

The Bodily Root of Symptoms

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1 Theoretical preliminaries

Lalangue and sinthome¹

We must start with Lacan's contribution. There is language and it is structured. It acts as a brake on *jouissance*; it is used for speaking, communicating and constructing our fictions. Then there is *lalangue*, that is, the material consisting of sounds, phonemes and words in their raw state and not articulated into the structure of a discourse - material that collides with living bodies. *Lalangue* is something that is endured or suffered. It is a passion. Human beings are the patients of this encounter between *lalangue* and the body. It leaves marks on the body. What Lacan calls "the *sinthome*" is the substance of such marks. These are events, bodily events. Man has a body, and events occur within this body.

These events are covered over by the superimposed level of language as structure. That is, ordinarily they are "sublimated." Every patient is dealing with symptoms and complaints about them. If he turns to psychoanalysis - transference to psychoanalysis is often already there - he assumes that unconsciously his symptom means something. He will give it the value of a message. Symptoms mean something. He will therefore attempt to decipher his symptom with the help of a psychoanalyst. Sooner or later a negative therapeutic resistance will appear. It is the indication that a "I do not want to know anything about it" is at work. Wanting to know nothing about a wish-to-enjoy [*jouir*] that symptoms feed one. This is what Freud calls fixation, *Fixierung*. If the analyst succeeds in blocking the unconscious's interpretative delusion, that is, in disturbing the unconscious as a defence, this deciphering will run up against a remainder. It is this remainder that Lacan refers to as a *sinthome*. A Lacanian *sinthome* is a symptom that has been disconnected and retains no value as a formation of the unconscious. It is what is untreatable in the marks *lalangue*

¹ Notes taken at Jacques-Alain Miller's 2010-2011 lecture series, *L'Un tout seul [The only One]*, and his earlier lecture series, *Pièces détachées [Spare parts]*, during the course of which *Le séminaire XXIII* was published.

leaves on the body. It's a form of pure *jouissance*; that is, it lies radically outside meaning. While speaking beings [*parlêtre*] do not recover from this mark of *jouissance*, they may accept it and make use of it once they have fully explored it.

In his 2010- 2011 lecture series, *L'Un tout seul*, J.-A. Miller distinguishes between being and existence, between ontology and henology. Ontology and its semblants: with language and speech I create fictions and I bring what does not exist into existence. Henology is a way of situating the real in psychoanalysis. This real corresponds to the initial shock of the collision between signifiers and the body, which produces a *jouissance* that one must not have, an event that is always singular and contingent. It is an originary event, one that lies at the very origins of the subject. This Lacanian real or Lacanian existent is brought about by signifiers, but signifiers outside meaning - that is, letters. These are not letters that are secondary to speech; letters that speak and that are read are always on the side of semblants, where this form of writing records speech. They are *unilateral* letters that are always the same and which are not there to be read, for they are traces. This form of writing manipulates these traces. And we can add that this Lacanian existent has nothing to do with the pulsating, preconceptual presence we find in Sartre's naturalism. Psychoanalysts need to go beyond listening, which is always listening for meaning. Reading the letter, which as such lies outside meaning, is what distinguishes psychoanalysis from psychotherapy.

Reading symptoms therefore consists in weaning symptoms off meaning. There is a huge paradox in the fact that the psychoanalytic setting, with its supposition of knowledge - that is, the transferential unconscious - is a requirement for uncovering and coming to grips with the real. There is no analysis without the analytic setting and the presence of bodies:

Existence in the Lacanian sense attaches to and detaches itself from a signifier-based procedure . . . Existence emerges from the work of language upon language and it presupposes that a logical apparatus takes possession of what is said [*le dit*], grasps, surrounds, compresses and

organises it, and solders the real together with language (Miller, 2010-2011, March 2011).

How can we designate the real?

Lacan invents a saying, "Yad'lun," "There is some One" (Lacan, 2008 [1971-1972]: 127).³ This is the kernel of the fact that there is discourse - the discourse necessary for there to be being. The One is prior to being. Every signifier, each signifier, is One. Any signifier is One when it is the only one. The signifier qua One precedes, presides over and conditions being. The signifier, in so far as it exists as real, presides over and conditions all equivocations, that is to say, all the semblants of being in discourse. This original One therefore has to be conceived as the only One. This single signifier is effaced, it is an originary mark, Freud's originary repression. It makes it possible to position the lack. Gottlob Frege turns this lack that comes from the One, which is a lack because it is effaced, into the sign of inexistence.⁴ Therefore, at first there has to be One, one that is effaced. This locus of inexistence is formed by the eclipse of the original One and is the locus of the Other, which is the locus of being. This effacement is marked with a zero, the initial zero of the series of whole numbers.

