

# Principles of Psychoanalytic Analysis of Psychotic Literary

Features: An Illustration on the Work of Pablo Palacio.

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'I Jonathan Davidoff Menasse, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.'



## Acknowledgements

The limits of language and knowledge of a doctoral research are difficult to trace and therefore its indebtedness is not completely acknowledgeable to begin with.

I would like to thank in the same way, without traceable limits, my professors, teachers, supervisors, analysts and guides, recent and not so recent, who lovingly and insistently have seen me through so much saying and writing.

I would like to extend my gratitude to those who have so kindly fostered the space for that saying and writing, wittingly and unwittingly. I have in mind those people, whose company, presence, absence and support inhabit the chapters of this research. I am thinking of those who did not give up on me in the difficult moments - when my research chapters felt like too much or too little. Also, my gratitude goes to the people who, in specific moments of cleavage, lovingly chose to do that which enabled my road – *alphabetically*.

I would like to thank my family, the people of whom I participate in the real, who day after day have shared with me the scriptless film, and have made it feel familiar. I would like to express appreciation for my colleagues from work for taking some of my allocated pot of daily grind just so I could undertake this research. My gratitude as ever to my friends, old and new, who are my chosen family.

Finally, I simply would like to express my gratitude as gratitude; recognise and acknowledge my fortune for having had the opportunity to undertake my doctoral research.

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## Abstract

The linguistic attributes of psychosis described by French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan in his early and late theories of psychosis point to a radical, unmediated and objectified relation between subject and signifier. In his third seminar in 1955, Lacan revisited psychosis and he posited it as a subjective structure alongside neurosis and perversion. Later, in his twenty-third seminar in 1975, Lacan revisited again the notion of psychosis positing it as a Borromean knot. Apropos, he examined some of the work of Irish writer James Joyce. His writing, argued Lacan, entailed dynamics such that prevented him from having a psychotic breakdown. Joyce's *mode of jouissance* via his writing provided unity to his subjective structure. This rests, following Lacan, upon Joyce's *linguistic know-how* (sinthome) which provided a symbolic space for imaginary, symbolic and real to be disjointed, and thus become joint.

It follows that there ought to be linguistic and literary dynamics that, under this theoretical framework, are recognisable as psychotic. This research consists of a psychoanalytic-literary analysis of four short stories and a novel by Ecuadorian writer Pablo Palacio. The objective is to determine whether the linguistic and extralinguistic attributes of psychosis described by Lacan can be said to be at play in Palacio's works and thus answer the question of whether psychotic attributes and dynamics can be extrapolated to other bodies of fictional literature. In turn, this research questions and aims to explore the contributions of such psychoanalytic-linguistic analysis of works of literature to the theory and practice of literary analysis or critique. What does it mean to interpret literature from this perspective and does it open literary meaning otherwise?

The findings of the literary analysis confirm that psychosis can be located in literary works under specific conceptual definitions of psychosis, literature, interpreting psychosis and the interpretable of the literary. The literary analysis yielded, furthermore, novel principles of characterisation of psychotic literary language that contribute to the understanding of the creative power of psychosis.

Keywords: psychosis, language, psychoanalysis, literature, Jacques Lacan, Pablo Palacio.

## Introduction

Why psychosis and why literature?

The fashion in which language is structured curves, expands or unsettles the kind of meaning it enables. In other words, the *kind of play* of language, understood as a structure, determines the fashion and kind of meaning that may be possible to open by means of it. The forms of meaning that may be possible and thinkable within language structured, for instance, psychotically may differ *substantially* to the ones possible within a neurotic or perverse structure. I am referring to the three possible forms in which according to Lacan subjectivity may be structured and therefore when I refer to 'language' in fact I am referring to the linguistic as well as the extralinguistic within human experience. Some aspects of the kind of meaning enabled by language within each structure must be specific only to them and different from the others.

A way into an enquiry about language and therefore about subjectivity and its possible organisations is by asking what does language do in each of these structures or one in particular and compare it to the others. Asking, for instance, what does language do in psychosis presupposes that in psychosis meaning is opened, closed or articulated otherwise than in neurosis and perversion. It furthermore presupposes that subjective dynamics, mediated and enabled by language (broadly understood) may as well differ from neurotic and perverse ones. In other words, the dynamics of psychosis as a structure (i.e. its linguistic and extralinguistic characteristics, mechanisms and resulting phenomena) underpin the meaning of language, discourse

and subjectivity that are possible within and are unique to this structure. These must be comparable and contrastable to their neurotic and psychotic counterparts.

Linguistic instantiations are needed to prove this true, yet every linguistic instantiation is contextual and therefore never 'pure' language. Literature, however, would be a good place from which to draw this 'instantiation' given that it amounts, following Roland Barthes, to the exercise of the linguistic symbol for its own sake (Barthes, 1977). Literary pieces, therefore, *may be* envisaged by their properties as autonomous linguistic entities. This rests upon the Barthesian assertion coupled with the Lacanian one about the symbolic in fact preceding and determining the subject (Lacan, 1960) which, although meant to highlight the paradoxical play of diachrony and synchrony in *après-coup* temporality, allows for an approach to a linguistic entity in itself and not as language proffered by 'someone' (i.e. work of literature as an autonomous linguistic artefact).

Plenty has been argued about *psychotic authors of literature*, or the role of *psychosis* in literary creation, creativity in general and art. I explore to an extent these approaches to the topic across the chapters of this research. However, less has been researched about the *kind of linguistic play*, psychoanalytically described, of psychosis in specific pieces of literature taken as autonomous linguistic artefacts (i.e. instantiations of specific symbolic, imaginary and real dynamics). Equally, although plenty has been described and researched about psychosis within psychoanalysis, not enough attention has been paid to Lacan's contention about psychosis comprising a relation between subject and signifier at its most *radical* (Lacan, 1955, 1956). *Radical* means, in short, a combination of the utmost immediacy and dislocation. Lacan's

fascinating statement demands research attention and further understanding, which partly motivates my research.

This research, in this sense, resides between literature and psychoanalysis as it aims to shed light on the linguistic and extralinguistic dynamics (i.e. symbolic, imaginary and real) of certain literary works of fiction. Consequently, this question presupposes to ask, for psychoanalysis, whether the phenomenological characterisation of psychosis advanced by Lacan, specifically in his third and twenty-third seminars can be used to characterise literary dynamics. Do these dynamics instantiate in works of fiction and what theoretical principles must be reformulated so they remain, to the extent possible, coherent, useful and descriptive of phenomena hitherto undescribed thus? In sum, “what does it mean to call a work of literature ‘psychotic’” is a question that I pursued throughout this research.

These questions pose other ones about the contribution of this research to literature. What literary phenomena, specific to the text or the *kinds of texts* analysed are brought to light by means of this analysis and what has this method to contribute to literature qua psychoanalytic literary analysis or criticism? Does this approach to literary analysis open meaning about these works of literature otherwise?

### Research structure

To answer these research questions, I explored some of the main pillars of the Lacanian understanding of psychosis. I explained to what extent I agree with them and what about them I had to reformulate. On the one hand, to render them applicable to

a literary analysis. On the other, to lay the grounds to enquire whether psychosis understood thus opens meaning of certain literary works otherwise.

The results and experience gained in this research indicate that these characteristics and dynamics of language can be found in works of fiction and under these specific circumstances a work of literature may be called psychotic. Indeed, several reformulations were made upon Lacan's understanding of psychosis to render it applicable to literary analysis. It is unlikely that universal principles may characterise these literary phenomena in the sense that nosological or taxonomical psychotic literary principles may not be possible - or desirable. However, some characteristics, dynamics and fashion of play of language that may be said to pertain to psychosis and that phenomenologically are clearly describable were found in the works of literature researched. The analysis performed on them, I argue, contributes to the understanding of the kind of creative power of psychosis as well as the understanding of how does psychosis read and what does it mean to read psychosis.

The first part of this research comprises the theoretical framework. In the first and second chapter I explored and discussed Lacan's early and late ideas around psychosis. I clarified my understanding of basic concepts such as the three registers or the speaking and spoken subject. Furthermore, I expanded and discussed some adjacent theoretical discussions that follow from re-visiting Lacan's theories of psychosis such as Lacan's *depictions*, my understanding of the *notions of repetition* and *difference* and so forth. Revisiting these key notions, although somewhat orthogonal to the main topic, proved to be in fact very fruitful in what they promise to become in future research.

In the third chapter, I explored some of the context of psychoanalytic literary criticism by discussing some of the thinking of other authors around the nature of psychoanalysis, psychosis and literature. I contrasted my framework to those of other authors from similar and other psychoanalytic literary analysis schools, in particular from the Yale school and their interlocutors led by literary scholar Shoshana Felman, Jean Michel Rey, Barbara Johnson as well as Meredith-Anne Skura. I sought to outline the specificity of my analysis in relation to theirs and answer whether the *radical* quality of language of psychosis adds anything to the understanding of the dynamics and phenomenology of certain pieces of fictional literature. Throughout the first, second and third chapters I raised in detail the questions that guided me through this research.

In the fourth chapter I explored some methodological issues resulting from aiming to characterise a work of literature as 'psychotic'. I followed a 'logical enquiry' methodology, testing logically whether the argument would stand or not. I explored whether and in what sense the notions of 'author', 'text' and 'context' would allow calling a work of literature 'psychotic'. In the fifth chapter I discussed further methodological, perhaps more practical issues to do with operationalisation of psychotic features. I also described the structure of the analysis of each literary piece. I argued why I followed a literary analysis structure in which I firstly summarised each story, then advanced a phenomenological reading of the story and concluded with a psychoanalytic reading. In this chapter I explain the reasons why the decision was made to follow this line of enquiry into Ecuadorian writer Pablo Palacio's four short stories and novel, which I translated into English and are included in the appendix of this research piece.

The second part of this research comprises the literary analysis in which I examined four short stories and one novel by Ecuadorian writer Pablo Palacio. I collected my conclusions about each of the stories at the end of this section in a separate small section of conclusions. Finally, this piece of research comes to a closure in the final discussion section in which, based on my research, I advance answers to the questions I raised throughout. The answers I give naturally open the way for further inquiry and I point out in which sense and the reasons I am compelled to research these questions in the future.

#### Psychoanalytic context

Jacques Lacan's interest on psychosis dates from as early as 1932 when he was awarded a Doctorate for his thesis "*On Paranoid Psychosis in its Relations to the Personality*". Lacan trained as a psychiatrist in the Sainte-Anne hospital in Paris and was therefore constantly involved in the treatment of psychotic patients. In his early works on paranoia, Lacan discussed the cases studies of the *Papin sisters* and *Aimée*.

In 1955 Lacan dedicated his third yearly seminar to the rethinking of the psychotic phenomenon under the light of a psychoanalytic investigation proper. In the same year, Lacan published a paper entitled "*On a preliminary question to every possible treatment of psychosis*" in which he set forth his crystallised views on psychosis. In this paper, Lacan developed his ideas on psychosis by revisiting Freud's 1910 case study "*Psycho-Analytic Notes on an Autobiographical Account of a Case of Paranoia (Dementia Paranoides)*".

Shortly after World War II came to an end, Lacan visited London and met with psychiatrists and psychoanalysts John Rickman and W. R. Bion. Lacan was struck particularly by Bion's work with groups of soldiers who were traumatised by the war (Lacan, 1947). In Britain, particularly in the Kleinian and Independent circles, the psychoanalytic investigation on psychosis was well under way. The previous year, Melanie Klein published her paper "*Notes on some schizoid mechanisms*" (1946) in which she set forth her consolidated views on the paranoid-schizoid position.

Lacan's understanding of psychosis, however, differs greatly from that of Melanie Klein and the British School of psychoanalysis in general. As will be explored in greater detail throughout this research, Lacan posited psychosis as a clear and distinct *structure*, that is, a specific result of the Oedipus complex not taking place (Lacan, 1955 - 1956). Klein on her part posited psychotic mechanisms observed in schizophrenia and paranoia as constituting the primitive core mechanisms of the psyche (Klein, 1946). In this sense, it can be argued that Lacan envisaged neurosis and psychosis as a matter of either/or<sup>1</sup> whereas Klein envisaged psychosis - or at least psychotic mechanisms - as a constitutive universal of the primitive, infantile psyche. In Klein's view, a 'florid psychosis' would be the result of an arrested development in which these mechanisms would dominate psychic functioning for too long preventing the ego and the internal objects to become unified and thus enter the depressive position. In fact, Klein and Lacan accounts were quite subversive in their own way at

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<sup>1</sup> Although the structure is a matter of either/or, the structure is also a 'to be determined' instance given that it may be given by what the subject will say next diachronically. The structure is an either/or instance synchronically, that is, given by a logical, extemporaneous point of capiton.

the time, as is well known, neither of them were well received by the Viennese psychoanalytic mainstream of the time (King, 1992; Perelberg, 2006).

Lacan criticised Klein's work as focusing on the imaginary register and not taking into consideration - at least expressly - an understanding of the symbolic overdetermination of the psyche<sup>2</sup>. He commented, for instance, Klein's reported interventions in her clinical case study of *Dick* (Klein, 1930). Klein interpreted Dick's play with a train going into a tunnel as the paternal penis attacking the interior of the mother. Lacan argued that Klein *slamming* signifiers upon Dick had more 'therapeutic effects' than the actual 'content' or 'aboutness' of the interpretations (Lacan, 1953 - 1954, 68) given their resulting metaphoric effect. In other words, the fact that Dick took on board 'one thing *standing* for another' was more important for his subjective shifts than the actual meaning of the figures of the train or the penis. To this extent Klein focused on the imaginary (the penis, the train, the mother), rather than the symbolic registers (the metaphoric effect, substitution of one symbol for another). Of course, one could ask whether 'anything' can potentially make a child like Dick 'accept' a metaphoric structure or are there certain privileged imaginary entities, like those Klein kindly evoked, which may have this effect upon the child's subjectivity.

As explained, Klein thought that prolonged and intense paranoid-schizoid phantasies (i.e. types of objects, mechanisms and anxieties) yield what is phenomenologically referred to as 'psychosis'. Lacan, however, asserted that no fantasy is determinant of

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<sup>2</sup> "...like the stumbling, yet guided work of Melanie Klein evidences sufficiently..." [My translation]. (Lacan, 1956, 32).

the structure, rather the symbolic Oedipus complex determines it<sup>3</sup>. Loving and sadistic object relations are, in Lacan's view, a subordinate aspect of the symbolic and certainly not the source of true psychic conflict. At this early stage of his work Lacan had already noted how *meconnaissance* permeates the imaginary. Hence the need of further understanding about psychosis hitherto posited only in imaginary terms (Lacan, 1947).

Reducing Melanie Klein's notion of *phantasy* to Lacan's understanding of fantasy as being only imaginary, however, can also be characterised as Lacan's misrecognition of Klein's theory. A thorough examination of the points of encounter and misencounter between the two, nevertheless, escapes the scope of this research. It can be mentioned in passing, however, that the Kleinian notion of phantasy is much broader than Lacan's notion of fantasy as it not only encompasses 'the script' of the object relation, but the kind of object, types of anxiety and types of mechanisms of this object relation. Klein's theory in this sense does not distinguish between the imaginary, the symbolic and the real - actual lack of good object and phantasised lack of good object are both simply 'bad object'. Hence in her theory, for instance, castration and frustration have similar dynamics - both simply hurt the subject and are the products of the operation of bad objects coupled as they are with their corresponding internal and external object as well as aggressive instinct. Lacan, especially in his early work, notes the difference between frustration, castration and privation as different kinds of lack, object and agent who performs it - each having real, symbolic and imaginary variations (Lacan, 1956 - 1957). In this sense, Lacan's distinction of the registers

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<sup>3</sup> Both authors may be said to converge in this, as Klein's paranoid schizoid position is also posited as 'an early stage' of the Oedipus complex. Nevertheless, what these two authors mean by Oedipus complex is quite different.

allows him to theorise meticulously different forms, manifestations and levels of experience of lack of the object - which in Klein's account are all combined, somewhat disorganised and muddled in the malleable notion of 'phantasy'. Klein's account, however, distinguishes persecutory bad from guilt provoking bad as proper of to the paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions respectively. This accounts for a major difference in psychic functioning, upon which Lacan does not focus so insistently.

Indeed, this fascinating discussion could continue. Yet for the purposes of this research it is important to account for the decision to focus solely on Lacan's theory. It responds primarily to an affinity between Lacan's mode of thinking in terms of either/or about neurosis and psychosis and my theoretical research interest upon that which is exclusive to psychosis in literature rather than what is psychotic within every work of literature. Furthermore, Lacan's insistence on language and its phenomenological unfolding, and particularly on the radical relation between subject and signifier in psychosis, makes of his theory an almost natural route into the enquiry.

Lacan's contention about the *radical* status of language in psychosis guides this research, as will become clear time and again. To my knowledge, only Lacan has so far emphasised this kind of radicalness and meant by it quite what I argue he meant. I argue this is true except for Bion, whose notion of bizarre object, as will be explored throughout the research, points to the same kind of radicalness that I argue Lacan attributed to psychosis. The radical quality which both authors attribute to psychosis connect their views beyond the limits of their frameworks and hence I introduced throughout this research, somewhat in counterpoint, Bion's contribution when I felt pertinent.

Lacan's originality in his views on psychosis<sup>4</sup>, furthermore, consisted in what he insistently called a return to Freud. This did not mean taking Freud's ideas literally and that no re-interpretation of them was in place. In fact, there are plenty of stances in which Lacan disagrees with Freud, and plenty more that Lacan sets forth as his own. What the return to Freud meant in this context was to follow Freud's steps closely and do not necessarily understand his ideas under the light of those of the dominant Post-Freudian, Ego Psychology or Object Relations psychoanalytic schools.

To re-think psychosis *Freudianly*, Lacan revisited Freud's 1910 case study in which Freud set forth his reading of Daniel Schreber's *Memoirs*. Based on Freud's ideas, Lacan advanced new and different ways to understand psychosis, paranoia in particular.

#### Lacan's understanding of psychosis

Lacan posited psychosis firstly as being symbolically determined; the function and nature of the signifier as well as its relation to the subject and the signified are revealed in psychosis in their most *radical* form. Secondly, Lacan posited psychosis as a result of a particular configuration of the symbolic Oedipus complex, or paternal metaphor, that occurs when the symbolic function of the father does not operate metaphorically over that of the mother. Thirdly, he advanced a dialectic between psychosis and the symbolic phallus that is different from the one that operates in neurotic or perverse structures, and that is entirely different from the Freudian castration anxiety or penis envy as well as the Kleinian idea of the penis as a partial object in the body of the mother. In sum, Lacan posited psychosis as a structure, a particular form of interaction

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<sup>4</sup> I am referring to his views on psychosis as he advanced them in the decade of nineteen fifties.

and configuration of the imaginary, symbolic and real registers that results from the symbolic Oedipus complex.

The paternal metaphor is the Lacanian equivalent to the Freudian Oedipus complex that results in prohibition of incest. In Freud's Oedipus complex, total satisfaction of sexual impulses is eventually relinquished by the subject. Freud affirms that this relinquishment, resulting from the prohibition of incest, makes civilisation possible and is a *universal* organiser (Freud, 1912). Simply put, in Freud's thinking the fundament of the law is about *sexual regulation* (i.e. who are individuals allowed to have sexual intercourse with and with whom are they not). Given the prohibition operates over infantile incestuous wishes, it impacts human subjectivity thereafter shaping object relations and the kind of prohibition over impulses (Freud, 1905). Lacan, on his part, explains the symbolic law in *linguistic* terms. In Lacan's view the law limits and regulates language, words mean this or that because of it. Words are *used* in this or that way because of it. Language operates in a given manner and not in a different one because of it. Meaning is thereby made 'finite' and 'regulated' and whatever language may do outside of the law is deemed 'outside of the law'<sup>5</sup> (Lacan, 1956). To wit, in neurosis the symbolic law renders *language* (broadly understood), albeit arbitrarily, operational and defined. In short, Lacan posits the paternal metaphor, his take on the Oedipus complex, as a sort of linguistic-existential organiser. The symbolic phallus, in constant dialectic with this operation, is the signifier of lack. What language lacks is something to guarantee its meaning - which then becomes the function of the

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<sup>5</sup> The tautological nature of this claim may be proof of language's closure as to the reasons for the law.

phallus: to guarantee meaning. In this sense, the symbolic phallus 'covers', 'stands for' the fact that there is no true guarantee of language possible.

In psychosis, however, the Oedipus complex (a metaphor in which the paternal signifier substitutes the maternal one) does not take place because the signifier Name-of-the-Father does not come into being within the symbolic register. Lacan called this symbolic mechanism of rejection 'foreclosure' (Lacan, 1954). The signifier Name-of-the-Father, Lacan explains, having been rejected from the symbolic register before it came into being is re-encountered by the subject in the real. Hence the psychotic subject undergoes hallucinations, that is, reports to perceive excerpts of language imposing themselves from 'without', that is, they are encountered in the real register which is, in Lacan's thought, the extra-linguistic or non-symbolised<sup>6</sup> (Lacan, 1956).

Lacan's characterisation of that which underpins hallucinations and delusions went further. He discussed in detail the hallucinations which German judge Daniel Schreber described in his *Memoirs* (1903), which I explore in detail in the first chapter of this research. Lacan observed that the voices Schreber heard effectively halted in the place of the shifter of the phrase. The shifter is the Jakobsonian linguistic term for that which designates who speaks in a phrase, akin to the grammatical subject (Jakobson, 1957). Why would auditory hallucinations halt in the place of the shifter of the phrase? Why exactly would voices stop speaking and then Schreber begin answering in the exact linguistic moment mediated by the pronoun 'I'? Lacan (1956) argues that this attests for the kind of division at play in Schreber's subjectivity, leaving certain sections of the subject within the symbolic realm and others in the real. In other words, this

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<sup>6</sup> Although Lacan's formulation of the real shifted throughout his work many times

accounts for the experiential dynamics of the speaking subject that becomes spoken-to. Epistemologically, furthermore, this serves as supporting evidence of the linguistic organisation of the psyche.

This characterisation portrays Lacan's early thought on psychosis. However, in his later thought, between 1975 and 1976, Lacan addressed the topic of psychosis again and some of the notions of the literary analysis of this research stem from this stage of his work.

In his twenty-third seminar (1975 - 1976) Lacan depicted the three registers (symbolic, imaginary and real) as a Borromean knot, that is a knot such that if any of the rings that make it is cut, the three rings are cut loose from each other. Lacan characterised psychotic breakdowns as instances of such coming undone of knots which may even have been falsely tied to begin with.

Psychotic subjects undergo moments of stabilisation and breakdowns. Therefore, it ought to be possible for a subject to be psychotically structured without having a manifest psychotic breakdown or symptomatology. In fact, Lacan argued that 'untriggered' psychosis is a far more common form of organisation or structure than otherwise thought. James Joyce was a paradigmatic example of such subjective organisation according to Lacan (1975 - 1976).

Joyce, following Lacan, deconstructed in his writing the phonemic identity of words by exploiting - separating - sound and written form. Lacan understood this as a psychotic form of linguistic know-how that presupposed an immediate and concrete form of relation to the signifier. In other words, Lacan argued that Joyce as a subject was psychotically organised accounting thus for his linguistic *savoir-faire*.

But this, precisely, kept Joyce from having a psychotic breakdown: his ego identified with his symptom which prevented the knot from coming undone. Lacan wrote this in the old French form of symptom, as 'sinthome', bearing equivocal meanings to 'Saint homme', 'Sinful Aquinas' (*sin Thome*) and others (Lacan, 1975 - 1976). The sinthome accounts for a mode of *jouissance*, an apprehension of psychic reality by means of symptoms conceptualised as a fourth ring knotted in such a way that would keep the falsely tied psychotic knot from coming undone. This topic is revised in further depth in the second chapter where, to an extent possible, I try to bridge between early and late Lacanian theories of psychosis. Lacan's contention on the Borromean knot being a metaphor of the chain (Lacan, 1975 - 1976) led me to make a link between 'paternal metaphor' and chain (i.e. a succession of knots). Arguably the notions of 'continuity of being', unity - knotting - of symbolic, imaginary and real, and continuity of *meaning* enabled by the 'chain' of signifiers are all closely related notions. The core of Lacan's thinking about psychosis may be said that a particular kind of disruption, understood as the failure of a metaphor or the coming undone of a knot, characterises it as a structure.

### Psychotic language

Given the non-operation of the symbolic law in psychosis, language and discourse in their entirety have different characteristics than the more habitual, neurotic ones. Lacan characterised psychotic speech as being full of neologisms, that is new words that are at once over-meaningful and meaningless (Lacan, 1955 - 1956). Often these neologisms are pure signifiers whose signified is the signifier itself. In this sense, explains Lacan, we see 'the signifier overtaking the signified' (Lacan, 1955 -1956), in other words, the signifier occupies an imaginary, rather than a symbolic place.

Psychotic speech, furthermore, is populated with reified words that are treated as heavy objects, clunkily linking with each other. Derailments of the sense of phrases and delusional attempts to stabilise meaning populate speech. These would be understood as the product of the non-operation of the symbolic law which otherwise would organise meaning so that it would operate 'non-delusionally'. Nevertheless, the most prominent feature of psychotic speech is its flavour, characterised by Lacan as the product of a *radical relation between the subject and the signifier* (Lacan, 1955 - 1956).

This form of relation between subject and language features a form of concrete immediacy that stems from the reduction of language to its materiality, that is to the minimal signifying material or *letter*. This radicalness stems, furthermore, from the structure of language overtaking the place of its by-product, that is the meaning it would produce. Effectively, the signifier occupies the place of the signified in the linguistic sign. Perhaps a somewhat clunky depiction of this phenomenon may be that of a building whose foundations and structure occupy the place of its facade. This renders the facade - the visible - identical to the structure and dynamics of that which is meant to underpin it. In the same measure, psychotic speech is rendered identical, stencil-like to the linguistic entities that are meant to underpin it. Some of Daniel Schreber's delusions, for instance the-nerves-of-God or the divine rays that connected him with God are, following Lacan, identical to the structure of the symbolic order and have identical dynamics to the signifier (1955). Freud had noted before that these delusional entities were remarkably similar to the structure he described apropos libido in his theory (Freud, 1910). To put it simply, psychotic speech makes appear in its

'sensible surface' what in neurosis underpins and organises the psychic apparatus itself.

## Psychosis, Psychoanalysis and Literature

Lacan's thinking apropos Schreber and Joyce point to a link between psychosis and literature that feels almost natural. Throughout his work, furthermore, Lacan found support in the literary work of Shakespeare (1977), Sade (1966), Sophocles (1959 - 1960), Goethe (1975), Poe (1956) just to name a few. Many Freudian notions are literary to begin with, like the Oedipus complex and narcissism. What does this tripartite relation between psychoanalysis, psychosis - or madness - and literature consist of?

Literary scholar Shoshana Felman (1982) argues that psychoanalysis and literature hold a relationship of implication in which psychoanalysis uses the literary to name itself. Further, literature occupies the position of the unconscious of psychoanalysis, its unthought and constant condition of subversion. In turn literature, argues Felman, 'is the sole channel by which madness has been able throughout history to speak in its own name, or at least with relative freedom' (Felman, 1985, 15). Indeed, psychoanalysis' endeavour consists of madness voicing itself. Albeit in different contexts and under different particular conditions, psychoanalysis and literature hold an interest on madness. Indeed, this tripartite relation is complex, yet intrinsic, Borromean perhaps.

Jean-Michel Rey (1982) explores the relation between writing and knowledge and posits knowledge following the lead of its lack in the process of writing. In the process of writing, following Rey, knowledge occurs in *après-coup*: “I write where I will have been”. Rey’s thinking permeated my research in mainly, but not exclusively two forms. Firstly, it serves to characterise the relation between psychosis and psychoanalysis via writing, which in combination with Felman’s ideas, problematises and bridges the status of literature and psychoanalysis considering that knowledge follows its lack. Secondly, Rey’s thinking serves to reflect upon the actual literary analysis of this research in which ‘reading psychosis’ revealed itself as inseparable of ‘writing psychosis’, all of which I explore in the third chapter and the final discussions of this research. In the same chapter, I discuss what other authors have *done* when faced with the endeavour of analysing literature from a psychoanalytic perspective. Each approach helped me to inform, contrast and discuss my ideas about the principles of psychoanalytic literary analysis, and therefore of psychoanalysis and literature in general.

Psychoanalyst and literary scholar Meredith Anne Skura (1981) recognises as well an intrinsic proximity between psychoanalysis and literature to the extent that she posits the method and frameworks of psychoanalysis as principles that can, and in fact have organised psychoanalytic analysis or critique of literature. She classifies psychoanalytic literary analyses into five general modalities based on the aspects of the psychoanalytic process it may be based upon: case history, fantasy, dream, transference and the full psychoanalytic process. Skura’s classification may be characterised as a thorough, nearly all encompassing classification of the possible approaches to psychoanalytic literary analysis conceived from a Freudian perspective.

Other psychoanalytic trends may have different approaches to the analysis of literature. In the case of the Lacanian school of psychoanalysis, notions such as subjectivity, imaginary, symbolic and real, signifier and signified, and so on, are central to the literary analysis. Indeed, across different psychoanalytic schools, methods of literary analysis may overlap. For example, Skura's model of approaching literature as if it had the structure of manifest and latent fantasies may be used as well by Lacanian authors. However, the conception of the very structure of fantasy may differ across these schools and therefore both schools may claim that their analysis is based on fantasy and in fact yield very different kinds of analysis. Indeed, the horizon of psychoanalytic literary analysis is vast and renders a complex and wealthy combination of possible results.

#### Characteristics of the literary analysis

The method of analysis I followed can be characterised as one that focuses on several aspects of the literary work. Indeed, at times I approached the literary piece as a case study, a report of events that is faithful to the reporter's experience of them. I also made recourse to the analysis of the text as fantasy; I highlighted several fundamental structures within a text that account for the vicissitudes of the relation between the subject at stake and the object cause of desire. Often, furthermore, I made recourse to what Skura calls character analysis and offered explanations that are often not commonsensical about the psychic makeup of a particular subject within the literary piece.

The literary analysis sought to offer psychoanalytical interpretations of psychosis in literature with the objective to open literary meaning otherwise. This presupposes, furthermore, to test whether Lacan's phenomenological characterisation of psychosis and its linguistic and extralinguistic determinants can be said to be at play in works of fiction. Hence, I sought to point specific forms of organisation of imaginary, symbolic and real dynamics within the literary.

Lacan's contention of the unconscious being structured like a language permeated my approach towards the literary analysis. The psychoanalytic literary analysis performed on this research focused on the above but most importantly on the materiality of the language of the work; its texture. Indeed, I argue that the way language plays and deploys within the story is the gate to the possible phenomenological analysis of the literary piece qua autonomous linguistic artefact. I focused on the literary piece's texture, that is, the way words are interwoven with each other, the way they produce meaning, their interplay and indeed, their very constitution, whether they are neologistic, whether their use is concrete or metaphoric, whether their sound irrupts in the diegetic or whether the diegetic disrupts them.

Psychotic radical immediacy between subject and signifier, I argue, ought to be visible in a work of literature. I hypothesised that the materiality of signifiers would intermingle with the diegetic; the sound of words would pierce and become part of the story. Furthermore, the *texture* of the work would *perform its aboutness*. I conceptualised this as being akin but not quite identical to J. L. Austin (1975) and Judith Butler's (1977) notions of illocutionary speech acts or performatives. It may be hypothesised, for instance, that in a text psychotically structured the dynamics of the unfolding of discourse as well as its grammatical and syntactic constitution and interplay between

words should be akin or at least comparable to the diegetic. Furthermore, the hypothesis is that such texts would transpire structural features of the symbolic order such as the dynamics of signifiers, dynamics between symbolic imaginary and real, temporality, and so forth. I termed this feature 'insight into the apparatus', meaning by that the ability of the text to transparently reveal the dynamics that in fact underpin it - like the building whose foundations are in fact its facade.

Due to the reasons I expose at length in chapter four, I refrained from analysing the author qua subject. Unlike Lacan's analysis on Joyce or Schreber, this analysis does not intend to make any interpretations on the life, past or psychic makeup of the author. I argue that an author need not be psychotic to write psychotically, mimesis of psychosis must be, at least hypothetically possible. Therefore, literary pieces were approached as autonomous symbolic artefacts in which the speaking subject is not the author but the narrator, the characters or the objects within the work. In this, I follow the Barthesian contention of the death of the author and literature having an undecidable origin (1977).

#### Analysis of four short stories and a novel by Pablo Palacio

In this research, I focused on the work of Ecuadorian author Pablo Palacio<sup>7</sup>. Palacio was born in Loja, Ecuador in 1906 and died in Guayaquil in 1947 at the age of forty-seven after spending seven years in a psychiatric hospital. His work is characterised by writer Leonardo Valencia as 'extremely lucid, smiling, electrifying just like its syntax,

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<sup>7</sup> A more thorough account on the reasons behind this choice as well as on the translation can be found in the introduction to the literary analysis.

and in its brevity, its writing is an intertwinement of fragments' (Valencia, 2012, 7). Chronologically and stylistically Palacio can be located amongst the avant-garde Hispano American authors that aimed at transgressing it all, particularly the 'edifying and exemplary role' expected from literary works constrained by realism and therefore by their supposed task to denounce social injustice and promote social involvement. Apropos the texture of Palacio's work, Valencia argues that 'one must make recourse to directly quoting his texts, since paraphrasing them flattens and simplifies all insinuations of that which can be revealed and also submits the texture of the written to rational explanations classifying thereby Palacio in that difficult box of 'strangeness' (Valencia, 2012, 8).

I focused on four of Palacio's short stories and a novel. *Débora* (Palacio, 1927), *Lateral Light* (Palacio, 1927), *Women Gaze the Stars* (1927), *The One and Double Woman* (1927) and the *Anthropophagus* (1927). The stories are characterised by constant derailments of sense, halts in the sliding of meaning and a sense of reification of words. The language of *Débora* and *Women Gaze the Stars* (1927) repeatedly features several remarkably similar dynamics to Lacan's description of the subjective structure in the Schema *Rho* (Lacan, 1956). *Lateral Light* features what I have called a delusional prose and indeed an instance of reification of words such that relates to, and reduces several signifiers to their signifying materiality. Several instances of language performing its aboutness and insight into the apparatus are present in different instances of the texts. I discuss them in the context of their happening in each analysis of each text as I argue that this analysis demands a word-by-word level of attention.

*The One and Double Woman* (1927) is a story about a conjoined twin whose identity does not find an anchor in language nor in her body. The woman talks about herself using the plural, and at once in the first and third person. This is the case of a partial yet contudent accordance between Lacan's notions about psychosis and what occurs in this text. Schreber's interrupted hallucinations as well as the alterations of *The One and Double Woman* occur at the same linguistic topos, which Lacan characterised as bearing witness to the subjective split that *speaking* and *being spoken to* entails in psychosis. I discuss this in further detail in the analysis of this text as well as in the final discussion.

## Contributions

My most important contribution can be ascribed to the recognition of psychosis in the literary moment where it unfolds in imaginary, symbolic and real terms. In other words, my major contribution to literary analysis is identifying literary psychotic features as such and tracing their unfolding within the text in the specific fashion I do it, underpinned by the framework that I set forth. I argued that this form of analysis can open literary meaning otherwise or that it brings forth hitherto literary unthoughts now as having been thought. What does this mean?

In this form of literary analysis, I focused on linguistic dynamics other than those normally attributed to language. Although I did focus on the diegetic dimension of the literary piece, I certainly paid attention more heavily to its interplay with the materiality of the words that act as its vehicle and their interwovenness. I followed Lacan in that I

believe that signifiers, that is, pure meaningless pieces of symbolic code determine the diegetic by their play and objectified transposition into the diegetic.

I argue that this not only transforms the diegetic but the symbolic code itself, that is words, their play and their texture. This is visible in the literary dynamics that I described, for example, apropos 'Lateral Light' in particular and generally in the principles that I called 'insight into the apparatus' and 'language performing its aboutness'. Bringing forth these dynamics of the literary piece opens its meaning beyond meaning, it opens other dimensions of what it may be believed the text is doing by unfolding.

This form of analysis, furthermore, contributes to the understanding of the unsettling power of certain forms of literature that I have called psychotic but that others have characterised otherwise. Notions such as the collapse of medium and object (Baudrillard, 1994) visible in works of literature and forms of art such as the renowned artist Yayoi Kusama (2013) are certainly receptive of this form of analysis. In these cases, similar transpositions between registers occur, object into medium and medium into object - making them thus collapse.

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## Chapter 1

### Lacan's Early Ideas on Psychosis.

#### Introduction

Psychosis was Lacan's main object of enquiry during his 1955 - 1956 seminar. He dedicated his yearly series of lectures to revisit psychosis and expand what was hitherto posited about it within psychoanalysis. He revisited Daniel Schreber's *Memoirs* (Schreber, 1903), Freud's analysis of them (Freud, 1910) as well as many Freudian and psychiatric theoretical standpoints on psychosis. Schreber was a German judge who had two psychotic episodes, the first of which occurred when he was promoted to a high post in the supreme court. Schreber wrote an autobiographical account of the second onset of his mental illness in which he described with remarkable lucidity his passage through a psychotic breakdown: his fantasies, hallucinations, delusions and experience in general.

Furthermore, in his seminar Lacan brought about some of his own clinical work with psychotic patients, which in fact had begun long before in the Sainte-Anne Hospital in Paris. Lacan had published the cases of *Aimée* and *Papin Sisters* in his doctoral dissertation (Lacan, 1932) to which many of the ideas he elaborated in this seminar can be traced.

Lacan's ideas developed in this seminar importantly, crystallising in the text 'On a Preliminary Question to Every Possible Treatment of Psychosis' (Lacan, 1956). He formulated the pivotal notions of *foreclosure* and *the signifier in the real*, which revolutionised and gave a formal structure to what had been hitherto theorised about

psychosis. Throughout this seminar, Lacan's notions of the three registers appear much more maturely formulated and the primacy of the symbolic over the other two registers is noteworthy (Vanheule, 2011).

Lacan's understanding of psychic phenomena in terms of *language*, that is, in terms of symbolic dynamics (and their interplay with imaginary and real ones) has led me to pose the question of whether these can be found in other linguistic disciplines; fictional literature being a linguistic discipline par excellence (Barthes, 1977). Further, the hypothesis is that being able to locate these linguistic dynamics in works of literature may allow for hitherto unthought, different dimensions of the work to reveal themselves and be understood. Psychosis, in this sense, presents the greatest interest for, as will be explained in detail, psychosis entails the most radical relation between subject and signifier.

This chapter is concerned with an overview of Lacan's early ideas on psychosis. His ideas at this stage are rich with phenomenological descriptions of the dynamics of psychosis. In contrast, Lacan's later ideas of psychosis (Lacan, 1975 - 1976), I argue, are set forth in a complete different level of abstraction and present a dramatically different understanding of the relations of the three registers. His later thought, nevertheless, exemplifies the differently conceptualised notion of psychosis by bringing about Irish writer James Joyce and his literature.

Throughout this chapter, I revise the most prominent phenomenological attributes of psychosis described by Lacan in his early theory. The aim is to explicitly clarify them and the structural dynamics that underpin them so as to lay the grounds for the literary analysis that will follow their coordinates. In this sense, several characteristics of psychotic language are extracted from Lacan's descriptions and henceforth serve as

guide to question and recognise psychotic linguistic phenomena in literature. In other words, throughout this chapter I raise specific questions on whether some of these phenomenological elements of psychosis may be found in works of literature. I cannot be asserted quickly enough that I raise questions around the purpose of such literary analysis, what could this contribute to the body of knowledge of psychoanalysis and literature and to the understanding, therefore, of specific works of literature? The objective, in sum, is to highlight the theoretical and phenomenological attributes of psychosis to be found in works of literature, raise specific questions about them and thus set the frame of the empirical questions of this piece of research.

## 1. Symbolic, Imaginary and Real

This section introduces briefly the three registers as conceptualised by Lacan between 1955 and 1960 and outlines some of their intersections with psychosis. Symbolic, Imaginary and Real are ‘placed by Lacan at the basis of human functioning (...) and they are the three registers of psychic reality’ (Vanheule, 2011, 4). The three registers, to wit, can be understood as three epistemo-existential categories, upon whose interplay human reality is played out.

### a. The symbolic

Lacan based his notion of the symbolic and the sign upon Saussurean semiology in which words (signifiers) and concepts (signifieds) are linked. (Saussure, 1916). Lacan however reversed the Saussurean notion of the sign placing the signifier above the signified. He characterised the symbolic register as a set of structured oppositions of linguistic pieces of symbolic code (signifiers) linked in a multiplicity of chains whose links are united by means of metaphoric and metonymic linkage (Lacan, 1955 - 1956,

66). The signifying chain is linear and diachronic, as well as circular (or retroactive) and associative, that is synchronic. Synchronically, signifiers exist extemporaneously and simultaneously. Diachronically, they unfold throughout time and link contiguously (Lacan, 1960).

When the subject speaks, he has available all language at the same time and the unfolding of language entails a “choice” of which signifier to use, which one will follow, and so forth. This “choice” cannot be totally ascribed to a subjective will of speech, for language is not only a tool used willingly by the subject to communicate a message. In fact, the symbolic register precedes and overdetermines the message itself (Lacan, 1960). To exemplify, we can think about a subject in the analytical session interrupting his discourse because he realises what he was going to say. The symbolic, as it becomes visible, has a thrust of its own, which makes of the *speaking* subject a *spoken* subject as well. At this point of his work, Lacan posited the symbolic as overdetermining psychic phenomena and therefore logically preceding the subject:

“But do not let yourself be fascinated by that moment of genesis [of language]. The little child that you see playing and making an object appear and disappear, and who practices thus the apprehension of a symbol, conceals, if you let yourself be fascinated, the fact that the symbol is already there, huge, covering it all already; that language exists, filling and brimming-over all libraries, surrounding all actions, guiding them, causing them; that you are involved in it, and it can make you shift and move somewhere. All of that, you forget when thinking of a child that is in the process of introducing himself to the symbolic dimension” (Lacan, 1955 - 1956, 94 - 95).

Lacan often called the locus of language *the Other* and repeatedly noted “ça parle” (it speaks, homophonous in French to “id speaks”). I argue that Lacan meant to underscore the autonomous quality by means of which language unfolds, speaking by and through the subject. In this sense, the autonomous function of language, the fact that it precedes the subject and therefore the extent to which a subject is *spoken* as opposed to *speaking* is Lacan’s take on the Freudian unconscious.

As explained, when the subject speaks, language in its entirety is extemporaneously and simultaneously available to him; at the very moment of the utterance of a word, all the other words are by implication excluded of the utterance. Therefore, what is said holds suddenly a place in relation to what is left unsaid. The subject who just spoke suddenly holds a place in relation to what he just said, what he will say and what he left unsaid. As explained, this results from the symbolic being a set of opposing entities. The meaning of the elements of the opposition, therefore, can only be understood in relation to the other elements to which they now oppose. In other words, the very configuration of the opposition is what makes each element mean one thing or another. This is thoroughly explored by Lacan in the seminar of the Purloined Letter (Lacan, 1956) in which the effects of the signifier are posited as independent of the signification they may produce, that is, their very *position* signifies.

Given that the oppositions can only become visible once the subject has spoken and thus the opposing relations established, it follows that subjective positioning can only be appreciated retrospectively, in *après coup* (Lacan, 1960). Therefore, to make sense of his position the subject must keep speaking - which concomitantly reveals and constitutes further subjective positions which make the subject to continue speaking to make sense of them, so on and so forth. One can observe analogous dynamics

between letters. Letters only acquire specific sounds in opposition to the previous and following letters of the word, despite having, to some extent, an inherent sound ascribed to them (Lacan, 1957).

In this sense, speech can be depicted as the continuous account and concomitant constitution of the meaning of these oppositions: those between signifiers, between signifiers and the subject, between said or unsaid signifiers, etc. This description of speech amounts to what Lacan calls signification<sup>8</sup>. Speech is therefore at once the product and the cause of the opposing dynamics of the symbolic - and vice versa.

Thus, the subject continues speaking; “signification re-sends us to signification, that is, another signification. The system of language, at any point that you pin it, never arrives to an index point of reality, it is all reality that is covered by the totality of the net of language” (Lacan, 1955-1956, 42). In other words, signifiers link only to other signifiers and signification re-sends to other significations. This characteristic of the signifier is commonly referred to in post-structuralist philosophy following Saussurean linguistic principles as non-referentiality of the signifier; the opposite of which is called ‘referential illusion’ (Saussure, 1916; Barthes, 1957). Therefore, *stricto sensu* the signifier makes no reference to reality, for it only links to other signifiers. In psychosis, however, signifiers can be said to become homogenous to reality - for the psychotic subject reality - what is there - speaks. Language being homogenous to reality may be a feature of psychosis at play in literature and it may be one of the key points to investigate in the present research. In this sense, we may ask what are the

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<sup>8</sup> The French word “signification” can be translated into English as “signification” but also as “meaning”. This equivocal translation is further complicated by the French words: “signifié” and “sense”, which can also be translated into English as “meaning”, but correspond to different conceptions of “meaning” in Lacan’s theory.

phenomenological features of language and reality when they are homogenous and how do they operate differently to a heterogeneous state of things?

Neurotic and psychotic relations to the symbolic register differ greatly. For the neurotic subject, meaning is organised by the linkage and substitution of signifiers in the chain. On the other hand, a psychotic subject encounters signifiers as perceptions coming from the “external” (Lacan, 1956).

Lacan (1956) claims that Schreber’s hallucinations and delusions, particularly those of the “divine rays” are *constituted* analogously to the *symbolic structure*. Schreber himself states that “the nature of the divine rays is that they must speak as soon as they are set in motion” (Schreber, 1955, p.130). Signifiers, too, ought to speak as soon as they are set in motion, that is, they ought to produce signification. It can be therefore hypothesised that psychotic delusional entities, in their structure, are a stencil-like copy of the structure of the symbolic register itself, unlike neurotic symptoms that are an *effect* of language. In other words, the constitution and manifestation of neurotic symptoms is an effect of language (i.e. conversive symptoms are metaphoric), whereas the constitution and manifestation of the psychotic symptom are analogous to the structure and dynamics of the signifier itself.

#### b. The Imaginary

Making sense of symbolic oppositions, that is, the work of signification is carried out by the ego. Lacan asserted that “the subject speaks himself *with* his ego (moi)” (Lacan, 1955-1956, 26). In an earlier text, “The mirror stage...” (1933), Lacan described how the ego comes about from the identification with the image in the mirror. The primitive

ego experiences itself as fragmented or incomplete, which is the experience of the very primitive fantasy of the fragmented body. However, the image on the mirror provides an achieved and complete form or *Gestalt*, with which the fragmented ego identifies. The ego, therefore, performs thereafter a function of completion and closure of fragmentation and gaps. Hence Lacan attributes to the ego this sense-making function, for the ego strives to “homogenise”, “close the gap” or “make sense of the senseless”. Lacan called the sense-making dimension *the imaginary*. Signification, thereby, can be understood as the point of linkage between the symbolic (i.e. the linkage of signifiers and their oppositions) and the imaginary (i.e. the meaning or sense of these oppositions).

The imaginary comprises the “sense-making” or “meaning”, as well as the “image” dimension of human experience, hence its name. The meaning or sense the ego may produce has, therefore, a “projective and identificatory” quality because the ego is in a dialectical relation with its reflection, or that which is not its reflection but is nevertheless *there opposing it*. In other words, the ego is caught in a dialectical relation with the image (in the mirror or otherwise) and the Other (understood as language in the way it underpins what is in Kleinian psychoanalysis called ‘object relations’). The image is thereafter named by Lacan “the other” or “a” (*autre*). The other is, in Freudian terms, the ego ideal (Lacan, 1960).

It follows that the notion of identity is imaginary. In psychosis, delusional systems have an enormous effect on the subject’s identity. Given the tendency of the imaginary (and the ego as an imaginary agency) to ‘make sense’, the question is what sort of sense does the ego make out of a symbolic structure that has psychotic properties? Schreber’s delusion of becoming the woman of God (Schreber, 1955), for instance,

may be thought of as an identity product of such state of things (Lacan, 1955 - 1956). A key question for the present research is how are these projective, identificatory and identitary properties of the imaginary be found in a work of literature; how will they be recognised and what functions will they perform in relation to the economy of the work as a whole.

### c. The Real

Out of the three registers, the real presents us with the greatest difficulty to characterise. There are several ways in which it was addressed by Lacan; for instance, as that which exceeds language, that is, what cannot be symbolised in language and therefore is inapprehensible by means of any signification. Scholar Stijn Vanheule defines it as “the radically non-signified” (Vanheule, 2011, 70). The real is, however, sometimes interchangeably understood by Lacan at this point of his work as a synonym of “reality”, not the describable reality, but the concrete reality inaccessible as such. Given Lacan’s stance on referentiality, it can be inferred that, at this point of his work, he understood the real as always mediated by the symbolic and imaginary, which envelop the real and render it thereby inaccessible without mediation.

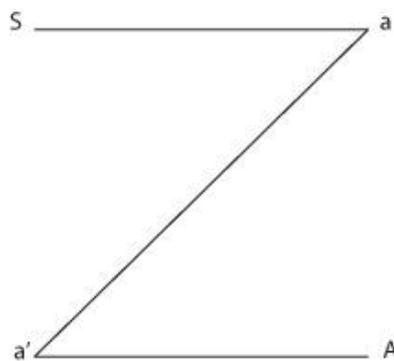
The real evolved throughout Lacan’s work as Lacan’s focus shifted from an imaginary and symbolic overdetermination of the psyche towards a real overdetermination of the psyche (i.e. the psyche overdetermined by jouissance). In other words, in later stages of his work ‘Lacan embraces the idea that some aspects of being are real and cannot be grasped by language’ (Vanheule, 2001, 4). The definitions of the real, therefore, changed throughout Lacan’s work dramatically. Towards the end of his work, he defined the real as *the impossible* and as that which never ceases to write itself (Lacan, 1975). As we will explore in the next chapter, he also defined the real as that

which 'ex-sists' the imaginary and symbolic, that it, resists them from within and without (Lacan, 1975n - 1976).

