

"INTERPRETATION: FROM TRUTH TO EVENT", ARGUMENT OF THE 2020 NLS CONGRESS IN GHENT, BY ÉRIC LAURENT

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Interpretation: From Truth to Event

by **Éric Laurent**

Speech delivered in Tel Aviv, 2 June 2019

As soon as one evokes interpretation a misunderstanding arises. The binary between the text and its interpretation misleads us. We immediately fall into the illusion that the language of the unconscious exists and that it calls for a metalanguage: interpretation. Lacan did not stop hammering home that the experience of psychoanalysis allowed him not only to affirm that there was no such thing as a metalanguage, but that saying so gave him the only chance of orienting himself correctly in this experience. Two fundamental propositions follow from this. Desire is not the metalinguistic interpretation of a previous indistinct drive. Desire is its interpretation. Both things are situated at the same level. A second proposition must be added to this: "Psychoanalysts are part and parcel of the concept of the unconscious, as they constitute that to which the unconscious is addressed." [\[1\]](#) The psychoanalyst can only hit the target if he aligns

himself with the interpretation performed by the unconscious, already structured like a language. Still, we must not reduce this language to the mechanical conception that linguistics can have of it. We must add to that the topology of poetics. The poetic function reveals that language is not information, but resonance, and emphasizes the matter that links sound and meaning. It reveals what Lacan called *moterialism*, which in its center closes around a void.

The void and the subject

The Seminars begin with the question of interpretation as a practice of bringing the central void of language to light. As the first lines of the first Seminar indicate: “The master breaks the silence with anything [*n’importe quoi*] – with a sarcastic remark, with a kick-start. That is how a Buddhist master conducts his search for meaning, according to the technique of *zen*. It behoves the students to find out for themselves the answer to their own questions. The master does not teach *ex cathedra* a ready-made science; he supplies an answer when the students are on the verge of finding it.”^[ii]

Make no mistake, these lines not only concern the form to be taken by teaching in general, they aim at the practice of analytic interpretation most profoundly anchored in the experience of the cure. We will see this later. Let’s accept this link between interpretation and this “*n’importe quoi*,” the “*anything whatever*,”^[iii] in the broadest sense, the heterogeneous. It will then be easier for us to follow the development of Lacan’s reflection on interpretation from his initial teaching to what he was led to by his last teaching in “passing to the other side” of interpretation, according to the problematic brought out by Jacques-Alain Miller.

On the most radical horizon of this new perspective, Lacan will be led to base the very possibility of interpretation on a new *dit-mansion*, a heterogeneous mixture of signifier and letter. It is this new dimension (as a specific contribution of psychoanalysis that adds to language functions unperceived by linguistics, even by Jakobson, who was so sensible to the poetic function) that links interpretation to the definition of the symptom as a *body event*. Interpretation thereby becomes *an event of saying*, which can be raised to the dignity of the symptom or, according to Lacan’s cryptic expression, *extinguish it*. It is this line of development that I will be exploring in this article. I will first consider the heterogeneity of interpretation. I will then go on to expose the passage to the other side of interpretation. We will then consider interpretation as jaculation, between the oral and the written. I will end by considering

some aspects of the practice of the new di-mansion thus revealed, and how it allows us to move between the different levels of interpretation that are mobilized in the course of the psychoanalytic experience itself.

Interpretation as heterogeneous

When Lacan isolates this *anything* from the Zen master,^[iv] Lacan is not speaking about Zen technique in general, but in particular that of Linji, one of the founders of a school whose influence was central in the transmission of *Chan* Buddhism to Japan. This author was dear to the person Lacan used to refer to as his “good mentor,”^[v] Paul Demiéville, who in 1947 published an important study, *The Spiritual Mirror*, which he used as reference. The sinologist, reading Sanskrit and a specialist in Buddhism, established the difference between Indian and Chinese Buddhism, contrasting Indian *gradualism* with Chinese *subitism*.^[vi] The emphasis placed by Linji on the sudden production of emptiness by means of rupture is the very example of this subitism. In this sense, Lacan’s references to lightning are indebted as much to the lightning of Linji’s emptiness as Heidegger’s Heraclitan lightning. Jacques-Alain Miller has insisted on this side of Lacan’s teaching, namely: “allowing oneself to be led in this way by the letter of Freud’s work, up to the spark [the *lightning*] that it necessitates, without selecting a destination in advance—and by not backing away from the residue, found anew at the end, of its enigmatic point of departure, and even by not considering that he had accounted, at the end of the proceedings, for the astonishment by which he entered into the proceedings...”^[vii]

We are authorized to relate the intervention of the Zen master to deliver the practitioner from his mental habits with the analytical interpretation brought about by Lacan’s saying [*le dit de Lacan*], according to which interpretation must aim at the object, especially in the guise of the void. “Everyone knows that a Zen exercise has something to do, though one doesn’t know what it means, with the subjective realization of a void.”^[viii]

The emphasis on the flash of lightning emphasizes that our relationship to temporality is more profound than the description of the relationship to time, whether it be the number of sessions or their duration. Along with this Zen version of the lightning strike [*point d’éclair*], the other most developed version is that of Heideggerian lightning based on Heraclitus’s aphorism:^[ix] “Lightning governs all” – this is one of the translations of this aphorism. Let’s at least mention this: lightning is not part of the “all”.