The emergence of jouissance and addiction

Along with this One of existence, there is the substance of jouissance, which is opaque to meaning. This is Freudian fixation, *Bedeutung*. There is a complete split between *Bedeutung* and *Sinn*. The One is effectively imprinted on the body, affecting it. This always-contingent event is traced out upon the body. It is an affection that traces and an intrusion of jouissance. This enjoying substance belongs to a completely different register from that of signifying substance. It is assigned to the body, which is not the body in the mirror, the specular body, but the body that enjoys itself. The expression, "the body enjoying itself" indicates the

³ Literally, "There is some One."

⁴ Only set theory makes it possible to operate with the absence of being, contrary to the theory of classes whose beings are this or that. In set theory, all that the elements have in common is being ones and belonging to this or that set indicated by such and such a letter - except that in set theory one also counts the empty set when one counts sub-sets. The empty set appears as a One-more. This One comes via signifiers, it breaks down our world, it is primary and cannot be deduced.

reflexivity of *jouissance*. The drive is the drive of the One; it is acephalic and reflexive; it is autistic. This disturbance or disorder that is *jouissance*, brought about by the branding mark of the One, is therefore the irruption of unforgettable *jouissance*. This is what will be commemorated by the repetition of the One.

It is, as J.-A. Miller remarks, fundamental that in this cycle of repetitions and commemoration of the same, the instances are not summed. In this respect, addiction differs from addition (2011: 58).⁵ One never learns anything from these experiences.⁶ This *jouissance* lies outside meaning and is mute. Lacan discovered it in female sexuality. In his very first seminars he indicates that the letter feminises and that femininity lies outside the symbolic. It is not all there yet, far from it, but this does point in the right direction. With the *sinthome* he generalises this *jouissance*. And what specifies it is its fundamental opacity. We have to insist upon the fact that this *jouissance* (*jouissance*) is not that of enjoyed sense (*sens-joui*). It must absolutely be distinguished from the object *a*. The object *a* is a form of *jouissance* that is linked to discourse and is dependent upon the signifiers which produce it by means of the machine of discourse. "Object *a*" designates the type of *jouissance* that has meaning. Effectively, the object *a* corresponds to the kernel of *jouissance* that can be elaborated and located.

Thus, symptoms repeat purely and simply. They iterate and don't make sense. One observes them. One uncovers them, and even, as I have been saying, go beyond the object *a*, which is also a semblant. This repetitive *jouissance* lies outside knowledge; it is an auto-*jouissance*. It is an S_1 without an S_2 , where the body takes on the function of S_2 . The body is the Other (Miller 2010-2011 [11, 18 & 25 May 2011]). There is the One and the body which appears as the Other of signifiers, by which it has been marked and where this constitutes an event. This bodily event, which is what this *jouissance* is, appears as the true cause of psychical reality. This is no longer the

⁵"L'addiction, c'est la racine du symptôme qui est fait de la réitération inextinguible du même Un. C'est le même, c'est-à-dire que cela ne s'additionne pas. (On boit toujours le même verre une fois de plus.)"

⁶ The etymology of the word "addiction" comes from the Latin "ad dicere" or "ad dictus" which signifies: spoken to. The slaves of Rome were "spoken to" by this or that master. In later Latin "ad-dictio" signifies: physical restraint. Thus, an addict is a slave, dependant on a practice.

Other of truth but the Other of the body and its jouissance. The body here is not organised by desire but by its own jouissance. This jouissance remains unknown, inaccessible and incessant.

To conclude my initial theoretical remarks

The real in psychoanalysis is, then, this level at which existence combines with writing that lies outside sense. The real in psychoanalysis is a conjunction of signifiers as substance and jouissance. The conjunction is always a contingent one. Here, the real is lawless, outside the laws of language. This unforgettable experience of jouissance is like a forced entry. It disrupts the order that was there before. It is a malfunction.

The trauma of the collision between signifiers and the body has a disordering effect and creates a fault line or a gap that we can call the phallus, fault or sin - but also impotence, which is the neurotic's mask over the impossible. This fault line always has a tendency to increase.

2 what my analysis has taught me about the bodily basis of symptoms

You aren't in a hurry!