#### d. The Schema Z

An overview of the schema Z may provide a means to understand how Lacan envisaged the interaction of the three registers at this point of his work. Lacan presented this schema in the text 'On a preliminary question...' (1955). It is useful to fully appreciate the contrast between this and Lacan's later *depiction* of the interaction between registers (Lacan 1975 - 1976), which is dramatically different and discussed in more detail in the following chapter.

In the 1956 text "On a preliminary question...", Lacan presented a simplified version of the schema *L* commonly known as schema *Z*. One possible reading of this schema is of it being a depiction of the structure of the subject. In addition, the four corners of the schema (S, a, a', A) and their interactions (the vectors that unite them), as a whole, account for the dynamics of the imaginary, the symbolic and the real.



"S" (subject) stands for the real existence of the subject, which, according to Lacan, is ineffable and absurd to the subject himself (Lacan, 1956). S, phonetically taken, sounds like Es, the Freudian Id in German. The quality of ineffability, of alienation, of

“*itness*” is what makes of S as if it did not belong to the dominion of the subject. Therefore, S stands for the real in the schema. “a” stands for the object (the imaginary object of object relations) and a’ for the ego (or imaginary other - *autre*); that which “is reflected of [the ego’s] shape on its objects” (Lacan, 1957, p 27). A stands for the Other (*Autre*), that is, the symbolic order, the place of language in its synchronic preceding of the speaking subject and from which the unconscious speaks.

Summing up, the schema can be divided in three areas: S (real), a’ – a (imaginary) and A (symbolic). If we follow the vector of the schema from “A” to “S”, we could read it as follows: the symbolic pre-exists, it overdetermines speech and the imaginary and only within speech, the subject as spoken will emerge as product of language. We can read it in the opposite direction as well, from “S” to “A” and formulate: the subject is ultimately overdetermined by the symbolic and the unconscious (“A”), but this is mediated by the imaginary (a – a’) that is, the ego, object relations, meaning, etc. In short, this schema is a depiction of the fact that real, imaginary and symbolic hold a singular place, function and form of manifestation in the subjective experience.

The signifier in the real

a. Foreclosure

Lacan’s theory of psychosis is well-known for the notions of the ‘signifier in the real’ and the mechanism that underpins it called ‘foreclosure’. In the text “Reply to the Commentary by Jean Hyppolite” (1954) Lacan drew this term from Freud’s clinical case “The Wolf Man” (Freud, 1918) and from his paper “Negation” (Freud, 1925). This term designates a primordial refusal of a symbolic element into the symbolic realm:

That which is repressed returns, for repression and the return of the repressed are two sides of one and the same thing. The repressed is always there, and it expresses itself in a perfectly articulated fashion in the symptoms and a bunch of other phenomena. However, that which falls under the sway of the *Verwerfung* has a completely different destiny” (Lacan, 1955-196, 21).

Lacan believed this mechanism determines psychotic structures. Freud used this term when describing the castration complex of the Wolf Man, highlighting thus that it had been fundamentally rejected, unsymbolised. Foreclosure in this sense implies a refusal or rejection to let a primordial signifier enter into the realm of the symbolic (*Bejahung*); “a rejection of something as if it didn’t exist” (Benvenuto, B; Kennedy, R, 1986, 151). To this extent it differs from repression, for repression, not of the originally repressed but of what becomes repressed, presupposes symbolisation and admittance into the symbolic. In short, Lacan’s thesis is that, in psychosis, the unacceptable is foreclosed, rejected before it comes into being in the symbolic and placed in the real, as opposed to repressed as it would be the case in neurosis:

“...everything that is refused to the symbolic order, in the sense of the *Verwerfung*, reappears in the real. There is an analogous relation between, for example, negation and that which reappears in the intellectual realm, and the *Verwerfung* and hallucinations, that is, the reappearance in the real of that which is refused by the subject. There is a vast range of possible relations between them” (Lacan, 1955-1956, 22).

Leclaire summarises the difference between neurotic repression and psychotic foreclosure in the following way:

“If we imagine common experience to be like a tissue, literally a piece of material made up of criss-crossing threads, we could say that repression would figure in it as a rent or tear, which nonetheless could still be repaired; while foreclosure would figure in it as a gap (*béance*) due to the weaving itself...”  
(Leclaire, 1968, 96).

The immediate question to ask would be why foreclosure would be proper only of psychosis? Why are there not foreclosed symbolic elements in the other two structures, neurosis and perversion, and consequently, hallucinations and delusions are not symptoms found in these structures? The answer given by Lacan is that the alteration occurs at the level of that which determines the structure, that is, the symbolic Oedipus complex. Following Lacan:

“no imaginary formation (fantasy) is unique to a structure, nor it determines it or the dynamics of a process. That is why one is bound to fail time and again when one gives them more importance than the symbolic articulation that Freud discovered at the same time as the unconscious, and that is coextensive of it: it is the need of this symbolic articulation what is meant in Freud’s constant reference to the Oedipus complex” (Lacan, 1956, 24).

It then follows that the Oedipus complex, from Lacan’s perspective, is that which determines the structure, whether neurosis, psychosis or perversion, because it provides a structural stencil, an *articulation* of symbolic, imaginary and real which determines how thereafter they stay organised. In the case of psychosis, the Oedipal stencil explains the radical relation of the subject and the signifier. The psychotic Oedipus complex is, according to Lacan, the first and determinant instance in which the foreclosure mechanism occurs.

As explained, Lacan (1955-1956) suggested that a logical phase (i.e. non-chronologically localisable) of affirmation of existence (*Bejahung*) precedes foreclosure. Foreclosure is the result of the failure of *Bejahung*, that is, the failure of recognising that a symbolic element does exist. This symbolic element, according to Lacan, is the signifier Name-of-the-Father. This signifier, in the neurotic Oedipus complex, replaces metaphorically the signifier Desire-of-the-Mother, and the latter is therefore elided. But in the psychotic Oedipus Complex, the signifier Name-of-the-Father is foreclosed from the symbolic realm, its existence is never really achieved in the symbolic - the register itself lacks something. The signifier Desire-of-the-Mother is thus not elided, and the subject is caught in dialectic with it. (Lacan, 1956). But furthermore, the signifier Name-of-the-Father is also the symbolic support of the symbolic law; the prohibition of incest around which civilisation is organised:

“If Freud has insisted so much on the Oedipus complex, to the point of building a sociology of totems and taboos, it is because according to him the Law is there *ab origine*. It is not a matter of therefore posing the question about the origin, the Law is there from the beginning, and human sexuality must take place by and through it. This fundamental Law is simply a symbolisation law.

This is what the Oedipus complex means”. (Lacan, 1955-156, 96).

Therefore, in Lacan’s view, the prohibition of incest and the symbolisation law are one and the same thing. The psychotic Oedipus complex, therefore, is one in which incest is not prohibited, that is, the signifier Desire-of-the-Mother is not elided and the laws of symbolisation operate therefore differently to the other structures. What has taken place is the foreclosure of the Name-of-the-Father instead of a metaphoric operation in which its admittance into the symbolic realm occurs. This foreclosure sets the

coordinates for all future symbolic, imaginary and real configurations for it sets the path for all that is thereafter *inadmissible* for the psychotic subject: it cannot be admitted into the symbolic realm, and therefore it shall reappear in the real.

This explanation is, I argue, theoretically and phenomenologically coherent. However, we may ask what are the theoretical grounds to assert this explanation thus and not otherwise. The answer may be given by reflecting on the remarkable combination of psychoanalysis and structuralist philosophy that Lacanian psychoanalytic theory is. To this purpose, we can examine a small piece of Claude Lévi-Strauss' *Structural Anthropology* also concerned with the interaction between the signifier and the real.

Lévi-Strauss carried out anthropological studies of North American natives, Polynesians and other ancestral societies. In the *Porcupine's Instructions* (1968), Lévi-Strauss compared a set of different versions of a myth that he called 'the myth about the wives of the sun and moon'. He collected each version from a different ethnic group. The myth alludes to the porcupine, which is, according to Lévi-Strauss, central to technology, economical activities, art and philosophy of these cultures. The porcupine, thus, is a real creature but also a symbolic element.

In his analysis of the versions of the myth, Lévi-Strauss accounts for how what in one version of the myth is 'low' in the other version is 'high'; what in one is 'horizontal' in the other is 'vertical', and so on. So once he set forth these oppositional pairs (low-high, internal-external, vertical-horizontal), he explains:

“if the presence of the porcupine is transformed into its absence, then in all those contexts in which it played a part – and in order that it should continue to play the part – the animal must be projected into a different world and,

because of this, low must be changed to high, horizontal to vertical, internal to external, etc. Only in these conditions can a formerly coherent world-picture remain coherent” (Lévi-Strauss, 1968, 273).

In other words, for Lévi-Strauss a real presence elicits a symbolic absence, and vice versa, symbols stand for that which lacks in the real. In the same measure, Lacan argues that that which lacks in, rather, is foreclosed from the symbolic reappears in the real. Lévi-Strauss asserts furthermore that this ‘projection’, the change of dimension (of realms, of registers) which the porcupine undergoes changes the dispositions of the other oppositional pairs (low - high, horizontal to vertical...) A transposition of registers, therefore, affects the relations between symbolic elements making them into their opposite. For Lacan, however, not only symbolic oppositions are affected but the place, structure and functioning of the signifier are affected and modified. The notion of *transposition* of an entity across registers is key to the understanding of psychosis and I will explore it all along this research in more detail.

#### b. Projection in Neurosis and Psychosis

In neurosis symptoms result from the effects of meaning of the signifier. Neurotic symptoms are overdetermined and have, most clearly in hysteria, a metaphoric structure in which the signifier that is avoided by means of the metaphor is expressed in the form of a symptom (Breuer; Freud, 1895). In psychosis, on the other hand, symptoms do not result from the metaphoric effects of signifiers. As we have explained, symptoms, particularly hallucinations, result from the subject confronting, re-encountering the foreclosed signifier without mediation.

Lacan understood hallucinations and delusions to be *sine qua non*-psychotic symptoms and he followed Freud on his ideas about hallucinations. Freud thought that neurosis was the product of an internal conflict (Freud, 1923). However, the conflict in psychosis is not a product of a discordant relation between psychic instances (e.g. id, ego, superego) nor between a drive and its prohibition, but rather between *the subject and reality* (Freud, 1924[1923]). In this sense, it is clear that psychoanalytic tradition has, since the very beginning, understood the conflict that is played out in psychosis as a major discordance between the internal and the external to the subject.

Furthermore, the psychotic mechanisms of hallucinations and delusions consist, according to Freud, of replacing the discordant, or missing, part of external reality with a part of internal reality (Freud, 1924[1923]). Freud emphasises that although this is not a mechanism exclusive to psychosis, it dominates its psychic organisation to such an extent that it has a qualitative difference to its neurotic counterpart.

Lacan, on his part, believed that although the neurotic and psychotic mechanisms of replacing external reality have similarities, the psychotic one is not just a more intense or dramatic version of its neurotic counterpart. Neurotic projection is not a milder form of the psychotic projection. The latter consists of a part of internal reality filling a gap in external reality (Lacan, 1956). Lacan qualifies this interchangeable use of the concept of projection, in psychosis and neurosis, as lacking a critical attitude towards the concept of projection. The reason for this being that, to Lacan's mind, the central issue at stake in Freud's description of projection in psychosis is not a colouration of external reality in accordance to internal reality but a structured mechanism.

Freud's description of the forms of paranoid delusions (Freud, 1910) posits them as forms of defence against homosexual impulses (i.e. he understands delusions as

defences against loving and hating links to objects perceived as being the same gender as the subject). Freud characterised them by making grammatical shifts in the sentence “I (man) do not love him” - a negation of a homosexual impulse. Each form of paranoid delusion, that is, each form of psychotic projection, is dependent upon a linguistic, therefore symbolic shift; psychotic projection entails such a shift. It is to this extent that both phenomena of projection must be distinguished from each other. Interestingly, the completions of the phrase “I don’t love him” which account for each form of paranoid delusion in Freud’s account, have a remarkable linguistic resemblance to the message phenomena that Lacan identified in Schreber’s delusions.

Projection in neurosis, understood as the coloration of external reality in terms of the internal one, could be thought of as mostly imaginary in nature. The neurotic projective and introjective mechanisms are performed by the ego and are in constant dialectic with the image in the mirror, as explained before. (Lacan, 1933). Of course, this mechanism follows as well the paths set by the signifier. Psychotic projection, however, has that same *radical* quality in terms of its relation to the symbolic described before: an almost immediate relation to the dynamics of the symbolic. It’s far more radical than the neurotic instance: what is projected are signifiers as such that are perceived by the subject as coming from the real (Benvenuto, B; Kennedy, R. 1986). The specificity of the psychotic projection, and what makes it radically different from its neurotic counterpart, is given by what replaces the rent in reality:

“Projection in psychosis (...) is the mechanism that makes return from outside that which is under the sway of the *Verwerfung*, that which has been

placed outside of the structuring general symbolisation of the subject”  
(Lacan, 1955-1956, 58).

The traditional phenomenological account of a hallucination is of a *perception* by a *precipiens* of a *perceptum* in the absence of an object (Lacan, 1956). In other words, it is a perception of an object that is not there but it is perceived as if it were. In more modern psychological terms, it could be defined as a perception in the absence of a true stimulus capable of arousing the sensorial systems of the body (Johnson, 1978). Lacan, however, contested the former characterisation of hallucinations and understood them as foreclosed signifiers placed on the real. Lacan found this explanatory of the destiny of that which is *inadmissible* for the psychotic subject, the neurotic counterpart of which is the repressed.

In neurosis, the elided signifiers, the repressed, the forgotten or the misrecognised constitute the *inadmissible* to consciousness (Lacan, 1955 – 1956). Psychotic suffering, following Lacan and Freud, is located in the relation of the subject to reality, not on the return of the repressed, which pertains to the domain of internal reality. In other words, following Lacan, psychotic phenomena do not result from repressed elements and their vicissitudes, but the fact that the *inadmissible* is encountered without mediation in external. Were these elements repressed, they would not appear in a non-mediated way to the subject (Soler, 2002).

A clinical example is Lacan’s clinical vignette of a woman who reportedly had a symbiotic and persecutory relation to her mother. As she was coming back from the butcher, she met her neighbour in the hallway and heard him calling her “sow” (i.e. female pig). (Lacan, 1956; 1955-1956). What she reportedly heard is related to the persecutory anxiety of being dismembered to pieces, being the chopped object of the

butcher. Had this signifier been linked to the chain, the patient would have been able to include this in her associations in one form or another. Lacan argued that this was, in fact, the case of a hallucination. Colette Soler argues that 'sow' is a *jouissance name*<sup>9</sup> of the subject (Soler, 2002, 126).

In this sense, another question that may be answered empirically in the present research is whether any analogous phenomena can be located in works of literature. Whether phenomena of exclusion of signifiers from the symbolic order and subsequent placement in the real can be found and whether these signifiers indeed correspond to that which is inadmissible for the subject who excludes them.

Furthermore, Lacan noted that "the most important question, that of *"Who speaks?"* has to dominate all the question of paranoia. (...) The subject articulates that which he says he hears" (Lacan 1955-1956, 33). Multiple sources of speech for one subject denotes a profound division in him; the subject may be fragmented in that he may position himself at once as *speaking* and *spoken to* in relation to his own symbolic productions. In this sense, we may add to the empirical questions that of the subjective status of the speaking and spoken-to subject. Can this phenomenon be found in works of literature and if so, how will it manifest itself?

### c. The Phallus in the Symbolic Oedipus Complex

In a conference given in 1958 entitled "The Signification of the Phallus", Lacan explored the role of the phallus in the Oedipus complex and its subsequent pivotal

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<sup>9</sup> Name of enjoyment. This refers to the enjoyment (pleasure and unpleasure) that the fantasy of being chopped to pieces by the other provokes, therefore sow is another name for the subject just like 'ratman' would have been a name of enjoyment of Freud's patient (Freud, 1910).

structuration of the psyche. In that paper Lacan sets forth two conceptions of the phallus. Firstly, the imaginary phallus, written as  $-\phi$ , which stands for the imaginary object that the Other lacks. Secondly, the symbolic phallus; it is denoted as  $\phi$  and it is a special signifier (Lacan, 1958). The phallus is an essential piece of the paternal metaphor given the intrinsic role played by the castration complex in the prohibition of incest.

Lacan followed Freud in that the phallus, be it imaginary or symbolic, is at play in the psychic economy as lacking, in imaginary or symbolic terms. This is most evident in Freud's essay "Fetishism" (1927), but in fact is present all over Freud's work. Freud's emphasis throughout his work is on the lacking phallus of the mother and the neurotic boy's horror towards this sight. To this extent, Lacan explained, it is understandable that Melanie Klein theorised the penis as a partial object inside the mother's body, that is, visibly lacking (Lacan, 1958). The emphasis is that the phallus, although not being the penis per se is to be *not found* in the Other and the other.

The law of symbolisation, as explained above, is the Lacanian designation of that which Freud understands as the prohibition of incest, set forth by Freud in Totem and Taboo (1912). Based on Lévi-Strauss research, Freud explained the foundation of civilisation in terms of sexual regulation and incest prohibition, that is, relinquishment of instinct fulfilment. At this point of his work Lacan understood this as a result of the subject being subject to language. For Lacan, the law is not about sexual regulation, but about *linguistic regulation*. As scholar Maud Ellmann rightly puts "for Lacan, as for Lévi-Strauss, incest is bad grammar" (Ellmann, 1998, 16).

In this sense, the symbolic phallus "is the signifier destined to designate the effects of the signified as a whole, insofar as the signifier determines them due to its presence

as signifier” (Lacan, 1958, 168). The symbolic phallus, according to Lacan, is a special signifier that designates all the effects of meaning that signifiers will produce as well as how the signifier determines them by effectively entering into the signification process. Furthermore, Lacan explains that “all that is alive of this being (the neurotic subject) in the *urverdrängt* (repressed), finds its signifier when it receives the mark of the *Verdrängung* (repression) of the phallus (due to which the unconscious is language)” (Lacan, 1958, 171). In other words, the repression of the symbolic phallus is what ties the repressed to the signifier, therefore the unconscious being signifiers, that is, language. Therefore, it may be argued that the phallus links language, repression and body. An example of such phenomenon may be found in Freud’s case study known as “the Ratman” (1910). Freud highlights how “rat” is what he calls a “komplexreizwort” and it manifests itself in *heiraten*, *spielratten*, *ratten*, etc, which are the determinant elements of the Rat Man’s symbolic coordinates. This is a neurotic phenomenon in which it is visible how the signifier determines the signification by *entering* into the signified itself.

In psychosis, as explained before, the Name-of-the-Father is foreclosed and therefore so is that symbolic support of the law. This is the reason why psychosis has visible linguistic features that make it seem not to comply with the laws of language, precisely, because these laws lack their symbolic support. For instance, Schreber is confronted without mediation to the signifier in the form of hallucinations. The linguistic features of psychosis are such due to the Name-of-the-Father, and therefore the operation of the law of symbolisation, being foreclosed. As a consequence of this, the symbolic phallus is not a veiled signifier that designates the effects of the signifier in the signified. This, arguably ought to have major implications for the

phenomenological analysis of any literary text in terms of its structure and meaning and remains a question to be answered empirically.

### 3. Psychosis and language

Psychosis, Lacan pointed, is a psychic process defined “by that which determines most radically the relation between man and signifier” (Lacan, 1956, 15). As explained, the subject encounters the signifier from without the symbolic register and the linguistic system. Hallucinations, in this sense, are thought of as signifiers encountered by the subject as perceptions. Hallucinations and delusions are, therefore, undeniably *external* to the subject, yet undeniably subjectively produced; concomitantly wilful (albeit unconsciously) and non-wilful. It follows that symbolic, imaginary and real, which for instance hold distinct and unique places in neurosis, have a different configuration in psychosis. In psychosis, the signifier returns to the subject from the real, which alters both symbolic and real altogether.

Psychosis cannot be fully understood on a purely linguistic basis. In fact, the psychotic phenomenon may be understood as having three broad features: 1) a particular relation to reality 2) a particular structure of the subject and 3) a special relation of the subject to his speech (Benvenuto & Kennedy, 1986, 144). Each of these three features of psychosis, however, has linguistic implications. Arguably, Lacan’s indication of reading the psychotic symptom in terms of its symbolic structure entails that it, too, must have a linguistic dimension.

Lacan underscored that the psychotic symptom reveals a particular relation between the subject and the symbolic that is specific to psychosis. For this reason, he

suggested that the symptom should be “read”. Notwithstanding, this indication resembles his characterisation of the neurotic symptom and its metaphoric structure which, once decoded, should recede. In this sense, it may be argued that like the psychotic symptom, the neurotic symptom should also be “read”.

Reading the neurotic symptom, in particular the conversive symptom, amounts to decoding the substitution of one signifier by another resulting in the elision of one of them. The neurotic symptom in general, at this point of Lacan’s work, is understood as a ciphered message and thus it is symbolically determined (Lacan, 1956). Lacan’s later elaborations on the role of the symptom in psychic economy changed dramatically, particularly when he introduced the notion of *jouissance* and knots theory to depict imaginary, symbolic and real (Lacan 1962; 1974).

Reading the psychotic symptom, on the other hand, does not entail decoding its metaphoric structure and the meaning produced thereby. Therefore, it is not an operation of *reading* *stricto sensu*. In this case, reading means to understand the psychotic symptom as a symbolic entity within a series of economical relations to the real. What reading the psychotic symptom may mean, nevertheless, is a crucial question in this research, the answers to which will be sought empirically. Furthermore, the question can be phrased more precisely by asking whether in the act of *reading literature* a psychotic symptom can be located and its economical relations to the real highlighted and understood.

## b. Psychotic Speech

About psychotic speech Lacan asserted: “we are not saying that, like neurosis, psychosis is a simple fact of language, far from that. We are simply saying that psychosis is very fertile in terms of what it can express in discourse” (Lacan, 1955-1956, 73). From this claim it would follow that psychotic symptoms and speech entail a specific internal structure and dynamics. Therefore, each structure (i.e. neurosis, psychosis, perversion) ought to entail certain forms of speech and certain symbolically structured forms of symptoms. Consequently, each structure entails certain symbolic, imaginary and real configurations. An empirical question for this research is, therefore, whether the speech that characterises psychosis can be found in certain works of literature and whether focusing on it may uncover the structural dynamics proper of psychosis at play in their literary dynamics.

Lacan takes paranoid language as the quintessential form of psychotic language. He characterises it as having “a particular and often extraordinary flavour. Certain words often acquire a special emphasis, a *density* that becomes manifest sometimes in the very form of the signifier. This gives to them sometimes their frankly neologistic character that is so striking in the creations of paranoia” (Lacan, 1955-1956, 42). The emphasis of certain words is, therefore, a phenomenological quality of psychotic speech that allows hypothesising certain aspects of the symbolic structure that underpins psychosis. Emphasis in neologistic words is a product of the particular interaction between signifier and signified in psychotic structure. Lacan describes it thus:

“At the level of the signifier, in its materiality, the delusion can be characterised by a special form of discordance with common language that is called a

neologism. At the level of signification, the delusion is characterised by the fact that signification does not exhaust itself by sending us to another signification.

The signification of these words that catch your eye is characteristic in that it essentially sends us to *the* signification as such. It is a sort of signification that does not send us fundamentally to anything but itself, that remains irreducible.

The patient himself underscores that the word has a weight of its own. Before being reducible to another signification, it signifies in itself something uncanny, it is a sort of signification that sends us, above all, to meaning as such” (Lacan, 1955-1956, 43).

In other words, delusions are populated with neologisms that acquire a weighty quality, they do not straightforwardly send to more signification as described before; in other words, signification in psychosis becomes arrested at the face of neologisms. As explained, in neurosis, signification is the product of the opposition of signifiers and their relation to the subject. However, in the case of delusional language, the neologism itself, the materiality of the signifier *is* the meaning, for there is no further signification possible. In this sense, it can be argued that the signifier replaces the signified; in other words, the materiality of words (signifier) replaces the meaning (signified) they ought to produce. It follows that a phenomenological characteristic of delusional literature, if it resembled Lacan’s description, is it being populated with neologisms and for this to be the reason of an arrested, clunky flow of its meaning.

Another quality of neologisms, besides their weighty quality, is their discordance and concomitant functionality within speech. They can have, for instance, the form of portmanteaux in which elements of different words are combined to form new words. Portmanteaux function according to “the logic of language” despite being words that

did not really exist in the first place. Neologisms can sometimes be simply frank new inventions without any precedent other than a phonetic one. Arguably, neologisms in psychosis are an objective instantiation of the way language evolves: a combination of letters that yields absolute novelty yet keeping a certain 'homogeneity' with the linguistic system. Therefore, neologisms in the context of psychosis are concrete, stencil-like copies of *language as a whole and its dynamics*; a radical and unmediated form of speech phenomenon.

The weighty quality of the neologism has an effect in terms of the position that the subject can adopt in relation to it. In neurosis, the linkage of signifiers produces signification, in psychosis the neologism *compels* the subject. Lacan calls it "an intuition quality" that arrests the subject:

"it is a phenomenon that has a flooding, all-encompassing character for the subject. It reveals to him a new perspective, of which the subject underscores the originality, particular flavour, like Schreber when he speaks of the fundamental language to which he was introduced in his experience. In it, words, with their full emphasis, the *enigmatic word*, is the master of the situation" (Lacan, 1955-1956, 43).

In other words, neologisms or *enigmatic words* overflow the subject with a compelling feeling whilst arresting signification. These two extremes, compelling overflow and arrest of signification are underscored by Lacan as being "a structural feature that allows us to recognise the delusion from a clinical perspective" (Lacan, 1955-1956, 43). Therefore, this phenomenological characteristic could be expected in literature qualified as delusional. Whether this is the case ought to be answered empirically. Furthermore, the form these phenomena may take in works of literature - what does it

mean for signification to be arrested or a compelling feeling in a work of literature, is an exploratory question that may be answered empirically as well.

### c. Hallucinatory phenomena

The replacement of the signified by the signifier as characterised before has further structural consequences in psychosis. This characteristic of psychosis manifests itself also in the speech that psychotic subjects experience as coming from without in hallucinatory phenomena. When considering the 'text' of Schreber's hallucinations, Lacan defined two types of hallucinatory phenomena in terms of their linguistic structure: code phenomena and message phenomena (Lacan, 1956). The former are almost the pure embodiment of the signifier and its function without really producing any meaning, whilst the latter are meant to deliver a message to Schreber.

#### i. Code Phenomena

Code phenomena are those in which the structure and function of the signifier appear in its most strikingly pure and radical way. Lacan explained that the voices Schreber hallucinated and that speak the *Grundsprache* (or *fundamental language*) are exemplary of these phenomena. The *Grundsprache* is a sort of German language that has a special flavour to it. Schreber named it in this way and described it as being an archaic and rigorous form of German that can be distinguished by its simplicity and richness in euphemisms (Schreber, 1955). It is remarkable that Schreber gave this form of language a name. Lacan termed it *neocode* for it is a new linguistic code that reveals itself as such and does not really fulfil the common function of the code, that is, to support the production of meaning. The *Grundsprache* is composed by

neologistic locutions, that is, new words invented by Schreber that, however, seem like existing words insofar as they follow the *logics* (form or shape) of language. In Lacan's view, some of the words in these locutions have also the quality of *autonyms*, that is, words used not to convey meaning per se, but convey mostly the individual that conveys them.

An example of a code phenomenon appertaining to the *Grundsprache* is what Schreber called *Nervenanhang* (*nerve annexation*), that according to Lacan are analogous to the *Gottesstrahlen* (*divine rays*). The actions of these beings, the nerves and the rays, are simply to annex or split themselves, and they are "only the embodiment<sup>10</sup> of the words that they support" (Lacan, 1955, 16).

Along isolated neologisms, code phenomena could be understood as the true linguistic originality of psychotic hallucinatory phenomena. They consist of invented sets of signifiers, that is, a new linguistic code of neologisms that, whilst observing the logics of language (German in this case), are actually a novelty. Furthermore, it is in the texture of these hallucinatory phenomena that the structure of the signifier is revealed as such. These hallucinations function as signifiers whose object of communication is simply the signifier itself and not the meaning produced by the linkage to other signifiers by means of signification. This is somewhat analogous to the phenomenon observed in delusional speech in terms of signification.

Specifically, in Schreber's delusion, the divine rays and nerves of God are *embodiments* or *communications* of the structure itself. Nerves and rays have an "active" and a "passive" activity in Schreber's account. Their activeness (annexation)

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<sup>10</sup> The French term used by Lacan is *entification*, which I translate as *embodiment*.

or passiveness (splitting) are analogous to the functions of the signifier itself: to link or to cut. As explained, the linkage or cutting of signifier chains is what produces signification. In this sense hallucinations understood as code phenomena reveal *transparently* the functions of the signifier by simply being embodiments of it. This recalls W. R. Bion's description of the bizarre object (Bion, 1957) in which the ego projects one of its functions into an object (i.e. speaking or looking), which is then perceived inversely towards the subject (being looked at or being spoken to). Lacan's code phenomena and Bion's bizarre objects are similar in that a structural aspect of the psyche is encountered from without. It would follow that this is a phenomenological feature of psychosis that could also be found in literature, namely language *conveying but* language itself, that is, language expressing but its structural attributes.

Lacan (1955) observed that in code phenomena the place of the signified is occupied by the function of the signifier itself. In other words, the *signification* of these hallucinations is the function of the signifier (rays and nerves in the above example). The function of the signifier overtakes the place of the signification that it ought to produce. According to Lacan, this explains the experience of *certainty* that some psychotic individuals report and the puzzling ability to "predict the future" that some psychotic subjects have. For instance, in Lars Von Trier's 2012 film "*Melancholia*", the main character, a young woman called Justine, can inexplicably guess the exact number of seeds in a big jar or predict the end of the world. As explained, the function of the signifier is synchronic (i.e. extemporal, ever present) and signification is diachronic (i.e. temporal, unfolding). Therefore, an 'ever present' entity in the stead of an 'unfolding' entity has the effect of overtaking itself. In other words, signification, which needs time to unfold, becomes initially given and gets ahead of itself. This does

not amount to an ultimately causal explanation to the phenomenon, but indeed provides a remarkable explanation of its structural dynamics.

## ii. Message Phenomena

Lacan identified in Schreber's hallucinatory phenomena a second kind of phenomena that he called message phenomena. These are auditory hallucinations in which a sort of communication does take place. These hallucinations have the property of being interrupted messages in which the sentences stop in what Lacan calls "index terms" (Lacan, 1956, 18). Some examples of these phenomena reported by Schreber are: 1) "Right now, I will..." (Nun will ich mich..."), 2) "That, I will..." (Das will ich mir..."), 3) "they are designed..." (Sie sollen nämlich...). To these phrases, Schreber replies respectively: 1) "come to terms with the fact that I'm an idiot", 2) "consider well" and 3) "for you to be exposed as a denier of God and thrown into a voluptuous libertinism, let alone the rest".

"Index terms" is the way Lacan terms the Jakobsonian linguistic notion of *shifter* (Jakobson, 1957). Shifters are the words that designate the speaking subject of a phrase; he, she or that which speaks. Personal pronouns are examples of these, particularly the French "*je*" that is not a personal pronoun per se, but a subject pronoun that designates the person who speaks as I, without it being the personal pronoun for I (in French *moi*).

In the examples of Schreber's auditory hallucinations, the sentences stop when they reach the locus of the shifter in the phrase. This is the point in which "the terms indicate the position of the subject in the phrases themselves" (Lacan, 1956, 18). The

communicative elements of the phrases, that is, what Lacan calls “the lexical part of the phrase proper” (Lacan, 1956, 18) in which the code may be “common” or “delusional”, is elided or omitted. However, the subject finds no difficulty in completing the phrases that his ‘interlocutor’ utters. In this sense, the completion of the phrases amounts to the effort of the subject to avoid the ambiguity proper of the perceived signifiers. This ambiguity, in fact, conceals the ambiguity, or duplicity, of the speaking subject who perceives the signifier in a hallucinatory form; the duplicity of the speaking subject who, in the hallucinatory phenomenon, has become *speaking* and *spoken-to*.

These two orders of linguistic phenomena in psychosis, code and message, confront us with the “predominant function of the signifier [...] a code of messages about the code and a message reduced to that which in the code indicates the message” (Lacan, 1956,18). This could be reformulated in the following way: psychotic hallucinatory phenomena communicate the very structure of language and semantics gets reduced to syntax. This is the extent to which, in psychosis, we are confronted with the structure and function of the signifier in its most radical form.

## Discussion

Lacan’s early theory of psychosis contributed a wealth of phenomenological as well as theoretical postulates that enable thinking about the psychotic phenomenon from a very rich perspective, particularly in its relation to language and the real. The main objective of this research is to determine whether and under which circumstances the phenomena outlined by Lacan as proper of psychosis can be found in works of literature. Therefore, revising Lacan’s early postulates on psychosis served the

purposes of outlining the phenomena whose presence and dynamics will be sought in works of literature.

Given that my main object of enquiry is psychosis in literature, the most general question that is posed in this research is whether psychosis can be found, or read in a work of literature; can a work of literature have structural dynamics akin to those of psychosis? Can, for example, a psychotic economy between symbolic, imaginary and real be located in a work of literature? Can psychotic symptoms, particularly hallucinations and delusions be located in the dynamics of the text?

The place of language as heterogeneous to the real (in neurosis and perversion) was theoretically outlined throughout this chapter. One of the main particularities of psychosis, the signifier in the real, is a subversion of such singular place for each. In that sense, what dynamics occur to language and the real in the case of a work of literature that may be under these structural circumstances - what happens to them when entities are transposed across registers? Furthermore, is such phenomenon possible in a work of literature altogether? Can a signifier be found in the real in this context? The question that logically follows, in case this phenomenon did take place, is whether like in psychosis these symbolic entities are foreclosed due to them being inadmissible; is their literary status akin in this sense to the one outlined by Lacan?

A signifier that is foreclosed and placed upon the real presupposes a subject who is at once speaking and spoken-to. How, it can be asked, may speaking and spoken-to subjectivities come about in works of literature and what effects may this have for the economy of the work. The compelling effect of the signifier in the real on the subject, furthermore, may be at play in such works of literature, the effects of which I will seek to outline.

A further question that I expect to answer empirically in this research is whether the linguistic properties of psychotic speech may characterise works of literature structured psychotically. The hypothesis is that the properties of psychotic speech, that is, neologistic, autonymic, interrupted at the locus of index terms, with a constantly arrested function of signification and generally outside the laws of signification will be found in works of literature identified as psychotic. The role of the symbolic phallus surely is an important one in these dynamics and I intend to outline it should it be the case. Furthermore, I expect to find several forms of radicalness in the dynamics of language of such works of literature; forms in which the structure of the symbolic may impose itself in an unmediated form in the stead of signification; forms in which language may speak *itself*.

Revisiting Lacan's later engagement with psychosis is the following step towards a construction of a framework to allow for a psychoanalytic literary analysis, the objective of which would be twofold. On the one hand, answering the questions raised in this chapter related to Lacan's theory of psychosis and literature, and on the other to question what could such literary analysis contribute qua literary critique. Therefore, revisiting Lacan's later theory of psychosis is the endeavour of the following chapter.

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## Chapter 2

### Lacan's Late Ideas on Psychosis

#### Introduction

Lacan's third and last major theoretical engagement with psychosis took place during his twenty-third seminar (Lacan, 1975 - 1976). Lacan revisited this notion apropos Irish writer James Joyce's work in order to set forth a novel form to understand and address the notion of symptom, namely *sinthome*. Concomitantly, Lacan deepened his understanding of the subjective structure as a knot. Earlier in his work, symbolic imaginary and real were theorised as set forth in the schema Z. By the twenty-third seminar, Lacan conceptualised subjective structure as a chain (a knot made of three rings) in which symbolic, imaginary and real are rings so tied that cutting loose any of the three rings that make up the knot results in its coming undone releasing each of the three rings from each other's grip.

These notions have theoretical as well as clinical implications. In this chapter I raise some of the implications that these notions may have, I argue, for the understanding and analysis of literature. Furthermore, I reflect upon some of the key features of Lacan's forms of depiction of psychic notions and phenomena (i.e. subjectivity). Some of these depictions have certain features in common with the psychotic phenomenon, namely juxtapositions or transpositions of elements into realms in which they would not immediately and necessarily pertain. As a result, the limits of language become visible and human experience is thereby pierced. In other words, the homogeneous experience of being can be said to be - ever momentarily - interrupted by the

overwhelm of glimpsing its limits and functioning. Therefore, in this chapter I interrogate the similarities and differences between psychotic phenomena and Lacan's forms of depiction and their implications for an analysis performed on works of literature on their basis.

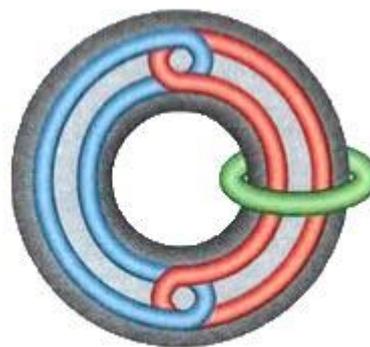
Lastly, this chapter explores some of the key features of Joyce's writing style as understood by Lacan in this seminar and other texts (Lacan, 1975, 1976; 1975). In addition to the features of psychotic language raised in the previous chapter, the ones raised in this chapter contribute to a fuller phenomenological outline of the psychotic phenomenon. The objective of collecting and interrogating all these features is the completion of a theoretical framework from which a psychotic phenomenon can be conceptualised *psychoanalytically and linguistically* and thus located in works of literature. Hence several empirical questions about whether certain key features of psychosis can be found in literature are raised throughout this chapter.

### 1. Knots and other depictions

In the 1972 – 1973 Seminar *Encore*, Lacan began to explore a novel form of understanding the nature of imaginary, symbolic and real and their interrelatedness by means of knots theory. Mathematicians Michel Tomé and Thierry Soury were instrumental in Lacan's exploration of knots theory (Roudinesco, 1997) and he made constant remarks about their contributions to his thought, particularly in the Seminar XXIII *Le Sinthome* (1975 - 1976).

Lacan's forms of depiction of psychic phenomena superset and superimposed over each other. The torus, for example, was one of the topological bodies used by Lacan

in the Seminar IX (Lacan, 1961 - 1962) to depict several phenomena related to the psychoanalytic phenomenon (i.e. demand, desire, speech, the place of the object a, and so forth). To stress the presence of previous forms of depiction in knots theory, he depicted a Borromean knot projected into a torus, thus achieving a superimposition of notions:



Inscription of a knot into a torus

11

Inevitably, this bewildering use of depiction excites curiosity. It has been suggested that Lacan's use, for instance, of algebraic formulae to depict psychoanalytic notions rests upon a need of accuracy, clarity and exactitude (Vanheule, 2011; Benvenuto, B; Kennedy, R. 1986). However, it may be argued that Lacan's intention was to depict aspects of subjective experience or subjective structure as such. Therefore, these may be best depicted by means of purely symbolic means and hence the need to depict them thus. Each form of depiction throughout Lacan's work has several possible readings; they can be read as depictions of human experience in general, the psychoanalytic experience in particular or the structure of the subject. Therefore, in addition to a need for exactitude, I argue, Lacan's intention was to *pierce human experience* itself to convey his ideas about it.

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<sup>11</sup>Lacan, 1975 - 1976. p

This is a problem faced by many structuralist and post-structuralist authors. Language broadly understood, being analogous to what I have called 'human experience' is in many cases their object of scrutiny and *the only means to scrutinise it is by means of language itself*. Lacan's insistence on there not being Other of the Other (Lacan, 1975 - 1976) can be understood as pointing towards this difficulty. If the Other is understood as the locus of the symbolic order as pre-existing the subject, Lacan's contention implies that there is no meta-language or *language about language*. In other words, there is no language that can transcend language to speak about itself. Therefore, in order to speak about language, it is necessary to *pierce* language itself so that the problem becomes visible, thinkable or accessible to experience. I argue that, Lacan found in his *depictions* ways to pierce language. Indeed, ways to *speak about language* (therefore about human experience or the analytic experience) by using symbolic means of communication that respond to different logics than common speech.

Throughout his work, Lacan used mathematical signs, formulae and equations, topological bodies, graphs, schemas, Greek isolated characters and knots. These interesting forms of depiction respond to the assumption that

“mankind, with its inclination to two-dimensional reflection, is alienated to the imaginary; one 'reflects' by building mental images. A problem with this kind of imaginary reflection is that it tends to frame complex problems in terms of univocal conclusions, which is always reductionist” (Vanheule, 2011, 155).

Thus, Vanheule stresses the insufficiency of simple imaginary reflection for the endeavour due to its simplicity or its limits. Nevertheless, the problem is that imaginary reflection is surpassed, over-brimmed by the nature of the problem not only due to its

simplicity but also to its very nature: *imaginary* means are insufficient to convey the nature of symbolic and real phenomena because it is imaginary and not purely symbolic. Arguably this is a problem faced by authors who simultaneously tackle ontic and ontological issues that are, by necessity, intermingled to the extent that the former are the form “accessible to human experience” of the latter.

About knots theory in particular, Lacan asserted that it has a “geometry to which, one can say, the imaginary has no access” (Lacan, 1975 – 1976, 31). When an attempt is made at “describing” what is depicted by means of a knot, one inevitably turns the pure symbolic relations into meaning, that is, imaginary entities. Yet, the nature of the knot makes the endeavour resistant to closure. This is because any *linguistic assertion* about the knot becomes, with the utmost immediacy, prey of precisely the phenomenon that the knot itself depicts. The knot, due to its nature, is located above and beyond such ‘meaning’. This very fact introduces that which is heterogeneous, transcendent of language into the symbolic and imaginary.

In this measure knots in themselves are an effective way to depict (and knot) imaginary, symbolic and real. In other words, once anything is said about the knot, that is, each and every form of imaginary and symbolic elaboration about it proves insufficient because the real dimension of the knot imposes its limit on that very saying (or any other). There is always something else to say about it because that which is said is immediately insufficient insofar as there is an unsymbolisable real dimension to the knot, which is the condition of possibility for further discourse.

Psychosis, asserted Lacan in the Seminar III, entails a radical relation to the signifier (Lacan 1955 - 1956), one of the reasons of which is that psychotic psychic phenomena have an analogous, unmediated structure to that of language. Knots, on their part,

have an analogous structure to what Lacan posits as subjective experience, in other words they depict effectively symbolic, imaginary and real. In this measure, a question can be posed as to whether there is anything analogous in these two entities, knots and psychotic phenomena in terms of their *radicalness*. In both cases the means of communication are the object of communication. This further reinforces my research question about psychosis and literature. Psychotic literature ought to be one that speaks itself or has a *radical* dynamic along these lines. Psychotic literature, arguably, ought to *literaturise* literature itself.

a. Depictions of pure relations

Depicting the three registers as a knot highlights their *internal and external relations*, that is, their internal form of operation in relation to themselves and the way they operate in relation to each other. Posing these relations in terms of knots allows depicting pure relations without having to define what symbolic, imaginary and real *are*.

Mathematical relations of elements, for example, depict the skeleton of a system of relations between elements yet keep the elements themselves as variables, or to-be embodied symbolic elements. It may be argued Lacan resorted to algebra firstly for economical reasons, because it is a logical necessity that any given word has less possible meanings than 'x'. The reason for this is that the possible values of variables is limited but infinite, which is not the case with words in their common usage. In an equation, 'x' can acquire any value as long as the equation remains true. In other words, variables are limited; they cannot have "any" value, but the number of values they can have is infinite as long as it remains true.

To exemplify we can look at Lacan's formula of fantasy. Formulae like this one, as well as topological figures, schemas and graphs "can be read in twenty or a hundred different ways" (Eidelsztein, 1998, 19):

$(\$ \diamond a)$

One of the possible readings of this formula is fantasy amounting to the mutually determining relation of the lacking and divided speaking subject and the object cause of desire (Lacan, 1962 - 1963) or the imaginary other (*autre*) if taken from Seminar V (Lacan, 1957 - 1958). Other readings, however, such as that formula being the answer to the question '*Che vuoi?*' (i.e. What am I [subject] in your [Other] desire?) (Lacan, 1960) or a defence against the *jouissance* of the Other (Lacan, 1966 - 1967) are possible *and* superimposed. The formula encompasses them all. The meaning of this formula, although limited by these coordinates, is not prescribed, is infinite.

From an ethical point of view, I argue, Lacan sought to *depict* and indeed encompass a variety of psychic phenomena without *prescribing* them. In the previous formula, for instance, fantasy is limited for it has limited (although multiply superimposed) coordinates to its *aboutness*. However, within these coordinates, it can take infinite forms. In this sense, Lacan's formula of fantasy is limited and is infinite. Infinite forms of discursive unfolding of fantasy could be made and still this formula would hold true; it would encompass them. This stands by the fact that subjectivity entails singularity; an absolute unique form of being. Is this not remarkably contrasting with, and less deterministic than, for instance, Melanie Klein's assertion of there being *three partial*,

*often persecutory objects that the subject phantasises within the body of the mother: penises, babies and faeces?* (Klein, 1946)<sup>12</sup>.

b. Piercing of human experience

The overlap of diachrony and synchrony in Lacan's depictions, I argue, pierces human experience. In other words, these depictions are elements of the structure (i.e. symbols) whose purpose is to convey a glimpse of the dynamics of the whole structure at once. Alfredo Eidelsztein summarises this by claiming that

“models, schemas and graphs are ways to present [these] concepts and their relations ‘synchronically’; in them all the concepts at play are given simultaneously. On the other hand, any discursive unfolding necessarily is done ‘diachronically’ given that discourse responds to a fundamental structure that consists of being a chain of terms<sup>13</sup>” (Eidelsztein, 1992, 11).

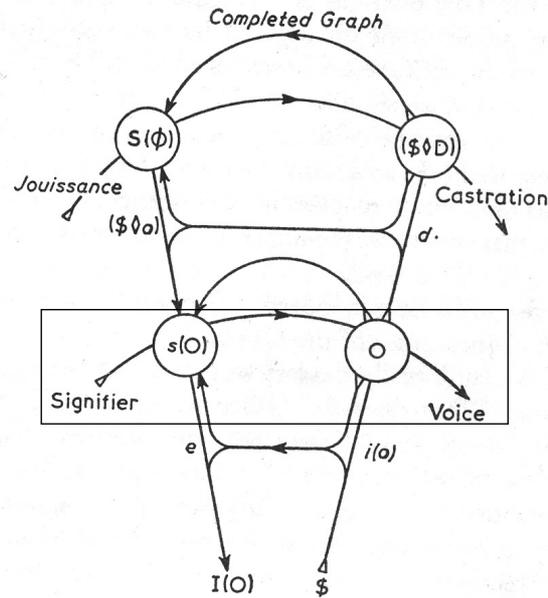
All the possible meanings of words, as well as all the possible values of variables, fantasies, object relations, forms of desire and subjectivities in their diachronic dimension need to unfold to exist. When we write 1, 2, 3 we write one number after the other *temporally*. In the same measure, if we were to list all the meanings of the word “house” we would have to write one after the other *temporally*. As analysands, we need to speak or spend some time in silence, for instance, so that fantasy becomes

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<sup>12</sup> Klein's notions of partial objects have a somewhat analogous way of functioning to Lacan's formulae. In this sense, in Klein's theory, also *anything* can be a symbol of these three partial objects, as long as it resembles or recalls them figuratively or associatively. Analogously, therefore, Kleinian phantasies are also limited and infinite. In this particular point, to sum up, Lacan's strength over Klein, I argue, is his express ethical concern about not prescribing subjectivity and the systematic transpiring of this ethical concern into his theory, without simultaneously ever losing any psychoanalytic rigor over it.

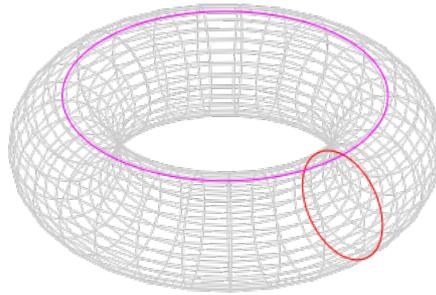
<sup>13</sup> The translation is mine.

alive, at play in the transference, and so forth. All these have a temporal dimension, depicted by Lacan in the Graph of Desire as the diachronic progressive vector  $S1 - S'$  (highlighted in a rectangle) (Lacan, 1960, 297).<sup>14</sup>



But all the above diachronic phenomena are depicted by Lacan by means of algebraic equations, graphs, vectors, topological bodies and knots which are synchronic in nature. They are forms of “all at once” or “simultaneous” depiction of what, if told in a narrative, would need to unfold through time. For example, one way to understand the torus is as it being the depiction of a circle revolutionised - therefore a depiction of the infinite possible loci of this circle.

<sup>14</sup> The square highlights the horizontal, left to right vector  $S1 - S'$  which in the graph below goes from signifier to voice.



15

An equation consists of the writing at once of *all the cases* in which a relation between variables and constants given by mathematical signs is true. Therefore, these *forms of depiction* have a visible synchronic dimension because the infinite instantiations of their infinite *meanings* are present all at once. The Graph of Desire (Lacan, 1960) is paradigmatic of such juxtaposition.

All of these are *immobile* depictions (*synchronic, atemporal, all at once*) of *unfolding, movement* and *process* (*diachronic, temporal, unfolding*). Their effectiveness lies on the fact that they depict unfolding manifoldness all at once. Juxtaposing synchrony and diachrony can pierce or short-circuit human experience, for in great measure the resulting interplay of diachrony and synchrony within language accounts for human experience or historicity.

Formations of the unconscious are good examples of this. A lapsus entails a synchronic and a diachronic dimension. The utterance of a 'wrong' word in the stead of the 'right' word which carries unacceptable meaning (hence its unwitting emergence) can be explained by the synchronic existence of the signifier, which is to say by unconscious overdetermination. It nonetheless entails a diachronic dimension, for if the utterance is not uttered, the lapsus cannot come into being. Therefore, a schema that depicts both synchrony and diachrony, such as the Graph of Desire

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<sup>15</sup> <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Torus>

(Lacan, 1960) which accounts for both dimensions has the effect to pierce human experience - it depicts these two aspects of temporality at once thus making them collapse. The graph, for example, describes the structure of a lapsus in general and can be applied to the structure of any particular lapsus. The use of these depictions, it may be argued, has the effect of formalising psychoanalysis and making it more scientific (Samaja, 2005).