Lightning is not a *being* [*étant*]. It is not counted among being(s) and does not add to it.

It is light that allows it to be distinguished. On the horizon of the analysis, it is what makes it possible to discern each thing in its singularity.

Analytic interpretation takes this heterogeneous into account by not only focusing on the word [*parole*] or the statement [*énoncé*]. Beyond its variety of support, it must be guided by the search for a truth effect conceived as a rupture. Its '*n'importe quoi*' is thus not equivalent to any intervention by the psychoanalyst, it must also want to produce an effect of rupture of truth – which is neither simply *adequatio*, nor the production of any meaning whatever – and take account of the aporias of this aim.

This is why, in the 1950s, Lacan became interested in the contribution of the heterodox English psychoanalyst Edward Glover, from the 1930s, referring to his comments on the effect of inaccurate interpretation as follows:

“An article that I advise you to read on the matter is one by Glover called “Therapeutic Effects of Inexact Interpretation,”... It's a very interesting question, and it leads Glover to draw up a general situation about all the positions taken by whoever finds himself in the position of consultant in relation to every kind of disorder. Having done this, he generalizes and extends the notion of interpretation to every formulated position taken by whomever one consults and draws up a scale of the different positions of the doctor in relation to the patient.”[\[x\]](#)

Glover is sensitive to the aporias inherent in interpretation but does not take account of the operative value of the place of the truth as such. The phlogistic fluid in question is in fact meaning as it appears as escaping the relationship between human beings spontaneously without any basis or principle.

“This importance of the signifier in the localization of analytic truth appears implicitly when an author holds firmly to the internal coherence of analytic experience in defining aporias. One should read Edward Glover to gauge the price he pays for not having the term ‘signifier’ at his disposal. In articulating the most relevant views, he finds interpretation everywhere, even in the banality of a medical prescription [...] Conceived of in this way, interpretation becomes a sort of phlogiston: it is manifest in everything that is understood rightly or wrongly...”[\[xi\]](#)

Because of the proliferation of meaning, Glover had the insight to grasp that the binary of the true and the false is not suited to psychoanalysis:

“When Mr. Glover speaks about correct or incorrect interpretation, he can only do so by avoiding this dimension of the truth [...] it is very difficult to speak about a ‘false’ interpretation [...] of incorrect interpretation [...] [for] sometimes it is not wide of the mark for all that. [...] Because truth rebels! And that however inexact it might be one has all the same tickled something.”^[xii]

But what Lacan is highlighting is that the level of opposition between the true and the false, insufficient to qualify what is involved in the analytic experience is the place in reserve of truth as that which can make a hole, make a hole in discourse, and that this place is occupied by the psychoanalyst who has authorized the discourse of ‘free association’, which Lacan clears of the historically connoted term of *association*, to qualify it simply as *free speech* [*discours libre*].

“In this analytic discourse designed to capture truth, it is the interpretative interpretation-response that represents the truth, the interpretation [...] as being *possible* there [...] the discourse that we have specified as free discourse has for its function *to make room for it*. It tends towards nothing else than to establish a *locus of reserve* in order that this interpretation maybe inscribed there as a locus reserved for the truth. This place is the one that the analyst occupies. I point out to you that he occupies it, but that it is not where the patient puts him! This is the interest of the definition that I give of transference [...] He is placed in the position of the *subject supposed to know*.”^[xiii]

The analytic interpretation is thus taken between the knowledge supposed about the mysterious link between the unconscious and *jouissance* and the actual emptiness which it is a question of producing: “In other words, he is between two stools, between the false position of being the subject supposed to *know* (which he knows he is not), and that of having to rectify the effects of this *supposition* on the part of the subject, and this in the name of truth. This is why the transference is the source of what is called resistance.”^[xiv]

To the interpretation that produces meaning that can be understood, without any limit, Lacan opposes the truth effect of interpretation in so far as it refers to a fundamental void, a first absence. Interpretation thus finds its foundation as the resumption of the insertion in the signifier of what he calls, in a remarkable way, *life*.

“... signification no more emanates from life than phlogiston escapes from bodies in

combustion. We should speak of signification rather as of the combination of life with the O atom of the sign [Lacan clarifies in a footnote: the “O” must be read as zero], the sign insofar as it first of all connotes presence or absence, by essentially introducing the *and* that links them, since in connoting presence or absence, it institutes presence against a background of absence, just as it constitutes absence in presence.”[\[xv\]](#)

And Lacan gives as the figure of this inaugural moment of conjunction, between the place of the Zero position of the subject included in the signifier with life, in the game of the *Fort-Da*: “This is the point of insemination for a symbolic order that pre-exists the infantile subject and in accordance with which he has to structure himself.”[\[xvi\]](#)

Lacan concludes his development on the fact that the heterogeneous of interpretation does not for all that leave it without rules. It is not everything and anything [*tout et n’importe quoi*]. It is an anything which must aim at the void of the first absence of the lost object. It is accompanied by a particular mark drawn from life and marks the place of a non-object which he will soon name *object a*. “I will spare myself the task of providing the rules of interpretation. It is not that they cannot be formulated, but their formalizations presuppose developments that I cannot presume to be known.”[\[xvii\]](#) The developments that he leaves to one side in the “Direction of the Treatment” are those of the relationship between the heterogeneous of interpretation and its precise aim, namely subjective emptiness, the memorial of the trace of *jouissance* left by the initial lost object, by the impossibility of repeating the contingent encounter with *jouissance* exactly as it was. It can but be repeated with its failure of missed encounter. Here is the psychoanalyst version of the Buddhist void and the emptiness that it is a question of producing in the experience.

