symbolic ones.

But Hamlet does not undergo analysis and must make do with the means at hand. Lacan sustains that it

is thanks to his rivalry with Laertes that Hamlet is able to catapult himself beyond the lower half of the Graph, that half associated with alienation. He views the imaginary relationship between Hamlet and Laertes as the catalyst here, the process being close in kind to that at work in the three-prisoner problem Lacan lays out in his article "Logical Time and the Assertion of Anticipated Certainty,"[11] involving a *precipitation of subjectivity through an accumulation of temporal tension*. Just as, in that article, the prisoners are forced to subjectivize the situation, due of course to the logical constraints of the situation, but also to the specular nature of their reciprocal relations, so too Hamlet is led, owing to the course of events and his rivalry with Laertes, to become the subject of his fate.

Laertes is clearly depicted in the play as Hamlet's equal in many respects, an excellent fencer, and Hamlet himself tells us that he sees Laertes as very like himself: "For by the image of my cause I see/ The portraiture of his … "They are thus "semblables," in Lacan's terminology. In the cemetery scene, Hamlet competes with Laertes in the expression of grief over Ophelia's death.

In Act V, Scene II, which is the second crucial moment Lacan focuses on in the play, Hamlet agrees to fence with Laertes in fulfillment of a bet made by Claudius—that is, in fulfillment of another person's demand (indicating that he is still *à l'heure de l'Autre*). At another's behest, he willingly accepts to be a *pawn* in Claudius's wager. Lacan says here that "This encounter with the other is there to allow Hamlet to at last identify with the fatal signifier"; "The instrument of death can only be given to him by an other" (1983, p. 26).

The "fatal" or "lethal" signifier is a term proposed in the course of Lacan's first interpretation of Hamlet's shift at the end of the play, which seems to rely on a very Freudian view of the phallus. This first interpretation begins with a play on words:

> Hamlet: … Give us the foils; come on.
>
> Laertes: Come, one for me.
>
> Hamlet: I'll be your foil, Laertes; in mine ignorance
>
> Your skill shall, like a star in the darkest night, Stick fiery off indeed.
>
> (Act V, Scene II)

The pun here is on the word "foil," meaning rapier or sword, but also a setting for a jewel: the mount or hole in which a jewel is set. A foil-leaf is placed in the setting to set off the polished stone and make it shine still more. The foil here is a reflector—it reflects back Laertes's skill and prowess. Or at least that seems to be the most obvious interpretation, given that Hamlet says to Laertes, "Your skill shall, like a star in the darkest night, stick fiery off indeed"—in other words, be set off to best advantage.

According to Lacan, however, "In this pun there is, in the final analysis, an identification with the lethal phallus" (1983, p. 27). However, apart from Hamlet's association of himself with a foil, the arm or weapon Laertes will use against him—this is the aspect of the pun that leads Lacan to speak of an identification with the lethal phallus—it seems to me that many of the connotations lead in a rather different direction: "I shall be my own undoing, I'll do the work for you, I'll be the best reflector of your talent, I'll be the setting, the foil-leaf in the hole in which you will be set, mounted, and displayed in all your glory." Hamlet seems to me to be adopting the position of setting in which Laertes will be placed to be shown off to his best advantage.[12]

There is clearly a sense in which Hamlet, in saying "I'll be your sword," is identifying himself with a phallic-like symbol. It is, however, a double-edged sword, in that it is a phallus that is weak compared to Laertes's, Hamlet claiming that he is bound to lose, and thus his sword will bend or yield beneath

Laertes's blows, before Laertes's prowess. (There are no doubt further possible meanings, such as "I'll be your undoing.")

A second interpretation of what happens to Hamlet is, however, forthcoming by the end of Lacan's seventh talk, according to which it is Laertes's evocation of the hole created by Ophelia's disappearance that brings on a mobilization of logos in Hamlet; here Φ finally comes forth for Hamlet as the signifier of the lack in the Other, allowing him to identify the phallus beyond the King and to take action. Here Hamlet is seen to identify the phallus beyond himself and the King, rather than identifying with it.

Stated somewhat differently, the emphasis placed by Laertes on Ophelia's disappearance amounts to an insistence upon the lack in the Other, a lack in the symbolic order. This insistence leads Hamlet, due to the rivalry between himself and Laertes generating a great deal of subjective tension, to a mobilization of logos around this lack, and the eventual emergence or surfacing of Φ as the signifier that can signify the lack in the Other. *Qua* signifier, it need not be identified with any particular warm or cold body ("The King is a thing … ").

Time seems to play an important role in the mounting of this subjective tension:

Laertes: It is here, Hamlet: Hamlet, thou art slain;
No medicine in the world can do thee good;
In thee there is not half an hour of life;
The treacherous instrument is in thy hand,
Unbated and envenom'd: the foul practice
Hath turn'd itself on me; lo, here I lie,
Never to rise again: thy mother's poison'd:
I can no more:— the king, the king's to blame.

Hamlet: The point envenom'd too!—
Then venom to thy work. [*Stabs the King*]

Faced with the certainty of death, Hamlet can finally act. Certainty seems to elude him throughout the play, but finally emerges due to the imminence of death. Hamlet is here faced with a kind of "now or never" situation where, already partly separated from life itself, he is at last able to separate from the Other and enact his *own* will.

An implication of Lacan's discussion of *Hamlet* is that life may create the circumstances necessary for the kind of precipitation of subjectivity that is orchestrated under "controlled" conditions within the analytic setting. The timing of those circumstances, when fortuitously orchestrated by life itself, may, as we see here however, leave a great deal to be desired.

Can Hamlet's belated separation—involving the emergence of the signifier of the lack in the Other owing to his competition with Laertes (and then, we might add, with death itself)—be generalized? In other words, can it serve others as a stand-in for what is more usually considered to bring on symbolic castration earlier in life?

Many is the film where a man finally takes action, declaring his love for a woman in dramatic circumstances of competition with another man (when, for example, that other man is at the altar with her, preparing to tie his fate with her 'till death do they part'). Apart from the fact that such circumstances

seem to arise more frequently in cinema than in real life, it is an open question whether they constitute anything more than a momentary panic. Could they possibly bring on a genuine separation of the man's desire from the Other's desire?

Living Posthumously?

Lacan's conclusion that Hamlet does take the leap in the end is, in my view, open to discussion, for it is not at all clear to me that Hamlet is ever able to act in any full sense of the term.[13] Consider what are among his last lines:

> I am dead, Horatio.— Wretched queen, adieu!—
>
> You that look pale and tremble at this chance,
>
> That are but mutes or audience to this act,
>
> Had I but time,—as this fell sergeant, death,
>
> Is strict in his arrest,—O, I could tell you, —
>
> But let it be.— Horatio, I am dead;
>
> Thou liv'st; report me and my cause aright
>
> To the unsatisfied.

The words "Had I but time" seem to me to suggest that Hamlet's time never comes—now he is *à l'heure de la mort*. He remains as neurotic as ever, his time is never now, he cannot say his piece, someone else must speak for him and plead his cause before the world. He is forever constrained, never free. The neurotic never acts in the present, living instead in the past or but for posterity—posthumously.

This paper presents a number of the themes developed in a series of talks at the University of California at Irvine, organized by John Smith and Julia Lupton, which were subsequently condensed for a lecture given in December 1992 in the context of Kenneth Reinhard's course on Lacan at UCLA. An earlier version of the paper was published in R. Feldstein and W. Apollon, Eds. (1996). *Lacan, politics, aesthetics* (pp. 181–98). Albany, NY: SUNY Press.

Notes

1 Although Seminar VI has yet to be published in its entirety in French, the lectures on *Hamlet* were edited and published by Jacques-Alain Miller in a preliminary version in several volumes of a journal (Lacan, 1981, 1982, 1983). Only the final three sessions on Hamlet were published in English (Lacan, 1977a); all translations of Lacan's work provided here are my own.

2 In Lacan's later work, this will be the "fourth ring," also known as the sinthome.

3 Hamlet expresses decidedly behavioristic views here.

4 There is a sense here in which *the content of demand is irrelevant*: the question at issue is whether or not the other person, the person to whom the demand is addressed (in this case the mOther), will accede, will give in.

5 See Lacan's (1978) discussion of the your-money-or-your-life paradigm in Seminar XI; this is where he first introduces the operations of alienation and separation. See Fink (1990, 1995).

6 Their disgust is a confirmation that the fantasies in question were repressed, disgust being a sure sign of repression.

7 To Lacan's way of thinking, desire is essentially a question.

8 I fail to see exactly where Gertrude says or implies any such thing.

9 Or perhaps even knock you off and take your place.

10 For more complete and precise accounts, see Fink (1990, 1995).

11 Lacan (2006a, pp. 197–213). See my detailed commentary on it (Fink, 1996).

12 Lacan, however, takes one of the meanings of "foil" to be *écrin* or jewelry box (not mount or setting), a false lead, to the best of my knowledge, perhaps suggested by one of the French translations of *Hamlet* Lacan was consulting at the time.

13 I do not agree, either, with a number of his other conclusions—for example, that Gertrude does not make mention of a third term.

On Translation

7

A PSYCHOANALYTIC ETHICS OF TRANSLATION

> Commenting on a text is like doing an analysis. How often have I said to my supervisees, when they have said to me, "I had the impression he meant this and that," that one of the things we must guard against most is understanding too much, understanding more than what is there in the subject's discourse. Interpreting and imagining that one understands are not at all the same. Indeed, they are diametrically opposed. I would even say that it is on the basis of a certain refusal of understanding that we open the door to analytic [interpretation].[1]
>
> — Lacan, 1988a, pp. 87–88

The Virtual Impossibility of Understanding

A psychoanalytic ethics is one in which the unconscious is always kept front and center—that is, one in which we never lose sight of the unconscious. We keep our sights set on the unconscious by paying close attention to the analysand's discourse and to the analysand's jouissance in speaking, whether that be obvious enjoyment in the form of smiling or laughing, not so obvious *Schadenfreude*, or hidden satisfaction in the form of embarrassment, anxiety, or any other intense negative affect.

To keep the unconscious front and center does *not* mean that one attempts to understand it, interpret it, or master it; one must begin instead from the position of nonmastery and of deferring understanding—indeed a presumption of the virtual impossibility of understanding, a presumption that understanding is never more than an asymptotically unfolding project.[2]

Just as I take it for granted that I probably don't really understand what to others might seem readily comprehensible in an analysand's discourse, I take it for granted that I probably don't really understand even what seems most readily comprehensible in Lacan's texts. A female analysand may, while describing a dream, say, "In the dream, I had daughter and she was in the hallway outside my door. There was sexual tension between us." Had I assumed she was talking about sexual tension between herself and her oneiric daughter—as seemed to be the case given her grammar—I would have been dead wrong, for when I echoed in a querying tone of voice, "Us?" she explained that the sexual tension was between herself and a guy she had mentioned some five or six sentences earlier.[3] Like Lacan, analysands often have a specific referent in mind when they say "he" or "she," but the referent may have been mentioned quite some time before and be anything but obvious to the listener.

At one point in *Écrits*, Lacan (2006a) discussed a male patient of his who had a mistress but had become impotent with her, and in the course of his commentary Lacan used the word *commère*. On the basis of my ten-plus years living in France, I believed I knew that meant a "gossipy woman," but it made very little sense in context.[4] Luckily, I had learned from experience that French words often have several different meanings and that Lacan was generally aware of far more of them than the average educated French person. When I looked it up, I realized that the word had a particular meaning in previous centuries that made far more sense in the context in which Lacan employed it than the more common

contemporary meaning: *commère* formerly meant godmother, but also a cunning woman, a bold and energetic woman; it was even used at one point to designate a music hall emcee. Given the context—that of a woman who has a dream that alleviates her sexual partner's erectile difficulties when she recounts it to him—I settled on "shrewd paramour." The sentence in which the word appeared could then be rendered as:

> On hearing [his mistress' dream, a dream in which she had a penis, but a vagina too, and wanted the penis to enter her vagina] my patient's powers were immediately restored and he demonstrated this brilliantly to his shrewd paramour.

Indeed, I realized that the more common contemporary meaning made little or no sense whatsoever in the context, and merely turned the passage into gobbledygook. (The English noun "gossip" referred more simply to one's companion in earlier centuries, but I felt it would probably confuse most contemporary readers.) Lacan wasn't there for me to ask which meaning he intended, and even if he had been I'm sure he would have told me something so confusing that I would have come away none the wiser. (With my analysands, things are a bit easier: I can ask them which meaning they intended, but of course they, like all of us, are prone to be duped as to their intentions.)

Plenty of readers—including certain French readers such as François Roustang, Jean Bricmont, and Mikkel Borch-Jacobsen—have concluded that Lacan was an impostor who talked a lot of hogwash. Most French people find Lacan impossible to read for the very same reasons that those of us who are not native French speakers find Lacan's French daunting if not downright impossible. They don't know the older meanings of many of the terms and expressions he uses and have never read the centuries of French literature from which he drew a plethora of now obscure grammatical turns of phrase and obsolete vocabulary.

They are left to devise creative answers to the thorny question why Lacan's spoken Seminars are so much easier to understand than his writings are and are often quite brilliant! Why would his seminars be brilliant and his writings nothing but smoke and mirrors? We could, of course, hypothesize that he refused to write for the masses and wished to make his message transparent only to those he worked with directly in his Seminar; but then why would he have spent so much time writing—and rewriting (up to ten drafts, as he tells us)—and publishing his papers, publication usually being designed for a wider audience?

You Get What You Work For[5]

I begin with a different assumption: I assume that his writings aren't a bunch of malarkey. Whether I agree with them or not, I assume that Lacan is saying something meaningful in them, in his own difficult, at times tortured, at times infuriatingly oblique way. Consummate French intellectuals like Jean-Claude Milner have gone so far as to claim that Lacan's writings are in fact crystal clear—maybe they are for him, but I do not have the privilege of finding them transparent like he professes to.

To my way of thinking, Lacan's writings were produced by someone who was trying to express something and trying to have a certain effect on his readers, just like the analysand's verbal and bodily discourse and actions are often trying to express something and to have a certain effect on those around the analysand. In both cases we are dealing with opaque, roundabout forms of expression—forms of expression that are adopted because more transparent, direct forms of expression were barred to the subjects who produced them, whether because the knowledge to be expressed was repressed and/or censored by the subject's ego or whether the style of expression was more or less deliberately adopted as a way of putting readers to work and making them appreciate the fact that they don't know what they think

they know, which is—or at least should be—a crucial part of psychoanalytic training.

I presuppose that there is a knowledge that is confusingly expressed in the discourse enunciated by the analysand—the analysand is often at least as confused by it as I am. He assumes that I know what his discourse means: he takes me as the subject who is supposed to know the meaning of his perplexing feelings, life decisions, and symptoms. I agree to hold the place of the subject supposed to know for him, realizing full well, however, that the knowledge lies in his unconscious, not in me. To elucidate the knowledge "contained" (or "inscribed") in his unconscious—and thus in his obscure speech about himself, his fantasies, and his dreams—he needs to imagine that I have it, that I know and understand it. But as for myself, I occupy the position of nonknowledge, and must realize that when I am tempted to think I really and truly know the meaning of something the analysand says, it is but a symptom of my own ignorance, as Lacan (2006a, p. 358) puts it: it is at such moments that I am most completely kidding myself.

Similarly, as a translator I presuppose that there is a thesis or knowledge that is opaquely expressed in the discourse found in Lacan's writings. For me the text holds the place of the analysand's obscure speech and I am in the position of the analyst who is forced to work extremely hard to decipher the logic of the text, hewing to the assumption that I do not know what it is.

The Unconventional Logic of the Text

If I presume right from the outset that there is no logic in the discourse with which I am faced, then I certainly will not find one. This is the position of the cognitive-behavioral therapist: the patient is suffering from incorrect thoughts and faulty logic. The patient's specious reasoning must simply be replaced with the therapist's correct reasoning and all will be well! There is only one true logic—a rather obsessive, capitalistic logic, as it turns out—and everyone must see the world the way the cognitive-behavioral therapist sees it if they are to be cured.

The Lacanian psychoanalyst, on the other hand, assumes that there is a logic to the patient's suffering, but that this logic is anything but a standard logic of the type taught in philosophy classes. Instead it is a highly personal logic that is transparent neither to the patient nor to the analyst. The unconscious does not obey the laws of classical either/or logic—it is highly individual and must be largely discovered anew in each new case the analyst encounters.

To assume that there is no logic there is to attempt to simply replace the patient's unconscious logic with one's own, attempting to force the analysand to model herself on oneself. To assume there is no rhyme or reason in Lacan's texts leaves one in the position of replacing Lacan's logic with one's own logic or with sheer nonsense.

Just as in any psychoanalysis, the work of deciphering such texts is long and difficult. Lacan was a master at linguistic origami, folding and refolding his clauses so assiduously that one often has to rewrite his sentences in French, grouping verbs with their objects and the beginnings of idiomatic expressions with their ends, before one can even begin to fathom any sort of meaning whatsoever in them.

Here is an elementary example from *Écrits* (I not long ago published the first complete edition in English of the 900-page volume and thus the majority of the examples I discuss here come from it). In "The Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire in the Freudian Unconscious," we find the following: *"Sur le fantasme ainsi posé, le graph inscrit que le désir se règle ... "* (Lacan, 2006a, p. 816). The standard French expression, *se régler sur quelque chose* (to model oneself on something or adapt to something), is broken up here in a way that makes it a bit difficult to see and the former translator, Alan Sheridan, obviously did not see it at all. His translation suggests that he read *sur* in the

sense of "regarding": "On to the phantasy presented in this way, the graph inscribes that desire governs itself … " (Lacan, 1977b, p. 314). Since when did Lacan say that "desire governs itself"? Sheridan failed to recognize the ordinary idiomatic expression *se régler sur quelque chose*, which requires us to translate the French more or less as follows: "The graph shows that desire adjusts to fantasy as posited in this way … "

I myself am not a master at origami: I'm not sure I would know how to fold even simple phrases like that into somewhat impenetrable syntagmas. One thing is for sure: I wouldn't want to. Not just to save time—this project already took numerous years—but because of my general approach to translating Lacan. Let me try to say a little bit about it.

The Jouissance of the Text

In general, and in line with my concern with keeping the unconscious front and center, I strive to convey the enjoyment or jouissance of the text from French to English. This was a special concern of mine in translating Lacan's work on feminine sexuality in Seminar XX, where it was clear that Lacan (1998) was having quite a good time speaking in his ever more punning and multi-layered way to his audience of 700. I was happy to hear from one of my colleagues in Paris—and the tribute was all the more gratifying as it was unsolicited and was told to someone other than myself—that she could tell by reading the English translation that Lacan was really enjoying himself at the seminar, really having a good time.

But note the ambiguity in the phrase "enjoyment of the text." Whose enjoyment is it? The author's or the reader's? Is man's enjoyment the other's enjoyment? Not necessarily, I think. When the analysand is clearly getting off on something in a session, the analyst isn't necessarily getting off in the same way—indeed, certain analysands especially enjoy making the analyst anxious. And Lacan, no doubt, at times enjoyed making his audience squirm!

In his writings, especially prior to around 1965, Lacan did not enjoy himself in the same way at all. He suggested on the first page of *Écrits* that the style of a talk or text depends upon the audience: the style is the man one addresses (2006a, p. 9). (Here he is no doubt echoing Cheng Yi's dictum, "The Sage's word is transformed in relation to the person to whom it is addressed" [cited in Jullien, 2000, p. 277].) This might account for some of the diversity of styles one finds in the many varied papers in *Écrits*, some of which were delivered at international psychoanalytic conferences, some to students in philosophy, some to students in literature, and so on. As his audience changed, Lacan's style of address changed; this is especially visible in the change in style of his seminars over the course of the three decades during which he gave them, his audience evolving considerably over those years.

A great deal has been said about Lacan's style and the way in which Lacan seems to have wanted his meaning to be accessible only to a small number of the initiated. Lacan presumably believed that Freud's work had been found overly, but in fact deceptively, accessible: the complexities of his work had been overlooked due to the relative simplicity and approachability of his style. Lacan ostensibly adopted, as his teaching progressed, an ever less accessible style, designed to thwart simplistic, quick and dirty readings.

All of that is no doubt true, as is the idea that Lacan wished to train analysts in the fine art of deciphering the unconscious as they worked through his written texts—claiming that his writings were not meant to be read but rather worked over and worked through pen, dictionaries, and Freud's texts in hand. They were no doubt designed to be off-putting to the lion's share of analysts trained in the Anglo-American traditions of ego psychology and object relations theory, traditions that Lacan despised as thoroughly anti-intellectual, ahistorical, and devoid of philosophical perspective. One might say that

Lacan's great achieve-ment in France was to create a whole new breed of psychoanalysts who were consummate intellectuals, avidly reading philosophy, literature, political theory, anthropology, mathematics, logic, and topology. Whereas American psychoanalysts forced the American Psychoanalytic Association to accept only physicians as professional psychoanalysts, Lacan opened the doors to intellectuals of all backgrounds and completely revitalized the study of Freud in France and in much of rest of the Romance-language-speaking world as well.

Lacan managed to debunk the notion that psychoanalysts had successfully gone beyond Freud when, in France especially, they had not yet even begun to read Freud since much of Freud's work was not yet available in French at all, and the little that was, was available only in very poor translations.

When I applied to the National Endowment for the Humanities for funding for the translation of *Écrits*, one of the jury members voted against my application saying, "I thought Lacan was passé." In saying this, he unwittingly echoed the belief of those French analysts of Lacan's time that they had gone beyond Freud even before reading him. Little of Lacan's work had been translated prior to 2000 when this comment was made, and much of it quite badly. Virtually everyone who jumped on the structuralist and poststructuralist bandwagons read commentaries on Lacan that were written primarily by those who could read no more of Lacan than the few generally poor translations available in the 1970s and 1980s. By 2000 and the turn away from theory in literature departments in general, many professors were already done with structuralism and poststructuralism and looking for the "next big thing," as one professor of literature at Cornell University unabashedly put it to me.

For Whom Doth the Translator Toil?

Lacan's audience in the English-speaking world prior to the 1990s consisted of few if any psychoanalysts. The translations prior to that time done by Alan Sheridan, Jacqueline Rose, and even Jeffrey Mehlman were often word for word, highly inaccurate, rarely if ever acknowledged the uncertainties of signification of the text, and often said the exact opposite of what Lacan had said. Nevertheless, these translations were, one might say, good enough for a certain audience, but certainly not good enough to allow Lacan to create a new audience of intellectually minded psychoanalysts in the English-speaking world as he had in France. American clinicians in particular were already not overly inclined to grapple with texts that presumed knowledge of linguistics, literature, and philosophy, in which they had little or no training, but they were certainly not inclined to grapple with gobbledygook, and that's what they were served up by translators who often hadn't even read the basic texts by Freud that Lacan was commenting on. (For a detailed example of this, see the discussion of a passage from "Direction of the Treatment" in Fink, 2004b.)

To be generous, we could say of each of Lacan's early translators—borrowing Lord Dorset's comments on Mr. Spence's translations—"that he was so cunning a translator that a man must consult the original to understand the version."[6] To be less generous to them, I can do no better than concur with what Nabokov (1992) says of Russian translators of Pushkin's work:

> One of the main troubles with would-be translators is their ignorance. Only by sheer unacquaintance with Russian life in the 'twenties of the last century can one explain, for instance, their persistently translating *derevnya* by "village" instead of "countryseat," and *skakat'* by "to gallop" instead of "to drive." Anyone who wishes to attempt a translation of Onegin should acquire exact information in regard to a number of relevant subjects, such as the fables of Krïlov, Byron's works, French poets of the eighteenth century, Rousseau's *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, Pushkin's biography, banking games, Russian songs related to divination, Russian military ranks of the time

> as compared to Western European and American ones, the difference between cranberry and lingenberry, the rules of the English pistol duel as used in Russia, and the Russian language.
>
> (p. 137)

It appears that the early translations of Lacan's work were nevertheless good enough for literary critics like the late Malcolm Bowie (1991) of Cambridge University fame, who refer in their books to "Sheridan's generally excellent renderings" (p. 214).

I decided right from the outset to prepare a translation addressed to a different audience—an audience of clinicians—even if it would require far more effort of those clinicians than required by many of the texts in the contemporary psychoanalytic literature. Note, however, that Kleinian analysts *are* used to reading difficult works by Melanie Klein, who although she wrote mostly in English seems to have thought primarily in German, and they are used to reading difficult works by Bion. Thus they are not averse to *all* difficulty. Clearly, however, at least some of them are averse to deliberate difficulty when the meaning is patently nonsensical. That is perhaps a good sign, in fact!

My working hypothesis was as follows: clinicians can get a great deal out of Lacan's work if it is translated carefully and accurately, with precise reference to the psychoanalytic texts by Freud and others that Lacan constantly refers to, and if the sentences are unfolded in a manner that makes them more readable—especially in English in which a multiplication of clauses and sub-clauses israrely considered to be a thing of beauty, much less a joy forever, as it is by some in French.

My theory—perhaps some will say it was nothing more than a wish—was that not all English-speaking clinicians are totally anti-intellectual and totally averse to working through challenging texts. Explanatory notes—even if they had to be relegated to the back of the book and keyed only with great difficulty to the original text due to the wishes of the owner of the French copyright—could be used to provide references that Lacan assumed or wished his audience knew. More notes could be provided to indicate those polyvalences that I was unable to render into English and indicate my uncertainties as to the meaning of the text due to obscurities, double entendres, and general ignorance and/or obtuseness on my part.

Had Lacan been able and wanting to write these texts in English, he would perhaps have written in a style just as incomprehensible as he adopted in French. Consider what he did to the paper, which Anthony Wilden attempted to translate, that he delivered in Baltimore in 1966, "Of Structure as an Inmixing of an Otherness Prerequisite to Any Subject Whatever" (1967). It has sometimes been said that Lacan was unable to reach those whom he most wanted to convince, and I have certainly not taken it as an ideal to write as I could only imagine Lacan would have written in English. As Friedrich Schleiermacher (1992) says, "the goal of translating in such a way as the author would have written originally in the language of the translation is not only unattainable but is also futile and empty in itself" (p. 50).

I recall being greatly perplexed when an influential Frenchman recommended that I find a great English writer whose style I could imitate in my translation of Lacan. Who could one even consider? Why would I adopt an American writer's style as a model? And how could I even hope to imitate a British writer's? A certain Frenchwoman then suggested I should preserve all of the punctuation in the original, apparently not realizing that punctuation is used differently from one language to another and must be translated along with the text itself. Few people who have not thoroughly engaged in the practice of translation themselves have the slightest idea what they're talking about.

Translator's Revenge

My refusal to adopt a Baroque, Gongoresque, origami-like style is, no doubt, the counterpart of the labor

of love this translation necessitated. This refusal on my part represents a nonlabor of hate; it represents the fact that Lacan drove me crazy with his obscure, convoluted prose. Like so many of Lacan's contemporary French readers, I never studied Latin, Greek, or German growing up, and it is only in recent decades that I have read Rabelais, Madeleine de Scudéry, Molière, and La Rochefoucauld, not to mention the better part of the psychoanalytic literature from the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s, much of which is exceedingly dull.

While I am on the topic of hatred, let me give you a short list of the things Lacan does or omits to do that drove me to distraction since they greatly complicated my task: he often fails to cite his sources even in the psychoanalytic literature, or to cite them correctly or completely; he doesn't consistently put quote marks around phrases taken from Mallarmé's translation of Edgar Allan Poe's "The Purloined Letter" and shows little concern to indicate when he is providing his own translation of Poe; he tends not to mention by name colleagues whom he is criticizing, such that the translator doesn't even know what texts to look at to figure out how to translate phrases or citations that Lacan has taken out of context; he has a predilection for proffering impenetrable introductions to his papers and to *Écrits* as a whole (if you've never read the first two pages of the book, have a look at them—they are about as off-putting as any written document could possibly be). In addition to this, he bends prepositions for his own wicked purposes, using them in ways for which there are few if any precedents in French usage, making it incredibly difficult to know what he intends by them (*sous* in "Logical Time," *par* in "Instance of the Letter," and *de* in "Subversion of the Subject"). These are the sorts of things that highlight the relevance of the Latin etymology of the verb "to translate": to carry across. To decompose it in my own way, I would say that each translator has to carry a cross, has a certain cross to bear, and deals with it in his or her own way.

I suspect Lacan would hate the straightforward prose style I adopted here and I am quite sure he would hate the hundreds of explanatory endnotes I have provided, so I guess in a way that goes a certain distance toward making us even. I eventually came to resent spending over eight hours of hard labor per page, often feeling that I personally didn't get enough out of it to justify that much work—I can only hope that the effort will pay off in facilitating other people's encounter with the text. I have deprived Lacan of some of the potentially posthumous enjoyment he would have taken in driving others crazy. He, I'm sure, would one-up me by saying that he knew all along that some American translator would come along and dumb down his text!

Nevertheless, I am happy to see that the wager I made that Lacan could be rendered simpler without throwing out the baby with the bathwater has paid off: as clear and straightforward as I feel I have made the English translation compared to the French original, readers almost always comment that *Écrits* is still very difficult. As one reviewer put it, "Lacan's style is notoriously as complicated as his ideas, but Fink's translation helps to make 'The Mirror Stage' and 'Psychical Causality' understandable, if not readily approachable" (Reynolds, 2006, p. 18). Another wrote,

> We have here a delightfully presented retranslation of the text with an incredibly helpful new editorial apparatus. One might think that this translation could solve the problems that previously interfered with the reading of Lacan and now bring him to the light of day. Don't!

He goes on to say, "I can assure you [that reading it] will cause you much pain" (Ephemera 2007).

Thus I have not gone so far as to betray Lacan's wish to "leave the reader no other way out than the way in, which I prefer to be difficult" (Lacan, 2006a, p. 493).

I am happy to see that my wager that English-speaking clinicians can get something out of *Écrits* has paid off too: far from being passé, Lacan has proved to be resilient enough to overcome the turn away

from theory in the world of comparative literature and to sell 12,000 copies of the complete English version of his ever challenging *Écrits* in just the first two years on the market, far more of which were purchased by clinicians and practitioners of every ilk than ever before. What I have found is that there are plenty of practitioners who are looking for ways to revitalize their practice and their thinking about psychoanalytic theory, after finding that the theory and technique they were taught during their analytic training is getting them bogged down in the "real world" of psychoanalytic practice. New translation: new audience.

In addition to consulting with other people regarding languages I don't know, specialized vocabularies, and references as I prepared the translation, I have been relying on the readers of the translation to help me improve it even after publication. Thus far I have received over a dozen corrections from different sources, and have managed to get the publisher, W. W. Norton & Co., to make those corrections starting in the fourth printing. They have, however, stonewalled me as regards anything more substantive than changing a word or two here or there, so I have posted a list of additional endnotes on my website (www.brucefink.com) along with lengthier corrections that the publisher will not allow. The translation thus remains a work in progress.

Langue de Bois

One of the results of the earlier translations of Lacan's work—and even some of the translations of works by Lacan's students today—has been the creation of a quirky jargon-laden language that you can be sure no one really understands. The French have a lovely term for this, *langue de bois* (literally "wooden language") which they seem to have borrowed from the pre-Revolutionary Russian term "language of oak" or "oaken language" used to make fun of the speaking style of bureaucrats under the Tsar; it designates a fixed, frozen kind of language that is cut off from reality and that artificially conveys a message that is intentionally trumped up or deceptive.

In the Lacanian world, this *langue de bois*, also known as Lacanese, includes expressions such as "the real of the body" and "the desire of the Other," as well as all kinds of expressions about "the act" or "the analytic act," expressions that fetishize Lacan's highly unusual French grammar and generally ignore English grammar altogether. The term *réel* has been used for generations by French authors to mean exactly the same thing as *réalité*, which means reality. True, at a certain point in his work, Lacan began to give the term *réel* other meanings as well—as that which is impossible, for example—but he often used it as everyone else did even late in his work. *Le réel du corps* would generally be better translated as "the reality of the body" or "the body as real" (as opposed to imaginary or symbolic) than as the "real of the body," which sounds quite mysterious, at least to me.

Le désir de l'homme, c'est le désir de l'Autre is a marvelous aphorism or thesis that exploits an ambiguity in French which does not exist in English: you cannot say "the desire of the Other" and mean "desire for the Other." Nevertheless, numerous commentators and translators act as though you can. Had Lacan wanted to say something more unequivocal, he could have said, "*ce que l'home désire, c'est la même chose que ce que l'Autre désire*," "a man wants the very same thing that the Other wants," or "*ce que désire l'homme, c'est d'être désiré par l'Autre*," "what man wants is to be desired by the Other" or "*ce que désire l'homme, c'est l'Autre*," "man essentially desires the Other." It is not as if the French language does not have the resources to express each one of these different ideas separately. If Lacan chose the more polyvalent one, it was probably because he appreciated all of the different ways it could be read. Many English translators and commentators don't seem to notice that their versions are not equally polyvalent.

Which brings us to the word *acte*, which would often be better translated into English as "deed" or

"action," and yet never is; then we could render *l'acte analytique* as psychoanalytic action, or as the psychoanalytic deed, which would avoid the potentially pejorative connotation that what the analyst does is nothing but an act or a put on, which it in fact becomes, in my view, when people speak in such stilted, incomprehensible ways. Such translations have, in my view, given rise to a generation of *poseurs* and fakers who hide their lack of knowledge behind a facade of confusing verbiage and mumbo-jumbo.

Some seem to think that my avoidance of Lacanese means there is no Lacan left in my presentations on clinical psychoanalysis. After speaking for five hours about a Lacanian approach to clinical practice in Toronto, an analyst in the audience complained, "it all sounds like the approach of a seasoned clinician, but where is the Lacan?" To him, it couldn't really be Lacan if it wasn't peppered with impenetrable phraseology and hermetic holophrases (I hope you hear that at two or more levels).

In translation, as in psychoanalysis, I try to adopt an ethics of respecting and maintaining the Other (or otherness), not attempting to reduce the Other to the same. But my sense is that Lacan's ideas are other enough that some of his language need not be so very other—so non-idiomatic, so foreign sounding, so difficult. The difficulty that I strive to maintain comes, in the vast majority of cases, from his ideas, not from the French language itself.

The Limits of Meaning

The difficulties of Lacan's writing remind us that not everything can be made meaningful, whether in a written text or in the analysand's discourse, and that the search for complete intelligibility is vain, indeed misguided. As Lacan (1973a) himself tells us in Seminar XI:

> *L'interprétation ne vise pas tellement le sens que de réduire les signifiants dans leur non-sens pour que nous puissions retrouver les déterminants de toute la conduite du sujet*.
>
> (p. 192)

This might be translated as:

> Interpretation aims not so much at meaning as at reducing signifiers to their nonsensicality [or: nonmeaning] so that we can locate the determinants of all of the subject's behavior.

The earlier translator, Alan Sheridan, got this completely backwards—saying that interpretation aims at "reducing the nonmeaning of signifiers"—at least in part because Lacan (1978, p. 212) uses a preposition here, *dans*, that no one ever uses after *réduire*, which implies either that *réduire* and *dans* should not be taken as going together at all, or simply that Lacan is using prepositions in his typically atypical way.

In any case, the point in psychoanalysis is to work with the analysand's signifiers in such a way that one arrives at the nonsensical lack of meaning behind them, so to speak: the fact, for example, that a particular symptom may be based on a nonsensical connection between the words *Ratte* and *Spielratte* (rat and gambler) in the case of Freud's Rat Man.

Recall that, as a child, the Rat Man identified with rats (*Ratten*) as biting creatures that are often treated cruelly by humans, he himself having been severely beaten by his father for having bitten his nurse. Certain ideas then became part of the "rat complex" due to meaning: rats can spread diseases such as syphilis, just like a man's penis. Hence rat was equated with penis. But other ideas became grafted onto the rat complex due to the word *Ratten* itself, not its meanings: *Raten* means installments, and led to the equation of rats and florins (the local currency at the time); *Spielratte* means gambler, and the Rat Man's father, having incurred a debt gambling, became drawn into the rat complex in yet another way. Freud

refers to these links as "verbal bridges" (1955a, p. 213); they have no meaning per se, deriving entirely from literal (that is, letter-based) relations among words. Insofar as they gave rise to symptomatic acts involving payment (for the pince-nez/father's debt), *it was the signifier itself* that subjugated the Rat Man, not meaning.

Conclusions

To preserve a place for the unconscious in the work of translation, we must adopt a position of nonmastery: just as psychoanalysts do not know what their analysands "really mean" since 1) their speech is open to multiple readings, 2) their intentions may be several, and 3) they may unwittingly say more than they consciously mean to say, we cannot know what the texts we translate "really mean" for similar reasons. We can propose several possible readings—footnotes provided in a critical apparatus are a great place for that, and allow for many more alternatives and commentary than text between slashes or in brackets within the main body of the text—and can try to judge which were intended and which were not, but we cannot be sure if our judgment even matters. In the best of cases, it will be an educated judgment, but it can hardly claim to be the last word.

Proposing alternate readings allows us to emphasize the *signifierness (signifiance)* of the original text more than its meaning or meaningfulness, its signifierness going beyond any particular signification we can provide. Only other readers and history will determine (and redetermine) the varied meanings of the text. In this sense, the textual nature or signifying nature of the text (i.e., the text as signifier) prevails over any particular meaning we can nail down.