Other authors have faced and tackled these issues differently. For instance, Bion used the masculine and feminine symbols when alluding to container and contained, thus achieving a superimposition (synchronic) of manifold meanings (diachronic) (Bion, 1963). Derrida, on his part, leaned on *undecidability* and the tension between the written and spoken to make meaning limited but infinite (i.e. *différance*) (Derrida, 1967), so on and so forth. Authors who are concerned with the limits of language have resorted to different strategies to pierce it, and thus convey their ideas.

Given the stencil-like structures of the psychotic symptom and the structure to the signifier, it could be hypothesised that the juxtaposition of synchrony and diachrony may be one of the features of the psychotic phenomenon, and therefore of psychosis in literature. This hypothesis is supported by the recurrent finding about psychotic phenomena having similar attributes to the psychic apparatus or psychic conditions that produce them. In the previous chapter I likened this phenomenon to Bion's notion of *bizarre object* in which a function of the ego is projected onto an object and then perceived by the psychotic subject from without. Arguably, a hypothesis about psychotic phenomena bearing a synchronic and diachronic juxtaposition is sound, for it holds an intimate relation with the overtaking of the signified by the signifier. As explained in the previous chapter, the signifier (synchronic) overtaking the signified

(diachronic) is one of the clinical features of psychosis. Nevertheless, this hypothesis rests as such, to be confirmed or disconfirmed, and the forms in which this can be found in literature to be described and accounted for empirically.

### 3. The Borromean Chain

Lacan described in the Seminar XXIII the fashion in which the imaginary, the symbolic and the real are knotted. At this point of his work Lacan wanted to emphasise the threefold nature of subjectivity without giving any longer a dialectical priority to any one or two registers (Lacan, 1975 – 1976). Knot theory seemed like the most appropriate way to go about this (Roudinesco, 1994). Therefore, he first used a simple knot called trefoil knot, that is, a line whose both ends are joined together and it intermingles by circularly bypassing itself six times. One of the reasons Lacan used this knot is that it consists of a single line that seems threefold nevertheless. Furthermore, if the trefoil knot is cut by the middle and the resulting sections joined, the result is two Möbius strips, which attests for the unimaginarisable properties of the knot and what makes it up. This is akin to the structure of the subject - a single entity with a logical unity, whose experience may be understood in a threefold manner (imaginary, symbolic and real), whose properties are those of topology and that, indeed, resists *simplicity as well as imaginisation* of approach:

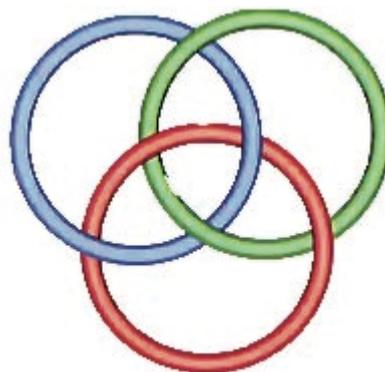


The trefoil knot

16

Further, Lacan introduced the notion of the Borromean chain to depict how symbolic, imaginary and real are knotted together. The difference between a knot and a chain is that a knot is made by one line whose ends are joined together whereas a chain joins more than one line, link or ringlet (Vanheule, 2011). Lacan argues:

So that the condition is expressed properly, we have made from three rings a link such that the rupture of one of the rings, the one in the middle if I may say that, frees up the other two from each other regardless of which they are. We have found such a thing in the Borromean coats of arms. (Lacan, 1975 – 1976, 19)



Common Borromean Knot

17

A Borromean chain is made by at least three rings such that if any of the three is cut, the other two become loose from each other. In other words, cutting any of the rings

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<sup>16</sup> Lacan, 1975 - 1976, 42.

<sup>17</sup> Lacan, 1975 - 1976, 42

sets the three of them loose from each other and make the chain come entirely undone. Therefore not every triple knot or chain can be classed as Borromean. It is a particular kind in which “the three rings are bound inextricably together such that the triad becomes *a systematic whole that is more than just the sum of its parts*” (Vanheule, 2011, 157).

a. Imaginary, Symbolic and Real

Lacan’s understanding of the nature of the three registers evolved from that which he set forth in the 1950’s. Throughout his work, the focus of his thought shifted from the imaginary to the symbolic and the real progressively (Roudinesco, 1994). Therefore, by the Seminar XXIII Lacan defined the three registers very differently to the Seminar III. Following Vanheule, Lacan “stopped thinking of them as separate entities, and no longer considered their relation in dialectical terms (...) He henceforth focused on their systematic connection whereby each register has a profound impact on the two others” (Vanheule, 2011, 157).

Lacan depicted the three registers by means of a Borromean knot “to illustrate the triplicity that results of a consistency that is only affected by the imaginary, of a fundamental hole that recalls the symbolic and of an *ex-sistence* which appertains to the real, and in itself, is its fundamental character” (Lacan, 1975 – 1976, 36). In this way, Lacan advanced what the knot conveys about each of the registers: an imaginary consistency, a symbolic hole and a real *ex-sistence*. Consistency refers to the imaginary tendency to make consistent or homogeneous that which would be otherwise fragmented. The notion of *ex-sistence* refers to “a body of eccentricity within the subject” (Vanheule, 2011, 158)

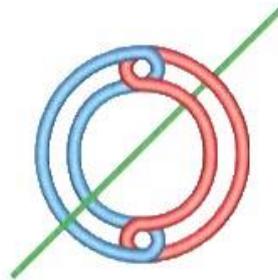
In the 1950's Lacan understood the imaginary as the work of signification, a sense-making dimension, a work of seaming image fragments. In the Seminar XXIII he called it a function of "consistency" and sense. Therefore, Lacan understood the imaginary similarly to his early theory from the nineteen fifties except that Lacan's approach to it was no longer by means of the notions of the signified and signification. In relation to the knot, the imaginary allows for a depiction of the relation of the three registers by imagining them as ringlets, one 'above' and 'under' the other. Nevertheless, the limits of the imaginary become immediately visible by the knot over brimming imaginary means. Arguably, this over brimming can be described as the reflection of *méconnaissance* itself.

Lacan still understood the symbolic as *language* by means of the notion of the signifier. However, the emphasis Lacan gave to it differs from being oppositional entities that ought to produce signification. At this point, Lacan defined the main function of signifier as creating a hole, or make of a false hole a true one - verifying a hole. This is linked to a function of the signifier that Lacan calls "unary trait", the signifier as pure difference (Lacan, 1961 - 1962). He exemplified this by means of the false hole that results simply from stretching two ringlets in the following way:



It is a false hole because, although it may seem that it is a hole, in fact the centre of each of the ringlets, the true holes, are kept aside. However, if the operation of a

symbolic entity is understood as tracing an infinite straight line, if it were to cross this false hole, automatically the false hole would be verified. In other words, the straight line would preserve the hole even if the ringlets were not held in that particular way anymore.



Transformation of a false hole into a true one  
by adding an infinite straight line

18

Lacan asserted that “the essence of the Borromean chain rests upon the verification of the false hole, upon the fact that this verification transforms it in real” (Lacan, 1975 – 1976, 117). In other words, if we imagine that two rings are tied up in such a way that a third one would make of them a Borromean chain, the infinite straight line would amount to this third ring. In this sense, it is the condition of possibility of ‘knotting Borromeanly’, for that line, if cut, would set the other two rings loose. But furthermore, the straight line sets a reference, so to say, which would then function as a confirmation of the false hole. Arguably, a falsely-knotted or coming-undone knot (i.e. a psychotic knot) is such in which this verification lacks; registers do not anchor each other sufficiently so that the knot holds together. A hypothesis, therefore, to advance and test empirically is that in works of literature with dynamics akin to psychosis, we

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<sup>18</sup> Lacan, 1975 - 1976, 83

are likely to find dynamics in which verifications of such holes do not take place and hence knots may come undone or be falsely tied.

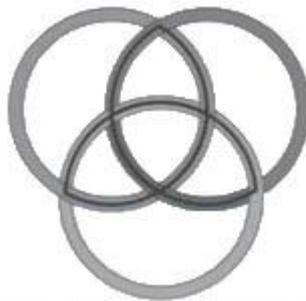
In relation to the symbolic phallus, which we explored in the first chapter, Lacan asserted that it is that which verifies a false hole: “the only real that verifies anything is the phallus, insofar as it is the support of the function of the signifier, which I underline in that article (c.f. Lacan, 1958 The Phallic Signification) as the creator of every signified” (Lacan, 1975 – 1976, 117). In this sense, the signifier sets references, leaves marks on the real and, along with the imaginary, creates sense. In the same breadth, Lacan stressed the arbitrariness of the signifier. The symbolic phallus, then, is the signifier par excellence that designates arbitrary, yet operational reference-setting and mark-tracing effects as a whole.

In connection to what was discussed about the symbolic phallus in the previous chapter, the subjective link between words and their meaning *is in itself a reference* that is not necessary nor given, but subjectively produced or socially agreed. The assumption of a word meaning something in particular (or anything at all), or the operation of grammatical and syntactical rules amounts precisely to tracing a straight line in a false hole that verifies it by implication. This operation renders these rules *operational and true*.

The relevance and dynamics of the symbolic phallus in psychosis, particularly in the intersections of psychosis and literature is one of the main objects of enquiry of this research. The dynamics of the symbolic phallus, determined as they may be by the paternal metaphor, affect the dynamics of the work of literature, specifically in the effects of signification of signifiers. An exploratory question to be raised is, therefore,

how the effects of the symbolic phallus will be visible in such works of literature, how will they manifest themselves?

Regarding the real, Lacan explains, “From the moment when it (the real) is Borromeanly knotted to them, the other two resist it. That is, the real has *ex-sistence* in finding in the symbolic and the imaginary, a halt” (Lacan, 1975 – 1976, 50). In this sense, the real is still understood as that which surpasses language and any sense-making dimension. Furthermore, the real’s *ex-sistence* in relation to the imaginary and symbolic points to the fact that it insists on them from without, but is unyieldingly intrinsic to them in the same measure. In other words, the notion of *ex-sistence* is meant as an internal yet external condition that insists. Therefore, in this sense, the trefoil knot is the real of the Borromean chain, for although it is an external entity, its logics insist from within the chain.



Trefoil knot deduced from Borromean knot 19

#### b. The Fourth Dimension: The Symptom

As explained, the trefoil knot can be projected into the Borromean knot and be its real. In other words, the very principle of why the Borromean link holds bound, in itself internal and external to the knot itself, is contained within the trefoil knot (Vanheule, 2011). In this sense, there is an implicit fourth element in the Borromean chain, which

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<sup>19</sup> Vanheule, 2011, 160

from this perspective is its very principle, its condition of possibility. Lacan explained that this fourth element amounts to the subject's symptoms: "I argue that one has to consider that which makes up the Borromean link as fourfold (...) advancing the enigmatic link between the imaginary, symbolic and the real implies or presupposes the ex-sistence of the symptom" (Lacan, 1975 – 1976, 19). The symptom, therefore, is the enigmatic link between the three registers<sup>20</sup>. Regarding the enigma, Lacan defined it as "an enunciation such in which one does not find the statement<sup>21</sup>" (Lacan, 1975 – 1976, 67). If we were to define enunciation as pure form and statement as communicative content (form not being rhetorical fashion of speaking but the pure act of speech), an enigma is *communicative form* without *communicative content*. The symptom therefore is pure form, an enunciation without statement, and the implicit form in which the imaginary, the real and the symbolic are kept tied together. Further on Lacan affirms that "analysis is precisely that, the answer to an enigma..." (Lacan, 1975 – 1976, 72). In other words, a psychoanalysis is pure *communicative form* posed as a question. But, how can there be communicative form without communicative content, how can there be enunciation without anything being stated and how is this a symptom? This almost oxymoronic affirmation in fact inhabits psychoanalysis from its very foundations. It was Freud's conviction from the outset that symptoms carried meaning; unsaid, inadmissible, repressed or un-symbolised meaning (Freud, 1926). To this extent Lacan remains a Freudian psychoanalyst on the one hand and a

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<sup>20</sup> It is noteworthy the way in which Lacan likens the symptom to the real (i.e. ex-sistence) as opposed to a ciphered message (an imaginary and symbolic entity).

<sup>21</sup> I translated the French word *enoncé* as *statement* to stress the speech act that it implies. However, the link to *enunciation* is weakened in this translation due to it not being the past participle of the same verb "to state". An alternative translation for this could be *the stating* and *the stated or statement*.

structuralist philosopher on the other, for he formulates a Freudian thesis in linguistic terms, thus making it universal and not circumscribed only to sexuality.

The consequences of these affirmations are of tremendous importance. In this way, Lacan affirms that symptoms are not clinical entities to get rid of, but the *form* a subject apprehends his world and inhabits it. This claim follows if we understand that symptoms are the depurated 'essence' of the way the three rings are knotted.

The symptom as the measure of 'madness' with which each subject relates to 'what there is' is to be understood as a "systemic form of relation" (Vanheule, 2011, 161) rather than something of which to be cured. Furthermore, Lacan does without a measure of normality, which otherwise would be given by the analyst whose analysand would need a cure of his symptoms. In other words, the analyst himself is "prey" of his own symptomatic way of apprehending the world, beyond which he may not be able to see or speak.

These affirmations about the symptom, I argue, have implications for the domain of literature as well. How can a psychotic literary symptom, pure literary form, pure enunciation, be conceptualised? The symptom in a work of literature would be, in this sense, its pure form beyond what is written or stated. The forms, manifestations and dynamics of a psychotic symptom within the domain of literature, therefore, remain objects of enquiry to be sought and exemplified empirically. Arguably, a psychotic symptom of literature would amount to the pure form of a work of literature which fails time and again to keep the knot of the registers from coming undone.

#### 4. Psychotic Breakdown: Unknotting and Name of the Father

As explained, knots depict an inextricable bond between the three registers. In other words, by means of the knot Lacan depicts the unity of being or of human experience. The coming undone of the knot amounts to a break in such unity and continuity and Lacan posited the psychotic breakdown as an instance of it. (Lacan, 1975 - 1976).

In the nineteen fifties Lacan explained such break of the unity of human experience in terms of a failure in the paternal metaphor (Lacan, 1956). The following suggestion of Lacan leads us to establish a link between the knot and the paternal metaphor: "These three elements, the way in which they are said to be knotted, actually linked, make metaphor. It is nothing more, of course, than a metaphor of the chain" (Lacan, 1975 - 1976, 130). In this sense, Lacan attributed to the operation of a metaphor what he now set forth in terms of the knot. Contrasting the two, therefore, may shed light on the nature of both.

The metaphor, as described by Lacan in the text "*On a preliminary question...*" (1956) is a symbolic and imaginary operation, whereas the knot comprises the three registers. This amounts to Lacan attributing far greater importance to the real at the later stage of his work and stands for a shift in his ideas. However, in his earlier theory Lacan posited a metaphor, that is, the substitution of one signifier ( $S_1$ ) by another ( $S_2$ ) and the elision of the former ( $S_1$ ), as able to produce a subjective sense of unity of experience and being. In what sense can this be understood? Arguably this can be explained from two points of view. Firstly, when one signifier substitutes another ( $S_2$  substitutes  $S_1$ ) all the chains of signifiers linked to  $S_1$  persist and become linked to the ones linked to  $S_2$ , and therefore there is a continuous flow of meaning. In this sense, the subject experiences the continuity of being as continuity of meaning, thoughts or psychic life. The sliding of the chain of signifiers is thereby not interrupted. This is

further supported by understanding the knot as a metaphor of the chain, be it of signifiers or knots, for *this knot* stands for (metaphorically) the infinite interconnectedness of the whole symbolic (therefore imaginary and real) system.

But if the paternal metaphor does not operate when called to the forth, the subject may experience a break in the metonymic flow of the chain of signifiers (Vanheule, 2011), experienced as a discontinuity of being. The signifier that would link two chains is called to link them but it lacks, which causes a break in meaning and a fundamental perplexity in the subject (Lacan, 1955 - 1956). In this sense, for Lacan, a rupture of meaning is how the psychotic breakdown may be understood; a rent in subjective and external reality. Lacan followed closely Freud's thesis as he set it forth in his text *Neurosis and Psychosis* (1924[1923]) in which he described, precisely, a rent in reality afterwards repaired, precisely, by a delusional system that aims to restore meaning and its continuity.

Secondly, in the text "The metaphor of the subject" (1961) Lacan revisited the topic of the paternal metaphor and the general formula of the metaphor. In this text, Lacan advanced the link between the metaphor and the subject, visible in the general formula of the metaphor:

$$\frac{S}{S_1} \cdot \frac{S_2}{x} \rightarrow S \left( \frac{1}{s''} \right)$$

$S_1$  and  $S_2$  are the signifiers of the metaphor, the latter substitutes the former. However, in this case the subject (S) is represented by the meaning produced in the metaphoric substitution. In this sense, the metaphor not only guarantees continuity of meaning, but also *a meaningful identity* for the subject.

In this sense, the paternal metaphor is a way to depict a phenomenon of continuity (and surplus) of meaning and identity, and its failure, a rent in reality and the subject. In the same measure, the trefoil knot or the Borromean chain are forms of depiction of the three registers being bound together and therefore operating. The coming undone of the knot implies a break of unity and continuity of being hitherto continuous. There are a number of examples (Lacan, 1975 - 1976), both of the trefoil knot and of the Borromean chain that are falsely knotted together, for instance:



Trefoil knot



False Trefoil knot

22

In the above example, the false trefoil knot does not hold together although it may seem it would. The 'error' of this knot could be said to be in the central lowest intersection (although the error is intrinsic to the whole of the knot, therefore could be located in any intersection). This knot is an instance of a false knot that would come undone. Were this a Borromean chain, although the error may be between the tying up of any two rings, the three of them would cut loose, as the error would be intrinsic to the whole knot. However, the intersection where the error 'is located' (any intersection can be this intersection) speaks about the way a fourth ring would need to be tied up to repair it, and retrospectively about the kind of error the knot had (i.e. the kind of psychotic structure at stake).

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<sup>22</sup> Lacan, 1975 - 1976, 92

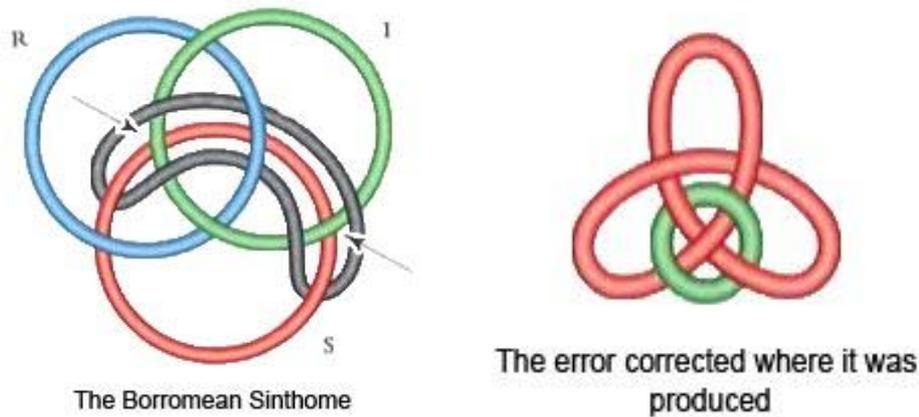
## 5. From symptom to sinthome

As explained, Lacan understood the symptom at this point as the enigmatic form in which the registers are knotted together, that which ex-sists in and onto them and holds them bound. Therefore, Lacan explored the possibility of the symptom being precisely that which could counteract an erroneous knot, that is, that which could sustain a subjective unity that may otherwise break.

The word sinthome, an old French word for the word *symptôm*, was introduced by Lacan to explore the stabilisation that the symptom could introduce to psychic economy (Lacan, 1975 -1976). *Sinthome* is homophonic to the word *symptôm* in French. The role of writing is central to the equivocal meaning of words through which, according to Lacan, psychoanalytic interpretation ought to be formulated (Lacan, 1975 – 1976). The main reason why Lacan used alternative forms of writing homophonous words or phrases, arguably, is that the multiple possible meanings of homophonic phrases, distinguishable only in their writing, is precisely the way in which alternative unconscious meanings can be brought into play (i.e. the imaginary, symbolic and real dynamics of language can be brought about by linguistic means). Sinthome is one instance of such homophony (i.e. *equivoque*). The signifier *sinthome* is homophonous to Saint Thome (Aquinas in French), the English word *sin* as well as the words *saint homme*, or holy man in French (Lacan, 1975 – 1976). These are essential to the unpacking of the new concept of symptom, now understood as sinthome, that Lacan was to introduce.

The sinthome was depicted by Lacan as an external ring in the trefoil knot or a fourth ring in the Borromean chain that can tie up the knot and correct it, that is, prevent it

from coming undone by keeping the three rings or lines together and thus tie them up Borromeanly:



Lacan's thesis is that the sinthome is not a clinical entity whose receding one should seek in analysis. On the contrary, he emphasised the stabilising potential that the sinthome can have for subjectivity. The sinthome, like the symbolic phallus, is yet another instance of a line such that would confirm or verify a false knot.

## 6. Sinthome and the notion of jouissance

In Lacan's work, the notion of *jouissance* is a concept that progressively gained relevance and became central to almost every aspect of it. The notion of jouissance can be understood, to wit, as the combination of the pleasurable and unpleasurable stickiness that accounts for repetition. Fink defines jouissance as a "pleasure that is excessive, leading to a sense of being overwhelmed and disgusted; yet simultaneously providing a source of fascination" (Fink, 1997, xii). It is a concept linked, therefore, to the death instinct as a motor of repetition, as well as to the notion of drive in the sense that it has a grip on the existential and bodily experience of the subject.

An effect of the evolution towards the notion of *jouissance* is visible, precisely, in Lacan's notion of symptom and its reformulation as *sinthome*. In the early years of his work Lacan understood the symptom as a *ciphered* message (Lacan, 1965), therefore a symbolically determined entity. The psychoanalytic endeavour consisted, therefore, in *deciphering* this message so that it would recede. But in the Seminar XXIII Lacan defined the symptom, now written *sinthome*, as a particular form of apprehension of reality, the precondition of the real, imaginary and symbolic being knotted together, and indeed, a singular form of *jouissance*. Jacques-Alain Miller explains: "Deep down, this is my thesis, what Lacan introduced with a new understanding of the symptom by writing it "sinthome", is the effort to write in one single trace, at the same time signifier and *jouissance*" (Miller, 1986 - 1987, 22). Further, he notes: "From the moment Lacan talks about *sinthome* he talks no more about fantasy, that is, he builds into the notion of *sinthome* a mixture of fantasy and symptom (...) he posits the *sinthome*, herein lies the novelty, as a mode of *jouissance* for each subject of his unconscious" (Miller, 1986 - 1987, 22). In other words, the form in which the subject unconsciously exerts, seeks, finds and is gripped by *jouissance* (understood as the real), always under symbolic overdetermination and within imaginary coordinates is, indeed, the *sinthome*.

#### 7. Joyce: knot of literature, psychosis and *sinthome*

The example that Lacan set forth as paradigmatic of such stabilisation was Irish writer James Joyce. Lacan called him a *saint homme*, or holy man, precisely because he managed, according to Lacan, to use his psychotic symptoms to tie up the knot of imaginary, symbolic and real (Lacan, 1975). Joyce achieved this, according to Lacan, by symbolic means, that is, by means of *writing* literature. Throughout the Seminar

XXIII, Lacan explored mainly three of Joyce's masterpieces, namely *A Portrait of The Artist as A Young Man* (1916), *Ulysses* (1922) and *Finnegan's' Wake* (1939).

Lacan asserted that one of the main topics that traverses *Ulysses* is Joyce's paternal complex, the essentially lacking character of Joyce's father, which seems to point to a failing paternal metaphor. However, Lacan does not assert unambiguously whether he believed that Joyce was psychotic or not. He asked:

“The question I am posing is whether Joyce was crazy or not, and maybe it can be located here.

Crazy, why after all Joyce would not have been it? All the more so as this is not a privilege, for in most people the symbolic, the imaginary and the real are so intertwined to the point of one continuing into the other, given the defaulting operation that would distinguish them like in the chain of the Borromean knot” (Lacan, 1975 – 1976, 87).

So, the question of Joyce's psychosis is not answered categorically and distinctively, nevertheless Lacan explored Joyce's family history and highlighted the cases of psychosis in his family, which suggests that, in his view, there may have been a prevailing link between Joyce's life and psychosis. Furthermore, Lacan suggested in the previous passage that the symbolic, the imaginary and the real are *a continuum* in Joyce's psychic economy due to the default of the operation that would distinguish them (noteworthy, like in *most* people). In this sense, Joyce's knot may have resembled the trefoil knot rather than the Borromean link. Given that this form of knot is proper of paranoia (Lacan, 1975 - 1976) Lacan challenged what had been hitherto

thought about psychosis and posited it as a *common form of psychic structure*. (Vanheule, 2011).

Lacan affirmed that Joyce's work is traversed by the endeavour of becoming a known artist, to make a *name for himself* as an artist (i.e. the Artist as a Young Man, *Dedalus*). In other words, the given name (nomme propre in French – “owned name” literally translated) can come to operate instead of the Name of the Father (Lacan, 1975 - 1976). *Nomme propre* is yet another way to posit the function the sinthome performs. Colette Soler argues that

this particular suppléance replaces the Name-of-the-Father for something closely related to the father, namely the Father of the Name. He [Joyce] became the father of his own name (...) this is what Lacan meant when he argued that Joyce, with his artist identity, replaced the defect of the imaginary consolidating his ego and thereby re-knotting the imaginary (Soler, 2002, 136).

Joyce's writing style is what strikes Lacan the most. It leads Lacan to consider “Joyce's case as an answer to a way of replacing an unknotting of the knot”. (Lacan, 1975 – 1976, 75). Explains Lacan:

Joyce writes English with certain refinements that make language, English in this case, loose its structure. It is not true that that begins at Finnegans Wake. Well before, particularly in Ulysses, he has a way of chopping phrases that goes already in this direction. It is a real process that goes towards giving the language in which he writes another use, in any case, a use that is far from the ordinary one (Lacan, 1975 – 1976, 75).

Joyce, therefore, *uses* language, exploits its features. Joyce, argues Lacan, was well aware of the parasitic character of language, which *neurotics* do not experience as such. The psychotic experience of language, the alienation from it and its reification, allows for this particular form of usage of language. Lacan describes Joyce's relation to language as follows:

It is difficult not to see that a certain relation to words (parole) gets more and more imposed on him (Joyce), namely these words (parole) that become written, smashed, dismantled to the point in which he dissolves language itself, (...) Joyce ends up imposing on language itself a sort of crack, of decomposition, that makes phonation identity disappear.

(...)

Without a doubt, we must reflect on writing. It is by mediation of writing that words (parole) decompose whilst imposing themselves as such, namely in a deformation that aims to get rid of the word-parasites of which I was talking about earlier, or maybe the opposite, to let himself be invaded by the essentially phonemic properties of words (parole), by the polyphonic character of words (parole)". (Lacan, 1975 – 1976, 97).

The psychotic experience and relation to language can reveal the parasitic character of the symbolic and, in turn, reveal itself as alienated from the symbolic as such. Furthermore, Joyce's alleged decomposition of language is achieved precisely by the exploitation of the phonemic identity that operates in traditional notions of language, which Lacan finds most striking.

The *equivoque* and Joyce's writing bear remarkable resemblance. One of the most genius features of Joyce's writing, arguably, is having had the ability to exploit, precisely, this very feature of language. This form of operation relies on the relation and difference between the spoken and written; sound and lettre. In relation to this, Miller exemplifies:

“Ça s'écrit

Ça se crie”<sup>23</sup>

(Miller, 1986 – 1987).

These two homophonous phrases in French demonstrate that an utterance may have several written forms. The different forms in which phrases may be written correspond to the different equivocal unconscious meanings and senses that signifiers may have or produce. Upon the *play* on these written forms rests the unconscious overdetermination of psychic phenomena and hence also the formulation of psychoanalytic interpretations.

Joyce's writing can be characterised, therefore, as an operation in which sound and writing are cut loose from each other. These separations of symbolic, real and imaginary occur *within* Joyce's texts. Therefore, they are brought together in their separateness, tied up by an *external* entity, namely, Joyce's act of literary writing. In this sense, Joyce's act of writing performs the function of the *sinthome* and prevented him from experiencing a psychotic breakdown (Soler, 2002).

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<sup>23</sup> Homophonous phrases that mean “that is written, that is shouted” as well as “the Id is written, the Id is shouted”.

## 7.1 Joyce and language

Joyce's usage of language drew Lacan's attention and led him to affirm that by means of what Joyce introduced into its limits, symbolic, imaginary and real held together.

For example, Joyce writes at the beginning of *Finnegan's' Wake*:

riverrun, past Eve and Adam's, from swerve of whore to bend of bay,  
brings us by a commodius vicus recirculation back to Howth Castle and  
Environs.

Sir Tristram, violer d'amores, fr'over the short sea, had passencore  
rearrived from North Armorica on this side the scraggy isthmus of Europe Minor  
to wielderfight his peninsolate war: nor had topsawyer's rock by the streams.

(...)

The fall  
(bababadalgharaghtakamminarronkonnbronntonneronntuonnt-  
hunntrovarrhounawnskawntoohooordenenthurnuk!) of a once wall strait  
oldparr is retaled early in bed and later on life down through all Christian  
minstrely. The great fall of the offwall entailed at such short notice the  
pftjschute of Finnegan... (Joyce, 1939, 4).

A number of unusual characteristics of language can be drawn from this passage. Some words have a neologistic character; *riverrun*, *passencore* and *topsawyer* are portmanteaux, that is, fusions of two different words into one. They seem like an existing word insofar as they follow the *logic of language*; but, indeed, they are new words and therefore at once respect and transgress this logic. The meaning of the two words is thus kept and superset, at once increasing its possible meanings and

decreasing it due to the uncertainty of the meaning of that new word. *North Armórica* plays with the phonetic nature of the words America, harmonica and armour. Yet, this word is none of them per se, hence its meaning is undecidable; increased and decreased.

Other neologisms such as *pftjschute* or *bababadalgharaghtakamminarronkonnbronntonneronntuonnthunntrovarrhounawns kawntoohoochordenenthurnuk!* have no detectable precedent, they can be characterised almost as symbolic cacophony, pure signifiers that produce no meaning, yet that in itself may produce meaning paradoxically.

Furthermore, Joyce drew words from different languages and brought them to operate in English as though they were words that belonged to it. They also are strictly speaking of a neologistic nature, but they are formed out of signifying material belonging to other languages. For instance, "*passencore*", which has the appearance of being an English word perhaps similar to *passenger*, is a neologism that comes from the French words *pas encore* that mean 'not yet', or the expression '*pas encore*' that means 'it is barely acceptable'. Jacques Aubert (1976) argues that the phrase in Finnegans Wake "*who ails tongue coddeau, aspace of dumbillsilly?*" (Joyce, 1939) conveys phonetically a sentence in French that means something like "*où est ton cadeau, espèce d'imbécile?*" (i.e. "*where is your gift, you imbecile*") albeit written in a series of neologisms that are seemingly, yet not quite English.

Joyce's prose is written as if it respected the syntactic rules of English language. But, when words have a neologistic nature, syntax is necessarily undecidable. An adjective modifying a noun, for instance, is easily identifiable. But in the case of a neologistic 'adjective', we are never sure if it is indeed an adjective or not. Therefore, only through

the position and opposition of words the reader can infer, hypothesise rather, that a given neologism is a noun, an adjective, an adverb, and so on. For instance, is *riverrun* a noun, a series of nouns collapsed into one or a noun collapsed with a verb in the imperative?

Thus, Joyce's text is such in which the meaning of, and grammatical relations between signifiers challenge the laws of signification. As explained, the laws of signification would not refer to the *essentially true* signification a certain combination of signifiers ought to produce, but to the laws of signification as an infinite straight line that confirms a knot; in other words, an arbitrary yet operational reference.

Neologisms can be thought of as a transposition of the possibility to say it all into a reified utterance. In other words, a transposition of absolute possibility and infinity of a *non-castrated language* (*i.e.* one in which the laws of signification do not operate and where *saying everything* is possible) into a concrete single word necessarily limited and finite. Hence neologisms' fascinating *awkward effect*, at once meaningful and meaningless. Neologisms can be conceptualised, I argue, as a reified, concrete instantiation of absolute linguistic contingency.

The attributes of Joyce's language thus highlighted may or may not generalise to other instances of psychosis in literature. It may be argued that a psychotic text may observe similar dynamics to what can be observed in Joyce's text, that is, *alterations* in similar points of cleavage perhaps. However, as explained, precisely the reason why it is economical to understand psychosis as a knot is that the instantiations of such structure may be infinite. Therefore, an exploratory endeavour of this research is to compare the extent to which other literary works understood as psychotic may or may

not resemble Lacan's understanding of Joyce's work and to account for these differences and similarities.

## Discussion

The use of knots to depict symbolic, imaginary and real amounted to a major shift in Lacan's theory and vastly enlarged the possibilities to think about the three registers and their vicissitudes. For this research, it opens up the possibilities of reflecting about the dynamics of literary works in terms of the forms of knots at play in them. Alternatively, it also allows us to reflect upon works of literature as a whole in terms of knots. Furthermore, it allows us to pose the question about psychosis in literature from a different perspective, namely how a psychotic knot, that is, a falsely tied or coming undone knot of imaginary, symbolic and real may account for a literary phenomenon that may be called psychotic.

Reflecting on the functions of Lacan's depictions is pertinent when reflecting upon psychosis and its relation to Joyce's literature. These are instances of language being used with different purposes other than being a vehicle of communication in a traditional sense. Although different in their methods and purposes, Lacan's depictions and Joyce's utilisation of language are instances in which the limits of language are without a doubt brought to light.

The effects of transposing elements of language to linguistic and extralinguistic loci and functions that would not "naturally" pertain them is noteworthy; both Lacan and Joyce rely on this for different purposes. The transpositions of the signifier into the real, or the signifier into the place of the signified are, as discussed in the previous chapter, quintessential of psychosis. As hypothesised, neologisms may result from

transposing symbolic elements pertaining to a limitless, non-castrated linguistic system (i.e. where the law of signification does operate and saying it all is possible) into a necessarily finite actual utterance.

In Joyce's writing, argued Lacan, phonation identity is exploited to the point of dissolution of English language. The equivocal is an effect of language, however it may be argued that Joyce makes of language an effect of the equivocal, indeed transposes these two in terms of their causal relations. French linguist and Lacan's disciple Jean-Claude Milner affirmed that each language is nothing but a different form of producing the equivocal (Milner, 1978). It seems that Joyce's transpositions, perhaps via Lacan, found echo in the post-structuralist school. Transpositions of symbolic, imaginary and real entities and their effects traverse the phenomena of language that are the object of scrutiny of the present research. An empirical question is whether transpositions of entities is a feature of psychosis that may be found in literature and, therefore, what is the nature of their effects.

Analogously, the sinthome is a theoretical and clinical transposition of that which hitherto had been posited as the object of cure of psychoanalysis. To assert that symptoms in fact are not what is visible of the psychic illness but what holds psychic life together is a major conceptual shift; a transposition of the ill into a psychic dorsal spine. In a conference in London in 2013, post-structuralist philosopher Judith Butler asserted that "one plays out one's symptoms in the scenery of life". Could she have asserted this had not Lacan, one of her major influences, developed the notion of symptom into sinthome? Was this theoretical shift not pivotal, therefore, for the philosophy as well as the clinical that were to come? I argue this is certainly the case.

In that sense, psychosis as a notion was also the object of an important shift. As discussed, the notion of psychosis was subverted and no longer thought of as an extreme form of madness, but as a form of knot of symbolic, imaginary and real, or structure, which can be very well tied up by a fourth ring and which not necessarily even implies a psychotic breakdown. Psychosis is not associated by Lacan with any kind of abnormality, in fact he thought of it as a much more common form of knot, or structure, than otherwise thought. Moreover, what is thought as 'psychosis' in traditional psychiatric terms is but a small subset of all the cases underpinned by psychotic structures. Hence my interest in psychosis in literature. Arguably, the elements of psychosis in literature hitherto considered traditionally or normatively written may bring light as to why and how language does what it does in those cases. Even earlier than Lacan, Melanie Klein (1946) described psychotic mechanisms as the core of the psyche, and even the precondition to survival. Nevertheless, still today, concepts like "the Brick Mother" (Lucas, 2009) refer to the psychiatric institutions that are meant to lock away psychotic patients. This shows little change from what Foucault describes in the History of Madness about the treatment of 'madmen' in the nineteenth century (Foucault, 1965), except that psychotic patients now are supposed to 'love' this brick, imprisoning mother. According to this line of thought, psychosis is not a structure of symbolic imaginary and real alongside neurosis and perversion, nor the core of the psyche, but an *illness*. In that sense, it is clear that even if psychosis is no longer regarded exactly as it was before, it is also clear that Lacan's ideas have yet to permeate.

Psychoanalysis has yet to fully permeate in general. But it cannot be argued that psychoanalysis has not informed culture, art, humanities and sciences altogether.

Specifically, psychoanalysis has informed a segment of literary criticism, which of course is of relevance for this research. My method of empirical research is an exercise of psychoanalytic literary analysis or critique based on the principles of this and the previous chapter. It is, therefore, of paramount importance to revise other psychoanalytic literary frameworks and the tripartite relation between psychoanalysis, psychosis and literature. To this I turn in the following chapter.

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## Chapter 3

### Psychoanalysis, Literature and Madness.

#### Introduction: Between Literature and Psychoanalysis

This chapter examines some of the contextual relations of this research to the wider discussion about the encounter between psychoanalysis and literature. The width and scatter of this encounter has led us to engage with specific authors pertaining mostly to the Yale school of literary studies as well as some exponents of the French neo-rhetoric school. Following German philosopher Emil Fackenheim's characterisation of the scope of the contemporary philosophical task (Fackenheim, 1982), this chapter does not aim to advance a *system of thought* about psychoanalysis and literature, but to *think systematically* some of the body of knowledge and language stemming from the encounter between these two disciplines.

All encounters between psychoanalysis and literature are underpinned by complex ideas on what psychoanalysis and literature *are* and what sort of relation is there or ought to be between them. Consequently, there are important digressions on what literary objects of psychoanalytic interpretation (or critique) are, who or what are the subject, object, fantasy and so forth in each case. In other words, each time psychoanalysis and literature converge, diverse answers arise to what does it mean to interpret, read or understand literature psychoanalytically, for whom and with which purpose to do so, as well as what kind of discourse can accommodate such endeavour. It follows that, although the main objective of this research is not to answer

all of these questions categorically, it is nevertheless the case that different answers to these questions yield specific frameworks from which to depart.

For example, the very formulation of these questions establishes a set of coordinates from which authors approach the problem. These coordinates, furthermore, are the very object of discussion for some of them. Asserting that literature can be *interpreted psychoanalytically* means that literature, argues scholar Shoshana Felman, “is considered a body of language - to be *interpreted* - and psychoanalysis is considered as a body of *knowledge*, whose competence is called upon to interpret” (Felman, 1982, 5). This presupposes, therefore, a status for each discipline, that is, epistemological and power coordinates that assign them a role and hierarchy. There is no universal agreement on these statuses nor on many other concepts and notions between the literary and psychoanalytic schools involved.

An initial difficulty in characterising what can be called psychoanalytic literary criticism or analysis as a unified body lies in that there are no stable grounds, no stable, univocal ideas from which to depart. Further, even within psychoanalytic and literary theories key notions are understood differently and the focus shifts on different dimensions of these very notions.

Therefore, in this chapter I have selected three specific key issues on which to focus the discussion of my framework and that of other authors, namely the status of literature and psychoanalysis, what does interpreting literature psychoanalytically consist of, and the relationship between madness and text.

## 1.0 The Status of Literature and Psychoanalysis

### a. Meaning and space

Undeniably since the dawn of psychoanalysis literature has occupied a privileged position in its midst. French philosopher Jean-Michel Rey asserts that “for the first psychoanalysts, literature seems to have played a decisive, catalytic role, provoking discussions in which absolutely contradictory points of view confronted one another, even though the first principles of psychoanalytic theory were applied quite mechanically. The theoretical stakes in these discussions were considerable” (Rey, 1982, 303). It is almost a commonplace, furthermore, to state that many of the theoretical backbones of psychoanalysis, such as the Oedipus complex (Freud, 1905) or the notion of narcissism (Freud, 1914) are inextricably connected to literature.

In this sense literature seems to have played from the outset a central, twofold role for psychoanalysis. On the one hand *as a carrier of the meaning, the narrative* necessary to characterise human psychic processes (i.e. the *stories* of the tragedy of Oedipus, the myth of Narcissus, and so forth). On the other hand, as an *enabler* of the unfolding of such characteristics (i.e. the space which fostered these discussions amongst psychoanalysts). The former implies that literature is a body of unfolding meaning from which psychoanalysis *draws*, whilst the latter implies that literature is a space in which psychoanalysis gets *subsumed* during its discussions. Being subsumed within literature, in this sense, means at once a measure of *drawing literary notions* to psychoanalytic theory, but more importantly it means that psychoanalysts are in unwitting transference enactments of sorts within the untraceable limits of the text. Hence the stakes were high in the early theoretical discussions amongst

psychoanalysts and contradiction emerged so profusely. This very emergence in the transference with the literary informs psychoanalysis as much as the *meaning* of the stories. In other words, the story of Narcissus, for instance, informs the theory of narcissism and the ego as much as the transferential relations between those who used this story to theorise the ego and the myth of Narcissus itself.

Arguably both understandings of literature - as a carrier of meaning, and as an enabling space - imply a status and a function for both psychoanalysis and literature. In the former, literature (i.e. ancient myths) is conceived as a reservoir of meaning, external and independent from psychoanalysis, albeit a carrier of human truth. In the latter, literature overarches psychoanalytic discussions in which psychoanalysts were under transferential relations of sorts with the text.

The first understanding would seemingly posit both disciplines as independent, enabling psychoanalysis *to borrow* from literature. Nevertheless, argues Felman, literature “is the language which psychoanalysis uses in order to *speak itself*, in order to *name itself*. Literature is therefore not simply *outside* psychoanalysis, since it motivates and *inhabits* the very names of its concepts, since it is the *inherent reference* by which psychoanalysis names its findings” (Felman, 1982, 9). Perhaps, from the outset, Lacan’s notion of “extimacy”, that is, a sort of relation at once intimate and external (Lacan, 1992, 139) or the topological body of the Möbius strip whose external side is also and at once its internal side (Lacan, 1961) serve the purpose of better characterising the relation of psychoanalysis and literature. Felman seems to have this in mind when suggesting that between psychoanalysis and literature “the notion of *application* would be replaced by the radically different notion of *implication*” (Felman, 1982, 9).

Felman posits the relation between the literary critic and the text as one between a slave and his master. Although the *interpreter* formulates the *interpretation*, in her view it is in fact the text which dominates meaning and the *interpreter*. She exemplifies this in her seminal paper “Turning the Screw on Interpretation” (Felman, 1982) in which she describes how symbolic elements of Henry James’ short story ‘The Turn of the Screw’ (James, 1898) reappeared in the critical discussions about it. In other words, literary critics were unwittingly submerged in the space of meaning of the story whilst formulating authoritative critique “on” the text. She therefore affirms that “the scene of the critical debate is thus a *repetition* of the scene dramatised in the text. The critical interpretation, in other words, not only elucidates the text but also reproduces it dramatically, unwittingly *participates in it*.” (Felman, 1982, 101).

Rey’s depiction of literature as that which fostered psychoanalytic discussions and that which allowed for contradiction to emerge in the heated, high-stakes discussions amongst early psychoanalysts partially coincides with Felman’s own ideas. It is not inconceivable that something akin to the critical scene of *The Turn of the Screw* occurred amongst the early psychoanalysts referred to by Rey when discussing literature given the grip it exerted on them and the re-emergence of literary symbolic elements in psychoanalytic theory. Indeed, this conceptualisation grants literature a superior epistemological position over psychoanalysis in that the literary text would be in fact the master of those who act as if in a position of mastery and knowledge over it. Moreover, understanding literature and psychoanalysis thus strips psychoanalysis off from its putative discovery of the unconscious and “fantasy of authority” over its meanings:

“literature, by virtue of its ironic force, fundamentally deconstructs the fantasy of authority in the same way, and for the same reasons, that psychoanalysis deconstructs the authority of the fantasy - its claim to belief and to power as the sole window through which we behold and perceive reality, as the sole window through which reality can indeed reach our grasp, enter into consciousness” (Felman, 1982, 8).

This leads Felman to affirm that “in the same way psychoanalysis points to the unconscious of literature, *literature, in its turn, is the unconscious of psychoanalysis* (...) it functions precisely as its “*unthought*”: *as the condition of possibility and the self-subversive blind spot of psychoanalytical thought*” (Felman, 1982, 9). In this sense, not only the statuses of psychoanalysis and literature are discussed in terms of their commensurability, inferiority or superiority, but also in terms of their relation to the other discipline as *unthought* - that is in terms of their ‘negativity’. The relevance of Felman’s discussion is compelling and alerting of the dangers of what she calls “being blind to one’s blind spots”, as well as the violence that psychoanalysis’ fantasy of authority over meaning may elicit over literature.

Nevertheless, this argument should be at least qualified with a vice versa which should curve Felman’s critique. One of the main reasons for this is that psychoanalysis’ knowledge derives, as well, from the clinical and not only the literary, nor the purely ‘cultural’ or ‘anthropological’ from which all subjects participate. Furthermore, were Felman’s arguments true, they could become an infinite regression as Felman’s own argument could be an enactment of literature itself. Were this the case, Felman’s argument would become ipso facto dubious for she would be enacting the blindness to her blind spot when denouncing the unrecognised blindness to blind spots. This

would account for the fact that Felman's attention focuses so emphatically on *power over meaning*. This is not to say this is not a relevant, pressing issue; but it is certainly one that grips Felman's theoretical coordinates. It exerts *authority* over her theoretical priorities and certainly over her interpretation of 'The Turn of the Screw' and its critical scene. This is by no means a critique in terms of it being right or mistaken, but a description of the window through which Felman views the relation between psychoanalysis and literature - under the grip of fantasy as any other would be. This counter argument grants psychoanalysis the upper hand in its epistemological status over literature as the fantasy of authority, from a psychoanalytic perspective, accounts for the reason of Felman's preoccupation. One is led to conclude that there is no final conclusion to this. Rather, perhaps like any other master - slave relation, there is a dialectical relation between these disciplines when seen from this perspective. The truth about it, therefore, would not be held by any of the poles of the relation. Indeed, the dialectical nature of the relationship is its only truth (Kojève, 1975).

#### b. Writing and knowledge

Rey, from a somewhat different perspective than Felman's, notes that from early days Freud (1905) recognised the relation between *writing* and *representation* (*Darstellung*) in which the interference between symbol and lack of knowledge becomes evident: "Freud immediately draws a conclusion about the very subject of writing, in a word, its *topography* (*topique*). (...) Where I know, I do not write; where I write, I can only know belatedly (*après-coup*)" (Rey, 1982, 305). In this sense, the notion of representation bridges the notions of literature as a carrier of meaning and as a subsuming space for

psychoanalysis, but in a different sense. Given the nature of Rey's thinking, this is best formulated in the first person singular pronoun: *writing* is at once *representation* and that place where *I do not know*. In other words, writing implies *production of meaning* but it is also the locus of the *unconscious that subsumes me*; a place where I have and I have not come about *at once*, writing is the liminal dimension where *I will have been* once I write.

This understanding of writing accounts for the effects of literature as a locus of knowledge (or symbol, language or representation) and as a place that subsumes subjects given their lack of knowledge. Given that the subject does not know the unconscious, he is in this sense subsumed in his not-knowing. It follows that psychoanalysis, if taken as a *writing discipline*, cannot escape the dynamics of language in which knowledge follows the lead of the written only belatedly. This amounts to saying that writers (of both literature and psychoanalysis; readers as well if we understand reading as writing), are subsumed by the effects of writing which carries meaning as much as it is the locus of the unknown or unconscious.

Under the light of *writing*, Rey's point of view and Felman's are not in opposition to each other. However, there is an important difference between them. In her critique, Felman opposes knowledge against the un-thought; which is a logical comparison but it is also done *atemporally*. It is a depiction of the relation between consciousness and unconsciousness *in stillness*. Felman's critique posits psychoanalysis as occupying a position of knowledge and power of meaning over literature, yet unwittingly literature is psychoanalysis' blind spot, that is, psychoanalysis' unconscious. Rey, on the other hand, characterises this similar relation but introduces a *temporal* dimension into it - movement - in which knowledge follows the lead of its lack, that is, authors of

psychoanalysis and literature realise their blind spots successively in après-coup, as it were. Both authors agree on psychoanalysis not having a powerful position over literature's meaning. Rey's point of view, although less stern of a critique than Felman's, however, is certainly more optimistic and psychoanalytic in its method. After all, the clinical method from which psychoanalysis derives can be thought as a series of significations and re-significations (on the part of the analyst and the analysand) whose meaning is given by what follows them. Rey posits this very movement of resignification as constitutive of meaning, whereas Felman posits meaning as somewhat fixed by a power position of thought/unthought or known/unknown. Rey's emphasis on temporality is consistent with Lacan's diachronic and synchronic dimensions (Lacan, 1960) in which signifiers link to each other, their meaning is given by the following signifier and they have the potential to retroactively re-signify what previously has been signified.

The relevance of this discussion for this research, I argue, is that it delimits how psychoanalysis and literature can be called upon to relate to each other. Felman's caution against any violent exertion of power over knowledge and Rey's understanding of the perpetual movement of knowledge following the lead of its lack are indeed principles that I can subscribe to in my own endeavour of literary interpretation and analysis. However, in my view, the status of language in what can be violently called "psychoanalysis" is different to that which can be no less violently called "literature".

Unlike literature, arguably, psychoanalysis holds discourse as its explicit object of discourse, language is its linguistic object; in other words, psychoanalysis can be

characterised as language which interferes with language<sup>24</sup>. This is not to say that some literary texts do not have a similar deconstructive effect on language, nor that other disciplines may not use similar linguistic strategies with similar purposes. In fact, literature may be more effective at times in achieving so since it is from a seemingly “non-explicit” form of discourse that literature can deconstruct language.