From translation interpretation to cut interpretation

It is in the link between the heterogeneous interpretation and the inaugural void that the passage, in Lacan’s teaching, between interpretation that gives meaning and its other side is situated. Jacques-Alain Miller has defined the problematic in an important article that opposes translation interpretation to asemantic interpretation, which aims only at the opacity of *jouissance*. The empty place is no longer “in reserve”, it is brought to the fore: “The question is not to know whether the session is long or short, silent or chatty. Either the session is a semantic unity, in which S2 comes to punctuate the elaboration – delusion in the service of the Name of the Father – (many sessions are like that), or the analytic session is an a-semantic unity bringing the subject back to the opacity of his *jouissance*. This supposes that it be cut before it closes on itself.”[\[xviii\]](#) The

fundamental polarity is no longer between meaning and truth as a hole, but between the two sides of *jouissance*: that which is an empty place in discourse and makes a hole in it, but which imposes itself in its fullness of opacity.

This new polarity is grasped in its full development only by breaking with illusions not only of intersubjectivity, but also of dialogue. This is what Jacques-Alain Miller brings to light with his invention of the concept of *l'apparole* which reconfigures the developments of the last period of Lacan's teaching. "Now, *l'apparole* is a monologue. This theme of monologue haunts the Lacan of the 70's – the reminder that speech is above all monologue. Here, I'm proposing *l'apparole* as the concept which responds to what comes to light in the Seminar *Encore*, when Lacan asks in a rhetorical way, *does lalangue serve, first and foremost, to dialogue?* Nothing is less certain."[\[xix\]](#)

If, for *lalangue*, being useful is not a requirement, it is because it is linked, in part, with *jouissance*: "which answers to the formula that Lacan gives in *Encore* – "There, where it speaks, it enjoys." That means, in this context, *it enjoys by speaking.*"[\[xx\]](#)

While semantic interpretation wanted to revive something, interpretation which confronts *jouissance* aims, on the contrary, at a non-revival. "There must be a limit to the autistic monologue of *jouissance*. And I find it very illuminating to say: *Analytic interpretation establishes a limit*. Interpretation, by contrast, has an infinite potentiality."[\[xxi\]](#) The infinite potentiality of *free speech* [*discours libre*] poses no other limit to *jouissance* than the pleasure principle. The limit of interpretation aims at something else. "*Saying anything* [*Dire n'importe quoi*] always leads to the pleasure principle, to the *Lustprinzip*. That is to say: "There, where it speaks, it enjoys. It is the commentary of the Id. Especially because we put prohibitions, inhibitions, prejudices, etc. in parentheses once it really begins to run at this level, there is a satisfaction of speech."[\[xxii\]](#) Jacques-Alain Miller thus gives interpretation a new aim. Instead of recourse to the pleasure principle and its indefinite possibilities, it is a matter of introducing the modality of the impossible as a limit. "This indicates what the place of analytic interpretation could be, since it would intervene on the opposite slope of the pleasure principle. We would need to formulate, along the lines of what Lacan suggests (...) that analytic interpretation introduces the impossible."[\[xxiii\]](#) Through the introduction of this modality which breaks with the free association of speech, by setting in place a "certain *it doesn't mean anything*,"[\[xxiv\]](#) interpretation, which passes through speech, passes from the side of the written, alone capable of taking charge of the hole of meaning and the impossible [\[xxv\]](#) "I like formalization, interpretation, is more on the side

meaning and the impossible. [LXXV](#) Like formalization, interpretation... is more on the side of writing than speech. In any case, it must be constructed from the written [*l'écrit*] at every opportunity, insofar as formalization supposes the written.” [LXXVI](#)

The problematic of a-semantic interpretation introduces a hybrid dimension between the signifier and the letter, while a large part of Lacan’s teaching opposes them. This reflects the fact that Lacan comes to oppose interpretation and speech. “Analytic interpretation [...] is brought to bear in a way that goes much further than speech. Speech is an object of elaboration for the analysand, but what does it bear of the effects of what the analyst says – for he does say. It is not nothing to formulate that the transference plays a role there, but that does not clarify anything. It would be a question of explaining how interpretation is brought to bear and that it does not necessarily involve an enunciation.” [LXXVII](#)

The a-semantic and the “it was written”

The Freudian unconscious, J.-A. Miller says, “this unconscious that Lacan translated with the term subject supposed to know [is] a structural illusion: the illusion that the past, in so far as contains everything that used to be the present [...] was there before the very experience of the present.” [LXXVIII](#)

The subject supposed to know is the illusion according to which what is said refers back to past, to what has taken place, as if it was already there before the experience of the analytic session, before speaking. Let’s take this idea in its fullest force, as does J.-A. Miller. In our interpretation it is a matter of transforming the illusion, linked to the signifying chain, of the subject supposed to know, by showing that this illusion is founded on an unprecedented, new regime, that of the instance of the letter: the “it was written.”