My first round of analysis ended on "disbeing" [désêtre]. Meaning had been bleached out and dried up, with its effects of depression and enthusiasm. I met my second wife. Then, ten years later, I start a second round of analysis with a second analyst, who begins by telling me, "You aren't in a hurry!" I have a dream following the first session, and it indicates with a great deal of precision that my analysis recommences precisely at the point at which I had stopped eight years previously. Disbeing does not affect existence, and I was still a long way away from having got the measure of what, for me, formed my bodily event.

Between my first and final round of analysis - my fourth, which I called "A toboggan in the transference" - there was, first, during my second analysis, the time required for a new unfolding of my family romance and for the construction of a fantasy that would become reduced to the sentence, "A child is ill." It was necessary to unpick the failure of this

consistent and imagined Other who was the custodian of my jouissance. Thus, as my fantasy, which is an imaginary formation of the drive, progressively faded, so my symptom, which was its real production, was able to be unlocked a little bit more. This happened in my third round of analysis. First, deconstructing (*démontage*) the semantics of my symptom, exposing its grammar and making an initial approach to its drive dimension resulted in extracting from it the letter "pressé," "in a hurry." I deduced the name of the symptom from it, "l'homme-pressé," "man in a hurry." However, I had not yet got to the real root of it. This was a semblant, a "foothold." I clung to it, I was happy with it, as if merely giving it a name was enough. It hid the real root of the symptom. It insisted. It was still necessary to reduce the Other, paradoxically supported by the transferential unconscious, if one was to dissolve the symptom in the real and expose what was to be the final term of the analysis.⁸

Several years!

A final phase unfolds, then, which goes from the end of this third analysis to the conclusion of the final one. Several gaps will appear, right till the end and its leap to a conclusion with the toboggan.

The third analysis ends with the word "femme," woman. That's the last word. It's like a plug. Life goes on, but contingent events occur, one by one, which designate and index what, in my body, continues to be written. My symptom continues to settle in. Its reiteration makes it increasingly obvious, and its lethal aspect ends up dominating the picture.

A series of bodily events occur. My father dies several weeks after my mother has a stroke and loses part of her sight. And then, three days later, my mother-in-law dies of erd while being resuscitated. Maintaining appearances, I am, however, affected down to the heart of my being, a heart attack - well named - does the trick, with no aftereffects, even though I have another one, which is treated early. A background of negative transference sets in, which I quickly interpret as

⁸ "This hole in knowledge included in the real has been described by J-A Miller as a separated asystematic fragment of fictional knowledge. Effectively, the Other is made by the eclipse of the original One. This is where the unconscious as a defence is apparent." "Le réel au XXIème siècle, présentation du thème du IXème congrès de l'AMP", *La cause du désir*, n°82.

the structural absence of a response from the Other. Two or three years later, a second, lengthy and serious incident, confirmed by a surgeon, occurs. The scar is a trait on my body that for me is the sign of a deeper mark. I establish a connection between my body and *lalangue*, which is confirmed by J.-A. Miller's lecture series, *L'Un tout seul*, which for me will be a sort of interpretative agency over the course of the year 2010-2011.

It took a crisis to bring me back to the couch. In the summer of 2011, once again a contingent event happened to someone close to me. As a result of this a *decisive ambiguity* arose: "Cancer of the tongue," cancer de la langue, was ambiguous with "cancer of *lalangue*," "cancer de *lalangue*." "Ambiguity makes a void or a hole - bordered by the letter - resonate. It isolates the letter of *jouissance* in symptoms" (Miller 2007: 28 March 2007). *Passage à l'acte*, I rush into the prompter's box. I go back into analysis with the aim of going right to the end and going through the pass again. Eight months, eight dreams, one parapraxis, one acting out, one bodily event, one intervention.

Three Lacanian formulas that are to be read together: there is no sexual relationship, auto-*jouissance* and there is some One

With these three formulas I can show how my defence was disorganised, with the striking effect of bringing my *sinthome* to light.

1 there is no sexual relationship

Two dreams got even with the signifier "woman," which was the final word of the third analysis. They uncorked the bottle.

The dream about femininity (no. 2) takes place after a class I gave in which I get confused, neglecting how radically outside the symbolic femininity is, *forclosed*. In this dream, one clear statement stands out: "In *Seminar III*, Lacan's sole interest in psychosis is so that he can show the *forclosed* nature of femininity." That is what, at bottom, I did not wish to know despite my Lacanian baggage.