Locating knowledge not in ourselves but in the source text means that we give the author we have chosen to translate the benefit of the doubt: even when we cannot grasp what is being said, we assume (as analysts do with their analysands) that *it is generally our own ignorance, resistance, or blindness that is stopping us from following the text's logic, not the author's stupidity*. Why would we bother to make the tremendous effort to translate that author's work otherwise? Given how poorly translators are paid to translate theoretical texts, it can hardly be just the financial inducements! Translation tends to be equated in status with the lowly task of copyediting by most publishing houses, university presses, and university departments. "There is," as John Dryden (1992) says, "so little praise and so small encouragement for so considerable a part of learning" (p. 22).

Our beloved authors can make the occasional mistake or say something we disagree with, but our working assumption must always be that what they say is not sheer nonsense. We check all available editions for emendations, errata, and corrections of typos when we suspect something is amiss, but resign ourselves to the hard work of confronting something beyond our ken once we have exhausted such possibilities.

Just as the analytic situation itself puts the analysand in the situation of the beloved and the analyst in the situation of the lover who must not ask to be loved in return—he pays attention to what the analysand says in a way no one else ever has before, seeking to grasp the individual logic that guides it—translating puts the translator into the position of the lover who loves the text without asking to be loved in return. This is obvious in the case of a dead author, but is true even in the case of a live one who usually cannot appreciate the subtlety of the rendition. Love's flipside, hatred, arises from the seemingly inordinate amount of effort required in both cases—analyzing and translating—to make the work move forward. In psychoanalysis, this is tempered by payment. In translation?

If, as Friedrich Schleiermacher (1992) claims, translation is a "foolish undertaking" and a "thankless task" (pp. 40 and 52) at least it is not an impossible profession like psychoanalysis. The three impossible

professions mentioned by Freud—educating, governing, and psychoanalyzing—all involve more than one person in situations in which the varied levels of each subject's will and jouissance interact, collide, and wear against each other. Translators have it easier: we have no need (or even opportunity, in most cases) to bring about change in any other subject than ourselves. And even when other people express little praise for our work, we ourselves may be and may remain well pleased with it.

This paper was given on March 13, 2009, at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, to the Translation Center, at the invitation of Michael Finke, Ph.D., professor of Russian literature. A version of the paper appeared in a special issue of *CR: The New Centennial Review* devoted to translation theory, edited by David E. Johnson.

Notes

1 Translation modified and reading *interprétation* for *compréhension*.

2 See Chapter 1 of the present volume, entitled "Against Understanding."

3 Of course, I need not, in such cases, utterly and completely rule out the potential validity of the more grammatically based reading, even if it was not consciously intended by the analysand. See Chapter 1 of the present volume, entitled "Against Understanding."

4 In *The Bride of Lammermore*, Sir Walter Scott uses "cummer" (sometimes also spelled "kimmer") in certain of his renditions of Scottish dialect of the early-eighteenth century where it meant a gossip, godmother, intimate female friend, midwife, or a witch; it was also used more generally as a familiar or contemptuous term with which to address or refer to a woman. See Chapter 1 of the present volume, entitled "Against Understanding."

5 Lacan (1998) puts this in a rather more complex way: "Knowledge is worth just as much as it costs, a pretty penny, in that it takes elbow grease and that it's difficult, difficult to what?—less to acquire it than to enjoy it" (p. 96).

6 Cited in John Dryden (1992, p. 30).

8

ON TRANSLATING *ÉCRITS: A SELECTION*

Bruce Fink interviewed by Dan Warner

Could you please tell me a bit about your background and what led you to study Lacan, and further, what brought you to translation?

I first came to Lacan through critical theory. I had been studying some analytic philosophy at Cornell University and getting bored with it, when a friend of mine lent me Deleuze and Guattari's book, *Anti-Oedipus*. I was intrigued by the comments they made about Lacan. There was a class being offered by Richard Klein in the Department of Romance Studies on Lacan and Derrida, and I decided to attend. I was really fascinated by Lacan's work, especially by his notion of the subject—that was what really hooked me.

The class got me interested in studying it in greater depth, and I realized, after talking to Stuart Schneiderman in New York City and Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe in Strasbourg, that there was really no other place to go but to Paris, at that time, to study it. So that's what I did.

My French was terrible! I had had high school French until I was 16—I didn't even want to continue it in my senior year of high school because I thought it would be of no value to me. Cornell had a language requirement, but I managed to find a way around that by doing an independent major in the College Scholar program!

The same friend who introduced me to Lacan gave me the book *Rhizome* by Deleuze and Guattari and I tried translating that while still in Ithaca, just using a dictionary … But really, I didn't start translating at all until I had lived in France for a few years. It was probably around 1984 or 1985 when my friend Marc Silver, who lives in Italy, convinced me to help him translate Lacan's "Logical Time and the Assertion of Anticipated Certainty." We essentially spent a summer working on the translation together. It was really awful at first; but, after several years and a lot of drafts, it improved.

After I had been in France for a few years, I started to do translations as a way of putting myself through graduate school. I eventually landed a job working for a journal, *Les Annales*, at the École des Hautes Études, and then did freelance jobs for different translation companies in Paris. Alain Badiou had me do a translation for him at one point—it just sort of took off in that way. When I returned to the States in 1989 I continued to translate for professional translation companies for a long time.

In public lectures discussing translation, you have said that all translators have an "ax to grind," their own agenda in how they think the text should look, sound, and read. What ax are you grinding with your translations and with the *Écrits* in particular?

My biggest ax to grind is that, while Lacan is incredibly difficult and obscure at certain times, there are lots of passages that really aren't that obscure and difficult, but they've been made more opaque by the translations that have been published to date. My agenda has been to try to make things as clear as possible when I think Lacan is being pretty clear about something, even though sometimes it has taken me

20 years of study to perceive that clarity!

I have avoided more complicated phraseology and terminology than I could have used in certain places. There are times when Lacan's sentences—for any reader of French who wants to try to understand them—have to be unfolded at 16 different points for their grammatical structure to finally become apparent, and it is only then that you can translate them. Now, if I wanted to imitate Lacan's style I could then go ahead and fold the English sentences up 16 times, but I have decided not to do that. Partly because it sounds better in French when you break things up and add a lot of adverbial clauses—it sounds pleasing in French, or at least it seems to be pleasing to the French. In English, on the other hand, we tend to prefer fewer commas setting off multiple clauses. So, rather than deliberately try to imitate his style in every respect, I've chosen clarity over complexity when Lacan's style made the grammar too convoluted for my taste.

Why did you translate the *Écrits* now? And what do you hope this will do for Lacan studies as a whole?

Well, as you know, two-thirds of the *Écrits* has never appeared in English in *any* form, so it seems to me of fairly obvious importance to publish that. Many of Lacan's later works are not even available for translation right now, because they are not even available in French. In fact, it was rather miraculous that I was able to do Seminar XX, *Encore*, because Stuart Schneiderman had been slated to translate it for many years and seems to have never gotten around to it. Finally Norton convinced him to rescind the contract and I was allowed to do it, but that's really the only one of Lacan's later seminars that has been available for translation.

Russell Grigg will be bringing out Seminar XVII on the "Four Discourses" very shortly, but even that didn't come out in French until 1991. And none of the later seminars have come out in French since then. [As of 2012, this has changed.]

My interest was always in translating texts that had never been translated into English before, and I contacted Norton to propose a complete edition of *Écrits*, once I obtained Jacques-Alain Miller's permission. But Norton was concerned that the British publisher, which at the time was Routledge/Tavistock, didn't want to give up the old *Selection*. They were willing to bring out a new complete edition, but they wanted to keep the old *Selection*. Norton was worried that the inexpensive edition of the old *Selection* would continue to creep into the United States through illicit channels and undercut the sales of the complete edition of *Écrits*. Eventually we agreed that I'd redo the old *Selection* first and then proceed with the complete edition. Incidentally, at the outset, Norton was only willing to bring the complete edition out on CD-ROM, but I eventually managed to convince them that a print edition would be very helpful.

Is such a CD-ROM still in the works?

I don't think so. It *would* be useful for searches, but given that Norton was projecting a price of about $400, very few people—and certainly very few students—would have been able to benefit from it. It was mostly aimed at libraries. But considering the evolution of the technology, it would have probably been out of date by the time it was available.

In any case, I didn't think for a long time that I was going to do a much better job than Sheridan on the *Selection*. I was aware that there were mistakes and infelicities in the text, and that it didn't read very well, but I really hadn't spent any time with Sheridan's renditions for many years by then, which was in 1997. It wasn't until I started working on it that I realized just how much there was to be done.

Were you introduced to Lacan's work through Sheridan's translations?

Of course, because I didn't read French at all at the time! It was the only way. There was, of course, Anthony Wilden's version of "Function and Field of Speech and Language." He was one of the first translators into English of anything substantial by Lacan (a couple of short pieces had come out in the *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*). Wilden helped Lacan translate his talk at Johns Hopkins in 1966, "Of Structure as an Inmixing of an Otherness Prerequisite to Any Subject Whatever," and went on to translate "Function and Field" in his *Language of the Self*. His version of "Function and Field" was widely read at the time because he included extensive notes and a long introduction as well.

So it's not so much that I was inspired to redo the *Selection* at the outset because of flaws in Sheridan's rendition. Now I realize that Seminar XI*, The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, should also be retranslated, but I'm certainly not taking it upon myself at this point. Seminar XI is extremely well known and contains many of the major concepts that have informed virtually all of the work on Lacan in English until quite recently. Seminar XX is starting to come into its own now, and I've been seeing more and more references to it. So, although a lot of the formulations in Sheridan's version of Seminar XI are problematic, I'm busy!

Do you find that there are different demands on you as a translator in translating early versus late Lacan? That is, somehow the texts work so differently that you must approach them in different ways?

Seminar XX is much more playful and was much more fun for me as a translator. The biggest challenge, at least one of the biggest challenges, in a text like Seminar XX, is to convey how good a time Lacan is having while he's speaking. To somehow convey the *jouissance* of the text is really a concern of mine. In the early texts, Lacan often doesn't seem to be having so much fun.

Also, in the later texts what is rather difficult to render are the multiple plays on words, the incredible punning that goes on, the deliberate polyphony of what he says; whereas in the early work, simply figuring out where Lacan is getting his vocabulary from is a sizable challenge. Some of it is coming from ethology, some of it is coming from phenomenological psychiatry—which, for me, is not something I have at my fingertips. A lot of it is also coming from Sartrian philosophy, which once again I'm not that familiar with.

Lacan's writing style was always difficult, especially for those texts that were written texts from beginning to end. A lot of his texts are based partly on his oral presentations at his Seminar. Those tend to be easier, not as difficult to translate. They contain certain challenges—such as idiomatic expressions and informal ways of speaking that probably got a rise or a laugh out of his audience at the time—but texts such as "Aggressiveness in Psychoanalysis" and "The Mirror Stage" are still very difficult just by the very nature of what he's working with and the conceptual fields he's drawing upon.

What I found the hardest in some of the earliest texts was the technical vocabulary from a wide variety of fields. To give a silly example, I once had to consult three technical dictionaries just to figure out that Lacan was talking about a kind of recording device used in the 1940s! The medical and psychiatric terminology is often difficult to render as well. In the texts of the later 1950s and 1960s, many of the references to ethology and phenomenology are gone because he's just not as influenced by them anymore. There's a bit less Heideggerian vocabulary as well. Personally, I'm more familiar with the vocabulary of the later Lacan.

Speaking of capturing the text's *jouissance*, I feel like the spirit, fervor, and revolutionary zeal of "Function and Field" comes out in your new translation.

Thank you.

How do you pay attention to tone in your reading of Lacan's work?

I think tone is extremely important to who Lacan was and how he conceived of himself. "Function and Field" was written in 1953, and that was a real turning point for him in terms of his institutional affiliations. His tone there tells us a great deal about his reasons for writing the piece. But that very tone is likely to turn off certain of his readers, especially analysts who may feel they are being taken a shot at, when he criticizes the IPA, for example. Such readers are likely to find the introduction to "Function and Field" more offensive now than they found it in the Sheridan translation.

Capturing Lacan's irony is one of the most difficult things for me, in translating both his early and late works. For it is at the very moment that he is ridiculing a particular psychoanalyst, or a whole tradition (the Anglo-American tradition usually), that he is most likely to be led into flights of fancy and into the most extravagant use of language. We often find Lacan at his most creative at such moments.

Anyway, part of why I recommend (in the translator's note of the new *Selection*) that people new to Lacan start with "Function and Field" is because I feel I got that right somehow. To me, the translation there really reads the best. People have a tendency to just open the book and start with "The Mirror Stage," which is still quite forbidding. My fear is always that people will never get past page five. I mean, I do see myself as a promoter of Lacan's work. I'm trying to get him as fair a hearing as possible. The French version of the *Écrits* starts in a much more reader-friendly manner than the English *Selection*, because it begins with the "Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter,'" which is very accessible and engagingly written. Unfortunately, the *Selection* doesn't have that going for it …

You said you recommend that people start the new *Selection* by reading "Function and Field." What other recommendations do you have for those of us who are now going to be reintroduced to a text we thought we were familiar with, or for those readers who may be brand new to Lacan? How would your opinion differ for practitioners, philosophers, literature scholars, artists, laymen, etc.?

I do have different recommendations for different people. I often try to size up an audience and direct it towards what I think it will be willing to work at—because each one of these texts has to be worked at, they can't just be read casually in 15-minute snatches before going to bed. To clinicians I will sometimes recommend "Direction of the Treatment" as a place to start, or "Function and Field" depending on whether or not they are likely to be put off by its political edge. Of course, "Direction of the Treatment" has a political edge to it too …

For the more literary-minded, I'm likely to recommend a piece such as "The Freudian Thing" or "The Instance of the Letter," even though "The Instance of the Letter" is extremely difficult. Lacan even announces on the first page that it is his intention to make it difficult for the reader!

As to how we should approach these texts at this point in time, I'm not so sure … Something many readers didn't have much of when I started reading Lacan in the late 1970s was perspective on the history of French psychoanalysis. There was one book, *Psychoanalytic Politics* by Sherry Turkle, which gave us a little bit of insight as to where Lacan fit in, in terms of the history of psychoanalysis and that sort of thing. But I knew very little about whom he was criticizing implicitly, and I find that very important to understanding what he's really saying and why he's so emphatic about it.

It's certainly good to keep him in perspective. I think a lot of people now are introduced to Lacan as a poststructuralist. If you think of Lacan as a poststructuralist, you are likely to be puzzled when you start reading the *Selection*. It's important to realize that he is working his way out of phenomenology into structuralism, and then into his own form of—well, you know, he never called himself a structuralist! Neither did Foucault or any of the other so-called structuralist thinkers—no one really wants these labels. In fact, I believe Lacan maintained that the structuralist label was invented by journalists. It's perhaps more fruitful to simply introduce Lacan as a psychoanalyst at the outset, and not to try and fit him into a

particular philosophical position.

That is interesting, because Lacan is often invoked by political philosophers to make claims about power and society, yet there isn't much of it there in his work.

Yes, I assume you mean how people get ideas about Lacan's take on power and society and institutions. In Lacan's work, larger social and political commentary is often made in passing and in anecdotes. It can be extrapolated—but you have to work pretty hard at it. His more sustained critiques of power and institutions are usually reserved for psychoanalytic institutions, but they're not even in the *Écrits* at all, not even in the complete version. They're tucked away in little photocopied volumes, unpublished documents such as *Lettres de l'École freudienne*, designed primarily for "in-house" use.

In the new *Selection*, you refer to Lacan's literary references as "consummately obscure." What do you make of them? How should a reader approach references that he doesn't understand, and for which there barely seem to be enough clues to follow up?

First of all, what is an obscure reference to us is not necessarily an obscure reference to a certain generation of French readers who have had a "classical" education, including the classics of French literature. This is disappearing in France, of course, at this point, but to an older generation of analysts whom I worked with in Paris, a lot of Lacan's references are not obscure. They may not be able to go straight to the bookcase and pull the right volume off the shelf, but it rings a bell and without too much trouble they'll know what to make of it, or they'll laugh immediately. Much of our generation has little training in the classics, so we have to look everything up.

Lacan is concerned with having a very well-read audience of psychoanalysts, not an audience of technicians who consider it their job to apply a set engineering technique to a human being. I would say that Lacan wants to create a new brand of psychoanalyst, so to speak, different from those he saw in his own day, who tended to be a part of the medical technocracy.

He critiques terms like "human engineering," which smack of a desire to make relationships among human beings into a branch of engineering. As interested as he is in trying to find a scientific status of some kind for psychoanalysis, he is nonetheless interested, like Freud, in having the psychoanalyst be a man of letters, as he says, *un lettré*, someone who has a broad knowledge of the culture of his time. He shouldn't be a specialist who can only write out a prescription. Lacan makes fun of Ernst Kris, part of the ego psychology triumvirate who moved to America during the 1940s, for thinking one could engage in "planning" in an analysis—as if a psychoanalyst could, based on just a few sessions, plan out the timing of his interpretations, presumably because this "case" falls into one of the main categories that we analysts all understand so well nowadays. Lacan likes to suggest that human beings do not operate in accordance with fixed schemas and schedules, and that it is above all the particularity of each analysis that we should be concerned with.

As to how to follow up on Lacan's references, we are in a marvelous position right now due to the wide distribution of the Internet. Just to give you an example, I was recently re-translating Jean Hyppolite's commentary in *Écrits* on Freud's paper "On Negation," found in English in the appendix to Seminar I, *Freud's Papers on Technique*. Hyppolite cites a few words of a poem, which the translator who rendered the text into English in 1989 was unable to find. Nowadays you just type the words Lacan cites into a search engine and you find the poem it is a part of, read it in context, and try to find the English equivalent—it's wonderful. The library research that would be necessary otherwise … well, it would be virtually impossible for most of us to track down even a small portion of Lacan's references.

So translating is really an experience of immersion into French culture.

It sure is. This makes it very exciting and interesting, but can also be a bit distracting. You can fly off on endless tangents if you read all the different texts he alludes to! As a graduate student studying Lacan, I had the misapprehension that were I to read all the texts Lacan cites—some of them quite explicitly, such as Aristotle, Kripke, Kant, Hegel, Kojève, Queneau, etc.—I would somehow understand what Lacan was talking about. But Lacan's own interpretation of these people is so idiosyncratic at times, or so non-obvious, that following up on them can turn out to be more distracting than edifying.

On the other hand, when faced with the task of translating, the references have to be read. For example, in rendering his commentaries on work by various English-speaking psychoanalysts I found it absolutely crucial to read all of the articles that are in any way referenced by Lacan, because otherwise I get the terminology wrong. He read all of these texts in English and, since very few of them were ever translated into French, he never cites existing translations— he does the translating himself and I usually have to guess which part of the original text he's translating. Sometimes he provides quote marks, but often he doesn't.

How do you account for the historical period in which every piece fits?

Well, for example, it's important to pay attention to the historical context of each text when rendering specific terms. The notion of the real, for instance, is not always there in Lacan's work; it develops at a particular moment in his Seminar when he is grappling with the question of trauma—that's when his notion of the real undergoes a major transformation. Thus, when the word *réel*, which in the early 1950s can almost always be translated as "reality," shows up in an article, I include the French in brackets so that it is not lost sight of, even if it is not yet raised to the level of a specifically Lacanian category. If we don't pay attention to such things, we may give the erroneous impression that he had already elaborated his later "full-blown" notion of the real by the time of his mirror stage article. Lacan's work, like Freud's, develops tremendously over the course of time, and I think it's very important to be able to trace the development of his ideas via his vocabulary.

How long did this translation take you?

Probably about three years from start to finish. I had a sabbatical from 1997 to 1998, during which I produced the basic drafts of all of the articles, but it took about three years to pull it all together. Each essay went through close to ten drafts. I did the *Selection* a little bit differently from the never before translated texts. I initially had one of my graduate students scan the entire Sheridan edition onto disk, and then I compared the French against Sheridan's translation line by line. I made a ton of changes, both in style (to provide something closer to American English than Sheridan's constructions, which are presumably more British in style, a style I couldn't possibly imitate) and content. Then I reread it to make it flow better, after which I re-checked it against the French line by line and reworked it for several more drafts to make it flow still better.

It was in these later stages that I looked up every reference to Freud, checked all the other references I could find to adjust the terminology here and there, and went back and forth from one text to the next in the *Selection* making sure that key terms had been rendered in the same manner in all the texts, or at least footnoted when that was not the case.

Then Héloïse Fink, my wife, a native French speaker, compared the French with the new English text line by line, and we talked endlessly about idioms, irony, and other niceties of Lacan's quirky French. Next Russell Grigg compared the French with the new English text line by line, proposing alternate readings and indicating references I'd overlooked; I went over all of his comments and we had a lot of back-and-forth discussions about how best to render certain important terms.

After that I reread each text several times at various intervals to make the transitions in the text flow better and improve the English—when you come back to a text after a few months, it's often amazingly easy to find a way to rewrite an awkward passage that had previously seemed intractable. I need to give myself the time to forget the French, because the French formulation keeps impinging on my ability to say something intelligible in English.

I was teaching the texts the whole time I was working on the *Selection*, and as I taught them I found infidelities in them and things that didn't seem to make any sense. I'd come across passages that I had been willing to let pass before even though I didn't feel I understood them—I was just so sick of them!—but when preparing a class an interpretation would suddenly dawn on me.

I reread the entire *Selection* one last time after it had been typeset and, with another six months of perspective, I started seeing new things. *Every* time I look at it I see new things—I realize that certain things aren't quite right—which is why I don't think it will ever truly be finished. I suspect I will continue tinkering with it for many years to come—or at least for as long as Norton allows me to make changes.

But I really do enjoy the process. Of course, I've already found a few typos (e.g., "alls" on page 95 should be "falls," and "is" in the second to last paragraph on page 292 should be "in") and missed references (e.g., "engendering sterile monsters" on page 64 is an image borrowed from Goya). Eventually I hope to put up an errata page on the Internet, which will be linked to my own website [this has been done]. I already have one made up for Seminar XX, which I intend to put on the Internet shortly.

Lord knows, it's easy enough to make mistakes in translating in general, especially when translating Lacan! I was quite embarrassed when I went to ask Jacques-Alain Miller for some help with certain passages; he was just flipping through the pages of my translation, noticed that I had the word [*geste*] in brackets, and looked at my rendition. Without even needing to look at the context, he said, "No, you got that wrong." He clearly knew the context by heart. You see there are two words in French, *le geste* and *la geste* and neither myself, my wife, nor Russell had noticed the gender problem there. So mistakes are always possible—it doesn't matter how many times you look at it, language is tricky stuff.

So let's get into the meat of the text. I have some examples of choices you made that differ from Sheridan's, that have had drastic effects on the meaning of certain passages. Please comment on them, and on the underlying issues that they bring out in the kinds of choices you make as a translator.

Right from the title of the first essay, "The Mirror Stage," we see one of the key ways you bring clarity to the text—you change the French construction "the function of the I" into the "I function." Of course, the first construction *is* intelligible in English—but awkward. When do you feel safe rearranging the word order to be more appropriate to our vernacular, and when do you keep Lacan's construction? Do you ever worry that bringing about such clarity violates a worthwhile ambiguity in the text?

I certainly weighed that a great deal, and Russell was very attentive to retaining ambiguities as he looked at the translation as well. Basically, when I feel that an ambiguity is intentional or that it gives us the possibility of reading the text in two different ways that are equally plausible, I will try to keep it. In the case you mentioned, I don't think we are looking at an intended ambiguity: I think Lacan is examining the *I* as a function, although we could probably talk about it all day. French, by its very nature, is much more ambiguous than English, so I operate on a case-by-case basis.

But, let me say, the use of "of," as in the "Function of the I" or "The bicycle of the professor," seems to be much more common in British English than in American English, at least in translations. One of my pet

peeves is that Sheridan translated *le désir de l'Autre* as "the desire of the Other." It has been assumed that this construction retains at least two of the meanings found in the French: desire *for* the Other and the Other's desire (for whatever, or simply as such). However, in ordinary American usage, "desire of a bicycle" does not mean desire *for* a bicycle—it means a bicycle's desire. The cumbersome phrase "desire of the Other" thus doesn't really convey two meanings at all. I've always eliminated it and put in either "the Other's desire" or "desire for the Other" depending on the context, which is admittedly not always crystal clear; I've also indicated in a few places that the phrase is a shorthand for "what the Other desires" or "the object of the Other's desire."

When I've eliminated a possibly useful ambiguity just because it makes the sentence more awkward, I try to point out the possible ambiguity in my translator's endnotes. I don't think it's always possible to have a text flow well and to show every ambiguity simultaneously … Admittedly, the notes would have worked better if they'd been placed at the bottom of each page, as I'd originally hoped.

The following two paragraphs highlight the way some of the changes you have made have significantly altered the meaning derived from Sheridan's translation, and almost to the point of reversing the meaning. Could you please comment on the choices you made in translating the following paragraph, paying particular attention to the bolded terms?

> Sheridan (p. 5): "It is this moment that decisively tips the whole of human knowledge into **mediatization** through the desire of the other, constitutes its objects in an abstract equivalence by the **co-operation** of others, and turns the *I* into that apparatus for which every instinctual thrust constitutes a danger, even though **it** should correspond to a natural maturation."
>
> Fink (p. 98 in the French edition/p. 7 in the English): "It is this moment that decisively tips the whole of human knowledge into being mediated by the other's desire, constitutes its objects in an abstract equivalence due to **competition** from other people, and turns the *I* into an apparatus to which every instinctual pressure constitutes a danger, even if it corresponds to a natural maturation process."

Sheridan uses the word "mediatization" here, which is certainly just as correct as my choice and which has the same set of meanings as the French term used by Lacan, *médiatisation.* But it's a rather rare term and my sense is that the most common way of expressing in English the meaning I believe Lacan has in mind here is with the verb "to mediate." Lacan's point here seems to me to be that man's knowledge, like his desire, comes to be mediated by the other's desire.

Next, it looks like Sheridan translated *concurrence* as "co-operation" instead of as "competition." *Concurrence* can mean both (as can English words such as "sanction," which means both to approve and punishment depending on its context and use as a verb or noun), but the context here—which involves the "drama of primordial jealousy" between siblings or semblables—seems to me to dictate "competition."

Regarding the "it" you bolded, notice that Sheridan's phrasing is a bit more ambiguous than mine. In Sheridan's text it seems as if the *I* might correspond to a natural maturation process, but the pronoun that Lacan uses is *elle*, which is feminine and thus refers back to *la poussée des instincts*. So what he's saying is that the instincts become a threat to the *I* even if they are part of a natural maturation process like puberty.

There are many commonly accepted Lacanian terms, such as "aggressivity" and "mediatization," that don't show up in your new translation. "Reflexion" and "quadrature," just to name a few neologisms, are also nowhere to be found. Were these neologisms not really of Lacan's making and

just the creation of English translators?

Well, you know, even though I've changed "aggressivity" to the more common English "aggressiveness," the latter is still rather rare in English. Psychoanalysts and ethologists talk far more about "aggression" (as in Konrad Lorenz's book, *On Aggression*) than about "aggressiveness." Often I was tempted to just translate *agressivité* as "aggression."

Anyway, I think readers have come to falsely associate Lacan's early work with neologisms partly as a result of Sheridan's and Jacqueline Rose's translations (she introduces the hardly believable "psychologicists"). The terms Lacan uses are wide-ranging and anything but everyday, but there are few neologisms to be found in his writings until quite a bit later, above all, in the 1970s. Many of those aren't even very well known (*hommoinzun, jouis-sens*, *l'âmour*, etc.), and often they're highly contextualized. A number of them in Seminar XX are rather difficult to transplant or take out of the particular contexts in which Lacan introduced them. They're often just plays on words that never become full-fledged concepts.

Of course, I simply imported the French term *jouissance* and didn't try to translate it at all. My sense is that the word is well enough known now after 30-odd years of Lacan scholarship and translations; people are pretty familiar with it and it really doesn't require that much glossing. It is true that the student new to Lacan still won't understand it, but I think that some of the attempts at translating it—like "bliss" and "over-coming"—just made matters worse!

In the following example, your new translation actually brought confusion to a part of the text I felt I understood. Please comment on your choice:

> Fink (pp. 99–100/9): "The sufferings of neurosis and psychosis provide us schooling in the passions of the soul, just as the balance arm of the psychoanalytic scales—when we calculate the angle of its threat to entire communities—**provides us with an amortization rate for the passions of the city**."
>
> Sheridan (p. 7): " … provides us with an indication of the deadening of the passions in society."

Well, it is my attempt, of course, to follow the text as closely as I can, and sometimes it seems that Sheridan assumed he knew what the French meant, whereas I'm not really so sure that's what it means. The French here is *l'indice d'amortissement*, and although *amortissement* by itself can mean "deadening"— in the sense in which one deadens or softens a blow (shock absorbers are called *amortisseurs*)—*l'indice d'amortissement*, seems to me to suggest a more complex metaphor. It is a financial term, an amortization rate, which has to do with the rate at which you pay something off—so a price has to be paid for people's passions, according to Lacan, and that price is paid at a certain interest rate and over a certain period of time.

The fact that he uses an economic metaphor here strikes me as important. Lacan uses a *ton* of economic and legal metaphors and I think it's important to maintain those.

Just as an aside, I had to use two specialized dictionaries on French financial and legal terminology to translate the *Selection*— and at times that still wasn't enough. I convinced the Duquesne University library to buy a 16-volume French-French dictionary called the *Trésor de la Langue Française* to help with this project; you might say it's the French equivalent of the *Oxford English Dictionary*. I managed to find most of Lacan's terms and expressions in there, though still not all of them. Sheridan couldn't have had this resource at this disposal because it hadn't yet been published.

On page 247/40 you translate a certain section as "taking the consequences of a misunderstanding to their most rigorous conclusions," while Sheridan puts "logical conclusion." The thing about your

choice is that it violates a common cliché that is typical in English. Wasn't Lacan also trying to evoke this cliché?

Lacan seems to always avoid whatever is the most common way of speaking! If there is a typical way to say something in French he will not use it. It seems quite deliberate. He obviously knows the expression, he's heard it 100,000 times; if he chooses to say something different, I usually follow him in saying something different. In this case, I also avoided using the word logic, where he doesn't use it (he says *pousser à la rigueur les conséquences d'un malentendu*, a far cry from simplicity!), because Lacan is aware of the existence of multiple logics—"logic" is not a word he uses lightly.

On page 255/47 there is an interesting moment when you translate a certain pronoun as "she," which Sheridan rendered as "he." What happened here?

I've always referred to "the subject" as a "he" (the French term, *le sujet*, is masculine but can refer to a male or female subject) here to keep the translation flowing. In this case, however, it seemed quite clear that Lacan was referring to Anna O. and the early hysterics Freud worked with. If you look back two or three paragraphs you'll see that Anna O. is mentioned. The context seemed to me to dictate "she."

That reminds me of something that often tripped up Sheridan. In French you use the definite article (as in *le désir de l'hystérique*) to say at least two very different things: the desire hysterics in general have and the desire that a specific hysteric has. Lacan is not always very careful with his pronominal references in the text—so you need determine whether he's speaking in general terms or referring back to a particular hysteric he had been talking about before. In many cases you need to go back three paragraphs to find the reference. Most writers in French wouldn't do that, but Lacan does. It's just one of the many ways in which he puts the reader to work.

And here is a change you made to the text that I find very confusing: what is a "rent nature" and how did "divide" turn into "rent nature"?

Well, the term in French is *déchiré*, which means torn apart or ripped up.

Oh! Rent as in torn?

Yes … it's not about paying for housing. I felt that Sheridan's term, "divided," might lead the reader to think Lacan was referring to "the divided subject" there. Often I try to use words that don't open the door to too many misunderstandings, because my sense is that Lacan has been horribly misunderstood by a great many of his interpreters. Generally, if I have a choice between two words that fairly well render the French, and one of them has a dozen different meanings while the other one is pretty clear, I'll often use the word with but one meaning—even though Lacan himself probably would have chosen the word with a dozen meanings! While I have tried to save seemingly intentional ambiguities, I have tried not to introduce many that weren't already there.

I've noticed that some of Lacan's footnotes seem to be different between your translation and Sheridan's.

There aren't that many, I think, but I did include some from the Points edition of *Écrits*, which came out a few years after *Écrits'* initial publication. *Écrits* was a giant seller when it first came out in 1966: it sold out the whole first print run of 5,000 copies in two weeks. It was so popular that teachers started to teach it in high schools, and they wanted inexpensive paperback editions. So in 1970 and 1971, Lacan and his editor put together another edition. You have a new introduction, which he wrote for the new edition, and every now and then there's a new footnote, which I included (not to mention a few corrections in the text, and a few new errors introduced as well). Also, unlike Sheridan, I compared the text of the articles in

Écrits with their original publications often ten or more years earlier and noticed that Lacan didn't always indicate in *Écrits* that he had actually added certain things. That also helped me catch a number of misleading typos in *Écrits*.

A few of my endnotes may be a little confusing in the new *Selection*. I included the French pagination and the paragraph and footnote numbers so that the reader would be able to go back and forth between the French and the English editions as easily as possible. In the French *Écrits*, Lacan's footnotes are found at the bottom of the page and numbered consecutively for each page only, not for each whole article; I asked Norton to do the same, but when I received the proofs I discovered they had gathered all of Lacan's notes at the end of each article and numbered them consecutively. It was too late to redo everything and so now and then I refer in my endnotes to footnote 1 of a page where the footnotes begin at number 32. For example: on page 352 of the *Selection*, I provide a translator's endnote to Lacan's footnote 1 on page 812. The problem is that the footnote number found in the text of "Subversion of the Subject" on page 812/298 is actually 7, and the footnote itself is only found on page 312. I just love publishers!

In the passage below, how did you get the term "all this signifier" and why do you prefer that phrasing to Sheridan's more parsimonious use of the word "whole"?

> Fink (p. 504/147): "But **all** this signifier can only operate, it may be objected, if it is present in the subject. I answer this objection by assuming that **he** has shifted to the level of the signified."
>
> Sheridan (p. 155): "But this **whole** signifier can only operate, it may be said, if it is present in the subject. It is this objection that I answer by supposing that **it** has passed over to the level of the signified."

First of all, the signifier, according to Lacan, is *not* totalizable. To talk about the "whole signifier," is already something I wouldn't do; I'd be more inclined to say that the signifier is not whole (*le signifiant n'est pas tout*), like Lacan says that Woman is not whole and the Other is not complete. The signifier, for Lacan, is a system and can't be divided up into discrete, autonomous units.

Lacan often talks about *du signifiant*, which is quite a peculiar way of speaking in French, but he seems to be suggesting thereby that the signifier is unquantifiable. It's like when you say you bought *some* bread, instead of a loaf of bread. In any case, Lacan says something even simpler here: *tout ce signifiant*. While "all this signifier" may sound weird, Lacan is speaking in a weird manner. I don't want to smooth that over.

As for my translating *il* as "he" in that passage instead of as "it," as Sheridan did, it would take too long to explain here—see my forthcoming book on *Écrits, Lacan to the Letter!*

I was surprised to find that you even translated some of Lacan's mathemes differently than Sheridan. What Sheridan had rendered as I/*s*, you render as 1/*s*.

I assume you're referring to the formula on page 515/155. Yes, that is, unfortunately, an old typographical convention. With old typewriters, some people in France would use the capital letter "I" instead of the number 1. That led to a conceptual error on certain people's part; there are other places where Lacan makes it very clear that it should be 1 over the signified, not a capital I.

But you know, that reminds me of the importance of considering punctuation during translation. I was once contacted by a French woman about a text I was translating into English, and was told in no uncertain terms: "Be sure to keep the punctuation the same!" I responded that punctuation was a part of language and was susceptible to translation as well. The French don't use commas in the same way that we do. Sure, they sometimes use them to pause and breathe as we do, but we don't necessarily breathe in

the same places as them. Also, the French set off clauses in quite different ways than we do, and indicate dialogue differently than we do in English. Translators must translate the punctuation just like everything else. Lacan's use of dashes and colons is sometimes very quirky by French standards, *and* it changes significantly over the course of his lifetime. I've tried to use fairly understandable, traditional, American punctuation, although I do bend it here and there.

Have you noticed anything about how Lacan's style changes from article to article?

One of the things that has struck me the most is his odd use of prepositions. *De* is clearly the biggest pain in the neck in the entire *Écrits*, and Lacan even theorizes its many uses in a couple of places. He does things with it that I've never seen anywhere else.

But that's not the whole story: I don't have a whole theory about this, but one of the things that has stood out for me over the years as I have translated different texts is the way Lacan works a particular preposition almost to death within a particular text. In "Subversion of the Subject," it is *de*. In "On a Question," it is *où*, which usually means "where" or "in which" but Lacan works it to the bone in that essay (to mean "with which" and other things as well) where the whole question of locus, and where the Other is located, seems to be at stake.

In "Logical Time," it is *sous* (under) that takes on an extraordinary weight. Lacan inserts it into expressions where no one else would ever dream of putting it! In Lacan's "Response to Jean Hyppolite," there's a similar use of *à*, which is normally translated as "in" or "to," but in that essay Lacan puts it in places where you would normally put other prepositions—it is all very unusual.

You state in your paper, "Lacan in 'Translation'" (Fink, 2004b) that those who wish to study Lacan and put him to use in their various disciplines should learn French. What do you say to those of us who can't go off to France? What do you say to those of us who can struggle as we might with a dictionary, but will never attain the proficiency Lacan demands of his audience? Can we still get anything from Lacan?

Yes, you can, but I think it's important to be very careful when you are working on a specific text or a specific concept, and you are basing your theorization on specific passages. Even if your French is not where you'd like it to be, it's important to look at the French and the English of those passages and make sure that your translator did his or her homework. There's a lot of sloppy scholarship in which people work from miserably translated texts—it's not surprising that their commentaries don't make any sense.