In Lacan’s first teaching, interpretation has for effect to give access to chapters that have been erased from my history, to what has been written in the chapters of history. In the second, Lacan uncouples himself from this reference to history and keeps only the reference to the “it was written.” The effect of supposed knowledge, its generalization must be maintained on the basis of the “it was written.” A new conception of interpretation emerges from it: interpretation, the essence of which is homophonic wordplay, is the return of speech to writing, that is to say, the return of each present statement to its inscription, to its enunciation by the subject supposed to know.” [LXXIX](#)

The relation to enunciation in the regime of the subject supposed to know passes to that of the “it was written in the equivoque” thanks to the new conception of interpretation in Lacan’s second teaching. Interpretation as homophony (the first teaching) is taken in the generalization of the equivoque which supposes a return to *it is written*, it calls to the very complex relation between speech and writing. In Seminar XXIII, Lacan conceptualizes writing as the support of speech, refusing to follow Jacques Derrida on his idea of writing as imprinting, weft, trace. Lacan makes use of writing and defines it departing from the analytic experience, which brings back speech to writing, to the generalized structural illusion of the *it was written*. He constructs a literality, a relation to the instance of the letter on the basis of the experience. “An interpretation is always to say ‘you have read what is written badly.’ In this sense, interpretation is a rectification of the subject supposed to know’s reading. Interpretation supposes that speech itself is a reading, that it leads speech back to an ‘original text.’”[\[xxx\]](#)

In Seminar XXII, Lacan shows how signifiers come to be linked to the RSI knot – this letter in three dimensions. They rely on this writing. His construction of the Joyce case is the writing of the slipping [*lapsus*] of the knot. In the same way, we put this writing into play as support each time we make the subject hear an equivoque which makes the gap between speech and writing emerge. It is no longer solely a question of the S1 and S2, the support of the S2 giving sense to the S1 (which we make use of when it is possible to use the power of the interpretative chain, S1–S2). It is also a question of this writing-support that brings the extremely diverse registers of the equivoque to light, which broadens the scope of possible interpretations and the sense of our action.

The barred subject, identified with time’s arrow, “the one that supports all the paradoxes of the now,” does not know how to situate himself and wants to plug the holes of the want-of-being with the passions of being: love and hatred. And there are the passions of the soul, in other words the passions of the object *a*, of the body affected by jouissance. The interpretation of “it was written” intervenes in the register of the “pathos of the soul: [...] the fluctuation of states of the soul, with their duration, with their substitutions, with the margin that is left to the subject to make them last or try to reduce them.”[\[xxxi\]](#) To interpret means to read on this margin, to intervene on this margin.

In this sense, the production of interpretative lightning must be said in the plural. The lightnings of the unconscious, the lightning of the parlêtre, does not only include the lightning that depends on the signifying chain. *The lightning governs all the lightning*

lightning that depends on the signifying chain. *The lightning governs all*, the lightning flash governs all the signifiers in a compact chain. At the end of analysis, these detach themselves as “spare parts” [*pièces détachées*] – as J.-A. Miller indicates – S1, S1, S1, a swarm [*essaim*] which is no longer bound, compacted in a chain, but returned to fundamental chance. The lightning is also an event of the body which comes to mark LOM, who has a body and who suffers from it. The event of jouissance which comes to mark the body with its branding iron is also a lightning strike, but different from the previous one. As Lacan brought to light in Seminar XXIII, the lightning of the body event introduces an equivocal, a fissure in the body, sometimes in an instantaneous way. Concerning the phenomenon of belief and of radicalization, for example, one speaks of rapid radicalization: the moment before, he was not radicalized, the moment after, he is – *a little more and the bomb will explode*. When it is a question of belief, the subject holds himself on a thread: belief is linked, on the one hand, to the signifying chain and the Ideal and, on the other, to the register of the body event. These two orders of interpretation, with its infinitely varied registers, constitute a touchstone which guides our practice.

Interpretation as jaculation

Lacan was able to call the analyst’s act of saying [*dire*] which responds to the saying [*dire*] of the unconscious become hybrid, *jaculation*. “What we establish with the Borromean knot already goes against the image of concatenation. The discourse that it concerns does not make a chain [...] Consequently, the question arises as to whether the effect of meaning in its real is due to the use of words or to their jaculation... we used to believe it was the words that counted. Whereas if we take the trouble to isolate the category of the signifier, we can see that the jaculation has a sense that can be isolated.”^[xxxii] To retain this link of an effect of meaning that continues to exist, without believing in the significance [*portée*] of an enunciation, Lacan comes to posit the existence of a real effect of meaning. “The effect of meaning required of the analytic discourse is not imaginary. It is not symbolic either. It must be real. What I’m busy doing this year is thinking what the real of an effect of meaning could be.”^[xxxiii] This interpretation is not of the order of a translation by addition of a signifier two, S2, in relation to an S1, a signifier One. It does not aim at concatenation or the production of a signifying chain. It responds to the new aim of tightening the knot around the body event and the inscription that can be noted (α) in a renewed use: “The famous concept of the letter, which was made to overcome the dichotomy of the signifier and the object.”^[xxxiv]