Nevertheless, the objective of this research is precisely to test whether a specific segment of psychoanalytic theory *can* be called to provide something like the dorsal spine of the interpretation of specific works of literature and thus open new meanings, or bring to light hitherto literary unthoughts. Therefore, I have to acknowledge that I might incur into what Felman denounces as violence of meaning - at least until I become aware of my unthoughts, which shall follow necessarily my moments of apparent knowledge about the unthought meaning of the text. Nevertheless, one can argue that any literary interpretation, be it psychoanalytic or not, incurs in the same kind of violence given the danger it takes upon itself to impose or fix meaning of the literary piece even if ephemerally. The kind of discourse, therefore, used for the endeavour is paramount; it ought not to impose and fix meaning categorically but *suggest an alternative reading* backed by the new horizon of meaning, hitherto unthought but now open to the gaze.

This critique, furthermore, needs to be qualified as it relates back to the instability of notions that were pointed at initially: denouncing violence of meaning cannot be done without evidence. In other words, the detail, nitty-gritty of psychoanalytic interpretation

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<sup>24</sup> I am cautious not to call psychoanalysis ‘language about language’. There being no Other of the Other, that is, no metalanguage makes this endeavour *stricto sensu* impossible. Hence psychoanalysis must conceive itself as acting from ‘within’ language and not from without it despite its object of language being language itself.

of literature must be discussed in order to rule whether it is violent or not, whether it imposes meaning or opens it up. In other words, the question is what have authors *done with or said about* the text in the encounter between literature and psychoanalysis and can this be qualified as violent?

## 2.0 Interpreting Literature Psychoanalytically

As explained before, different encounters between literature and psychoanalysis yield different results. Still, one can pose the question of what literary critics, analysts or interpreters do in the encounter of literature and psychoanalysis? What exactly does the work of interpretation consist of in this encounter? To answer this question, let us examine some examples and discuss what the interpretation consisted of in each.

### a. Lacan and Poe

It is a commonplace to assert that the most important notion advanced by Lacan in his analysis of Edgar Allan Poe's short story 'The Purloined Letter' (Lacan, 1964) is the notion of the signifier as that which represents a subject for another signifier (Johnson, 1982). In her seminal paper "The Frame of Reference: Poe, Lacan, Derrida" Barbara Johnson explains that "it is neither the character of the individual subjects, nor the contents of the letter, but the *position* of the letter within the group, which decides what the person will do next. It is the fact that a letter does *not* function as a unit of meaning (*a signified*) but as that which produces certain *effects* (*a signifier*) ..." (Johnson, 1982, 464). Johnson explains that the meaning of the signifier (in the story this would perhaps amount to what the text of the letter says, which as readers we never find out) does not have to be revealed in order for it to nevertheless determine the events of

the story and grant each character a function in relation to the other (i.e. who stole the letter, who now should have it, who must have betrayed whom, and so forth).

As has been discussed, Lacan's contention at the initial phase of his work was that the symbolic register, that is, a set of opposing units of symbolic code (the signifier, the letter) overarches and overdetermines unconscious psychic life. The very position and opposition of the code units determine psychic life. An example of this in the domain of clinical psychoanalysis can be found in Freud's clinical case "the Rat Man" in which the Rat Man's destiny is "determined" by what Freud calls the *komplexeizwort* "rat" (Freud, 1910). "Rat" does not mean anything by itself in German, it is an irreducible, meaningless piece of symbolic code. Nevertheless, it plays an essential role in the Rat Man's psychic life and destiny. It determines his mishaps depending on its *position* and its fashion of *entering* the signified: his father being a gambler (*spielratten* in German); his fear of marriage (*heiraten* in German); the relate of the rat torture by Captain Cruel which precipitates his anxiety and have such a grip in his fantasy (*ratten* in German), and so forth. In this sense the signifier 'rat' represents the subject (indeed, trans-linguistically and equivocally the "rat" Man). Lacan notes how incredibly intuitive was Freud in his naming the case study thus; hence his remark 'one must trust Freud' (Lacan, 1958).

Lacan's engagement with Poe's text can be characterised, from this perspective, as an illustration of a theoretical notion. It can be argued that Lacan does not formulate an interpretation that is meant to bring about the unconscious meaning of Poe's story, if the unconscious is thought as a *reservoir of 'material'*. Lacan takes the events of the text as concrete happenings, as events that allow him to illustrate the notion and function of the signifier.

The strongest objection to this, however, is of course the equivocal meaning of 'letter' - at once 'missive' and 'character', that is, the word "letter" meaning at once "written document *for another*" and "character" (as in 'a', 'b', 'c'); the irreducible symbolic unit which makes up signifiers. In this sense, the equivocal use of the word letter is, indeed, an interpretation formulated by Lacan that rests upon the assumption that this equivocity is an effect of the unconscious structured like a language; of the *spoken subject* dimension as discussed in previous chapters. Therefore, this equivocity is a usage of language, *an interpretation* that is meant to illustrate a *theoretical notion* (i.e. the signifier or letter) as well as *how* to interpret, that is, how to purposely play with the equivocal effects of the signifier. In other words, how to destabilise meaning with the purpose of making a subject aware of this very destabilisation; how to make him aware of the previous meaning, the new meaning and the very fact that meaning is an effect of the signifier - at once, in the utterance of one signifier that highlights an equivocal effect at the precise time.

In this sense, interpreting literature in this fashion would open up other meanings as a consequence - but it has to consider and focus upon the symbolic overarching the imaginary and real. This, potentially, may be non-violent (in the sense meant by Felman) whilst bringing about literary unthoughts, that is, open up meaning. Using the same words of the story *by their equivocal meanings* as a basis to formulate literary interpretations is a good case against the putative violence of psychoanalytic interpretation over literature brought about by Felman. This is so particularly because the signifiers of the story will indeed emerge in the critical scene, but in a different fashion than the one she describes about the critical discussion of the Turn of the Screw. Instead of signifiers appearing unwittingly in the critical scene of a particular

text, the critical scene would be built upon the interpretative, equivocal play with these signifiers.

Although Lacan's explicit objective is not to perform literary criticism, there were aspects of the story with which Lacan did not engage. Derrida argues, for instance, that "[Lacan's] Seminar is about the content of the story, what they call precisely the story, the 'told' of the 'tale', the internal aspect and narrated of the narration. Not the narration itself (...) The displacement of the signifier is analysed thus as a signified, like the told object of a story" (Derrida, 1980, 402).

In this sense, Johnson follows Derrida by highlighting that Lacan "left out precisely *literature* itself" (Johnson, 1982, 580). This all-encompassing critical stance of Johnson stems from the definition of literature upon which she relies, namely literature being "language (...), but it is language around which we have drawn a *frame*, a frame that indicates a decision to regard with a particular self-consciousness the resources language has always possessed" (Fish, 1974, 52). It is this frame that Derrida and Johnson argue Lacan did not consider in his interpretation of the Purloined Letter. Derrida is more specific, he explains that Lacan left out of his interpretation, even if initially the reader would have thought otherwise, 'the narrating narration, the complex structure of the scripture scene that is played out in it and the curious place of the narrator" (Derrida, 1980, 402).

This may be true. However, again, it could be argued that Lacan's intention was not to perform literary criticism per se on the text neither to analyse Poe qua subject. The last section of 'The Purveyor of Truth' (Derrida, 1980) *perhaps* may be characterised as a more complete literary criticism exercise on Poe's story than Lacan's Seminar. In

this sense, Derrida's critique is worth close attention as in fact Felman and Rey's arguments are, as well, in close relation to it.

Derrida's addresses the psychoanalytic enterprise of imposing knowledge, indeed over literature but generally upon meaning in what can be characterised as psychoanalysis' insistence to build an epistemology of the same. Discussing Freud's interpretative methodology apropos the Interpretation of Dreams (Freud, 1900), Derrida denounces:

“Exhibition, nakedness, undressing, unveiling, we know the drill: it is the metaphor *of* truth. Equally it can be said a metaphor of metaphor itself, the truth of truth, the truth of metaphors. When Freud tries to undress the original *Stoff* under the guises of the secondary fabric, he anticipates the truth of the text. It would be ordered, from its original content, according to its naked truth but also according to truth as nudity (Derrida, 1980, 391).

Derrida may be arguing that Freud's quest for knowledge is one in which the already found would be that which is sought. That which is *already* known is put in the putative place of the newly found; herein the similarity to the critique Felman advances about psychoanalysis imposing its knowledge over literature. Further, Derrida criticises the seemingly clumsy psychoanalytic interpretation made by Marie Bonaparte and Lacan of the story in which they understand the letter finally appearing in the fireplace as the penis of the mother and the phallus of the Other respectively<sup>25</sup>. Derrida argues that

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<sup>25</sup> Although Derrida clearly distinguishes the philosophical sophistication between the two interpretations given that Marie Bonaparte ascribes this to Poe's unconscious and Lacan to the symbolic truth (*vérité*). It would be scandalous for Derrida not to recognise this, yet it is scandalous, from my point of view, having recognised it quite in the way he did.

the story in fact describes the letter as appearing above the fireplace and criticises the interpretation of the fireplace as the female genitals by Marie Bonaparte. Specifically, Derrida criticises Lacan's interpretation of the letter in the fireplace as a signifier of the lack in the Other (i.e. the phallus) for, he argues, this is yet another instance of the phallogocentric stance of psychoanalysis whose 'discoveries' would be but a premeditated search and find. In other words, Derrida criticises this specific interpretation as an instance of psychoanalysis finding what it already has, namely a position<sup>26</sup> of the phallus as a central organiser of the psychic.

Nevertheless, it may be argued that the stolen letter, finally found in the fireplace in Poe's story may be understood otherwise if taking the signifier 'fireplace' metonymically rather than metaphorically. The signifier 'fireplace' translated to French as well as Spanish becomes a synonym to the signifier 'home', about which Derrida was surely aware. The slippage of the signifier 'hearth' in the phrase 'hearth and home' points in this direction in English as well. In this sense, the letter is found at home, at the place which gives home its warmth. Lacan did not write the story nor did he assign all these metonymic slidings to the word *fireplace*. Whether we call the letter in the story *the phallic signifier* or *John Smith*, whether we agree with '*the lacking nature*' that the *phallic* qualification gives to this particular letter or not (i.e. whether we emphasise the letter as being stolen, present, absent, returning...), whether Derrida agrees or not, the letter was found in or just above the place that keeps home warm.

Another aspect of Derrida's criticism, however, is a fair one to raise: the letter may have not appeared in the fireplace had it *disseminated* (Derrida, 1980). To this danger

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<sup>26</sup> I mean position as the result to the act of positing.

perhaps Lacan is not as pressingly alert as Derrida, and in this sense Lacan's so-called logocentrism may be said to be naive (i.e. ascribing to logos a sort of omnipresence and omnipotence exempt from *decay* or *dim*). Indeed, the letter disseminating is a possibility - and this calls into question the materiality, understood as the indivisibility and perdurability of the letter. In this sense, Poe's story may have been called the Disappeared, Unimportant, Torn or Ignorable Letter, or may have been called John Smith in an absolute forgetfulness of the letter, and the events of the story may have recounted its dissemination in one form or another, even unwittingly, carelessly, violently. Further, were dissemination a priority for Lacan, his interpretation may have been altogether different - which is Derrida's point.

There are surely aspects of the signifier or the story that were disseminated. If we resort back to Rey's ideas, the place where I write, where I will have been when I write, is surely the place in greatest danger of disseminating *given* the lack of knowledge about it. Surely something similar may be argued about Lacan's account. In fact it may be argued that many of the elements which became disseminated in Lacan's interpretation of the story found *home* - or recognition before their dissemination - in that of Derrida<sup>27</sup>. In other words, dissemination may be a topic for philosophical discussion and the extent to which Lacan addressed it<sup>28</sup> may be questioned indeed. But, however dangerous the notion of dissemination, effective or possible, however likely, almost inevitable the signifier not being at home or returning home - and in this

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<sup>27</sup> Maybe recognition prior to dissemination prevents the latter? Maybe for dissemination to exist as such, which Derrida seems to argue, perhaps oblivion ought to exist.

<sup>28</sup> The notion of dissemination may be attributed to Derrida rather than Lacan and therefore it may be unfair to criticise the absence of such concept in Lacan's work. Nevertheless, it is fair to ask whether there is anything analogous to dissemination in Lacan's work and it is surely a question deserving further research.

sense of psychoanalysis not finding what it sought - in this particular case, we have to agree, even if its normative, hegemonic, phallogocentric to the brim - the letter was in the fireplace.

Furthermore, Derrida's text, although undoubtedly incisive, builds upon Lacan's Seminar - philosophically, conceptually, and epistemologically to extents that escape the scope of this research. Derrida, therefore, is in an advantageous position with respect to Lacan, but also in a place of indebtedness. About thirty years of post-structuralist philosophy research stand between the two interpretations of Poe's story. The scene of the 'pupil superseding the master' is a contextual scene for which Derrida fails to account in his revisiting of Lacan's Seminar - particularly when he addresses, not without recognising his *philosophical vigilance*, nothing more and nothing less than the 'Lacanian doctrine of Truth' (Derrida, 1980, 435) as the Truth of the Lacanian doctrine.

Regardless of whether we agree with Derrida's views on Lacan's views on truth, we may ask whether it is farfetched to expect from Derrida to account for the movement from the otherwise phallogocentric interpretation of the Purloined Letter to his now seemingly all-encompassing interpretation. And to account for it specifically in terms of his interpretation lacking less than that of Lacan, his teacher, in the context of his 'deconstruction' of the *phallus*. Is that not central to the *scripture* of the *Purveyor of Truth* and as such of Derrida's reading of Lacan? As scholar Maud Ellmann rightly pointed out: "Lacan has been accused of phallicism, phallocentrism, and even phallogocentrism: his critics often seem to be competing for the length of their neologisms in the absence of the controversial member" (Ellman, 1994, 20).

Derrida fails to account for the dimension of scholar subordination and indebtedness between him and Lacan. Is there not an intrinsic phallic dimension to all of this, paradoxically enough? In this sense, is Derrida not caught in similar dialectics to what he criticises in particular about the phallus that he fails to recognise and discuss? But this has further implications. It places a tremendous question mark upon Derrida's criticism of Freud as he advanced it in his text *To Speculate - On Freud* (1980) published in the same volume as the Purveyor of Truth. In this text, Derrida criticised Freud for not accounting for the 'familiality' of the scene of the Fort-Da (Freud, 1920). Has Derrida not failed to account exactly for what he seems to denounce Freud for not accounting, namely his personal, private kinship positions in relation to what he writes? Is Derrida, in this sense, not blind to his blind spots?

Marie Bonaparte offered in her analysis of Poe what Felman calls a "clinical portrait on the artist" (Felman, 1980, 141). "Under this analysis", argues Williams, "Poe's stories and poems emerge primarily as a symptomatising body, offering traces of a real human crisis which lies behind it in the psyche of the author" (Williams, 1995, 74). Derrida's distinction is here pertinent, between Bonaparte ascribing the final destination of the letter to Poe's unconscious and Lacan ascribing it to symbolic truth. Lacan's objective, in this sense, was to exemplify a psychoanalytic notion, a philosophical truth some may argue (i.e. signifier, letter, equivocal, interpretation, truth) by means of Poe's story.

Nevertheless, it is adequate to pose the question of whether this is possible; can literature serve such a function of exemplification in which the *implication* of psychoanalysis and literature is ignored to this extent? Can this be considered violent? Felman would perhaps answer the former question in the negative and the latter in the

affirmative, for taking literature as an 'example' presupposes a measure of independence between the two disciplines as well as between reader and text.

As we have discussed, in "Turning the Screw of Interpretation" (1982) Felman argues that in fact there is no such relation of "independence" but rather one of implication. Apropos the Turn of the Screw she claims that "the most scandalous thing about this scandalous story is that *we are forced to participate in the scandal*, that the reader's innocence cannot remain intact: there is no such thing as an *innocent reader*<sup>29</sup> of this text" (Felman, 1982, 97). She thus argues that the literary critic, analyst or interpreter is in fact under the sway of meaning of the story. Therefore, arguably, she would be against Lacan's approach to Poe's text, for Lacan would have been in some form another, prey of the literary dimension of Poe's text. In this sense, Lacan's violence over literature would be that of oblivion, for the specific way in which Lacan would have been subsumed by the literary dimension of Poe's story (largely unrecognised by Lacan himself) would have driven him to formulate *that specific interpretation* about it. In sum, from this perspective, Lacan's literary interpretation proper was purloined and disseminated. It was not found in the fireplace.

#### b. Felman and 'The Turn of the Screw'

Felman's method of engaging psychoanalytically with this piece of literature deserves examination in itself. As explained, she observes elements from the story sprouting in the scene of its literary criticism; she contrasts the effects of the criticism of the story to the *ghost effects* of the ghosts in the story. She highlights, for instance, how the

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<sup>29</sup> Felman purposefully uses the term *innocent* so as to make a point about the *innocence* of the children of the story emerging in the critical discussion of the Turn of the Screw.

heroine of the story is *interpreted* by psychoanalytic critics as being hysteric. Concomitantly, she highlights, “Robert Heilman thus accuses Wilson of alleged “hysterical blindness” which alone would be able to account for the latter’s errors in interpretation” (Felman, 1982, 99), proving thus that the coordinates of the unconscious meaning of the story are re-enacted in the critical debate which they overdetermine.

Felman’s focus is thus laid on the re-emergence of the signifiers of the story in the critical debate, which is subsumed by the literary dimension of the story. She does not formulate a new, better or more accurate interpretation *of the story itself*, neither does she contend openly the ones advanced, although she clearly remains sceptical of them by calling them re-enactments. This is a compelling analysis to say the least.

Nevertheless, Peter Brooks criticises psychoanalytic interpretations that are based on a poststructuralist framework. He is an exponent of the rhetoric linguistic tradition and criticises the Saussurean principles to which Felman *partially* subscribes. Felman herself, however, distances herself from Saussurean linguistics and subscribes to a Peircean linguistic model, dominant at the rhetorical tradition of Yale University at the time. Nevertheless, her affinity with Lacanian psychoanalysis and the French tradition in general brings her to some theoretical conundrums.

Brooks explains that “the postulation of a static model indeed is the central deficiency of most formalist and structuralist work on the narrative, which has sought to make manifest the structures of narrative in spatial and atemporal terms, as versions of Lévi-Strauss “atemporal matrix structure” (Brooks, 1982, 281). In this sense, Lévi-Strauss’ atemporal matrix structure, akin to the one discussed in the first chapter, underpins

Felman's interpretation because what emerges in the dimension of the psychoanalytic interpretation of the 'Turn of the Screw' also emerges in the critical debate about it, albeit enacted, *spatially and atemporally*. They are unfolded diachronically by each and every literary critic, but their synchronic existence determines, lays the coordinates of the criticisms.

Felman claims that a theory of the reading effect as a theory of transference is one "centred on a rhetorical analysis and a theoretical examination of the occurrences of transference in both text and its critical readings" (Felman, 1985, 30). Indeed, this is reminiscent of Lévi-Strauss analysis of the myths of the Wives of the Sun and the Moon in which he highlights the coordinated existence and non-existence of the porcupine from any geographical area according to its existence or non-existence as a symbolic element in the myths - discussed in the first chapter. The signifiers of the story sprout on the critical scene similarly to the porcupine sprouting (or lacking) as a symbolic element in the versions of the myths and in the environment.

Although Felman's analysis rests upon a rhetorical framework in which grammar and rhetoric are viewed as *forces* of meaning, it is nevertheless indebted to a structural model in which transference enactments within the literary critical debate mirror the symbolic elements of the story. Further, the coordinates of the transference enactments of the critical debate *are given* by the symbolic elements of the story. A truly, stern rhetorical approach, I argue, would highlight the relation between text and critical debate as actions and reactions of *meaning*. If such analysis were to incorporate an unconscious dimension, it would focus on the kind of language, yes, but mostly on the 'reasons' for the opposition against interpretations of the story in terms of the meaning the story would unwittingly push into the critical debate. Indeed,

this view would regard the critical debate like a dimension of irruptions of unacknowledged meaningful forces and the defences against them - but would not attribute the primacy to the signifier like a structuralist approach would have it. Felman does grant such an importance to the signifier; in the previous example the signifier 'hysteria' accounts for the governess 'madness' and for the critics' blindness. This is not to pass any failing judgement upon Felman's readings and interpretations of the *Turn of the Screw*, rather to highlight an unacknowledged indebtedness to semiotics of her interpretative methodology.

### c. Lacan and Hamlet

Another seminal engagement between psychoanalysis and literature is Lacan's engagement with Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (Lacan, 1977). Arguably, Lacan's objective was not to analyse Shakespeare qua subject as Marie Bonaparte's was in relation to Poe. Lacan's objective was, again to illuminate psychoanalytic dimensions (i.e. the Other, desire, demand, the Other's desire, and so forth) via a reading of *Hamlet*. Nevertheless, in this case Lacan does advance certain hypotheses about *Hamlet* qua character and subject necessary to support subsequent theoretical claims. For instance, explains Lacan,

“the first factor that I indicated to you in *Hamlet*'s structure was his situation of dependence with respect to the desire of the Other, the desire of his mother. Here now is the second factor that I ask you to recognise: *Hamlet* is constantly suspended in the time of the Other, throughout the entire story until the very end” (Lacan, 1977, 17).

This passage is Lacan's exemplification of his formulation of desire being the Other's desire. Hamlet is furthermore an inextricable determinant of the very process of formulating that very notion. Lacan's objective is to elaborate on the notion of the desire of the Other, characterising it in this case as the desire of Hamlet's mother. But the question "why use Hamlet for such purpose?" is one that cannot be answered categorically for there are many other ways in which the same thesis could be advanced. However, it may be argued that psychoanalytical notions are better understood through a storytelling-like structure so that their unfolding can be observed, but this approach does not recognise the extent to which literature overdetermines this process. This supports Felman's notion of literature being the language necessary for psychoanalysis to name itself and to some extent her objection against the violence of psychoanalysis over literature.

But this goes further. Lacan's is a much deeper engagement with Hamlet qua subject than for instance Freud's with Narcissus qua character in his theory of narcissism. Lacan's engagement with Hamlet to exemplify theoretical notions involves formulating interpretations of Hamlet's "behaviour". In other words, formulating explanations to his acts qua character and therefore qua subject. This becomes evident in passages such as the following: "the thing that distinguishes Hamlet from Oedipus is that Hamlet *knows*. This characteristic explains, for example, Hamlet's madness. In the tragedies of antiquity, there are mad heroes, but, to the best of my knowledge, there are no heroes in tragedy, I say, not in legends, no heroes who feign madness. Hamlet, however, does" (Lacan, 1977, 19).

Analysing characters qua subjects in order to exemplify theoretical and psychoanalytic principles is definitely a commonplace in psychoanalytic theory. However, one should

be aware of Felman and Rey's warnings by not claiming that the meaning of the acts of the characters is exhausted by any psychoanalytic interpretation of them. Further, one ought to be alert to the blindness to one's blind spots. Nevertheless, it is almost intrinsic to psychoanalysis to proceed in the way Lacan did, exemplifying theoretical notions with literature, which in turn necessitates a degree of interpretation of the story with psychoanalytic principles as well as regarding characters qua subjects. My own research converges partially with this approach, for I regard characters as the speaking egos and subjective effects of the utterances of the story and in them I rely to formulate interpretations.

#### d. Skura: Aspects of the psychoanalytic process

With a predominantly Freudian framework and in an incredibly comprehensive fashion, literary theorist Meredith Anne Skura (1981) undertook a different approach to the question 'what does it mean to interpret a text psychoanalytically'. She likened different aspects of the psychoanalytic process to different ways of regarding the object of interpretation within the manifold dimensions of a literary text. Each, by consequence, solicits a different task from the interpreter as it depends on the nature of the object of interpretation. To characterise the object of interpretation and the consequent task of the interpreter, she chose "the case history, the fantasy, the dream, the rhetorical exchange between analyst and patient and the entire psychoanalytic process" (Skura, 1981, 6). She explains that she selected these models "not only because they happen to be used most often in literary criticism, but also because they define the different dimensions of the material being analysed and the different approaches to interpretation which each has generated, both in the analytic situation

and in the literary criticism” (Skura, 1981, 9). Out of Skura’s models, I will examine the first four.

i. The case history

The case history implies regarding the text, indeed, as a narrative reporting a situation to some extent ‘factually’ happened. Albeit subjectively interpreted, the case history aims to portray ‘objective psychic reality’. Therefore, characters, objects and story are treated as factual occurrences upon which analysis and formulation of interpretations are possible so as to bring about the unconscious meaning or ‘subjective fictional dimension’. In this particular approach to literary criticism, what Skura calls ‘character analysis’, that is, understanding characters qua subjects, “has more than historical importance; in fact, it provides a vital meeting place for psychoanalysis and literature, where problems in interpretation arise with particular force and clarity” (Skura, 1981, 30). I agree with Skura, particularly on the importance of the question of who speaks in the literary text. Furthermore, Skura argues that Lacan resorted to character analysis. She highlights that “after proving that the letter is a floating signifier with no meaning apart from the one given to it by the situation, Lacan takes a detour through character analysis and argues that the Minister D and Dupin, who are part of the situation are also signifiers. He applies his theory of unconscious motivation to these characters as people” (Skura, 1981, 30).

Arguably, Skura means to highlight that every approach to psychoanalytic literary criticism is rarely pure - rarely there is a psychoanalytic approach to literature that would be only this or that. I agree with Skura on this point. Nevertheless, I disagree with her statement about Lacan’s treatment of Dupin and Minister D as signifiers

amounting to explain their *behaviour qua subjects*. I argue Lacan aimed to highlight that they now occupy a different position in relation to each other; they mean something else in relation to someone else (the one who stole the letter, the one who must have it now, and so forth) in fact almost without acting, just by the possession of the letter seemingly shifting to someone else. To a degree, my own literary analysis indeed approaches texts as case histories and indeed treats characters as subjects. As I have defined them, characters are speaking egos whose narrative gives place to subjective effects.

## ii. Story as fantasy

Skura's second model regards the story as fantasy. She distinguishes manifest from latent fantasy and explains that "the difference between *manifest* and *latent* is a difference not simply between defences and hidden wish but between sophisticated and primitive ways of seeing things. Examining the play of fantasy - rather than its mere presence - can help the critic see how the texts work" (Skura, 1981, 60). In this sense, she understands latent and manifest fantasy as modalities; as structures of the story. Fantasy can be primitive or sophisticated, as well as allow visibility only of certain dimensions (i.e. the manifest as opposed to the latent). The critic, in this sense, is called to provide the full picture, to turn the latent into manifest so that the story now makes fuller sense.

Arguably, Felman had this model in mind when criticising psychoanalysis as a body of knowledge called upon to interpret literature, for the critic must formulate a different meaning of the story to the manifest one, or at the very least to complete it. The psychoanalytic critic, furthermore, will surely argue that this new meaning is opposed

(by anyone) precisely because it challenges the defences that aim to keep the *inadmissible* fantasy latent. Given it is inadmissible it is opposed. Oblivion may be another manifestation of this phenomenon.

Felman argues, nevertheless, that this position of 'knowledge about underlying, true meaning' is authoritarian and violent, for as Skura suggests: "a primitive fantasy is not a story but a "schema for" a story, as one analyst described it: it is "peremptory ideation" about a particular conflict with its characteristic feeling tone (often ambivalent) and its associated scenes and images, but with no fixed and final version" (Skura, 1981, 85). Felman's position is one of disagreement with 'characteristic' and 'associated scenes' that make up a 'schema', as this presupposes, indeed, authority over the meaning of the story - not only of that specific story, but over structures of meaning in general. However, the very depiction of 'authority over meaning' can be characterised as a primitive sadomasochistic fantasy itself, which would tinge Felman's perception of the endeavour of the psychoanalytic literary critic in this specific case. The 'authority over meaning' of the psychoanalyst, in this sense, lies in his ability to compare different structures of meaning - now appearing sadomasochistic, now appearing paranoid, now appearing otherwise, given his expertise in recognising different types of fantasy. Therefore, it is best characterised as an ability of comparing rather than passing judgement.

In this research, I incorporate the use of this model but not to the extent that it can be informative of the structure of the story (i.e. structure understood as Lacan's three structures: neurosis, psychosis, perversion). In this research, I identify persecutory fantasies, for instance, that can be called *paranoid*. These may explain why suddenly, for instance, a character may fear or attack another; feel fearful of an idea or situation;

feel being seen through, experiencing being fearfully penetrated by a situation, so on and so forth (in this sense, peremptory ideation). This may come at hand, precisely, when the reason for the character's behaviour or thoughts is not clear in the story.

Following the example of paranoia, different formulations, in this case, of homosexual unacknowledged fantasies described by Freud (Freud, 1922) account for different types of delusions. Fantasies can be indicative of structural matters that are not readily commonsensical; which may appear illogical or puzzling. Nevertheless, fantasies are so due to their symbolic configuration and not the imaginary objects they instantiate upon. In other words, in paranoia this would be the specific type of negation about loving the homosexual object and the subsequent form of affirmation about the object that is loved or feared instead, not the homosexual object per se. It is the stencil of attributional affirmations and negations which distinguishes the type of delusion, not the fact that this can be applied to a homosexual scenario. Any fantasy can potentially have this structure or stencil. It follows that I subscribe to Lacan's indication about imaginary formations not being determinant of the structure (Lacan, 1955 - 1956). Nevertheless, it would be naive to negate that the imaginary has specific configurations, which although do not provide an explanation of the structure serve for the psychoanalytic literary critic to orient himself around the conflict at stake in the story, especially in the imaginary dimension understood as the relation between the subject and the object cause of desire.

### iii. Story as dream

Skura's third model characterises literary criticism as a form of interpretation in which the interpreter understands the meaning of the text as a dream. The interpreter faces

the text as if it were the product of a work of *bricolage*, as “a whole network of associations, thoughts and images related to each other and represented (in the dream) in the strangest, most diverse ways” (Skura, 1981, 147). The interpreter thus faces the text *knowing* that symbols and associations to them have counter-sensical structures and unexpected linkages determined often by far-fetched details. Symbols themselves are constituted by condensation and displacement of features pertaining to other symbols (Freud, 1900). There would be manifest and latent ‘textual’ thoughts (i.e. dream-thoughts), mediated and deformed by an unwitting work of censorship in the text. This censorship would be motivated by the prohibition of unconscious desires; by the ultimate goal of avoiding the anxiety which those desires produce if acknowledged and made manifest. Skura argues that allegorical texts would readily appear receptive to this kind of interpretation, for allegories place symbols together, appearing initially unlinked, as if by chance (Skura, 1981, 105). Books of aphorisms could be located in this category as well, if one were to assume a connection between each specific aphorism - an intertextuality between passages that would be enough to account for the leading threads of meaning across the segments of the text.

Surely this approach allows freedom of interpretation to the literary critic, although it may be prone to incur even more severely in the violent mastery of knowledge warned against by Felman. Certain texts would lend themselves to such an interpretation, even *necessitate* this kind of interpretation in which ‘an awful lot goes’ if any interpretation were attempted. Skura herself exemplifies this kind of text by bringing about “Lewis Carroll’s paranoid ritual of cutting up his manuscript pages into arbitrarily numbered strips, pasting them randomly together to form new pages and sending them to his publisher while carefully keeping to himself the key to the sequence”

(Skura, 1981, 133). She highlights that the product of the interpretation may not be more communicative in nature than the text itself - in this sense, both text and interpretation may be symbolic debris in nature.

But in the lack of communicative intent of these texts lays their force and uniqueness. These texts may appear senseless, but their senselessness calls for sense concomitantly, perhaps even more powerfully than 'meaningful' texts. The psychoanalytic critic has the impulse to address this call whilst the literary critic seems to be prone to witness the silence as silence. This is what Felman argues with her notion of *literary silence*. She asserts that

“it is by *killing literary silence*, by stifling the very silence which inhabits literary language as such, that psychoanalysis *masters* literature. But Oedipus becomes master only to end up *blinding himself*. To blind oneself: the final gesture of a master, so as to delude himself with the impression (...) that he still can master his own loss of mastery, his own castration whereas he in reality *undergoes* it, everywhere, from without” (Felman, 1982, 198).

This is Felman's most stern criticism of psychoanalytic literary interpretation. Virginia Woolf seems to agree with Felman's point when she writes that

“[words] seem to like people to think and feel before they use them, but to think and to feel not about them, but about something different. They are highly sensitive, easily made self-conscious. They do not like to have their purity or impurity discussed” (Woolf, 1937, 205).

This points to what we have called power, dominion over meaning. This is possible for psychoanalysis, Felman argues, given that literature is silent when it comes to the answer that psychoanalysis seemingly seeks: the answer to the question “what does this really mean?” Perhaps answering that question amounts to arresting freedom, play of meaning. Nevertheless, yet again, Rey’s point of view about knowledge of meaning following its lack ad infinitum likens more to the psychoanalytic approach. Violence would be total when meaning would be concluded, when analysis were *terminated* (a very different thing than *ended*). Nevertheless, it could be hypothesised that opening meaning calls for a degree of ever ephemeral violence. Felman’s criticism posits the operation of opening or offering meaning in the hands of psychoanalytic literary criticism in terms of ‘killing literary silence’. She posits discourse as killing silence because in her view it is discourse that is where it ought not be. Nevertheless, perhaps the notion of trauma and the often need to end, rather than kill silence precisely where discourse is not invited but dreaded would be interesting to contrast to her objections in further research.

#### iv. Transference

Skura’s fourth model is that of transference in which there is unconscious communication between the author and the reader via the text. This dimension presupposes a fantasised relationship between author and reader and a series of rhetorical communications between them via the text. This is an approach, Skura argues, that has been “enthusiastically adopted by literary critics as more promising approaches to literature than the old-style fantasy model” (Skura, 1981, 173). However, she remains sceptical of the usefulness of such models as she argues that “it is still not clear whether they can be applied to specific texts or to the creative

process in general. The rhetorical dimension of discourse is much harder to locate in a text than in the psychoanalytic process, and therefore more problematic” (Skura, 1981, 173).

My own method converges and differs from this model on two main aspects. Firstly, my own analysis does not focus on the author qua subject nor on the relation between author and reader. However, there is some convergence between my own method and the rhetorical dimension of this model as it relies heavily on the linguistic interpretation of the text. They further differ, however, in that the analysis I am setting forth is not rhetorical *stricto sensu*; it is not an analysis that aims at understanding the act of communication of language in its manifold dimensions. Rather, it is an analysis that focuses on linguistic symbols and their functioning as signifiers and signifieds as well as their effect on the text from the specific point of view of psychosis. However, it cannot be denied that there is not an absolute ‘purity’ in my model given that the communicative, more contextual effects of the signifier - the signified - is unignorable and affects any understanding of the text. Unwittingly, of course, the rhetorical dimensions of the text may drive me - as interpreter - to sift this or that signifier and focus on it specifically. In that sense, I may be subsumed in the space fostered by the literary piece, which Felman characterises, and which I will (maybe) discover belatedly following my writing, in *après-coup* as Rey suggests.

#### e. Lacan and Joyce

Lastly, I discussed somewhat in depth Lacan’s engagement with James Joyce’s literature apropos the discussion of Lacan’s late theory of psychosis. Lacan dedicated his twenty-third yearly seminar to *theorise* the notion of the *sinthome*. This is yet

another instance of Lacan using literature to address and develop psychoanalytic theoretical notions (Miller, 1986 - 1987). Nevertheless, in this case the author qua subject plays a very important role in Lacan's elaborations. Lacan's notion of the the sinthome operating as a fourth knot that keeps imaginary, symbolic and real makes sense when reflecting upon James Joyce qua subject. "The Artist", who made a name for himself (Lacan, 1975 - 1976, 1975; Soler, 2002, Miller, 1986 - 1987) although personified as Dedalus in the novel "The Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man" is none but Joyce himself. Soler claims that Joyce reintroduced symbolic debris to the symbolic order via his writing (i.e. the signifier on the real being re-chained to the signifier chain). The basis of her argument is Joyce's autobiography, and she categorically claims that such symbolic doing (savoir-faire) prevented James Joyce's psychotic breakdown (Soler, 2002).

Lacan's engagement with Joyce, furthermore, relies heavily upon the linguistic rather than the diegetic dimension of Joyce's work. This is not to say that Lacan did not touch upon the themes of Joyce's novels; Lacan did state, for instance, how the question of the father is all over Ulysses (Lacan, 1975 - 1976). Nevertheless, arguably Lacan's main point on Joyce's literature is that Joyce deconstructed language and stripped it down to its phonemic character (Lacan, 1975 - 1976). Indeed, the immediate, objectified quality of the inhabiting of language by the psychotic subject characterises Joyce's writing. In this sense Joyce made of his symptom a sinthome thus guaranteeing an identity for himself, a name.

The present literary analysis does not focus on the person of the author. In the following chapters I will discuss the extent to which hypotheses about the author that stem from the author's writing remain hypotheses only. I discuss this under the light of

the notion of mimesis of psychosis. Logically, authors could write as if they were psychotic without being so themselves. Therefore, and to that extent, I disagree with a psychoanalytic interpretation of literature in which the object of interpretation is the author qua subject. It follows that the notion of *sinthome* must be reformulated to be rendered operational for this kind of literary analysis. This is discussed in greater depth in the following chapters.

The second aspect of Lacan's engagement with Joyce, language, is one of the pillars of my own literary analysis. The linguistic analysis of the text can be one of the most fruitful aspects of the text to analyse. In the case of psychosis specifically, I argue that language is the most reliable dimension upon which to interpret. As I explained in the first chapter, Lacan's early theory of psychosis comprises linguistic, grammatical descriptions of the structure of psychotic symptoms. Felman, however, challenges this by asking: "it would seem that Lacan's scientific project is to reduce the rhetorical mystifications of the unconscious to the rigour of a grammar (...) Is this project feasible?" (Felman, 1985, 124). Partly, this question converges with my own research as I aim to determine whether Lacan's early theory of psychosis replicates in literary texts. In other words, can literary analysis be done on the basis of these principles?

### 3. Madness and Text

This section aims to explore some of the points of view on the intimate relation between madness and text. Paraphrasing Felman, Heart asserts that "there is no longer a clear-cut opposition or a well-defined border between literature and psychoanalysis: psychoanalysis can be intraliterary just as much as literature is

intrapsychanalytic” (Hart, 1992, 5). In this sense, a similar kind of relation could be posited between madness and text. Literature and madness, argues Felman, “are precisely linked by what attempts to shut them out” (Felman, 1985, 16). This is true insofar as what is deemed ‘mad’ is excluded from the ‘sane’, as literature may be in some contexts as well. However, madness and text are not only linked by what opposes them or attempts to silence them; they are linked by the very form in which literature speaks madness, or in which madness speaks literature. Therefore, in this section I aim to address a specific discussion on how does literature speak madness. I argue that this can be posited as the relation between literary language and madness. I will focus on two points of view on the discussion, namely that of Shoshana Felman who, although influenced by Lacan, comes from an American literary tradition predominant at Yale University and that of Lacan.

Felman defines the French modern trend as “an offspring of formalism and structural linguistics, [which] aims for a science of literature, conceived above all as a brand of *semiology*,” (Felman, 1985, 23) and she opposes it to the American trend which “links rhetoric and literary theory (which is not thought of as a science) in their relation to *logic and philosophy*” (Felman, 1985, 23). Although Felman does not define *logics* and *philosophy*, it may be argued that she means that the American trend views literature from a much wider perspective than the French tradition. It follows that the American tradition is less constrained when it draws various kinds of meanings into its fashion to perform literary criticism. The American tradition seems freer to ascribe meaningful relations (i.e. logical, philosophical, existential, humanistic...) to literary elements such as text, diegetic elements, intertextuality, contextuality, and so forth. Whilst on the other hand, the French school would be under the sway of Saussurean semiology

whose focus is on the linguistic sign - in Lacan's case the signifier in particular - its play and overdetermination of meaning. Indeed, this highlights an important theoretical disagreement between these two traditions. The pivotal, central, jamb-like function of the signifier in language seems to be the crucial difference between these two traditions and Felman seems to posit the French one as more rigid against the wider, more flexible American one.

Felman moves on to characterise the American tradition which rests upon a Peircean linguistic model. Such model holds the notion of "the interpretant" as central to any meaningful linguistic "happening" and posits the sign as a 'to-be-interpreted' entity, the interpretation of which becomes itself a sign to be interpreted ad infinitum (Felman, 1985). Figures of speech, explains Felman, are performatives and therefore are to be read as *speech acts*, "as *forces* rather than as forms [it is] less a kind of geometry than a kind of physics. It consists in the study of *movements* produced by the *interaction* of forces in language. (...) Neither it is simply a *pathos* (...) nor is it simply a *logos*..." (Felman, 1985 25). The aspiration of such literary approach is one bound to incompleteness "because rhetorical study cannot help but participate in the rhetorical performance it explores, and can therefore never perfectly control the epistemological rigor of its own rhetoric, a perfect knowledge of rhetoric (albeit a scientific one) is theoretically inconceivable" (Felman, 1985, 26). On this point, Felman agrees with the French school in that there is no metalanguage.

According to Felman, Lacan's particular contribution "resides as much in what he brings through rhetoric as in what he brings in theory--and in the openings forged by the interaction between the two" (Felman, 1985, 29). Following Felman, Lacan's aim was to advance a theory of misprision (*méconnaissance*), by, argues Felman,

“*anagrammatising the theoretical through the rhetorical*” (Felman, 1985, 29). This is Felman’s way to characterise the reasons behind Lacan’s discursive *fashion*. Apropos his own style, in the well-known *theme le Famillionaire* Lacan remarks that “in the difficulties of my style, maybe you get a glimpse of that, namely there is something that fits the object of which it is about, (...) it is not about speaking *of* the word, but speaking *in* the edge of the word” (Lacan, 1957, 33). In this sense Lacan’s ‘*rhetoric*’ objective is better characterised not as an anagrammatised theory of *meconnaissance*, but as an attempt to incarnate the effects of the signifier, in the very act of speaking, consciously considering the impossibility to speak *of* them without being concomitantly prey *of* them, under their sway. In this point, although coming from different perspectives, Felman and Lacan could be said to coincide.

Lacan, furthermore, had a second project, which Felman criticises, namely “to reduce the rhetorical mystifications of the unconscious to the rigour of a grammar” (Felman, 1985, 125). Given that there is no Other of the Other, no metalanguage, or in other words, no possibility to transcend the unconscious within which we inescapably dwell, how can this rigour, this *grammar* be possible, Felman asks, “is a grammar of the unconscious not the epitome of metalanguage?” (Felman, 1985, 125). This criticism, by implication, calls into question Lacan’s project and deems it contradictory. Lacan’s notions of metonymy, metaphor as mechanisms of linkage of signifiers, and particularly his linguistic account of psychotic symptoms, upon which this literary analysis will place a wager, would be according to Felman *epitomes of metalanguage*. The *very description*, for instance, of the interruption of a hallucinatory phenomenon (a phrase) halting in the place of the *shifter* or personal pronoun would be language about language, that is, an affirmation that rests upon *grammar* as a locus of authority

*above and beyond* language. But language about language is a notion which Lacan, as Felman rightly points out, deems impossible on the other hand. In other words, Felman's criticism is that part of Lacan's project consists of language about language whilst at the same time asserting that such thing is impossible.

Such is Felman's criticism to an apparent contradiction in Lacan's theory and indeed, one can say that within Felman's theoretical coordinates, the criticism stands. Nevertheless, one can characterise grammar as language within language and not 'about it' by highlighting its connection to the symbolic phallus, the signifier that operates as a guarantee of the effects of meaning of the signifier over the signified. Arguably, this is an operation of organisation within language as a structure and it accounts for a certain position *within* language and not *above* it. The symbolic phallus is theorised by Lacan as the signifier of the lack in the symbolic system (Lacan, 1958, 1960). Simply put, the symbolic system (let us call it language) lacks something to guarantee meaning - it lacks an absolute assurance that *this* means *this* or *that*. Grammar is precisely that, an assurance of meaning; but it is so within language, not above it as Felman described. The 'assurance' or 'guarantee' is a signifier, and it can be called upon to signify anything. In this sense, *anything*<sup>30</sup> could potentially perform the function of guarantee, in fact it does: although every language has grammatical rules (i.e. a symbolic function that operates instead of the actual lack of guarantee of meaning) grammatical rules are different across languages - what guarantees meaning in *this* language does not guarantee meaning in *another*. Diverse grammatical rules 'apparently' guarantee meaning in diverse forms of grammar within

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<sup>30</sup> By *anything* I mean a signifier that may not produce any particular meaning itself. Like in Poe's *Purloined Letter* the letter need not signify to produce effects; in that sense the letter could be anything. Equally, the guarantee of meaning could be anything.

each specific language. Therefore, the function of guarantee operates in every language understood as system or structure, but what guarantees meaning in each case is different. The variety of 'rules' of apparent guarantees of language transpires the obvious truth that each rule is not necessary in itself, each rule is contingent, just the *function* of ruling or ordering is necessary. The symbolic phallus stands for the function of the rule which in fact is guaranteed by *nothing*. To be sure, that which would make a linguistic rule necessary *lacks* in language; the symbolic phallus is a signifier of precisely that - *grammar* being one of its imaginary offshoots.

A 'geometry of language' or 'a grammar of rhetorics' as Felman calls Lacan's project, underpins the possibility to analyse psychotic texts following Lacan's linguistic model as developed in his third seminar, which is one of my main objectives. Lacan's indications around psychotic linguistic attributes (i.e. how does madness look in language, or how does mad language look) such as neologistic, having interrupted phrases, reified words and so forth, rest upon the possibility to conceive grammatical implications of language as the main link between *text (language) and madness* - text and subjectivity in general. Is this possible? According to Felman this would not be possible, but according to Lacan it is certainly so, precisely due to what the empirical (i.e. the clinical) imposed on his ideas. In the case of psychosis, psychotic speech is characterised by those instances in which grammar seems to not operate in a way in which it would in neurosis or perversion - its particular flavour rests in the inside-outside of grammar; where strange, inexistent or grammatically unrecognisable words operate as if grammatically. But furthermore, the particular 'deformations' of psychosis are not 'random' (i.e. they are not simply beyond or outside grammar) they are the

product of a cut across the subjective structure, conceived as a plane, yielding specific *kinds* of deformations explicable by topology (Lacan, 1955).

As Felman suggests, it would be rather impossible to formulate an all-encompassing theory that would *grammatically* account for all the forms in which any form of madness, or subjectivity may be spoken in literature. However, it is certain that, for example, psychotic neologisms are words that operate in the way described before, they are outside grammar (syntax) insofar as they are strictly neither nouns, adverbs, adjectives, articles, etc. Nevertheless, they bear a relation to grammar, because they still abide to the 'shape' that makes words different to a random cluster of letters, and yet they do not operate as known words, or even unknown words. Hence Lacan calls this attribute a 'flavour' (Lacan, 1955 - 1956). Whether this 'flavour' is better characterised as a 'force' than as a 'shape' (i.e. physically rather than geometrically), is a question that deserves further research.

But Felman's critique of the French school deserves further attention. Although she aims to highlight the strength of the American School by asserting that it draws from logics and philosophy, one is immediately struck by the consequent impossibility that indeed Felman would, and to some extent does face to truly incorporate an unconscious dimension into the endeavour. The reason for this is that the unconscious defies logics and logical relations, upon which, as Felman points out, the American School insists to rest. If Psychoanalysis is thought of as philosophy, it could not, as it has not, fully permeate due to the resistance that the logical, secondary thinking would impose upon it (Freud, 1915).

As discussed, Felman likens the French tradition, stemming from semiology, to a “geometry of language” rather than a “physics of language”, the latter akin to the American School. To agree with Felman’s ideas one would have to imagine physics as the description of an ‘interplay of forces’ rather than as an endeavour to formalise phenomena into scientific, indeed, mathematical formulations. Otherwise one would have to immediately disagree with Felman given Lacan’s insistence on doing exactly that. Furthermore, Lacan’s topological bodies and knots, indeed instances of mathematics, arguably serve a purpose of defying commonsensical notions, depicting how they defy (imaginary) depiction and of course discursive description. They aim to challenge human rationality (logics) and imaginary means of intelligibility. For example, Möbius strip-like structures such as chiral molecules which have no superimposability on their mirror image. I can hardly characterise, narrate, describe this other than by saying that chiral molecules are not specularisable - they are *not even* dissimilar to their image in the mirror in the same way as every specularisable object in the world is (i.e. almost everything else).

Given this challenge to intelligibility, Felman’s objections are understandable. Nevertheless, physics - which she argues for - aims to describe no less complex phenomena of the universe which defy imaginary intelligibility in similar measures. Felman characterises the American School as viewing language as ‘forces of meaning’ so as to highlight its theoretical ‘flexibility’; its lack of aspiration to a totalising perfection ascribed to geometry. However, the nature of physics is a claim of an all-encompassing truth about the universe as strong as geometry’s, which then makes Felman’s concern over violence over meaning rather dubious, quite partial to say the least. In other words, I argue that Felman’s critique of Lacan’s project is not altogether

accurate. Arguably, a grammar of rhetorics or a geometry of language like Lacan's, is indeed incredibly complex and awe provoking, but is as *totalising* as a physics of language. Aspiration to totality is, in my view, Felman's critique to Lacan as well as the unwitting aspiration of the theoretical principles upon which she claims she relies.

Felman's specific question is whether is it possible to reduce the mystifications of the unconscious to grammar (akin to geometry), as opposed to approaching them by means of the "ampleness" of rhetorics. Further, she asks if it is possible and not contradictory to Lacan's own project to attempt so. I would argue that Felman's characterisation of Lacan's project, if granted, does not respond to a need for 'perfection' or 'exactitude' as she seems to affirm. Indeed, the imaginary aspects of the formations of the unconscious cannot be fully made felt by the formulae or topological bodies that *explain their underpinning symbolic structure*. Perhaps this is what Felman feels insufficient. However, geometry (specifically topology) responds to a different need: depicting the undepictable, phenomena that are *symbolic* in nature, due to their very nature, cannot be *depicted* by imaginary means. Hence the need of other symbolic resources to do so which are not ordinary usages of language - such as geometry, topology or mathematical notations - *quintessential* to physics as well by the way.