If, for example, the concept of trauma in Seminar VII, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, is absolutely crucial to the work you are doing on, say, the Holocaust, it's an elementary facet of intellectual honesty to look at the text in the original. Maybe you can't do any better than Dennis Porter did, but in my experience a little dictionary work can help avoid a lot of mistakes that have been made in the translation. This doesn't mean you have to work exclusively in French, but it does mean that if you want to write something intelligible about Lacan, or use his work in some honest manner, you have to check the portions of the text that are crucial to your interpretation.

Of course, we should do the same with every translation, whether of Heidegger, Freud, Marx, or Lacan.

One last question: your writing is so clear, and every one of your students knows that your editing of their papers is ruthless in its demand for clarity, yet you are drawn to Lacan who brings vagueness to a higher art form. Why the attraction when it is so far from what you demand of yourself and your students?

Well first I think it's interesting to note that while people in theory often say that my writing is clear,

American analysts often complain of my "vague terminology"! Your question thus perhaps says something about your own background …

In any case, I started out in analytic philosophy, and for a long time I really thought that if something couldn't be said clearly it was probably bunk. Nevertheless, I became extremely bored with analytic philosophy quite quickly. I just found it empty, it did nothing for me. Then I started reading Saussure, Deleuze, and Guattari—their writing is quite extravagant and polyvalent—and I started reading Habermas and all of these really dense German thinkers like Adorno and Benjamin. I certainly felt there was a lot more there. Even though I didn't necessarily understand it, it was a lot more intriguing to me. I think that's what has always kept me going with Lacan. It's so much richer to me than anything I read by the Anglo-American analysts.

I certainly do put certain demands on myself when I write about Lacan. I try to avoid the gestures that I think were made for at least a decade by commentators on Lacan, which were to be as obscure as the man himself. I didn't really see any point in that—Lacan will *always* be head and shoulders above his commentators in the obscurity department. And such commentators certainly didn't help me grasp anything in his work.

I found a model of clarity in Jacques-Alain Miller. I went to his courses for seven years and learned a ton from him. Which is not to say that he is never unclear, or that he never utters a vague or ambiguous formulation; but obfuscation for the sake of obfuscation is just not his style.

I've heard that some literary critics view my comments on translation as positivistic in flavor. In a word, I think they wonder how I could possibly claim that the lesson they thought they had learned from Lacan himself—that language has no meaning or that language can mean anything and everything—is not true. Well, I don't think Lacan ever said any such thing!

It's true that Lacan asserts in "Instance of the Letter" that you can make a term, by the way you use it in your discourse, mean virtually anything, but that doesn't mean that everything means anything and everything all the time. So, when I say that some people have simply mistranslated Lacan's work, and that there are often real semantic equivalences between English and French that are very simple (like *physicien* meaning physicist, not physician, during a particular historical period and in a particular text), this doesn't mean that there is never any polyvalence in a text or that there can be no slippage between the signifier and signified, especially when an author works the language in a certain way. But Lacan wasn't working *all* of his language in that way *all* of the time, just some of it at any one time.

It is the obscurity in Lacan's work that fascinates me and that challenges me to work harder to understand it. It is also what brings the enjoyment! It's the polyvalent nature of it all that makes me smile as I read it or, in the best of cases, burst out laughing! And I keep finding more there. Of course, there are times when I find *less* than I thought was there, when I end up concluding something about the meaning of a certain passage and it no longer looks as intriguing as it had before, but more often the more time I spend with the text, the richer it becomes.

This interview took place in McKees Rocks, Pennsylvania, on January 12, 2003, at the request of Dan Warner, who was a Ph.D. student in the Department of Psychology at Duquesne University at the time. It appeared in 2003 in the *Journal for Lacanian Studies, 1*, 129–48.

CASES

9

BOTH/AND LOGIC IN A CASE OF FETISHISM

Theoretical and Research Basis

The work to be described in this paper grows out of a contemporary psychoanalytic framework based on the approach to long-term treatment outlined by Jacques Lacan, the French psychoanalyst (1901–81). This approach eschews any moralistic condemnation of sexual acts conventionally considered to be "perverse," and does not in any way take it as a goal to change homosexuals into heterosexuals.

A somewhat unusual feature of the case to be presented here derives from the fact that the analysand lives in a city where there are no psychoanalysts and few Ph.D.-level clinicians of any persuasion whatsoever, and that all of our work together has been carried out over the telephone. I have been conducting partial and total phone analysis for about 20 years and have found it to be very effective in many cases.

Case Study

Presenting Complaints

The analysand is a man in his forties with whom I have been working for about four years, beginning with three sessions a week and increasing, after about a year, to four sessions a week. I will refer to him as W. W contacted me after two serious depressions, one of which had left him suicidal. He had gone through two years of Christian counseling, which he had found to be of little value to him, and had been put on Zoloft, Klonopin, and various sleeping pills by his family doctor. His current depression was, he told me, due to the fact that his lover had left town several months before; but he quickly revealed that he was especially distressed by a constant fantasy he had of boots stepping on him. The medications had helped smooth this over, but he was tired of taking medications and, indeed, tried to stop taking Zoloft during the very first week of analytic sessions.

It was disturbing to W to talk about his homosexual activities and he did not like to think of himself as a homosexual per se. It disturbed him still more to think about what he clearly identified as a long-standing fetish: boots, and in particular black shiny boots. They played a central role in virtually all of his masturbation fantasies at the time.

In the course of our work together, we have explored many of the threads of this fetish that reach very far back into his past, and I will use these threads to tell a part of his story. It will only be a very small part, given that it would be impossible to summarize so much work in the short space available here. The fetish, while it loomed large in the early years of the treatment, was never more than one of the many topics taken up in the treatment; in my account here it shall, however, take center stage.

History

W grew up in the Midwest, surrounded by cowboys and rodeos. He was the firstborn child of parents

who, like all parents, had a peculiar relationship. That relationship saw a particularly defining moment when W was around five. For it was at that time, when W's mother was pregnant with her second child, that it came out that W's father had never officially divorced one of his several previous wives and that his marriage to W's mother was thus a sham. This sent W's mother into a tailspin, and she openly complained about and criticized her husband in front of her son, going so far as to claim that she would not be surprised if one day they all "woke up dead" in their beds, her husband having killed her and her child. The curious both/and logic with which she expressed herself on this and other occasions (affirming that they could *both* be dead *and* wake up to become cognizant of this fact) was not devoid of repercussions on her son.

W and his mother accompanied the father one day to an out-of-state location to finalize the divorce and to perform a new marriage ceremony. From the moment of his discovery of his own illegitimacy and of the illegitimacy of his parents' marriage, W came to scorn his father and would make a noise of disgust whenever his father walked by W's room. The father complained of this to the mother but did not seem to know how to win his son back in any way, and seems to have resorted instead to making fun of his son and referring to him as a sissy. He also adopted the habit of referring to W as an *it*, instead of as a he or she.

W, who had already been quite close to his mother, now became closer still and lived in what he himself described as a "feminine universe," including his mother, his mother's sister, his grandmother, and his female piano teacher—not to mention his sister, who was born shortly after W began turning away from his father. W seems to have turned away from masculinity so completely that when asked by his kindergarten teacher at age six to play the part of George Washington in a school skit, he volunteered to play Martha Washington instead. At summer camp he told his camp counselor that he wanted to sleep in the girls' cabin, not the boys'. When W first began to wonder where babies come from, he did not ask his father but only his mother, and she responded by saying that babies come out of a "special opening."

Signifying Contributions

It might be said that the question of this "special opening" is where the story of the boot fetish begins. Children tend to be quite curious about where babies come from and about special openings, and in the absence of explicit information or instruction, they are very creative at inventing explanations themselves. W seems to have noticed that the women in his family had larger behinds than the men and to have concluded that the special opening must be the *butt*, as it was called in his family. Note that "butt" and "boot" are very closely related in spelling and sound. He seemed to find a confirmation that the butt was the special opening in question in comparing the menstrual blood he saw on the toilet bowl after his mother used the bathroom and the blood left there by the hemorrhoids he suffered from due to fairly chronic constipation as a child.

This would seem to suggest *a lack of difference between the sexes*, since he too had a butt, or what he also referred to as a "butt crack." Note that when he first mentioned the female genital organ known as the clitoris, after more than two years of analysis, he remarked that "It's not all it's cracked up to be." As a candidate for the special opening, the butt or butt crack does not seem to provide much in the way of difference between males and females.

Nevertheless, a couple of girls who lived nearby tried to explain to him one day that boys and girls were different because *boys have one thumb and girls have two thumbs*. They do not seem to have offered to show him theirs if he showed them his, and the thumb explanation of sexual difference may seem a bit enigmatic; it should be noted, in any case, that "thumb" and "boot" start and end with the same letters, albeit in reverse order (and that "bum" is another term in the analysand's vocabulary for "butt").

Let us note too that sexual difference here is not explained with different terms—it is not explained by using one signifier for male genitalia and another signifier for female genitalia—but by different numbers of the same thing: girls have twice as many of something that boys also have. (Oddly enough, the last name of the girls who gave W this explanation was pronounced like "you-dick.")

A slang term that W heard used for penis was "root," closely related in sound to "boot," and another slang term he heard was "tube," a virtual palindrome for "butt" (i.e., the one term read backwards is almost identical to the other). Note that, particularly from a child's point of view, whereas a tube sticks out, a butt crack goes in—in other words, they are inverted forms of each other.

The father made several contributions to the boot fetish, not the least of which concerns the family name or patronymic (which bears an affinity to an aspect of the fetish). In the father's attempts to bond, in his own curious way, with his son, the father would stand behind the bathroom door and try to scare him as he came by or walked in, by yelling "boo!" As for the blackness of the boots, it should be noted that W's grandfather was a blacksmith, and that W's father had inherited the grandfather's anvil and other blacksmith tools. The father also had a shiny black leather belt, with which he occasionally beat W (W felt closest to him on those occasions, physically touching his father's knees), more often threatening to "tan his hide" with it. They would, incidentally, watch the television show *Rawhide* together.

The father was also rather attached to boots. One day, while he was giving W's younger sister a horsy ride on his boot, he got very angry when she accidentally scratched it. This may well be the origin of the connection in W's mind between the boot and female genitalia, for his sister certainly seemed to be enjoying straddling her father's boot (this probably occurred when W was between eight and ten years of age). In any case, some time after having turned his back on his father, W seemed to want to be like him and commented that since he had no affiliation with his father, he "forged one." Note the double meaning in this expression: "forging" can mean both creating and faking, and perhaps also alludes to a blacksmith's forge.

It is rare to find a symptom that is not overdetermined—that is not the result of a multitude of signifiers and events—and there are a number of other linguistic and historical connections that I would like to mention here. First, there is the term "genitalia," the last part of which is "Italia," the Italian pronunciation of "Italy," which W learned as a young child, along with the fact that it is shaped like a boot. A number of other important terms are related to his mother. He grew up with the slang term "boobs" for "breasts," which is obviously closely related in sound to "boots." In addition to this, his mother had a shiny black satin garment with a hem that seems to have played an important role as well. When he was a young child, W's mother read him a story of pirates who wore tall black boots, and she specifically pointed to their boots (indeed, they referred to it as the "boot book"). Part of the family lore was that they were direct descendants of Captain Kidd. She perhaps viewed these pirates as real men, unlike her husband, whom she considered to be too weak to fill the shoes (or boots) of her own strong father (whose boots W put on when he first masturbated, as we shall see shortly). There is a possible link to the term "booty" as well, in both the pirate and sexual sense, but I have never heard W use this slang term in its sexual sense, which I believe dates back only to the late 1960s.

What I hope to make clear is that *the boot became, for W, a marker of sexual difference and nondifference*: it came to stand in for an important ambiguity around sexual difference. Boots had both masculine and feminine attributes, to his mind, and masculine and feminine identity seemed to be played out around it, in certain respects. The boot fetish was accompanied by a belief that women have penises, and indeed W said he always believed that his mother had a penis. "Why would she cover herself up with a towel in coming out of the bath if she didn't have one to hide?" W asked. Even at age 18, he asked his 12-year-old sister if he could see "between her legs" (assuming that he would thereby see her penis), and

even in his twenties he didn't think women had pubic hair, associating such hair with men, not women.

Life Events and the "Primal Scene"

Growing up in the Midwest, many of the men around W wore boots, including his father (who had, as W put it, an "*inordinate* number of work boots in the basement" of their house), his grandfather, his friends' fathers, and so on. As a young boy he would sit with his legs crossed, and a man wearing cowboy boots once made fun of him for hiding his penis by crossing his legs "like a girl." A kindergarten classmate of his wore black boots and W himself was attracted to Andy Griffith, the television Sheriff who also wore boots. A young man who lived nearby once made out with his girlfriend on the front porch while wearing boots, and when W first began to masturbate he would put on his maternal grandfather's boots and masturbate in the barn.

W once saw a policeman who had caught a criminal and was holding him down on the ground by standing on him with his black boot. The criminal, a fairly young kid, was squirming underneath the boot and the officer had total control—W recalled that he was aroused by this.

What thrilled him the most, however, were cowboys in rodeos who would break horses, ride their steeds, and go up and down on bucking broncos. The word "buck" itself struck him as incredibly sexual right from the very first time he heard it used as a slang term for "dollar," and the domination of animals by cowboys excited him. He later remarked on the element of masquerade involved in the clothing worn by cowboys, saying that it was as if they were all really women, in fact, wearing very tight jeans, high-heeled boots, and wide-brimmed hats; they seemed to him like "women in a fashion contest," women disguised as men, hiding behind their mustaches. However, he tended mostly to identify with the animal—the bull or calf—they roped and tied up. He wanted both to know what it was like to be a cowboy who could exercise such violence and to be the wild animal in their strong hands.

After about six months of analysis, W recalled that, on one occasion, he had been very upset by something he had seen in the kitchen and had run into his parents' bedroom without knocking. There he saw his father on top of his mother and, although they were presumably having intercourse (about which he knew little, if anything, at the time), he thought that they were fighting as they went up and down. He heard his mother moaning and assumed that she was suffering at his father's hands. The connection between this scene and his rodeo fascination seemed quite clear, and it led him to tell me about a number of homosexual partners with whom he had engaged in various forms of sadomasochistic sex, involving his being beaten with a belt (the way his father had beaten him as a child).

W often referred to this event thereafter as the "primal scene," as it is called in psychoanalysis, and recalled an important addition to it as time went on. The reason he had been so upset that he ran into his parents' bedroom unannounced was that he had been rummaging through the *drawers* (perhaps an important term in and of itself) in the kitchen and had found a picture of himself that he had never seen before. Actually, it was not a picture but a negative, and he suddenly became convinced that he was black, not white, and that he must therefore have been adopted and was not really his parents' child at all. How come they had not told him, he wondered. It was this identity crisis, this sudden inversion or reversal of perspective, that upset him terribly and led him to burst into the bedroom.

Here we see a curious intersection of the questions of racial and sexual identity at a very young age. The question of inversion or reversal of perspective shows up again in W's very common left—right reversals: he will often tell me a dream or story in such a way that the first time he tells it, a certain element is on the left, but the second time he tells it, that element is on the right. At one point, he had a dream in which there were two boots that he was leaning against, and the one on the left was male and the

one on the right was female, but when he began associating to the dream he reversed the two. He related the word "left" to the fact that his father's own father had left the family when his father was just a young boy, and that his last name was not in fact the name of his biological grandfather who had left but that of his step-grandfather. There was thus a juxtaposition between the "right name" (the last name of the grandmother's second husband who adopted W's father) and the "left name," so to speak (the last name of the biological grandfather who left). This highlights the importance of signifying connections (or, as Freud [1955a, p. 213] calls them, "verbal bridges") that have no rhyme or reason: this particular connection seems to be based simply on the homophony in English between the signifier "left," as the opposite of the spatial term "right," and the past tense of the verb "to leave"—a homophony we would be hard pressed to find in any other language! (I have seen another interesting case of such inversions in one of my analysands whose first and last names form a palindrome: abcde edcba.)

In many of W's sexual fantasies, he is having sex with a woman, and a man is egging him on, encouraging him by saying things like, "Go on" and "Give it to her." It is often quite unclear where he himself is situated in the fantasy, whether he is "taking it" (like a woman or like a man?) or whether he is giving it to her. Certain of his boot fantasies involve boots, which he sees in this case as male, pressing down on his nipples, which he thinks of as female. The violent quality of certain of his boot fantasies involving policemen or Nazi soldiers often led him to thoughts of suicide in the period prior to his analysis as well as in the early months of the treatment.

To give some sense of the role the fetish played in his life, he seems to have purchased his first pair of boots in his mid-twenties and ended up with some 20 pairs. The last two pairs that he bought (before starting analysis) were over $600 each. He himself mentioned that he found it easier to entertain the idea that he might want, at some level, to kill his mother than to talk about his boot collection, establishing an interesting connection between the two.

W saw boots as male insofar as they can stand up straight by themselves, and his mother always told him to stand up straight. However, he also saw the shaft of the boot as both penis-like and vagina-like, since it has an opening at one end. The silver tip of a boot was like the shiny tip of his penis. He once mentioned the fact that he steps *on* the boots when he walks in them, seeing that as a sadistic activity.

One particular dream W reported brought together many of the elements here. In the dream, he went into a shoe store and saw a black shoe, which he assumed was his. It glinted in the light of the sun, it blinded the way it broke the light, and there were different folds in it. "That's how leather is," he commented, "it's black and yet it's not, there's light and brightness … It sounds like … "—he broke off and I encouraged him to go on—"a crotch." "Crotch" is, of course, a peculiar term in English in that it points to the general locale of sexual difference, without coming down on any one side.

W said so many striking things about boots that it would be impossible to go into them all at length here. I will simply mention a few more of them:

- "The boot is the eye of the needle through which I pass to the male side."
- "The boot allows me to repudiate sexual difference." He said that it puts him in the position of certainty, which is a male position, to his mind. Doubt is for women. Homosexuality makes him all man and the boot helps him deny the female within himself. He said that he invents the male—that, with the boot, he invents a way to "come between the mother and father." Note again the remarkably ambiguous turn of phrase here.
- "The boots stand for me," he said; they let him be a man, even though he has never felt like he was enough of a man for a woman.

Course of Treatment and Assessment of Progress

The enunciation and elaboration of all these intriguing statements about the fetish object seem to have led to its disappearance after about three years of psychoanalysis. As is often true in clinical work, it is easier to note the disappearance of something than to explain it. Did I make some brilliant interpretation that led to the dissipation of a symptom that had led the patient to the brink of suicide? I do not think so. I did my best to help W unravel the various threads of the fetish, and to follow each of the threads as far as he could. In looking back over my notes, it seems that while the fetish had been gradually losing its hold over W, it was a dream he told me late in the third year that signaled its demise.

In the dream, he was in my office looking at my books. He suddenly noticed a fight going on between me and someone in the water (as if a body of water had somehow appeared in the office); I was wearing tall, shiny black boots. I drowned. He saw to it that the killer was eliminated. At that very moment, all my analysands were set free.

As usual, he associated the shiny black boots with many different things, including the skin of his penis. He said he feels dominated by his penis, because it has a mind of its own. My analysands were glad, he said, and he was celebrated for he had done something to set them all free. Even though the dream does not directly show him killing me, seeming to displace his aggression toward me onto the person who killed me, the dream fulfills the wish for me to die. I had drowned in the water, water that appeared in his many wet dreams from adolescence, which seemed to symbolize women. I had drowned in the maternal, the necessary sacrifice had been made to the mother, and he could go free. It is not clear here if I represented his mother, to whose apron strings he was thus no longer tied, to whose virtual couch he was thus no longer bound, or if I was a sacrificial lamb or Christ figure (he often thought of himself as a Christ-like martyr) offered up to the mother who wanted "too much" from him. I may even have represented a sadistic father figure who was drowned in the maternal waters, thereby neutralizing both parents. In any case, it seemed that a part of himself was simultaneously laid to rest: the sadistic part that wished me—as his mother or father—dead. Since we talked about that dream, the boot fantasies have receded decisively and have not returned in the past year, allowing us to focus more on other things.[1]

Generally speaking, what has occurred is the gradual reclaiming of his own body, we might say, from the Other (the Other is understood by Lacan as the general locus of parental and social demands, ideals, and desires that are foisted upon but not always willingly assimilated by the subject). When W began analysis he was almost always impotent with his partners, male or female, and found it very difficult and exhausting to masturbate. He eventually related this to a moment in his adolescence when he had been masturbating for one of the first times in his bedroom and his mother walked in. She placed her hand on his forehead as if to feel if he were feverish (she was apparently always anxious about his health and often took his temperature) and then placed her hand on his erect penis. She then left the room silently, and W indicated that he was unable to finish masturbating and felt unable to masturbate thereafter for a long time. It was as if she had claimed his organ as her own, he said. It had "died" and was "rotting."

In one dream, his mother was very upset with him and said, "I want you to know I've shown this car" (the car being his black Probe). "It's a good car but it has a high E_2." He explained that it was as though his mother had put the car up for sale without asking him, as though it were hers to do with as she pleased. This Probe had already starred in numerous dreams and he had often associated it with his penis. The fact, he said, that she had already shown it meant that she had already seen it, that she knew all about it, and that it was hers.

E_2, he explained, is the symbol for "critical error" in a certain field, but he also mentioned that his family often remarked that his mother looked a bit like Queen Elizabeth, also known as Elizabeth II. Thus

the problem with the Probe, he said, its flaw, is that "it's like its mother," but he slipped in saying so, saying instead "it likes its mother." One possible wish we might see in the dream (in accordance with the Freudian notion that dreams contain wishes, albeit disguised wishes) is that his mother would sell off her share in his Probe, due to its predilection for her. If she would do it, he wouldn't have to do it himself.

After telling me this dream W recalled that, when he was an adolescent, his erections seemed strange and foreign to him, and that he often thought of cutting his penis off, being mindful of the Biblical phrase, "If thine own eye offends thee, pluck it out." At the same time, though, he was quite afraid of castration. When he saw a rat's tail, for example, he would immediately think that "it could *not* be there"—another remarkably ambiguous formulation. One of his male friends told him horrible stories about botched circumcisions. He was also very struck by his mother's pastry tube (pastry bag or cookie press) that had different conical tips with serrated edges that he associated with the term *vagina dentata* (toothed vagina); he had always been concerned that you could put your finger in the tube and not be able to get it out. He was simultaneously fascinated by its interchangeable tips. He recalled having been horrified by the idea of the cutting of the umbilical cord at age six, when he saw his newborn sister's umbilical cord tied up with a piece of *black* plastic. He was also horrified one day when he came home from school and saw his mother's dining room table pulled apart, "a gaping hole in the middle of it." He commented that he "couldn't handle it," he was so upset. All of these scenes evoke a longstanding anxiety about castration and about ownership of his genitalia.

In the course of therapy, it became progressively easier for him to masturbate— it no longer took a full hour, no longer bothered him for days thereafter as it had before, no longer sapped him of his "vital forces" or "vital fluids," as he put it, and no longer felt like such an intrusion in his life. Similarly, his impotence disappeared, impotence that had been a very serious problem because he would often go limp during penetration, his condom would fall off, and sex with his partner would no longer be safe. As certain of his partners were HIV positive, this had been a very serious matter indeed. He had also been impotent in the sense that, even when he could maintain an erection, he usually could not come in his partner and would fake orgasm.

His impotence was at least in part related to the connection in his mind between sexual intercourse and fighting; insofar as he could not maintain an erection, he was at least at some level refusing to accept his own aggressiveness, his own destructive drives that he primarily turned against himself. By not reaching orgasm he refused to allow himself any enjoyment from what he viewed as an aggressive act. Our work together allowed him to engage in intercourse as the insertive and not just the receptive party, and integrate some of his more aggressive tendencies.

I would characterize this as "furthering the analysand's Eros," something Lacan (2001) contrasts with the often very misguided attempt on the part of analysts to further what they consider to be the analysand's "Good." It is only too easy for the analyst to project his or her own idea of what is good for the analysand in an attempt to impose his or her own idea of the Good on others (Fink, 1999). Even though W at times explicitly stated that he wanted me to prohibit his homosexual activity and make him into a heterosexual, I did not take such requests at face value and instead left the question of his sexual orientation up to him.

Relationship with the Mother

Let me now comment more extensively on W's relationship with his mother. She seems to have thwarted any attempt on his part to have relations with members of the opposite sex of his own age, telling him to "stop trying to impress the girls." When he kissed a girl for the first time as a young boy, she spotted him out the window and told him to "Make sure that what you love is lovely," implying thereby that the girl he

had chosen to honor with his kiss did not fit his mother's lofty idea of loveliness. (Maria Callas, the opera singer, was one of the few women who lived up to her standards.) She often warned W to "beware women" because "they will wrap you around their little finger," the curious logic of a woman enunciating such a statement not having fallen on deaf ears.

When W first started having wet dreams, his mother would get angry at him because he dirtied the sheets. She would say, "Can't you do something about this?" W said that his solution was to masturbate. "That's how my mother's jouissance got into my penis," he remarked ("jouissance" is a term in French psychoanalysis for any pleasure or satisfaction that verges on pain due to its excessive or "dirty" quality; the analysand originally chose me as his analyst due to his pre-existing interest in Lacan's work). In other words, his mother had become ever more intertwined in his masturbatory activities.

She managed to walk in on him when he was having one of his first sexual encounters with a male friend as a teenager, just before he ejaculated. In fact, he said that she always spoiled his fun, whether he was enjoying complaining about something—she'd say "look on the bright side"—or was excited about something—she'd say "calm down!" He also mentioned that if he was so stupid as to say he wanted to go to the park, he could be sure she would not take him there, for she very often did the exact opposite of what he said he wanted to do. This led to what at first sounded like a superstitious belief that if he said in analysis that he was feeling better, he would be punished and start feeling worse.

After W had been with a woman for the first time at age 26, his mother asked if he had "entered her." He responded by yelling, "This is none of your business." When he told her of his first adult homosexual experience at age 36, she made it clear that she felt this could not possibly have been what *he* wanted, saying "these homos have tried to recruit you." Telling her at age 46 that he had a boyfriend, she commented: "Still trying to get out from under your mother?" The tone of ownership seems quite unmistakable in many of her comments to him. (We should not, however, overlook the fact that he continued to tell her about his love life, thereby keeping her involved in it.)

Such treatment and comments left W little able to express anger toward his mother. As a boy, he used to drive nails into the ground, which he called "mother earth," instead of attacking his mother directly. He also showed his anger toward certain animate substitutes, including the female dog the family had, and towards manifestations of maternity in the animal kingdom, in particular birds' eggs, about which he was very curious but which he also occasionally buried and stomped on. Discussions of these incidents made him feel very ashamed, and he had a number of upsetting dreams over the course of the analysis in which a woman of his mother's age was executed. These dreams and others in which violent sexual acts were performed on mother figures were very distressing to him and almost led him to break off the analysis at different times, feeling that *I* was responsible for his having these thoughts and dreams; as long as his aggression toward his mother continued to seem unacceptable and reprehensible to him, he projected it onto me.

Nevertheless, repeating on many occasions that I wanted him to continue his analysis, after about five and a half months of analysis he reported that he no longer heard his mother's voice in his head telling him to do this or not to do that. After about a year of analysis, however, he was once again distressed by thoughts like "step on a crack and break your mother's back," and couldn't believe he could be having such thoughts at his age. In moments of desperation, he thought of becoming infected with HIV by having unsafe sex as the only way to get away from his mother, describing it as a compromise between suicide and natural death, as something he would not be entirely responsible for, something for which *I* could be held responsible (perhaps as a stand-in for his mother who had driven him to his death, or as a disguised externalized representative of his own anger: he would be the innocent victim of anger that was repudiated within himself and projected onto me).

Over the course of time, he connected his thoughts about wanting to stomp on his mother with boots and about "fucking his mother" with what he described as a very longstanding fear of committing "a horrible, heinous crime." As a young child, whenever he heard of some horrendous crime on television, he became afraid he himself would commit it, apparently not realizing that his wish was, at least at one level, to commit such a crime against his mother. This was fueled by an expression his mother often used when she was angry at him: "When your father gets home, he'll *stomp* some sense into you."

A few months later he was able to openly say the word "fucking" and affirm that he really "loved fucking." He commented that in his analysis he was pouring off all the "mother liquor," a term for a residue in certain reactions—that is, ridding himself of the mother in himself.

Recounting, one day, a masturbation fantasy in which he heard in his mind the words, "Okay, let's get *her* started," he realized these were the very words his father used to utter in talking about his black car. W analyzed the fantasy by saying that, just as his father spoke of his car as if it were a woman, W was talking to his own penis as if it were a woman. I stopped the session there (I practice a "variable-length session," which involves ending sessions on particularly striking statements [see Fink, 1997]) and at the next session W said that it was like an exorcism, that he felt differently ever since we talked about that fantasy—he felt as if his body were no longer his mother's body. "I have one of my own," he said, "I'm fully equipped."

I hope it is clear from some of these examples the degree to which W does the analyzing himself, hence the appropriateness of the term "analysand," which is the gerund form meaning "the person who does the analyzing." In Lacanian psychoanalysis, the analyst does not present him- or herself as the master of knowledge, but rather sets the analysand to work, to the work of analyzing all the dreams, fantasies, daydreams, and intrusive and "stray" thoughts that occur to him or her.

Piano

An important turning point in W's analysis came when he was finally willing to talk with me about something that always made him very emotional and teary. At his mother's prodding, he had started taking piano lessons as a young boy with a woman who lived nearby and he very much enjoyed the lessons. He resented, however, the fact that his mother came and sat in on his lessons, but he never told her so. He also resented it when she would ask him to play for her at the house and felt that she was trying to "feed off" of his music in an intolerable way, and even criticizing the works he was playing by saying things like "why don't you play something nice like Bach." His solution was to stop playing altogether when she was home.

He got the shock of his life, as he put it, one day when he was having dinner with his mother and his piano teacher and his mother said, "I wish W would play in public," and the piano teacher agreed, saying, "Yes, he should." He thought he had just been taking lessons for his own pleasure and had not known, up until that moment, that he was expected to please other people, his mother and teacher in particular. He felt they were colluding against him. He had trusted them and suddenly learned that he was supposed to do more: please them in public and be on display.

In the next session he mentioned just how struck he had been by what he had said about that dinner: that dinner had awakened him out of his own unconsciousness for the very first time, he thought in retrospect. He had never been aware before this that his mother and piano teacher were mad because he was not playing in public, and that there was a *gap* between who he felt he was and what they wanted him to be. This seemed to him to be a defining moment or realization in his analysis. He had long ago stopped playing piano altogether, and now little by little started playing again, especially when I was away on

vacation, logically enough. This suggests, obviously, the degree to which I was associated at times with his mother, and he was concerned that I not be happy that he was playing again or try to take credit for it.

Now, after four years of analysis, he no longer seems to feel the need to hide the fact that he is playing occasionally, and no longer sobs or becomes teary-eyed whenever the subject of music comes up. It eventually came out that W had wanted to go to music school after high school and that his mother had said he could not. Indeed, she had wanted him to enlist in the military and go to Vietnam so they would make a man of him (it seems she wanted him to be *both* a woman *and* a man). He instead secretly became a conscientious objector. But, 20 years later, at a turning point in his career, he tried to enlist in the Navy, his mother having been in the Navy many years before. At his Naval medical examination he was told he had a slight heart murmur and thus could not enlist. This conjunction of circumstances gave rise to another symptom that plagued him for most of ten years thereafter.

The symptom was the sense that there was a dagger or foil that was about to or was in the process of stabbing him in the heart. W was aware that it was completely psychosomatic—indeed, he initially described it as such—and originated when the doctor gave him the news of his slight heart murmur; but the only way he found to alleviate it was *to finger a piece of cloth*, in particular, to run the hem of a piece of cloth under his fingernail. He described in great detail the ecstasy he felt in fingering such cloth, indicating that he felt it both in his heart and his genitals. He said that, as a young boy, he had not been exactly sure what a "hem" was at first; he wasn't sure if it was the edge of a piece of fabric or the fabric that was hidden from view, the hidden part. This symptom gradually abated after we talked about a late-night thought and two dreams he had:

- In the late-night thought, he imagined that he was at the edge of a *frayed piece of fabric* looking into a lack or void. He was not lost in the forest, but rather at the edge of the clearing. "It's not a cage," he said to himself; indeed, "I'm coming out of the cage!"
- In one of the dreams, an older woman he had known had suffered the death of a son. She was something of a mother figure to him and he put himself in the place of the son she had lost: it seemed to be a wish for a separation from someone close to his heart.
- In the other dream, there was a huge red curtain hanging down from the sky that had a small hole in it. A locomotive started going toward it and then the train ripped the curtain open as it came through.

He associated the curtain with the hymen, the redness of the curtain to the color of blood, and the ripping of the curtain to the Biblical "rending of garments." He then mentioned the story in the Bible about how touching the hem of a piece of Christ's clothing stopped a woman's "issue of blood"—in other words, stopped up something related to sexual difference and reproduction. On another occasion, he commented, "A sperm in an egg is like a dagger in my heart," the sperm and the egg being likely representatives here of sexual difference.

Fingering fabric thus seems to have been a way of putting the opening or lack in the mOther (that is, the mother as Other) out of heart and mind. Fabric served as a kind of transitional object or fetish object having something to do with the plugging up of a special opening or lack in the Other, plugging up a lack that might be understood in the sense of his mother wanting something more from him, something intolerable. If he admitted she had such an opening or gap, perhaps what she wanted from him was to use a part of his body to fill that gap—after all, she already acted as if she owned that part, if not all of him. Linking the two fetish objects, he once said that boots are like a grave, and that he felt that he had one foot in the grave and was holding onto a piece of cloth (a shroud?) with his hands. The fingering of fabric faded somewhat after these thoughts and dreams were discussed, but has returned at certain moments.

Analytic Stance

My approach to working with W was very much the same as with any other analysand. I began each session, except for the first few, of course, with the single word "So," prodded him to finish sentences that he started but did not seem to want to finish, and encouraged him to associate to dreams, daydreams, sexual fantasies, and slips of the tongue. I prompted him to enunciate associations that came to mind that seemed particularly stupid or irrelevant to him, such as Biblical references (e.g., the effect of Christ's hem on a woman's menstrual flow), which he often considered to be related only to earlier religious times in his life and of no current importance.

In typical analytic fashion I insinuated that fears could be understood as wishes, and that something closer to the truth was often hiding behind a negation. For example, when, after recounting a dream in which a woman had been murdered, he said, "I hope that's not the murder of my mother," I repeated, "The murder of your mother?"

I became, in this way, associated with some of the aspects of himself that he found most disagreeable, and he could at least talk about them insofar as he attributed them to me, not wishing to see them as his own. In other words, I agreed to occupy the place of the unconscious for him, that (often aggressive) part of himself that he considered unacceptable.

I viewed his various attempts over the course of the first couple of years of analysis to reduce the number of sessions per week or break off the analysis altogether as primarily signs of his being disturbed by the material we were touching on. Rather than accuse analysands of resisting me or of resisting the process as so many analysts seem to do, I try to express my desire, as often as necessary, that they continue the work. I have found, time and again, that important breakthroughs and revelations occur just after the analysand expresses a desire to terminate, and accept Lacan's notion that the symbolization of one's experience is extremely difficult: the reality that the analysand is up against *resists* symbolization and the analysand quite understandably holds the analyst responsible for the difficulty and resulting frustration (Lacan, 1993). It is nevertheless the analyst's expression of his or her desire that the analysand continue the work that allows the process of symbolization to continue. W wrote me a letter two years ago, in which he said the following:

> I frequently hear you saying to me, in me, "I want you to continue" and "Let's continue working together." And those words make me believe when all other words have failed. Because of them I can go on, and I will.

It is in the course of the two years since he wrote that letter that the majority of the complaints he brought with him to analysis have abated significantly, if not altogether disappeared. The changes noted during this period include the following:

- heart pains disappeared
- depression disappeared
- decrease in (mostly work-related) paranoia
- ability to move on in his work and find new pleasure in it, in addition to the sense of being more creative and receiving more recognition for his work
- desire to play music returned
- not tormented by masturbation as before

- not so taken with domination/dominated fantasies
- not as socially inhibited anymore
- can finally be somewhat critical of his mother
- feels that he has a new voice, and that when he talks, people listen.

Transference Relationship

It was quite clear that W thought of me, at many times, as the driving force behind his analysis, depicting me in one dream as his bus driver, and clearly dreaming about me, dreaming the night before our sessions, and associating to his dreams and fantasies in order to tell me about them. In Lacanian terms, I was thus in many ways associated with object a (the Lacanian "cause of desire") for him, causing his desire to continue analysis, to remember his dreams and associate to them, and so on (Fink, 1995, Chapter 7).

Nevertheless, there were many times at which W thought of himself as object *a* for me, claiming that he was teaching me about sexuality and about who I am (he once said, "Who trains the analyst but the analysand," which is, of course, quite true!) and that he believed that what he tells me works its way into my unconscious. In this sense, although he was rather loath to express anger with me directly, he did characterize himself as having a "penetrating curiosity" about me, trying to discover as much personal information about me as possible, and as we have seen, penetration was associated with fighting and aggression for him.

Although W characterized himself in his relationships as submissive, he said that in his fantasies he was dominant, and his "penetrating curiosity" could be seen as an unconscious attempt to dominate me. He claimed that by telling me all these lurid things he was "obliging [me] to intimacy with [him]," suggesting that he saw me as some kind of slave of his, a sex slave of sorts. He even believed that he had divined the cause of a sports-related injury I had two years ago, and went so far as to say that it must have happened because of him—in particular, he believed that I had thought of him and had fallen. He thus saw himself as the cause of my desire (and even of my death drive), a configuration found far more often in cases of perversion, diagnostically speaking, than of neurosis (Fink, 1997, Chapter 9).