Lacan had already used this term ‘jaculation’ to account for the power of the poetic text, whether with reference to Pindare^[xxxv] or Angelus Silesius and his *mystic jaculations*.^[xxxvi] Or again, of Serge Leclaire’s *Poordjeli*— an expression outside meaning of different elements of the fantasy, he made “a secrete jaculation, a jubilatory expression, an onomatopoeia,”^[xxxvii] as he made a jaculation out of the “Fort-Da”. In the seminar on *The Object of Psychoanalysis*, he took up the first sentences from his first Seminar on the action of the Zen master: “Everyone knows, though one does not know what it means, that a Zen exercise has something to do with the subjective realization of a void [...] the mental void that it is a matter of obtaining and which would be obtained, this singular moment, in an abruptness following a period of waiting, sometimes provoked by a word, a sentence, a jaculation, even a rude remark, a snub, a kick in the ass. It is quite certain that these kinds of slapstick moments or clownish behavior have meaning only in the light of a long subjective preparation [...]”^[xxxviii] We can now add that, in Zen Buddhism, Linji was the inventor, and also the one who best knew how to put it into practice, of what Demiéville translated as *eructation*: “An eructation, the inimitable way of conducting the Chan maieutic; Lin-tsi was regarded as being its most consummate virtuoso, if not its inventor.”^[xxxix]

Jacques-Alain Miller has given an updated version of this jaculation that gives it its full scope. He considers that Lacan goes beyond the Saussurean atom that links sound and meaning by using the voice. “An utterance is [...] subject to the binary matrix of statement and enunciation, which makes two. I would say today that vociferation – which I take as a third term after those of proposition and statement – overcomes the division of statement and enunciation. The vociferation is statement-enunciation as indivisible. [...] It does not take a distance from he who vociferates. And when there is no who, it is said all together. In other words, vociferation includes its point of emission.”^[xl]

What was called jaculation in Seminar XXII, as designating a real effect of meaning becomes, in Seminar XXIV, the *new signifier*. “When he appeals to a new signifier, in fact, it concerns a signifier that could have another use [...] a signifier that would be new, not simply because with it there would be one more signifier but because, instead of being contaminated by sleep, this new signifier would trigger an awakening.”^[xli]

This awakening is connected to the production of a real effect of meaning as the production of a subjective void. Thus, in his latest teaching, Lacan draws, in the fullest sense, with the knot, a modality of the treatment of the disruption of jouissance by the

sense, with the knot, a modality of the treatment of the disruption of *jouissance* by the One blunder [*Une bévue*]. For this, he revises the classical terms of the instruments of the psychoanalytic operation: the unconscious, transference, and interpretation, to propose new ones: the *parlêtre*, the act, and jaculation subject to the logic of the “There’s something of the One” [*Yad’l’Un*],” a jaculation that is central in Lacan’s last teaching.

From truth to writing

At the end of analysis there comes a moment when it is no longer interpreted [*ça ne s’interprète plus*]. The accounts of the pass testify to this and one can refer to the recent testimony of Clotilde Leguil. It is equivalent to an axiom in formal logic, except that an axiom is there from the start, as the saying that cannot be interpreted. This saying will be outside the universe of discourse that one will build. On the basis of a certain number of axioms about which nothing will be said, one then constructs a universe of discourse which generates propositions that are deduced from axioms. After this, everything is interpreted [*tout s’interprète*], everything is deduced, and it becomes possible to refer the propositions generated to the true or the false. At the end of the love affair with truth, one has, as an axiom, something which is written about which there is not very much to say. That says it all. It is this “*that says it all*” effect that is like an axiom. Clotilde Leguil’s account of the pass [\[xlii\]](#) ends with a dream which takes up different stories about bad water, *les mauvaises eaux*, that can cause death. These different significations condense in the letter O. But in a supplementary dream, the dead father returns to write a telephone number which he tries to give to his daughter. Of this mobile phone number only two numbers remain, 0 and 1. The O, to which the effects of meaning from the account about death come to be reduced, is reduced still further. It is no longer the O of a letter, it is the 0 of a number. Here we place our finger on the atom of signification evoked by Lacan in relation to Glover. One passes from the O of a letter, which [in French] can equivocate with the water [*eaux*] that you don’t drink, the O of the blood group, which comes to mark the filiation reduced to a letter. And the letter O can make the subject pass from a sense of destitution [*dénouement*] to the moment where she separates from the analyst and to the urgency of a denouement [*dénouement*]. A letter makes meaning topple over. More profoundly, in the dream, in which the dead father leaves a number to call him on, the message is reduced to 0#1. It is the fundamental opposition between nothing and something. It writes, in the most concise form, everything that plays around the fact of having been the first child, transformed into a superegoic requirement to be first – here reduced to a writing. Then,

the 0 comes to mark the minimum alternation of what can come to being [à l'être]. This highlights the fact that, for Lacan, it is the number, the mathematical letter, much more than the grapheme, that falls under the name of the letter and its instance.