Lacan's topology responds to the conviction that "the notion of the subject of the unconscious as it reveals itself in the analytical experience must be present in that which we choose to represent it; otherwise we would always be making *metaphors* about it" (Eidelsztein, 1998, 13). The notion of the subject of the unconscious as a particular articulation between imaginary, symbolic and real defies logical relations, renders insufficient what could be analogically or metaphorically said about it. Hence,

a system that accommodates *logical* yet often *counter-sensical*<sup>31</sup> relations is the appropriate one to think about it. This, may well be topology or also physics, but surely not in the sense Felman posits physics. In other words, I argue that Lacan's system is the most logical psychoanalytic system to date given it transcends the limits that imaginary relations impose on non-mathematical systems of thought. I am of course not in the position to fully prove this, although I have provided a few examples. But this reason, nevertheless, leads me to agree with the relation between grammar, text and psychosis as posited by Lacan in the Seminar III and pursue its development into a model of literary analysis.

## Conclusions

This fragmentary exploration of some of the issues that arise in the encounter of psychoanalysis and literature immediately confronts us to its incredible multidimensionality. From the outset, the task of exploring the theoretical conditions of possibility and implications of such encounter seems a vast ocean of possibility, contradiction and difference. The irreducible incommensurability of some notions, approaches and problems identified by different authors and trends, leaves us with a set of final questions: what is the purpose of psychoanalytic literary criticism given the difficulty to discuss it and to communicate it? Is communication possible across psychoanalysis and literature, as well as between different psychoanalytic literary analysis trends? What is the metric of usefulness of such endeavour and how to

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<sup>31</sup> They are logical in that they are governed by a *system*, counter-sensical in that often they go against logical-imaginary rules (i.e. cause and effect, principle of identity, principle of non-contradiction, and so forth).

assess different results? Although each question would deserve further research, we can conclude that the first objective of the encounter between psychoanalysis and literature is to make this particular kind of language continue. In other words, it is an endeavour that seeks truth in the literary; it disappoints itself in its search, but continues. In this sense, the 'delivery' journey of the truth is a causal 'factor' of the truth and to that extent I agree with Derrida's contributions to Lacan's Seminar on Poe. In short, the quest for truth in the encounter between psychoanalysis and literature is indeed purposeless unless it serves as alibi for this specific language to keep unfolding and subjectivities to come about thereby in *après-coup*.

Certain conclusions can be drawn about the particular approach between psychoanalysis and literature that I perform in this research. A psychoanalytic, specifically Lacanian framework serves the purpose of defining the psychotic attributes of language and their neighbouring phenomena, upon which I rely to perform the analysis. This is underpinned by Lacan's understanding of the three registers; their interplay and configurations, but above all on his theory of the sign and its linguistic implications, distinct as they might be from those of the American rhetorical tradition.

Furthermore, it can be concluded that although the literary analysis in this research focuses primarily on the above, it is undeniable that the endeavour is not 'pure', it incorporates elements of the other traditions from which it stems. Skura's models of psychoanalytic literary analysis, although neither fully accounts for my own, certainly have commonalities with it. Specifically, approaching literary analysis as case history, fantasy and transference bear certain methodological overlaps with my method given greatly to her and my indebtedness to ultimately Freudian notions. Nevertheless, there are big differences between our understandings of the very notions of fantasy and

transference specifically. Given I subscribe to a largely Lacanian conceptual framework, the function and theoretical composition of these notions differs from those strictly posited by Skura. For example, Skura follows a Freudian model of fantasy, latent and manifest, whereas I follow a Lacanian one which posits fantasy as the relation between the subject and the imaginary other, as well as the relation of the subject to the object a ( $\$ \diamond a$ ). This certainly tinges my literary interpretation based on fantasy by consequence.

Indeed, contrasting my ideas about the focus of interpretation to those of other authors (i.e. characters qua symbols, characters qua subjects, story qua fantasy, structure of the text qua dream, literary critical scenario qua space of re-enactment, and so forth) as well as the task of interpretation (i.e. making fuller sense, offering alternative meanings, pointing at unconscious re-enactment) has served the purpose to make my own clearer in relation to theirs. The task of interpretation that I find most akin to mine, and to which I aspire, is Lacan's play upon the equivocal meaning of the signifier 'letter' in Poe's 'Purloined Letter' and its consequent conceptualisation as a signifier.

Nevertheless, I also aim to open new meanings of the story by performing an analysis of the linguistic attributes of stories in relation to the attributes of psychotic phenomena. I argue, therefore, the focus of my interpretations is upon *the text qua psychotic delusion, hallucination or psychotic phenomenon* as I have defined it based on Lacan's thinking. This very operation intrinsically may subvert the commonsensical meaning that the story may have. The task of interpretation in this research, therefore, consists of highlighting these phenomena as such and consequently pursuing the meaningful consequences of understanding them thus, which translates as opening up new meanings, hopefully, in a non-violent way, or at least in a non-excessively

violent way. To a degree, I subscribe to approaching the story as case history, for I will perform character analysis to some degree, not by offering the background of the character's childhood conflict, for instance, but by relating the happenings of the story directly to them or to the narrator, but not to the author. The author qua subject, in my view, is a secret to any reader.

Indeed, my agreement with Felman's view on the intrinsic implication between psychoanalysis and literature is such that this chapter, and to a great extent this whole research, has focused on a historical, methodological, epistemological and to a degree existential relation of madness and text, explained by psychoanalysis, under the grip of literature, via psychoanalysis... Nevertheless, further research on this relation would be adequate, one that takes into full consideration not only literature's frame as brought about by Johnson, but the psychoanalytic frame. The latter frame, in a different but analogous way to that of literature following Fish's definition, implies regarding the resources, dare we say 'forces' or 'figures' that language always has possessed with a certain self-consciousness.

In conclusion, I agree, as well, with Rey's assertions about writing in which he characterises it as the interference of knowledge and its lack, because it is only now that belatedly I come to learn that I am implicated in this specific question - the relation between psychoanalysis and literature - which gripped my research attention from the outset and now seems like a question that was waiting to be formulated. The risk of dissemination of this question was, has been latent and pressing. But in this case, dissemination did not occur, yet.

The following chapters focus more specifically on the methodology of the literary analysis. Specifically, what does it mean to call a work of literature psychotic and how are the attributes of language that Lacan described apropos psychosis be operationalised so they can be analysed.

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## Chapter 4

### Methodological Considerations I:

#### Psychosis and Literature - Scope and limits

##### Introduction

Having reviewed Lacan's early and late theories of psychosis as well as some aspects of the encounter between psychoanalysis, literature, and madness, the question posed now is whether and under what circumstances can psychosis be recognised in works of literature, fictional literature specifically. This question gains relevance if seen as a logical inquiry into the very possibility of understanding a work of fiction as psychotic. What would calling a work of fiction 'psychotic' mean? In this sense, are Lacan's ideas on psychosis applicable to works of fiction? Can works of fiction be, therefore, understood as instantiations of psychosis?

To approach these questions from a theoretical as well as methodological point of view, I follow a logical structure of argument and question. Three poles of enquiry stroke me as possible pathways into this interrogation: *author, text and context*. I begin by questioning the author followed by the text and context of the work of literature. This structure is underpinned by the wager upon these three elements being the possible foci of analysability of a work of literature. In other words, author, text and context will be interrogated in the search of the features that would allow us to understand each of them, and therefore the work in question as a whole, as psychotic. Issues around *psychosis proper* and *mimesis of psychosis* traverse the discussion about author and text. Counterpointing them, the notions of speaking and spoken

subject as discussed in the previous chapters will serve as means to introduce the dimension of the unconscious to the discussion. I argue that the extent to which a work of literature may be seen as an autonomous linguistic artefact is its spoken dimension and therefore its *unconscious* aspect. This is one of psychoanalysis most important contributions to any possible literary analysis.

The analysis of the context of the work of literature will be approached from a somewhat ontological point of view. It will focus on the features of *the letter*, understood as the most irreducible element of the symbolic realm. The dynamics of the letter, however, can be extrapolated to the relation between texts or symbolic universes, that is, contexts. In this case, neurosis and perversion would be the immediate contexts of psychosis. Therefore, based on Lacan and Derrida's notions of *the letter*, specifically around issues of identity, repetition and difference, an argument is built about psychosis in the work of fiction being recognisable in contrast and comparison to other works of fiction that may be understood as *non-psychotic*.

In *Writing and Madness* (1985), Shoshana Felman claims that literary analyses of this kind encounter the specificity and irreducible singularity of the text. Therefore, throughout this chapter, a discussion will unfold about the irreducible points of individual interpretation that may play a part in deciding whether a work of fiction can be thought of as psychotic. In this sense, firstly any claim to universality and wish for generalisation of the notion of psychosis in the work of fiction will be problematised. Secondly, a discussion will be elaborated on the possible meaning of calling a work of fiction *psychotic* following Lacan's proposition on knots theory and the *verification of a false hole*. In other words, I will argue that calling a work of fiction psychotic is a naming

act that is meant to leave but an unwarranted symbolic mark or precedent that, however, may tie a hitherto un-knotted Borromean knot.

## Psychosis and Literature

Asserting that a given work of fiction is psychotic poses complex questions. The question of whether the author was indeed psychotic or not is usually posed in the same breadth and is followed by the question of how would a psychotic text read. It would seem that if there were biographical knowledge about the author having been or being psychotic and the work in question were written in a discursive style akin to Lacan's description of psychotic language, the work could be considered psychotic. Daniel Schreber's *Memoirs* (1903) is a paradigmatic example of this kind of text. Freud and Lacan's categorical certainty about Schreber's paranoia and the delusional flavour of his text confirms this (Freud, 1911[1910], Lacan, 1955 - 1956; 1955).

However, the cases in which biographical information about the author is not definitive are many. Lacan's contention of psychosis being far more common than suspected lingers the background of the otherwise psychiatric conception of psychosis, which leads us to suspect that what may be initially thought neurotic or perverse may be, in fact, psychotic.

Lacan's ambiguity about James Joyce's psychotic structure (Lacan, 1975 - 1976), for instance, is proof of the difficulty to assert clearly and distinctly that an author is or was psychotic. The diverse stances of subsequent authors on Lacan's ambiguous claims about Joyce's psychotic structure make it all the more evident that the answers given to this question are not definitive (Miller, 1986 - 1987, Soler, 2008, Vanheule, 2011).

Some authors seem to accept as granted that Joyce had a psychotic structure and others contest this position. In short, the question seems more complicated than simply ticking two boxes: biography of the author and discursive style of the text.

Felman (1985) outlines a negative<sup>32</sup> relation between madness and literature. She claims that madness speaks in literature out of what reduces it to silence. Whilst this may be true, it can be argued that understanding literature as psychotic (or 'mad') means to focus on the fashion with which literature speaks rather than only on what it silences or is silenced by; why does it speak in this way, what may its origin be (if it had any) and with which other symbolic universes does it relate.

If one is to follow a psychoanalytic model in which a subject needs to speak or write and another listen or read, arguably this assertion about a work of literature must take into consideration several elements, namely biographical and experiential information about (or by) the author, an analysis of the discourse or texture of the work of fiction, its diegetic dimension as well as its contextual relations. However, if each of these elements were considered separately, the assertion of a work of fiction being psychotic would become dubious ipso facto. To make this kind of assertion about a work of literature requires a careful 'synthesis' of all these elements which yields a product greater than the sum of its parts. In many cases, surely, some of these elements will be somewhat uncertain or appear unconvincing, in which case this would have to be acknowledged and the strength of the other elements considered may become the decisive factors. In this sense, the whole of the work amounts to more than the sum of its parts in an analogous way to a knot. The assertion about a work of fiction being

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<sup>32</sup> In this context, negative means that which André Green (1999) outlines as the effort to repress, foreclose, deny, split, etc. The negative is understood as the effort to banish a psychic element whatsoever from the consciousness or the psyche altogether.

psychotic must take into consideration more than a mere aggregation of the aforementioned elements.

Such endeavour would not follow a psychiatric model based on an illness paradigm proper of the discourse of psychiatry (Foucault, 1965) in which the work of literature would be deemed insanely or foolishly written. The work of literature would not be deemed disabled or lacking in 'mental health'. Understanding a work of literature as psychotic would follow a psychoanalytic model as set forth by Lacan in his early and late theories of psychosis. It would aim to shed light on the symbolic, imaginary and real dynamics underpinning a given literary work, or a moment of the work, enriching thus the possibilities of understanding it psychoanalytically in relation to a given context. This endeavour ought to follow the principle of *reflexivity*, drawn by scholar Stephen Frosh (2008) from French philosopher and cultural theorist Pierre Bourdieu (1999). By means of reflexivity, the cultural artefact is analysed following psychoanalytic principles and theory. In turn, psychoanalytic principles and theory are problematised by folding them upon themselves so that "psychoanalysis contribution might usefully become more tentative and disruptive than has been the case" (Frosh, 2008, 346).

The author: mimesis and psychosis proper

A point of departure can be to focus on the author of a given work of literature. Almost immediately, a question is posed on whether there is a necessary connection between the author's psychic structure and his style of writing. Indeed, a neurotic author *may* write psychotically and vice versa. Therefore, the point of departure ought to take into

consideration the distinction between two kinds of *psychotic-like* writing authors. On the one hand, authors who purposefully and consciously write in a specific, psychotic-like fashion. This would be the case of authors who purposefully perform a mimesis of psychotic speech. On the other hand, authors to whom language imposes itself in this way<sup>33</sup>, who are subjectively taken by these linguistic-existential phenomena and have no other choice but to write in this way, in other words psychotic authors proper.

French psychoanalyst Colette Soler (2004), for instance, agrees in that Joyce belonged to the latter group. She claims that although Joyce did not undergo hallucinatory phenomena, he did experience phenomena that he called “epiphanies” between 1900 and 1904. These provided him with symbolic disjointed fragments, which Soler qualifies as “strangely senseless, out of discourse, and therefore, *real*” (Soler, 2004, 103). Soler describes how Joyce reintroduced these fragments to his prose, and thereby to the symbolic order in detriment of the signification that his texts produce. These fragments would be nothing but symbolic debris, explains Soler, “if it were not by the epiphanic experience described by Joyce in which the signification vacuum is transformed into its opposite, namely an uncanny revelatory certainty” (Soler, 2004, 103).

Another example is brought about by scholar Meredith Anne Skura, (1981) who suggests that English writer Lewis Carroll practiced a ‘paranoid ritual’ by cutting his manuscript in pieces, gluing it back disjointedly and keeping to himself the code that would order the text fragments. This points to Carroll having been paranoid and his prose, like that of Joyce, could be classed along the lines of psychotic speech. This

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<sup>33</sup> Lacan’s view on language *imposing itself* to Joyce is noteworthy as he claims that “it is difficult not to see that a certain relation to words (*parole*) gets more and more imposed on him (Joyce)” Lacan, 1975 – 1976, 97

suggests that the psychotic *experience* of the author is the element that distinguishes *mimetic* from *psychotic proper* authors. An author who would mimic psychotic language and who were not psychotic would not experience epiphanies or perform rituals that were strictly paranoid and vice versa.

However, this assertion presupposes a measure of self-transparency that the author and he who makes a clinical judgement<sup>34</sup> about the author ought to have. The author should be able to account for his rituals, revelatory experience or epiphany. This means he should consider the latter revelatory and not daily or mundane, and communicate it in such a way that the *clinical reader* understands it and judges it to be an experience of senselessness, fragmentariness and meaninglessness transposed into an all-encompassing, sense-making meaningfulness. This requirement is problematic because what grants the psychotic character to the experience would be its subjective compellingness. Schreber, for instance, although arguing for his sanity in his autobiography, accounted for the *compelling, epiphanic* revelatory experiences of his paranoiac episode. Indeed, the “compelling” character of the psychotic phenomenon is described by Lacan in the Seminar III when he describes the feeling of “reality” that is characteristic of primary phenomena (Lacan, 1955 - 1956).

But a strictly psychotic phenomenon can nonetheless occur without the subject deeming it unusual or noticing it as such. Would it, then, not be considered psychotic? In other words, if the compelling qualities of the phenomenon would not occur, or the hallucinatory or delusional characteristics of the experience were attributed to a rather

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<sup>34</sup> In this particular instance I am referring to Soler’s assertions about Joyce. However, hereafter I use the term *Clinical Reader* to refer to the individual who makes a judgment about whether or not the author or the text may be psychotic in one form or another.

simple, non-revelatory experience, would that be the case of a non-psychosis? Can there be such a thing given that what grants it its psychotic character would be the subjective interpretation given to it?

I would answer in the negative because otherwise the term *subjective experience* would become an oxymoron. It would follow that this would be a matter of individual interpretation after all, that is, of the subject (or author) interpreting his own experience and of the clinical judge agreeing, disagreeing or reinterpreting the author's account of it.

This is an irreducible measure of subjectivity (and therefore singularity) of the author's experience. It makes the formalisation and generalisation of the classification of psychotic and nonpsychotic authors very complex. Firstly, this would be due to the subjective character of the individual interpretation of the psychotic phenomenon, thereby impeding any universal generalisation of the notion. Secondly, the agency that would perform such interpretation would be the ego (*moi*), that is, precisely the locus of lack of self-transparency of the author *and* the clinical judge. The ego (*moi*) would be, therefore, at once the source of the certainty, that is, the compelling character of the phenomenon that makes of it a truly psychotic experience, and the reason to doubt the very existence of this truth. Given the epistemological misrecognition (*méconnaissance*) with which the ego relates to its objects (Lacan, 1949), the assessment itself of the supposed psychotic experience is unreliable as well. In other words, relying on a misrecognising agency makes its resulting interpretation dubiously generalisable.

Simply put, if the subjective account is the sole element that would distinguish psychotic from non-psychotic authors, it would not be possible to distinguish the cases

of a *true, false, unrecognised or mendacious* psychosis in the author. In this sense, although not unfounded, Soler's assertions about Joyce risk being mistaken. Perhaps the risk of being mistaken may be a lesser evil than not attempting an interpretation given it would nonetheless guarantee a *singular* analysis of each work of literature in relation to its author. This may open dimensions of analysis hitherto unthought even if the specific interpretation turns out to be mistaken. This level of specificity, arguably, is needed in this type of literary analysis. It follows, however, that the notion of "psychotic trend" of literature is implausible. Nevertheless, as will be discussed in further chapters, general properties of psychotic language in literature may be recognised.

The subjective experience of the author, furthermore, may be added to known or documented biographical information about the author's life. In Joyce's case for example, his sister was diagnosed with psychosis and was admitted to hospital on several occasions (Lacan, 1975 - 1976). This information may provide some support to the distinction between the two groups of authors, making of the subjective experience not the only source of information about the author's psychosis.

But if we shift the focus to the group of authors who perform a mimesis of psychosis there is a problem. To even conceptualise such group of authors, a sharp distinction between the author and the text must be made. The author must be able *to be non-psychotic* and still write *psychotically*. Therefore, the author ought to be *other to or different from* the text. These assumptions would underpin the process of mimesis of psychosis on the hands of a non-psychotic author.

Roland Barthes succinctly lays out the problem in his 1967 essay *The Death of the Author*, when he argues that separate voices and identities cannot be distinguished

between the author and the text. In this seminal essay, Barthes rightly claims that “all writing is itself this special voice, consisting of several indiscernible voices, and that literature is precisely the invention of this voice, to which we cannot assign a specific origin” (Barthes, 1977, 145). The question that we are subsequently forced to pose is: whose voice is the one speaking psychotically in the text? The assertion that a non-psychotic author can write psychotically implies necessarily that that voice does not belong to him. Otherwise, if it did belong to the author, I would be forced to consider the author psychotic, or at the very least, something in the author being psychotic, which in turn would make the distinction between psychotic proper and non-psychotic authors who perform a mimesis of psychosis, collapse.

Alternatively, it could be argued that authors can achieve by means of their writing an asymptotical measure of similarity to a psychotic phenomenon, with which they would have, *personally*, nothing to do whatsoever. This affirmation is naïve given the nature of psychosis and psychotic speech, as psychosis is a phenomenon that concerns the whole of *being*. If the author were completely alien to psychosis, the psychotic phenomena in the text would appear very unconvincing. In this sense, I argue that the author must have first-hand experience of psychosis in order to write thus.

Further, when it comes to the *ability to write psychotically* it can be argued that no mimesis is possible. This would be simply due to the author not inhabiting (or being inhabited by) language in this way. A neurotic author would not be able to write psychotically because he would not command language in such a way that he could, for instance, transpose successfully signifiers into the realm of the imaginary (Lacan, 1955 - 1956), without his work appearing unconvincing. At best, what a non-psychotic author could do is copy in a stencil-like form the discourse, or the structure of the

discourse of a truly psychotic subject. This would be possible, but in this case the author's discourse would come from a psychotic subject proper, even if it were not himself.

The problem, however, remains because mimesis of psychosis ought to be possible logically. Furthermore, writing psychotically may be indeed, part of the author's stylistic strategy. What if, for instance, only one character in a work of fiction would be (convincingly) psychotic and the rest would not? The discourse of the author would have psychotic and nonpsychotic moments. This would call into question the possibility of psychosis (and neurosis and perversion) being a matter of either or. As discussed before, Lacan (Lacan, 1955) differentiates these structures in terms of the operation of the symbolic law or lack of it resulting from the paternal metaphor. However, Lacan describes the cases of stabilised or untriggered psychosis (Recalcati, 1999) and describes it by means of the figure of thought of a three-legged stool that remain standing even if they lack something to support them. Also, he describes cases of what he terms 'suppléance' (replacement) of the foreclosed signifier, which can be real or imaginary elements that make up for the rent in the symbolic order and prevent the psychotic breakdown from happening. The sinthome is yet another possibility to conceptualise this, which according to Lacan and Soler, would be the case of Joyce's literary work. Therefore, another possibility to admit is that the author has achieved a stabilised (or sinthomatic) psychotic structure.

Summing up, authors who convincingly mimic psychosis may be the case of subjects with a psychotic structure who may have never experienced psychotic symptoms such as hallucinations and delusions. Yet, the fact that these authors have a psychotic structure would account for their very *linguistic possibility* to perform a convincing

mimesis of psychosis otherwise possible only by means of a stencil-like copy of the discourse of another psychotic subject. In this sense, the division of psychotic and non-psychotic authors itself ought to be qualified. Given that subjects may be structured psychotically without necessarily experiencing psychotic symptomatology (such as undergoing hallucinatory or delusional phenomena), *the distinction that could be made is between authors who write in a psychotic discursive style and those who do not*. Writing in a psychotic discursive style may be an indication of the author having a subjective psychotic structure. Nevertheless, the psychic structure of the author remains unknown and for the most part a hypothesis. Therefore, although it may contribute to the understanding of the work of literature, the psychic structure of the author is not a sufficiently unproblematic criterion to classify works of fiction as psychotic or nonpsychotic. In other words, a work of fiction is not necessarily psychotic or nonpsychotic due to the subjective structure (psychotic or otherwise) of its author.

### *Speaking and spoken author*

From the problem of distinguishing psychosis proper and mimesis of psychosis follows that of *linguistic agency*. To what extent is an author on command of language and to what extent language speaks through and by the author in a particular way? As discussed previously, Lacan (1955 - 1956) understands the Freudian unconscious as the extent to which language speaks through and by the subject escaping thus conscious will of meaning. In other words, the unconscious is the dimension of the subject as *spoken*. Taking into consideration the unconscious dimension thus understood is one of the contributions that psychoanalysis can offer to this and any discussion. Barthes' argument may be understood, for instance, as one of the

offshoots of this understanding the unconscious for the *speaking and spoken* dimensions of linguistic agency prevent us from being able to locate the absolute origin of a subject's voice and by consequence of any literary text.

The reason why we ought to consider an unconscious dimension in this analysis is the answer to the question "*why does the author write this, or in this way, given that he could write something else or write in a different way?*" or "*how can an author write in this way?*". Since authors can write about anything, and write in any way they *like* by means of the words they *choose*, why do they, then, chose *these* words, sentences, syntactic structures, locutions and not others? Further, beyond it being a matter of conscious (or even unconscious) choice of words or locutions, subjective structures - whether psychosis, neurosis or perversion- account for the form the subject inhabits and is inhabited by language given the way the symbolic law operates in each instance. Indeed, the question could be posed as how is the author spoken by the language that he chooses? This does not amount to asking how does language capture unwittingly the identity of the author, but with which fashion does language *speak*, how do words produce meaning; what are the author's words doing as words and how do they do it?

If we focus only on the extent to which an author is a *spoken author*, and the author in question writes similarly to the speech that characterises psychotic delusions and hallucinations, the author is likely to be considered psychotic because language would speak by and through him psychotically. An objection, however, against considering authors only as spoken authors is that the distinction between the two groups of authors (i.e. purposeful, consciously psychotic-writing authors, and psychotic authors proper) collapses. It would not be truly possible, under this view, to write in a psychotic

way purely consciously, purposefully and convincingly because the author would write in this way due to language speaking by and through in this way, in other words, the author would be indeed psychotic. This would consequently support the argument of authors who perform a mimesis of psychosis being psychotically structured qua subjects.

Therefore, if mimesis of psychotic speech were understood as the literary product of psychotic speech in the hands of a neurotic or perverse author (i.e. non-psychotic), mimesis of psychosis would be *stricto sensu* impossible. In the case of a purely spoken author, language would fully pre-exist and determine him; therefore there would be no true linguistic subjective agency possible. Authors would be avatars or embodiments of the symbolic order. Therefore, nonpsychotic authors who write psychotically would not exist as such, given that the autonomous and overdetermining aspect of language would speak these subjects in a psychotic way. In sum, if only the *spoken author* dimension is taken into consideration, every author who wrote psychotically would be psychotic and mimesis of psychosis would be impossible.

The complete opposite is also possible. Thinking about authors as purely speaking subjects, as *speaking authors* is also an alternative. In this sense, the author would be understood as a subject who is in full command of language, a truly autonomous linguistic agency. In other words, this would mean rejecting the existence of the unconscious altogether because all of language and its effects would be under the author's command. 'Accidental' linguistic phenomena like lapsus would never occur and the visible unwitting linguistic structure of symptoms, for instance, would not be plausible given that language would not be autonomous in any form whatsoever to act upon subjectivity. Albeit a counter-reading of whole philosophical schools and a

rejection of psychoanalysis altogether, the purely *speaking* dimension of the author would be possible to assert as the only one that mattered.

Nevertheless, this view on linguistic agency is naïve. As Judith Butler rightly affirms “the subject surely speaks, and there is no speaking without a subject, but the subject does not exercise sovereign power of what he says” (Butler, 1997, 35). This view is confirmed by reflection upon language made by authors of fiction such as Virginia Woolf when she writes that

“...words possess [a diabolical power] when they are not tapped out by a typewriter but come fresh from a human brain—the power that is to suggest the writer; his character; his appearance, his wife, his family, his house—even the cat on the hearthrug. Why words do this, how they do it, how to prevent them from doing it, nobody knows”. (Woolf, 1937, 202).

It seems reasonable to conclude that both dimensions, speaking and spoken coexist, presumably in constant tension. This tension is most visible in the absolute contingency of “*what will the subject say next*”. No one, not even the subject himself knows it fully. Nevertheless, the subject may stop speaking when he realises what he will say next. All sorts of tensions between the position of commanding and being under the command of language arise in the subject.

As explored previously, writing is the interface where knowledge will follow belatedly (in *après-coup*) (Rey, 1982). Therefore, due to this tension there is an irreducible measure of uncertainty about asserting whether any given subject is psychotic, neurotic or perverse – because what the subject will say next remains forever unknown. In other words, a structure can never be definite, it is always a to-be-defined.

This is especially visible in the case of a subject whose stabilised psychotic structure may seem a neurotic one until the psychotic breakdown occurs, if it were to occur at all, or until psychotic speech unfolded. Therefore, I agree with the Lacanian temporality of *après-coup* (Lacan, 1960). The psychic structure can only be conceptualised as something that *will have come to existence once it unfolds*; something never final, prone to resignification and, by necessity, likely to resignify everything that has been said up until now –momentarily– remaining true only whilst this *point de capiton* lasts. It follows from this that asserting that an author is psychotic or otherwise remains merely a *working hypothesis*.

#### Psychotic texts

Shifting the focus of enquiry from the author to the text itself leads us to being unable to distinguish the two groups of texts, psychotic-proper and the ones that perform a mimesis of psychosis. Unlike authors, the differentiation of texts that mimic psychosis and texts that are psychotic proper in fact resemble. If we consider a text that were psychotic-proper and a text that were a mimesis of psychosis, both would have identical features. The only objection to this idea is, indeed, irony (Felman, 1985). Nevertheless, if irony were there in a way that showed a dimension beyond the ‘flat presence of the psychotic text’, mimesis of psychosis would not be total in that case; would be dubious due to the ironic subterfuge.

If we take the case of neologistic words, for example, could we distinguish the cases of real neologisms and mimesis of neologisms? Or distinguish a disrupted syntax from the mimesis of a disrupted syntax? Arguably no, except for the cases of irony in which

they would be distinguishable. The flatness of the text can be understood as the text's inability *to lie* or *fake* its simply being-there. This is why both kinds of texts, the psychotic proper and the one performing a mimesis of psychosis, can be considered equal with the reservations mentioned. In this sense, herein lies a point of solid support for the answer to the question. If we consider the text in its own right and as its own universe (and except irony), if psychosis were found in the text, it would be undeniably there.

As explored before, it could be the case that a text may have psychotic and nonpsychotic parts. In this case, the analysis should consider the economy of the text in relation to its psychotic and nonpsychotic elements. If there were elements of the text that were psychotic, the text could either be considered as having moments of stabilisation and moments of outbreak but organised on the whole within a psychotic structure.

But, psychosis in the text, that is the presence of neologisms, interrupted phrases, disrupted syntax and so forth is not enough to consider a work of fiction psychotic altogether. There is, indeed, an operation of aggregation of all these elements. This aggregation, however, ought to be decisively more than the adding up of textual features that resemble psychotic phenomenological signs. Psychosis is understood by Lacan as a structure, that is, as having the properties that language as a system has (i.e. symbolic, imaginary and real dynamics). Were it not the case, Lacan would have conceptualised psychosis as a syndrome, that is, as a collection of symptoms that appear together. Following this, a sense of a psychotic economy must emanate from the text. Arguably, this sense of it being psychotic is akin to the effect of what Lacan tries to depict by means of a *knot* (Lacan 1975 – 1976), that is, a complex figure

that depicts a whole and that resists simple, non-multidimensional “imagarisations”. The togetherness of the strings, the being-tied, the whole of the knot being more than each of its strings is akin to the “sense of the whole literary work” being psychotic. Further, another way to recognise this economy is by means of contrast to non-psychotic texts. The reason for this lies in the dynamics of the symbolic and in particular of the letter.

### The letter

The letter is the most irreducible unit of the symbolic order, the most irreducible piece of symbolic code (Lacan, 1957). Two principles can be stated about the identity of the letter: *the letter* is not a *no-letter* and the letter is not the letter that it is not (i.e. the letter is the letter that it is). To exemplify, the letter ‘a’ is not a blank space but a letter, and it is also not the letter ‘b’ or any other than the letter ‘a’<sup>35</sup>.

As can be observed, these claims about the letter are somewhat tautological, in the negative and in relation to other letters or blank spaces. Therefore, they are weaker than positive affirmations that would refer to letters themselves. But why cannot this sort of affirmations be made? Why even at this most basic level of definition, is the letter defined in relation to other letters? Because only this relational status can be ascribed to the letter; not sounds, meaning or intrinsic rules of utilisation.

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<sup>35</sup> Derrida’s (1980) discussion and critique of the materiality, truth value and indivisibility that Lacan ascribes to the letter is of relevance here as well. Derrida’s criticisms, I argue, point to his disagreement with the value of truth (*verité*) of the symbolic and his awareness of the risk of dissemination of the symbolic. Therefore, in this specific instance he disagrees with the unconscious overdetermination of psychic life. Of course, Derrida’s philosophical positions are generally ambiguous and hyperbolic and therefore his opposition to this notion may not be total. Although relevant, this discussion is slightly adjacent to the current methodological discussion which, for all the reasons explained, subscribes to a Lacanian framework.

The letter acquires its never fully achieved identity in the dynamics of opposition to other letters (Lacan, 1957). We cannot even assert a principle of identity of a letter [t is t] because this in fact amounts to two letters - the second “t” is a repetition of the first one which makes it not the first one. In the words of Lacan “repetition of the symbolical sameness is impossible” (Lacan, 1970). Each of the t’s acquires inevitably its identity in relation to each other, being the second an iteration of the first. In other words, there is not an identity principle *strictly speaking* between them.<sup>36</sup>

In the same breath, we are obviously forced to recognise that if there were nothing *equal* being *repeated*, then we would not be able to recognise that both are the case of the letter ‘t’. Therefore, there is an element of sameness as well, otherwise the notion of *repetition* would be nonsensical. Therefore, there is repetition and difference in every iteration of a letter (Lacan, 1957; Derrida, 1967, 1978). It follows that the identity of the letter cannot only be an *in-itself*, it is also something *for and from-another*. These dynamics can be extrapolated to words, sentences, locutions, paragraphs and whole texts.

Given these features of the most basic symbolic unit, how can we understand the economy of the psychotic text and its context? Given what has been discussed in relation to the identity of the letter (and by extension of the whole of the symbolic order), ‘identity’ must come from the encounter with another symbolic entity. For instance, the sense of the psychotic economy of Schreber’s text can only be appreciated in comparison to other texts that are considered non-psychotic; or

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<sup>36</sup> The identity of the letter, in-itself *and* forcefully for and from-another, is yet another way to describe the synchronic and diachronic dimensions of the symbolic. The synchronic is the in-itself of the letter (atemporal, ever-present) and the diachronic is the for and from-another of the letter (temporal and therefore necessarily in an order of succession). t = t synchronically points to the sameness between two instances of the letter t, but diachronically t = t is an oxymoron.

perhaps by comparing it to other texts that are also considered psychotic and locating their similarities. However, the identity of the non-psychotic text against which the psychotic text may be compared is not in-itself given, it is also a product of its comparison with other texts (this, ad infinitum).

In this sense, it can be argued that no *definitive answer* about whether the text is psychotic or not can be derived from this comparison. The psychotic economy of the text is a sedimentation, a sort of sifting of the product of endless comparisons. Therefore, it is irreducibly indefinite. In other words, in each moment of comparison with other texts, a glimpse, an indefinite yet hinting kernel of identity is grasped – and immediately lost, so to say. This comparison is repeated asymptotically, therefore the process never achieves its objective of reaching a moment of full identity of the text, but approaches it ad infinitum in the illusion of getting closer, yet never being fully there<sup>37</sup>.

Context: comparing and contrasting

Given the tension between the in-itself and the for and from-another aspects of the letter's identity (and of the symbolic), no final identity is possible to achieve. However, the in-itself element of the letter generates contrast with other letters. The in-itself of the letter corresponds to that which repeats itself in the iterations of that 'same' letter. In this sense, something does reveal itself about the letter (and the text) in any moment of encounter with another letter (what was referred to as sedimentation) as the product of comparison and contrast, that is, repetition and difference. To exemplify: if we place

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<sup>37</sup> Arguably, this may be what Derrida means by *différance* understood as 'deferring' (Derrida, 1967).

an orange and a blue square alongside, the effect is that the colours become brighter because of their contrast, that is, their specific difference. So, because blue is not orange, we can distinguish them. But because blue is blue, orange becomes brighter (and vice versa). If blue were green, orange would not appear brighter but darker. Herein is the sediment of identity that we learn by means of difference and repetition. The sediment, nevertheless, remains as a comparison and contrast, for what would be the in-itself of the colour blue?

Similar dynamics one could argue being at play in and amongst letters. A sediment of identity can be glanced about a letter in this contrast, yet not to the point that we could define what each letter *is*. The same is true about the text. As explained before, the psychotic economy of a given text can only be appreciated by the process of sedimentation that results from comparisons and contrasts with other psychotic and nonpsychotic texts, yet not to the point that we can define anything all-encompassing and essential about psychotic texts that can *define* them or grant them a final, categorical, clear and distinct identity.

### Psychoanalysis as a context of psychotic literature

But a somewhat unique sedimentation of identity of literature occurs when compared and contrasted contextually with psychoanalysis. One of the particularities of psychoanalytic theory is that it can be understood as language about language<sup>38</sup>. It is discourse that takes discourse itself as its object of discourse. In other words, the

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<sup>38</sup> The impossibility of metalanguage, of ‘Other of the Other’ makes psychoanalysis endeavour so difficult. Psychoanalysis is discourse about discourse whilst knowing that discourse cannot transcend itself to speak about itself.

*aboutness* of psychoanalytic theory is discourse itself. This folding of a symbolic practice over the symbolic yields somewhat unique results. It aims to characterise and describe the dynamics of the symbolic (and of the imaginary and real by necessity) by means of the symbolic. For example, the fact that psychoanalytic interpretations, according to Lacan (1975 - 1976) and further explored by Miller (1986 – 1987), ought to be usages of language that produce an equivocal effect is a product of psychoanalysis being language about language, language therefore *used* differently. It amounts to employing language with a different purpose than “communication”; it is meant to interfere with language and alter the dynamics between symbolic, real and imaginary.

In this sense, psychoanalytic psychopathological theory aims to describe sedimentation. Describing psychosis means to describe the sedimentation of the ‘encounters’ (comparisons and contrasts) with the structure of psychosis, be it in the clinical or the literary. The sedimentation of psychosis may be taken as the description of the particular dynamics between the symbolic, the imaginary and the real proper of psychotic structures (or knots). This dynamics differ from that of the other structures and can be recognised, again, only in contrast to them. For example, it can be argued that the grammatical and syntactical structure of the discourse of an individual or text does not observe the symbolic law. In order to explain what not observing the symbolic law looks like (psychosis), one would have to explain what observing the symbolic law looks like (neurosis). The contrast, in sum, is inevitable and as such the only sediment of identity.

It is possible to conclude that the result of the contextual relation between psychoanalysis and psychosis yields a detailed, rich, yet never complete description

of psychosis. It provides a detailed enough description of the sedimentation of psychosis so as to be able to recognise it, even to get a glimpse of its *totality as a structure* and its *economy*, but will probably never offer a definition of its identity. Something analogous can be extrapolated about the attribution of a psychotic nature to a given work of literature.

### Psychotic texture

Arguably, the description of the sedimentation of symbolic, imaginary and real dynamics of psychosis can be mapped onto the texture of a work of literature. In case that such mapping were possible, then under this particular contextual relationship and circumstances, we gain evidence that may authorise us to call a work of literature, *psychotic*. This naming would be the signifying act by means of which, from the point of view of psychoanalysis, certain (psychotic) imaginary, symbolic and real dynamics can be recognised to be at play in the texture of a work of fiction *in contrast* to others in which these dynamics were absent.

But what exactly authorises this naming? What sort of sedimentation would be expected so that this naming would be possible and meaningful? These attributes can be located in what can be called the *texture* of the text. The word texture, in the context of literature, is defined by the Oxford Dictionary<sup>39</sup> as “the quality created by the combination of the different elements in a work of music or literature” (Dictionary, O.E. 2008). Its etymological origin is the Latin verb *texere* that means “to weave”.

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<sup>39</sup> The recourse to the Dictionary will be reflected upon in what follows.

Therefore, the texture of the text can be understood as the direction, patterns, ways of interconnectedness, juncture, disjuncture and, certainly, holes made by the threads in the fabric of the text. To observe the texture of the text would be almost, in this sense, to observe in a magnifying glass the strings that make up a piece of textile. The endeavour is not to define what each thread *is*, which is the in-itself of the text. In other words, it is not about saying that this or that thread *are* psychotic. The endeavour would be to describe the dynamics between strings in terms of their direction, position, combination, separation and wholes in relation to the piece of fabric as a whole. This dynamic can be called psychotic because of its features and the contrast it would produce against neurotic and perverse ones.

However, we may argue that different *readers* will find very different elements, or strings, that make up a text(ile). Therefore, each may describe the text as a piece of fabric that behaves in a different way than others would. This would subsequently difficult any generalisation about the makeup of the texture of psychotic texts. Herein, one may argue, we may find an irreducible measure of individual interpretation on whether the texture of any given text may or may be not considered psychotic.

Nevertheless, a description of the supposed psychotic fabric, or texture, is worth attempting. The reason behind this is that the form of psychoanalytic clinic that Lacan proposes, as it has been described in previous chapters, is descriptive but not prescriptive. In this sense, it would be possible to make generalisations of the composition and dynamics of the symbolic fabric - the texture - of psychotic literature without making any essentialist, prescriptive or violent judgements about the text or the author. The aim of such characterisation would be, as has been explained, to bring to light hitherto unthought textual dynamics of a given work of literature.

## Psychotic texture in detail

The texture of the text can be addressed and contrasted to other textures. In this sense, to assert that a given texture would be psychotic would not correspond to an assertion about the essential features (the in-itself) of the text but about the fashion of its weaving. The term psychotic, in this sense, would point to a form of weaving distinct from a neurotic or a perverse one. In Benvenuto and Kennedy's words:

“If we imagine common experience to be like a tissue...a piece of material made up of (...) threads, we could say that repression would figure in it as a rent or a tear, which nonetheless could still be repaired; while foreclosure would figure in it as a gap...due to the weaving itself, a *primal hole* which would *never again be able to find its substance since it would never have been anything other than the substance of a hole*, and could only be filled, and even then imperfectly, by a patch...” (Benvenuto & Kennedy, 1986, 153).

In this sense, to assert that any textual piece were psychotic, for instance, would necessitate a detailed observation of how signifiers link and around what do they organise themselves (i.e. identifying the hole around which they link). It would necessitate the observation of the text as a whole, indeed, of its weaving, rather than looking for discreet particular textual symptomatic evidences of it being psychotic. For example, it would not suffice to locate interruptions of phrases and neologisms to assert that the text may be psychotic. These should occupy, as well, a particular place and exert a function in relation to the text as a whole and be both the cause and the product of other phenomena.

The clear and distinct outline of the psychotic features that would map onto the texture of a given work of literature, of course, is not an easy endeavour. If one were to describe the texture of a particular work of literature in terms of, for example, Klein's paranoid-schizoid position (Klein, 1946), one would attempt to explain how partial persecutory objects would be conveyed in the written word, how does the structure of this psychic state of things is played out in the structure of a story. For instance, one could potentially map elements of the story of George Bataille's "Story of the Eye" (1928) onto partial objects, like eyes, faeces, cavernous places, and so on. Alternatively, symbolic<sup>40</sup> elements of a story like ideas, characters, situations or places may be mapped onto objects resulting in a Kleinian interpretation in which 'this' stands for 'that' *symbolically*.

But as discussed previously, Lacan not only made structural hypotheses about psychosis, that is, about the imaginary, symbolic and real features of it (Lacan, 1955 - 1956; 1975 - 1976). He also performed a *linguistic description* of hallucinations and delusions (Lacan, 1955; 1955 - 1956), that is an elucidation of the linguistic properties of some of the most prevalent psychotic symptoms. One of the things that would make a Lacanian approach to this kind of literary analysis unique would be the mapping of these features onto the texture of the literary piece and the elucidation of their subjective implications.

The wealth of observational material in Lacan's clinical trajectory, particularly his engagement with Schreber's Memoirs and Joyce's work are the main sources of his

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<sup>40</sup> Symbolic is meant here in the Kleinian use of the term 'symbolisation' rather than Lacan's use of the notion symbolic as a register.

assertions about the linguistic dynamics of psychosis. Lacan's early ideas on psychosis (1955-1956) provide a detailed description of such linguistic features.

As discussed in more detail in the first chapter, Lacan calls *message phenomena* the broken locutions that halt in the shifter of the phrase (or place of the pronoun) resulting in a subjective perplexity. Lacan describes this feature in the analysis of Schreber's auditory hallucinations (1955 - 1956), a female patient who comes back from the butcher and hears her neighbour calling her *sow* (1956) and Freud's account of paranoid deliria (1955 - 1956). On the other hand, *code phenomena* are locutions in which the signification of the communication is in fact a stencil-like depiction of the dynamics of the symbolic realm itself. For instance, Schreber's hallucinatory elements such as the rays of God or divine nerves (Lacan, 1955 - 1956). These amount respectively to the functioning of the signifier itself and are a depiction of the synchronic character of the Other.

Lacan describes as well an *abundance of neologistic words*. Neologisms in psychotic discourse acquire a weighty quality, over-meaningful and meaningless at the same time, for instance Schreber's "*nerveannexation*" (Lacan, 1955 - 1956) and other portmanteaux. This ambivalence in meaning as well as their entailing *subjective certainty* are the features which allow distinguishing a psychotic from a nonpsychotic neologism.

Apart from the stops in the shifter of phrases, *sudden stops of the metonymic flow of language* occur constantly, and they have a perplexing effect on subjectivity (Vanheule, 2011). Furthermore, psychotic subjects experience a sense of *alienation from language*. This amounts to an experience of language, words or the symbolic as being external to the subject with an invasive and alienating quality. The *parasitic*

character of the signifier is, following Lacan (1975 - 1976), true for all individuals. However, the psychotic subject experiences it without mediation. In this sense, Lacan asks about Joyce “why a normal man, a supposed normal man, does not realise that words (parole) are a parasite, that they are an inlay, they are a form of cancer of which human beings suffer. How is it possible that there are those who feel this? For sure, Joyce gives us a little clue” (Lacan, 1975 – 1976, 95). In this sense, an *objectification of language or reification of words* with a very particular flavour occurs. Psychotic speech employs words as if they were “objects”, that is, words undergo particular forms of grammatical declination, fusion, shattering, and so forth. But most importantly, arguably in psychosis *structural elements become experiential ones* in a phenomenon akin to Bion’s (1957) notion of bizarre object in which a part of the ego is projected and then perceived as a hallucination.

In Lacanian terms, in this kind of psychosis the subject is not only *speaking and spoken* but he is also *spoken-to*. In this sense, the symbolic addresses the psychotic subject perceptually, individually and especially. The auditory or any form of receptive symbolic function (or Lacan’s notion of partial object) of the subject becomes the receptacle for his own communications, resulting in a particular, often persecutory and perplexing effect on the subject (Lacan, 1955 - 1956).

When comparing a psychotic with a non-psychotic text, a *derailment of sense* may be immediately felt. The often expected, neurotic-like metonymic flow of signifiers does not occur as such. The signifier chain, unless stopped, flows not by a contiguity of meaning (*commonly called common sense, semantic closeness, association or logics*). The signifier chain flows in a dislocated fashion; gaps in meaning are evident, which may be compensated by *phonemic* contiguity of signifiers. Furthermore, when

neologisms are uttered or alterations of the syntactic structure of phrases and locutions occur, the meaning these convey is by necessity ambiguous or perplexing. Therefore, it can be argued, a psychotic symbolic system is such that the meaningful relations between words are, in this sense, indeterminate in terms of their meaning and more importantly determined by their *materiality*. Although this would hold true for the symbolic realm as such, in the case of psychosis this is all the more evident due to the otherwise *habitual* neurotic metonymic links between signifiers being interrupted or altered (i.e. the contrast with neurosis).

All these features can be ascribed to psychotic works of literature only when compared to other texts that are thought to be nonpsychotic even if mentally or non-explicitly. Describing the skeleton of the texture of a psychotic text in the above manner presupposes a dialectical recognition of psychosis and non-psychosis made by recurrent visitations to the psychotic and the non-psychotic phenomena as well as the notions that underpin this distinction.

The symbolic phallus: authority and individual interpretation

Ultimately, the distinction between psychosis and non-psychosis presupposes a decision underpinned by a sort of 'guarantee' upon which this distinction would rest. As discussed before, there is an irreducible element of interpretation (or *reading* in the case of the literary analysis) of the texture of psychosis and of what it consists. In this sense, psychotic features cannot be generalised without an obligatory acknowledgement of the limits to their universality, precisely, because they rely on an individual interpretation. However, the richness and unyielding ethical dimension of

such analysis, following the specificity of psychoanalysis' case-by-case methodology, lies precisely in its singularity.

One could argue, however, in favour of the universality of psychosis as a phenomenon as such. The proof of this universality is the autonomous grouping of its linguistic and extralinguistic features into *similar* discrete phenomenological happenings or manifestations. But even then, an irreducible element of individual interpretation in the act of *locating them there, and there, and there*, is nonetheless inescapable.

Beyond the richness and ethical dimension of the singularity of the case-by-case, this very fact reveals an important element at play in psychosis and the symbolic realm in general that is worthy of attention. One notes that there is almost a natural recourse to authority when trying to define or describe psychosis, specifically or in general. Not only one consults what authors have said or described about psychosis in general, its putative relation to reality, its transference features, and so on. There is as well a specific recourse to authority when describing, for example, the texture of psychosis in terms of syntax and grammar being altered. This assertion presupposes a "correct" and an "altered" syntax. What would be the measure of such "correctness"? The answer is: grammatical rules, that is, syntactic, morphological, semantic and phonological rules and their exceptions. These disciplines are the *sediment of linguistic authority* that consists of a collective agreement on them being the locus of the laws (or rules) of language. Felman argues in this sense that grammar is the epitome of *metalanguage* (1985), a linguistic position that would authoritatively locate itself above *all language*. In this sense appealing to 'syntactical *abnormalities*' in psychosis would seemingly rest upon metalanguage, on a sort of neurotic linguistic normativity. Arguably, a new language beyond neurosis, psychosis or perversion

would be needed to talk about them in a non-intrinsically *judgemental* way (like calling psychotic *syntax* incorrect or strange even if not meaning it in a derogatory form). Indeed, on the one hand this is the impossible metalanguage and on the other, paradoxically, psychosis is more closely in an interplay with linguistic novelty, invention, than the other two structures. Perhaps, admittedly, psychotic language comes across to a neurotic mind as invention and in fact for the psychotic subject there is nothing new at all about his language. This is, perhaps, the most pressing implication of conceptualising the structure thus and perhaps what guides Lacan's and other authors to use language differently to convey their ideas. Nevertheless, the kind of novelty of psychosis is a question that is present throughout this research and

Be that as it may it goes without saying that there is nothing of necessity or essential that makes any syntactical or grammatical rule a 'right rule'. In the same way, there is nothing of necessity that binds meaning to words. Grammatical rules as well as meaning bound to words are arbitrary, mere conventions. Nevertheless, we can recognise an "altered" syntax, and a meaningful, meaningless or out-of-meaning word. What supports this possibility of recognition? What supports the rules of language?