The cases in which he saw *me* as serving as the cause of *his* desire were not always positive in coloration, for he also considered me to be responsible for manifestations of his death drive, such as having unprotected sex with HIVpositive men and "starving" himself to some degree (he has lost some 30 pounds over four years, settling at a weight that is quite healthy for his height and build). He was doing it for me, he said, or to show me how difficult a patient he was. He sometimes expressed a fear—that is, at least at some level a wish—that I would find him too much to handle, that I would feel he had too much transference toward me, and that I would tell him that "it wouldn't work out," just as his mother had told him that she had tried to breast-feed him as a child, but "it didn't work out." In other words, we can perhaps see here that he was unconsciously attempting to make me chase him away by acting self-destructively, unconsciously attempting to make me treat him the way his mother had treated him, even though at another level that was not what he wanted.

Complicating Factors

The attempt to make the analyst view one as a difficult patient is fairly common in myriad analyses, and self-destructive practices are obvious ways of trying to get the analyst's attention. In analytic work with many neurotics, it is often enough for the analyst to adopt a stance of equanimity (as opposed to one of anxiety) for certain self-destructive activities to subside. In analytic work with highly masochistic

patients, however, it is sometimes decidedly difficult to deal with the anxiety the patient repudiates and thrusts upon the analyst, and equanimity on the analyst's part only leads to the escalation of self-destructive gestures. With certain patients I have had to make the continuation of the treatment conditional upon the cessation of masochistic sex practices (see Chapter 14 in Volume 2 of the present collection); in W's case, however, this never became necessary, perhaps because fetishism was more salient in his case than masochism (Fink, 1997, Chapter 9).

While W came to analysis on a variety of medications, and quickly tried to wean himself from some of them, in the end he gradually decreased dosages and eventually stopped taking medications altogether on his own, without the intervention of a psychiatrist. He occasionally discussed the effects of the medications in our sessions, but I never made any specific suggestions or interpretations about them.

Case Conceptualization

W's fetish can be understood in a number of different ways. In psychoanalytic terms, it can, at one level, be understood as an attempt to make up for a missing signifier in the signifying system W had at his disposal, a signifier of sexual difference as such. In the face of his mother's many demands, and in the absence of a name being provided by either his father or his mother for the female genitalia, and for what the mother lacked and thus desired, W could only imagine the worst: his mother was demanding that he surrender to her that part of his body to which she seemed to be laying claim, his penis. He seemed, indeed, to have in many ways relinquished his penis and viewed it as her possession.

The boot fetish could, perhaps, be understood as something created in order to at least temporarily put something else in the place of the physical organ seemingly wanted by his mother, so as to take back part of his body from her, at least in fantasy. In other words, faced with what he experienced as an overwhelming demand being made on him by his mother for something that he associated with his genitalia (a demand that seems to make the much ballyhooed term "penis envy" pale in comparison), he attempted to put some other object in its place; he perhaps reasoned as follows: "What she wants is not my penis, but something associated with fathers, something which is a sign of their power—boots."

Boots were, after all, a representative of his mother's own father, whom she considered to be a real man, and in whose boots W masturbated for the first time. (In masturbating, he was perhaps symbolically *giving her the boot(s)* while he took back his penis.) The boot was also associated with his own father, who had a thing about boots, and with his father's last name. The boot could thus be understood as an attempt to insert a father substitute between himself and his mother, as if to say, *it isn't me that she wants, it's him*. This clearly relates to W's view that he had been the object of a transaction or exchange: since he sensed that his mother considered his father to be impotent as a man, W felt that his father had handed W over to his mother in order to placate and satisfy her. "Men," he said, "give up their penises, hand them over to women." His father, not wanting to do so, had wanted W to satisfy the mother in his stead (making W here his father's sacrificial object). In a common masturbation fantasy, his father says to W, "give it to her." He sees himself as but a medium of exchange between them, satisfying all of them in this fantasy. His fetish can thus be seen as part of a family system. He himself said that, with the boot, he invents a way to "come between the mother and father": he pleases his father by satisfying his mother, but manages to briefly keep himself out of the game.

The boot can thus be seen here as a Name-of-the-Father, a name of something the mother wants that is located beyond the child, something that is other than the child (Fink, 1997, Chapter 7). In the stereotypical Oedipal scenario, a male child may at first wish to see himself as the mother's only love object, but a bigger, stronger rival eventually emerges: the mother loves someone else more or differently than the child, whether it is the biological father, stepfather, another man in her entourage, a father who

passed away, or some other male figure she pines for or admires. The Name-of-the-Father, as Lacan calls it, is the name of that something that the mother desires that shows the child that he is not the be-all and end-all of his mother's existence. While the intrusion of this rival destroys the pleasant fantasy of an exclusive relationship between mother and child, it simultaneously brings relief, allowing him too a space in which to have a desire that reaches beyond the mother/child dyad.

Since W's mother indicated in so many ways that W's father was undesirable, and since the father himself seemed quite content to have W satisfy the mother, we could theorize that the father (or "paternal function") did not emerge very clearly in W's history and needed some kind of support. The boot could be understood as providing a semi-permanent solution to this problem, by helping to prop up the Name-of-the-Father, helping to name something that the mother herself seemed to associate with "real men" (pirates, Captain Kidd, her own father, etc.).

W asserted that the boot made him "all man"; it "stomped out the feminine" in him. In that sense it was a prohibiting function and served as a source of identification with strong men such as the maternal grandfather, motorcycle police, and cowboys, men who would want to separate him from his mother, whereas his own father seemed to have been unwilling or unable to do so. As W said in one session, his father tried to say no, but he was stupid and W could continue to enjoy feminine things of which his father knew nothing, such as bulbs and flowers, which were important sexual symbols for him (with their ovaries and styles, and tips to bite off). Boots, however, seemed to exact something from him. By having them step on his feminine nipples in some of his sexual activities, he saw them as stomping out the feminine in him (he enacted something similar with sporadic partners he found who would beat him, establishing a law or prohibition, as it were). In the course of his analysis with me he has lost some 30 pounds, pounds that he clearly associated with his mother who has attempted, according to him, to force-feed him his whole life, attempting to get him to eat when he stops by her place just for a minute even now.

We might say that in a way his analyst has come to take the place of the boot, and my job, as he sees it, is to "cut out" the mother in him, or to "splice" her out. He sees me as exacting the pound of flesh, the renunciation of certain of his pleasures; he at times claimed that he was trying to give up masturbation *for me*. The way in which I have become an object placed between himself and his mother can perhaps also be seen in his comment, "When will my mother finally go into analysis?" Here it seems that what she wants is analysis, not him. Is psychoanalysis, then, a new Name-of-the-Father?

There are, no doubt, many other ways of formulating the function the boot fetish served. It could, perhaps, also be understood as a name for the female genitalia that W did not have at his disposal as a child. He saw his sister's genitalia when he was six, but since his parents gave him no name for what she did indeed have—a vagina, a clitoris, labia, and so on—he could only understand what he saw there in terms of the *lack* of a penis (his parents had given him a name for the latter). This, in the classical Freudian sense (Freud, 1963b), gave rise to castration anxiety ("if she does not have one, then I too could lose mine"). The fetish would thus appear as a solution to this anxiety, for the term "boot" preserves a *both/and* structure of things by bringing both female and male characteristics with it, according to W. A boot has an opening, making it vagina-like, but it also has a shaft and a shine, making it penis-like. In other words, the fetish can be understood as creating a space for both lack (an opening) and its possible filling, for both emptiness and fullness, thereby eliminating W's anxiety. As we have seen, this kind of both/and logic was quite prevalent in W's background and discourse, and can be theorized to be a regular feature of fetishism.

Many other interpretations of the boot fetish would, of course, be possible here as well. Note, in any case, that none of the memories W has been able to recall in the course of his analysis has allowed us to

confirm Freud's claim that a fetish object is generally the last object seen before a boy sees his mother's (or some other woman's) genitalia for the first time, though images and memories of rent fabric and of the hem of his mother's shiny black satin garment were certainly suggestive. It was, perhaps, seeing his sister having a "horsy-ride" while straddling the father's boot that literally brought the object that was to become fetishized into contact with the female genitalia for the first time, thereby creating an association of the two in thought as well.

Follow-Up

W's analysis is ongoing and he is making progress in many other areas at this time. He has been exploring the reasons why he has often backed down in arguments with others, let others' desires take precedence over his own, and so on. I will not in any way recommend that W terminate his analysis until he feels he has made all the progress in the many varied areas of his life that he would like to make.

Treatment Implications of the Case

For many years, certain analysts considered those who engaged in homosexual activities to be untreatable. This case shows, I believe, that masochistic trends can abate considerably and that more or less full recovery from many life-difficulties such as depression, suicidality, self-destructive behavior, timidity, and self-effacement is possible through long-term psychoanalytic treatment. Such success is no doubt at least partly conditional upon therapists having resolved questions about their own sexuality through their own personal analysis and being able to leave the analysand's sexual orientation up to him or her.

Recommendations to Clinicians and Students

While many people seem to believe that managed care has made it such that long-term psychoanalytic therapy has gone the way of all flesh, it is altogether possible to conduct long-term work with clients who pay for sessions out of their own pockets using sliding fee scales based on clients' ability to pay. Such work can be rendered still more affordable—not limiting it to the well-to-do—by encouraging clients to establish "health care flexible spending accounts" through their employers, allowing all sessions to be paid for with pretax dollars (saving them 10–40 percent of the actual cost). The benefits of the therapy are often quite tangible to the clients within a few months, encouraging them to accomplish more in the therapy than they might have hoped for at the outset, and allowing them to find a great deal of personal satisfaction in life despite a social milieu that often demands nothing but quick fixes for easily isolable problems. Many of my analysands report changes that have nothing to do with their presenting complaints: having much more energy than before, being able to genuinely listen to people for the first time, being interested in more things, having a weight taken off their shoulders, no longer seeing the whole world as against them, not being anxious about hygiene, illness, or old age any more, and so on. Doesn't the great satisfaction they express at these changes make the additional time spent in therapy well worthwhile?

This paper was given as a clinical case conference at Duquesne University in December 2000 and published in January 2003, under the title "The Use of Lacanian Psychoanalysis in a Case of Fetishism," in *Clinical Case Studies*, 2(1), 50–69. The structure and main headings of the paper were the standard ones requested by the journal.

Note

1 But boot fantasies returned later, confirming the *structural* perspective whereby a fetish plays an important psychical role (that can, perhaps, come to be filled by something else) that is a *permanent* feature of the fetishist's psyche. The disturbingly persecutory quality of the early boot fantasies did not, however, return.

The following two chapters provide separate snapshots of one and the same case, viewed six months and then two years into the analysis. Both were designed to present clinical material related to a particular conference theme—addiction, in the first instance, and anxiety in the second—and focused on but a few specific aspects of the case, there being no time to formulate the case as a whole or the unfolding of the analysis with all its ins and outs. The material selected was designed to open up a larger discussion with groups of colleagues, leading to a form of group supervision in which theoretical questions and practical matters were debated at length.

Such discussions, in my view, open up many new avenues for thought and force the presenter to consider the case from numerous different angles, as certain discussants present dialectical reversals of the way one has been formulating things as the analysis has proceeded. Although no recording was, to the best of my knowledge, made of the lengthy question and answer period following each presentation, I would like to thank all of those attending the seventh annual conference of the Affiliated Psychoanalytic Workgroups (APW) on "Addictions" at Emory University and the University of West Georgia, Carrollton, in March 2006, as well as those attending the Forums English-Speaking Seminar on "Anxiety" held June 28–30, 2007, in Paris, France, organized by the psychoanalytic institute, Forums du Champ Lacanien.

10

INTER(OED)DICTIONS

One of the first and fastest growing uses of the Internet seems to have been the distribution of pornography. Whether or not it makes sense for us to consider masturbation while looking at pornographic images to be an "addiction," strictly speaking, it is obvious that patients sometimes do. The analysand whom I am going to talk about today—I shall call him Slater—came to me because of what he referred to as his addiction to Internet porn. He had repeatedly tried to break himself of the habit, which began when he got his first Internet connection in the late-1990s. From the moment he first got online, he spent three full days looking at porn and masturbating, only stopping because he had to go to the emergency room—he had dislocated his shoulder, and I do not believe that it was the shoulder connected to the hand that was working the mouse!

Slater's compulsion to look at porn was so great that on several different occasions he felt compelled to simply give away his computer so that he could not get online anymore, which was rather inconvenient for the work he was doing. He told me that although he was currently seeing a woman with whom he had been involved for many years, and that things were going very well between them, he found himself unable to agree to marry her because of his secret life looking at porn. Indeed he suggested that there were no conflicts between them, only the conflict in his own head between porn and her. (He even went so far as to say, at one point, that he had "one foot in porn and one foot with her," evoking the expression "one foot in the grave.") Although he had been stopping himself from looking at porn for some time before first contacting me, he "binged" on porn right after we spoke on the phone to schedule our first appointment, as if to signal that he was sick of self-restraint and wanted me to somehow take over the role of inhibiting him.

Object *a*: From Breasts to Butts

Slater's compulsion to look at porn was mirrored, in a sense, by his compulsion to look at women's "butts," as he called them, never using any other term for the human posterior. (The conjunction "but" also loomed large in his way of expressing himself, especially at the outset of the analysis.) When he would force himself to stop looking at Internet porn, the butts of the women around him in everyday life would capture his attention, he would begin fantasizing about those with what he considered to be fabulous butts, and that would eventually bring him back to masturbating to Internet porn. He was hard-pressed to answer my question, "What made a butt fabulous?" He eventually proposed that it was not so much a question of size as of shape: "bubbly" was the only descriptor he eventually came up with.

Rather atypically, he was able to date the exact moment at which his interest had turned from women's breasts—which had captivated him during his early years—to women's butts. In eighth grade, he had a friend named Willy who was having rather more success with the fairer sex than Slater was. One day he asked several girls why they liked Willy, and they replied that he had a great butt; when Slater asked what was great about it, they said it was muscular and a bit protruding. When he asked about his own butt, they laughed and said he didn't have one. This threw him into a bit of a tailspin, so to speak, and led him to begin looking at girls' butts. He first noticed, apparently, that girls' and guys' butts were rather similar:

when seen from behind, teenage girls' and guys' butts looked much the same to him.

Slater commented that his fixation on butts must be hiding something, something found around the other side. He went on to talk about his incredible excitement as a boy of four or five, when he saw drawings in the book *The Joy of Sex*, drawings in which he could not tell whether the penis in a particular picture belonged to the man or the woman—seemingly being partially in each of them—nor to whom belonged the scrotum in the picture. In early adolescence he occasionally fantasized while masturbating that he had both a vagina and a penis, and at various points he tried on his mother's clothes and makeup and imagined being a girl. Clearly there were some questions in his mind about the anatomy and physiology of sexual difference.

It turned out that his newfound fascination with butts coincided not only with the termination of his fascination with breasts, but also with the end of his fascination with horror movies. Since he had been quite a young boy, his father would wake him up rather late at night, after his mother had gone to sleep, and have Slater watch horror movies with him, a practice the mother heartily disapproved of. The father seemed to especially enjoy those movies in which a woman was hurt or killed, and whenever a sex scene began or a part of a woman's body was revealed, he would say, "Sex rears its ugly head again." Slater came to greatly enjoy these movies, difficult as it was for him to sleep afterward, and especially enjoyed those in which a boy killed his sister for going out on dates and having sex with guys, or killed his whole family.[1] The last horror movie he seemed to really get excited by was *The Shining*, and it was shortly after seeing it that butts first appeared on his radar. (Being unfamiliar with the film, I am unsure what, if anything, to make of the propinquity in time of these two events.)[2]

This same horror-show-watching father once found Slater's collection of *Playboy* magazines that he had picked out of neighbors' garbage cans. The father acted indignant and angry at Slater, but at the same time giggled a tad as he pulled them out of the desk where his son had placed them. Slater said he felt as if his world was collapsing at that moment—his secret was out and he would have to find a new secret. Instead of simply throwing away the magazines, as his father demanded he do, he burned them because he said he would have been tempted to simply pick them out of the garbage again.

What Men and Women Want

It turned out that Slater's father had been an alcoholic during much of Slater's childhood. With some regularity, the father would get into fights with his wife during which he would relentlessly berate her until she could no longer speak. At the precise moment that she broke down in tears and moans, the father would leave the house to go out drinking.

Slater was fascinated by the unfolding of their arguments, and would listen through his bedroom wall for his mother's moans, sobs, and tears. In analysis, he associated this with the fact that he felt compelled to listen to a woman having sex whenever he overheard moans coming from a neighboring apartment. He would be transfixed and unable to move, which suggested both an identification with his father—for he often wished he could bring a woman to the same point, especially his sister who was a couple of years older than him—and an identification with his mother, insofar as he too at times felt subjected to his father's wrath.

Indeed, Slater's first words were apparently "no pins," since his father regularly stuck him with safety pins when he changed Slater's diapers—owing to illness, the father had only one good arm with which to change him, which led to clumsiness in the procedure.[3] Slater appears to have concluded very early on that what a man wanted from a woman was to spew anger at her and make her moan and cry, and that this was somehow related to sex (and perhaps tangentially related to diaper changing).

Much as Slater seems to have wanted to reduce his sister—who was, he said, better at absolutely everything than he was—to tears in the same way, he was never able to do so because she adopted techniques such as acting as if she hadn't heard him and not speaking to him at all.

Perhaps in part because he had so little success in this endeavor with his sister, *he seems to have taken a diametrically opposed tack: to never express any anger at a woman whatsoever*. Since I have only been seeing Slater for about six months, it is not yet clear to me how this occurred, but there are unmistakable signs that it did, his anger at girls apparently undergoing repression at this point. Although his sister and her girlfriends talked excitedly about "real boys" who seemed to him to be sexually aggressive, he decided by around age 12 or 13 that *what they really wanted were sensitive guys*. In fact, he concluded that girls basically never wanted sex, all evidence to the contrary notwithstanding.

And there appears to have been no dearth of such evidence: for example, one day at about the exact same age, three girls from his school cornered him in a sort of alley behind the school and began kissing and groping him frenetically, while pinning him against a wall. He also had several experiences with rather forward girls in elementary school, who seemed to make it abundantly clear that they were interested in sex; and his first real girlfriend at age 13 apparently broke things off with him because he refused to initiate any kind of sexual activity with her.

Nevertheless, Slater seemed to feel compelled to draw the conclusion that a guy's advances were always unwelcome; a woman had to make not just the first move but all the moves. Virtually all of his sexual fantasies and sexual activity thereafter revolved around him being the "passive" partner on the bottom, the woman being on top yelling orders at him, commanding him to do exactly what she wanted him to do. In that position he felt relieved of all responsibility for initiating sex and could not in any way be thought to be expressing any aggression toward her, such aggression having become utterly unacceptable to his conscious self. (Note that his mother would lie on top of him when he was little and tickle him until he couldn't breathe; his father would tickle him too, but would merely lean against him, since he only had one good arm.) As an adult, Slater occasionally frequented red light districts where the women were known to be extremely forward with men on the street; this allowed him, he said, to act as if he were simply responding to a woman's advances and had not directed his steps toward that particular part of town in the first place. This allowed him to misrecognize his own interest in having sex.

With one girlfriend who looked very much like his sister, he would often have what he called "mind-splitting orgasms"—but only when she was on top. Perhaps the "mind splitting" had something to do with the attempt to totally remove any aggression toward women from the picture.[4]

Do It Yourself

The anger carefully split off from or suppressed from relations with real women seems to manifest itself, however, in masturbation. The first time Slater tried to stop masturbating followed his being caught in the act by his sister in rather curious circumstances: he was in his bedroom masturbating, and was looking around for some image to focus on when he noticed a woman next door out in her yard, a woman (a mother) he particularly detested. She was, he felt, a convenient target, and he enjoyed having "outside targets" even though he could masturbate by simply conjuring up an image in his head. "Some part of [him was] convinced that that's not enough," he said, it being clear that he felt he was expressing his rage at her by "shooting" at her as his target (she had evidently been the cause of the death of his dog and had lodged various complaints against him and his family). When the woman moved from her front yard to the backyard, Slater started to walk down the hall from his bedroom to the bathroom, and his sister came out of her room and saw him masturbating in the corridor. She laughed derisively and he later overheard her telling her girlfriends about it.

What he decided to give up shortly after that was his reliance on "targets," not masturbation as a whole. (This limited resolution didn't last long.) He was intent on keeping all anger and aggression toward women out of his relations with the real women he knew, his anger at women only finding expression when he masturbated while looking at pornography.[5] It seems that his anger was, at such times, simultaneously turned against himself, for the manner in which he would "beat the meat" for up to six hours at a time would leave him red, sore, and even bleeding at times, when it didn't lead him to dislocate his shoulder.

On several occasions, he did, however, find a sort of compromise solution when he would encounter real women who looked like the porn stars he was fascinated by. He would secretly project onto these women his images of and fascination with the porn stars, be very excited by them, and initiate sex with them. He professed to feel no inclination to look at porn during the relationships he had with such women. Perhaps not surprisingly, he never revealed to any of them that he in fact found them so exciting precisely because they looked like women he had seen online. Nevertheless, he described his relationships with these real women as full of conflict, suggesting that they fought all the time.

He sensed that these relationships were doomed from the start because he allowed a real woman to "fill out the empty form" of a porn star, as he put it, and yet he was prepared to marry these women anyway, preferring to sacrifice what he called his "happiness" (to what? to his jouissance? to his superego demanding punishment for what he had done to these women?). Perhaps it was precisely because he projected this "empty form" onto them that he was able to express his angry desire toward them, but this remains to be confirmed.

His compulsion to look at porn thus generally arose only when he was involved with a woman upon whom he could *not* superimpose the image of a porn star. When he had no girlfriend or had a girlfriend whom he chose because of her resemblance to a porn star, he rarely if ever looked at porn.

The first woman in the series of those women upon whom he projected some pre-existing image very closely resembled his sister, as it turned out, and he later got involved with another woman who looked just like this first woman. This implies a connection between such pre-existing images and family members; indeed, his mother probably played some role in his early fascination with breasts (she had, as he said, "big" ones) and his subsequent fascination with butts (she had, he said, "curvy hips and thunder thighs").[6]

Parent/Child Relations

The connection between his mother and porn came out in a number of statements that very much surprised him: early on in the analysis, Slater said that the one thing that would really devastate him would be if his mother were to die. A few weeks later he claimed that the one thing that would really devastate him would be if his use of porn were to be discovered. He himself realized that the two statements were structured in precisely the same way and that there thus must be some connection between the two. To lose one would be akin to losing the other. His enjoyment of the one must be akin to his enjoyment of the other.

His mother had repeatedly told him, starting at the latest by age 11, that they had a special secret relationship, a relationship that was much closer than the one she had with his father. Slater was aware from a very early age that he was his mother's favorite and that she vastly preferred him to his older sister. He enjoyed the closeness and yet consciously thought his mother unfair for treating his sister as she did (he was dimly aware that the mother's preference for him fueled much of the conflict between his sister and himself). He enjoyed sleeping in the mother's bed when he was ill, but found it especially

enjoyable when she was no longer in the bed and he could simply feel her warmth and smell her body lotions and perfume.

She and her husband went through an especially rough patch when Slater was an adolescent, and they divorced when he was in his mid-teens. According to Slater, in the years leading up to the divorce his mother would come home from work in a foul mood and lay into him and his sister for any household chores they had failed to do. When one day she couldn't find anything to yell at him about, she came into his bedroom, threw everything from the drawers onto the floor, and then began berating him for what a mess it was. She backed him into a corner in a menacing manner, and he pushed her away for the very first time and told her to never threaten him again. It was around this time that he began to openly reject his mother's claim that they had a special, close relationship.

The father seems to have made little if any attempt to intervene in his wife's relationship with his son; indeed, he seemed quite content for many years to go off and drink with his pals, and even after he finally stopped drinking he spent a great amount of time with the same pals. There seems to have been something of a lack of *interdiction* in Slater's childhood, and the son certainly did not feel protected by his father from his mother's vicious attacks during the years leading up to the divorce.

Nevertheless, his father was associated with the law in the family perhaps in spite of himself because of some prior training he had had, and associated with punishing behavior insofar as, right from Slater's birth, the father would often prick him with safety pins when he changed his diapers. As I indicated earlier, Slater's very first words were apparently "no pins."

I mentioned previously that Slater's father had one day found his collection of *Playboy* magazines and had forced him to get rid of them—as if the father's response to Slater's first words was "No pin-ups!" Slater felt that he would have to find a new secret after that (a secret kept from the Other), which he suspected his father would also discover, as if there were something inevitable about that happening. Slater began engaging in another secret activity—stealing hood ornaments off cars—by his mid-teens, and his father in effect discovered it. Indeed, it seems that Slater perhaps left his father clues so that he would find out, and this led to what Slater described as the most dramatic incident in his entire life.

The day his father found the notebook in which Slater had been recording what he stole—in a code that turned out to be very easy to crack—his father cross-examined him at length, forcing him to reveal his secret.[7] The father then had the hood ornaments appraised, and after discovering that the value of the ornaments was such as to constitute a felony, he "dangled," as Slater put it, the possibility of reform school and prison before Slater, making him feel like a worthless criminal; ultimately, however, the father did nothing whatsoever to punish him.

"Can He Lose Me?"

This incident led Slater to feel he was such a terrible person that there could be no room for him in the family, and he soon attempted to commit suicide. He took a bottle of liquor out of his parents' liquor cabinet, turned on a horror movie, drank the entire bottle, and began masturbating. Not being as drunk as he wished, he went back to the liquor cabinet to get some more alcohol, and blacked out, falling into a coma that lasted a week.

When he finally came to, he decided not to do what he had done after his first hospitalization for alcohol poisoning (see further on)—he had made up a story at that time that other boys had forced him to do it, but he had told a slightly different version of the story to everyone with whom he spoke. This time he decided he would tell the truth, which was that he had been thinking of killing himself for quite some time and had tried to do it. He had been savoring fantasies about the pain and suffering he would cause his

family as they asked themselves what they had done to hurt him; he imagined that it would be a kind of infinite suffering for his father who had treated him like a criminal and had lorded it over him, dangling the possibility of prison in front of him as if he had total power over his son. The message Slater seemed to be sending his father, he said, was, in the words of the poet, "I've got the power!" Nevertheless, he found it difficult to fathom how he could consider this message to his father to be more important than his own life.

In "Position of the Unconscious," Lacan (2006a, p. 844) discusses the child's self-destructive gestures in terms of a question directed at the parental Other: "Can he lose me?" By this Lacan means, "Can s/he afford to lose me?" "Is s/he so attached to the demand s/he is making of me that s/he would rather lose me than give in?"[8] Among the most common specific forms this general question takes are the following: "Is she so concerned that I be toilet trained that she'd sooner sacrifice me than let me go on using diapers?" and "Is she so concerned that I be regular that she'd sooner brutalize me with enemas than let me regulate myself?" One way to find out is to hold in one's feces for so long as to place one's own life in danger and have to be hospitalized.

One way Slater formulated his self-destructive gesture in the analysis was to say that he wanted to deprive his father of the pleasure he clearly seemed to take in cross-examining his son about the hood ornaments. By killing himself he would effectively ensure that the father didn't get off on him anymore, didn't get any more enjoyment out of berating and threatening him. ("*Que l'Autre ne jouisse pas de moi!*"—the Other shall get nothing out of me!—he seemed to be shouting). And if he did not succeed in killing himself, his father might nevertheless get the message that he had better back off.

Having failed in his endeavor to kill himself—which was perhaps also an attempt to kill his father insofar as Slater had identified with his father in many ways since he was a young boy—we might suspect that his looking at Internet porn was part of a renewed rebellion against this father who had forbade him to look at *Playboy*. To look at porn was to say "No!" to his father. His father had, after all, sent Slater a somewhat complex message: "It's okay for you to have a very close relationship with your mother but it's not okay for you to look at other women!" Adding to the complexity of the message was the father's giggle upon discovering the stash of magazines…

Looking for Castration in All the…

Slater indicated that when he looks at porn he always feels like he is "breaking a rule," even though he always ensures that he has complete privacy. When he would look at the drawings in *The Joy of Sex* as a child, he was always looking at a woman who was with another man, in essence gazing at someone whom he felt to be another man's woman. In addition, he would do this in his parents' bedroom, under his mother's side of the bed where the book was kept. Most of the porn that he looks at to this day involves a woman with a man, and he has even wondered in sessions if he needs "that third person to really get off." He always seems, in some sense, to be "sneaking a peek" at his mother under his father's nose.

Thus there appears to be an enjoyment of something related to his mother in his looking at porn and a thumbing of his nose at his father who would heartily disapprove. There is, then, a defiance in his looking at Internet porn of the incest taboo and of his father's (never-really-articulated) prohibition—in a word, some kind of refusal of castration here. Castration, we might say, was rather something he imposed on other people when he stole those proud, protruding symbols of luxury and prestige off the hoods of their cars!

Slater noted that his mother, too, would no doubt disapprove of his looking at porn: although she initially encouraged him in his crushes on girls as a young boy, by ten or 11 she began referring to all of

his girlfriends as "bimbos" who were beneath him. She would surely consider the porn stars he looks at to be bimbos, he proffered.

Defying castration in his porn usage, he has nevertheless been looking for castration elsewhere. He would often imagine being caught red-handed watching porn by someone (his employer or girlfriend, for example), thinking that this would suffice to break him of the habit. He certainly hoped that I would put an end to his porn usage, and right from the outset of the analysis confessed to me all of his experiences with pornography since his earliest childhood as though he were at some sort of "Masturbators Anonymous" meeting.

After a few months of analysis he had a dream in which his partner cut off the head of his much-adored cat. He commented that his partner was jealous of the plentiful attention he gave this cat, and that in the dream she must have been castrating him of his attachment to something that took him away from her, the cat here standing for his attachment to pornography, he said.

Although his compulsion to look at porn bespeaks a refusal of castration, he nevertheless clearly recognized the importance of castration to him in his fantasies of being caught and in his seeking out a Lacanian psychoanalyst, especially one who has written so extensively on castration. Looking for castration is, in my experience, an increasingly common motive for beginning analysis: in recent years, numerous patients, both male and female, have come to me quite explicitly asking me to tell them to stop cheating on their spouses, stop using pornography to create a distance between themselves and their partners, and stop getting off in all kinds of substitute ways suggesting that they have not accepted their own castration or limitation, instead surreptitiously or doggedly seeking jouissance in various forms they consider to be illicit.

My sense, nevertheless, is that all of these forms of surreptitious jouissance fall under the sign of the phallus, so to speak. Even if, in Slater's case, we can say that the illicit jouissance is related to his mother, it is not related to an unbarred mother but rather to a barred mother; for Slater has, in my view, undergone alienation and separation (albeit incompletely) and thus what he enjoys is a rem(a)inder of the mother—in other words, object *a*. He attempts to escape or undo castration from within castration, and his attempt never takes him back to a time *before* alienation. Otherwise stated, he never manages to undo alienation, much as he might like to.[9]

In other words, I do not think that we can consider Slater's masturbatory jouissance to be "a jouissance beyond the phallus," that is, as the Other jouissance, as Lacan articulates it in Seminar XX (1998). I'm sure this is something that we will debate in the discussion!

In "The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis," Lacan (2006a, p. 263) remarks that analysts have effectively bound "heavy burdens… on men's shoulders" by holding out the hope for them "of attaining the paradise of full realization of the genital object"; analysands took the bait constituted by this postulation of a hitherto unknown genital satisfaction and began to chastise themselves for not attaining it. Something somewhat analogous seems to have occurred with Lacan's postulation of the Other jouissance: neurotics have begun to fantasize that they can have and hold and know this Other jouissance, as if they could master it, whereas it is not something one can have or hold or know. As Lacan puts it, this Other jouissance is something that just happens to certain people and they can say precious little about it.[10] From the moment that everyone begins to think they have access to this Other jouissance, we can, I think, be pretty sure that the Other jouissance lies elsewhere.

Alcoholism?

Having described at some length Slater's "addiction" to Internet pornography, let me give a thumbnail

sketch of his use of alcohol. Although he described himself as an alcoholic right from the outset and informed me that he had gone to AA meetings for over a decade at his mother's insistence, for some time in the analysis he only mentioned two times that he had actually imbibed alcoholic beverages: at age 11 when he managed to get himself taken to his local hospital for blacking out from drinking, and at age 15 when he drank himself into a week-long coma.

It turned out, however, that he took his first drink early in his childhood: he saw a bottle of Grand Marnier in his parents' liquor cabinet and recognized it as a bottle his father used in cooking. Wanting to be like his father, he said, he took a few swigs from the bottle, and then went out on his big wheel bicycle to ride to his friend's house down the street. Being a little tipsy, he fell over on the sidewalk and broke his collarbone (this is the abbreviated version, in any case).

As a preteen he apparently began drinking somewhat regularly, but found himself unable to get drunk. Captain Haddock—the character in the *Tin Tin* comic books who would often get plastered, curse, berate people, and fall down and hurt himself—struck Slater as immensely funny and Slater purportedly wanted to be like him. In the session in which he told me this, it occurred to him that Captain Haddock was actually very much like his father, some of his earliest memories of his father being him yelling, cursing, and coming home from the hospital in a cast after having had a car accident while under the influence (several such accidents occurred during Slater's childhood).

In the summer, Slater would sleep in a tent in the backyard and would occasionally sneak into the house to get some liquor out of the liquor cabinet. (His mother once detected alcohol on his breath, but he denied it and she never did anything about it; the family certainly never put a lock on the liquor cabinet.) Although he wanted to know what it felt like to be drunk like his father and Captain Haddock, he only apparently drank enough to find out on a particular day at age 11 when he and his sister were home alone. She was, as usual, glued to the television set watching her favorite TV show, *General Hospital*, she and her girlfriends being crazy about one of the actors in the soap opera (of whom Slater was quite jealous). The liquor cabinet was located in the bathroom right off the living room where she was watching, and Slater sat in the bathroom drinking and drinking. He eventually went up to his bedroom where he passed out and was, not unforeseeably, found by his sister—she was officially babysitting him—who quickly called an ambulance and had him taken to a nearby hospital, which just happened to be called General Hospital!

As he put it in the session in which he finally told me about these details, it was as if he wanted to appear on the TV screen, in the very scene his sister was watching—that would make her notice him! Drinking himself into a coma was certainly a way of doing so, comas playing a prominent part in soap operas like *General Hospital*. This may have something to do with his predilection for computer screens, as opposed to magazines, in his preferred form of pornography.[11]

Slater has purportedly not had a single drink since he was hospitalized for his second coma at age 15.

Oeddictions

"Addiction" is not, in and of itself, a psychoanalytic diagnosis, inasmuch as it refers to activities found across the diagnostic spectrum. Addictions may, like so many other cyclical activities, be viewed as symptomatic (i.e., compulsive) activities that aim at achieving a form of satisfaction or jouissance that they approach but never fully attain. It is, it seems, the very failure to fully reach what is sought that leads to the repetition of such activities. (Missing one's objective is what brings on repetition, suggests Lacan, 1978.)

The satisfaction or jouissance sought (albeit not consciously, in the vast majority of cases) often goes

as far as the dissolution of the self—whether this is thought of as some sort of merging into the All (the One or Godhead, as it is variously called), returning to some hypothetical primordial state of nondifferentiation between self and other, sliding into oblivion, or being released from life into death. Recall, in this connection, Slater's comment that he had "one foot in porn," evoking the expression "one foot in the grave." Using porn ("binging" on porn, as he sometimes put it) was, in his mind, apparently associated with a kind of self-annihilation.

Insofar as there is often a direct or indirect appeal to the Other even in the most extreme addiction-related actions—for example, Slater's *passages à l'acte,* the first of which included an appeal to his sister for attention, and the second a wish to make his father repent for treating his son so harshly—they have a chance of falling short of becoming lethal. After all, the subject would, at some level at least, like to survive to ensure he succeeded in his aim and enjoy his potential victory. The satisfaction sought in such cases seems thus not to be exclusively preoedipal, but also Other-related—hence Oedipal.

Notes

1 The attentive reader will no doubt have detected at least the following in my choice of the pseudonym "Slater": hater, hate her, and slay her.

2 Unless there is a direct connection at the signifying level: in some regions of America, "to give someone a shining" means, I believe, to give someone a spanking.

3 One might be tempted to see a possible connection between Slater dislocating his shoulder while masturbating compulsively and his father's infirmity.

4 With his current partner, he has what he refers to as "laughasms" when they make love in that position—he bursts out laughing during orgasm. He called it, "going beyond a certain limit in what's tolerable," and there is perhaps a first (re)appearance of a modicum of aggression in the laughter. There might also be some connection here with his father's giggling about his *Playboy* collection.

5 He could not express his desire, which would inevitably be an aggressive desire, toward a real woman; as he put it, desire is a "zero-sum game": if he desires she can't desire, and if she desires he can't desire.

6 She would hit him on the butt with a wooden spoon when she punished him.

7 Slater at first denied all of his father's accusations, not having any idea what his father actually knew; he felt still more humiliated afterward for having persisted in lying to his father during the cross-examination.