Behind the mathematical letter, the opposition between 0 and 1 is fundamental in coming to mark the inscription of what of jouissance comes to be knotted around 0#1. The whole topology of the winding of signifiers around this writing is then introduced. To say that all the significations traversed in analysis finally hook up to 0#1, allows us to understand what Lacan says in Seminar XXIII, when all the signifiers come to articulate themselves around a writing. The writing is no longer at all what comes to transcribe speech, as a grapheme, in so far as it transcribes what is articulated in speech. It is the writing of the Borromean knots, the writing of RSI, which comes to border the holes of trauma in the body around which all the signifying accounts [récits] come to link up in a chain, in its most generalized sense. This unconscious that binds itself is really the unconscious in so far as it is closest to the trauma, to the traumatic emergence. It is in relation to this first writing on the body that everything else will come to be tied. We see how in the course of an analysis we must pass through the different equivoques of subjective myths. This on the basis of formations of the unconscious, which from time to time, as Freud says, come to reveal themselves in the dream as a rebus. This mode of writing allows one to attain the point at which one passes from a world of still imaginarized writing to a fundamental 'navel'. It is the link to a trauma which cannot be imaginarized in the writing of the dream and which comes to mark the order of 0#1, which comes to emerge, to mark itself as a hole in the body. This cyphering refers to writing in the most fundamental sense, the topological writing which for Lacan becomes the excellence of the mathematical letter, in so far as he develops it and forges a topology of his own as he had done for his *linguistricks*. His topology is the mode of writing that he manages to use, which draws upon a certain number of properties of non-oriented surfaces and of knots to write all the signifiers in the field of jouissance and not simply in the linguistic field. He can then show that what comes to take hold [s'accrocher] is always imbued with a traumatic mark of jouissance in the profoundest sense. The different onion layers that enclose the kernel of the subject, are peeled away to the point of bringing to light this new love for the unconscious which links, which at the same time, and it is here that we can take up the contingency Lacan speaks about when he says: "I incarnated contingency in the expression 'stops not being written'. For here there is nothing but encounter, the encounter in the partner of symptoms and affects, of everything that marks in each of us the trace of his exile – not

as subject but as speaking – from the sexual relationship.”[\[xliii\]](#)

Interpretation as event

Jacques-Alain Miller has linked the question of interpretation in Lacan’s last teaching to that of the symptom in a decisive way: “This definition of the symptom as a body event makes the status of the interpretation that could respond to it much more problematic.”[\[xliv\]](#) From this moment on, the symptom comes to be linked to the impact of language on the body. “This will be picked up in way that is perhaps too much on the side of the logician in the formula ‘the signifier is the cause of jouissance’, but this is pertains to the idea of the fundamental body event which is the incidence of language [*la langue*].”[\[xlv\]](#) The writing of jouissance on the body has the structure of the inverted message from the first period of Lacan’s teaching and Lacan can then reformulate his definition of the inverted message. “This is why Lacan can write, ‘the subject receives his own message in an inverted form. Here this means his own jouissance in the form of the jouissance of the Other.’ In other words, that which, in this still undeveloped, glimpsed, form brings about the corporization of the dialectic of the subject and the Other.”[\[xlvi\]](#)

The interpretation that has a chance to respond to the corporized writing of the symptom is not only a hybrid between speech and writing, but must take account of the hidden consequences implied by this hybrid. In the Saussurean signifier, what serves as writing is the atom which links together the signifier and the signified. Once this link has been exposed as being artificial and given over to the link to be constructed between writing and speech, then speech finds itself animated by a new dimension, that of the voice that was hidden there. It is the voice which returns in the jaculation as a new use of the signifier. Jacques-Alain Miller called the return of this voice *vociferation*. “Vociferation adds something to speech. It adds the value, the dimension and the weight of the voice.”[\[xlvii\]](#) The voice breaks the link of statement and enunciation. Jaculation aims to be uttered from a place which is no longer that of the enunciation of the subject, it is uttered from the place of “no-longer-anyone.” “The place of No-longer-Anyone [*Plus-Personne*], is without doubt the place of the subject, but a place conceived and named by Lacan as being the burnt ring in the bush of jouissance... it is what vociferates from the place of “No-longer-anyone.”[\[xlviii\]](#)

Lacan then considers how to account for the fact that, if the signifier is the cause of jouissance, one must consider how this jouissance can escape the auto-eroticism of the body and also be responsive to the interpretative jaculation. “[O]ne must raise the

body and also be responsive to the interpretative jaculation. [L]ne must raise the question of knowing if psychoanalysis... is not what one could call an *autism à deux*?