In his inquiry about language and truth, philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche asks

"what about these conventions of language? Are they really the products of knowledge, of the sense of truth? Do the designations and the things coincide? Is language the adequate expression of all realities?"

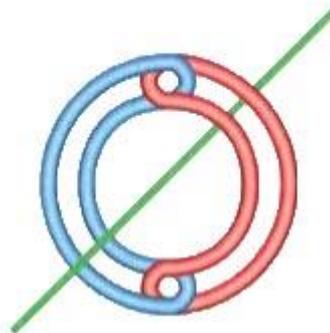
Only through forgetfulness can man ever achieve the illusion of possessing a "truth" in the sense just designated" (Nietzsche, 1873, 46).

Grammatical rules of language are supported by an analogous mechanism to what

Lacan describes in the Seminary XXIII as a “verification of a false hole” (1975 – 1976). In this example, which Lacan sets as the condition of possibility of the Borromean chain, he explains how pulling two strings in this way



creates a false hole, that is, the perception of a circle that actually does not correspond to the internal circumference of any of the two strings. Nevertheless, we perceive the hole. In the same measure, nothing of necessity makes any grammar correct, but we perceive it. Once an infinite straight line (or a third ring) goes through the false circle it becomes “true or verified” because then if the other two are let loose, that circle would remain, that is, the other two circles could not go back to their original position and the hitherto false circle would become a circle in its own right. Furthermore, the unverified circle becomes a Borromean knot.



Transformation of a false hole into a true one  
by adding an infinite straight line

Lacan explains that the tracing of that infinite straight line is analogous to the symbolic phallus and the unary-trace operation of the signifier - and the essence of the Borromean knot (Lacan, 1975 - 1976). This can be understood as a symbolic trace that once done becomes a point of reference for something previously inexistent. One can argue that the rules of language follow this mechanisms; they are arbitrary but once set, they confirm what hitherto was inexistent. In other words, they leave a trace or mark that even if made "after" x, it will thence become a precedent of x. It can be argued that there is nothing of necessity in these traces nor in the kind of proscription and prescription they set in spite of being, in many but certainly not all cases, consistent.

However, regardless of their necessity, rules of language are traces that operate on the subject as its being is tied up in language. The operation of the Name of the Father and its intimate relation to the phallus in neurosis and its foreclosure in psychosis is an explanation of why neurotic subjects live by the rules of language that the symbolic law imposes, whereas psychotic subjects live by the foreclosure of those rules.

Lacan (1958) explored in detail how the Name-of-the-Father, as explained before, is the symbolic locus of the symbolic law and the resulting operation of the symbolic phallus its offshoot. It follows that if in psychosis foreclosure is at play then the locus of the law lacks, as well as that veiled signifier (the symbolic phallus) that is its guarantee (and also the signifier of the lack of the Other) (Lacan, 1958). The linguistic "deformations" of psychosis are, therefore, interesting to examine under this light. The indetermination of syntactic relations in psychosis may be understood as the effect of the foreclosure of the Name-of-the-Father. Not only logical and syntactical rules often lack in psychotic speech, but also the very syntactic identity of words. This is evident

in the case of neologisms whose syntactic place (noun, verb, adjective, adverb, etc.) cannot be determined nor inferred. The non-operation of the Laws of language<sup>41</sup> (syntactic and semantic) can be, arguably, understood as the result of the absence of a specific unary trace. In other words, the contingent symbolic point of reference that ought to leave that trace is absent, as is the mark in subjectivity that it would have left. In this sense, a claim to authority is perhaps inescapable, irreducible, when trying to locate psychosis in a work of literature. Given what has been argued in relation to the context, to designate psychosis means to designate what is not neurosis or perversion. Therefore, in order to characterise psychotic speech, one has to point out what it lacks in relation to neurotic or perverse speech, namely a set of grammatical and syntactic rules that, albeit contingent, operate as if were necessary.

Under the light of the contingent (i.e. not necessary) relation between words and meaning, what would it mean to *call* a work of literature *'psychotic'*? If the notion of 'psychosis' is a particular structure, that is, an imaginary, symbolic and real state of things entailing certain dynamics, what of necessity binds the term 'psychosis' to the state of things it names? The answer is: nothing of necessity. In spite of any detailed description of the mechanisms that the term "psychosis" would point to, and a detailed description of the phenomenon, still, what binds the signifying act of description to the linguistic phenomenon in question? The answer is, yet again, nothing of necessity. Therefore, anything said or written about psychosis, in this specific sense, should be

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<sup>41</sup> Using the words 'non-operation of the laws of language' is a convoluted speech form resulting from wanting to 'speak neutrally about psychosis' but utterly failing given I cannot transcend (neurotic) language and therefore I speak from within it. Why would the rules of language *not operate*? Does psychosis as a structure *lacks* anything or is it that the neurotic *majority rules* and therefore this is *widely accepted*? If so, speaking about psychosis in this way amounts to giving into normativity without questioning it and is this not undesirable?

taken simply as a verification of a false hole, namely an unwarranted symbolic mark that might, however, tie a new Borromean knot. It is in this specific sense, the tying of a new Borromean knot where hitherto the rings were untied, might be a worthwhile act of naming.

## Discussion

Exploring the conditions of possibility of understanding a work of literature as psychotic has yielded interesting outcomes. Firstly, it is clear that an irreducible measure of interpretation, or subjective judgement, traverses the endeavour throughout. Given the intrinsic singular and subjective character of interpretation, there is an insurmountable limit when it comes to generalising features of psychosis or making universal claims about it. In this sense, assertions about a work of literature being psychotic ought to be qualified in the particular as well as the conditions under which such assertion has been made. Given that subjectivity and singularity are inescapable in this sense, objectivity and universality become therefore strictly speaking impossible. In other words, any assertion about 'works of literature having this or that property' may be taken under the light of this limitation.

But herein lies as well the strength of this kind of literary analysis. Akin to clinical psychoanalysis, a psychoanalytic literary analysis that aims to look at the texture of a given work of fiction ought to follow a bespoke process and produce unique results in each case. The psychoanalytic bet on subjectivity and, in this case, specificity of each work of literature opposes the discourse of quantification, serialisation, automatisisation and the resulting alienation of the subject into the mass or the trend. This stance has

political, ethical, clinical and literary implications that could be approached by their strengths or weaknesses. In the case of the literary, it may be difficult to delineate literary trends or movements of psychotic literature as this would, perhaps, suppress the specificity of the case-by-case analysis. But on the other hand, it may offer a truly specific analysis of the work of literature and it would, consequently, become the condition of possibility of new Borromean knots. In other words, the analysis itself as a work of psychoanalytic interpretation would bring to light the forms in which the imaginary, symbolic and real dimensions of the work may operate, as well as offer new possible understandings of the way its unknotted dimensions may rest untied, thereby perhaps creating a new tied knot.

However, as discussed in relation to the dynamics of repetition, despite the uniqueness and singularity in which psychosis would unfold in each literary work, a sediment of identity would indeed repeat itself each time. Hence, it is justified to set forth general principles that can account for the structural dynamics of psychosis in the literary as long as their spirit is, like the rest of Lacanian theory, limited and infinite.

Exploring the figures of thought of the author and text served as the basis to assess whether any of these can provide solid support for the assertion of a work of fiction being psychotic. Understanding the author either as psychotic or nonpsychotic based on biographical information has direct consequences on the understanding of the text, for this determines whether the text is psychotic speech proper or a mimesis of psychotic speech. The opposite focus, as discussed, does not yield the same results. If we take the text as the focal point of the analysis, a psychotic text proper and a mimesis of a psychotic text would be identical – in both cases psychotic-like speech would be present with the exception of irony as I have outlined it. Therefore, focusing

on the text rather than the author seems the best decision – given it would enrich the analysis of the work of literature in question, and given there is little to be ‘clinically’ said about the author. This analysis may be complemented by biographical facts about the author, however, were they enriching of the analysis.

This viewpoint is, nevertheless, problematic when confronted with the speaking and spoken subject notions. The focal point of the analysis is the text and not the author. But there is a need to locate as well a speaking subject so that the analysis can be performed. Seemingly, this would pull back the focus back onto the author, as he would be, strictly speaking, the speaking and spoken (although not necessarily spoken-to) subject. Nevertheless, Barthes’ viewpoint, strengthened by Woolf’s reflection on words, is precisely that the voices of the text and the author are indistinguishable. This point can be summarised by the question who speaks in the text? This point, of extreme importance, is one of the objects of inquiry of the following chapter in which I explain why the focus of analysis are the narrator, characters and objects in the text, that is, the speaking subjects *within the text*.

As discussed in the last section of this chapter, calling a work of fiction psychotic means to designate that certain imaginary, real and dynamics that characterise psychosis are at play in its economy. Calling it thus, however, is but an unwarranted symbolic mark; an infinite straight line that confirms a false hole. In other words, it may serve as a precedent to think about the work of literature thus and give it a new form of unity, of being-knotted in a hitherto unthought-of fashion. Under this light, can anything be concluded about the methodological proceedings of asserting that a work of literature is psychotic? It can be argued that the first point of support for such assertion is the whole of the literary work in question conveying a sense of psychosis

greater than its parts. As explained before, this is akin to the operation of knotting used by Lacan when conveying subjective structures (of neurosis, psychosis and perversion). Every element or ring that makes up the knot contributes to the understanding, even depicting of a complex phenomenon (such as subjectivity or psychosis). But the whole of the knot, the *knotting* is greater than each of the strings which, however, it cannot do without. Similarly, the wholeness that a work of literature conveys rather than the aggregation of its features may be the strongest point of support for this assertion.

The literary features that will call the attention of the analysis in the first place are the linguistic features of the text. The focal point of the analysis, as concluded above, is the text given its inability to 'fake' by itself its psychotic speech. If the mapping of psychotic linguistic features onto the texture of the work of literature were possible, this would give a strong enough indication of psychosis in the text. Similarly, the three elements explored in this chapter, namely author, text and context may be dialectically, or in the form of a tripartite knot, linked in a form that may support the hypothesis of the work of fiction being psychotic.

The comparison and contrast of the text with its context, both textual and non-textual may be also serve to locate psychosis in the text, given that, as I have pointed out, it is by contrast that psychosis can be understood (i.e. as non-neurotic and non-perverse). What may have been considered psychotic in a given context, may be considered neurotic or perverse in a different one. Certain linguistic features of the text may be psychotic in a given language, culture, literary epoch, etc., whilst in others they may be considered differently. In this sense, the text may be the point of departure, but certainly not the limit of the analysis. The tackling of any conceptual structure,

understood as a knot, implies by necessity beginning by one string. But the knot is the effect of the encounter of all the strings, not the product of any of them solely. It is a form of being that depends on each of them, affects them reciprocally and determines a state of unity that is greater than their sum.

The following chapter is an exploration of more practical methodological issues. Given what has been discussed in this chapter in addition to psychoanalytic theory of psychosis and psychoanalytic-literary analysis theory, the question can be posed around the best methodology for this research. Further, this question of methodology is closely followed and determined by a question about operationalisation of certain features of the text (i.e. its radicalness) so that the literary analysis becomes feasible. I will discuss these questions in the following chapter.

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## Chapter 5

### Methodological Considerations II

#### Literary Analysis

##### Introduction

One of the questions I seek to answer in this research is whether psychotic phenomena of language akin to those Lacan described in the seminar III and XXIII replicate in works of fiction. This question belongs subordinately to a more general question of this research, namely what does it mean to understand a work of literature as psychotic. The literary analysis that will serve as a means to answer these questions, nevertheless, poses methodological questions that must be addressed as well.

Lacan's theory of psychosis was not elaborated for the purposes of literary analysis and was importantly informed by clinical work. The closeness of literature to the topic in Lacan's early and late work on psychosis (i.e. Lacan's dialogue with Schreber's *Memoirs* and Joyce's work), nevertheless opens almost a natural correspondence between psychosis and literature within the domain of psychoanalysis. A psychoanalytic analysis of literature, however, poses methodological conundrums, namely who speaks in or from a text of literature? What is the task and place of the *reader as analyst*? How can psychoanalytic principles conceived to operate in a clinical setting originally be applied onto literary analysis? Answering these questions is the focus of the present chapter.

I have described in the previous chapter a feature of the text that I called “the flatness of the text”, that is, the inability of the text to fake or mimic itself, with the exception of irony as discussed. However, risking to state the obvious, it is clear that a text cannot utter a lapsus, for instance, which is to say no truly unconscious dimension can emerge from the text. In other words, the text is strictly speaking unanalysable. However, that very flatness conceals in its very surface dynamics that are of course very complex and multidimensional, but revealing of the dynamics of language in its autonomy. Meaning and texture however “flat” open far more dimensions than those I can account for. Describing some of these dimensions and likening them to psychotic phenomena as Lacan described them is a general description of a part of the analysis that can be performed on the text.

In order to do so the coordinates within which this analysis will operate must be defined. In this chapter I first define who are the “analyst” and “analysand” and upon what exactly will interpretations of the analyst be formulated. I therefore explain the reasons why I claim the reader-analyst advances interpretations over *the text*. I explain that interpretations must not focus on the psychic makeup of the author, but on the speaking agencies within the text and the dynamics of language in the text as a whole. These two dimensions, I argue, correspond to the *speaking* and *spoken* dimensions of language that characterise the Freudian unconscious following Lacan (1960).

Furthermore, in this chapter I aim to formalise and to an extent operationalise some of the notions that Lacan advanced apropos psychotic radical relation to language. This rests upon the need to adapt some of Lacan’s ideas about psychosis to practical principles that serve the purposes of literary analysis. Therefore, I will resort to the notion of performativity, stemming from John Austin’s illocutionary speech act theory,

which I argue, renders the notion of *radicalness of language* applicable to literary analysis.

The last part of this chapter examines the specific structure and sections of the literary analysis. I argue that a tripartite structure in which a summary of the text, a phenomenological reading and a psychoanalytic reading proper is the most suitable for these purposes. Whilst the reasons behind the first and third sections are somewhat obvious, my discussion dwells on the rationale behind the phenomenological reading in particular. This section provides the necessary space for the reader-analyst to unfold his thoughts, experience and understanding of his particular encounter with the text as it appears for him. This is underpinned by considerations around the particular place of the reader in relation to the text. On the one hand, as analyst and on the other as under the mastery exerted by the text over him. The text is, arguably, simultaneously an object of analysis, a transference text-supposed-to-know and an imaginary object of his projection and fantasy.

### Subject and object of analysis

Advancing a psychoanalytic analysis of a literary work of fiction implies locating what can be called an '*object of interpretation*' over which interpretations ought be formulated. Consequently, this implies locating a '*speaking subject*' and an '*analyst*'. The reason for this is that the psychoanalytic model presupposes a speaking subject<sup>42</sup> whose free associations the analyst ought to listen so that the speaking subject may,

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<sup>42</sup> (Hopper, et. al 2012) Group analysis presupposes, as well, a group of speaking subjects, albeit conceptualised as a matrix.

in various forms and with different consequences, encounter his own spoken subject or unconscious dimension.

Freud (1938) defined the coordinates of the analytic endeavour within the limits of free association of the analysand in the context of transference, listened by the analyst in a free-floating attention manner. Associations, formations of the unconscious (i.e. dreams, symptoms, lapsus, parapraxes and jokes) as well as transferential enactments unfold throughout the sessions and give the analyst access to the unconscious dimension of the analysand. Interpretations and constructions would be, in this sense, the communication of this material to the analysand with the purpose of bringing to consciousness the unconscious, or ego where hitherto id was, and so forth (Freud, 1923; 1937).

Lacan's clinical coordinates followed the Freudian model, but gradually drifted away from it in terms of technique. The evolution of Lacan's psychoanalytic model is underpinned by the evolution of his ideas on what generically can be termed 'psychic conflict' as well as the reasons for the efficacy of interpretation, which also evolved throughout his work (Roudinesco, 1997). This is clearly visible, for instance, in the shift of his ideas from the symptom in the Seminar III (1955 – 1956) to the *sinthome* in the Seminar XXIII (1975 – 1976). Lacan shifted from understanding the symptom as a ciphered or coded message (Lacan, 1955 – 1956) to the *sinthome*, a subjective mode of *jouissance* and a wholesome apprehension of psychic reality (Lacan, 1975 – 1976; Vanheule, 2011). It follows that deciphering the symptom as a coded message entails decoding its metaphoric structure, understood by Lacan at the time mostly as a symbolic and imaginary entity (Lacan, 1955 – 1956; Miller, 1986 – 1987, Soler, 2004). An interpretation that ought to touch upon the *sinthome*, on the other hand, is one that

should produce a shift in the subject's mode of jouissance. Hence Lacan's technique of using equivocal forms of the analysand's own speech (*l'équivoque*) (Miller, 1986 - 1987). This technique relies on the materiality of the letter rather than its signification effects. In other words, it relies on the *real* dimension of speech – the same dimension Lacan attributed to jouissance. Decoding a ciphered message and relying on equivocal forms are different analytical techniques that pursue different objectives of analysis (termed by Lacan 'directions of the cure' [Lacan, 1958]).

In the case of a psychoanalytic analysis of a work of literature, however, from the outset the polar setting analyst - analysand is problematic. Therefore, applying a stencil of any strictly psychoanalytic model of interpretation to a work of literature is problematic as well. To wit, who are the speaker and listener in that situation? Over what should the literary analysis operate and whom should it address?

Freud and Lacan relied on various forms of literature to advance psychoanalytical ideas, exemplify certain psychic phenomena, in short, name psychoanalysis. Paradigmatically, Freud and Lacan approached Schreber's *Memoirs* (1903) as a reliable self-report of his mental illness. Based on Schreber's writing, they formulated an analysis of Schreber's psychic makeup and explained the psychotic mechanisms at play in Schreber's experience (Freud, 1910; Lacan, 1955 – 1956, 1955). They worked on Schreber's *Memoirs* in a form akin to a clinical case.

Lacan, on his part, undertook a different kind of analysis on James Joyce's writing. Unlike Schreber's, Joyce's writing is not an autobiographical account but fiction<sup>43</sup>. Yet, Joyce's style of writing seemed sufficient for Lacan to hypothesise certain

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<sup>43</sup> Although strictly speaking fictional, 'A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man' may be thought highly autobiographical.

mechanisms of Joyce's psyche. However, Lacan's aim was not entirely to 'analyse' Joyce. Lacan's objective was according to Miller, to "...formulate this interference [of sense and jouissance] in order to question psychoanalysis in the field of language from the written" (Miller, 1996). In other words, Miller explains that Lacan did not intend an analysis of Joyce qua subject, but contribute to the psychoanalytical theoretical corpus, especially on the point of convergence of jouissance (real) and sense (imaginary and symbolic) from the point of view of the lettre<sup>44</sup>.

However, Lacan did pose the question of whether Joyce was mad. He also stated that the paternal question is all over *Ulysses* (Joyce, 1928) and suggested that the history of psychosis in Joyce's family may be an indication of Joyce's own psychosis (Lacan, 1975 – 1976). In this sense, Lacan did formulate analytical hypotheses about James Joyce as a subject, even if to a lesser degree than Schreber. Soler (2004) on her part, for instance, categorically assumes that James Joyce was psychotic and that the making of his own name, particularly in "A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man" (Joyce, 1916) was aimed at achieving a *suppléance* - an identity qua subject - that stabilised his psychotic structure.

What can be sifted of Freud and Lacan's approach and applied to a psychoanalytical model of literary analysis is that they were analysts/readers and they focused on Joyce and Schreber's texts as their *object of interpretation*. They used the text as the material upon which analytical hypotheses were formulated about Schreber and Joyce qua

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<sup>44</sup> In *Télévision* (1974), Lacan coined the term "jouis-sense", a homophonous term to "jouissance" but written differently. *Jouis sense* means to *enjoy the sense or meaning* and jouissance is usually translated as enjoyment. Enjoying the sense highlights two dimensions: meaning and enjoyment by means of an equivocal. The equivocal, precisely, highlights the disjunction between the symbolic, imaginary and real orders, which is visible only in the *written* form. Joyce's form of writing interested Lacan, precisely, because it played upon the disjunction of the written and sound.

subjects. This presupposes that the author is implied, represented qua subject in the literary text, in line with Harari's thought when he asserts that "of course, in my view a literary creation is potentially just as metaphorical as a symptom" (Harari, 1995, 73).

Notwithstanding, Barthes asserted that in the particular case of literature, "the voice [of the author] loses its origin, the author enters his own death, writing begins" (Barthes, 1977, 145). The Barthesian 'death of the author' stresses the extent to which he who writes is not the origin of literature qua subject, but also that he who writes is spoken by and through language and is not strictly in command of it. This can be understood in two ways, on the one hand if the author is spoken by and through language, there is an unconscious dimension about the author and therefore analytical hypotheses about him qua subject may be advanced. On the other hand, if the voice in the text is not *stricto sensu* the voice of the author, analytical hypotheses may not relate to the author qua subject but to the lost origin of his voice, which is nonsensical to analyse qua subject. Herein lies a methodological conundrum, for the psychoanalytic method necessitates, as explained, a speaking subject and an analyst. The question is, therefore, if not the author, who speaks?

It could be argued that in order to test whether Lacan's ideas on the configuration of symbolic, imaginary and real in psychosis replicate in works of fiction, one would have to keep Lacan's implicit presuppositions about the roles of the text, author and reader. In other words, one seems forced to frame the analysis on the author as a speaking subject and the text as 'associative material'. This, however, does not converge entirely with the method of literary analysis intended in the present research because the objective is not to make clinical hypotheses about the author qua subject. Furthermore, very little can be affirmed - even hypothesised - about an author qua

subject given that fiction is not *stricto sensu* associative material or a formation of the unconscious, and the “author/analysand” is not in a transferential relation with the reader/analyst<sup>45</sup>. On that specific understanding of the metaphoric role of fiction, I disagree with Harari’s stance.

There is, therefore, a need to focus on the subject and of analysis otherwise. The alternative ought to preserve the notions of speaking and spoken subject, that is, of linguistic agency *and* overdetermination of the subject by language, as well as the autonomy of language itself qua object of scrutiny. As I have argued, the objective of the literary analysis is not to advance clinical hypotheses about the psychic reality or makeup of the author qua subject, but to contribute with possible alternative understandings of the work of literature qua artefact using psychoanalytic principles<sup>46</sup>.

### The Subject of the Literary Analysis

As argued, a psychoanalytic literary analysis must locate a speaking subject. As explored before, the act of speaking occurs in the interface of the ego, the Other and the subject (Lacan, 1955 - 1956). The schema Z, discussed in the first chapter, depicts how signification is produced by the ego and is therefore imaginary, as Lacan points out “the subject speaks himself *with* his ego (moi)” (Lacan, 1955-1956, 26). The subject, a letter S in the schema (the sound of S being the word for Id in German) is the dimension that escapes linguistic agency. That is why Lacan insistently claimed ‘ça parle’, that is, *it or Id speaks*. Elsewhere, Lacan defined the signifier as that which

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<sup>45</sup> Although the reader may very well establish a relation with an author in which the latter becomes an object of fantasy of sorts.

<sup>46</sup> In the previous chapter, the methodological as well as theoretical stances that underpin this claim were discussed in greater depth.

represents a subject for another signifier (Lacan, 1976) and in an earlier text (1960), he described what he called the “evanescence” of the subject as the subjective form of being in-between signifiers. From these points we can infer that according to Lacan the subject is an effect of language and not its agency; the ego, on the other hand, is the linguistic agency that says “I” and with which the subject speaks himself<sup>47</sup>.

Considering the previous conclusions about author and text, and what has been argued about the text not being strictly speaking associative material nor a formation of the unconscious of the author, I argue that the speaking subject of the literary analysis must be located within the text and not in any heterogeneous space to it<sup>48</sup>. Therefore, the subject as an effect of language and the ego that speaks ought to be located within the text, which in turn follows Barthes’ thesis of the death of the author and preserves the literary work’s autonomy qua artefact. Narrators, characters and objects that may speak in the literary work are, therefore, to be understood as speaking egos, and their subjectivity may lie in their evanescent presence between signifiers which qua egos they speak. A relationship between these and the author qua subject may lend itself to analytical interpretation but, as has been argued, cannot be inferred solely by the reading of the literary work and remains largely a hypothesis in the hands of the reader.

Given the specificity of the literary analysis, the dynamics of the speaking ego and the subject in the text ought to follow the dynamics described by Lacan in his theory of

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<sup>47</sup> Although it is nonetheless true that often the term ‘subject’ is interchangeable with ‘analysand’ as it refers to “the individual”.

<sup>48</sup> This holds even if the limits of the text are undrawable and therefore the subject which implicates in it is strictly speaking not heterogeneous to it in this sense. What I mean by this claim is that the subject implicated in the text ought to be in the readable dimension of the text and not in the supposed-to-know ‘transcendental subjectivity’ or biography of the author - which is a very different text.

psychosis. Arguably, the textual features of the work in question may reveal such dynamics and allow the reader to advance hypotheses about the imaginary and symbolic dynamics at play in the literary work stemming from the act of speaking by the ego and the subject which it produces.

Furthermore, Lacan's indication about psychosis comprising a radical relation to the signifier leads us to hypothesise that further to the imaginary and symbolic dynamics that the dimensions of the *ego* and *the subject* may reveal, the form in which this radical relation may unfold should reveal the psychotic dimension of the text qua autonomous entity. In other words, the 'analysand' of this literary analysis is not only the speaking ego (i.e. characters, objects, narrators) and the subject product of their discourse, but language itself as it manifests in the work of literature as a whole and the forms in which it may radically *speak itself*.

Lacan's characterisation of psychotic language (Lacan, 1955 - 1956; 1955) has several instances in which it appears autonymic. Furthermore, it features several instances of what I have called 'transpositions', that is, of entities occupying a place that is not their 'normally' (i.e. neurotically) expected one (e.g. the signifier in the real or the unmediated signifier in signification). These features, I argue, are visible in a work of fiction as instances of *language speaking itself* or *language performing its aboutness*.

### Performativity and the Object of Analysis

The notion of illocutionary speech act, more specifically of performativity, is a fruitful way to formalise the somewhat obscure affirmation of *language speaking itself* that I

argue characterises psychotic language. J. L. Austin's *How to Do Things with Words* (1955) is a stern linguistic philosophical work that interrogates how specific instances of language perform actions that may be immanent to language or reach beyond it. The notions of linguistic agency, linguistic act, linguistic context, linguistic consequence, transitivity or intransitivity are integral to this theory. Performativity has been widely discussed in analytical and continental philosophy and some of the notions advanced by Austin and further developed by Judith Butler, may aid us to understand what *language speaking itself* may mean.

The question of performativity, in particular of the speech acts that Austin calls illocutionary, highlights the autonomy of language and of the symbolic order in the most palpable form. In Judith Butler's words, "Austin poses the question of performativity as what it means to say that 'things might be done with words' (...) What does it mean for a word not only to name, but also in some sense to perform, and in particular, to perform what it names?" (Butler, 1997, 43). Further on, Butler explains that "the meaning of a performative speech act is to be found in this apparent coincidence of signifying and enacting" (Butler, 1997, 44). In this sense, some paradigmatic examples of illocutionary speech acts or performatives are thanking, blessing, promising, forgiving, confessing, and so forth. In these instances, utterance and action correspond to each other. For example, to promise is to utter "I promise" and the utterance itself is the act that it names – to promise. Performatives have no 'truth' value, that is, a performative cannot strictly be true or false, but they have what Austin (1955) terms illocutionary force, what we may venture to call the extent of their efficacy.

In this sense, the *substance* of illocutionary acts is purely linguistic, that is, they exist within speech only. They have, of course, consequences beyond speech, largely intersubjective consequences. In other words, speech acts exist purely linguistically but bind the subject in specific ways within a social exchange with another subject. In a similar measure, psychotic linguistic elements, such as autonymic neologisms or Joyce's "epiphanies as texts that are but speech debris" (Soler, 2004, 102) might be said to be purely symbolic. Their imaginary correlate is identical to their symbolic structure (in detriment of the signification they produce) and are largely outside any form of social exchange or social link (Soler, 2004). In this sense, something is similar between the structure of illocutionary speech acts and some psychotic linguistic elements. Being external to a *social link* is how Soler qualifies *meaningless* language proper of psychosis. The reintroduction to the *social link* (like Joyce's reintroduction of his discursive debris into literature) is yet another way to characterise Joyce's *sinthome*, or the *sinthome* in general.

Therefore, one of the main differences between illocutionary speech acts and these psychotic linguistic elements is that the former are within a social link whereas the latter are not. The signification of illocutionary speech acts is given by the social function they produce, had they not any social function they would be, like psychotic language, symbolic debris, identical to themselves and without signification for another subject (i.e. outside any social link). For example, were there no notion of *the other* to whom one would promise to act in one way or another, and no notion of what promising consists of (largely given by the social link in which this act is embedded) saying "I promise" would be but an autonym in that word would be sound and sound would be word - only.

Exploring illocutionary speech acts and psychotic linguistic phenomena from the point of view of their similarities, however, proves more fruitful. The convergence of signifier and signified in the case of illocutionary speech acts - the measure in which name is act and act is name - serves to exemplify the correspondence of symbolic and imaginary in psychosis. To wit, illocutionary speech acts are word-acts within intersubjective meaning; psychotic linguistic phenomena (autonyms, neologisms) are word-things without intersubjective meaning. The similarity between these two linguistic entities, I argue, lies the transposition of elements heteronomous to language (i.e. acts and things) into the realm of language. Conversely, language exerts henceforth, especially in psychosis, a *non-purely symbolic function*, that is, it exerts the roles of acts and things for the subject.

Specifically *psychotic* transpositions of this sort are different to *neurotic* ones. Words being acts are 'business as usual' for neurotics. Furthermore, there are plenty of cases of *neurotic* transpositions: Freud's notion of *displacement* (Freud, 1915; Lacan, 1961) in which signifiers substitute other signifiers. Another example is the hysteric phenomenon described by psychoanalyst Juan Nasio in which sexuality is displaced from the genital imaginary object into the rest of the imaginary body (thereby sexuality getting displaced from genitality and eroticising everything else) (Nasio, 1990). These would be neurotic cases of displacement, *neurotic transpositions*. Arguably, transpositions such as the ones I aim to characterise about psychosis and illocutionary speech acts occur across *registers*, not within them, which grants them their radical quality.

Lacan's assertion of psychosis being the most *radical* form of relation between man and signifier (1955 – 1956), aimed to capture the phenomenon of the imaginary – as

a register – being identical to, that is, performing the symbolic. As explained previously, Schreber’s divine rays or nerves of God are, according to Lacan, a stencil copy of the structure of the symbolic, which appear to Schreber without mediation. This stencil copy-like form of operation, unlike a metaphoric or metonymic form of operation of the symbolic, is what characterises psychosis and it is an example of the imaginary performing the symbolic, that is both registers coinciding. The way Schreber *wrote* is akin to the way he hallucinated or became delusional. His text has moments in which the flavour is delusional, in this sense the text itself performs its meaning, its aboutness.

A conservative take on Lacan’s assertions, however, would be to state that unlike the traditional notion of illocutionary speech acts, in psychosis the imaginary *is not* the symbolic - the extent to which they are different would make of their homogeneity *radical*, precisely because they are different. Illocutionary speech acts, on the other hand, are words *and simultaneously* the actions they name; let us say, signifiers are the very performance of their meaning. Notwithstanding, Lacan states that

Freud himself remarked this, and in a certain way it confirms the homogeneity that I am positing now. Freud noted at the end of the Schreber case that he had never seen anything that resembles so much his theory of libido than Schreber’s theory of the divine rays with their disinvestments, separation reactions and long-distance influences. All of Freud’s analysis of Schreber’s delirium shows a surprising approximation to the inter-individual exchange structures as well as to the intra-psychic economy (Lacan, 1955 – 1956, 36).

In this sense, Lacan goes as far as asserting the homogeneity between signifier and meaning. Schreber’s “access” to the “structure of libido” (or of the symbolic order itself)

as well as Joyce's perception of the 'parasitic character of language' would lend themselves to a less conservative reading than the aforementioned. In this reading, imaginary and symbolic would be in fact homogenous and, therefore, psychosis could be likened to performativity in a much more emphatic way. In other words, in this reading the symbolic *is* imaginary in a similar measure as words *are* actions in the case of illocutionary speech acts.

Much later in his work, (1975 – 1976), Lacan insisted on this homogeneity characterising paranoia as a trefoil knot. I presume he meant to underscore that paranoia occupies that tension between registers being necessarily and at once *different* but *homogeneous*, a threefold and unique line that constitutes a knot. They must be heterogeneous to the extent that otherwise their difference becomes unthinkable, but they need to be homogenous to the extent that *transpositions of elements* can effectively occur and therefore logically one register is the other two and vice versa.



Trefoil knot

I argue that the homogeneity of registers in the literary can be understood as the coinciding of the registers with each other, that is, the *texture* coinciding with *signification*. These *moments* of the text can be posited as akin to the coincidence of *word* and *action* proper of illocutionary speech acts and are what before I called *the*

*text speaking itself*. Therefore, and in order to formalise this feature of psychotic text, it can be understood as the ability of the text to *perform its aboutness*. This is, more precisely, how in literature the feature of psychotic language *speaking itself* may be visible for the reader. In this dynamics, the materiality of the text at the level of the lettre and signifier *does* what the signification of the text *points to or is about*.

However, psychotic textual features and illocutionary speech acts cannot always be likened for not every instance of the text performing its aboutness is autonymic nor has an autonymic flavour. Words being *precisely and exactly* identical to the action they name is the particularity of illocutionary speech acts, which does not always replicate in the case of a text performing its aboutness. Therefore, there are cases in which a psychotic text may perform its aboutness without being autonymic and therefore the notion of performative (in the sense of illocutionary speech acts) is not a perfect analogy for this phenomenon. To illustrate this difference, we may think of an apology (i.e. to say 'I apologise') being identical to the act of 'apologising'. On the other hand, the following excerpt of Pablo Palacio's 1926 short story "Lateral Light" is not a broken instance of the words 'broken passage' or "broken language"; like Schreber's rays and nerves, that is, they are not autonyms. Nevertheless its *aboutness*, its *meaning* can be said to be broken language, particularly because of the role it plays within the context in which it is written. In other words, the thing named is not identical to the words naming it, but words do perform their aboutness nevertheless:

HEIGHT &  
SHAPE & GA  
RB OF THE H  
EST VIRGIN A  
CCORDING TO  
WHAT ST  
ANSELM WRO  
TE & ST LUKE  
P A I N T E D 49

Nevertheless, a psychotic text performing its aboutness is the case of a transposition of symbolic, imaginary and real, a homogeneity between registers despite words not being identical to their aboutness. I argue that illocutionary speech acts and psychotic instances of the text are both cases in which things are being done with words. The former are the case of an action performed by the word that names it, and the latter are the case of the text performing in a visible form the dynamics by which it is underpinned (i.e. what shows of the text is identical to the dynamics that underpin it). To that extent, the imaginary and real are the symbolic. Despite its difference to illocutionary speech acts, the notion of the text '*performing its aboutness*' is useful to pin down and formalise an otherwise difficult to grasp, somewhat *diffuse* feature of psychotic texts.

It follows that highlighting the textual moments in which the text performs its aboutness, their analysis, and the analysis of their relation to the economy of the text as a whole is one of the main objectives of the literary analysis. I argue, this can bring to light layers of meaning of the work of literature that would otherwise remain undisclosed or not necessarily recognised in this way. In this sense, in addition to bringing to light the features of psychotic speech that I have previously outlined, the object of interpretation

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<sup>49</sup> Palacio, P. (1926). A detailed analysis of this passage can be found in the empirical section of this research.

of this literary analysis is the text when it performs its aboutness - language speaking itself.

Furthermore, the features of the text that may offer an insight into the dynamics of language itself are also my object of interpretation for they are instances of language speaking itself as well. This stems as well from Lacan and Freud's assertions about the similarity between Schreber's delusional system to the structure of libido and the structure of the signifier, as well as Lacan's assertions about Joyce's noticing the parasitic character of signifiers. Nevertheless, the emphasis is not on language performing its aboutness, but on the fact that psychotic language ought to bring to light phenomena stemming from the features of language itself qua structure. The array of the features of the symbolic that the text may convey, that is, perform, is something to be answered empirically. Arguably, features of the way signifiers link to one another, unfold, aspects of linguistic temporality, the way in which the signifier enters and operates over the signified, and so forth, may be portrayed in an unmediated way by the meaning of the text. This is yet another instance of a transposition, that of the functions of the structure into the meaning it produces. I call this feature 'insight into the apparatus' and aims to convey the forms in which, in psychosis, *structural features of the structure* may be conveyed by means of the *elements of the structure* itself.

We draw this analogy from Freud and Lacan, as explained before, but also from Bion's notion of bizarre object (Bion, 1957) that characterises psychotic subjects projecting a function of the ego into an object and then perceiving it as exerting that function inversely (i.e. being seen, spoken to, etc.) The particularity of this feature is that psychic elements that make up the psychic apparatus have a stencil-like structure of the shape and form of the apparatus that created them. In that sense, the psychotic subject may

be said to have insight into his own psychic apparatus. This does not amount to a conscious act of insight or *realisation*, but *an unmediated form of encounter with it*. It is therefore likely that psychotic language, too, ought to encounter its own functions in an analogous manner.

### Sinthome and Performativity

Soler (2004) follows Lacan's steps and describes the moments prior to Schreber's breakdown, the precipitation of his psychosis due to the encounter of A-Father (Dr. Flechsig), the beginning of the breakdown proper when God appears as a delusional, persecutory entity up to the delusional stabilisation in which Schreber sees himself as the woman of God. This minute description of his psychotic episode is possible due to Schreber's written account of it. In this sense, Soler and many others have located points of breakdown and stabilisation in Schreber's life. This may come across as an all-too schematic approach to understanding human phenomena, yet this is possible if approached by the symbolic nature of the phenomenon.

Apropos, Nasio affirms that the analyst "[writes the clinical case] following the restricted laws of writing" (2000, 24). This leads Nasio to affirm the extent to which every case-study is in fact *fictional*. Analysis of fictional literature, therefore, ought to share to some extent the scope of a clinical case. Therefore, locating stabilisation and breakdown moments of a text of fiction ought to be possible. One is led to raise the question, in this sense, of whether the text may go through similar breakdown and stabilisation dynamics as a subject would. We may expect this to be the case and therefore similar dynamics to the subjective ones may be found in the text itself. In this

sense, the question of the sinthome as that stabilising entity in the literary comes to the fore.

Performativity, in the sense described before, has been of aid to name the instances of the text in which words might do things other than being vehicles of meaning, specifically, language speaking itself and language allowing an insight into the apparatus (or structure) that underpins it. But, furthermore, the notion of performativity may be of aid to name the instances in which the text may feature visible forms of the sinthome. Given that performativity accounts for the visible psychotic features of the text for the reader, these could be likened to the sinthome whenever by means of precisely these features, a Borromean knot of imaginary, symbolic and real is tied up together.

In other words, the moments of coincidence of symbolic, imaginary and real elements of the text by means of performativity may be understood as *sinthomatic moments* of the text. In this sense, the form in which symbolic, imaginary and real are re-knotted adds to the object of literary analysis. This expands what we may hypothesise a particular work of literature is *doing*, namely knotting back together symbolic, imaginary and real in particular and specific forms that respond to a specific form of unknotted state of things.

Therefore, the sinthomatic moment accounts for a shift in the texture of the literary work in question. Not every instance of a moment of performativity (of coincidence of the registers, that is, transpositions of entities across registers) has by necessity to be sinthomatic. But, I argue that in the case of a psychotic work of literature we are likely to find these instances because, precisely, the coming undone of the knot would be at stake in the very structure of the texture. Therefore, my hypothesis is that the visible

moments of the knotting of the three registers by a performance of the text, although not *necessary*, are *likely*.

To assert that a text may have sinthomatic moments rests upon an understanding of the sinthome somewhat different from Lacan's original ideas about it. Lacan (1975 – 1976) asserted that Joyce's writing was a sinthome mainly because it was a way of reintroducing to the symbolic order what was foreclosed, thereby Joyce making a name for himself. In this sense, Joyce's symptom became his sinthome in the measure that he found a know-how, a *savoir-faire* with his symptom. His literary endeavour became his sinthome. In this sense, Soler (2004) underscores that a failure in the paternal metaphor (resulting from the foreclosure of the name of the father) causes a subject not to be able to metaphorise his *stupid and ineffable existence* qua subject. Therefore, Joyce's making a name for himself is the case of a sinthomatic endeavour because it fulfilled the operation left vacant by the lacking metaphor, namely representing him qua subject.

What interests us the most of this conceptualisation is what this means for the understanding of the sinthome, namely that it can be identified as a result of *the work of a lifetime*, so to say. However, in order to conceptualise the sinthomatic moments of performativity of the text as characterised before, one needs to posit discreet *sinthomatic moments*, rather than the *sinthome of a lifetime*. For this to be the case, one needs to identify moments of coming undone of the Borromean knot and moments of it being re-knotted again, mediated by a performative that would somehow bring together symbolic, imaginary and real. Whether this is possible to locate or not, rests as an empirical question of this research.

Summing up, we conceptualise sinthomatic moments of the text, in which real, imaginary and symbolic are re-knotted. These moments ought to be instances of the text performing its aboutness and should be followed, furthermore, by shifts in the texture of the literary work in question. The moments in which the features of psychotic speech, as have been characterised in previous chapters, can be found in the text are moments of imaginary, symbolic and real unknotting, broadly put. One cannot be quick enough to affirm the utmost singularity of these literary phenomena in each text, even of each of these phenomena within a text. Therefore, generalisations may be difficult to sustain. However, it would make theoretical sense to affirm that psychotic phenomena akin to the ones described by Lacan in the Seminar III are likely to be found in moments of 'breakdown' of the texture, and sinthomatic moments subsequently accompanying moments of 'stabilisation' of the texture.

The text performing its aboutness, insight into the apparatus and sinthomatic moments of the text all point to language itself as the object of analysis. These phenomena encompass many of the features of psychotic language described by Lacan in the Seminar III and the Seminar XXIII, but their totality is a large portion of the objects of the literary analysis. All of these are underpinned by the autonomous quality of language, the extent to which the symbolic qua structure logically precedes any subject (Lacan, 1960) and therefore operates autonomously. In this sense, a psychoanalytic analysis of language (i.e. not a strictly linguistic analysis of language) is possible to the extent that all subjectivities are preceded and overdetermined by it. Nevertheless, logically one is lead to ask, yet again, language, yes, but spoken by whom? The answer, as explained before, is language as spoken by the egos (i.e. entities of a work of literature occupying the function that says 'I') and subjectivities of

the specific work of literature under analysis. Any of the aforementioned psychotic linguistic phenomena are the product of a voice within the text - the narrator, a character, an object, or anything within the text that may occupy the function of a speaking ego and which thereby may produce subjectivity as an effect.

Arguably, deliberately avoiding an analysis of the author qua subject, in this sense, has strengths and weaknesses. On the one hand it recognises the 'death' of the author of the work in question, it acknowledges that a literary work is not a formation of the unconscious and that, simply put, even if the reader were a psychoanalyst, he would not be the psychoanalyst of the author (if this were the case, then on that basis this could be overturned). On the other hand, it is naive not to recognise that someone, in fact, wrote the work in question and he wrote it in a particular kind of way and not another. It could be argued that this would allow for some, albeit limited and hypothetical form of analysis of the author qua subject given that there is so much at stake for the subject in his writing. Recurrent themes in writing, choice of specific locutions or linguistic forms, genre, characters, events, all come indeed from the author's psyche. Nevertheless, the intentions of an author with regards his text are the reader's hypothesis. Writing a work of literature, does not allow for the unconscious to unfold in a form that may make of the text an interpretable object about an author qua subject. Nevertheless, in the kind of analysis that I am setting forth, the reader of the text does perform the psychoanalytic literary analysis of language itself and speaking entities of the text and this calls for an account of its role.

## The Reader, the Analyst

There is a methodological need to discuss the role of the reader as the agent that performs the literary analysis over the text in the sense discussed above<sup>50</sup>. The questions are what is his status and which methodology should he pursue his endeavour following my previous considerations.

Given the task at hand, namely to highlight and discuss psychotic linguistic dynamics of the text and the speaking subjects within it, I argue that the analyst must first account the liminal place between himself and the text. In line with Nasio's thinking about clinical cases (2000), there is a need to account for the experience of the reader whose endeavour is to perform an analysis of the text. In line, furthermore, with Shoshana Felman's claims (1982), the literary analyst-reader has a twofold relation with the text. On the one hand the reader is the analyst of the work in question, but on the other the text is also the master as the reader attributes a supposed-knowledge to the text and may be unwittingly under the sway of meaning of the literary piece. The latter claim agrees, furthermore, with my own view of language qua autonomous entity. In this sense, the relationship between reader and text is not a simple relationship in which the reader may situate himself in an overpowering master position over the text upon which he may impose its psychoanalytic knowledge.

LaCapra (2001), on the domain of history, argues that historians cannot escape a transferential relation with the historical representation and text. LaCapra explains that historians must account for this transferential relation so as to minimize the subjective

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<sup>50</sup> This issue was discussed in greater depth in the third chapter in which different approaches to literary analysis are discussed and contrasted. The purpose of this section is to set forth the role and methodology that, I argue is specific (although not unique) to the literary analysis of the present research only.

bias of the historian in relation to his object of scrutiny. This is akin to Felman's claim in relation to the mastery of the literary text, for if the text is a text-supposed-to-know (like the analyst in the context of transference with the analysand), it follows that the reader may establish, in several dimensions, a transferential relation with the text which may hinder an objective literary analysis. In this sense Felman (1985) warns against the literary analysis becoming simply a depository of the reader-analyst's 'projections'.

However, it is far to claim that no creative artefact and any analysis of it by another can be free of human projection altogether, nor necessarily this would be desirable. Human projection, and projection in singular cases in this sense, can be understood as the singularity of any human production; within its domain creation can come about. Nevertheless, the extent to which this dimension is recognised and circumscribed as fantasy, allows for avoiding any claim to totality, absoluteness and objectivity. It may allow for an ever unfathomable, yet true otherness to emerge in the space where only a fantasised other may have existed. Herein lies an individual measure of necessary and desirable individual interpretation. Elsewhere I have recognised measures of individual interpretation that may make it difficult to universally formalise the recognition of psychotic texts. When it comes to the literary analysis, uniqueness, specificity and individual interpretation, to an extent stemming from projection of the reader-analyst are not limits, but the sought product. Therefore, the more explicit the process of the formulation of these interpretations, the richer they might be.

## Structure of Analysis

There is a need, nevertheless, to formalise the process of formulating interpretations. This responds to a methodological need to treat texts in a uniform way so that texts, and the very process of their analysis can be compared. Furthermore, the process of analysis must be designed to provide a space for the explicit tension to come about between, as Felman (1982) suggests, the twofold tension of the reader as analyst and under the mastery of the text.

Therefore, the literary analysis will comprise a threefold structure. For each text, the analysis will feature a summary of the text, a phenomenological reading of the text and a psychoanalytic reading of it in which interpretations per se will be formulated. The phenomenological reading is meant to account for the dimensions discussed before. I take 'phenomenological reading' to mean an explicit description of the reader's experience structured by, and in relation to the reading of a particular text. In this reading the reader makes explicit his individual interpretation and understanding of the text taking a critical yet accounted stance towards his experience. In other words, the meaning and experience of the reader are made explicit without any interpretation being advanced at that stage. Interpretations, like in a clinical case (Nasio, 2000) rely to a great extent on the individuality and singularity of all that makes up a particular analytic moment. This literary analysis is similar to clinical analysis to that extent. Therefore, making explicit as much as possible the particularities of the encounter between reader and text enriches the reader's endeavour as well as makes it accessible for another.

It is worth mentioning that I take the notion of 'phenomenological' in a broad sense, in other words, in this context the term does not mean any particular methodology

posited by any specific philosophical phenomenological school of thought. Further, this particular phenomenological reading does not intend to study the structures of consciousness of the reader, his perception itself as an object of study nor intentionality. (Zalta, 2009). The term 'phenomenological' aims to account for the appearance of the text, in its materiality, meaning and other effects on the reader-analyst, what the reader-analyst makes of them, as well as the effects that the text-master may have on the reader in the senses discussed previously. This space and endeavour has limits for the reader-analyst; indeed he is by necessity far from self-transparent. Therefore this might in fact inform more the reader of the analyst, than the analyst himself.

Furthermore, given the focus of the analysis being mostly the text, the analysis will follow a structure in which each text is examined separately and general conclusions only advanced at the end of the analysis. Other authors who advance other forms of psychoanalytic literary analysis, as discussed in greater depth in previous chapters, follow different approaches in which, for instance, excerpts of different texts are brought about to examine a particular tendency or theme of the author's writing or examine the texts of different authors to highlight common features of certain literary trends (Felman, 1982, 1985; Hart, 1992). Arguably, this methodology is appropriate given its focus being greatly the linguistic features of each text. This stems from aiming to answer what does it mean to deem a text 'psychotic', to test whether approaching a text thus may bring to light hitherto undisclosed particular (psychotic) dynamics of a text and whether Lacan's ideas on psychosis replicate in works of fiction under the conditions discussed.

## Conclusions

Many crucial methodological considerations have been discussed, weighted and concluded in this chapter. It is paramount for the literary analysis defining how I envisage the analytic approach following the psychoanalytic model, namely, who speaks, who is the analyst and over what the analysis should operate.

For the reasons discussed, I have located the speaking subject of my model of analysis not as the author of the text, but as any symbolic entity within the text that may speak and therefore may perform the function of a speaking ego, namely narrator, characters, objects, etcetera. The subjective dimension of these entities may come about throughout the text as a product of the unfolding of language. Furthermore, I conclude that the particular form in which the text may unfold, the text as a whole and its texture, is also the object of analysis.

The notion of 'radical relation to the signifier' used by Lacan (1955 - 1956) to characterise the form in which the psychotic subject inhabits and is inhabited by language has proven to be pivotal for the analysis. The term *radical* in this context may be understood to mean that something forms an inherent part of the most fundamental nature of something or someone, or as something characterised by departing from tradition or the commonly expected.