8 As Lacan (1973a) says in Seminar XI, "The first object [the subject] proposes to this parental desire whose object is unknown is his own loss: 'Does he want to lose me?' [*Veut-il me perdre?*]. The fantasy of his death or disappearance is the first object the subject must put into play in this dialectic, and indeed he does so—we know that he does so from a thousand facts, if nothing else from that of anorexia. We also know that the fantasy of his death is quite commonly brought to bear by the child in its love relations with its parents" (pp. 194–95).

9 Here I suspect I disagree with Rik Loose (2002) about the effect of masturbation and drug addiction in neurotics: the Other with a capital O is, in my view, included in such activities. Even if the neurotic tries to annihilate or stave off the Other in such activities, the Other cannot be escaped from. Isn't that why Lacan (1998) calls masturbation "the jouissance of the idiot" (p. 81)?

10 Consider the following passages in Seminar XX: "'Were there another one,' but there is no other than phallic jouissance—except the one concerning which woman doesn't breathe a word, perhaps because she doesn't know it, the one that makes her not-whole" (Lacan, 1998, p. 60). "There is a jouissance that is hers, that belongs to that 'she' that doesn't exist and doesn't signify anything. There is a jouissance that is hers about which she herself perhaps knows nothing, if not that she experiences it—that much she knows. She knows it, of course, when it comes [*arrive*]. It doesn't happen [*arrive*] to all of them" (p. 74). "If she simply experienced it and knew nothing about it, that would allow us to cast myriad doubts on this notorious [*fameuse*] frigidity" (p. 75). "It is clear that the essential testimony of the mystics consists in saying that they experience it, but know nothing about it" (p. 76). "This jouissance one experiences and yet knows nothing about" (p. 77).

11 Note that video pornography—which has become ever more widespread over the past couple of decades (owing to VCRs and DVD players), and virtually ubiquitous with the Internet—relieves people of the need to even develop or spin their own fantasies and thus leads to the curious situation in which many feel they are not responsible for the fantasy material that most excites them. Analysands today often claim to have accidently alighted upon the video scenes they watch repeatedly, and it often takes considerable effort to elicit on their part any sense that they "have a hand" in choosing what to watch.

11

SEXUAL ANXIETIES

The case that I will briefly discuss today is one of an obsessive neurotic in his thirties who reported that, in all his relations with a girl whom he had been involved with at around the age of 20 and whom he had never been able to get out of his head, he had experienced what he called “mind-splitting orgasms.” He had had terrible anxiety around sex with this girl and around the relationship in general, and had experienced orgasms with her that made him feel he would be left “irreparably damaged.” He felt he would never be the same afterward. He nevertheless repeatedly referred to the sex he had with her as “great sex,” but made it clear that it was terrifying to him at the same time. After the relationship ended, he chased and seduced a number of other women who resembled this girl very closely and felt for over a decade that what he'd had with her was “real sex.”

Most of the sex life of this analysand, whom I shall refer to as Slater, was dominated by looking at pornography of women with what he considered to be the ideal body type, the most salient feature of which was a prominent, round, bubble-like butt (“butt” was the term that he almost invariably used). The women in the pornographic images he preferred were being overwhelmed sexually by one or two men: the women were “beside themselves” or overcome with pleasure. He would often click through hundreds of pictures at a sitting to find the expression of being “out of control” with pleasure that he was looking for on their faces.

In most of Slater’s actual relationships with girlfriends prior to his early twenties, and later as well, while having sex he fantasized about “ideal” porn stars or imagined seeing the butt of the girl he was with as though he were at a certain distance from her. He professed to be always at a certain distance from what he was doing during the sexual act, and that distance allowed him to exist, he felt. Just as his current lover is wrapped up in herself, according to him, during sex, he is preoccupied with his fantasies during sex with her and doesn't really prefer sex with her to masturbation. He said that he engages in sex with her because he believes she always wants it and that it is important to give it to her to maintain the relationship. When he first came to see me about two years ago, he told me that even though they had been living together for many years, he should probably leave this current girlfriend because he didn't have “great sex” with her like he had with the girlfriend he had at age 20, whom I shall refer to as Celine.

What had the situation with Celine been like? It was extremely complex, of course, like most relationships. First of all, Celine closely resembled Slater’s older sister, who Slater had idealized for much of his adolescence, wanting to be like her, to be accepted by her, and to be close to her. Instead he felt made fun of by his sister. She laughed at him as a child when their father would spank him for a ruckus or fight Slater and his sister had gotten into, even when she had started it and was at fault, not Slater. The father was always convinced that Slater was at fault and that his sister was an angel. This “angel” nevertheless laughed when Slater was spanked, clearly enjoying the injustice their father was handing down. for the longest time during his childhood, Slater wanted revenge; it was only in his teenage years that he began to idolize his sister (in other words, a shift occurred from rivalry and aggression to admiration and idealization). Hence, there seemed to be something incestuous about his relationship with Celine, which involved an attempt to get even with his sister via Celine. Their sex life initially followed

the same pattern as had his relations with his previous girlfriends, dominated as it was by his fantasies of butts (hers and those of porn stars).

Having found Celine immature early on in their relationship (she was a few years younger than him), Slater soon broke up with her. But she begged him to take her back every day for months, arguing that it was unfair of him and that she had not been cheating on him as he claimed. He enjoyed her pain at being rejected, since he felt he'd always been rejected by his sister.

Note that Slater's father had left Slater's mother a few years earlier, claiming that the mother had cheated on him, something Slater found difficult to believe. His father had placed all the blame on his mother and Slater had at first believed everything his father said, until his father came out of the closet, at which point Slater began to wonder if the father didn't share in the blame for the failure of the marriage.

Being accused by Celine of being unfair for breaking up with her, he felt himself to be in a situation in which he could act just like his father had so often acted—unfair and enjoying others' distress and pain—or in which he could show moral superiority to his father. Slater decided to take Celine back and vowed in his mind never to break up with her again nor to ever accuse her of cheating again, even though he was quite sure she was cheating. She'd have to be the one to break up with him; she'd have to be the one who could be blamed for the break-up. That vow—and it was hardly the first vow Slater ever made—seemed to leave him no escape route. It seemed to "close the window," as he put it, a phrase that he used time and again to provide an image of what he believed marriage would involve: exclusivity and no way out.

The *window* or frame of fantasy that Lacan occasionally mentions (see, for example, Lacan, 2004, pp. 89–90) appears here, although it is only the opening or closing of the window that seems to be germane in this instance, not something that appears in the window or frame.

Out of Control

It was not long after Slater got back together with Celine and made this vow to himself that their sex life changed radically. He said he gave up all control and simply let her have sex with him whenever she wanted to. She would sit on top of him and would only reach orgasm when it was clear to her that he had reached orgasm. This had at least two sets of consequences:

1. Having a woman sit on top of him had never before been of much interest to Slater, either in his fantasies or in bed, but it evoked a number of different things:
    a. being pinned down as a child by his father, who—because he had only one good arm—used his torso to hold Slater down and tickled him until Slater couldn't take it anymore; Slater described this as being fun at first and then becoming unbearable;
    b. being tickled by his mother as a child: she'd hold both his arms down in one of her hands and tickle him until he couldn't breathe with her other hand;
    c. his father would literally pin him as a baby—he stuck Slater accidentally with safety pins when he put on his diaper because of his awkwardness using just one hand to do so; Slater's first words were, apparently, "no pins."

    These scenes all involved being dominated, overpowered, overwhelmed, pinned down, pricked, and/or tickled until he couldn't breathe by his parents, it not being clear exactly what they wanted from him and what would make them stop. When he was talking about being tickled by them he once elided a few words, ending up saying, "It would be fine up to a point and then I'd want it… " When I asked about this, he said he had intended to say "to stop" at the end, but leaving those words out

suggested that he enjoyed it perhaps all the more when he let himself go, go beyond a certain barrier or resistance.

2. When Celine's orgasm became conditional upon his, Slater felt she had deprived him of all opportunity for fantasy: he could no longer think that his jouissance was independent of her or of her jouissance, and that he was actually getting off on some fantasy scenario or image in his mind. To his way of thinking, she seemed to be ordering him to give her something directly, without mediation, something that could not be circumvented. Recall Lacan's (2004, p. 95) comments on the anxiety aroused by the God of the Jews who orders one to come[1]: what could be more anxiety-provoking than to come on demand, to come when commanded to do so? He felt it to be imperative that he come so she could come.

Slater seemed to realize that in such circumstances, some men might have never ejaculated or might have lost their erections, but he said he wanted to come and that she thus essentially incorporated his jouissance into her own, "made it hers." This paralleled what he said his mother had done with the hobbies and interests he had developed as a child and as a teenager: his mother would get so excited about and involved in whatever he was doing—whether it was his schoolwork or extracurricular activities—that he'd no longer feel they were his own and would eventually lose interest in them.

He at times resisted his mother's attempts at appropriation, but with Celine he did not resist (rather than deprive her of jouissance he seemed to prefer to deprive himself of himself, he said). The upshot was that he often felt he had irretrievably lost something after sex with her, that he'd been "irreparably damaged" in some way and that his "brain would never be the same" again.[2] To stop being beside himself and find some world of his own, he began reading a lot (his current profession grew out of this) and thinking about becoming a Trappist monk. During sex, he gave himself over completely to Celine—he'd let the window close—but he kept looking for some room in which to breathe easy, some window by which to let in fresh air in some other facet of his life. As we shall see further on, we might even characterize this as a cycle, reminiscent of the binge-purge cycle often found in bulimia.

Subversion of the Other Subject

Slater felt that something disappeared when he had sex with Celine and he tried in analysis to talk about what that might have been. He noted that rebelliousness toward a man played a major part in all his relationships with women:

- His mother told him that she and Slater had a special relationship, one that was closer and more special than the relationship she had with either his sister or father. Slater secretly enjoyed this usurping of his father's position.
- With his sister, Slater tried to usurp his father's role. Their father apparently very much enjoyed seeing his children scared out of their wits by horror movies that he would encourage them to watch and sometimes even drag them out of bed to watch with him in the middle of the night in order to "keep him company." Slater would try to force his sister to watch even when she was hiding her eyes behind her hands, telling her that the scary part was over even when it wasn't, usurping what he thought of as his father's role of enjoying his children's terror, and usurping it right under his father's very nose.
- Slater became the lead singer in a rock band and devoted all his efforts to seducing other men's women during performances. He was only satisfied when the girls in the audience who at first seemed most indifferent to him began to ignore the men they had come with and became fascinated with him. He'd even jump down into the audience and try to seduce women who were particularly

resistant to his charms. Slater especially enjoyed infuriating the boyfriends, while hiding behind the pretense that it was all for the sake of the music. He was uninterested in dating the women who were seduced by him in this way. Irritating the men seemed to be of far more interest to him than actually sleeping with their girlfriends.[3]

It seemed important to him to see himself as rebelling against men by stealing women away from them, and in his intellectual work he had a similarly rebellious attitude toward all recognized authorities in his field: under the guise of simply reading a text, he would try to undermine and annoy those he perceived as authorities. He said that the "precondition for [his] caring about something" was his ability to find something or someone to subvert in it. In his analysis, he was not openly rebellious toward me, but wanted to convince me that he could not be classified—that he did not fit into any known diagnostic category—because he constantly moved from one category to another. His rebellion was thus against the whole of psychoanalytic theory as he understood it.

One of the things he felt he lost in sex with Celine was his subversiveness, his rebellious stance. He wasn't stealing her from anyone (she was sleeping around plenty, so he wasn't depriving anyone of her) and wasn't pissing any man off by being with her. "Every man is every other man's enemy," he said, but with Celine there was no other declared enemy. The whole Oedipal structure, his whole subjective stance, the whole fantasy frame propping up his desire, seemed to collapse during sex with Celine. If the only reason for him to have sex with a woman was to irritate a man, or to be stealing something from a man, that reason disappeared here. His desire was effectively crushed.

Co-opting Object *a*

We have here an example like the one Lacan (2004) provides in which anxiety and orgasm are found in very close proximity to each other (he gives the example of test anxiety, pp. 198 and 208). It seemed to be the very threat of being made to disappear in some important way, to have some part of himself to which he was very attached eliminated, that brought on Slater's mind-splitting orgasms. It was the disappearance of his own desire from the scene that was anxiety-provoking and seemed to open the door to some overwhelming jouissance, anxiety clearly being a form of jouissance.[4]

Note that everything that seemed to serve Slater as an object *a* propping up his desire disappeared in his sexual encounters with Celine. He could not see her butt, the object that transfixed him in his masturbatory jouissance and that had a big effect on him when he would come across a woman in the street whose butt corresponded to his criteria.

Two other things clearly transfixed Slater, and they were both related to a woman going out of control, being beside herself, or being overwhelmed. At four or five years of age, he had found a book under his parents' bed, *The Joy of Sex*. This book, which is full of drawings of couples having sex in a wide range of positions, played a very significant role in his fantasy life. He was particularly struck by images in the book in which the woman seemed to be overcome with pleasure, overwhelmed by what the man was doing to her. It was her gaze—not at the man she was with necessarily, but perhaps off the page—that captivated him.

This fascination with a woman's gaze/face as she was overwhelmed by a man became linked with another: the sound of his mother's voice in arguments with his father. His father would play out a particular scenario with his wife when he wanted to leave the house to go out drinking: he would criticize the mother for some trivial household matter and would escalate his criticism and raise his voice louder and louder. The mother would soon begin to cry, but Slater often suspected that this was fake, that she was crying to manipulate her husband.

It was only when the father had berated her so relentlessly that she collapsed into a babbling heap and could no longer utter any coherent sentences that Slater was convinced she had been completely overwhelmed (it was at this point that his father would leave to go out drinking). This was what Slater wanted to hear when he actively listened in on their fights. It was also what Slater listened for in porn movies: sounds from the female porn star that showed she wasn't just faking it, that she was genuinely beside herself with enjoyment, that it was truly too much for her. (If he overheard another couple in his apartment building having sex, he would remain transfixed listening for sounds suggestive of the same thing.)

In his sexual encounters with Celine, however, such looks and sounds were not available to him, or came only after he had already come. Insofar as Celine's jouissance had become contingent upon his, the looks and voiced sounds (two obvious candidates for object *a*) that propped up his desire only appeared after it was too late (as a sort of *moutarde après dîner*, as Lacan [2006a, p. 600] says, or as we might put it here, as a kind of "post-sex condiment"). She was no longer the perfect butt for him—indeed, we might say that he had become the butt of her jouissance (like we say, "the butt of a joke"), for it was perhaps the look on *his* face and the sounds *he* was making that had become the cause of her enjoyment. She had, in effect, assimilated his cause of desire and turned the tables on him, he felt, for he was the one who went out of control and was overwhelmed (thus being like his mother in relation to his father, with Celine playing the role of father).[5] She was the one who desired and his desire was nowhere to be found (desire is "a zero-sum game," he said: if the woman desires, the man cannot, and vice versa).

Perhaps we can imagine that, faced with a lack of lack, the crushing of his desire, Slater, like the lizard, jettisoned his "little tail" in distress. In other words, his orgasm during sexual intercourse with Celine was tantamount to a handing over, a giving up, or a surrendering of something to the Other as a way to appease and get away from the Other. Indeed, one of Lacan's main theses in *Seminar X* (2004) is that anxiety arises at the very moment the object (object *a*) is about to be given up or yielded to the Other (see, for example, p. 377).[6]

If it was a form of separation, as Colette Soler might argue, Slater seemed to try to find a supplement by seeking out a life apart from Celine in other facets of his life. He began cultivating intellectual activities during his relationship with her, and continued to do so for many years thereafter, deliberately seeking out fields that neither his mother nor any other woman in his life understood anything about.

Although he allowed his desire to disappear in one realm (in order to fulfill the vow not to be unfair like his father), it would seem that he reasserted its presence in another, one that could not be co-opted. Disappearing as a subject in sex, he found a way to make himself reappear in intellectual strata. A cycle of crushing and reemerging, of disappearing and reappearing seemed to come into being, a cycle we might liken to that sometimes seen in bulimia where bulimics stuff themselves at least in part as a way of disappearing as lacking/desiring subjects—thereby falling in with what often seems to them to be their parents' wishes or demands, their desire being literally and figuratively crushed by the satisfaction of hunger's need—only to reassert their existence by recreating a lack or emptiness in themselves by purging, thereby refusing to remain crushed. (Recall that Slater himself occasionally used the term "binge" regarding sex, especially in connection with his use of pornography.)

Entry into Analysis

Slater did not come to me for analysis having problematized the jouissance he experienced with Celine. Instead, he came to analysis many years after his relationship with her had ended for the ostensible reason that he was "addicted to porn" and that it was jeopardizing his relationship with his current lover as well

as his job. Indeed, he saw his current relationship as problematic and wanted to find anew that "real sex" and those "mind-splitting orgasms" he had with Celine by finding another woman just like her.

It is only as he has talked about his relationship with Celine, and drawn connections between it and his conflicts with his sister, mother, and father (conflicts that led to the two suicidal gestures he made as an adolescent), that he has begun to call into question his temptation to remove himself from the scene and to enlist his own jouissance in the service of the Other's jouissance.

In short, it is only after about two years of treatment that Slater has come to think of the kind of anguish or anxiety he experienced during sex with Celine less as the "ultimate in jouissance" and more like something worthy of analysis.

Follow-Up

The reader would be mistaken in thinking that the theoretical matters discussed in this paper—such as the connection between anxiety and jouissance, repression of anger leading to "mind-splitting," castration, separation, object *a*, and the Other jouissance—were directly broached in sessions with Slater. They are part of the theoretical frame through which I have tried to formulate the case and communicate its major outlines.

Leaving behind the lens of theory, let me say a few words about the outcome of the case. In the course of about eight years of analysis at an average frequency of four sessions per week, Slater overcame a number of things he himself presented as obstacles, some right at the outset of the analysis and others along the way. He was able to advance in his chosen line of work, finding it easier to concentrate (without tobacco) and write (his writer's block gave way); get along with colleagues and bosses and view others in his field in a new way; marry his lover, while no longer nostalgically longing for "mind-splitting" orgasms; cease binging on porn, no longer being transfixed by women's moans; deal better with his mother (whose interminable daily phone calls he took for many years even as he complained how much they annoyed him); and more generally appreciate and enjoy life.

Notes

1 Lacan is presumably referring there to *Ecclesiastes*, Chapter 2.

2 This perhaps corresponds to what Lacan (2004) calls "a maximum of difficulty"—Slater was in a bind (*embarras*) because he wanted to come and yet his jouissance was the condition for Celine's—and a maximal problem of motion (or movement): Slater was beside himself, outside of himself (*émoi*).

What allows me to try to situate his anguish in this way is the example Lacan (2004) gives on pp. 131–36. Lacan situates the suicide attempt—that is, the *passage à l'acte*—of Freud's young homosexual woman as follows (p. 131):

1. Faced with her father's preference of her mother over her, as witnessed by the birth of her younger brother, she had adopted a sort of courtly love strategy whereby she gave up her own femininity to create and prop up an idealized relationship with a "genuine lady."
2. Encountering her father as she walked hand-in-hand with the lady, she was in what Lacan calls "*le suprême embarras*"—in other words, in a serious bind, a colossal quandary.
3. "Next comes the emotion… the emotion is brought on by her sudden inability to face the scene her lady friend made," that is, to deal with the stink her lady friend made about the situation when the latter realized her suitor had no doubt deliberately steered their promenade in the direction of her father's place of business in the hope of being seen with her and provoking him.

Her *passage à l'acte* thus involves the combination of the bind with the emotion. They are resolved in a sense by her attempting to take herself off of the stage of life or out of the picture or scene (p. 136).

As for Slater, he seems to have felt himself to be in a terrible bind (not all of the coordinates of which I have spelled out here) and simultaneously at a complete loss to move, to take any action whatsoever—at least until after the sexual act.

3 He would often be made up as a woman on stage, for a wide range of reasons, no doubt, at least one of which was to diffuse the boyfriends' potential anger so that he did not get beaten up during or after the performance.

Cf. Freud's (1957) comment that certain men need to feel jealous of and have "gratifying impulses of rivalry and hostility" (p. 166)

toward another man, a man who was already involved with a woman before they themselves came on the scene. Often those gratifying impulses outweigh any genuine interest in the woman herself.

4 As Freud (1963a) argues, "the most immediate vicissitude of [an] affect [tied to an idea that undergoes repression] is to be transformed into anxiety" (p. 409); in other words, when we encounter anxiety we can assume that some thought has been repressed and the affect associated with it, regardless of its original tenor, has been set adrift, so to speak; it no longer seems to be connected in the analysand's mind to any event, circumstances, or thought and transforms into anxiety, anxiety being "the universally current coinage for which *any* affective impulse is or can be exchanged if the ideational content attached to it is subjected to repression" (pp. 403–4). In Slater's case, hateful thoughts about his sister (and mother and, by extension, every other woman) have been repressed, and the anger attached to those thoughts may be hypothesized to have been set adrift, appearing during sex in the form of intense anxiety.

5 While watching porn, he feels his sexual satisfaction to be "at arm's length," an object on a computer screen—the women are not interested in him, he is interested in them. Celine, however, was interested in him and needed him to come in order to come—in that sense, he seems to have become the *object* for her.

6 Early in life, typical examples of this include toilet training (the handing over of one's feces and, indeed, of one's enjoyment of defecating whenever the spirit moves one, so to speak, to the Other) and weaning (giving up the breast and a form of usually warm contact with the mother).

12

PSYCHOANALYTIC APPROACHES TO SEVERE PATHOLOGY
A Lacanian Perspective

Psychoanalysis is often referred to as a form of "insight-oriented psychotherapy," a type of therapy that would seem to require analysands to be insightful. And to be "insightful," according to the way the term is often used, means that they must be capable of "stepping outside" themselves in order to examine themselves as an another person might, in other words, to take themselves as objects, objects of study or observation.

This particular view of psychoanalysis is reflected in a kind of psychological discourse in which analysands are encouraged to "work on their feelings," as if their feelings were located in a different space or realm than the subject studying them—that is, as if the subject analyzing them were doing so from the outside, from some position not embedded in affective states, or somehow immune to them. Some kind of objectifying process thus seems to be at work here and the instating of a supposed meta-position: that of a self or ego that is hypothesized to be merely observing, not participating.

Even clinicians who are, in theory, quite critical of the model implicit in the notion of "insight" as I've presented it here, based as it seems to be on the objectivizing Cartesian cogito, are likely in practice to be happy to begin therapy with someone who is already insightful. Why so? Perhaps because they feel that some of their work has been spared them with such patients, taking it for granted, as they do, that part of what they need to accomplish in the course of therapy is to get patients to become "introspective" and insightful, even if they would not formulate it as an objectifying process. Indeed, many feel that the likelihood of therapeutic success with uninsightful individuals is far lower, and even rule out psychoanalysis with them. Others, myself included on occasion, have the impression that a breakthrough has been made when a previously uninsightful individual begins showing signs of self-reflection, having the impression that the individual has at last become a genuine analysand—someone who is truly engaged in the analyzing process.

It seems to me that we must, nevertheless, remain skeptical of the value of insight when we note that while a realization may seem very striking and true, it may still lead to little or no change in the analysand's life; hence the complaint often heard from analysands after years of therapy: "I understand why I do things a lot better, but I still do them." Perhaps insight thus functions as a *lure* for both analyst and analysand. Rather than announcing a prolonged opening up of the unconscious, a realization may instead announce to us that the analysand's ego is about to *recrystallize* around a new view, theory, or bit of knowledge that will serve more to impede progress than to promote it. It is often not an insight itself that is of value to the patient who is ordinarily thought to be analyzable; instead it is the patient's ability to turn that insight on its head, reverse it, and invert it time and again that leads to more fruitful work. Otherwise it is generally more of a hindrance than a help.

Non-Insight-Oriented Psychotherapy

That said, I would like to turn to the question of how to approach work with those patients who usually do *not* seem to be insightful, and for whom analytic technique would seem to have to be radically altered. I'm

not going to discuss, or at least I hope I'm not going to discuss, cases where diagnosis is very much in question: my intention is to take up the kind of work that can be done with psychotics, in particular, patients who could typically be characterized as paranoid. My working hypothesis here is probably more easily stated than justified: *whereas in neurosis, the ego is already more than strong enough in the vast majority of cases, in psychosis we would do better to speak of a hole or weakness in the ego*.

The ego is so strong and rigid in neurosis that repression occurs whenever one of the patient's own sexual or aggressive thoughts does not fit in with her view of herself, leading to the return of the repressed in symptoms. There would be no symptoms were the neurotic's ego too weak to push such impulses outside of itself. Indeed, we might say that the goal of analysis with neurotics is to loosen up the rigidity of the ego, for it is that very rigidity that requires so many things to be put out of mind. To do so we call into question or look for holes in the wholes the ego is constantly reconstituting, in its attempt to rationalize the analysand's behavior and impulses. We deconstruct the patient's view of herself, which constantly recrystallizes in a way that excludes a part of herself.

The ego can be seen here to be like an ideological system, which attempts to explain all occurrences in a palatable way, providing ad hoc or what are considered to be *acceptable* reasons for what would otherwise be considered unexplainable or *unacceptable* events. Even though we do not directly critique the ego's view of things (of so-called reality) in analysis, there is nevertheless a structural analogy that can be made between psychoanalytic work on the ego and the critique of ideology.

In psychosis, on the other hand, we begin from the assumption that the psychotic analysand's ego is deficient in a certain respect and that, rather than trying to deconstruct the analysand's view of himself, rather than seeking out holes in an overly totalized self-conception, we need to help him patch it up, gloss over the hole that is already there. This is a simplistic way of talking about what Lacan (2006a, pp. 553–83) refers to as "supplementation," "supplementation of the name-of-the-father." I will not elaborate here on the name-of-the-father or of the "paternal metaphor," as Lacan calls it (having done so elsewhere; see Fink, 1997; 2007), hoping instead that for the purposes of our discussion today we can get by with the notion of a hole in the psychotic's ego. It is precisely when the analysand gets too close to the hole in his ego, which is arguably the same hole as that in his worldview, that things fall apart and he is more likely to have a psychotic break. Here we might say that there are gaps in the patient's ideological framework and that it needs to be extended to cover everything.

Whereas in neurosis we seek to decomplete the analysand's view of himself and his world, in psychosis we seek to help him complete it by somehow supplementing it (not being able to go back and repair it directly).

How can the psychotic's worldview be propped up or supplemented? It is curious to note that a useful prop is occasionally provided by a school psychologist or psychiatrist when labeling a psychotic child as having attention deficit disorder or bipolar disorder. I have treated and supervised cases where psychiatric labels have come to serve patients as an explanatory device, as something that explains everything in their universe: why they turned out the way they did, why things happened the way they did, and why they have a certain place in the world. Indeed, the label may even occasionally provide them with an existential project or mission in life: that of lobbying for benefits and privileges for people with the same diagnosis as themselves. (The medications that generally accompany these labels are, however, often debilitating and at times even life-threatening; see Whitaker, 2010).

Here, even though it was certainly not the psychiatrist's or school psychologist's intention to help the patient plug up a certain hole in his worldview, the signifying material provided by the mental health professional gets incorporated into the fabric of meaning the patient weaves and leads to a certain

stability: a stable ideological system. When, as psychoanalysts, we encounter such patients, we are likely to be frustrated by such explanations, and are often convinced that we are, in fact, dealing with neurotics who have simply latched onto a label that they feel lets them off the hook or releases them from responsibility for what has gone on in their lives. While this is of course occasionally the case, we must be careful not to try to call this particular element of the patient's worldview into question too quickly, as it may be the element that is covering over an abyss or gaping hole in the person's history.

The course of psychosis can take many different forms. Freud's (1958b) Judge Schreber can be understood as a case of spontaneous remission (without a transference relationship, strictly speaking, although Professor Flechsig plays an important role in Schreber's psychotic process) in which the patient's worldview was completely reconstructed to cover over something, in which the patient's *Weltanschauung* wrapped around a hole that appeared at a certain point in his history. James Joyce can, according to Lacan, be considered a case of "self-prevention" of psychosis due to his identification with his symptom (on this point, see Soler, 1993, p. 51).

Most of the time, however, if a patient comes to our attention, it is precisely because no spontaneous remission or self-prevention has occurred, and the question we are faced with is how we can in any way assist in the curative process. Freud himself viewed a subject's production of delusions as an attempt at a cure, but this has unfortunately fallen upon deaf ears, for the most part. Psychiatrists very often tell patients that they have to come to understand that their hallucinations and delusions are part of the illness, and that they must take their antipsychotic medications in order to stay well. While some of these medications may force the hallucinations into the background, they simultaneously curtail and sometimes completely obviate the curative process.

Delusions are a self-generated attempt to throw or project meaning onto the world where meaning seems to be absent, and medications designed to suppress delusions consequently suppress this meaning-making process. Medications are not *always* unnecessary and counterproductive, since therapeutic work is sometimes virtually impossible without them in the short term. Taken long term, however, many of them become debilitating, bringing on tardive dyskinesia and other still more serious conditions (Whitaker, 2010)—the proverbial cure becoming worse than the so-called disease. And psychotropics do tend to render a psychoanalytic approach to the treatment of psychosis unworkable.

They are not alone in doing so. I once attended a case presentation of a patient who had experienced numerous hallucinations involving a child of hers who had been gunned down by some gang members. Brought to a psychiatric hospital, she was given multiple sessions of electroconvulsive therapy, after which she came to see her attending psychiatrist nicely dressed and made up. Her psychiatrist, extremely new to the profession, exclaimed, "You look great!" The patient not surprisingly replied, "I feel like crap!" She proceeded to tell the psychiatrist how much she missed her child's visits during her hallucinations.

The question for clinicians is not how to rid the psychotic of hallucinations but how to guide her spontaneous meaning-making process in such a way as to foster stability while avoiding the establishment of beliefs that might prove dangerous to the patient herself or to those around her, ourselves included. This involves a delicate balancing act in which we avoid becoming associated with what Lacan (2006a, p. 577) refers to as "A father" or a "One-father" (the French term is *Un-père*), that is, an authority figure who attempts to instate a symbolic position in relation to the patient. For such a figure is, in Lacan's view, likely to be perceived as a persecutor and to trigger a psychotic break. Instead we must adopt a position as witness and as gentle persuader, who attempts to dissipate projections that attribute evil intentions to people in the patient's entourage and to smooth over the hurtful implications of things they say to the patient.

At the same time, however, we are obliged to work as far as possible within the framework of the belief system to which the patient already ascribes, whether that be a fundamentalist religious framework or that of black magic. As objectionable as the patient's belief system may be to us as individuals with our own worldviews, it is not by imposing our own views from the outside, as it were, that we are likely to bring about any sort of stability. We need to try to find a place within the patient's own belief system that she can occupy, an important place with a mission attached to it that can give the patient a project and something to guide her actions. If we think of psychosis as resulting, at least in part, from the fact that a child is often considered by a parent to be nothing more than an extension of the parent, and not a person in her own right, we can say that the psychotic has never had a place of her own, an important role to play in the world as a separate person (however much we may criticize the ideology of separateness and the apparently Cartesian cogito-like ideology behind that). Again and again psychotics recount how they were never treated by one or both parents as if they were people who had a right to exist, as if their bodies were inviolate and belonged to them alone, and as if there were real limits to the things people could do to them and legal recourse that could be taken if those limits were not respected.

Given that, what kind of place can we help the psychotic patient find for herself in the world by modifying her belief system in such a way that she comes to play an important role at the center of the world as she comes to understand it?

Let me introduce three examples to try to illustrate the kinds of solutions we can hope for; it should nevertheless be understood from the outset that, as in work with neurotics, no two solutions are exactly alike. The first two examples are from a special issue of the psychoanalytic journal *La cause freudienne*, devoted to the topic of "Psychosis and Enigma." The first case I will discuss is presented by Colette Chouraqui-Sepel (1993) and is entitled "The Accountant, God, and the Devil."

The Mark of Accountability

The patient's name was Mark, his mother's name was Mary (it was actually her middle name that was Mary in Hebrew), and his father's name was Joseph. Joseph was, however, married to someone else and Mark, in fact, only met his father on two occasions, once at age five and again at age 16. Even though Joseph was a lawyer, he refused to ever legally recognize his son, even when a governmental decree allowed him to do so at a certain point when Mark was still fairly young.

Mark considered this to be fraudulent behavior on his father's part and blamed his father's neglect for something that occurred when he was ten or 11 years old. The superintendent of his building had repeatedly told Mark that it was prohibited to bicycle in the courtyard of the building where he lived, and one day the superintendent sustained injuries when he tripped over Mark's bicycle and decided to sue. Even though Mark was found innocent, the trial traumatized him and he believed the superintendent would never have dared to sue his family if his father had been there to support him.

At age 16, Mark and his mother went to visit his five half-siblings, children that his mother had with a previous lover but whom Mark had never met before. One night he returned to the man's apartment after having seen *Some Like It Hot* at the movies and found one of his half-brothers having a violent altercation with his mother. The brother grabbed a bottle of Clorox and drank the whole thing down. The mother did nothing and two days later the half-brother died. To Mark's way of thinking, it was obviously suicide, but his mother claimed that it was an accident: her son had simply grabbed the wrong bottle. This was Mark's first encounter with death, and he apparently saw his half-brother lying on a bed of ice.[1] He considered the fact that his mother disguised the suicide as an accident to be fraudulent behavior on her part. It was at the interment that Mark saw his biological father for the second time.

This firsthand encounter with death and this second meeting with his father shook Mark profoundly. He wanted to shout the truth about his half-brother's suicide from the rooftops but felt that he could not because of his mother. Several months later his aunt died very quickly of what he called a "bizarre" form of cancer and Mark was immediately convinced that his aunt and his half-brother had both been victims of a curse or hex of some kind.

His whole family believed in curses and his aunt and mother had always tried to protect themselves from them by praying, going on pilgrimages, and reading from the Bible. Mark came to believe that a spell had been cast upon his mother's side of the family but did not know by whom. Things went downhill from here for him: he flunked out of school and started doing drugs. He eventually moved from smoking hash to shooting up heroin and sniffing cocaine, in search of the warmth that would allow him to forget the coldness of death. At around age 23 he asked God to help him stop shooting up, and became convinced that the AIDS virus that he had contracted was a trial God had prepared for him, which would allow him to take the family curse upon himself, thereby freeing the rest of the family from the curse. He would thus be their savior.

As part of the trial God had prepared for him, he made a pilgrimage to the town where his father was born. There he had an experience that led him to be involuntarily hospitalized, and it was only once in analysis that he was able to describe what happened to him in his father's hometown. According to the *retrospective* description he provided to his analyst, he entered an empty church where suddenly a bright light lit up the choir: "It was magnificent, it was the divine presence." At the very moment at which he was going to kneel before the altar to make the sign of the cross, someone in the wings suddenly came between Christ and himself: a woman dressed in red and black, as his psychoanalyst had been dressed when she first met him. She did not face him, for had she turned around he would, he averred, have seen the face of death itself.

Panic-stricken he fled to Paris, and winding up at the Place Saint-Michel in the Latin Quarter, he found himself standing before the statue of the archangel slaying the dragon. He wondered to himself: "Is this the mission that God is entrusting to me, to slay the devil?" He concluded that it was and that the two stars that he saw in the sky represented him now and him later when he would be healthy in both mind and body. In fact there would be a third star after his death once he was sainted for having accomplished his divine mission of slaying the devil.

This reconstructed memory, recounted in his therapy well after the fact, clues us into the position in which he had situated his female analyst. The very first time they had met at the hospital, he had refused to speak with her because she was wearing red and black, which to him were signs of the devil. As time went on, however, she also became associated with a healer, someone who was clairvoyant and could undo spells. It should be noted that, after fleeing the church in his father's hometown, he had raced back to Paris where he had three sessions with a sorceress and his mother, who were trying to cure him of a condition he believed he had, which he referred to as "catalinization" of the beard, a neologism that he referred to as a medical term meaning that pus was coming out of his whiskers.[2] To his mind, there was not much difference between a psychoanalyst and a witch doctor.

To briefly summarize the development of his belief system, we see that at 16 he came to believe that a curse had been placed upon his mother's side of the family, but he did not know by whom. By age 23 he had concluded that this curse had been placed upon the family by the devil. Why? Because God had given him—a member of the family—the mission of slaying the demon. The conclusions he arrived at retroactively explained many aspects of his life: all of his suffering (much of which I have not included in my short account here) could be understood within the perspective of a trial he had been made to undergo by God to see if he was worthy of the mission God had in store for him. The curse upon other of his

family members actually targeted him. The delusional system, elaborated within the traditional belief system of many of his Caribbean island family members, served to explain the unexplainable, to fill in the gaps in an enigmatic history, and supplement the paternal failings. Moreover, it provided Mark with a significant role to play in the cosmos.

In certain of his dreams, which he took to be not fantasies but real experiences, he went to heaven and was expected there; the Virgin Mary appeared all illuminated, and he himself assumed the role of Saint Joseph, Mary's husband—in other words, the place of the missing father. In other dreams he saw himself as a double of the Virgin, that is, as God's partner in a Divine Union, which allowed him to be one with God, like Judge Schreber. This privileged position led to a reconciliation or pacification of his state, and even though the delusional system was still under construction at the time the case presentation was written up by Chouraqui-Sepel, it had already led to a good deal of stabilization. Like the case of Schreber, this case seems to present a classic case of pacification and stabilization that grows out of a fully developed delusional system. The analyst does not tell us exactly how she worked with Mark, but I think it is clear that she operated within his pre-existing system of beliefs, not by attempting to foist a new and different set of beliefs upon him.