This was followed several days later by "the dream of the bottomless pit" (no. 3). The setting is unclear, there are dunes, the North Sea. The atmosphere is sombre and murky. I am

with my wife in a holiday house. A female colleague and her husband happen to be staying in a neighbouring house. They invite us over. We have to reply to the invitation. Despite my wife's hesitation, I go over to say yes. At first she is not there, and then she arrives. She is usually so feminine and bright, but she is dishevelled, her hair is sopping wet and messed up. She is all puny and I take her in my arms. Stunted as she is, she shrivels up. Discombobulated and distraught, I cross the sandy garden. Near the exit, against a low wall and seated on the ground is a young man I know, a little crazy and backward. He says, trying to reassure me, "Don't worry, everything will be all right." There is a well close by him. It is unclear. On my return, my wife is beside herself. On the telephone she agrees with their daughter who is complaining about mine. Blunder, anxiety, awakening. The images of my daughter and my friend blend with one another, their feminine characteristics dissolve, they disappear in my arms and disintegrate. Then comes the statement: "There is a bottomless pit." The woman disappears.

2 From the body's auto-jouissance to the body that enjoys itself

The first dream of this last period of analysis locates what is at stake in my analysis and what its terrain is (no. 1). The dreamer's unconscious body, isolated and headless, naked on exposed terrain surrounded by ruins, is racked by spasms, as if it were being struck by bullets, as in a scene from the film *Full Metal Jacket*. A body is enjoying all on its own. The body is there.

This auto-jouissance of the body reappears at the end of my analysis when a malaise, a bodily event, the reiteration of a mute jouissance and a veritable proof-by-the-new surface in the plane taking me to Tel Aviv for the Study Days of the NLS, *Reading a symptom*. It thrusts the "making oneself . . .," the third moment of the drive, to the status of paradigms. The obscenity of the body that enjoys itself, its autism, the shamelessness of this "making oneself be seen." We have gone from the Other speech to the Other reduced to the real body, the Other on which the One is imprinted.

3 there is some One

Two dreams - the interjection dream and the striking out dream - indicate that an unspeakable and incessant mark is hiding under the imaginary shreds of the Other of speech.

The interjection dream (no. 4): I'm doing an oil painting. I'm trying to clear up a stain. A friend calls out to me from up ahead. After a few metres I realise that I've left my canvas in the middle of all the others. The idea comes to me that my son, who is young, might smudge it. I go back, but too late! "You idiot!" I yell at him. I wake up. I wish I were dead. The idiot is me, always wanting to clear away and cover over the stain. The interjection becomes: the One is hiding underneath dejection.

The striking out dream (no. 5): I'm looking at a vague relief map of northern Spain. My analyst goes past and uses a yellow highlighter to cross out a pile of rubble. Letters of the name of a town, Llogar, with an accent on the "o." My analyst takes my iPhone. I no longer have any means of access to knowledge. In a state of anxiety, I catch up with him and take my phone back. Without looking at me, without speech and in an offhand manner, he gives me a broken telephone, the child's toy. I wake. "Llogar" is a condensation of "lugar," place, and "llegar," arrive. The acute accent points like an index finger: you have arrived at this place. Underneath the dejection, there is a hole, the product of a trait. The o is a zero barred by the accent. Ambiguity over the zero. My unconscious responds like a letter (lettre) game. Ambiguity over being (l'être). Then the schema from the last of J-A Miller's lectures. What's going on with my consent to this striking out, to this inaccessible and unceasing mark?

A slip of the tongue, occurring after a session of analysis, brings the analysis to an end. While I am discussing an institutional matter with my analyst after a session, I say, "Je suis un aliment apaisant," instead of, "Je suis un élément apaisant." This produces a cascade of oral drive events that had remained untouched for so long.

"The dream of the tomb-man" (no. 6) followed: descending the stairs in a famous arcade in Nantes, with a man at my side. The man falls and, in the dream, the dreamer says to himself: it's time he woke up and got up. The ambiguity is fertile.