However, there is something with which to force open this *autism*, namely that language [*la langue*] is a communal affair [*un affaire commune*].^[xlix] Jouissance is autoerotic, but language is not a private affair. It is communal. And Lacan explores the resources of what could allow the analyst to make something other than sense resonate, something which evokes jouissance in common language [*la langue commune*]. There is first and foremost poetry: “these forcings by which a psychoanalyst can sound out something else, something other than meaning, for meaning is what resonates with the help of the signifier, but what resonates doesn’t go very far... in what one calls poetic writing you have the dimension of what poetic interpretation could be [...] Chinese poets cannot do otherwise than write.”^[l]

But Chinese poetic writing is not only the incarnation of a new link between speech and writing. It also includes a modality of the voice, of vociferation, in the form of a certain psalmody, of a singing, playing upon the interplay of tonic accents characteristic of the Chinese language. “There is something that gives the feeling that they are not reduced there, it’s that they sing, it’s that they modulate, it’s that there is what François Cheng said in front of me, namely a tonic counter-point, a modulation that makes it sing.”^[li]

By taking account of the different *dit-mansions* in the new use of the signifier that interpretation makes possible, Lacan is able to break with the Saussurean conception of the sign and the linguistics deduced from it. “Linguistics is still a science that I would say is very badly oriented. If linguistics has raised itself up, it is in so far as one Roman Jakobson has broached the question of poetics in a forthright manner. Metaphor and metonymy have implications for interpretation only insofar as they are cable of bringing something else into play. And this other thing that they bring into play is what tightly unites sound and meaning.”^[lii] The psychoanalyst's use of metaphor and metonymy does not, however, have the same aim as the poet who aims at an aesthetic effect that liberates a surplus enjoyment of its own.

As with the witticism, the psychoanalyst must aim at ethics, in other words jouissance. “That is even what a witticism consists of, it consists in deploying a word in a different usage than the one for which it is made. In the case of *famillionnaire*, the word is a little crumpled, but it is in this crumpling that its operative effect resides.”^[liii] The new poetry that Lacan brings to light through interpretation is not linked to beauty but touches jouissance, as the witticism triggers a particular surplus enjoyment. “We have nothing

jouissance, as the witticism triggers a particular surplus enjoyment. We have nothing beautiful to say. A different resonance is at stake, one founded upon witticism. A witticism is not beautiful, it only depends on an equivocal, or as Freud said, on an economy.”^[iv]

This new use in this new aim defines very well the signifier in a new usage, even the possibility of producing a bespoke new signifier. “Why does one not invent a new signifier? Our signifiers are always received. For example, a signifier which, like the real, would have no effect of meaning. One never knows, perhaps it would be fruitful. It might be fruitful, it might be a means, a means of astonishment at least.”^[v]

The new signifier raises the act of saying [*le dire*] to the level of an event, like the symptom. “Note, I did not say speech [*la parole*], I said the act of saying [*le dire*], not all speech is an act of saying [*un dire*], if this were not the case, all speech would be an event, which is not the case and one would not speak of vain speech. An act of saying, *un dire*, is of the order of the event.”^[vi] The power that Lacan attributes to this new use of the signifier acts directly on the symptom. In this regard he uses a curious expression by speaking of *extinguishing* [*éteindre*] the symptom. “It is in so far as an accurate interpretation *extinguishes* a symptom, that truth is characterized as being poetic.”^[vii]

How can we understand this verb, *extinguish*. I would suggest returning to the ‘Spiritual Mirror’ with which our text began and reread a paragraph that concerns the impact of saying [*le dire*], and in which the gleam of light and the extinction of the lightning are knotted: “When man, seeking to empty himself of all thoughts, advances in the shadowless gleam of imaginary space, abstaining from even awaiting what will emerge from it, a dull mirror shows him a surface in which nothing is reflected.”^[viii] The new signifier comes to be inscribed on a surface where no glimmer of meaning comes to be inscribed. It remains the pure trace of an outside-meaning that has finally extinguished the false shimmers of the belief in the symptom.

Translated by Philip Dravers and Florencia F. C. Shanahan

^[i]Lacan, J., *Écrits. The First Complete Edition in English*, tr. B. Fink, Routledge, London, 2006. p. 707.

[iii]Lacan, J., *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book I, Freud's Papers on Technique*, tr. J. Forrester, W.W. Norton & Co., New York/London, 1991, p. 8.

[iiii][T.N. The term '*n'importe quoi*' was translated in Seminar I as 'anything', but could also be pushed further to 'anything whatever', 'anything at all' etc. Its sense is of something that *has no import*, that does not imply or signify anything. It also means, 'rubbish', 'nonsense', and even, in contemporary usage, '*Whatever!*']

[iv]Lacan, J., *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book I, Freud's Papers on Technique*, *op.cit.*

[v]Lacan, J., *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book X, Anxiety*, tr. A. R. Price, Polity, Cambridge, 2014, p. 225.

[vi]Diény J-P., Paul Demiéville (1894-1979) in: *École pratique des hautes études*, 4èmesection, Livret 2. Rapport sur les conférences des années 1981-1982, pp. 23-29.

[vii]Lacan, J., "On a Purpose", *Écrits*, *op. cit.* p. 304 [T.N. quoted by Jacques-Alain Miller, in "The Space of a Lapsus", *TLR6*, p. 70 (French) and p. 73 (English), where *éclair* is translated as 'spark'.]

[viii]Lacan, J., *Seminar XII*, "The Object of Psychoanalysis", unpublished.