Interestingly, after about three years of analysis he told his analyst that he was in love with accounting (just as he had formerly told her he was in love with God), because in accounting there is no equivocation: a good accountant can, he asserted, always uncover the ruses that someone tries to use to cover up fraudulent financial transactions![3]

Establishing a Limit

The second case I will discuss was presented by Jorge Alemàn (1993) and entitled "The Invention of a Parenthesis." The case is that of a man who showed no *overtly* psychotic symptoms into his twenties and was 33 years old when he first came to see an analyst. Alemàn does not give him a name in the write-up, but I will refer to him as José. At 33, José was still living with his mother, whom he both admired and feared, saying of her that she was "racially superior." He was both surprised and fascinated by the violence of her acts, whether they were killing a rabbit with a single blow, slitting a chicken's throat, or kicking her husband in the balls so hard that he rolled on the floor in agony. She was one of the "winners," a "virile" person like the patient's uncles—virile not in any sexual sense, to his way of thinking, but in terms of the violence she could do.

José said that he never believed in his father because his father "never had the courage to intervene with my mother, the brute"; "Since he was a man who reasoned, he was weak." As a young child, José had once fallen off of his chair in front of his father and his father had been unable to catch him. When José was 18 and was about to be fired from his job for incompetence, his father got down on his knees in front of the boy's boss and begged him to keep his son on. This led José to scorn his father definitively, and to try to find a way to get rid of his last name—that is, his father's surname—in order to use only his mother's maiden name (in Spain it is common to use both). His father died when he was 20, and José laughed so hard at the funeral that he had to be asked to leave the room in which the service was being held. Talking about the episode years later in analysis, he said, "since the relationship to my father was a *mistake*, I didn't know how to experience his death."

José's psychotic episodes were always triggered in the same way: his superiors at work would sooner or later accuse him of not being as stupid as he pretended to be and of not doing his job simply because he did not want to work hard. Never having finished high school, José found it convenient to pretend that he was a bit slow and retarded, and would even move like a robot at work as if he were being remotely controlled. Sooner or later his boss would realize that this was an act and José would feel accused. He

would not feel guilty but would feel that he was about to be implicated in some kind of plot that would soon come to light; his boss would take on the role of a sadistic persecutor to his mind, who was in cahoots with extreme right political factions. These factions would help his boss become the master of his existence, and José would be completely at the mercy of his persecutors, being required to cook for them and take care of their most intimate needs. He would become their total slave because he would no longer have any conscience of his own.

The extreme right political factions that emerged in his delusions were related to the role played by his mother's family in the Spanish Civil War, and his analyst seems to have managed to avoid being included in his delusions partly because he himself was *not* of Spanish origin.

This does not mean that the analyst was able to stop certain kinds of problems from occurring for the patient, in particular a violent dispute with a neighbor of his. The latter came to occupy the position of a highly sadistic persecutor for José, and the altercation led to the involvement of many neighbors, his boss, and the police. José was forced to leave his job, he was put on disability, and for the first time in his life he moved out of his mother's house. Having little income, he lived on the street for six months, even though he continued to come to his appointments with his analyst three or four times a week.

There seem to have been several events that were decisive for José growing up, including one at age nine, in the course of which he was brutally beaten by older kids; when he told his mother about it she blamed it all on him. At age 13, a priest claimed to have caught him shoplifting and turned him over to the police as a thief; he was beaten at the police station and forced to sign a paper even though he refused to admit that he had stolen anything. A number of years later, he went out with a woman for the first and only time in his life; the scene ended violently, and his own mother filed a complaint with the police alleging that he had tried to rape the woman.[4]

A true turning point in his adult life began with the death of his mother: although he began to hallucinate and even "saw" his mother sit up in her coffin, he began to give away numerous objects that his mother had collected over the years. He also began writing down his thoughts before each session with his analyst, bringing his papers with him to the session, and ceremoniously ripping them up and throwing them away at the end of the session even if he had not managed to get through all of them before their time was up.

Curiously enough, whereas in the past he had thoroughly rejected his father's world and the "paternal imposture," as he called it, now he went over to his father's side in his own mind. He became very fond of movies, seeing the uninteresting ones three or four times and the good ones nine times—he was clearly the ideal consumer in the eyes of the movie industry! Whether he found them interesting or uninteresting had nothing to do with the scenario, the actors, or the quality of the film, but what he tried to get out of them. By the ninth time he saw a movie, he always arrived at the conclusion that "he had never loved anyone." In these cases, he would refer to himself in the third person, creating a certain distance between himself and the person who had never loved anyone (as if he were one of the main characters in the movie). It was this distance, explored extensively in his analysis, that led to the creation of a space that the analyst himself refers to in his case study as a "bracketing," or "putting something in parentheses."

The patient would use indirect discourse, as it is called in linguistics, as if to say: look at what I'm going to say now or note that I'm about to say something important: "(open the quotes). This is a way of saying something while attributing it to someone else or to another time; *he* said it, not me, or this is what I thought, which is not to say that I still think it now or believe it. Clearly this introduces a distance between saying and believing. The patient could now say something without believing it entirely or even at all, much less feeling compelled to immediately act on it. According to the analyst, "this parenthesis not

only allowed him to handle in a different way the distance between himself and his fellow man, but it also allowed me at times to create an obstacle to the emergence of an aspect of reality that could lead to a situation which would trigger a psychotic episode." (Unfortunately, he does not tell us how he did so.)

What best illustrates the function of these parentheses is that, after some ten years of analysis, the patient began talking about what he called "his own films," which he considered to be his "life's work."

He would say, for example, at a session: "We are at the movies, and the film is about to begin; we sit down in our seats (the film begins): I am someone who performed brilliantly as a student of economics and who was part of the Federal Reserve Bank of Spain. I have more and more money and power. Nevertheless, I run into someone from the Company of Jesus who advises me to follow another pathway, the pathway that leads to God. He invites me to come to Andalusia to work the land and begin my spiritual exercises. There I am mistaken for a delinquent and am arrested by the National Guard. A sergeant and another member of the National Guard beat me and torture me. But later my true identity is recognized, as well as my influential role at the Federal Reserve Bank. Thus my innocence is recognized and the two guards are punished: one is sent to the Basque country where he commits suicide and the other is stripped of his rank. I return to Madrid to definitively resume my career at the Federal Reserve Bank. The projector light goes out. End."

We see that in this "film" recounted by the patient, the false accusation that is made against him is rectified and his accusers are punished. He feels that he finally knows who he is and can henceforth pursue his ideal. Falsely accused in the past by his mother and by a priest, he feels, the situation is corrected in the movie he recounts. This fiction or creation allows him to stabilize in a way that is different from the kind of stability that might have been expected from his delusions (e.g., his mother sitting up in her coffin and the extreme right political groups out to get him). We see in his films the elaboration of a form of law that is less capricious or unpredictable than the law he had known growing up. His films take on many different forms with a multiplicity of details, but they all seem to center around the same kind of redemptive theme.

They seem to strive to erect a limit to the punishments meted out to him by other people and thus to the sadistic pleasure he feels his mother and others took in beating and humiliating him. In theory, this limit, had the subject been neurotic, would have long since been established by the paternal metaphor; but, as the patient himself says, his father never intervened between himself and his "brute of a mother." Although the father—as a pretense or impostor, as a stand-in for the law—was never accepted and never served as a limit to what could be done to his son by his wife, the son appears to invent a limit in his forties that in some way makes up for the absence of a limit prior to that time, serving in some sense as a substitute or supplement. This is clearly why Alemàn encouraged José to dream up such films in great detail.

One curious facet of the outcome here is that it does not provide an explanation for the suffering José endured as a child and young adult, as so many delusional systems do. It seems to stand in for a limit, a limiting factor, instance, or agency that was not there when he was growing up, but it does not seem to justify all the supposedly false accusations to which he was subjected. As we saw in the case of Mark, the accountant, a subject may come to believe that he was destined to be the wife of God or one of God's messengers, and that the trials to which he was subjected were necessary to prove his loyalty or worthiness to occupy such a glorified position. There is a slight hint of that in the film in which José encounters someone who encourages him to follow the pathway of God, but ultimately it seems to be his distinguished position at the Federal Reserve Bank that gives him mission enough to go on. The gaping hole, which might have been thought of as the lack of a limit, is covered over with a filmic fiction: he was falsely accused only so as to have been all the better redeemed thereafter.

Whereas Mark and José had many of the classic symptoms of psychosis, including visual and tactile hallucinations as well as delusions, what of cases in which such obvious features are not present? How do we operate in such cases?

The Writing Subject

To broach the topic, I would like to turn to a case, that of one of my own patients, whom I will refer to here as Tina. It is always more difficult, I find, to briefly discuss an analysand on whom I have hundreds of pages of notes than to briefly discuss someone else's, but I will try to summarize a number of the major facets of her history.

Once again, the theme of fraud looms large in the family history. Tina's father was arrested when he was a young teenager for robbing a gas station, and was eventually indicted for *accounting fraud* when his daughter was in her late teens. He fled the country but seems to have eventually been extradited and imprisoned for about five years. His daughter was born when he was still a teen, and he began drinking heavily a few short years thereafter. He and Tina's mother divorced when Tina was around five, and he seems to have made almost no attempt to stay in contact with Tina, although he did manage to continue flirting with and occasionally having sex with Tina's mother for the next 25 years, despite the fact that each of them remarried at various times.

Tina was nevertheless very attached to him and, when she and her mother moved across country when Tina was a child and her mother remarried almost immediately thereafter, Tina ran away from home with the intention of walking back to the state where her father lived to be with him. On the occasion of a visit with him when Tina was in her mid-teens, her father gave her a ring he had actually bought for someone else, asked her to lie down on a couch, and French kissed her (she pushed him away, thinking "this can't be normal"). During another visit around the same time he claimed that it was Tina's mother who had prevented him from seeing Tina all those years, and that he had actually sent her money on a regular basis. He nevertheless threatened to kill her if she told any of this to her mother; the threat was perhaps no idle one, for it seems he had once beaten up Tina's mother quite badly and she was genuinely scared of him.

When her father fled the country after being indicted for fraud, Tina followed him abroad. One day, she invited him over to the apartment she had rented, they got drunk together, and when he made advances toward her she pushed him down the stairs. When he returned to the United States, he apparently made up quite a story for his own parents, telling them that Tina was a heroin dealer and a prostitute, and that it was in fact her pimp who had beaten him up.[5] Tina soon received a phone call from her father's mother, one of the family members she had formerly been closest to, accusing her of having gotten her father sent to prison and of ruining the family. Her paternal grandmother spoke to her, as Tina put it, as if she were "trying to destroy me."[6] The contradiction between what Tina knew she had done and what others were asserting was too great, and the tone of voice too hateful, for her meaning structure to remain intact: she kept repeating to her grandmother that she was going to drive her crazy with these false accusations. Yet the grandmother went on making them. Tina felt annihilated by this, and her relationship with her grandmother was never re-established.[7]

Tina's mother was in her late teens when Tina was born and seems to have started having affairs almost immediately, affairs that led to fighting between her and her young husband. She was never faithful to any man, according to Tina, and to this day proclaims that "monogamy is impossible." While Tina was openly hostile to her mother's second husband and did not care if her mother cheated on him, she found it very distasteful to be asked by her mother to lie for her when she cheated on boyfriends Tina did in fact like. Indeed, Tina claims to have been obsessed with telling the truth as a child and would only lie under the

influence of alcohol (in contrast with neurotics who often finally begin to tell something closer to the truth when inebriated).

Tina's mother also refused to play the part of a parent and wanted simply to be Tina's best friend. She never disciplined Tina or made her do any chores around the house, and indeed thwarted all attempts made by her second husband to lay down the law for Tina at home. The mother refused to acknowledge any of the claims made by Tina's teachers that Tina was not doing well or was depressed. According to the mother, Tina would always come out on top because she was intelligent like her father. Tina never had any set bedtime, could eat whatever she wanted whenever she wanted, rarely had a prepared meal, and wound up taking care of her own incapable mother, who was forever having the phone and electricity turned off for forgetting to pay her bills.

When Tina began drinking in her early teens, her mother would drink with her and would never acknowledge that Tina had a drinking problem. On an occasion when Tina came home tripping on acid, her mother thought it was funny and nothing to be alarmed about. At one point, when Tina asked her mother for help after overdosing on cocaine in her late teens, her mother thought it was nothing serious. Even now, with Tina in her thirties and a string of hospitalizations, psychiatric visits, and numerous psychotherapies behind her, Tina's mother remains convinced that there is nothing wrong with Tina.[8]

Thus, here again we find an absence of limits: Tina's father considered Tina his sexual object and someone he could kill if she disobeyed him; Tina's mother used Tina as a pawn in her amorous affairs and refused to set any limits that might be in Tina's own interest. On one occasion, she went over to Tina's house and told Tina that her father would be calling for Tina's birthday; when the phone rang the mother grabbed the phone, spoke at length with the father, flirting quite openly, and hung up the phone without ever allowing Tina to speak to her father (who was in some unknown location abroad). It turned out that he had not been calling for her birthday at all, but that the mother had arranged things so that she could speak to the father behind her current boyfriend's back.[9] When Tina reproached her for deceiving her, her mother fell apart and literally sank to the floor, hysterical, saying "You're killing me! I'm such a bad mother I should kill myself."

The continual fraud and deception is quite decisive here, and each new example of it threatens to push Tina over the edge.[10] One boyfriend, initially telling her that he wanted to marry her and would love to have children with her, changed his tune when she became pregnant and told her he wanted her to have an abortion. It was not the abortion itself, it seems (she had already had at least two before), but rather the contradiction in the boyfriend's discourse that she found so unpalatable. She could not fathom how he could "break his promise" to her.

Even seemingly minor incidents seem quite threatening to her: on one occasion, after having finally been able to sleep after a few harrowing sleepless nights, and feeling rested for once, a nurse who barely knew her told her on the phone that she sounded groggy and this scared her considerably. The very fact that she was perceived to be tired even though she felt rested disconcerted her so significantly and for so many hours that I had to tell her that the nurse had no idea what she was talking about since she did not know Tina, and that Tina should pay no attention to her. This immediately calmed her down and averted another looming crisis.

More serious crises usually begin when a man, who has seemingly declared his undying love for her and has spent every waking moment with her from the instant they first met, suddenly appears to turn his back on her or to momentarily show signs of indifference toward her (matters are worse when he is openly unfaithful). While she seems to have had very few hallucinations in her life, and very mild and nonthreatening ones at that, she suddenly begins to find the smell and color of food overwhelming, finds

sounds oppressively loud, is distracted by things in her visual field, making her unable to drive, and so on. She becomes afraid of going crazy, of falling apart, and of her whole world collapsing in on her. Any sign that a man who is being very nice to her when she is going through tough times, may be doing so not simply because he is kind by nature, but because he has some ulterior motives, raises anew the specter of betrayal: the specter of the fundamental fraud, the fundamental lie inherent in the promise of undying love made by the men in her life.[11] Most discussions of the disappearance or impending death of her father send her into a similar tailspin.

The horror she feels at the hole left in her world by the repeated fraud on the part of her parents and by one lover after another is interestingly represented by a fear of having a hole in her mouth. While castration anxiety appears, in the dreams of many neurotics, in the form of losing teeth, it is the pure horror of the hole in her world that is expressed in Tina's fears of her teeth rotting away or of a hole being left in her mouth by a dentist. This harks back to an episode in which she fell off the monkey bars at school and broke a front tooth—it was the dentist she was taken to who was to become her stepfather around age seven, her mother quickly flirting with the handsome, well-to-do man.[12]

It was the same dentist/stepfather who attempted to play the more stereotypical role of father with her, who thus in Lacanian terms attempted to instate a position of symbolic third party to the mother-daughter relationship, unsuccessfully however. It is not surprising perhaps that his area of expertise—teeth, cavities, and tooth extractions—points toward the gaping hole of the father function, nor that the patient so often craves the various sweets that this dental stepfather tried to prohibit her from eating.

The horror of such a hole is curiously paralleled in her history by something that kept me from concluding upon a diagnosis of psychosis for quite a long time: her belief, which seems to have taken root in her early twenties, that there are holes in her memory.[13] She has nevertheless given different ages virtually every time she has mentioned the affected time periods: sometimes it is eight to ten, sometimes ten to 12, and sometimes ten to 14. Once she even pointed to a few months she thought she did not remember at age 15, although she could not say why. This kept me wondering about hysteria and even the possibility of multiple personality until enough of her history had come out that I could find no real holes in it (though contradictions and vagueness remain). Nevertheless, many of the stories she tells are nothing more than stories that were told to her by her mother—for example, that their cat died when Tina was five, and that Tina was in fact more upset about the cat dying than about her father leaving when her parents divorced—and that were likely self-serving inventions on her mother's part. My impression is that for Tina there are few important symbolic markers in her history, and that the general imprecision of dates and of reasons given for events has more to do with the general lack of symbolic landmarks than with gaps in her memory. In other words, it is not repression that is at work, but rather a more overarching problem of inscription—that is, of the location of life events in socially coded time, such as at a particular age or, as is so common in the United States, in a particular grade in school.

A decisive life event occurred when Tina was in her late teens: someone she worked with at a waitressing job introduced her one night to a clean-cut, well-educated man wearing a suit. He offered to walk her home, saying it might not be safe for her to walk home alone.[14] Talking in a parking lot outside her apartment building, his tone of voice[15] suddenly changed, he became very violent, and raped her. Once again, the contradiction was too glaring: the contradiction between his earlier demeanor and his sudden violence was too much for her, and she kept protesting that she was going to go insane and would never again be okay.

As horrible as the experience itself was, something good came of it. Encouraged by friends and people at the hospital, she decided to take him to court; six months later she was vindicated when the jury handed

down a guilty charge and sent the man to jail. She said, “I was probably the proudest of myself I've ever been.” She had the sense of getting a new lease on life, because for once a fraud that had been committed in connection with her had been publicly acknowledged and punished. She claimed she would not have *survived* if the rapist had been let off. She stopped drinking the next day and managed to stay off drugs and alcohol for many years thereafter.

What kind of invention designed to supplement the paternal function can I point to in the course of treatment thus far? Not much, alas. The treatment is still quite young, in analytic terms—about twice a week for two years with numerous interruptions, and it took a full year for Tina to begin, even ever so slightly, to pick up the thread from one session to the next. It is primarily the patient’s writing in a certain academic area that seems it may lead to something. Her writing has, over the course of the past two years, started to deal with subjects we've been talking about in analysis, such as maternity and paternity. She recently started writing about the “social impossibility of paternity,” coming to a conclusion that surprised even her: that paternity is actually necessary and even redeeming.[16]

Her writing also brings up one of the projects we have undertaken in her therapy, and that is to isolate those things that make no sense to her and try to provide them with some sense. For example, she does not address most of her writing to an audience, saying that she is just working out a “logical problem” in it for herself. She always finds it curious that people like her writing so much—their enthusiasm strikes her as enigmatic. We have tried to link that to other writing she has done over the years, in particular letters she has written to different boyfriends that have had a big impact on them. This has been important because she gets rather paranoid when a professor becomes a little too enthusiastic about her work—she begins to feel persecuted, as if she is being forced to write for that person, and becomes suspicious of the professor’s motives. In addressing enigmas like why someone might appreciate her writing (which, in fact, I have never seen), I am not aiming so much for truth as for a meaning patch, some meaning we can attribute to what remains otherwise inexplicable to her and risks becoming threatening.

The rape itself left her with many such enigmas: in recent months she told me something she had never told anyone before, which was that she had an orgasm during the rape. She finds that impossible to fathom, even though she has worked for several years at a rape crisis center. We have not made much progress on this particular enigma, but she was relieved to finally speak it and has linked the fact that the month of March tends to be a rough one for her with the fact that the rape trial took place in March. As she puts it, “It’s nice when I don't have the sense that I am crying and screaming about nothing.” (March has since been just another month for her.)

A few months prior she had, in connection with a dream, recalled a time when a roommate of hers had brought a man over, and things seemed to take a turn for the worse, but Tina was drunk and too tired to get up. She had the suspicion that the man had raped her roommate, and was once again relieved to have spoken of this event, which she had never even formulated to herself as such before. This, it seems to me, has something to do with the symbolization of experience, which has little if anything to do with insight.[17] What I would like to point to, in the case at hand, is the draining away of the affective charge attached to these memories that is—oh so very slowly—leading to a lessening of their traumatic impact.

A good example of this is the longstanding nightmares Tina has had of her best friend when she was 16 who was killed in a car accident, with whom Tina identified almost completely (they apparently looked so alike that people would mistake them for one another). Her best friend’s mother accused Tina of having involved her daughter with a bad crowd, and Tina had nightmares for the next 16 years in which her friend would be alive and then die violently yet again. After a little over a year of analysis, Tina had her first dream ever in which her friend did not die anew, and has since had a number of dreams in which she

sees her friend and talks to her. She even once lamented not having the overwhelming sadness she used to have upon waking from such dreams, a sure sign that some of the morbid jouissance attached to her friend's death has dissipated, leading to some improvement in her overall state.

A Word in Conclusion

The meanings we try to help patients provide for the inexplicable cannot, of course, go in the direction of an attempt to cover over genuine fraud and betrayal. The latter are all around us and their continued emergence would rupture any patches we might try to fabricate, whether in the cases I discussed earlier cited in journal articles or in the case I myself am treating. How we proceed seems to have to be highly individual, tailored to what gets created by each analysand in the attempt to grapple with the enigmas in his or her life, whether it be a delusional system, a filmic production, or a literary genre. (For a subsequent, more detailed account of the treatment of psychosis, see Fink, 2007, Chapter 10.)

This paper was given on November 3, 2000, at the 11th Annual Interdisciplinary Conference of the International Federation for Psychoanalytic Education—now known as the International Forum for Psychoanalytic Education (IFPE)—held in Chicago. An early version of the talk was published in the *Newsletter of the International Federation for Psychoanalytic Education* in 2001.

Notes

1 Some apparently "like it cold." This is actually a practice in certain tropical cultures, which is designed to slow down the decomposition of the body.

2 The term "catalinization" exists (it refers to rendering something Catalan-like, being structured like the term "Americanization"), but not in the sense in which the patient used it.

3 Clearly he had not yet seen anything like the great financial crisis of 2007–12 (or will it go on still longer?).

4 On a fourth occasion, he was picked up by the police who jokingly referred to him as a "*tombeur*"—a seducer of women. This signifier, which struck the patient as highly enigmatic and opaque, led to a reorganization of his delusional meaning structure at the time.

5 As usual, there was a long history of lying in his own family: his father left the family when he was a boy, and his mother told him his father was dead, even though the father returned when the boy was a teenager.

6 She used the same words in discussing a woman who made some very harshly toned comments at her dissertation defense.

7 Note that the very notion of "false accusation" seems to tacitly recognize the existence of the law (the law of truth in speech, at least). Yet the recognition of the law is quite different in neurosis and psychosis: the neurotic may at first be scandalized when he witnesses the breaking of the law by public officials or corporate heads, but often becomes used to it and indeed jaded, coming to expect it from such figures. The psychotic, on the other hand, seems to experience each new instance of law-breaking as just as traumatic as the first and never comes to expect it.

Although neurotics generally wonder what they did to bring problems on (or to deserve them), what their own part was in them, Tina never seemed to wonder if she were even partly to blame for anything—for example, having invited her father over and gotten drunk with him. Given his interest in French kissing her a couple of years earlier, one would think that she could have anticipated his advances. Such "unlawful" behavior, however, never seems to occur to her as a possibility.

8 Her mother identifies with her to such an extent that she declared herself an alcoholic and quit drinking the very same day Tina told her she had stopped drinking.

9 Her mother refused to accept that she would never remarry Tina's father, even when she herself had remarried (and divorced anew, and Tina's father was in jail and she was afraid he would kill her). They had made a pact not to have children with any other lovers/spouses, but the father did with his third wife.

10 Another important deception concerns Tina's birth, her mother and father claiming different things about the mother's early pregnancy. The mother claimed that her parents wanted her to give Tina up for adoption and that she could have had an abortion, while the father claims that the mother *wanted* the abortion, whereas he did not. The mother later said that raising Tina was the only thing she had done in her entire life.

11 This seems to be related to Tina's lifelong identification with Marilyn Monroe, whom, according to many biographers, so many men claimed to really love but whose love was hypocritical—they always ended up trying to change her and use her for certain ends of their own. There is, in such cases, an implicit lie: "I love you just as you are" becomes, "You're impossible and have to change."

12 It may hark back to a second and earlier episode at age four (told to her by her mother) in which she put her coat on backwards with her

hood over her face, ran downhill, and smashed her teeth into a parked car, leading her two front teeth to turn black.

13 Tina's various therapists prior to coming to see me gave her many different psychiatric diagnoses, including paranoia, schizophrenia, manic-depression, and borderline personality disorder.

14 Early on in the analysis she said that he was training for the priesthood, but she never mentioned that again.

15 The voice is very important to her, and she says her boyfriends' voices are often very much like her father's loud voice. When people say critical things to her, it is above all the tone of voice that gets her—an "abandoning" tone of voice, as she calls it. She says her father uses that tone of voice, and such words "stick." Her mother, on the contrary, gives her a certain look.

16 The potential contribution of religious elements in this case of untriggered psychosis (such patients are sometimes referred to as prepsychotics) does not seem too likely given that she has, according to her, never been a believer, although she thought it would be nice to be able to believe the way people in her religious school did. Religion does, nevertheless, play a role in her history insofar as several of the people she knows were molested by priests, and indeed in the first dream in which I appeared, she had heard from someone that I am a priest (which I am not). In another dream someone drove nail holes in her hands like Jesus's. One of her former boyfriends thought she was an angel, another was a fundamentalist, and she watched films of female Satan worshipers as a child, in which satanic cult followers were looking for a young girl to kill.

17 It should not be thought that there were *no* insights arrived at by the patient. Tina realized at one point that whereas her mother always referred to Tina's father as a "lousy father" and yet made excuses for him, when Tina started thinking that only her father could understand her, her mother changed her tune and said he was a "schmuck." This struck her as something significant she had never thought of before, and yet it was never in any way taken up or brought to bear on her life or therapy.

13

MARILYN MONROE AND MODERN-DAY HYSTERIA

Norma Jeane Mortenson, better known as Marilyn Monroe, suffered from a whole variety of psychological and psychosomatic problems for many years, among them severe depression, chronic insomnia, drug addiction, and alcoholism. The media ensured that all the world was aware of the love troubles, repeated suicide attempts, and confusional states of the world's foremost sex symbol. Yet biographies of Marilyn Monroe tell different stories of her childhood, adolescence, and adult life, and it is not a simple task to figure out why one woman was plagued with so many problems, why her love life was so unfulfilling, and why no one was able to help her. While plenty of investigative reporting has been done about her life (and even more about her death), virtually every biographer has relied at least in part on the stories Marilyn herself told her myriad interviewers over the years. Those stories vary wildly at times, painting a picture of relatively ordinary 1930s depression-age misery in certain cases, and a picture of child slave labor, molestation, and utter destitution in others.[1]

The history Marilyn recounted to her interviewers was clearly calculated, in many instances, to have a specific effect on her public, whether to glorify her as a rising star in the world of the silver screen or to arouse sympathy on the part of her fans for an international celebrity gaining a reputation for heavy drinking, incoherence, and a flagging ability to perform onstage. She did not, for example, reveal in the 1940s and 1950s, as she was climbing the ladder of success, that she had been raped at age nine (which in America during the 1990s would have made her an instant success), but did release it later when she felt she was no longer being viewed by the public in such a kind manner.

But calculation on Marilyn's part is only one facet of the difficulty facing us as we try to unravel certain aspects of her life. For Marilyn was, it seems, throughout her life prone to inventing accounts of what took place that reflected what she would have liked to have taken place. In other words, she tended to invent truths about her life that suited her, creating stories that sounded better than the events as they had in fact occurred. This is, in and of itself, a problem typical of neurotics: it is not always clear what can be believed in what a neurotic willingly tells of his or her exploits, many neurotics compulsively exaggerating their prowess or misfortune and omitting mention of their cowardliness or more than fortunate background. In Marilyn's case, however, embellishment of deeds seems to have gone so far that she perhaps genuinely lost sight of where the truth lay: like many hysterics, she began to believe her own fabrications.

Not having had the opportunity to work with Marilyn in analysis myself, I too must rely on the accounts provided by Marilyn's various and sundry interviewers and biographers—some with an ax of their own to grind (former husbands, lovers, and friends often seeking above all to assuage their own guilt over what became of Marilyn, and to cast themselves in a favorable light), others more committed to sifting through the insinuations, rumors, and hearsay. Certain facts have come out about her early years that seem indisputable, and other facets of her psychology can be virtually deduced from the very proliferation of different versions of her life history. In any case, my interest here is not so much to establish that any one particular incident occurred on such and such a date, but rather to trace the general outlines of her life.

Herstoria

Let us begin then with some well-established facts. Marilyn was born into a family in which husbands were virtually non-existent. Men were not uncommon visitors to the Monroe household, but they rarely stayed long enough to achieve a social status akin to "father," "legally wedded husband," or "head of the household." Gladys Monroe, Marilyn's mother, married and divorced twice by the time she was twenty-four. The two children resulting from her first marriage were wrested from her by relatives of her first husband (a certain Mr. Baker). Her second husband (Martin Edward Mortensen, or Mortenson) apparently left shortly after the birth of her third child, Marilyn, who may or may not have been sired by someone else. Marilyn perhaps never knew her biological father at all; her mother once showed her a photograph of Charles Stanley Gifford, claiming that he, not Mortensen, was her biological father.

Marilyn's maternal grandmother, Della Monroe, died when Marilyn was one year of age. In Marilyn's only "memory" of her grandmother, Della was trying to smother her (Summers, 1985, p. 7). Whether or not such a scene really took place, no one will ever know. In any case, it indicates that Marilyn viewed her mother's mother as threatening—life-threatening at that.

Della marks the beginning of documented "madness" in the Monroe family, having spent a good deal of time in insane asylums, incarcerated with a diagnosis of "manic-depressive psychosis" (p. 7). We must be wary of such a diagnosis, however, just as we must be wary of assuming that Marilyn's psychological problems were in any sense hereditary in origin. For many psychiatrists at that time classified more or less anyone with considerable mood swings (highs and lows) as manic-depressive,[2] and psychosis was a term added on at the end that basically meant chronic—in other words, it meant that the psychiatrists had not been able to make it go away.

Gladys Monroe (Baker by her first marriage, and Mortensen by the second) felt unable to cope with full-time motherhood, and left Marilyn in the care of foster parents for the most part. At one point, when Marilyn was seven and living with her biological mother for a short time, Gladys suffered a severe depression followed by a violent explosion during which she reportedly attacked her best friend, Grace McKee, with a knife. That led Gladys to be hospitalized in the insane asylum where she remained for most of the rest of her life. Gladys, like her mother Della before her, was almost wholly obsessed with Christian Science and evil. These were clearly inauspicious beginnings for the young Marilyn, but her "family situation," insofar as she had one, in no way improved after her mother was hospitalized.

Marilyn was shuttled around from one foster home to another, living in eleven foster homes in all, an orphanage, and then for four years with Grace McKee who was designated as her legal guardian by Los Angeles County authorities. Marilyn thus grew up without any contact with her biological father and only intermittent contact with her biological mother. The rapid moves from one set of foster parents to another obviated the emergence in her life of strong bonds with parental figures and little if anything by way of a father figure.

Grace McKee largely arranged Marilyn's first marriage at the age of sixteen to Jim Dougherty, at least in part to get Marilyn out of her hair (Grace had just recently married). Marilyn seems to have had little inkling of the facts of life at that time, considered herself cold and indifferent, and later claimed never to have loved Dougherty before, during, or after their four years of marriage. Dougherty, naturally, begged to differ.

As for Marilyn's own account of her early years, she once claimed to have had sex for the first time at age seven; on another abovementioned occasion she narrated a rape sequence that supposedly took place when she was nine. According to her, a man who was boarding in the house of her then current foster

parents lured her into his room, onto his lap, and into his arms for a little game of kiss and do not tell. When she tried to tell her foster mother what had happened, she was promptly hushed up with a slap on the mouth. During another interview, Marilyn maintained that the same sequence took place when she was a teenager, and led to pregnancy and to the birth of a male child.

Marilyn often contradicted herself concerning such scenes and frequently regretted never having given birth to a child in her life. In hearing her recount certain events prior to her first marriage, a number of her friends had the distinct impression that, while not really lying, she was inventing a history for herself that at least in part corresponded to her own fantasies. One of her friends recalled being woken up in the middle of the night by Marilyn screaming that she had been out in the street in her nightgown, running away from a man who was trying to rape her. Other friends recalled her claims that a peeping Tom had been watching her through the window.

Concerning her interest in sex, Marilyn said that despite her precocious curves, she had no desire to even be kissed, and was "as unresponsive as a fossil" (p. 9). She claimed, on occasion, to have never once experienced orgasm, but did wind up having a highly active sex life. Men were very turned on by her, and she seemed to allow them to do things to her sexually as a sort of favor—not so much because she wanted it as because they insisted and she felt that it made them happy. She enjoyed showing her body off to men as it aroused their desire for her, but she often admitted to having rarely if ever been turned on sexually.

Marilyn claimed to have been something of an exhibitionist ever since she was little and to have had trouble in church on Sundays; she was quoted as saying:

> No sooner was I in the pew with the organ playing and everybody singing a hymn than the impulse would come to me to take off all my clothes. I wanted desperately to stand up naked for God and everyone else to see. I had to clench my teeth and sit on my hands to keep myself from undressing … I even had dreams about it. In the dreams I entered the church wearing a hoop skirt with nothing under it. The people would be lying on their backs in the church aisle, and I would step over them, and they would look up at me.
>
> (Summers, 1985, p. 37)

But as for sex, she seemed somewhat indifferent to it, stating that the sexual side of her relations with men had been a disappointment.

In her twenties, she seems to have wanted a baby so badly that she would convince herself she was pregnant every two or three months and gain fourteen or fifteen pounds. Perhaps she was, because she reputedly had over a dozen abortions during the same time period so as not to jeopardize her career. In her thirties, when she desperately wanted to have a baby, she was no longer able to do so and had a series of miscarriages that were at times very dangerous to her health.

Marilyn claimed to have tried to commit suicide twice by age nineteen, once by leaving the gas on at home and once by swallowing pills. On numerous occasions as an adult, she took overdoses of barbiturates knowing full well that someone was about to call or come over to see her; she was resuscitated after being raced to the hospital by those who would find her or suspect something was up, and had her stomach pumped a phenomenal number of times.

Most of the men important in her life were considerably older than her. "Older men," she once said, "are kinder, and they know more" (p. 43). At age twenty-two, she seems to have been emotionally and sexually involved with a somewhat older woman, Natasha Lytess, a teacher of hers. Marilyn professed to

be frigid, but had always been thrilled by looking at pictures of well-built women. People have suggested that she was involved with another woman as well, but it has never been substantiated. In her thirties, she expressed a terrible fear of homosexuality in general, and became increasingly upset with women friends and co-workers who she claimed to be moving in on her turf—in other words, competing with her for men and fame.

Her major love relationships were clearly with men she looked up to because of their vast knowledge and intelligence, she herself resolutely attempting to offset her poor intellectual background by reading a wide-ranging panoply of books. Another category of lovers, however, included men who pursued her doggedly, and eventually got what they wanted from her—for a time—as she seemed unable to resist such assiduous dedication and love.

She always called her first husband "Daddy," and another of her husbands signed his letters to her "Pa" (p. 69). Relating a fantasy to friends at a party, she said she would like "to put on her black wig, pick up her father in a bar, and have him make love to her. Then she'd say, 'How do you feel now to have a daughter that you've made love to?'" (p. 70).

One husband claimed,

> She was so childlike she could do anything, and you would forgive [her] as you would forgive a seven-year-old. She was both a woman and a baby, and both men and women adored her. A man wouldn't know whether to sit her on his knee and pet her, or put his arms around her and get her in the sack.
>
> (Summers, 1985, p. 94)

At one marriage ceremony, she promised to "love, honor, and cherish" her husband to be, Joe DiMaggio—the famous baseball player from the 1950s—but did not promise to obey him. Marilyn was very soon disenchanted with Joe because of his lack of culture and intellectual interests. Extremely demanding, assiduous, and jealous, he nevertheless managed to stay in very close contact with Marilyn long after their divorce. His macho attitudes and possessive love obviously pleased Marilyn to a considerable extent. Not long after their divorce, she claimed never to have wanted to marry him, and that he had physically hurt her on a number of occasions while they were still married—a claim borne out by several friends and relatives. Speaking of Joe, Marilyn bragged that her sex life with him was better than with any of her other men, and that his "biggest bat is not the one he uses on the field" (p. 114); at another point, however, she stated that if that were all it took, they would have remained married.

A man who worked with her noted that at one point she began systematically showing up late for work; when he told her that he would not stand for it, that he was not impressed by her or her reputation, she straightened out and stopped coming in late. Another co-worker claimed she behaved like a child asking to be spanked.

Marilyn regularly resorted to blackmail to get her way with men, forcing them to stop seeing other women, or give up their wives, children, and careers for her. While saying that she wanted a man to be the boss and resolving time and again to play housewife, the tables inevitably turned: the man became an overly doting father, and she set off to make fresh conquests. Her marriage to Arthur Miller, a prominent intellectual figure and playwright at that time, quickly degenerated as he was coaxed into becoming her lackey, and began doing everything for her. One friend observed that he was at her beck and call, running around after her all the time. After meeting with Arthur Miller, Ralph Greenson, Marilyn's second psychiatrist, said that he felt Miller had "the attitude of a father who has done more than most fathers

would do, and is rapidly coming to the end of his rope" (p. 216). Greenson nevertheless advised Miller that Marilyn needed unconditional love and devotion, and that anything less would be unbearable to her. Such advice speaks volumes about the wisdom dispensed by psychiatry!