This radical relation can be posited in terms of a somewhat arbitrary division, namely the relation between the speaking subject and language on the one hand, and language itself on the other. These two correspond to two approaches to language that are necessary to combine, that is, as the product of a speaking subject (i.e. a linguistic agent that I have characterised as the narrators, characters, objects in the

text) and as an autonomous entity that as such pre-exists the speaking subject and determines it. As concluded previously, these two dimensions are important in the analysis of literature given the specificity of psychoanalysis; *speaking* and *spoken* are linguistic dimensions of the subject qua agent as well as unconscious product of language. In addition, the analysis focuses on the vicissitudes of the subject when in psychosis he becomes spoken-to. To sum up, the literary analysis must account for three radical dimensions of the subject: *speaking*, *spoken* and *spoken-to* in which transpositions of entities across registers may occur.

In this sense, Lacan's characterisation of psychotic stabilised, delusional and hallucinatory speech accounts for the *speaking* and spoken-to subject of psychosis, that is, for psychotic discourse per se. The *spoken-to* dimension is accounted by the profound deformations that the subject may go through in psychosis when he encounters language from without<sup>51</sup>. These two dimensions occur within the domain of the speech of the narrator, the characters and the objects.

The dimension of *spoken* subject was arguably my main concern in this chapter and I aimed at characterising the extent to which language qua autonomous entity may be fruitfully analysed without incurring into an absolute "disembodiment" of language, yet keeping its autonomy as the object of scrutiny.

In this sense, the notion of language speaking itself highlights the most extreme form of linguistic autonomy and serves for the analysis of the work of literature as a whole. Furthermore, it highlights that language in psychosis speaks in a radical form, that is, speaks its most inherent and fundamental nature in an unmediated form. The notion

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<sup>51</sup> Both of these notions have been discussed in chapters one and two.

of the autonym and hallucinatory and delusional symbolic entities, imaginary in nature but being identical to the symbolic, are the elements that have motivated us to characterise this feature of psychotic language thus.

Given the difficulty of grasping this notion, and in order to formalise it and apply it in the literary analysis, I have resorted to the notion of the performative. Performatives, however, are not radical uses of language and differ to the extent discussed from the phenomenon I aim to describe. Nevertheless, the notions of *language performing its aboutness* in its very *materiality* and language performing *sinthomatic moments* are useful tools that I may be able to use in the literary analysis and that, to the extent discussed, capture the phenomena at stake.

Furthermore, *insight into the apparatus* is yet another feature of psychotic language. This notion is based on the similarity between Schreber's delusions to the structure of libido and the symbolic itself, as well as on Bion's notion of bizarre object in which a function of the ego is projected and then perceived from without. I have advanced this property of psychotic language to account for the 'psychic apparatus' or 'structure as a whole' transposing its structure into its products.

Discreet sinthomatic moments of the text, furthermore, in which the three registers might be said to be tied up again is yet another dimension of my analysis. In this particular case, there is an encounter of the speaking and spoken dimensions of language in the sense that this phenomenon may feature a convergence of the dynamics of the text as a whole (i.e. the registers brought to operate together with a consequent shift in the texture) as well as a particular speaking subject (narrator, character or object in the story) for whom this sinthomatic moment occurs. As explained, this notion is somewhat different to Lacan's understanding of the sinthome

given that I posit it as a discrete occurrence that is localisable in the text rather than a life-long, wholesome form of jouissance like James Joyce's work.

We have furthermore discussed some methodological issues regarding the reader-analyst. I have discussed the extent to which he might be in a transferential relation with a master-text to which he might *suppose knowledge*, and therefore his endeavour cannot be free of projection. I have discussed that this is not undesirable given the desired specificity of the literary analysis. However, there is a need to account and make explicit these dimensions so that the analysis done over the work of literature may be accessible to others.

This has led us to posit a structure of analysis in which a phenomenological reading of the text will be made explicit. In it, the reader-analyst must account for the experience of encounter with the text. In addition to making accessible the analysis for others, this phenomenological reading will provide the necessary individual understanding of the text upon which interpretations may be formulated and dimensions of the text hitherto undisclosed may be made explicit.

In this sense, the description of the specific speech phenomena of psychosis at play in the text and the characterisation of the psychotic dynamics of language in the work as a whole, I argue, are the work of interpretation that the reader-analyst will perform on each work of literature of the analysis.

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## **Introduction to Literary Analysis**

The second part of this research is concerned with putting into practice a literary analysis with the objective of testing whether the hypotheses that have been set forth throughout this research are confirmed, in what manner, under which circumstances and to what extent. Specifically, understanding whether the dynamics, principles and mechanisms of psychosis mainly set forth by Lacan in his third (1955 - 1956) and twenty third (1975 - 1976) seminars are applicable to characterise dynamics of literary, specifically fictional texts. From this question follow those of whether it is possible and what would it mean to call a work of literature psychotic. In the same breadth, an answer is sought as to what would understanding works of literature in this way contribute qua literary analysis, that is whether the meaning of the work in question would be opened otherwise and in what sense this may be understood.

Throughout the first five chapters I have laid the theoretical grounds that will foster a literary analysis that answers the above questions. I have discussed in previous chapters firstly Lacan's early and late theories of psychosis as a point of departure. Different viewpoints and stances have been explored and contrasted apropos psychoanalytic literary analysis and lastly I have focused on posing and solving theoretical and methodological questions (wherever possible, or adopting a stance where needed) to clarify the points of theoretical departure, methods and the reasons behind them.

The section that is being now introduced comprises the literary analysis proper. I will endeavour to interrogate four short stories and a short novel that are paradigmatic of the kind of text that is susceptible to such analysis.

I have throughout this research expressed my views on the analysis of the author qua subject. I have explained that the focus is rather set on the text and I have accounted for the reasons behind this. Nevertheless, this does not mean that the author should be disregarded nor his identity or biographical information left unexplored altogether in the process of research.

Pablo Palacio

As argued, proposing psychotic attributes of a text may be said to respond to a synchronic kind of logic since it is a claim about ever-present, atemporal symbolic attributes of a kind of texture. 'Finding' these attributes in a given text responds to a diachronic kind of logic in which language needs to be proffered so that the synchronic proposition unfolds or instantiates. One could argue that the synchronic aspect of the symbolic determines the meaning of the diachronic, therefore these very psychotic principles might determine the very unfolding of the text and in this sense 'bias' any reading of any text as 'psychotic'. I have discussed this issue in connection to Felman and Rey's criticisms to psychoanalytic theory. I argue that this, however, extends to the application of any theoretical principle to the interpretation of what we may call 'reality' - which in itself is already taken by the interpretative, nay constitutive operation of the interplay between synchrony and diachrony. Having acknowledged that, however, questions may nevertheless be posed about why focus on Palacio's texts in

particular? What is it about Palacio - perhaps not so much qua subject or author, but as *a writing* - that under the light of the present re-search manifests itself as pertaining to the 'found'?

To wit, Palacio's writing, when firstly encountered had a surprising, disconcerting effect - upon me. I knew that I was looking for literary works of fiction with a texture that I would find baffling. In this sense I was looking for a surprise that surprised me, which in itself - as I explore further in the final discussions of this research - became a kind of finding in relation to the position of the reader-analyst, an impossible position of *anticipated surprise*.

Notwithstanding the anticipation, the surprise was surprising firstly because of the so-called literary effects of Palacio's literature, which are beyond anticipation yet expected as literary. But, there was something additional as most of Palacio's texts I read *did* something which language usually does not do. Language appeared as playing disjointedly, stumbling with its own features, stretching itself, sometimes at the expense of meaning and concomitantly at its increase - both at once. This bewilderment attracted my attention and reflecting upon some of the discrete happenings of this 'bizarreness' led me to suspect that language did not carry meaning in the usual way, there were many instances of signification not sliding, but being the product of foldings of language upon itself, rather. Meaning indeed moves in the texts, indeed, but instead of sliding, the impression is that of something being turned inside-out. That is how I would characterise my general impression of Palacio as writing and hence the choice of focusing upon his work.

Life and work

Pablo Palacio was Ecuadorean, he was born in Loja in 1906 and died in Guayaquil in 1947 at the age of forty-one. Writer Blas Parra (2009) describes Palacio as an orphan. Palacio was raised by his uncle after his mother's death. His father was never present and never recognised him as his son. At a very young age, Palacio had an accident near a river and suffered from several injuries in the head. Nevertheless he was a bright student in primary school, which led his uncle to keep supporting his academic development.

Like Kafka, Palacio became a lawyer. He wrote his dissertation on payment of bills of exchange.<sup>52</sup> Speaking of Pablo Palacio, explains writer Leonardo Valencia, means to speak of "parts, fragments and pieces" (Valencia, 2012, 7). He wrote two novels: *Débora* (1927) and *Life of the hangman* (1932). He wrote nine scattered short stories, five poems and three essays on philosophy entitled: *Sense of the word truth*, *Sense of the word reality* and *Brief generic schema of dialectics* (Valencia, 2012). Allegedly, he wrote a third novel entitled *The Virgin's eye-bags*<sup>53</sup> which was never published and was lost. At the age of 34 he was sectioned in a psychiatric hospital in which he spent the last seven years of his life. Often, these life events are used to explain his madness, which in turn is used to explain his writing.

Much of Palacio remains unknown given his short life and the scarcity of his writings. Palacio nevertheless causes fascination, in the words of Valencia, 'the man has been sought in the literary work which has been reduced to symptom, instead of considering the literary work of the man as the symptom of the creative need of its time' (Valencia, 2012, 12). In other words, Palacio's madness, so inextricably connected to his

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<sup>52</sup> In Spanish, bill of exchange translates as *Letter of Change (Letra de Cambio)*.

<sup>53</sup> *Las Ojeras de la Virgen*

literature exerts curiosity in its readership. Its effect is that of marvel and tragedy, but also of breakthrough.

Valencia, arguably, aims to liberate Palacio's work of the stigma of madness. He attributes Palacio's writing style to the Latin American avant-garde trend in which most literary canons were broken. Valencia argues that 'whilst the traditionalist or realist novel garlanded the edges of its themes, Palacio frayed them, like those strange, conjured men did; those men who were practitioners of the fragmented' (Valencia, 2012, 18). In this sense, Palacio's writing does not aim to obscure the shameful, small clarities of the daily or mundane in favour of bringing to light 'grand truths'. On the contrary, Palacio focuses on the minutiae of the daily, wherein the truth would lie. However, the dynamics of those daily truths is that they pierce, impinge on the texture of his works, which as I will argue, is informative of what the work is doing at that particular moment. In other words, I argue that the form in which truth pierces Palacio's textures is more informative of his literature than whether he writes about a crooked toenail or the heroism of the working classes.

Valencia does not deny that Palacio's writing style is out of the ordinary, nor that Palacio's madness was real. He does deny, however, that Palacio's writings were an omen of his yet-to come psychotic breakdown. It is clear that Valencia's understanding of madness is different to my understanding of psychosis. Valencia seems to be arguing that calling Palacio's writing psychotic would amount to pathologising it pejoratively - to aim to explain and thus supersede the genius by means of the pathological. My contention, on the other hand, is that psychosis as understood by Lacan in fact offers a richer language to describe and envisage the (broadly understood) linguistic dynamics of Palacio's writing.

Valencia explains Palacio's writing by aesthetic causes, I argue that, indeed, psychotic styles of writing thrived in the avant-garde trends precisely due to their attributes. Transgression, rejection of rules, bending of language; I argue that given the avant-garde trends across the world, psychosis had its century of literary fame. Pursuing this claim, however, exceeds the scope of the present research but is nevertheless a question that naturally follows from Valencia's contentions and perhaps ought to be subject to further research.

Valencia describes Palacio's work as a manifold combination of literary resources that complement each other. Also, the limits of each resource is made visible, yielding a multiplicity of voices within the literary. Valencia argues, furthermore, that Palacio "creates the phenomenon [of marginality] verbally to make palpable in his sparkling prosody the reach and sense of truth and reality for the reader" (Valencia, 2012, 13). He adds that Palacio "does not limit words to being a medium to communicate a story, the language of the story is an end in itself, so distorted as that which it speaks about" (Valencia, 2012, 15). Arguably, these characteristics of Palacio's work are what makes it an object susceptible to the literary analysis.

The work of Palacio was originally written in Spanish and has not been translated into English, therefore all translations of Palacio's texts are mine<sup>54</sup>. The difficulties arising from translating a text whose kind of play and attributes are akin to those described about psychosis cannot be stressed enough. One cannot win it all - at least I know I did not in this sense, I acknowledge that as a *traduttore* I am also a *traditore*.

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<sup>54</sup> All translations in the appendix.

Undecidable meanings and the closeness of the materiality of signifier to the effects of the signified perhaps suffer the most from translation. Translating may entail turning an undecidable meaning into a decided one. Turning an undecidable meaning into another undecidable meaning is also possible, but this sets the original and the translation apart - they are taken by their 'function' rather than their materiality. Footnotes, indeed, aid to explain the effect that words would have had if in their original language, but their effect is irremediably affected for it is mediated by the translator rather than being immediate for the reader.

In relation to language 'sane' and 'mad', similarly to the discourse of literature and discourse in general, Shoshana Felman argues that something analogous to the Freudian notion of *repression* stands between them. Madness and literature would be thus repressed, and Felman follows Freud as she posits repression amounting to a *failure of translation* - an active mistranslation (or misrecognition). Therefore, the task of investigating the relation between madness and literature necessitates proffering discourse that "lifts repression". She argues that

"if madness and literature are both ruled by the very thing that represses them, by the very thing that censors them in language, if they both - each in its own way - proceed from a 'failure of translation', the attempt will necessitate a crossing of the border between languages (Felman, 2005, 19).

Felman's contention, stressing the translation de facto intrinsic to madness and literature is correct if we were to conceptualise madness as neurosis. If we agree to this, we would have to accept that sane discourse would feature formations of mad discourse, mainstream discourse would feature formations of literary discourse and,

indeed, literature would feature formations of madness. This would not be difficult to accept if we likened the literary and madness to consciousness, unconsciousness and the formations of the unconscious that result from their interplay. In this sense, repression would be the force that powers misrecognition and a mistranslation between these dimensions<sup>55</sup>.

But a question could undoubtedly be posed around the specificity of psychosis in these dynamics. We could pose questions around the specificity of psychotic mechanisms to each language and the extent of their translatability given precisely their challenge to grammatical structures and rules. How can a linguistic happening that is inside-outside of grammar be translated into a different linguistic system? Does this not necessarily imply recognising a 'rule' about it so that it may be 'respected' as it is translated into a different language? Is this not, precisely, impossible given that psychosis designates a subject and linguistic phenomena being outside the rules of language'? Would translation of psychotic linguistic happenings not imply to fit its challenging relation to one system unto another? As such, does the relation have *rules* insofar it is outside of them? These question, surely, will be guides to further research.

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<sup>55</sup> This neat conceptualisation by Felman is completely at odds with her own views upon the interpretability of literature. We ought to be able to trace these formations of madness in the literary - but she is reluctant to it as she denounces the imposition of knowledge of psychoanalysis over literature. Further, and in perspective, I think I understand Felman's stern, implacable defence of the illusion of literature, but I also understand the stern and implacable defence of the illusion of psychoanalysis. Where is the good in stripping anyone off them?

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## **Débora**

### Summary

The narration begins by the narrator detaching himself from the main character, the Lieutenant. He describes how he sets him free to become what he may in the hands of others. Thereafter, the diegetic of the novel proceeds with an unusual, fragmentary succession of events, memories, dreams, and fantasies of the Lieutenant, interspersed between narratives and reflections by the narrator. The particularly fragmentary and interrupted style of the prose is noteworthy throughout. The novel ends with the sudden narration and reflection upon the death of the Lieutenant by the narrator.

Throughout the novel a sense of contingency is patent. There is a sense of flattening in the relevance of the events narrated, that is anything from the narrative feels as worthy of being narrated as any other hypothetical event, dream, fantasy, etcetera. This sense is conveyed by the structure as well as the texture of the narrative. However, despite its fragmentariness, the novel does not convey a sense of purposelessness. The fragmentariness of the narration is consistent with the general preoccupation of the text, arguably, the relation between fragments and that which makes them continuous. This is visible in the reflections of the narrator about writing, literature and life in general as well as in his narrations of the occurrences of the novel as well as in the texture of the novel as a whole.

Throughout the novel there are moments in which the Lieutenant is in service, strolling around the city with a colleague or alone, out on dates with women, visiting prostitutes

in the slums of the city or facing a random occurrence with an epileptic female neighbour howling on the street. As explained, there is not a necessary linear connection between these events. Furthermore, they are interspersed between the Lieutenant's memories of childhood such as being put to sleep, being beaten at school by the teacher, having a fight and being punched in the stomach or the memory of a childhood fantasy of a monster that dwells underneath the sofa. The almost superimposing elements of the narrative, although disjointed, produce at once a sense of inextricable intertwinement between them; a complex tissue of past, present and future with elements of oneiric, fantasy, perceptual as well as matter of fact dimensions – each of them contaminated by the others.

## Structure

Débora has been catalogued as a novel that does not meet the “conventional criteria of novels” (Valencia, 2012, 18). This is mainly visible in one of its features, more deeply addressed in the following section, namely the reluctance to make an abstraction of facts and give them a literary continuity. Rather, the novel follows a fragmentary logic and focuses on that which is true, that which according to the narrator is not truly of interest to anyone. This, as will be explained, has further implications than those hitherto addressed by literary critics, for this is not only an attempt to unsettle literary standards and transgress literary frames, but a sign, arguably, of a psychotic mechanism at play in the text.

The temporality of the novel and therefore the sequence of the events is not linear. Arguably, the novel is composed of a sedimentation of fragments that do not follow

any particular vectorial unfolding. As will be explained in more detail further on, the whole of the novel is paradoxically given by its fragmentariness. Events, memories, fantasy, and reflections on the part of the narrator are so interspersed that a sense of contingency is conveyed throughout.

The beginning of the novel is given by the 'creation' of the main character by the narrator. The ending is given by the narration of its death. These events are so fortuitous that a sense of lack of necessity is conveyed. In other words, the reader experiences that the excerpts that the novel recounts about the character's life and the reflections of the narrator around them would be as relevant as any. The ending of the novel emphasises this by ending in an oxymoronic, syntactically unusual form that grants simultaneously, therefore, substance to its occurrence and lack of it:

"In this initial and final moment I suppress all minutiae and blur the outlines

OF A SOFT WHITE COLOUR" (Palacio, 1929, 67).

The name of the novel, *Débora*, is the name of a somewhat fugacious character mentioned by the narrator at the ending of the novel. She is, the narrator explains, a dancer that he seems to have known, he longs for and whose memory is as fugacious as her appearance in the novel. The narrator explains that she is "yanquilandean", probably meaning that she is American of origin or has a dual nationality of sorts. Arguably, the origins of the character, as those of the novel, are ambiguous, neologistic and even from a different language. This, paradoxically, gives the novel its name and fragmentary identity.

The narrator

Throughout the novel, the narrator is omniscient, witness and protagonist. His capacity to rise above, as well as to participate of the events of the novel locates him at once above and at the same level of *his own symbols*. This situates the novel in a dimension that, as will be further explained, entails a specific relation of the subject to the symbolic and imaginary registers.

The narrator, furthermore, performs a double function: narrating the fragmentary story of the novel and reflecting about the acts of writing and narrating themselves. The story is "...configured by sequences of fragments in which always a conjectural character of actions and characters gets established, and in which, furthermore, there are constant reflections about the process of writing' (Valencia, 2012, 11). These two dimensions of the narrator's endeavour interact throughout the novel and co-determine each other. Segments of the narration are interspersed with reflections of how should writing be done and why, as well as which pitfalls of writing should be avoided and the reasons for it.

When the narrator reflects about writing, he communicates with remarkable degree of transparency certain moments of cleavage of this process. For example, he reflects upon the creation of a character and letting it then "live on freely". He describes this almost as a process of detachment of a part of himself, a veritable loss of a symbol that once uttered, narrated or written, is bound to gain a life of its own. It can be argued that this act of *liberation of a symbol* amounts to an utterance or to writing in the sense that once a symbolic unit is written or uttered, it is bound to communication, that is, to the circulation of symbols between the subject and other.

About the main character of the novel, and at the very beginning of it, the narrator says:

you have been my guest for years. Today I throw you off me so that you can be the mock of some and the melancholy of others.

Many will see themselves in your eyes like they see themselves in the depths of the mirror.

Since you are a man, you could have been a foreman or a shoe black.

Why do you exist? It would have been better you did not exist. You bring nothing, you have nothing nor you will give anything (Palacio, 1927, 25).

Thus, the narrator addresses the symbol directly, speaks to the symbol. This particularity, arguably, means that the narrator is aware of the 'parasitic character of the signifier' described by Lacan (1975), the awareness of which he attributes to the psychotic structures in general, and specifically to Joyce (1975 - 1976).

This sort of presentation and utilisation of symbols suggests an intertwinement of the symbolic and the imaginary registers loose enough so as to allow the narrator a contemplation of the symbol by itself, free of its communicative or sense-making dimension. The narrator, in this sense, is aware of such possible independence or unknotting and puts it in practice by addressing a symbol in the act of writing. Arguably, in this sense, there is a measure of performativity proper of psychotic structures as discussed previously, namely the text doing what it is about. In other words, the text reaches a measure of transparency: it describes an aspect of the dynamics –in this case– between the subject, the symbolic and imaginary by taking the relation to and detachment from symbols as its topic of discussion *in the very act of relating to and detaching from symbols*.

Nevertheless, the act of narrating such mishaps of a character, which intimates a loose knot between the imaginary and the symbolic, is in itself a knot. In this respect, the narrator still harnesses the narration as a form of knot between the symbolic and the

imaginary, despite him knowing of their mutual possible independence – or possible unknitting. The narration, could be, arguably, understood as an instance of the sinthome: an overarching fourth knot that, however bearing the trace of the unknitting of the imaginary and the symbolic, keeps them together by means of the very act of the narrative.

There is, indeed, a distance between the phenomena that Lacan identified in Joyce's literature and the one identified here. Arguably, Joyce's translinguistic utilisation of signifiers as letters, that is his utilisation of their real dimension, amounts to a veritable simultaneous stripping off and exploitation of the signifier and its communicative or sense-making functions (Harari, 1995). The narrator in *Débora*, however, still relies on the communicative function of the signifier in order to speak about it. Therefore it cannot be argued that the narrator relates to the signifier in the same way as Joyce did. (Lacan, 1955 – 1956). What can be argued, however, is that the narrator is aware of the structural independence between the symbolic and the imaginary, between signifier and signified. Being aware of this independence means that, although the knot holds by means of the narrative, the felt difference between the registers is patent. It follows that the possibility of the imaginary and symbolic registers being unknotted is not foreign to the subject, for only in this way their true independence can be glimpsed.

Throughout the novel, the narrator acknowledges and fights the temptation to “garland” the narration, which he calls as well ‘literaturising’. This consists of embellishing the narration and polishing its continuity so as to agree with the reader's demands of consistency of the story and aesthetic attributes. Further, it consist in

omitting the uncomfortable little truths, which albeit felt unimportant, in fact, according to the narrator constitute the truth of life.

In some occasions, the narrator catches himself in the very act of overstepping these self-set limits and apologises or cynically jokes about having done so. In other occasions he apologises for deliberately denying the reader that embellishment which he expects; the 'literaturising' that would satisfy his demands. The narrator's objective, arguably, is to offer a critique of the act of writing and of the sense-making dimension in general relative to the symbolic and imaginary registers in relation to the emergence of the real. This implies, therefore, that the subjective dynamics between the symbolic, imaginary and real are accessible to the narrator, transparent to some degree. The following paragraphs exemplify such an instance:

Thus, historians and philosophers, men of letters, whose garlanded work in numerous semicircles work in a straight line, based on the vertexes of these semicircles that cut each other; trace the useless arch of life outside their work and isolate every usable point that afterwards will shape, in union with all the rest, the rosary that has common sense as a soul.

The animal of abstractions becomes popular.

A given chemist, for example, sells drugs and presides whispering reunions of people, only this. We forget that the callus between his toes tortures him and the bad smell of the "safe" of the boy, and the exact weight of the onions bought by the lady.

That same chemist, when seeing his toes after having had an organic satisfaction, has had that same gesture of he who was betrayed by the consistency of used paper; but thinks, to let it out, that Napoleon Bonaparte and St Bartholomew may have gone through the same.

To avoid these painful clarities, the work has been garlanded in the aforementioned way (Palacio, 1927, 31).

From this passage, I infer that the narrator describes the nature of what subjective 'truth' must be about. He describes it as 'painful clarities', that is, kernels of truth that are subsumed to, and largely excluded by a sense-making dimension whose aim would be to 'literaturise' or grant a form of narrative, cohesion and sense to subjective experience. Life, or truth, however, would be about those kernels of truth, which the narrator ascribes to a bodily dimension: calluses, bodily smells or weight. In this sense, the narrator seems to believe that discourse and meaning are a form of mendacious decoration, indeed a garland of these kernels of truth.

This form of understanding of the kernels of truth of subjective experience, kept at bay by the sense making dimension, is akin to Lacan's description of the symbolic, imaginary and real in the schema R, a re-work of the schema Z which he discussed apropos Schreber's memoirs (Lacan, 1955). In this schema, discussed previously in detail, Lacan depicts a 'veil of sense' – a geometrical plane, therefore a cylinder as well, in which imaginary elements and signifiers occupy shared, specific places, thus setting the coordinates of the world for the subject. Another way in which this schema can be accounted for is as being a *depiction* of the very structure of the subject. The imaginary and symbolic veil, however, can be pierced by emergences of the real (Lacan, 1955). In Schreber's case, this very veil underwent all the deformations proper of Schreber's delusions, which precisely aimed to restore the coordinates of consistency and meaning of the world for Schreber (Lacan, 1955 – 1956).

It cannot be argued that the 'veil of sense' of the narrator has undergone deformations akin to those of Schreber's. What can be argued is that the narrator has insight into the structure of what is depicted by the schema, the functioning of the subjective apparatus – something that arguably Schreber had as well to some extent, but above

which he was unable to rise. I am led to ask in what sense does the narrator have this insight?

Arguably, for the narrator, the sense making dimension whose aim is to 'garland' the truth amounts to the veil of the symbolic and the imaginary, and the kernels of truth, often bodily, amount to real elements that can and often do pierce this veil. The narrator's position seems to be that of wanting to reject the imaginary and the symbolic, the garland, the sense-making dimension. However, he is unable to depict pure kernels of truth other than by means of language, therefore he finds himself 'garlanding' the narration in spite of himself. In other words, although he has insight into the functioning of the subjective dynamics, he is unable to do without them, or beyond them altogether as Lacan argues Joyce did.

Unwittingly, however, there are moments in which the narrator does do without the dynamics of the imaginary, symbolic and real. In the previously quoted passage, the sentence "the animal of abstractions becomes popular" is an instance of an attempt to de-garland narration and depicting within language a kernel of truth. The result, however, is a somewhat disjointed sentence-paragraph in which the sliding of meaning is somewhat disrupted. In this sense, I argue that the text performs what it speaks about: a kernel of truth disrupting the garlanded text. This is yet another psychotic instance of the text.

## Characters

The main character of the novel is a Lieutenant. Although throughout the novel a degree of his identity is sifted and the reader may therefore feel a degree of

identification with the character, it is possible to assert that his identity is given fragmentarily. The narration brings about snippets of the Lieutenant's memories, thoughts, actions, as well as somewhat oblique happenings that arguably aim to contour his identity. Consequently, the diegetic consists of an interrupted interspersing of the past and the present, as well as the oneiric world, fantasy and matter-of-fact reality. Further, the diegetic is interspersed with narration segments in such a way that the reader is left with a sense of discontinuity; paradoxically the whole of the novel is given by its fragmentariness. The same is true for the characters, particularly the Lieutenant, whose sole identity and permanence seems to be given by a succession of ephemeral moments.

The fragmentariness of the identity of the characters is consistent with that of the narrative in the novel. This can be appreciated in the first moment of the narration. The following passage, separated by paragraph breaks, comprises a present moment in which the Lieutenant marches and salutes his Captain, followed by an observation of the narrator about the facial expression of the Lieutenant, followed by the narration of a series of childhood memories of his. Similarly to the Lieutenant as a symbol having left off the narrator, the memories of the Lieutenant are described as departing him. The interspersing of disjointed exclamations by the narrator, like that of 'being under the effects of whipworm toxins' highlight the disjointed sense of the text:

“- Good morning, lieutenant.

And hands towards the guts, perpendicularly.

(I am under the effect of whipworm toxins).

Very straight, the knee pits arched, the chest high: memories of Prussian stamps.

Loud stomps of the heels on the stones and long steps, they think on the possible potency of a very well given punch. How strongly one feels the psychic influence of the sharpened tapping tips. It may be said: the dangerous moral support of guns accentuates magnificently the vigour of muscles. This recipe would be unsurpassable by those who seek fat women.

Lieutenant, you have made of your soul a niche for the grave face of the mother.

The memory boats, having to depart from you, sail off the static internal moment.

School times:

Under the oblique vigilance of the friars, piled lines of children await the moment to leave. The “click” –the persistence of which will evoke later in children’s minds later the scream of ‘Stop!’ in the Academy-, the click of the Master commanded silence. And when some boy’s fugitive laughter burst, the layman principal, just after drinking sodium sulphate:

“You!” “Come to the front!”

To receive the punishment of ‘the wall’.

All of that is misty; fixed are only the white, punished legs of the punished. Why this isolated and useless memory? To the schoolmaster, the Lieutenant must give a haughty face, seen after, because the first one he left forgotten somewhere within the skull. What he did not forget, the legs (‘but why the legs?’), scares the lieutenant like an unexpected spark of catechism. “What is the sign of the Christian?

-The sign of the Christian is the holy cross”.

And on that same vein, another moment of passed times:

For some reason, that he will never know, he is punched in the stomach, his face is left off extended and leaves him off ‘dry’; precise ending of childhood. The lieutenant responds with another blow, that leaves an enemy dry as well. I can imagine the pale faces of the rogues and their efforts

to reach serenity, weary of being left 'by the wall'. Now, hastily one looks for the wall, weary of being left 'as a rogue'.

"In the commonplace of a family evening, on the bricks of the wall, I rubbed the pieces of nails that I tore off horse shoes. My grandfather, who inherited the smithy off his dead son, told me that to make those old horseshoes shine, one has to rub them with bricks. The ghost under the sofa watched my determination. A huddled, reddish ghost that was chased by my aunt's' bullet-like doubts. I shouted and got excited – excitement for me is now METRO GOLDWYN PICTURES, because I have never managed to observe any other emotion and it is similar to an insistent chest swing. That ghost still exists for me, watching me from the inside, from where I carry it".

"Afterwards it was in the bedroom, when the lights were still off but were already needed. Maybe it was because they told me to go to bed early or because I was ill. My bed had taken possession of me: this possession happened so many times that now I hate it, along with the horror I have of emptiness. My father's sister, a faded stain, went out, taking a little bit of light as she closed the door. She came into the room again, and without being ill I saw her as a walking stick. Long and arched, pressing her abdomen, easing some pain. When I spoke with a quiet voice I was scared. When I spoke out loud she answered me from without.

Today I wrote a song:

My auntie left

My auntie entered... (Palacio, 1929, 29).

This remarkable excerpt exemplifies how the text performs, in the sense explained before, fragmentariness. To put it simply, the 'aboutness' of the text, fragmentariness, is concomitant to the fragmentariness itself of the texture. This can be appreciated in several dimensions: the often-felt discontinuity of sense between sentences, the abrupt introduction of paragraphs, the interruption of the narrative with memories, the no less abrupt introduction of questions and exclamations made by the narrator,

indeed, about fragmentariness and discontinuity of subjective experience. In this sense, the identity of the characters throughout the novel is the sedimentation of fragments of memories, experience, thoughts, and so forth. These textual dynamics are akin to Lacan's description of psychotic speech (Lacan, 1955 – 1956) in which the sliding of meaning is constantly interrupted.

However, it could be argued that the halts and derailments of sense typically ascribed to psychosis are qualitatively different to the ones exemplified in the above excerpt given their flavour and being about human experience (i.e. about something "we could all relate to"). Daily life interrupted by fragmentary memories of childhood, or identity being sedimentations of fragments would not be necessarily, or exclusively, psychotic occurrences. In other words, it could be argued that the fragmentariness about which the text speaks could be the experience of any subject, not necessarily psychotic. However, I am led to suspect otherwise given that a psychotic dimension of fragmentariness in the text can be located in the fact that it is not only spoken about, but also performed in its texture. A psychotic knot in which a radical relation to the symbolic is possible, arguably, accounts for the possibility of such performance.

The narrator, as explained in the previous section, clarifies initially that the characters are his symbolic productions, but now that they have been *written* they are set free to become the object of discourse of the other, specifically the melancholy or the mockery of the other. Arguably, however, the act of 'setting free' the character implies, in fact, the very same act that would 'enslave' the character. One can argue that once any utterance is made, or a character is 'set free' by the act of writing, its 'freedom' lies on the infinity of possibilities of concatenations of further signifiers to it, by the subject or by the other. Anything a character or a symbol may become depends on the infinity of

meaning it may produce. However, the very act of concatenation is at once the exertion of the absolute liberty of the symbol as well as its definition and delimitation of meaning, that is, its 'enslaving'. Arguably, the narrator who concomitantly sets free and enslaves the character, is aware of this, even if he only speaks about liberty and not enslavement of the character. In other words, setting a symbol 'free to mean what it may' implies simultaneously and even if infinitely momentarily, restricting its meaning by the act of speaking, for in the act of speaking it is 'meant' in one way or another by the speaking subject.

We can interpret that such reflection on the part of the narrator entails a degree of awareness of these aspects of the nature and dynamics of the symbol and acts of speech. Therefore, it entails as well an awareness of the temporalities to which discourse and language are bound, namely synchrony and diachrony (Lacan, 1960). Diachronic temporality, discussed previously in detail, is one that necessitates time to unfold – it is chronological. The chain of signifiers  $S_1 - S'$ , represented in the progressive vector of Lacan's graph of desire (Lacan, 1960) is the depiction of such temporal dimension. To this dimension, arguably, corresponds the freedom of meaning of the symbol given that meaning is ever changing due to the concatenation of further signifiers to the chain.

The counterpart of this dimension is what the symbol, even if infinitely momentarily, 'means at that particular point of the chain'. This infinitely ephemeral moment amounts to the delimitation of meaning of the symbol – Lacan's notion of 'point de capiton'. This moment can be more clearly appreciated from the point of view of synchrony, a temporal dimension in which the symbol is what all the other symbols are not and retroactively resignifies other previously uttered symbols (Lacan, 1960).

This does not exhaust all the aspects of these two temporalities, for their interrelation in fact de-stabilises what free and constricted meaning may mean. When these two temporalities are seen as intertwined and operating simultaneously, the fixing of meaning depends on its sliding and vice versa, sliding depends on fixing. They depend on each other so inextricably that neither absolute 'freedom' or 'constriction' of meaning are possible *stricto sensu*. Nevertheless, it can be argued that the narrator is preoccupied by the operation of these temporalities as such in relation to the characters. It is not the effects of meaning that the intertwinement of these temporalities produce, but their very functioning which concerns him.

Arguably, the awareness and preoccupation of the very functioning of these two temporal dimensions implies as well a radical relation to the signifier. The meaning of this radical relation, regarding this point, does not mean an unmediated encounter with the letter, the signifier overtaking the signified nor it returning from the real as Lacan described in the Seminar III (Lacan, 1955 – 1956). It means a form of relation in which the very functioning of the symbol is revealed to the subject; somehow the subject is not only prey of the effects of the signifier, but is able to rise above them and gain insight, for instance, on these two temporalities at play in every act of speech. This, arguably, may be proper of the psychotic structure given that in psychosis the subject gains this form of overview of the apparatus; insight into the nature of, in this case, the symbolic and the imaginary. As discussed, this is something explored by Freud (1910) and Lacan (1955 – 1956, 37) *apropos* Schreber. Freud highlighted that Schreber's description of the 'divine rays' was strikingly similar to his theory of libido. Lacan, on his part, argued that it is akin to the nature of the signifier – their only purpose is to be set in motion, they 'must speak' (Lacan, 1955). Summing up, the narrator's awareness

of these features of every act of speech in relation to the characters, highlights a psychotic dynamic at play in the novel, namely the focus on the functioning of linguistic means, rather than on their effects. It does not follow that every concern about the functioning of symbolic structures is psychotic; a universal claim cannot be made in this sense. Arguably, a case-by-case exploration would be required.

### Text and Language

Throughout the novel there is a clear sense of fragmentariness and distortion conveyed by the linguistic form of the narrative or prose. Leonardo Valencia, argues that the “language of the story is an end in itself, an end so distorted like that which it talks about” (Valencia, 2012, 15). The following excerpt, quoted in Spanish, exemplifies some of these linguistic features, difficult to pin down, as they are rather effects of the unfolding of the prose:

Los tenientes taconeaban por La Ronda.

De la belleza de La Ronda no había para qué preocuparse.

Todo lo más, de estar atentos a una probable sonrisa acogedora que podía iluminar una ventana.

Y si les visitó la manía recordativa como a todos los héroes novelescos, despertar la movida aventura occidental, durante el tiempo de la caza de hombres en las comisiones militares. Como aquéllas en la costa, en que, cuando los criminales alineados a bordo habían perdido el alcance de la playa, a las primeras claridades, después de atarles hierros a los pies, Maestro Luces gritaba a voz en cuello:

-Aclarar la boza

Y un marinero tras un hombre esperaban el disparo de la campana, a cuyo aviso un solo golpe resonaba en el mar; el mismo que, las primeras veces, quedaba resonando largo tiempo en el espíritu con la visión tormentosa de los ahogados.

Por lo menos, en esta historia del mar queda alguna sensación transparente: “Maestro Luces”, el hombre que daba la voz, por su denominación en el barco<sup>56</sup>. (Palacio, 1929, 51).

An example of the fragmentariness of the prose can be located between the second and third paragraphs of the excerpt. The second sentence, in itself a paragraph, explains that the beauty of ‘La Ronda’ was no reason to worry about. The third paragraph begins by stating: “At most, about being attentive to a possible welcoming smile...” The preposition ‘about’ in that paragraph makes reference to the verb ‘worry’ in the previous paragraph. The gap introduced by the paragraph somewhat breaks the link that the preposition ‘about’ ought to sustain between the words ‘worry’ and ‘probable smile’. This break weakens this link and makes difficult understanding the object of communication of the second paragraph. This is further accentuated by the sentence focusing on its subject, the ‘probable smile’, rather than the original subject ‘worry’ and then by the introduction of yet another subject, a direct object of the action of the smile, a window that may be illuminated by it. In this sense, the phenomenon is

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<sup>56</sup> The Lieutenants tapped their heels around La Ronda.

About the beauty of La Ronda there was no reason to worry.

At most, about being attentive to a possible welcoming smile that might light up a window.

And if they were visited by the remembering folly like every other novelesque hero, the Western sense of adventure would awaken like during the time of the manhunts in the military commissions. Like those in the coast in which, when the criminals aligned on board had lost the ability to reach the coast, at dawn after tidying their feet to shackles, Maestro Luces would shout:

-Clear up the bum-fluff!

And a sailor behind a man would wait for the bell to ding, after which only one splash would sound in the sea; the same one that, the first few times, would long resonate within the spirit with the tormenting vision of the drowned.

At least, in this story of the sea remains a transparent sensation: “Maestro Luces”, the man who gave the signal, for his denomination in the boat. (Palacio, 1929, 52)

akin to a cascade of superimposing subjects that prevents focusing on any of them fully, in other words, a flight rather than sliding of meaning.

The fourth paragraph adds to this fragmentary sense. In this paragraph the narrator explains that if the characters, both Lieutenants, were caught in a reverie about their exciting military past, like any 'novelesque hero' would get in a similar moment of the narration, then they would surely remember the days in which men were arrested, taken into the sea and drowned by being thrown off board in shackles. The only allusion about the two Lieutenants being those who would remember this is the personal pronoun 'les' (they in a passive voice). Given that the first sentence is written in a passive voice, the agency of the characters gets importantly weakened. Rather, the sentence reads 'they are visited by the memories...' Further, the sentence is written in the conditional tense, which makes their agency even less apparent: 'were they visited by a memory...' The weakening of the agency of the characters makes the meaning of the prose even more discontinuous for the answer to 'who is performing the action narrated' has no immediately clear answer. Arguably, based on this kind of texture, the agency of the characters is but the sedimentation of that which visits upon them. Therefore, the reader may struggle to see the intention of the character as a leading thread to his actions. In this sense, the texture of the story performs fragmentariness not only of identity of subjects, but also will or intentionality by introducing syntactical distance and distortion between agents and acts.

Another dimension that exemplifies the discontinuity and fragmentariness in the texture of the previous excerpt is the discrepancy amongst the tenses of the sentences that make up the fourth paragraph. The first one is conjugated in past passive voice conditional, the second one in the infinitive; the third one alludes to the past and the

last one is conjugated in the imperfect past. The reader understands that the past is being alluded in the narrative, but finds himself disoriented. The questions the reader arguably poses are how did he get to this point in time? Exactly when did this happen and therefore who is thinking or speaking about this? This, arguably, is a clear sign of disorientation produced by the temporal discrepancy of tenses, carried mostly by verbs, which results in furthering the sense of fragmentariness.

This disorientation, however, occurs whilst a reverie is being recounted, a flight of fancy of the characters. In this sense, the narrative performs the 'experience' of the characters. The texture syntactically performs a flight of fancy in which disorientation, fragmentariness gets conveyed concomitantly to narrating a flight of fancy. This is yet another instance of the texture performing what it is about, this time breaking syntax conventions that would otherwise make the prose more 'easily understandable'. In other words, the prose undermines orientation and unified structures by moving outside syntactical standards that would otherwise enable them. Arguably, operating outside syntactical conventions is a feature of psychotic language. However, not all syntactical conventions are absent in the texture, they are so only to a degree. There is a distance between this texture and the one described by Lacan about Schreber's special language, for instance, full of neologisms. Furthermore, one can argue that not every absence of syntactical conventions is to be understood as psychotic. In this case, however, the argued fact of the text performing its 'aboutness' indicates that this may be the case. All this is not to say, nevertheless, that the prose may not be absolutely fantastic in its proceeding, precisely by what makes it unusual.

Notwithstanding the fragmentariness, the disorientation produced by syntax and narration of the flight of fancy finds two moments of anchor, arguably, of permanence.

The first one is the description of the splashing sound of the unnamed object tied to the shackles of the prisoners bound to drown. We are told that this sound would resonate alongside the memories of the drowned, albeit not in whose memory. The other anchor, 'Maestro Luces', is the name and title of the man in charge of 'giving voice', that is, ordering the execution. Arguably, this corresponds to what the narrator described as garlanding the story opposed to the kernels of truth that actually are what "life is about". If the splash and the voice are indeed the kernels of truth within the garlanding of the story we may assume therefore that the flight of fancy is anchored by a deadly voice and splash. In this sense, arguably, this is yet another instance of the performance of the subjective structure, as explained before, depicted in the schema R by Lacan (1955). The previously explained veil of the symbolic and imaginary may be understood as the garlanded flight of fancy, a sense making dimension which is pierced by the kernels of truth understood as the real, that is, the deadly splash and voice – the most grappling, resonating and permanent elements that escape the sense making dimension.

Another textual attribute worthy of attention is the use of capitalised titles throughout the narrative. These textual fragments, although make sense in relation to the narration and therefore are not completely disjointed from it, produce a sense of a break in the texture. These titles are:

THE EMPTINESS OF VULGARITY

AND

THE TRAGEDY OF GENIALITY

SAN MARCOS

SAN JUAN

LA CHILENA

SAN BLAS

LA RONDA

POOR NEIGHBOURHOODS

Taddee, tadda

THE WAIT FOR THE WOMAN

SEDUCTION ATTEMPT

LIEUTENANT

OF A SOFT WHITE COLOUR

These titles are interspersed within the text all along the story. In each case, arguably, they perform a particular function depending of the context of their appearance in the story. Observably, however, these titles have some features in common. Many of them are street signs of names of places. But, they can be about mostly 'anything', for even 'Tadee, tadda', the humming of a song, achieves this highlighted textual form. Arguably, most of these titles are signs that ought to produce meanings. In some cases they function as announcements of what is to come, in others they function as names of places, signifiers that by themselves do not produce any meaning, oxymorons or hyperbolic affirmations.

It is difficult to pin down the exact reason why these sentences are written thus. The hypothesis can be advanced, however, of these loose fragments of the narrative corresponding to the elements that achieve some measure of permanence within the garlanding of the story, a recurrent preoccupation and theme of the text. In other words, it can be argued that these sentences are kernels of symbolic truth akin to the splashing of water and the voice from the previous excerpt, the crooked toenail of the chemist discussed in the previous section, and so forth. Thus far, however, I have

understood those elements as kernels of truth erupting through the symbolic and imaginary veil, that is, disrupting the consistency of meaning. These titles have a similar function, except that they are symbolic in nature given that they are signifiers, sometimes 'pure' signifiers like 'Taddee, tadda'. In this sense, they could be understood as signifiers with a real quality to them, perhaps, like signifiers in the place of the real. They are not, however, completely disjointed symbolic elements that are encountered by the subject in the form of a 'false perception' or hallucination. Their real would reside in their weighty quality, in the fact that their capitalisation and suddenness pierce the narration and, perhaps, in their recurrence as well. In other words, their real would reside in their functioning as anchors. In this sense, yet again, the text is found performing its 'aboutness', namely discontinuity caused by the erupting elements that anchor, resonate and remain beyond the garlanding of the narration. This, as argued, may be understood as psychotic because it implies an insight or awareness of the way in which subjective dynamics function; what I have called elsewhere an insight into the dynamics of the 'apparatus' rather than being a simple effect of it.

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## Lateral Light

### Summary

Lateral Light (1926) is a short story narrated in the first person. The narrator is a thirty-year-old man who recounts the mishaps of his relationship with his wife Amelia and who seems tormented by what firstly appears petty or minutiae. The story begins with the description of Amelia and the reasons why the narrator married her, followed by the reasons why the life of the narrator is *almost* perfect. What spoils the narrator's love life is a mannerism that Amelia does when she speaks. She uses the pet word 'obviously'<sup>57</sup> in a condescending, patronising and annoying fashion when she explains why the narrator is wrong to think or act in a specific way. The narrator attributes this nuisance with all the unhappiness of his life.

The story progresses somewhat linearly until the point in which Amelia, using this particular word disliked by the narrator, makes him a sexual proposition. He finds this so disturbing that he punches her in the face and leaves. As he walks down the street he meets Paula, a woman we are told is somewhat like a tramp. He follows her to her house where they spend ten days together.

On the eighth day, the narrator recounts, he dreams that he goes to the doctor. The next thing he knows is being hit with a fifty-three-kilogram mace and being pricked with ten-centimetre pins in the heart. The narrative at this point becomes disjointed and clunky. The narrator sees a man that scares him and threatens to slit his throat

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<sup>57</sup> The word in Spanish is '*claro*'. It translates literally as '*clear*' (or clearly). Whilst this meaning is important to keep in mind in what will be explained further on, I translated it to '*obviously*' for it to retain the effect that the narrator dislikes.

with four shaving knives, which he passes around his own neck, and then hides under Paula's bed. The narrator then sees his future children wounded; he sees them as dry, implausible fossils with white eyeballs. He recounts of visions of his future self whose internal organs are destroyed by the *Treponema Pallidum*.

It is unclear if the last scene of the story, which follows, is still part of the so-called dream or refers to an actual event. The narrator describes a visit to the church of the village, which he particularly likes because it has a stone statue of the Virgin in the façade. He continues by describing a painting of the Virgin that is inside the church and has an inscription, which is reproduced in the text in a stencil form. He then goes out to the country, and in solitude, he shouts to the pitch-black darkness of the night: "Treponema Pallidum, Treponema Pallidum".

In the story there are a few somewhat bizarre elements that interrupt the narration. On two occasions, the narrator is called by a woman, Maria, to have lunch. The narrator explains that he hates being called for lunch and that this ruins his good mood. The second time this happens, he refuses to attend. Further, the word Treponema (or Treponema Pallidum – the bacteria of Syphilis) surges in moments of cleavage of the story, like when he punches Amelia or recounts the dream. Twice in the story, the narrator makes reference to an old, broken kitchen utensil<sup>58</sup> that he keeps in a crystal urn to which he seems to have a loving attachment. The narrator brings it about in a somewhat disjointed and irruptive fashion, the meaning of which remains enigmatic.

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<sup>58</sup> It is unclear which utensil the narrator refers to, but the Spanish word he uses (*cacharro*) makes reference to an old, rusty, tin-made utensil.

## Phenomenological Reading

The story begins to unfold told by an omniscient narrator who is also a character. He first begins by situating himself in time and circumstance, explaining that he is not old or young, but his old looks are attributable to Amelia, the girl whom he married. He explains he had to wait until she was old enough to marry as well as the importance of her paleness. Crimson lips, the narrator explains, reminds him of flesh and blood, which makes him nervous – as is the case with all men, he seems to think. This seems to be an attempt to locate Amelia alongside women who do not make men nervous, in other words, to posit her as non-persecutory.

The narration is suddenly interrupted by an extra-textual call for lunch. In the text we have notice of the narrator's response to that call, but not of the call itself. The flow of the narration is interrupted by a voice, which the reader cannot hear or read, but to which the narrator replies. One can liken this textual phenomenon to that described by Lacan (1955- 1956) in relation to Schreber's message phenomena. The narrator, who up until that point was a speaking subject, becomes a spoken-to/speaking subject. This has an effect of perplexing, but also one of making the subject 'nervous', as he explains. He must interrupt his narration in order to answer the call for lunch.

When the narration continues, the narrator elaborates on the reasons for his utter unhappiness. The main reason for it, he tells us, is Amelia's use of the word "obviously!"<sup>59</sup> This is striking as it highlights a tremendous persecutory potential of a signifier usually uttered by Amelia to frustrate the narrator's wishes. This signifier, according to the narrator's own words, has the potential to 'obscure' his life. The

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<sup>59</sup> The Spanish word is 'claro!' which would translate literally into 'clear' or 'clearly'.

persecutory effect of this signifier is transposing the positive into the negative (i.e. clear into obscure - equivocal of meaning and light conditions). The narrator explains how that signifier has the effect of calling him an idiot or being challenged to a duel. This signifier has a different flavour than others for the narrator, as it has a sort of 'concrete' existence. The narrator explains his desire of "shoving that signifier up Amelia's nose"; "suffocate it down her mouth with a kiss that angrily presses mucosae until making them bleed" or spitting that word instead of saying it. 'Obviously!' is a signifier that can be concretely manipulated in the same realm as the body. In other words, it is a signifier that has been split from its symbolic function and felt to operate, one could argue, in the real.