It leads to an interpretation by the analyst which causes the master signifier "croque-mort," undertaker, to fall, which had been continuing to maintain the Other's consistence along with that of its objects a, "these mobile indexes of jouissance in speech." It masked the voracity of the real aspect of the drive. This is the leap from the toboggan. I had produced this signifier in the session. On my way to the door, I retrieve my coat from the coat hook. Silence, no sound of the door opening to go and get the next analysand. I turn around, my analyst is there wearing a dark coloured suit - a contingency of interpretation - a suit that one would wear on solemn occasions. In the shadows in the corridor, behind the waiting room, he faces the wall, motionless, mimicking an undertaker. Blown away, "cut off," dumbfounded, separate... In the street a few metres further on, lighter, I laugh. A word comes to mind: "breath."¹⁰ The breath remains. The interpretation made the master signifier "undertaker" fall, a word that I had produced earlier in the session. "Undertaker", this S₁, this ego ideal, this identification and its superego injunction, multiplied by the gaze attributed imaginarily to the Other, looking down on the scene of the fantasy. He persisted so as to give it consistency. Lacan's remark concerning the gaze an obstacle to the conclusion of the treatment in the obsessional subject is well illustrated here. Imitating him, mute and without a gaze, the analyst assumes it himself and separates me from it. I was this gaze gazing at itself, this voice invoking itself. Crunch. I was this mouth to which I was offering myself as food in order to appease it.

Am I thereby cured of my addiction? The breath remains.

What is this word "breath"? Is it my fictions that have been "soufflées," flabbergasted, turning out to be as inexistent as a flash in the sky, as inexistent as objects a? For sure, no symptom has been flabbergasted, getting its consistency from them, confirming what Lacan needs: that it is dissolved into the real. Is this a new rim that will close upon the hole? Have I invented a way of dealing with one's "breath"?

Whooping cough at the age of one left me on the verge of dying. The return of the pulmonary Thing transfixed my parents. Its impact upon my body, by knotting itself to the absence of a signifier, made this contingency into an

¹⁰ "Soufflé", related to "souffle" means dumbfounded.

inaugural body event. Its iteration, covered by the superimposed level of my neurosis, presents two aspects. It's mortal aspect, that of the signifier that kills. The other, its aspect of jouissance, is its life power. The word "breath" indicates this living aspect. As if there had been a topological turning around, as if this point of going back over the symptom's steps, as it were, at which the effects of creation bloom. And so I point out to my analyst that, as my analyst, I am left to gently blow upon the fictions of being. I undertake the procedure of the pass once again, because I am left to speak from the place of this hole in the Other.

You haven't come!

Strangely, I said to myself that I would only return to my analyst once I had received acknowledgement of my demand. Two weeks went by, I wait. I miss two sessions. Acting out. On my return, I say so to my analyst. He thunders, almost going hoarse, "You haven't come!" And this resonates with: you are not in a hurry. Ethical backsliding, recalling the *Wo Es war soll ich werden*. I did not wish to give ground over my oral jouissance.

It was after this that I experienced this profound malaise in the plane taking me to Israel, which I mentioned above. Gathering myself, I joke: "le petit marrant," funny guy. I finally understand the meaning of this signifier that would sometimes appear quite often. Those around me were afraid. I had no shame in displaying myself, my body in jouissance, the ego in exile. The drive is voracious. Two terms then struck me: "caution" and "responsibility." One has to be careful with this mortal game. One must also assume responsibility for it.

In conclusion

I have described this word "breath," "breathing," (*souffle*) as a discrete word.

This formulation, which had emerged at the time of my final pass, indicates a movement, a leap towards a vanishing point, and aspiration which I was consenting to towards an elaboration without closure. It has no closure in the sense in which there is no final word, where, whenever something is pinned down, something that complements it is called for. From grasping one thing to grasping another, immediately let go of,

caught up in this endless movement of generalised equivocation, is to allow oneself to be captured by the real, to make oneself its dupe! (Laurent 2011)

This is what the last dream of my analysis indicates, the one in which the "bottomless well" (no. 8) occurs. It designates the hole in the Other. "I forgot my session, I will take the next train, but I cannot find my keys for leaving home. The manuscripts of the Dead Sea in their jars. The last room in the Jerusalem [Holocaust] Memorial, Yad Vashem. It is a circular library, incomplete forever, in which ID numbers and names are recorded: nothing but numbers, nothing but letters. In the centre, the bottomless pit. And above, the life of people, their fictions. I wake. There was no session that day. I get up" (Porcheret 2012).

My analysis, whose final words in my last session were "I am happy," allow me to step aside in relation to my own program for jouissance. They indicate satisfaction that has subsided. This gnawing away at my body by lalangue, this cancerous lalangue, is what in my first testimony I called, "the drive's voracity." The jouissance that was produced, its iteration and its addiction, are what here I am calling "the bodily root of my symptom."

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