A great many of her friends seemed to have been drawn to her at least in part because of her very insecurity, unhappiness, and apparent sleepwalking through life. They took care of all of her business and legal affairs, lent her money, and found her lawyers when necessary. She seemed to be utterly incapable of dealing with such practical matters, and never lacked for friends willing to do so for her.

Men in particular were drawn to her because of a kind of innocence or eternal purity she emanated—strange characteristics to attribute to a woman who had worked for some time as a high-class call girl, slept her way up the professional ladder, used sex to get what she wanted at times, and been married numerous times. But she was also described as seemingly eternally available, ready and waiting for men. She was obviously able to simultaneously embody for them both the immediate prospect of sex associated with prostitutes and the innocent sweetness of the pure at heart.

Ever more disenchanted with the men she had known, in the last years of her life Marilyn seemed only interested in powerful men and went for the most prominent men in her circles. At one time she was involved with two very important men who were in fact brothers: John F. Kennedy and Robert F. Kennedy. While John carried on a very superficial relationship with her, she engaged in a far deeper relationship with Robert, perhaps in part to get back at John or even to make him jealous and thereby win him over. Her relationship with Robert also seemed to thrive quite distinctly on the fact that he was already married and had a family. The challenge, as usual, was to try to pry him away from his wife and get him to marry her. Marilyn basically came right out and demanded that Robert, then Attorney General of United States and aspiring presidential material, not only give up his wife and family for her, but give up politics altogether. When her own charms proved insufficient, it seems she may have resorted to other means, including a pretended pregnancy (though there are some indications that Robert had in fact gotten her pregnant) and a suicide attempt designed to blackmail or guilt-trip him into staying with her.

Marilyn tended to turn to the bottle when things did not go well in her love life, and her drinking seemed to accentuate her confusional states, hesitant if not slurred speech, and moodiness. Alcohol took the edge off her tensions and anxieties, and as her difficulties sleeping mounted, she relied ever more heavily on barbiturates to induce the rest she so badly needed to maintain her extremely busy schedule.

She also turned to psychotherapy at various points in her life, and underwent a year of therapy with one psychiatrist and at least two years with a second, Ralph Greenson. Accounts given of Marilyn's "treatment" by this second psychiatrist, a man of international renown in the psychoanalytic community (who was a personal friend of Anna Freud's), are particularly revealing of Marilyn's psychology, but not in the way that might be expected at first. Greenson's statements show that Marilyn had him wrapped around her little finger. For example, to alleviate the discomfort Marilyn felt in waiting with his other patients in his waiting room, Greenson invited her to have her sessions at *his own home*. When she was particularly depressed, "his sessions with her would last four or five hours" (p. 307) and were not infrequently held at Marilyn's *own home*. When Marilyn was obliged to travel for professional reasons, Greenson was often brought along to hold her hand and be supportive. When able to go to her sessions at the psychiatrist's home, she often went for a walk with his daughter before her sessions, and stayed for a drink and sometimes dinner with his wife and son afterward (pp. 234–35), the whole family becoming very wound up in her troubles.

Marilyn seems to have committed suicide after having been categorically rejected by John F. Kennedy, that rejection coinciding with a spell of conflict with a good girlfriend, Pat Newcomb, who was also

deeply in love with Robert Kennedy. On the night of her death, Marilyn made myriad phone calls to friends and doctors, which could easily have been interpreted as calls for help—similar calls had been interpreted in that way on many occasions in the past—and the self-administered overdose (if that was indeed the true cause of death) may well have been somewhat accidental. For Marilyn had become accustomed to taking great quantities of barbiturates over periods of several hours in her attempt to induce sleep, leaving her in a stupor wherein she could well have considerably miscalculated the number of pills she had already taken. Her psychiatrist, who had spent two and a half hours with her on the day she died, was convinced that it was *not* suicide and many authors have sustained that she was murdered. I will leave the why and wherefore of her untimely death to the investigative reporters and FBI files seekers, turning instead to what Marilyn's life story has to teach us about hysteria.

The Demand for Absolute Love

Marilyn's life story provides many indications that Marilyn was an hysteric, not a schizophrenic or "borderline" as her various psychiatrists believed. An hysteric often demands that her[3] significant other's love be absolutely unreserved, in other words, she demands a situation in which she will be the object of someone's unconditional, unbounded love. Now what could be a better test of the unreservedness of love than to have her partner give up loved ones and/or career for her? Marilyn provides fine examples of this on numerous occasions, and one of the best examples is perhaps that of her demand that Robert Kennedy give up wife, family, and politics for her. It was not enough for her that he took time out of his busy political career, risking exposure and thus possible damage to his political and family life, to be with her; she apparently could not rest—even though it seems quite clear that she was far more taken with brother John than with Robert—until he left all else behind: everything of importance to him that did not revolve around her.

More striking still was her relationship with her second psychiatrist, Ralph Greenson. As I mentioned earlier, Greenson gave in to Marilyn's every request (let her have her sessions at his home, at her home, for as long as she wanted, and so on), and she certainly did not restrain her demands. She engaged in an overstepping of the usual limits of the therapeutic context that is absolutely typical of hysteria, seeking to prove to herself that Greenson wanted to help her, not because she paid him to do so, but rather because he loved her (what is not so typical is the degree of overstepping of the analytic context). Many neurotics fantasize about being their therapist's only patient, but few encounter such willingness on their therapist's part to make such a wish come true.

Greenson, however, was the exception: he tried to prove his love (parental or Platonic, in his eyes no doubt) for Marilyn, but she pushed him to the breaking point. When Marilyn was about 35, Greenson wrote,

> Above all, I try to help her not to be so lonely, and therefore to escape into drugs or get involved with very destructive people … This is the kind of planning you do with an adolescent girl who needs guidance, friendliness, and firmness, and she seems to take it very well … She said, for the first time, she looked forward to coming [back into town after a trip] because she could speak to me. Of course, this does not prevent her from canceling several hours [of sessions] to go to [see a lover of hers]. She is unfaithful to me as one is to a parent.
>
> (Summers, 1985, p. 264)

Unbeknownst to himself, no doubt, Greenson was thereby admitting defeat: the utter and total collapse of the analytic relationship. He was holding Marilyn's hand, counseling her, and all in all taking on a

parental role, which bears no resemblance to that required of the analyst. He stated that Marilyn "took great offense at the slightest irritation on [his] part, [and] could not abide … any imperfection in 'certain ideal figures in her life'" (p. 277). This too is quite typical of hysteria, wherein those called upon at various points in the hysteric's life to play the part of the Other—the perfect parent, the all-knowing and all-forgiving godlike significant other in one's life (whether embodied by a real or strictly imagined person)—can never live up to the hysteric's expectations of perfection. Such expectations are projected at times onto parental figures, lovers, spouses, teachers, priests, and analysts, and anyone who tries to fill that role necessarily comes up short. Trying to give unconditional love and support, Greenson bowed to Marilyn's threats of indulging in drugs again and all sorts of other threats by granting five-hour-long sessions. Quite aptly, he admitted to having "become a prisoner of a form of treatment that I thought was correct for her, but almost impossible for me" (p. 307).

Greenson's whole approach to "treating" Marilyn is indicative of the fact that a certain strain of American psychoanalysis views itself as a sort of service industry: a demand exists out there in the marketplace, and the analyst does whatever he or she can to fulfill that demand. The service provided by the analyst in this case was not adequate to meet the demand. He tried to give Marilyn what she asked for, but—not surprisingly—it was never enough for her even as it was too much for him.[4]

Demand and Desire Are Not One and the Same

Just because Marilyn demanded such unbounded love does not mean that it was what she actually wanted. Hysteria teaches us a great deal about the radical split between demand and desire, between what you ask for and what you want, between what you find yourself trying to get people to give you, and what you really want them to give you. Whereas love might incline you to demand that you be someone's one and only, desire might blossom only when you feel that you are *not* that person's one and only.

To illustrate the distinction between desire and demand (note that the French *demande* is often better translated into English as "request"), consider the common request made by analysands to decrease the number of sessions per week or to discontinue treatment altogether. Such requests are made for a variety of reasons—running the gamut from feeling they are boring or disgusting the analyst, not to mention most other people in their lives, to feeling they are not sure they are making headway or are pretty sure they have made headway but perhaps can go no further—and frequently are tantamount to an attempt to find out what the analyst thinks: is he or she fed up with us, sick of our stories and problems, or does he or she genuinely think we are making progress and want us to continue? The explicit demand or request is to have fewer or no further sessions, whereas the underlying desire may be to hear the analyst say, "You're doing good work and I want you to continue." Thus, while formulating a request (which may be feeble or take on the more insistent form of a demand proper),

- Demand: "I want to have one session a week instead of three" (Level 1)

the analysand's desire can be put as follows:

- Desire: "Tell me I'm doing a good job and you want to see me more, not less" (Level 2)

(This is not to say that analysands should never be granted fewer sessions or that analysts should never agree to terminate the therapy, but that there is always potentially more than meets the eye in a request or demand.)

A female analysand once asked her boyfriend to move with her to a city where she had landed a job (Level 1), all the while hoping he would not agree to move there with her (Level 2), because to her such agreement would have meant he was weak-willed like her own father, whereas she wanted a strong-

willed lover. In this instance, she explicitly asked for something she did not want.

It seems quite clear that many of Marilyn's husbands systematically responded to the first level, that of Marilyn's explicit demands for love, but almost completely neglected the existence of the second level, that of her desire. Marilyn's demands for love were, no doubt, quite convincing, and she very often played up to men by appealing to their paternal instincts, playing the helpless little girl in need of a father's attentions. She probably also at times sought out older men who were looking for a much younger woman precisely so as to be able to treat her as a daughter. With Marilyn, such men would be in no danger of turning her into a mother figure, as obsessive men are so inclined to do.

Yet as soon as a man began to respond to her demand for unconditional love, began jumping through hoops to satisfy her every whim and fancy, she lost interest. As soon as she had attracted the man she had set her sights on, and gotten him to love her in that unconditional way, she wanted out of the relationship. Consciously she wanted a man to take care of her and dote on her, and yet a man who could be cajoled into doing that was not reckoning with the second level, that of her desire. Just as obsessive men have a tendency of turning their partners into mother figures, hysterics have a tendency of transforming their partners into doting father figures. No one is especially happy with the result, but they often feel they cannot help but do so.

It seems safe to say that at least unconsciously, if not consciously, Marilyn would have preferred a man who would *not* play that game with her, who would not allow himself to be transformed into a doting father, who would not neglect that second level.

That man was, for a time, Joe DiMaggio, a first generation Italian-American with decidedly macho tendencies. DiMaggio seems not to have kowtowed to Marilyn as did many of her other men, and her sex life with him was, according to her, the best she had ever had (as I mentioned earlier). That did not stop her, however, from finding him hopelessly uncultured, divorcing him for their divergent interests,[5] and setting out to conquer Arthur Miller who she considered to be one of the most prominent intellectual figures of her time. I do not claim to know exactly why the "romance" in her relationship with DiMaggio disappeared so quickly or why she eventually broke up with him, but it may well have had something to do with the second feature of hysteria, to which I will turn momentarily.

The Blossoming of Desire

Up until now I have been speaking as though it were clear what Marilyn desired, above and beyond the multitude of specific demands she made. But just how clear is it that Marilyn's desire was fully constituted, in other words, that Marilyn had a specific, already formulated desire that lay hidden behind the many demands for love she made upon her friends and beaus? The simplest way to illustrate what I mean in asking whether or not we can assert that Marilyn's desire was fully constituted is to consider what transpired between Marilyn and Ralph Greenson.

By systematically giving Marilyn whatever she asked for, it seems quite clear that the psychiatrist eliminated any room for the blossoming of her desire in the analytic situation. Taking her requests at face value and attempting to satisfy them at that face-value level, he thereby implicitly indicated to her that there was nothing more in her requests than was clear at first glance. Her words were taken to have but one obvious meaning, and no intention on her part to say something in the analytic situation beyond what Greenson implied he heard could be acknowledged. Desire, insofar as we can consider it to be budding and burgeoning behind demand and even within demand, was thereby neglected by the psychiatrist. The whole level of desire, which is literally impossible to express in words—words never quite capturing what it is we feel we want—was discounted.

People generally think that they are able to express their desires to those around them, and to formulate those desires in their own minds. Yet those very same people, when they eventually seek out a psychoanalyst's help, make it very clear that they do not really know what they want. When people discuss, say, their career choice in analysis, they often insinuate that their career was foisted upon them or repeatedly recommended by relatives, teachers, guidance counselors, and/or friends. Such patients seem to be wondering, "Where do I come in? I've spent all these years pursuing someone else's goal, but is that what *I* really want?" Most people have a great deal of trouble sorting out what their own desires are, finding it much easier to mouth what they have heard other people express.

The point is not that Greenson should have deliberately frustrated Marilyn's demands for longer sessions, special treatment, and the like, but that by not responding to her demands, by sidestepping them and changing the subject, he would have created an opening, a breathing space that invariably gives an hysteric a sense of relief and brings about a lifting of anxiety (albeit temporary). He clearly would have done better had he seen to it that desire was not squelched into demand, not read as specific requests for special attention. One of a psycho analyst's tasks is to create a space in which desire can come forward, be spoken in whatever approximate terms are available, and be put to work in the analytic process. Paradoxically enough, a psychoanalyst is, in a sense, a person—perhaps the only person—you pay *not* to grant your requests, his or her job being to elicit your desire instead. Neurotics are, we might say, stuck wandering about with someone else's desire—their parents' desire, for example—and are desperately in need of a separation allowing their desire to come to be in its own right, as it were.

Had Greenson helped Marilyn to separate from her mother's and other peoples' desires, and fostered the emergence of a desire she could call her own, Marilyn would have certainly been less troubled, though not necessarily less dissatisfied with her love life.

Unsatisfied Desire: Desire Strictly Speaking

Marilyn's story can be understood as also bringing out another characteristic of hysteria: *the primacy in hysteria of maintaining an unsatisfied desire*. While the whole question of desire (embryonic or full-fledged) was neglected by many of Marilyn's husbands, who seem to have paid single-minded attention to her demands, we can perhaps nevertheless consider her movement from man to man as due in part to her attempt to maintain "an unsatisfied wish," as Freud (1958a) called it. We can more simply call it a wish to go on desiring.

We sense in Marilyn's case an interest in conquest, Marilyn carefully researching different men before going out to meet them. While still married to Joe DiMaggio, for example, she had already decided—on the basis of her reading, various reviews she had perused, and so on—that her next husband would be Arthur Miller. She had not yet even met him, but had already set her cap for him. There seems to be a sense in which Marilyn's restless movement from "man to man to man," like Joni Mitchell's perhaps, was a strategy for keeping her desire alive; in the words of one of Marilyn's own song and dance numbers: "After you get what you want you don't want it." While that title applies to some extent to everyone, it seems to best characterize hysterics. Having selected a man to conquer, and having effectively won his affections and wrested him away from his wife and family, Marilyn lost interest.

"After You Get What You Want You Don't Want It"

Desire, strictly speaking, has no object. The want in desire is to go on desiring. When Marilyn selected a particular man, he generally thwarted the pursuit of her desire and stifled its blossoming in their relationship, not because her desire always needed a new man as its object, but because he did not find a

way to keep her desire in play or in motion within the relationship. No man was ever the "real" object of her desire, as her desire was to go on desiring, and thus no one could "fulfill" her desire—in other words, satisfy it. Appearances notwithstanding, desire is not in search of satisfaction, but rather of a situation it which it can thrive and multiply, in which there is ever more desire, in which one can keep on desiring.

Such a state is not easily achieved, and the closest many people get to it is in the realm of consumer goods. The advertising world has been successful in stimulating inexhaustible desires for objects of various kinds—televisions, cars, houses, and gadgets of every kind—and there is no necessary stopping point to the pursuit of wealth and its symbols. Each may provide some small sense of satisfaction, but the desire for more can always be rekindled. Yet few men are able to do in their love and sex lives what Madison Avenue has been able to achieve in the world of consumer goods: *create new desires*. Few in fact realize that this is indeed what they are being called upon to do. Most men (obsessive in structure) tend to be primarily concerned with maintaining the status quo in their love relationships, abhorring anything that might rock the boat or shake things up a bit.

Desire is a complex matter: it seems to emerge mysteriously, inexplicably at one moment, and die out the next. It may be elicited suddenly with someone you thought absolutely unappealing to you, and prove utterly unstirred with someone you find eminently attractive. What is clear is that one's desire is not spurred on by one's partner responding to one's demands, as that may lead to a flattening out or even shriveling up of desire. Desire is structurally speaking unsatisfiable, while demands can be met and thus dissipated.

The wish someone expresses to you is not in and of itself either a genuine demand or a genuine desire—the status of a wish is determined by how it is responded to. If a "friend" tells you he or she wants "to see more of you" and you suggest going to a concert on Tuesday night, you have responded to what was *explicitly* requested but have, perhaps deliberately and deftly, avoided revealing what you may have glimpsed behind the request: a desire not only to see you more often, but to see you in a different way, as a lover, for example, and not as a friend. "To see more of you" is obviously an ambiguous choice of words. If you respond to it at only its most superficial level, as a request to spend more clock time with you, you make it into a demand. Desire, which was waiting in the wings, ready to spring forth, may then wither. If, on the other hand, you suspect that the choice of words was perhaps not "unintentional," and you respond more ambiguously, leaving open the possibility that your conception of the relationship does not necessarily stop at friendship, your friend's wish may begin to take shape and show itself as a desire.

This is one of the subtleties about desire that is rarely shown on the silver screen, but which is known to almost everyone who has ever been involved in dating or meeting potential lovers in social situations: if you declare your interest to certain people it turns them off. If you let on to someone about your feelings in a fairly explicit way, he or she may very well run the other way. Hence the oftentimes unbearable game of waiting for someone to make a move, make the first phone call, or make the first declaration of love.

With some people it is not simply a question of timing—that is, it is not a matter of declaring oneself too soon in a relationship or rather at the right time. Certain people will be scared off by any declaration at any time at all. They seem to thrive only in relationships in which they are always in doubt, in which they never really know how their partner feels about them. Satisfaction—in the form, for example, of knowing their love is reciprocated by their beloved—is of little interest to them compared with the anxious worry and trembling (regarding the beloved's affections) that makes them feel alive, makes them aware they want something very badly.[6]

Anorexia Amoris

Such people can perhaps be viewed as "anorexic in matters of love." In many cases, anorexia in children and adolescents begins with a family situation in which the mother (and perhaps the father as well) is unwilling or does not know how to respond to her infant's crying with anything but food. She is unable to provide warmth, caresses, and the like, or refuses to give the infant such things (perhaps she resents having gotten so little of them herself growing up; or perhaps she did not want to have children at all at this stage in her life, did not want them with this particular man, or only wanted a boy and got a girl or vice versa), and responds in every instance with food of one kind or another. Eventually, the mother is surprised when her child refuses to eat.

The mother, in always responding to the child's cries with food, has read all of the child's wishes as demands, and now the child wishes for something other than satisfiable demands. "Demand will not suffice," the child seems to be saying: "I must have something more. I would rather eat nothing than forego desire." By refusing food—which is perhaps the only form of care the parent knows how to give—the child makes a statement: I will not be filled up or satisfied with this, I will not stop wanting, you cannot dismiss my wants so easily. I will prove to you that there is something more, something else. Such a child is forced to refuse sustenance in order to prove to its parents that man does not live by bread alone and in order to create a space in which desire can come to the fore. Desire here shows its primacy: all other so-called "life-instincts" take a back seat when desire is at the wheel. Desire takes precedence over life itself. The anorexic is willing to forego food, but not (a space for) desire.

The people we might refer to as "anorexic in matters of love" do something similar: if their partners manifest love or desire for them, they run the other way. They thrive only in relationships in which they are always in doubt, in which they either never really know their partners' feelings or are, in fact, rebuffed, refused, or put off. Their greatest pleasure is when someone declines to match love for love, desire for desire, and they are often most content when they are rejected.

This is, in fact, a very widespread phenomenon: human beings have a tremendous propensity to fall in love with people they cannot have, people who are wholly inaccessible whether because of their age, position, or marital status. Nothing seems to so fire their desire as the unattainable nature of their beloved, whether he or she is a teacher, rock star, president, or royal. In such cases, they can only dream of satisfaction, there being virtually no chance whatsoever of their ever even meeting their beloved.

And even in less extreme cases, where the beloved is not so distant in time, space, or social status, people are highly inclined to fall desperately in love with those who are already involved in a relationship or married, or with those who pay no attention to them at all or refuse their every advance. Such relatively unattainable objects allow one to go on desiring, go on dreaming, go on fantasizing, without ever having to face the prospect of having one's love or desire responded to, answered, met, fulfilled—that is, without ever having to deal with that other person who might in real life douse your dreams, disabuse your fantasies, and quell the fire burning in your soul instead of stirring it forever after.

This inclination is related to a classic neurotic mechanism whereby *the neurotic sabotages his or her own desire*. He or she unwittingly makes it go awry so as not to have to deal with the consequences of having attained a desired someone or something. Marilyn Monroe, for example, again and again resolved to change her attitude towards her various husbands, to play a less domineering role with them, and yet inevitably found herself, much to her dismay, having her men wrapped around her little finger. True, they responded to her demands, but why was she so intent on making those demands in the first place? The repetitive character of her marriages can be viewed as part and parcel of neurotics' compulsion to sabotage their own conscious plans, ensuring that their own goals are never realized. The rationalizations people proffer by way of explanation for such self-destructive actions vary widely, running the gamut from "I felt as if he were too good for me—I don't deserve somebody that kind and loving" to "I don't

deserve to have my raise approved—I'm such a fake, and the only thing I excel at is tricking people into believing I know something." But regardless of the moralistic and/or guilt-ridden reasons advanced, we can nevertheless glimpse here the neurotic's fundamental aversion to having his or her fondest wishes fulfilled.

The fact is that, *while desire is certainly not in search of satisfaction, satisfaction may even bring on a kind of disgust or revulsion*. With such a notion we approach more closely the deeper roots of hysteria. Much that I have said of demand and desire thus far is true quite generally, though hysterics are the ones who most clearly teach it to us and who most often express it in no uncertain terms. However, the idea that a person may find satisfaction revolting or react to satisfaction with obvious (and not simply feigned) disgust, takes us one step closer to the structural foundations of hysteria.

Surplus Sexuality: Freud's Early Work on Hysteria and Obsession

Neurosis originates, according to Freud in 1896, in the experience of what he calls a *sexual über*, which has been translated as a "surplus of sexuality" (Freud, 1954, pp. 163–64). A child, in interacting with its parents, experiences a traumatic overload of sexuality, an overload of sexual stimulation, or pleasure.[7] This traumatic sexual overload becomes the center, in a sense, of the neurotic subject's being, and, in Lacan's view, the subject comes into being as a defense against this overcharged experience. The subject is no more than a defense: subjectivity is defined at the outset as a position adopted in relation to this first oversexed encounter.

Freud's 1896 attempt at distinguishing between obsession and hysteria consists in saying that, for the hysteric, this first experience of excessive sexuality is accompanied by revulsion and fright, while for the obsessive it is accompanied by pleasure. Or stated differently, that the child, in experiencing either disgust or pleasure in this primordial encounter with the other, chooses (in a paradoxical sense) his or her neurotic structure: hysteria consists in a particular kind of reaction to that first experience of sexuality, obsession consisting in another kind of reaction to it.

Jacques-Alain Miller (1987–88, unpublished) points out that there is a kind of hiatus here in Freud's 1896 theory between the supposed primordial reactions and clinical descriptions of hysterics and obsessive neurotics. Whereas Freud hypothesizes that the hysteric is disgusted in this first traumatic encounter with the Other, she is clinically characterized by demands for more (*Encore!*), by a desire to obtain ever more from the Other. Whereas one might expect the hysteric, given her revulsion and fright, to shy away from the Other or wish that the Other would go away, instead she seeks out the Other. Similarly, whereas the obsessive neurotic, given his pleasure in this first experience with the Other, might be expected to actively seek the Other out to reproduce that experience, his activity can instead be characterized as avoidance of the Other. Here we are led to speculate that his pleasure was in some respect *excessive*—that pleasure taken to a certain limit can be traumatic, leading a subject to steer clear of its point of origin from then on.

There remain a great many gaps in our understanding of the structural conditions of hysteria and obsession, and the usual rule of thumb—stipulating that hysteria involves revulsion and obsession a reaction of too much, of being overwhelmed—leaves something to be desired.

We might hypothesize, given the clinical observation of the importance in hysteria of maintaining an unsatisfied desire, that for the hysteric, desire cannot be satisfied because it aims at that primordial traumatic experience. The hysteric strives to return to it, and yet has to turn away from it (sometimes at the very last moment), the jouissance implied therein being revolting. Here instead of thinking simply of the hysteric's attempt to go on desiring, we encounter Freud's negative formulation: the desire has to be

effectively thwarted, leading as it would otherwise to disgust.

The very use of the term "satisfaction" is problematic when used to talk about desire—desire as that which, ultimately, has no object and can know no satisfaction. The kind of formulation that is, perhaps, called for is one more along the following lines:

- Hysteria involves the maintenance of desire (keeping one's desire alive) and the flight from or sabotaging of jouissance when encountered.
- Obsession involves the endeavor to silence (or eliminate) desire[8] and the avoidance of jouissance.

This is overly simplistic, nevertheless, as any description of hysteria and obsession must introduce at least three registers: love, desire, and jouissance. For we must not lose sight of the fact that love serves, at times, to compensate for the nonexistence of a relationship between the sexes, to gloss over it in some sense: while there is such a thing as a love relationship, there is no such thing as a sexual relationship. And it seems quite likely that hysterics and obsessive compulsives rely on love in different ways to cover over that non-relationship.

How to Fool Three Eminent Psychiatrists in the Bat of an Eye

Let us return for a moment to the question of diagnosis in the case of Marilyn Monroe. I mentioned earlier that she was generally considered to be paranoiac or schizophrenic by her doctors. It seems to me that they were thrown off by her mood swings, often considered to be extreme: one minute she would be vivacious, witty, brilliant, and poised, and the next anxious, bewildered, withdrawn, and in a virtual stupor. It also seems clear that they took her contradictory stories, tales of rape, and rivalry with women as telltale signs of psychosis. However, none of them need be thought to involve anything beyond the extreme symptoms already mentioned by Freud in his various studies of hysteria, most notably a sort of twilight state bordering on hallucination wherein an hysteric can no longer distinguish between what is really happening or has happened and what she wants, has once dreamt, or has previously imagined. I can see no clear signs whatsoever of psychosis in Marilyn's case in the accounts I have read—which are admittedly far from complete, as I have not had access to the psychiatrist's notes (only his public statements)—nor is there any indication of psychotic breaks having taken place.

Hysteria has been eliminated pretty much lock, stock, and barrel from psychiatric and psychological diagnostic manuals such as the DSM III and IV, giving way to a symptom-by-symptom approach whereby the hysteric is characterized as depressed, manic, or suffering from an eating disorder. But hysteria, as a Lacanian diagnostic category, can apply to clinical manifestations as serious as catalepsy, mythomania, and catatonia. Hysterics are very often mistakenly diagnosed as schizophrenic and paranoiac because of the fleeting hallucinations they recount, and a great many of the patients classified in the United States as borderline fit quite well into the Freudian/Lacanian category of hysteria.

Historically speaking, a great many hysterics in America were "treated" in the 1950s with what is still known as psychosurgery, and the most common operation performed was prefrontal lobotomy. It was used in the treatment of what Freud might have called ordinary, everyday unhappiness, and what would now be referred to as borderline depressive states. The result, which so impressed psychiatrists of the time, was that the women it was used on—and it was used almost exclusively on women—seemed more content with their existences after the operation. The pressure and restlessness of desire had apparently been surgically removed.

Nowadays, those hysterics who are labeled psychotic are often persuaded to take psychotropic drugs, which can do little to improve their condition, and those who are labeled borderline are generally

considered to be exceedingly difficult to handle in therapy. American psychoanalysis has a tendency to throw in the towel when it comes to psychotherapeutically treating people considered to be psychotic or borderline, the upshot being that many hysterics—who, while perhaps difficult to work with, are certainly not "beyond therapy"[9]—are shunted from therapist to therapist or are simply put on medication.

Much of this paper was originally presented at a conference on History and Hysteria at the University of Missouri-Columbia in October 1991. It was reworked in 1992 for publication in a book to be entitled *Modern-day hysteria: From Marilyn Monroe to Madonna*. It was undoubtedly a sign of the times regarding the study of Lacan's work that I could quite easily obtain a contract for such a book (which my heart was not really in), whereas it took five years for a publisher to finally deign to accept the manuscript that became *The Lacanian subject: Between language and jouissance* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995).

Notes

1 In this paper, I rely primarily on Anthony Summers's (1985) biography of Monroe.

2 The new, new term is "bipolar."

3 I am deliberately adopting the feminine personal pronoun for the hysteric here because statistically speaking the majority of, though by no means all, hysterics are female.

4 In this sense, he was similar to Karl Abraham, about whom Lacan (1978, p. 145) remarks: "Abraham wanted to be a complete mother." Greenson had unwittingly invented his own form of "variable-length session."

5 An hysteric like Marilyn Monroe is exceptionally resourceful when it comes to finding fault with lovers. While it might be thought that with the Kennedy brothers she had at last met her match, clinically speaking there seems to be no doubt but that, even as First Lady comfortably ensconced in the White House, she would have found fault with everything from their wardrobe to their foreign policy (Marilyn and Robert Kennedy apparently had bitter arguments over the Bay of Pigs and atomic testing).

6 Stendhal provides a plethora of examples of this in his classic book entitled *Love*.

7 For an example, see the case of Slater in "Sexual Anxieties" included in this collection.

8 Obsession thus seems to bear a certain affinity to Buddhism, which calls for the elimination of all desire (even that for Nirvana).

9 A reference to Robert Altman's film *Beyond Therapy* in which it is clear that it is the therapists who are beyond therapy, not the patients!

CRITIQUE

14

A PSYCHOANALYST HAS TO SPEAK LIKE AN ORACLE

Bruce Fink interviewed by Izabela Michalska

Lacanian theory is used to explain culture, as Zizek and Salecl do, for example. Do you think it is a key to understanding contemporary culture?

I'm very suspicious, myself, of taking concepts that were developed in the clinical setting for transformative psychotherapeutic work and trying to apply them everywhere else. Freud (1961a) tried to extend his concepts on many occasions, but he at least offered the following caveat:

> I would not say that an attempt … to carry psychoanalysis over to the cultural [arena] was absurd or doomed to be fruitless. But we should have to be very cautious and not forget that, after all, we are only dealing with analogies and that it is dangerous, not only with men but also with concepts, to tear them from the sphere in which they have originated and been evolved.
>
> (p. 144)

Personally, I'm not interested in trying to analyze all of culture through psychoanalysis. Freud did try at times, Lacan far less so. I'm not convinced that, when people talk about the real and try to interpret culture with that concept, they're truly talking about the same real we talk about in psychoanalysis. Maybe, at times, but I don't think that in general the concepts developed in psychoanalysis can be applied to every other realm. If they could be, that would mean that psychoanalysts have some kind of special approach to the world that other people don't have. I'm not so sure that's true.

People are sometimes confused when they see that Lacan talks about paintings, films, and artworks of different kinds; they think that Lacan is applying his own concepts to the artworks. It's the exact opposite—he is looking to art to inspire him to develop concepts to use in his clinical work.

Let's come to the individual level then. What can someone who starts a Lacanian analysis expect? If you go to a Freudian he will ask you about your childhood, if you start a Jungian analysis you will work on dreams …

Lacanians ask about everything. I think the difference is that, in the best of cases at least, a Lacanian tries to get the patient to do most of the work. In the old typical Freudian approach (not Freud's own approach, but that employed by many of his successors), you talk about a dream and the Freudian interprets it for you; with a Jungian you talk about the dream and the analyst says, "this is a Great Mother symbol," and so on—I'm vastly oversimplifying, of course. In Lacanian psychoanalysis it's much more about getting the patient to do the work of interpretation. The analyst is not in the position of the master who knows, but rather in a position of unknowing and this requires the patient to produce knowledge.

Lacan came up with the idea of the "subject supposed to know." He says that the analyst holds the

position of the subject who is supposed to know—the patient assumes the analyst knows—but the analyst doesn't say very much. In a sense, the analyst agrees to occupy the position of the patient's unconscious that knows something about what's going on with the patient or about the patient's desire. The patient is the one who puts the analyst in the position of his own unconscious. A patient will often say, "Oh, you must be thinking that what I just said means *x*." The analyst doesn't say yes or no. *X* is something that the patient's unconscious has produced and it has come to the surface as if it were someone else's thought: the analyst's. The patient assumes that *x* is what the analyst is thinking. It is actually what the patient is thinking unbeknownst to himself.

That's projection.

Exactly. What makes Lacan's approach so different from most forms of therapy— whether behavioral, cognitive, Freudian, or Kleinian—is that the analyst must occupy the position of unknowing, of nonmastery.

So does he speak at all?

Of course he speaks, but he does so cryptically, enigmatically. He doesn't say, "The woman in your dream is your mother and you hate your mother." Many analysts assume they themselves know exactly what the patient's dream means or what the patient's fantasy means. My position as a Lacanian is that I don't know, I can't know—maybe after a number of years I might know a little bit. But even then I do not adopt the Socratic image of communicating vases where the knowledge is in me and then flows into the patient.

Lacan developed a whole new way of thinking about interpretation. An interpretation is not supposed to be something that the analyst develops and then delivers as a gift to the patient, but rather something almost without an author, something that uses the patient's own words and almost in the exact way the patient put those words together. Maybe it involves simply changing where the verb is or where the adjective is in the phrase or sentence. With an interpretation of this kind, the patient doesn't hear the interpretation as coming from the analyst as some sort of master of knowledge, but realizes it grew directly out of what she said. Sometimes she's not even sure—maybe it's almost exactly what she herself said. That makes it easier for her to accept the interpretation, because it comes from herself.

The image that comes to me, when I think about the Lacanian analyst, is the Delphic Oracle, speaking enigmatically about fate …

Yes, Lacan used the Greek notion of the oracle, and says that the analyst's speech should be oracular, in the sense that it should be quite ambiguous, polyvalent, open to several different interpretations. The analyst shouldn't say, "You hate your father and want to kill him"; the analyst should say something much more ambiguous so that it's up to the patient to try to think about all the different meanings that might be attributed to his speech.

There are no straightforward rules of interpretation; you as an analyst say something enigmatic to the patient … Can't you just then say anything at all?

No, I think interpretation requires a great deal of discipline. Lacanians pay very close attention to the patient's history, to the patient's own language, to the patient's own way of seeing the world and we interpret through the patient's own language, trying not to impose our own language on her. For example, many American therapists will hear a patient talking about a difficult experience and say, "That was physical abuse, verbal abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse," putting their own names or labels on the

experience. They use their own vocabulary. Lacanians want to use the patient's vocabulary rather than impose a whole framework on the patient—therapists' vocabulary often consists of silly pop-psychology terms, implying a very simplistic worldview.

We have some freedom in interpreting: it is a very creative process because with every patient we have to enter into her world and we have to do something very different in each case. I find that it is not just that neurotics are different from psychotics and the kind of work we do with them is different. Each individual case is very different; in some cases, for example, I find the only useful interpretations are puns and plays on words. You have to find a way of interpreting that is different for each person and that has something to do with her own way of being in the world, her own relationship to humor, tragedy, pain, and suffering.

You differentiate three diagnoses: neurosis, psychosis, and perversion. In which case does Lacanian psychoanalysis work best?

In the United States, most therapists and even most psychoanalysts can't tell the difference between neurosis and psychosis, they don't study that in their training. When psychotics go into analysis with them, the psychotics often get much worse, because the therapists use the same techniques with them that they use with everyone else, leading the psychotics to have a breakdown. Most of my patients are neurotic, a few are perverse, and a few are psychotic. But I think everyone, regardless of diagnosis, can benefit from Lacanian psychoanalysis.

Is Lacanian psychoanalysis becoming more popular as a therapy in the U.S.?

It is what I would call a "therapy of last resort." When someone has already been to every New Age psychologist and every behavioral psychologist, and has maybe even done a little Jungian psychoanalysis or taken Prozac, and none of this has worked, she may finally get so frustrated that she calls someone like me because she heard about yet another kind of therapy—Lacanian.

What would she do otherwise?

Kill herself, in certain cases. The people who come to me have often been taking prescription drugs already for five to ten years, some of them since they were little children. In America they've started giving kids ADHD and bipolar medications very early on, so even if I am the first therapist they come to—which is rare—often they've already been involved with the psychiatric establishment for quite some time. But most of the people who come to see me are in their thirties, forties, or fifties, sometimes even in their seventies, and they have already had several—and often many—therapies of different kinds that didn't work … Some of them are truly at the end of their rope.

It must be difficult to work with a patient after twenty years of different therapies, who comes to you with all kinds of psychological categories in his head. You have to change this attitude.

Yes, it is difficult, but you have to do that even with people who have never been in therapy before. They watch television, they go to movies, they hear about psychotherapy—in America you hear about psychotherapy all the time.

From a European point of view, we think you Americans take psychotherapy as a kind of religion. Is this just a stereotype? And what about a whole society of people being in or having been in therapy? What would that be like?