[ix]Cf. Heidegger M., "Logos", tr. J. Lacan, pp. 59-79.

[x]Lacan, J., *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book V, Formations of the Unconscious*, tr. R. Grigg, Polity, Cambridge, 2017, pp. 433-434.

[xi]Lacan, J., *Écrits*, *op. cit.*, p. 496.

[xii]Lacan, J., *Seminar XIV*, "The Logic of the Fantasy", lesson of 21 June 1967, unpublished.

[xiii]*ibid.*

[xiv]*ibid.*

[xv]Lacan, J., "Direction of the Treatment...", *Écrits*, *op. cit.*, pp. 496-497.

[xvi]*ibid.*, p. 497.

[xvii]*ibid.*

[xviii] Jacques-Alain Miller, “Interpretation in Reverse”, *Psychoanalytical Notebooks*,

Issue 2, 1999. Available on-line: https://londonsociety-nls.org.uk/Publications/002/Miller-Jacques-Alain_Interpretation-in-Reverse.pdf

[xix] Miller, J.-A., “The Monologue of *l’Apparole*”, tr. M. Downing Roberts, *Qui Parle*, 9 (Spring/Summer 1996), p. 171. [T.N. translation modified; the reference to *Encore*, can be found on page 138.]

[xx] *Ibid.*, p. 173.

[xxi] *Ibid.*, p. 178-179.

[xxii] *Ibid.*, p.180.

[xxiii] *Ibid.*

[xxiv] *Ibid.*, p. 181.

[xxv] *Ibid.*

[xxvi] *Ibid.*, p. 181 (translation modified).

[xxvii] Lacan, J., *Seminar XXII*, “R.S.I”, Lesson of 11 February 1975. Text established in French by J.-A. Miller, *Ornicar ?*, n° 4, pp. 95-97.

[xxviii] Miller, J.-A., “Introduction à l’érotique du temps” [“Introduction to the Erotics of Time”, excerpts published in *Lacanian Ink*, Issue 24/25], in *La Cause freudienne*, No. 56, Navarin, Paris, March 2004, p. 77.

[xxix] *Ibid.*

[xxx] *Ibid.*, p. 78.

[xxxi] *Ibid.*, p. 85.

[xxxii] *Ibid.*, pp. 96-97.

[xxxiii] *Ibid.*

[xxxiv] Miller, J.-A., “Lacanian Biology and the Event of the Body”, *Lacanian Ink*, Issue 18, 2001, pp. 6-29.

[xxxv]Lacan, J., *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book VIII, Transference*, tr. B. Fink, Polity, London, 2017, p. 372. Lacan speaks of “Pindar’s famous ejaculatory proclamation.”

[xxxvi]Lacan J., *Seminar XIII*, “The Object of Psychoanalysis (1965-1966), lesson of 1December 1965, unpublished.

[xxxvii]Lacan J., *Seminar XII*, “Crucial Problems for Psychoanalysis” (1964-1965), lesson of 27 February 1965, unpublished.

[xxxviii]Lacan, J., *Seminar XIII*, *op. cit.*

[xxxix]Demiéville, P., *Entretiens de Linji*, Fayard, 1972, quoted by Nathalie Charraud, “Lacan et le Bouddhisme Chan” *La Cause freudienne*, No. 79 (2011/2013), p. 123.

[xl]Miller, J-A., *XVIII, Nullibiété*, Lesson of 11 June 2008, unpublished.

[xli]Miller, J.-A., “L’orientation lacanienne, Le tout dernier Lacan,” teaching delivered within the framework of the Department of Psychoanalysis Paris VIII, published as “En deçà de l’inconscient”, *La Cause du Désir*, No. 91, Navarin, Paris, 2015, p. 107.

[xlii]I am referring to the version of this testimony presented at the soirée of the pass, on 21 May 2019, which has yet to be published. Other published versions are available which bear out the reasoning.

[xliii]Lacan, J., *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XX, Encore*, W.W. Norton & Co., New York/London, 1998, p. 145.

[xliv]Miller, J.-A., “Lacanian Biology and the Event of the Body”, *Lacanian Ink*, Issue 18, *op. cit.*

[xlv]*Ibid.*

[xlvi]*Ibid.*

[xlvii]*Ibid.*

[xlviii]*Ibid.*

[xliv]Lacan, J., *Seminar XXIV*, “L’insu que sait de l’une-bévue s’aile à mourre”, lesson of 19April 1977, unpublished.

[\[i\]](#) *ibid.*

[\[ii\]](#) *ibid.*

[\[iii\]](#) *ibid.*

[\[iiii\]](#) *ibid.*

[\[v\]](#) *ibid.*

[\[vi\]](#) *ibid.*

[\[vii\]](#) Lacan, J., *Seminar XXI*, “Les non-dupes errent”, lesson of 18 December 1973, unpublished.

[\[viii\]](#) *ibid.*

[\[ix\]](#) Lacan, J., “Presentation on Psychological Causality”, *Écrits, op. cit.*, p. 153

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OPENING SPEECH OF THE 2019 CONGRESS OF THE NLS, BY BERNARD SEYNHAEVE