Psychoanalysis was taken very seriously in the U.S. in the 1950s and 1960s. In a lot of movies from that time people were depicted as seeing analysts. Already by the 1970s and certainly in the 1980s and 1990s that began to change. The clinician portrayed was no longer a psychoanalyst but a psychotherapist, and the therapy was always being conducted face to face. No one used the couch anymore, or if they did, the patient was depicted as constantly getting up and moving around the office, yelling and screaming.

It shouldn't be thought that Americans actually believe in therapy. I think they don't. Americans believe less and less in therapy all the time. Instead, they believe in psychiatric medications, because they're reimbursed by insurance companies and are supposedly fast-acting. Many people really do try everything —Buddhist meditation, acupuncture, psychotropic medications, everything imaginable— before doing therapy because therapy is difficult work, especially psychoanalysis. Analysis is expensive and it takes years. Most people don't want to do that kind of work or make that kind of commitment: they want a fast and easy solution, even if there aren't really any. They would like to believe the promises made by psychiatry.

Notions that come from Freudian theory have permeated everyday life and colloquial language, we think about ourselves with these categories. Do you think that this can happen with Lacanian language and schemas too? Or maybe it has already happened?

If it does happen we'll have to come up with a new language for psychoanalysis. When psychoanalytic language becomes part of the culture it no longer has any usefulness in therapy. If a patient tells you, "Doctor, I know what my problem is, I have an Oedipal complex," it doesn't serve any purpose whatsoever. In fact, it is a form of resistance, it makes the work harder. If people start coming into analysis saying, "My problem is that I have never adequately symbolized the real of my existence and my trauma," it may be true—it is probably true for everyone—but it doesn't say anything about the individual subject. And it doesn't tell us anything about how to help this individual subject. It becomes a kind of barrier.

A patient of mine just recently avoided telling me an interpretation of his early childhood that came to his mind, because it centered on sibling rivalry with his brother. He had read somewhere that Lacan stressed the importance of competition and aggressiveness between children of about the same age ("semblables") and worried that I would think he was telling me this interpretation—which struck him as predictable and overly "textbook"—just to please me. So even though it was probably a very relevant interpretation of his situation, I could not get him to mention it at first. You see how theory becomes an obstacle!

Lacan himself, as his own work in France became known, would hear people talking about his work in certain banal ways and he would constantly reinvent himself. He wasn't Madonna, but he was someone who constantly sought to recast and reformulate things. When his students thought they had understood everything, which is a terrible tendency psychoanalysts and psychiatrists have, he would always say: No, you haven't understood anything, you need to start all over again. His idea was that psychoanalysis, perhaps like philosophy, has a tendency to develop what they call in French a *langue de bois*— literally a wooden tongue, but more figuratively a jargon: you repeat the same words over and over again (e.g., symbolic, jouissance, sinthome), almost like a mantra, but you have no idea what they mean. You just

repeat them because everyone else repeats them …

Some of Lacan's terms—like the gaze and the real—are already entering everyday discourse. But most of the people who come to me for analysis who have been reading about Lacan don't really understand these concepts. They mouth them, but they tend to serve little or no helpful purpose in the analysis.

Can they really understand them? As Lacan said, one understands nothing … Is there any final knowledge or it is always a process?

Lacan's position is that there are limits to understanding and that there is no such thing as a Hegelian sort of total understanding, total knowledge. It is, in fact, dangerous for psychoanalysts to think they have understood everything, because the unconscious is a kind of nonknowledge and it doesn't ever disappear: even when we go through an analysis and our life has changed radically, the unconscious is still there—it still affects us. So there are always things we don't know about ourselves, even after a great deal of analysis.

Many patients claim to want knowledge or think that what they need to acquire through psychoanalysis is knowledge of themselves. But Lacan's notion is that it is not by obtaining knowledge that you get better or that your life changes, it's through something else. Analysis brings a kind of change that doesn't necessarily involve consciously realized knowledge you can explain to other people. Patients say, "I don't know why it happened, but after the last session I just felt completely different." The analyst may have some idea why something suddenly changed, but not necessarily. I don't necessarily know, and they don't necessarily know, but something happens anyway.

You came to Poland to give a lecture about love. What is love according to Lacan?

There is no one formulation of love in Lacan's work. There are many different approaches that he takes to love at different times, but no single theory of love. Lacan certainly does not believe that love is the great unifier or endorse the ancient notion that love is a fusion of two people into one. Not only is that an illusion, according to Lacan, it's a dangerous illusion. We find it in psychosis: the notion that we can be perfectly united with a partner is a strictly imaginary notion. When we believe it, that is when we are most deluded, most mistaken, not really seeing the other person, simply seeing ourselves in the other person, essentially projecting.

That kind of approach to love ignores difference, doesn't want to see difference, and is usually horrified by difference: the partner's different background, religion, race, ways of enjoying, etc. It's part of romantic love and is very much characterized by the imaginary—that is, by narcissism. It involves the wish that the other be just like oneself, the wish to believe that one can find oneself in another person, in the form of a self identical to oneself.

The symbolic notion of love that I talked about in the lecture is that love involves giving something you don't have. It's a very paradoxical idea, but a very interesting and productive one.

What is the lack that we are giving to someone?

We each want to believe that we are essential to another person. We don't want to be exchangeable with someone else and, in order not to be fungible, there has to be something in us that appeals to another person uniquely. Not simply at the level of goods that we can acquire—objects, merchandise, or diplomas. It's not at the level at which I might ask myself, "Am I the best looking, the smartest, the most desirable to lots of people?" There has to be some way in which we affect a specific person at the level of lack, the level of castration, the level of *not having* something. There's a connection at the level of

something that the other person feels he is missing—I somehow speak to his lack.

But that doesn't mean I fill this lack, does it?

No, you bring out the lack in the other person, you incite and emphasize that lack. It's not about fulfilling, for after all satisfaction is a problem, Lacan would say, for most of us. Let's say you're interested in having sex and you could simply go out, meet someone, have sex, and be completely satisfied. Why would you ever see that person again? It's when we're unsatisfied, when there's something left to be desired, that we form a connection with someone. I'm not saying we have to be completely unsatisfied to form a connection with someone, but there always has to be something more to be desired, something that's not quite it, not quite right. What Lacan says is that it's not enough for us to be loved by another person, we also want to be the cause of that person's desire. The cause of their desire doesn't mean the object that satisfies their desire, but rather the person who maybe drives the other person a little bit crazy, makes him do things he thinks he shouldn't do and wishes later he hadn't done. To be the cause of someone's desire is to get under his skin—it itches, he wants to scratch, he can't stop scratching. He can't leave it alone, he knows no peace.

One of the important contributions Lacan makes regarding love involves distinguishing between love and desire. And then, in addition to that, between love, desire, and what he calls jouissance. For example, you don't necessarily experience sexual satisfaction with someone you love and even desire—you can desire another person intensely and yet your greatest sexual satisfaction may come with someone you despise, or through taking drugs, being beaten, or being humiliated.

Love relationships between people are very complicated, because there are several different levels: in a certain sense, we might say that love is imaginary, desire is symbolic, and jouissance is real. Those three rarely come together perfectly, meaning that it isn't easy to make relationships work.

Can we use the same notions to talk about parental love? Do I seek the lack in my child?

Perhaps your child is looking for the lack in you! You may give lots of time to your child, but that's not necessarily the most important thing to your child. Your child tries to figure out what it is that you want, what it is that you're lacking in, and somehow tries to position himself in relation to that. One of the difficulties in talking about parental love is that there are many different forms of it. Some parents love their children only when their children do exactly what the parents want them to do. It is a conditional and narcissistic love. In such cases, parents love their children because they are a lovely reflection of themselves. That's unfortunately very common indeed!

A mother often wants to see her child as a beautiful reflection of herself; her love in this case is very similar to the romantic form we talked about earlier. Other mothers look at their children at the level of demand alone, and believe that to be good mothers all they have to do is satisfy the child's basic demands for nourishment. But a child who is given food every time she cries, doesn't necessarily want just food, she wants presence, she wants the mother to be around. Maybe she even wants to annoy the mother and keep the mother in a certain kind of hyper-attentive state. She wants something more from the mother and yet the mother doesn't pay any attention to the lack in the child. Lacan says that such a predicament can lead to anorexia, because the child who is given food whenever she cries, protests: "I'm not going to eat anymore, because you can't shut me up with food. I need to desire, to maintain a space of lack within myself in order to become a person, in order to live."

What is the difference between love, desire, demand, and drive?

There's a sort of three-part system: demand, desire, and drive. Again, as a kind of shorthand, we could say: demand is imaginary, desire is symbolic, and drive is real. Lacan says that we spend lots of time demanding, requesting things from other people, and he says that every demand is a demand for love. Demand and love are closely associated in his work.

And yet, one of the problems, if you think about little children asking for something, is that very often they aren't satisfied when they get it—it's not exactly what they wanted. Lacan argues that there's always something more in demand than the specific object that's being requested. Let's say I ask my parents for a certain toy, and I get it, but I want them not just to give me the toy, but to give it to me in a certain way: not because it's Christmas, but just because—that is, for no particular reason. There's always *something more* that's being asked for, when we make a request or a demand, and that *something more* has to do with desire, something that isn't ever explicitly articulated in the demand itself.

Let's say you ask your significant other for something for your birthday and he gives it to you; nevertheless, you're disappointed. You got exactly what you asked for, but maybe you hoped that he would get you an even better version of what you asked for or *something more* in addition to what you asked for, or that he would wrap it more creatively or present it differently—with a poetically written card or during a romantic dinner. There's always something more that we want than what we state overtly in a demand. That something more is desire, Lacan says: desire is sort of leftover, something that is unspoken in a demand, and that continues to haunt us. He talks about desire as structurally unsatisfiable, as it is by definition a desire for something else.

The drives are situated at the level of the real. I may tell myself that the person I'm crazy about is all wrong for me, not the kind of person I should be involved with, and yet I can't help myself—I just have to pursue this person. I don't want to consciously, it doesn't make any sense to me, but it's something I can't stop myself from doing: it's a kind of compulsive behavior. That's the level of the drives.

What is love, then?

Lacan formulates it in different ways at different periods of his teaching. Early in his work, when he talks about demand, desire, and drive, he associates love with demand, saying, "Every demand is a demand for love." But later he comes up with a very interesting formulation: "Love is what allows jouissance to condescend to desire." Here he seems to be saying that drive, demand, and desire all lead in different directions. They do not necessarily have the same object or revolve around the same person. But love somehow allows us to perhaps find jouissance— that is, drive satisfaction—with the person we desire, something we don't always do. Sometimes we desire a person, but we're profoundly dissatisfied in our sexual relations with that person. That's a complaint many people have when they start an analysis: "I really like this person, I want to be with this person, and yet I don' t enjoy being with him."

Love here can serve as a kind of mediator between the different registers. It doesn't provide perfect harmony. Lacan never says there can be a perfect harmony between demand, desire, and drive, but maybe, through love, we can find something fulfilling enough.

This interview took place in Warsaw, Poland, on February 21, 2010, the day after I gave a talk entitled "Lacan on Love" (part of a book on love I am currently writing) at the Centre for Contemporary Art. It appeared in Polish in *Kronos: Metafizyka Kultura Religia* in 2010 (1): 52–59.

15

LACAN'S RECEPTION IN THE UNITED STATES

Bruce Fink interviewed by Miles Smit

How did someone like yourself, who comes from the United States, become interested in Lacan? What motivated you to move in that direction?

I had been interested in psychoanalysis while I was studying philosophy and political theory at Cornell University in the mid-1970s, but no classes were offered on the topic. I audited courses there for several years after graduating and came across a professor in Romance Studies named Richard Klein who had worked with Derrida and was teaching a course on Lacan, Derrida, and Foucault. It was then that I became very interested in Lacan's notion of the subject as something radically different from the ego.

I had not been particularly interested in the forms of ego psychology practiced in the States, but Lacan provided what I found to be quite an intriguing view of psychoanalysis, so I decided to go to France and stay a year or two to see how I would like it. I ended up staying much longer! My French was terrible when I first got there, but I started reading a lot and talking with people, and my language skills improved. That is how my interest in Lacan started.

How do you find the divide in the United States between ego psychology and the attempt to introduce some of the considerations that other more continentally derived forms of psychoanalysis might offer?

That is a difficult question. In my experience, a lot of people who I would consider to be doing ego psychology, or some variant of that, would deny it vehemently. They see it is as passé and consider themselves to have moved well beyond it. Ultimately, however, from a clinical standpoint it seems they are doing much the same thing and simply conceptualizing it differently.

People in the U.S. are more receptive now to some continental forms of thought. I believe there is a certain amount of frustration among psychologists, psychiatrists, and psychoanalysts with the stagnation in the Anglo-American tradition of psychoanalysis. There isn't the kind of effervescence of theoretical activity now that there was, say, between the 1920s and 1950s. In light of this, more people are looking elsewhere. So I would say that as long as you do not present the continental viewpoint as a direct critique of what people are already doing, but rather as something they could add to or that might inform their work, then reception is possible.

One difference I have discerned between Anglo-American and Continental schools of psychoanalysis is the emphasis they place on cognitive disabilities as the central pathology. The Continental approach seems disinclined to identify a psychiatric or psychological pathology with cognitive disability. In fact, there was a conference here in Louvain on that very issue as regards paranoia, in which it was mentioned that the cognitive aptitude of the paranoid patient might well excel that of the average person. Do any of these concerns figure in the work that you do?

I myself have not encountered the distinction you mention between the two approaches. It may exist more in medical milieus, which I work with a bit less. I work with a fair number of psychiatrists but they tend to be people trained in psychoanalysis. I do agree that by and large Americans pay much more attention to what can be objectively quantified, giving more weight to tests scores and that kind of thing. So you will often read in the description of a patient the I.Q. score or any sub-normal test scores from other areas, whereas in Europe this tends to be downplayed. A concern with supposed chemical imbalances in the brain far exceeds any concern I have thus far seen with cognitive difficulties.

I gather that your work as a practicing psychoanalyst informs much of your research and work in philosophy or philosophical psychology. Can you comment on some of the tensions or interesting relations between the clinical and pedagogical points of view?

I do not situate any of my work in philosophy per se. I think there are plenty of people in philosophy who are interested in psychoanalysis, especially in its Lacanian manifestations. As for my own work I do not think there is much tension between the clinical and the theoretical, because the one always grows out of the other. I see both as involved in a useful dialectic.

I was just talking with Martin Stanton from England, who will be speaking here later today, and he mentioned something that corresponds very closely to my own experience working with French analysts versus American or British analysts. The latter immediately want you to illustrate everything you say with case material, whereas the French will talk for hours about theory without indicating how it might be applied to clinical work. Having trained in the French tradition, I know what it is to deal with American colleagues who will neither sit nor read through a long theoretical presentation. Because of this, I have always tried to integrate explicit clinical material into my lectures to illustrate what I am talking about. As you know, America is a very pragmatic country and looks for results. So if you talk endlessly about the "fundamental fantasy" in such a way that the usefulness of the idea in practice is not immediately obvious, it becomes next to impossible to motivate people to take the time to study Lacan's work, which can be quite challenging.

Now for the French, the *utility* of the idea is secondary. This idea is even reflected to some degree in a comment Lacan (2006a, p. 324) makes when he says that a cure comes as an after-thought, side effect, bonus, or added benefit in analysis ("*la guérison comme bénéfice de surcroît de la cure psychanalytique*"). In a British or American context, it would be virtual heresy to say such a thing.

As I understand it, you have been quite vocal about the inadequacies of English translations of Lacan's work. Professor Moyaert mentioned yesterday that the retranslation of selections from Lacan's *Écrits* is almost ready. I was wondering how the various works in translation are coming along and when they are likely to appear.

The new version of *Écrits: A Selection*, which is the same selection that was published 25 years ago by Alan Sheridan, will finally be out in September 2002. It has been a protracted uphill battle, but the editors at Norton and I have finally prevailed. The complete *Écrits*will still be a few years in the making, because I have to muster the intestinal fortitude, or whatever one might call it, before deciding to start again. It is a difficult and in many ways thankless task, which can be interesting at some levels, but there is a lot of fairly boring background research to be done as well.

What about the English-speaking audience for Lacan? While Freudian psychoanalysis as a psychiatric tool is fighting for credibility in some circles in North America, Lacan seems to be gaining an ever-wider audience, particularly in critical theory. Given the improved translations of Lacan that will soon be available, do you have any thoughts on the kind of reception or impact they might have?

My sense is that the reception of Lacan is changing a bit in the States at this time. The initial reception by psychoanalysts, psychologists, and psychiatrists was quite cold, but this has taken a turn in the last 20 years through the efforts of people like John Muller, Bill Richardson, and myself. We have attempted to present Lacan in a clinical manner to people in their own language, trying to overcome the difficulty of his texts by making his ideas more presentable to people. The fact is that most psychologists and psychiatrists will not read theoretical texts in the way that critical theorists or people in film studies or philosophy are inclined to do. They are just not used to dealing with texts like Lacan's, and I think the new translations will help in the sense that they will make Lacan a lot more accessible and readable.

This does not mean his work will become transparent, because his work will never be transparent, yet I think my new translation does make it easier to grasp more of what Lacan is saying. There are 80 to a hundred pages of footnotes in the back of the book that will also assist in providing some context for people. My hope is that this will help, at least to some degree, modify Lacan's audience in North America. In contrast to his growing influence in the general area of psychology, however, there is a turn away from Lacan's work in women's studies and literary criticism, possibly as a result of the desire in these disciplines to move on in the search for the next so-called big thing. A theory that is divorced from its practice can't expect to have a long life expectancy.

Would you agree that many of Freud's ideas have infiltrated everyday consciousness to such an extent that they have become touchstones for our larger society, apart from their constructive role in a clinical setting?

The more Freud's terms have become vulgarized and disseminated, the more they have been simplified. The more they are absorbed into a discipline like psychology, the less content remains in any of them. In order to assimilate a notion like the unconscious, psychologists reduce it to something that it is not, or reduce to its barest bones. This can be seen in certain studies that try to prove whether Freud is right or wrong, for example, that dreams involve wish-fulfillment—the researchers could obviously study nothing more than conscious wishes, whereas Freud clearly states that it is unconscious wishes that are fulfilled in dreams! Even though the researchers determined he was right, they concluded he was right about something he did not postulate, or that vastly oversimplifies what he did postulate.

In the very presumption that his ideas must be studied empirically, researchers end up reducing wish-fulfillment and the unconscious to something unrecognizable, attempting to "prove" ideas that certainly were not Freud's. There has been a spreading of Freudianism through dilution and simplification, which saps the power Freud's discourse originally had.

I think the situation is a bit different with regard to Lacan's discourse—his terms are so hard to grasp that they resist this kind of facile assimilation. Even in France today, where Lacan is fairly widely read, there is not that much bandying about of his terms in everyday discourse, and this I think says something about how difficult he made it for people to assimilate them. I believe he did so deliberately, at least in part.

Would you agree that the larger appeal of Lacan, at least in philosophy, lies in his attempt to provide a general theory of the subject, rather than restrict his insights to clinical pathology alone?

I think Lacan provides a general theory of subjectivity. He attempts to subvert a certain reading of Descartes' cogito. As Lacan says in his lectures in the late 1960s, human subjectivity is essentially defined not by a conjunction but rather by a disjunction between thinking and being, in which the two shall never meet. Descartes was mistaken: there is no place where I am both thinking and I am. It is always one or the other—as Lacan sometimes puts it, there is a forced choice between the two. We can see in this an attempt to formulate what human subjectivity is about. Lacan also tries to flesh out subjectivity by introducing such terms as the "Borromean knot," which is a knot between the imaginary, the symbolic, and the real. This could be of great interest to philosophers, because it describes how the world of sensation, the world of language, and the real are tied together—when, that is, they *are*tied together, for they aren't for everyone.

The issue of transition came up in your talk yesterday [on fantasies and the fundamental fantasy]. As you mentioned, there is movement between the imaginary and the symbolic in the realm of fantasy. The symbolic, which is generally fixed, can become fluid. This fluidity is made possible by imaginary identification. Is this idea of transition of particular interest to your research?

I am not sure I would agree with you that there is fluidity to the imaginary. Such fluidity would then be contrasted with some sort of stasis of the symbolic, which— in my opinion—is not Lacan's position. In

Lacan's view, we are captured by the imaginary, captured by certain images that have become of primary importance to us. There is not much flux available in the imaginary. In fact, it is precisely by symbolizing certain relationships, which had once been exclusively imaginary, that new permutations become possible. For example, it often happens that talking about one's various fantasies in analysis leads them to change. One's position within the fantasies, which may initially be quite fixed, may begin to shift as one speaks. Once fantasies are symbolized—that is, articulated in speech to another person—they begin to lose their hold on the analysand. So I associate flux with the symbolic, because of the movement of the signifying chain, and juxtapose it to the fixity or rigidity of the imaginary register.

The question of transition from imaginary stasis to symbolic fluidity is certainly important, because any time we analyze a fantasy there are multiple possible subject positions within the fantasy, and it is not exactly clear what the fantasizer is enjoying. In other words, it is not clear whether the subject is enjoying the position of one of the actors in the fantasy scene, the position of one of the objects in the fantasy, or even the position of outside observer.

You mentioned earlier in our conversation that Descartes is a counterpoint of sorts to Lacan. I wanted to ask you about some of the philosophers who most interested you before you committed yourself so wholeheartedly to psychoanalysis?

The philosophy department at Cornell, like those at the majority of American universities, was predominantly analytic, there being but one person who taught Kant, Hegel, and Dostoyevsky. I managed to study a little bit of their work while doing my B.A. there. After I finished it, I began to read Marx and Hegel quite a lot as well as Althusser. Strangely enough, perhaps, I came to psychoanalysis through critical theory—thinkers like Habermas, Marcuse, and Adorno—yet it was actually through Deleuze and Guattari's book *Anti-Oedipus* that I first heard about Lacan.

A version of this interview, which took place on February 15, 2002, at the Catholic University of Louvain in Belgium, appeared in *The Leuven Philosophy Newsletter*, Volume 11, 2002–2003, pp. 20–23.

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LETTER TO THE EDITOR OF *SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN*

Jonathan Piel, Editor Scientific American, Inc.

415 Madison Ave.

New York, NY 10017-1111

Dear Mr. Piel,

The finest equipment in the world will not stop brain researchers from making the most elementary errors in test design. Marcus E. Raichle's experiments, reported on in "Visualizing the Mind" in your April 1994 issue, while purportedly aimed at understanding "the relation between the human mind and the brain," shows a decided misunderstanding of the former. Take, for example, his experiment described on pages 61–62: the subject is asked to generate and speak aloud "a verb appropriate for the noun" presented to him or her. Now while Raichle's example of an appropriate verb for "hammer" is "to hit," one of the questions likely going through the subject's mind is, "what is appropriate in this experimental context?"

Raichle asks his subjects to engage in a specialized form of word association, and—as the technique known as "automatic writing" shows—there is no such thing as an inherently *inappropriate* association. Perfectly ordinary verb responses to the noun "hammer" may, for example, include "to pound," "to stamp," "to ring out," "to badger," "to pump," "to drive fast," "to forge," and even "to beat up" or "to have sex." The first set of responses move in a slightly *poetic* direction of associated meanings, and the second in a more violent or sexual direction. The fact that the experimenter asks for "appropriate" responses means that the subject has to censor myriad associations, even if they come to mind, engaging in a complex process of word selection on the basis of what linguists call "paradigmatic relations." Thus in the "Before Practice/After Practice" illustration (p. 62), the upper tier of brain images shows the work done by the subject to *exclude* socially and contextually inappropriate associations—that is, considerable censorship—in addition to the "purely linguistic" task of associating a noun with a verb. Similarly, the lower tier depicts relatively "free association," once the subject has determined what kind of associations are considered "appropriate" in this particular context, and no longer needs to exert so much censorship to channel his or her thoughts in the "proper" direction.

Researchers should realize that there is a social and psychoanalytic dimension to every iteration of such a task: they are never mapping a pure grammatical function or a purely technical problem-solving task!

The linguistic naiveté of such research is apparent at every step, regardless of the school of linguistics one prefers. There is no such thing as "word perception" (p. 61): what one hears is a series of phonemes and what one sees is a series of written letters; words are constructed in the mind, not perceived. Again, although linguists and psychoanalysts have been contending for over a century that "we occasionally speak without consciously thinking about the consequences" (p. 62), the fact that areas of the brain believed to be associated with consciousness are discovered *not* to be engaged when the subject reads

aloud nouns that are presented on a monitor has nothing to do with this contention. What *is* related to this discovery is the fact that we sometimes speak more or less grammatical and contextually relevant sentences "without consciously thinking about the consequences"—in other words, speech and consciousness need not go hand in hand.

One can only hope that someday linguists and psychoanalysts will be included in at least the test-design and results-interpretation stages of brain research so that the conclusions drawn will be something other than banal.

Bruce Fink

This letter to the editor of the magazine *Scientific American*, written in April 1994, was (needless to say) never published.

17

A SUMMARY COMPARISON OF PSYCHOANALYTIC PARADIGMS

Common Caricature of Freud's Approach (assumes there is one self-consistent model that can be found in Freud's work)	Contemporary Eclectic Approach (combination of object relations, ego psychology, and relational/intersubjective)	Proposed Lacanian Approach (for treatment of neurosis, not psychosis)
Role of the analyst		
Objective observer, translator, decoder, decipherer. *Comment*: Indeed, Freud seems to have done far too much analyzing and interpreting at times (e.g., case of Dora). He cautions us not to interpret until the analysand is but one short step from arriving at the same interpretation, but often seems not to have followed his own recommendation.	**Participant observer; total participant**. *Critique*: In wanting to be just as involved as the analysand, analysts overlook the fact that they align themselves with a certain conception of reality, "appropriate" behavior and affect, and "effective functioning" under present socioeconomic and political conditions, and view the analysand as needing to see things more their way. Total participation often means the analyst becomes extremely invested in particular outcomes (achievement of specific goals: making a relationship work, getting a promotion, etc.), leading to further alienation of the analysand.	**The analyst employs the Other**, as located between the analyst and the analysand or as encompassing both of them; avoids participating as ego (imaginary); the analysand does the majority of the analyzing; the analyst provides occasional polyvalent interpretations. Analysts cannot be neutral, but are imbued with a desire that takes precedence over all other desires they may have regarding the analysand: a desire for the analytic work to go on, whether the analysand pursues the goals analysts would like or not.
Blank screen, mirror. *Comment*: Freud recommends this as an ideal, realizing that it can never be completely achieved. The goal is to obstruct as few projections as possible, whether positive or negative, due to the symbolic and affective material they will bring forward.	**Co-participant**; inevitable embeddedness of analyst in relational matrix. *Critique*: By constantly reminding the analysand of the analyst's individuality, projection of imagos is thwarted; in the effort to "reparent" or "reeducate" the analysand, the analyst wants to be viewed as the good parent, and often ends up dodging bad-parent projections instead of accepting them and working them through.	**Analyst as object *a***, cause of the analysand's desire, motor force of the analysis; emphasis on the real. The analyst cultivates inscrutability and speaks enigmatically for the most part, keeping the analysand guessing. The analyst is very involved in the therapy, highly attentive and ready to intervene at any moment —but not at the level of her/his ego or personality.

	The analyst wants to be loved by the analysand, instead of maintaining (like Socrates, I would argue) the purely loving position.	
Transference		
Transference as distortion. *Comment*: Transference is a case of mistaken identity; the analyst's individuality/personality should not stand in the way of it occurring. Transference brings out useful projections, which can then be worked through.	**Analyst's actual behavior strongly affects analysand**. *Critique*: The analyst acts differently with analysands than their parents did, supposedly allowing them to break out of old patterns of behavior toward significant others. However, this often leads simply to conscious knowledge of old patterns by the "observing ego," not to new patterns.	**Transference occurs in all three registers** and the analyst must focus on the symbolic dimension. Transference most often appears in the form of resistance, which is understood as the analyst's resistance to doing or saying something that will assist the analysand in symbolizing the real.
Objective reflection of history. *Critique*: Freud actually considers the work to involve a construction/ reconstruction of history, not some sort of objective reflection of history: that was rejected along with the seduction theory.	**Activity of two individuals**. *Critique*: Doing what? Analysts sometimes seem to discuss how a patient's analysis affected or helped them more than how it affected or helped the analysand.	**Filling in the gaps in and reconstructing history**; making one's history one's own: **subjectivization**.
Countertransference		
Countertransference as failure to remain neutral.	**Countertransference is an objective creation of the analysand's** that can be used to understand the analysand's state, for example, via projective identification. Analyst plays roles assigned by analysand, cannot help playing the game; "role responsiveness."	**Neutrality as useless**; analyst's desire must be foremost; imaginary relations kept to a minimum, however.
Analyst does not "feel the analysand's feelings."	**Analyst feels the feelings that the analysand unwittingly has or has split off (projective identification)**. *Critique*: Feelings are not repressed; thoughts (representations or signifiers) are. Not all analysts feel what others are feeling, much less what	**What the analyst feels is generally a function of how the analyst situates him- or herself in the therapy**, whether as an ego (or personality, on the imaginary axis), as the Other (symbolic), or as object *a* (real). In the first case, the analyst is likely to feel challenged or called into question

	they are *not* feeling, and the notion of a direct, unmediated communication of affect (or "split-off affect") rests on shaky theoretical ground (see Fink, 2007, Chapter 7).	a good deal of the time. Analysts should look for the source of what they are feeling in themselves and in the analytic work first and foremost.
Product of analyst's unresolved conflicts and childhood residues.	**Countertransference is grounded in interpersonal empathy**.	**Empathy (*Einfühlung*) is "connivance"**; it means the analyst buys at least part of the story analysands tell about themselves; it is patronizing.
Type and role of intervention		
Accurate interpretation; emphasis on content and precision. *Critique*: Freud virtually always insists that the value of an interpretation is determined *not* by its accuracy but by what new material it allows the analysand to bring up. *Comment*: Freud no doubt sometimes assumed his interpretations were accurate even when the analysand repeatedly denied them and brought up no confirmatory material.	**Concrete, unambiguous interpretation and corrective emotional experience or mutative experience owing to new relationship with the analyst**. *Critique*: Although analysts claim to be on the same level as the analysand (there being "mutuality" and "reciprocity" between them), analysts assume they are "universal subjects of affect": *if the analysand affects them in some way, he or she undoubtedly affects everyone else in the same way too*. This allows analysts to interpret on the basis of their own feelings (countertransference) and use themselves as the standard against which the analysand's "maladaptive," "inappropriate," or "immature" behavior is judged and "corrected" through the use of interpretations that strive to feed the analysand precise, unambiguous meanings.	**Oracular interpretation**; polyvalent interpretation aims at being evocative, requiring the analysand to work to find meaning(s) in it. Interpretation aims at creating truth, not "discovering" it: it is a constitutive process.
Countertransference disclosure as diversion away from the main focus of therapy. *Comment*: This does not mean that analysts must not admit when they have made a mistake or been at fault (forgetting appointments,	**Countertransference disclosure contributes to the main focus of therapy**. *Critique*: Here again analysts are the universal subjects of feeling: if they feel a certain way during the session, that's because the	**Countertransference disclosure contraindicated**.

making scheduling errors, blowing up, etc.).	analysand is doing something to them, the same exact thing he or she does to everyone else. But not everyone (whether inside or outside the consulting room) reacts identically to an analysand's behavior.	
Interpretation of transference recommended, specifically when transference has become an obstacle (resistance) to the treatment and can be tied to the analysand's history.	**Interpretation of transference often recommended in here and now**. *Critique*: Research by analysts of this orientation (e.g., Piper et al., 1991) shows that it is often best to keep transference interpretations to a strict minimum; some researchers even question their effectiveness in general (William Henry et al., 1994).	**Interpretation of transference recommended only as a last resort**, for example, to get the analysis moving again during a period of stasis; interpretation of transference generally leads to "the elimination of the subject supposed to know."
Revealing historical truth that is scientifically objective. *Critique*: Freud (1964) clearly talks about the construction of truth.	**Narrative truth.** *Critique*: The backdrop remains a commonsense view of reality that is based on the dominant Eurocentric culture.	**Truth is an ongoing dialectical construction** related to psychical reality (not the supposed "world out there") and the progressive symbolization of the real; something feels true when it hits the real, or something unconscious, as opposed to revealing a defense.
Change occurs through interpretation.	**Internalization of analyst; modifications of representations of self and others**. *Critique*: Representations are modified at the level of the observing ego, change often failing to occur at the spontaneous, lived level of the unconscious and/or drives.	**Change occurs through the articulation of experience in speech and interpretation**. The analysand does the lion's share of the analyzing and interpreting.
Insight; expansion of consciousness.	**Shared analytic reality; social constructivism.** Analysts use themselves as the measure of all things and compare the analysand's behavior, thoughts, and affects with their own to assess the analysand's degree of reality contact and normality. Imaginary focus;	In the contemporary eclectic approach, there is no recognition that **"reality" is structured by one's fundamental fantasy**. The analyst and the analysand do not "share" reality, nor do any other two people. The analyst works on the basis of the analysand's discourse.

concern with social norms.

General model

Clear differentiation between neurosis and psychosis. Psychoanalysis is not considered yet able to treat psychosis.

Neurosis and psychosis are situated on a continuum. Everyone has a psychotic core. One basic style of treatment is used with everyone.

Structural distinction between neurosis and psychosis. Different techniques required for each. Grey area sketched out where knotting together of the symbolic, imaginary, and real takes a form other than the Oedipal form and where the analyst must tread lightly.

One-person psychology.
Critique: Freud does not take the "person" as a monolithic entity. While the work is intended to be for the benefit of one party alone (the analysand), Lacan suggests that the truth arrived at by Freud and his analysand is a truth for both parties, as in the case of the Rat Man.

Two-person psychology.
Critique: The two "persons" present seem to reduce to one as the analysand's ego ("observing ego") allies with and models itself on the analyst's ego. In certain cases, this is formulated as identification by the analysand with the analyst's strong ego; in others, the model is one of introjection.

Four-person (or more).
Comment: The L schema introduces four roles for each party and the game of analytic bridge requires four players. The ego (structured like a symptom, and "the mental illness of man") is not taken to be the analyst's ally but rather a considerable obstacle to the analytic work.

Asymmetry in therapeutic relationship.
Comment: Critics often take Freud to task for supposedly adopting the position of powerful master of knowledge, failing to recognize the importance of the analyst being an Other like no other.

Mutuality.
Critique: In the interest of equality (subverting power differentials) or repudiating the notion that the analyst has more knowledge than the "client," nothing but egos are given a place; although the unconscious is still paid lip service, the here and now are given most attention. The goal adopted is for the analysand's ego to become like (e.g., as autonomous and pattern-observing as) the analyst's.

Asymmetry.
Comment: The analyst holds the place of the analysand's unconscious as what Lacan calls the "subject supposed to know," thereby preserving a place for what the analysand otherwise repudiates. Analysts are imbued with a desire for the analysand to symbolize the real—that is, to put into words what has never before been spoken.

Intrapsychic conflict among internal agencies set in stone long ago.

Conflicts are interpersonal and based on repeated interactions.
Critique: It is assumed that the analysand's way of interacting with others is not based on any fundamental structures (e.g., fundamental fantasy) but can be radically transformed through a fairly small number of

Structural model of diagnosis, emphasis on unconscious desire, unconscious identifications, symptoms with overdetermined meanings, and fundamental fantasy.

	interactions with the analyst who does not conform to the pattern of interactions the analysand expects. The emphasis here goes on the breaking of patterns of relating behavior, based *de facto* on a behavioral model: the analyst engages in a form of reconditioning of the analysand.	
Mind as structured from within, not in interaction with others.	**Mind is structured from without**; internal working model of interactions.	**The unconscious is the Other's discourse** (Lacan, 2006a, pp. 16 and 379); inside and outside are structured like a Klein bottle or a cross-cap.
Objectivist, natural science. Analyst, not analysand, is adept at testing reality. *Critique*: Freud's concept of "reality testing" has little, if anything, to do with verification of a correspondence between one's "internal representations" and the "real world"; it is primarily related to the attempts we make to grasp what is going on within our own psyches by reading the *speech* that comes out of our own mouths (see Fink, 2007, pp. 222–28).	**Perspectivist.** *Critique*: While "perspectivism" may sound attractive on paper, the analysand is nevertheless generally determined to be "out of touch with reality" on the basis of the analyst's view of reality, which usually coincides better than the analysand's with the dominant view of reality in their culture. The analysand is considered to be developmentally regressed; this is determined by a model of infant, child, adolescent, and adult development that is supposedly universally valid.	**Saussurian linguistics** allows Lacan to leave behind the question of the referent, focusing instead on the relation (or nonrelation) between the signifi er and the signifi ed; "reality" is understood to be constructed on the basis of a specifi c language; analysts turn their attention not to some supposed reality that the analysand is thought to refuse to face but to the real as that portion of the analysand's experience that has yet to be symbolized.
Tensions between instinct, coping mechanisms, and society. *Critique*: Freud's *Triebe* are not biological instincts but drives that form (unlike instincts) in relation to parental/societal demands.	**Transactional patterns derived from interactive field.** *Critique*: Analyst enlists analysand's ego in "stepping back" and observing patterns developing in the therapy situation. Analysts "metacommunicate" with the analysand about their "interactions" in an "objectivist" and "objectivizing" manner (e.g., "the analyst [enlists] the analysand's dispassionate examination of the interactive process between the two of them"), clearly repudiating the	**Analysand enmeshed in the imaginary, symbolic, and real**, both in life outside the sessions and in the transference; "the analyst's speech is [always] heard as coming from the transferential Other."

notion that they are always and inescapably situated transferentially by the analysand.

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