Further on, the narrator tells us that his love for Amelia is similar to the one of the forgotten mother and of that broken old utensil kept in a crystal urn. At this point of the story we encounter a derailment of sense in the prose of the story. It begins to be unclear how the ideas that the narrator expresses connect to each other. The reflection of the narrator upon the word "broken old utensil"<sup>60</sup> leads him to say that he would like to be covered and cuddled by that shovelful of r's. This expression about the subjective experience of these signifiers is noteworthy. The succession of rolled r's in these signifiers (i.e. rr-o-rr-o in the original Spanish) is homonymous to the word "rorro", which in Spanish means 'little boy'. This leads us to understand this signifying effect as related either to parental or filial love. Further on in the story, the narrator makes reference to his future children, damaged by the *Treponema Pallidum*. In this sense, this bundle of signifiers may relate to the subject's dreaded fatherhood or childhood.

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<sup>60</sup> In Spanish 'cacharro roto' (the pronunciation of these two word implies a succession of rolled r's and o's: rr-o-rr-o).

Furthermore, the fashion with which the narrator explains his relation to the signifiers broken old utensil (*chacharro roto*) points to a split between the signifier and its signifying function. The accent is put on the letter rather than on the signifier as a symbolic entity that ought to produce signification. In this sense, I encounter a psychotic feature of the subjective relation to language (Lacan 1955 -1956) in the form of reification of words.

Further on in the story, we face a point of cleavage in which the narrator explains how he punches Amelia due to a sexual innuendo. She insinuates herself to the narrator using the dreaded signifier “obviously!” which leads the narrator to punch her in the face and leave. At this point I locate an insufficiency of the symbolic and the imaginary for the subject. These registers break down as the main vehicles of subjective meaning, and the subject is left but with the option to act out, that is, to punch her.

As he encounters Paula, the first thing the narrator asks her is whether she can say ‘obviously!’ This is striking, as it is an attempt to establish a symbolic status of Paula: is she to be located along the series of symbolic elements related to the dreaded signifier or not? We could understand this as an attempt to establish whether Paula belongs to the persecutory symbolic system governed by the signifier ‘obviously!’ Establishing Paula’s place in the symbolic order seems an attempt to re-establish it as a whole. He then goes off with her and spends ten days with her in her flat. The narrator can, as he has determined, have sexual contact with Paula given she does not belong to the persecutory symbolic system to which Amelia belongs. In other words, the symbolic structure is not at risk with Paula as it is with Amelia.

From this point onwards, the tense in which the story is recounted changes. The narrator explains he has a dream and recounts it in the present instead of the past

imperfect, which would allow linguistically for the metaphorical effect of the dream. Instead, the persecutory dream is recounted without tense-mediation, without *as-if* dimension. The events of the dream are strikingly horrid and *prophetic*, that is, they lack the metaphoric function that would be expected in a dream, and they come across as real. The narrator is haunted by symbolic elements, like numbers, that seem meaningless yet anxiety provoking (e.g. the weight of the mace, the length of the pins in his heart). The narrator dreams about a terrible, cruel persecutor and a horrible future embodied by his future children. Interspersed in the dream, the signifier *Treponema Pallidum* appears once again. This signifier is the name of the bacteria of syphilis; therefore in this context can be taken as the 'name of madness', which is to come from an infection transmitted by sexual contact. It can potentially be understood as part of the persecutory system to which Amelia and the signifier 'obviously!' belong. In the last part of the story, we encounter a sort of coming back together of the narrative. It is re-established as a vehicle of meaning, as a possible register of expression of subjective reality. In it, the narrator describes a visit to the church of the village. The narrator makes reference to the cardinal points, to direction as symbolic coordinates re-established. The church could be understood as a symbolic jamb that would set things back in place. The narrator describes a statue of the Virgin Mary in the façade, as well as a painting of the Virgin inside the church. He reproduces in a stencil-like form an inscription in the painting of the Virgin, which corresponds to the old colonial form of writing. Incidentally, this form of writing allows for broken signifiers to fit into a shape, in this case, a square. A sort of reintroduction to the symbolic realm of the brokenness of the symbolic, therefore, takes place. Furthermore, the name of the virgin is the same as the woman who calls him for lunch. The garb of the Virgin is,

the narrator tells us, the same colour as the old broken utensil, which has a green rusty coloration. This set of signifiers point once again to a parental or filial set of signifiers. One could venture that these signifiers have the imaginary signification of comfort amidst the persecutory, that is, of somehow holding together what was otherwise broken or coming undone.

This encounter with all these symbolic elements allows the narrator not to be persecuted by the signifiers *Treponema Pallidum*, but to be able to utter them. In this sense, something occurs in the last part of the story that changes the subjective economy. I notice this in the description of the narrator of his shouting of *Treponema Pallidum* into the concave loneliness of the night – which is other than the persecutory anxiety in which he was previously caught.

### Analysis

Amelia qua imaginary element in the story plays a twofold role. Initially, she seems to be the support of the symbolic element that binds the subject to the symbolic order as well as that which *interdicts*. Amelia is a symbolic element that is dependent upon time; the narrator explains she had to “grow up” to marry her. Therefore, beyond its imaginary function of being the love object of the narrator, Amelia is described as that which binds to time, that is, to the symbolic order. Concomitantly, she brings to light the limits of the world, that which is beyond the narrator’s control and therefore annoys him. In this sense, she is as well the support of the symbolic prohibiting or interdicting function.

Amelia's interdicting function is visible in what firstly appears as an all-too neurotic dynamics. The narrator tells us about the vicissitudes of this prohibiting function and how it annoys him. He bitterly describes Amelia's use of the word "obviously!" [clearly/clear]. The symbolic function of this phrase is better understood in the words of the narrator, as the use of this word 'obviously!' ['clear'] *obscures* his life. The transposition of '*clear*' into its opposite, '*obscure*' is what leads us to believe that Amelia is an imaginary entity that supports the Name-of-the-Father as the symbolic element whose function is to prohibit. The signifier uttered by Amelia has the effect of transposing into the opposite, she interdicts, in fact, with remarkable efficacy<sup>61</sup>. The imaginary effects of this interdiction are visible in the narrator's complaints about Amelia's use of this word: 'I cannot go out [obviously!] because of the weather', 'I don't like the hats because [obviously!] they're out of fashion', 'I cannot host our guests because [obviously!] I'm indisposed', and so forth. We infer, therefore, that the narrator is annoyed by the operation of the Law. Furthermore, there is a third element (weather, fashion, illness) that does not allow them (via Amelia) to do what they had in mind in each case. In this sense, and in line with Lacan and Freud's ideas, as long as there is prohibition, there is civilisation, neurosis (a tripartite structure of relation) and discontent (Freud, 1930).

However, the symbolic function of the prohibition breaks down in the story and brings neurosis and *jouissance* of discontent to an end by inaugurating a stage of untamed *jouissance*. The narrator tells us he was "dancing on a table of logarithms" just before it happened. This enigmatic phrase points to a moment of playful relation to the

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<sup>61</sup> The Latin root of the word interdict (prohibit) are *inter* (in between) and *dicere* (to say). Indeed, Amelia utters 'obviously!' in between the phrases that discourage the narrator.

signifier, both in the metaphor used to describe it as well as the signification it produces. Then, Amelia utters the dreaded 'obviously!' in a phrase used *not to forbid but to provoke a sexual encounter by attempting to seduce the narrator*. His reaction is to punch her in the face and escape the scene. This point of cleavage in the story shows the breakdown of the Name-of-the-Father qua forbidding symbolic agency. The narrator moves from the plane of the signifier to the plane of the 'act' by punching Amelia, for he cannot bind the effect of the breakdown of the Law to the symbolic order. In this sense, the imaginary and symbolic sense-making function breaks down and the subject is left off with the impossibility to bind *jouissance* to the symbolic realm. We can locate at this point the undoing of the knot of the three registers, being the subject left with the only option to punch Amelia and leave. The consequent disjointedness of the prose of the narrative is but confirmation of this happening. In the prose I do not find a break of linkage between words and their meaning altogether, but I find a radical change in its flow. The narrative becomes somewhat disjointed and there is a marked ambiguity in the meaning of some phrases. The story, certainly, acquires what could be called a manic flavour; a flight of one phrase into the next one – meaning not meaning but confusing the reader forward.

After the narrator punches Amelia and runs away, he meets Paula on the street and asks her 'if she knows how to say 'obviously!' Whilst the obvious imaginary take on that is that he is checking that Paula is unlike Amelia, in fact the opposite can be interpreted if understood symbolically: an attempt to re-establish the symbolic prohibition. In this sense it could be said that the narrator in fact checks if Paula is anything like Amelia. This partial yet unsuccessful attempt to re-establish the law will lead the narrator to spend ten days in Paula's place. Although we know he stayed

there ten days, the narration of what occurred therein has a timeless and delusional flavour; not only the narrative suddenly becomes even more disjointed and senseless but there is a breakdown of the space of symbolic mediation in the texture. In this sense, the breaking of that which prohibits and binds to time may be thus recognised by its effects in the story and in the text. The subject is left in what could be portrayed as a timeless and disjointed sea of *jouissance* of the persecutory.

Treponema Pallidum (or Treponema) is an interesting symbolic entity to interrogate in the context of the story. Treponema Pallidum<sup>62</sup> is the name of the bacteria of syphilis. At the time when the short story was written, having syphilis was almost a guarantee of madness followed by death. In this sense, the story may be about the narrator's experience, or persecutory fear of being diagnosed with syphilis. However, the hypothesis that Treponema Pallidum, as a signifier, is a symbolic entity that produces effects as well as meaning can be advanced. Therefore, it can be the object of an interrogation if taken merely as a symbolic entity.

Treponema Pallidum (in fact sharing its materiality with Pálida and Paletada<sup>63</sup>) in this sense, may be understood as the signifier of madness and death. It is, in addition, the only symbolic element in the story that is not *stricto sensu* written in Spanish, but in its etymological ancestor, Latin. Furthermore, Treponema Pallidum is a name, therefore a pure signifier. In this sense Treponema Pallidum stands for the function of the signifier as such.

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<sup>62</sup> The author writes 'Treponema' or 'Treponema Pálido'. Although it is translation of the original Latin into Spanish, this name is not strictly speaking in Spanish.

<sup>63</sup> Pale (pálida) and shovelful (paletada) in English. These two signifiers can be found across the story and reduced to 'Pal'. 'Pal' and 'Palacio' share the signifying materiality pal. This will be discussed in the discussion of this part as well as in the final discussions of this research

The appearance of *Treponema Pallidum* in the story is interesting to observe. The first appearance of the signifier *Treponema* is just before the narrator punches Amelia and runs away, that is, just before the failure of the prohibiting function of the Name-of-the-Father. It appears disjointed from the rest of the prose, disrupting the flow of events in the narrative, as if throwing the narrator off balance. In fact, it appears right after the narrator begins to reflect, somewhat enigmatically and bizarrely, upon the old broken utensil that he keeps in a crystal urn. The second time, it appears in the account of the dream when the narrator sees the *Treponema Pallidum* breaking his veins and destroying his internal organs. The third time it appears is at the end of the story, being *Treponema Pallidum* the last word the narrator utters as he recounts how he shouts this name, this signifier to the concave dark loneliness of the night.

We can observe the movement of this symbolic element first as a disjointed signifier in the prose, then as a persecutory element proper in the account of the dream or, as we will hypothesise in detail further on, as a delusional or hallucinatory element. Thirdly, as an utterance –a very important one– of the narrator to the void space. This movement may be understood as a clear depiction of a signifier that, having lost its link to other signifiers in the chain, returns from the real as a hallucination or delusion and then once again is bound to it in a final utterance. The return from the real of this signifier may be attributed to the breakdown of the symbolic law. The possibility to utter it in the final phrase may be attributed to the operation of the *Sinthome*, which binds together imaginary, symbolic and real once again, as we will explore further on. There are quite a few elements in the texture of the story that can be likened to Lacan's description of psychotic speech structure in the Seminar III (1955 – 1956).

At the moment of the narrator being at Paula's place, he explains that he has a dream. We may contest that this indeed was a dream due to the structure of the account. The first part seems linear and is narrated in the past continuous tense (Spanish past imperfect) so the metaphoric dimension, the 'as if it were real' of the dream operates. Then, quite suddenly, the story of the dream becomes persecutory and the narrator tells us about the man who threatens him with shaving knives and hides under Paula's bed. From that point on, there is a sudden change in the tense of the narration, it is recounted in present, breaking therefore the mediation of the 'as if' dimension of the account of the dream. We could, therefore, venture a hypothesis of that second part being an account of what effectively occurs to the subject in the form of a delusion or a hallucination. If this were the case, we could understand the future children of the narrator as entities akin to *code phenomena*, that is, as instances of imaginary entities that have an identical structure to that of the signifier and that appear to the subject without mediation. The subject, then, envisages future signifiers that are blind, dry, quartered, puzzlingly fossilised and wounded - signifiers that operate as inoperant.

The disjointedness of the story from then on, as we explained, points to an *alteration in the metonymic flow of signifiers*. There are sudden halts, interruptions, and the linkage based on the slippage of signification often leaps causing in the reader a sense of perplexity.

There are some phenomena that could be likened to what we have characterised as the *psychotic reification of words*. Each of these phenomena has particular features that deserve closer attention. Just before the first appearance of the word Treponema, the narrator recounts in a somewhat disjointed prose that he has an old-broken utensil in a crystal urn. The narrator reflects on the sound of the words "old broken utensil"

(*cacharro roto* in Spanish), explaining that he likes the sound of the last syllable of the first word and the first syllable of the second. These two syllables render a sound “rro-ro” that the narrator likes. The homonymous word “rorro” in Spanish means little boy. By the account of the broken old utensil, and the narrator’s express desire to cuddle in that ‘shovelful of r’s’, we may infer that this is a group of signifiers that relate to his childhood – either parental or filial. The fact that it is through the sound, the materiality of the signifier “rorro” that we learn about this link to the chain, points to one of the qualities of the symbolic order in a psychotic structure. Furthermore, the description of the sound of these two syllables as a ‘shovelful’ points to the subjective experience of that signifier, perhaps, as something that buries the subject, or makes a hole in him.

There is an instance in which the narrator refers to what we, as readers, hypothesise is Amelia’s mannerism. The narrator then hesitates whether or not to actually pronounce the word. He in fact refuses to say it and explains that he prefers to spit the word into a spittoon, talks about how nauseous this word makes him feel and ends the phrase with an ellipsis. Although somewhat figuratively yet based on quite a concrete operation, the reader gets the impression that the narrator literally spat the word outside the symbolic – a quality of silencing possible only if words were concrete, reified.

One of the main features of psychosis is that *the speaking subject becomes spoken-to*. Throughout the story, a woman called Maria calls the narrator for lunch. The narrator explains that he dislikes very much to be called for lunch. In fact, the author likens the effect of Amelia’s mannerism to the effect of being called for lunch. The call for lunch occurs externally to the narrative and in fact interrupts it. The spoken-to subject is a dimension that puzzles the subject and compels him to respond. It splits

the subject and includes forcefully the “the external” into the “internal world” – hence the narrator’s experience, arguably, of being compelled and indeed intruded by it.

It is interesting to note that the name of the woman who calls the narrator for lunch is Maria. It is also, of course, the name of the Virgin that he then sees as a statue and painting at the end of the narration. This, we may hypothesise, is not coincidental and to it we turn.

Maria’s extra-textual calls for lunch have an almost unbearable effect on the narrator. The calls are interspersed all along the story. When this happens he expresses his discontent about being called for lunch and interrupts the narration. At these moments, we encounter a divided subject – a subject that first hears and then speaks out his psychic productions. The narrator addresses the reader, who is of course external to the narrative, and tells him about the calls for lunch. The callings are made by Maria, a character who is external to the narration as well. If the narrative and the text are thought as the symbolic universe of the story, the callings as well as the replies are addressed to a place that is heterogeneous to the symbolic universe, extra-textual. Arguably, these originate and are addressed to the real. If I ventured this hypothesis, remarkable similarities are found to the structure of the psychotic subject, who is being called by voices beyond the symbolic and to which he replies within the symbolic addressing them beyond it. In this sense, arguably, the symbolic reappears in the real in psychosis.

Concomitantly to these calls, the subject is haunted by the *Treponema Pallidum*; by its returns as a disjointed signifier and as a persecutory hallucinatory or delusional entity. However, at the end of the story the narrator is able to shout “*Treponema Pallidum*”, that is, to place himself in the position of speaking subject instead of

spoken-to and to utter this name instead of hearing it. How is the narrator able to do this?

If we take the signifier “*Treponema Pallidum*” as a disjointed signifier or hallucinatory and delusional entity, it may be argued that the shouting of this signifier to the void of the night may be taken as a *sinthome*, that is, as a reintroduction to the symbolic order of the signifier by the subject now occupying the position of speaking subject. If this were the case, it would mean that the once unknotted imaginary, symbolic and real are once again knotted by this call. Where are we able to locate the real, symbolic and imaginary in a knot again? It can be hypothesised that this is visible in the encounter with the Virgin Mary at the church in the scene prior to the shout and is confirmed by the prose of the story regaining its pace.

The narrator recounts his visit to the church of the village where there is a sculpture and a painting of the Virgin Mary. The association to the old, broken utensil, the image of the Virgin and the inscription on the painting may well be thought as the three registers being bound together. The association, having returned, would be taken as the real, the image of the Virgin as the imaginary and the inscription at the bottom of the painting as the symbolic.

The inscription, albeit broken and to some extent being a reification of language (based in the way it appears in the text), link the Virgin with the broken, old utensil<sup>64</sup>. In that sense, a signifier that is inhabited, invested (the old, broken utensil) is linked with the Virgin Mary, at once Maria who calls for lunch and a sign of pity and fruitful sexuality without sin or disease. That which is alive in the narrator, therefore, is at play

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<sup>64</sup> The narrator explains that the garment of the Virgin has a similar colour as the broken, old utensil. The garment of the Virgin is described in the square inscription.

in this encounter. This knot between the three registers around the Virgin makes possible for the narrator to make out of his symptom, a *sinthome*. He then shouts *Treponema Pallidum* to the concave solitude of the night– the persecution of the signifier from the real becomes then loneliness and darkness of the night. Maria, now as the Virgin, who during the story called the narrator for lunch, now is silent and does not appear in a heterogeneous space to the narrative, but within it. She is no longer speaking and the narrator the spoken-to subject, the narrator occupies the speaking subject position, Maria is in the three registers and the subject is able to shout “*Treponema Pallidum*” as opposed to encountering it in a persecutory form.

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## **Women Gaze the Stars (1927)**

### Summary

The story begins with the description of Juan Gual's ambivalent relationship to history. We are told he loves it, on the one hand, but he has also been damaged by it. The omniscient narrator occasionally switches roles with the historian, elicited by the equivocal meanings of the words story and history in Spanish. The narrator begins by reflecting upon the nature of history and literature, as well as of mad and sane men. The narrator's reflections, however, are interrupted by a dialogue between Juan Gual and his copyist. Juan Gual dictates what the copyist should write and the latter replies with the last words Gual has uttered so as to signal that he has taken note of what he says. In this way, the initial part of the story unfolds, between the narrator's reflections and the occurrence of the dialogue between Juan Gual and the copyist.

The event that disrupts this flow is the entrance of Juan Gual's wife into the scene. The narrator describes the circumstances of their relationship: he is much older than her and suffers from occasional sexual impotence. The narrator explains that Juan Gual often must wait for 'potency being greater than resistance'. The narrator insists upon the helplessness of such situation, and explains that having a son or daughter in Juan Gual's situation would be absurd.

In a rather poetic and somewhat convoluted fashion, the narrator explains that the copyist and Rosalía, Juan Gual's wife, have had an affair and feel ashamed about it. Further on, we learn that when Juan Gual and Rosalía were about to have intercourse, he caressed her lower abdomen and realised she is pregnant. He jumps off

scandalised, they argue, she feels ashamed and so does he. The narrator describes the bitterness that they both experience, the feelings of remorse and loneliness both go through.

Juan Gual right away knows that the copyist is to be blamed and violently brings him to the office. The copyist does not defend himself, but puts some resistance. Juan Gual swallows all his anger and merely says that 'it is over with the girl'. He then continues, with a trembling voice, his dictation to the copyist. The narrator finishes the story by stating the simple fact that up until today they have two children. The phrase is somewhat undecidable about whom does it refer to.

#### Phenomenological reading

The narration begins with the introduction of the focaliser, Juan Gual, the historian. We are told that Juan Gual loves history like a loved woman, and that *she* has pulled his hair and scratched his face. The post-structuralist critique of history holds history as a discursive practice that claims the truth of the facticity of its object of discourse, that is, what is said or written in history, ostensibly *happened*. Otherwise, its discourse would be indistinguishable from that of fiction (LaCapra 2008). It follows that Juan Gual has an ambivalent relation to discourse that claims the facticity of its object. The description, therefore, leaves the reader with the impression that the pretence of the symbolic being identical to its real correlate has left off marks in Juan Gual's body.

The omniscient narrator then continues to reflect upon other *symbolic* practices such as literature and football. He calls those who practice them 'maniacs', referring to their foolishness. He suggests that walking on a tightrope and becoming a prisoner of the

sunshade of reason is what these figures are bound. As opposed to the madman, he continues, because madmen can 'squeeze the absurd up to the glands'. The narrator assigns to them the highest of intellectual categories. What is the difference between historians, literates, footballers, on the one hand; and madmen on the other? According to the narrator the difference is that unlike mad men, the others are caught up in *reason*. Based on what he previously explains, reason can be understood as the insistence upon the symbolic and the imaginary being tied up with the real. Madness, that is when symbolic, imaginary and real are not knotted, allows the subject to experience each of them, particularly the real without mediation and not by mediation (and consequent limitation) of what the narrator calls 'reason'. In this sense, I assume that the narrator is mad, or is able to experience the 'perks' of madness, and Juan Gual on the other hand is not. Given the narrator's awareness of these things he ought to be mad, whereas Juan Gual would be caught up within reason, as historians 'would be'. However, the words *history* and *story* are homonyms in Spanish. Therefore, the identification between the narrator (or *storyteller*) and Juan Gual the historian is left in undecidability, as is the *madness* or *reason* of both.

Following this passage, there is an interesting textual phenomenon that occurs, arguably, in accordance to the undecidability of the separate identities of the narrator and Juan Gual, as well as their madness and reason. The narrator and Juan Gual switch symbolic places. The narrator states "Juan Gual the historian" but goes on telling *facts* (like historical facts) about Juan Gual, symbolic entities that are meant to describe undisputable real kernels. Whilst listing these features, an interruption occurs in the text. It is as if the right to speak had been snatched off the narrator and someone else spoke instead. I assume it is the historian, Juan Gual, who speaks; but in fact the

identity of the snatcher is left undecidable as well. The passage that the snatcher recounts is disjointed from the rest of the narration and introduces a character, María Augusta. She is unknown, occupies no role in the original narration and does not appear in it again; her place, as is that of the whole passage, is the disruption of the narration from some heterogeneous narrative space. The snatcher brags about his ability to tell far more interesting pieces of information than the novelist, that is the narrator, precisely because these pieces of information would be more interesting since they correspond to factual reality – they are like historical facts. Given the sexual connotation of the scene recounted about Maria Augusta, the more ‘real’ it is, the more exciting it becomes. He recounts a scene in which María Augusta voluptuously comes out of the bath, looks at herself naked in the mirror and dresses up. Thus, the snatcher introduces a sort of critique to ‘reason’, to the overindulgent reflective scholarly way of reflection, but also to the storytelling in which symbols do not claim any facticity or reference to the real. In so doing, the snatcher disrupts all possibilities: reason and madness are neither viable at once.

The narration continues. Given the disruptions and disagreements between the characters and the narrator in what touches ‘story’ (or symbolic practice) and ‘real events’, the events of the narration gain a sort of independence from those who tell them. In this sense, the reader gets the sense that the dialogue between Juan Gual and the copyist happens independently to the narrator’s will, in spite of it or transcending it. In this sense, I encounter a dimension of autonomy of the symbolic register, that is, its non-dependence upon the speaking subject. Furthermore, I get a sense of the real, as it independently imposes itself over the symbolic and imaginary dimension previously established by the discussions between the narrator and the

snatcher. I get a sense of pettiness of the real as well, as the dialogues between them are mundane and have orthography errors. It is noteworthy, nevertheless, how these simple, disrupted phrases that are the depiction of a scene between Juan Gual and the copyist account for two important dimensions of subjectivity: speaking and writing. The text itself does so; by means of the orthographic error visible only in the written; thus an accent on the difference between writing and speaking is laid.

The narration continues with yet another moment of identification between narrator and character. The narrator explains, in a slightly sarcastic tone, that he cares for Juan Gual as much as Juan Gual cares about the inhabitants of Callayruc (a fictional little town, the derisory name of which denotes little importance). In this sense, the narrator could be saying that “each cares equally about his own symbolic productions”. Textually, the narrator describes Juan Gual as if he were real, and seemingly addresses the reader directly when he does so. For whom else the narrator would be addressing this sentence about Juan Gual? This can be understood in many ways. One could argue that in fact the narrator cares a great deal about Juan Gual, a fictional character who is, however, identical to the narrator in this aspect. One could also argue that the narrator resolves the conflict of the symbol’s claim to facticity, for symbols would matter regardless of it; perhaps they matter because they are one’s own. Or perhaps it is the other way around, by showing the importance of the symbol for a symbol, the narrator may be saying, “I must be someone else’s symbol too” (in the sense that there may be something greater than him that causes him). In that sense, everyone would matter very little; only to the Other we would matter as a symbol. One should keep in mind what the narrator stated originally in relation to

madness and its ability to gain visibility of the real so that the dimension of these textual effects gains relevance.

The following sentence has a further striking effect. We do not really know who utters it, but confirms the supposed “sanity, yet foolishness” of the storyteller: “the storyteller is a maniac”. This means that, like historians and the others, the storyteller attempts to rely upon reason too much and is imprisoned by it. It could be assumed that the storyteller refers to the narrator, but at this point it can refer to Juan Gual or even to the author or the reader. The second sentence makes the relevance of the first both grow and collapse: “we’re all maniacs, those who are not are strange animals”. This can be understood as “those who do not rely too much on reason are strange animals”. Nevertheless, the utterance of this very sentence points to the fact that the narrator does not rely too much on reason; therefore he is a strange animal. In other words, by making a “mad” statement about his own “reason”, in the narration the difference between reason and madness collapses. In so doing, the narrator reveals, a dimension of the symbolic register: its intrinsic undecidability, which the imaginary register is meant to ‘decide’.

The collapse between reason and madness, that is, a sort of unmediated appreciation of the real as it is versus one mediated by the symbolic and the imaginary (understood as ‘reason’) continues in the following paragraphs. The narrator extends an invitation to enjoy simple things, like the good weather. However, immediately the simple thing is problematised by the ‘over use’ of reason, as the narrator describes the things under the sun in a highly sophisticated, intellectualised, reason-like way. Nevertheless, what becomes accessible by means of the over intellectualisation, arguably, is yet another

dimension of the real, one to which only madmen could access. In this sense, overusing reason and madness are, yet again, collapsed in undecidability.

The narration continues and we are introduced finally to the copyist and we gain more knowledge about Juan Gual. In these passages, we gain insight into the vicissitudes of the dispute between the symbolic and the real. Each register, the narrator explains, can overcome and challenge the other. A 'name can spoil a person' (the copyist being called Temistocles and not Earnest) or 'cooking rice can be puzzling if you are an engineer'. In the former, the symbolic dimension 'ruins' the real; in the latter the real does not match the symbolic. At the end of this paragraph, we encounter again the autonomous dialogue that has been, as it were, occurring in parallel to this unfolding – autonomously, like a reminder of some form of truth happening whilst the narrator rambled. Paradoxically, Juan Gual is a historian, yet he is simply talking to the copyist who writes what he says – he is more of a storyteller than a historian who claims the facticity of what is being written. Finally, the first true event of the story occurs, a woman walks into the room, kisses Juan Gual but looks at the copyist suspiciously. A triangular imaginary scene is thus set. The narrator, who by now has almost completely adopted the character of the historian (thereby inverting by implication almost completely the roles of Juan Gual and the narrator) gives three 'hard facts' which leave no doubt about the love affair between the partner of Juan Gual and the copyist – their ages and the fact that Juan Gual is a bit 'lazy', that is, an innuendo about Juan Gual's low sexual drive.

Juan Gual's sexual drive becomes the focus of the story. The narrator tells us with a remarkable, unwitting resemblance to Freud's drive theory that Juan Gual must wait for the moment of *potency* being greater than *resistance*. History, explains the

narrator, has that *defect* as its *effect*. The narrator, it seems, mocks the pettiness of Juan Gual's symptom. In so doing, the dimension of the 'downside' of neurosis – being trapped within reason, or when the symbolic, real and imaginary are knotted – is brought up.

The narration continues and there is a change in the flow of the prose. Reflection upon events becomes as it were a normal feature of the narrative. In a more freely intellectual, bound-by-reason sort of prose the narrator depicts the sexual impotence of Juan Gual as well as the feelings of shame it causes in him. The narrator explains that there is not much to do but wait and observe one's life – Juan Gual cannot do but wait until potency is greater than resistance. In a separate sentence, itself a paragraph, the narrator reveals more straightforwardly, yet by means of a metaphor, that the copyist, Temistocles, and Rosalía, have had an affair.

The description of how Juan Gual finds out about the affair resembles the interactions described before between the symbolic and the real. The first thing that is recounted is Juan Gual's reaction – a jump. The real precedes the symbolic, over-brims it. But in a sort of *après-coup* fashion, we learn that in an intimate moment with Rosalía he touched her lower abdomen and realised she was pregnant. The prose, although not interrupted, feels fragmented as if the symbolic were trying to catch up with what has occurred, as if language were trying to symbolise the unexpected. Language fails repeatedly: Juan Gual spits over Rosalía, he asks her what has she done, she responds with the same question and Juan Gual cannot respond. The internal dialogue provided by the narrator explains that Juan Gual knows he has done nothing, that is, he has not had intercourse with Rosalía, and he feels ashamed by this. Indeed, he can only *wait*. The narrator explains: they are both right, both feeling ashamed and

angry. The interaction between bodies and symbolic elements in this segment is noteworthy: Juan Gual swallows the cone of loneliness, Juan Gual feels the reproach whipping his face, loneliness punches him in the face, his reproaches to her are thin *like a comma*.

What occurs next and is ostensibly the last scene of the story is Juan Gual's reaction towards the copyist. The narrator recounts that Juan Gual grabs the copyist by the ear and forces him to sit by the desk. Juan Gual's impotent anger is akin to his sexual impotence. One expects in the story an explosion of anger, a fight that actually never comes. Instead, Juan Gual utters a small, almost broken phrase to the copyist signalling that 'it's over with the girl'. The phrase is so broken that the reader does not get a clear conclusion about whose relationship is over, Rosalía and Temistocles or Juan Gual? Nevertheless, Juan Gual forces the copyist to continue writing, to take dictation from him. Thus Juan Gual attempts to assert his mastery over the copyist. It is a symbolic act, of course, in which the purported command over the symbolic register and of 'action' is asserted. Juan Gual tells the copyist 'it must be told as it is and that is why you are here'. Thus he assigns a symbolic place, task and destiny to the copyist as well as a strict and univocal sense to the signifier as it is "*told as it is*". This is, I argue, may be understood as an attempt of recovery, a small moment of *illusory potency*.

Nevertheless, the narrator continues, Juan Gual 'swallows something so large that it seems the page of a monologue'. In this remarkable expression, an interaction between the symbolic register and the body is highlighted. One can say that a monologue resembles the unfolding of subjectivity, in which case what is being swallowed is Juan Gual's truth. Swallowing, the bodily opposite of speaking, highlights

finally a dimension of an unmediated relation to the signifier that hardly appeared before in the text. Not that of a claim to facticity where the symbolic and the real are the same, but the subjective relation towards signifiers; the effects of signifiers in the subject and in the body when these are treated like objects rather than symbols. This dimension appeared before only when Juan Gual and Rosalía fought over her affair with Temístocles. Herein appears a relation between the symbolic, words, and the real, the body, which is yet another dimension of their relation. Not that of sameness or difference, but effect. When the symbolic cannot unfold, its destiny becomes the body. Words are painfully swallowed – a real dimension of them. Therefore, the story ends by showing just how faulty, naïve is the endeavour of *telling it as it is*. The symbolic may not resemble the real, on the one hand, and subjects may be unable to bear their truth on the other. Yet, Juan Gual has no other alternative than to continue dictation; despite not being able to *tell it as it is*, he must go on *speaking*. In this sense, the question of madness and sanity is once again problematised in the story. The reader is aware that Juan Gual and the narrator may be identical, one may be the other. Juan Gual cannot bear the truth, cannot know it whole. The narrator, on the other hand, can because he has a higher point of view, as the reader does, of what Juan Gual cannot say. However, the warnings of one being the other lingers, as well as the warnings of the symbolic not being identical to the real and not everything being possible to say. The tension of *history* and *story* is never more fully present – one wonders just how much Juan Gual, the storyteller and, of course, the reader are unable to say.

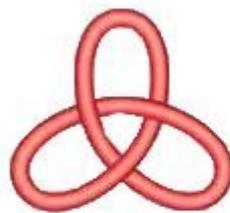
The last sentence of the story tightens and condenses the tension that is present throughout. Initially it could be said it is a statement of the historical kind, it states facts.

However, given that the reader knows the *story*, he can understand that this seemingly factual remark is actually left off undecidable. 'They', whether Temistocles or Juan Gual and Rosalía, have two children. The main question is who 'they' are. Again, a historical type of question, yet raised by story-type of knowledge, seemingly only answerable by history; so on and so forth. A sexual historical fact bound to be a part of the eternal unfolding of tension between history and story on the one hand, and reason and madness on the other.

### Analysis

The tension and difference between madness and reason in the story are present from the outset. It is unclear precisely what is meant by madness in the story. However, the 'highest intellectual category' ascribed to it, suggests a putative access to dimensions seldom accessed by the 'sane'. This is not actually linked to intellectual capabilities, but to the possibilities of the interplay of signifiers possible *only* when the symbolic Law does not operate. In other words, in the instances of foreclosure of the Name of the Father, and the consequent rejection of the symbolic Law. Indeed, the possibilities of combination of signifiers and meddling with (as well as breaking off) the imaginary and real are wider. The neurotic mechanisms of linkage of signifiers, as well as the operation of the signifier in the signified are governed by the symbolic Law. In the absence of the Law, the signifying play may yield products that to the neurotic mind may seem bizarre or genius. Therefore, this initial reflection sets the frame of the story in the contrast of neurosis and psychosis.

The interplay between the real and the symbolic is, I argue, a particular worry in the story. In this sense, I find that the tension between historical and fictional discourses, visible in the initial contrast between the historian and the storyteller, highlight this tension. History, or traditional schools of history, claim a correspondence of the symbolic and the real (LaCapra, 2008). They affirm a referential dimension of the sign to real kernels - if we understand the real as facticity, what occurs. Fictional discourse, on the other hand, does not hold this correspondence – hence its character of fiction. Literature, as Barthes suggests (1964) is the exercise of the symbol for its own sake. I argue that these two views on the symbolic and the real and their relations, furthermore, may be understood in the form of knots. The pretence of the symbolic being the real of traditional historical discourse is akin to the form of knot ascribed by Lacan to paranoia, (1975 – 1976) in which there is a continuation, a uniformity between the symbolic and the real. The texture of what is symbolic in nature and what is real in nature are indistinguishable in this form of knot.



Trefoil knot

It can be argued, therefore, that the pretence that the symbolic being what factually happened has a paranoid dimension. The correspondence between the symbolic and the real has even a derisory effect when the narrator of the story speaks about Temístocles being spoiled by his name; a monk or an engineer who can cook, which comes across as a strange thing. In these cases the dissonance between the registers

is played upon to cause derision: a name that does not correspond to a person, or an act that does not correspond to a title (engineer or priest). This mock, may be in fact a critique of the assumption of a natural symmetry, and therefore a derisory dissymmetry between the two registers.

Nevertheless, with remarkable genius, in the story we are driven through the *effective* dimension of this form of knot. In the story, the moments of correspondence between symbolic and real, that is, when the narration explicitly becomes matter of fact, about *true* events, the effect of their *truth, jouissance, interest* and *urgency* becomes greater. Therefore the reader is taken into a dimension where psychosis as a structure operates, where symbols *are* events or objects. At times, arguably, it operates more effectively than a neurotic structure. This psychotic dimension is effective in that there is no metaphoric dimension, no mediation, a *necessary* reference of the symbol to facticity and intolerance to ambiguity of meaning. A psychotic dimension in the story could be argued in this sense. I do not find in the story moments of coming undone of such knot; there are not moments of florid delusional or hallucinatory discourse. Nevertheless, I argue that there is enough evidence to hypothesise a psychotic stabilised structure in the form of the continuous trefoil knot.

The omniscient narrator carries out this reflection upon madness and reason. Occasionally, however, the internal monologue of the narrator is interrupted by a dialogue, a dictation of one character to the other from 'within' the diegetic dimension. In these interruptions, there is a sense of irruption of a dimension that I could call 'real' into the flow of the prose. The ruminations of the narrator, akin to fictional discourse untied to anything real, are interrupted by the voices of the characters, by what is *actually happening in the diegetic space*, that is, one man dictating historical facts to

another. In this sense, we are reminded of the effects of the real on the symbolic: disrupting it, over brimming it, making everything else silent – given that the real, operating like and instead of the symbolic, speaks louder than it. I cannot argue, of course, that the dictation is delusional or a description of a delusion *stricto sensu*. It is not a symbol reappearing in the real in that sense. However, the similarity to the real's form of disruption and functioning like the symbolic are surprisingly effective in the story. Its objective is to communicate truth in a way that I have previously characterised as performative. The disruption says what it does: by disrupting, the disruption reminds of the very function of disruption of the real. Performativity as I have characterised it and as a textual strategy is yet another psychotic dimension of the text.

Furthermore, there is another level of analysis that links to the initial characterisation of a madman as someone who can unlock 'higher viewpoints' that would be unrevealed to the rest. There is something at play in the story that can be described as a Russian-doll sort of logic, hence the difficulty to describe it. It initiates with the identification between the narrator, the historian and the storyteller. The narrator is a storyteller, initially opposed to the historian in the sense explained previously. But as the story progresses it becomes evident that the historian is *but* a storyteller as the character of Juan Gual, a historian, is simply dictating a story to the copyist. Thus the sharp distinction between their identities collapses. The narrator, on his part, acts interchangeably as a storyteller and as a historian by telling a story and by telling hard, historical facts about the story that are more akin to historical discourse. In other words, the narrator, a man of symbol himself, draws a diegetic dimension in which its characters or symbols are men of symbol too, whom also draw a sub-diegetic

dimension made of symbols. So on, and so forth. The moment where this becomes visible is when the narrator explicitly states that he cares for Juan Gual, his own symbolic production, as much as Juan Gual cares about the inhabitants of the village of Callayruc, that is, *very little*. This Russian-doll sort of narrative points to a deeper dimension, namely the fact that signifiers only point to other signifiers and signification re-sends to signification (Lacan, 1955 - 1956). In this sense, this is an example of what I have called "insight into the apparatus" as the texture features characteristics of the symbolic register itself. This 'deeper knowledge', furthermore, is available to the storyteller, the narrator, supposedly not a madman. The fact that for the narrator this dimension is available points to an at once affirmation and negation of the sharp differences in the identities marked initially by the text. This higher viewpoint of the dialectical collapse and maintenance of identities as well as of the functioning of the signifier grants a higher viewpoint to the structure of the narrative, highlighting its madness, its genius.

A further dimension that can be interpreted as being akin to psychosis is that of the relation between signifiers and bodies, or the symbolic and the real. The characters of the story have each a particular relation to language. Juan Gual could be depicted as a man of symbol par excellence: he, in fact, speaks for a living. But he has a form of unmediated relation to the signifier that is pathos in his body. Signifiers seem to act directly upon his body in different occasions. We are told that history scratched his face, Juan Gual has swallowed the cones of loneliness, reproaches have whipped his face, loneliness punches him in the face, his reproaches to his wife are thin like a comma, and he swallows something so big like a page of a monologue. In this sense, words cease to operate as symbols and become objects that leave marks and traces

upon Juan Gual's body. They are indeed objects of exchange between characters but not by means of the meaning they produce, but by means of the direct action one can perform on the other using words as objectified tools, with a degree of reification.

There is another bodily dimension to language in the story, albeit perhaps metaphorical and therefore not akin *stricto sensu* to psychosis, but worth mentioning nevertheless. Juan Gual the historian dictates to Temístocles the copyist what he ought to write, that is, the former is in charge of speaking and the latter of writing. Concomitantly, we are told that the sexual relation between Juan Gual and his wife suffers due to Juan Gual's sexual impotence. We are as well told that Temístocles has an affair with her and she becomes pregnant. It is tempting to interpret this as a metaphor of the fecundity of speaking and writing respectively. Although the will, the decision of what is going to be in fact said resides in the act of speaking, it can be inferred that there is a suggestion about writing having, indeed, the upper hand – more fecundity and the possibility of the equivocal and therefore of the unconscious. The copyist, when he makes a spelling mistake, omitting an 'h' – in itself silent in the original Spanish, goes to show that it has the power to spoil everything, to have the last word on the matter, as it were. It may be ventured as a hypothesis that this is, as well, something ascribable only to higher viewpoint, accessible perhaps only to madmen, an instance of the clarity that insight into the apparatus would entail. In other words, there is an awareness in the story of the interference between speaking and writing, their mutually disruptive possibilities which is, I argue, an instance of insight into the apparatus given the centrality of it to the unconscious structured like a language, which may be said one of Lacan's central contributions to psychoanalysis.

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## **The Anthropophagus (1927)**

### Summary

An omniscient narrator tells the short story of a man who is locked in a cell and is called by everyone 'the anthropophagus'. The slippage of the ways the narrator refers to him is important in the story, as will become clear. The narration begins with the description of the current state of imprisonment of the man. The narrator describes him physically, noting that he has an unusually large head and bony features. He describes his gaze, lost and dark, as well as his aloof attitude. People come to visit him in prison with a mixture of curiosity and fear. The narrator explores the fantasy of being bit by the anthropophagus, and perhaps his nose being chewed off his face. He describes how the anthropophagus was initially fed solely legumes, which was torturous for him as he really desired to eat bloody meat. The reader is told that the man almost tore the cell apart in his desperation for meat.

As the story progresses, the reader discovers that the narrator is a criminology student and that he visited the cell with his classmates. He describes how his colleagues made fun of the anthropophagus, called him all sorts of names and invented derisory stories about him. The narrator expresses the moral outrage that initially he seemed to experience regarding the man. He explains he finds unacceptable that a man abandons himself to pleasures that destabilise the organism, like the anthropophagus does. Moreover, the narrator insists on the distance between himself and the man, as he does not want to be associated with him under any circumstance. He strongly remarks that there is nothing at stake for him in the anthropophagus case. However

the opinion of the narrator on the immorality of the anthropophagus shifts towards the opposite very suddenly. He then expresses his understanding, solidarity and even justifies the man's acts – he points out that in fact there is no difference between the anthropophagus, a smoker or a sage. These are all equal inclinations in his view.

Given the interest of the narrator in juridical matters and motivations behind the anthropophagus' actions, he recounts his story in order to give some insight into the man's motivations. The narrator tells us for the first time the name of the anthropophagus, Nicanor Tiberio, named after his father who was a slaughterer and his mother, Dolores Orellana, a midwife and a grocer. The narrator likens the parents of the anthropophagus with Socrates' parents, Sophroniscus the sculptor and Phaenarete the midwife.

Nico Tiberio, a diminutive for Nicanor, was born after eleven months of pregnancy. The narrator explains that this caused the innate disposition of Nico Tiberio to anthropophagy, because he was nurtured of human bloody substances for too long. He was an innocent looking child, the reader is told, Nico Tiberio was an intelligent little boy. His mother, therefore, wanted him to become a doctor. The narrator exclaims that women always intrude in one's life in these matters. He repeats this exclamation further in the story as Nico Tiberio's wife does the same with their son.

However, Nicanor Tiberio (father) wanted him to become a slaughterer and butcher like himself, and the boy had from a very early age a natural disposition towards butchering and an inclination for meat. This saddened Dolores very much, and she died out of sorrow. Nicanor Tiberio then went out drinking for six days in a row, and on the seventh day, the reader is told, he rested eternally. Therefore, at the age of ten Nico Tiberio was left an orphan.

The narrator explains that between the age of ten and twenty-five nothing of importance occurred in Nico Tiberio's life. At the age of twenty-five he married a 'well-proportioned and somewhat pleasant girl'. After two years they had a son whom they called Nico after the main character of the story and his father. The narrator emphasises that there was 'again' another Nico. The boy, the reader is told, was very intelligent and by the age of three he could read, write and was very honest. His mother wanted him to be a lawyer. Every time she told this to her husband he would not listen and would grumble about it.

The night of the event Nico Tiberio went out drinking with two friends. The narrator explains that nothing unusual happened during that night. Nico Tiberio behaved his usual and around one in the morning everyone made his way. These events were gathered by Nico's friends' declarations. What follows, explains the narrator, was gathered from Nico's shameless confession.

On his way home, Nico Tiberio was assaulted by a sudden smell of meat. He was drunk and his sensations at that point were somewhat unclear to him. But this much was clear: he had a sudden 'desire for woman' mixed with the desire to eat something tasty and chewy so as 'to work his jaws' with concomitant sadistic tremors. These urges were accompanied by thoughts of angry, violent and bloody intercourse that should occur amongst cries and wounds made by stabbings.

He continued his way home, furious, pushing people on the street. When he got home he went straight into his room. His wife woke up agitated and asked what was the matter. She immediately thought someone had told him lies about her and now he was angry at her. But he denied anything being the matter and shouted at her to stay in bed. Puzzled, she stood up. As she approached him he bit her large and firm breast

that stuck out her cleavage. She screamed, and he carried on, tasting the blood that dripped off her breast.

All of a sudden, the narrator continues, their son began to cry. Nico Tiberio sprung at him and began to chew the boy's face off. The boy screamed and tried to dodge him uselessly. The narrator describes the sound and consistency of the boy's cartilages as the father ate them. The boy, the reader is told, had all the wounds and bruises of 'a whole hospital'. Alarmed by the screams, the neighbours rushed in and when they saw what was happening they hit the man hard, left him unconscious and tied him up and turned him to the police. The narrator describes the boy, little Nico, left off disfigured after the assault.

The story ends with a pun in which the narrator reflects that if he were like everybody else, he would say that Tiberio (father) is like those who 'eat what they create', like the father who ate his own son. However, this affirmation also means that if the narrator were like everybody else, he would say that Tiberio (father) is like those who 'eat what they believe'<sup>65</sup> in other words, he is like those who 'buy into their own lies'. The exact meaning of this phrase is left undecidable as well as the identity of which of the two Tiberio fathers the phrase alludes to.

### Phenomenological reading

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<sup>65</sup> The author finishes the story with a pun. The verb 'believe' (creer) when conjugated in the third person singular of the present subjunctive tense is "crea", which is homonym of the third person singular indicative of the verb "to create". In this sense, the pun means: "one eats what one believes" and "one eats what one creates". The latter sentence means that 'one buys into one's own beliefs, creations or lies'.

When the story commences, the narrator introduces the character of the anthropophagus. The name the narrator gives him initially is noteworthy because that specific aspect of his identity determines the whole subjectivity of the man. This aspect of his identity, of course, is the cause of the misfortunes that the character then will face, namely being tried, judged by society and ultimately imprisoned. A name may be understood as a way to be addressed by others, a social token of exchange referring to identity. In this case, however, his name stands precisely for the reason why he is rejected from social exchange and ultimately imprisoned – even if becoming a ‘morbid attraction’ becomes his only social form exchange thereafter.

The narrator introduces the character as if he were a circus attraction, a freak. He calls the reader’s attention upon what may produce astonishment, bedazzlement and at the same time fear and morbid curiosity about the man. The narrator speculates about the causes of the anthropophagus’ behaviour; is it madness maybe, he asks. He invites the reader to come and take a look at the man and plays with the morbid fantasy of the reader being the object of an attack by the anthropophagus. The narrator invites the reader to empathise with the man’s fancy of raw meat, and immediately discourages this, since in fact, the reader risks liking it.

As the narrator continues, the dimension of morality in view of this impulse comes to the fore. The narrator warns the reader that if he did the same as the anthropophagus, the newspapers would call him a beast. In this sense, there is in the narration the introduction of an anxiety about the possibility or impossibility of social exchange, of intersubjectivity given that at stake there is the desire to devour the other. The narrator explains that they, ‘society’ or ‘media’, would not understand this urge and condemn it immediately. Thus the conflict of impulse and the moral prohibition given its effects on

others is brought about in the story. But the narrator adopts a seemingly extra moral position about this and points out that social structures will not understand that this desire, this impulse, is in fact like any other: the impulse to smoke, have sexual intercourse with children or the desire for knowledge. As we will explore, this sudden change of mind becomes telling of the structure of the story.

The narrator reveals at this point his own identity, which is given, similarly to the anthropophagus, by an activity or function. The narrator is a Law student and he visited the anthropophagus with his classmates. The narration continues and focuses on the students' reactions towards the man. The narrator describes how they mocked the man and in youthful fancy disrupted the school field trip. But the narrator seems to be interested in the condition of the anthropophagus and therefore shows a deeper engagement with the topic than his classmates. The narrator describes feeling sorry for him, and begins to explain in what way he believes the anthropophagus is, in fact, not guilty. At this point, the narrator calls the anthropophagus, for one single time in the story, 'my defendant'. Although weary of being too identified with the anthropophagus, the narrator continues to make his case.

The reasons behind the feelings of pity the narrator feels for the man lie on the man's life story. The narrator goes back in time and explains that the anthropophagus' parents were, akin to those of Socrates, a slaughterer and a midwife. The comparison with Socrates seems to put two very different devotions at the same level: Socrates' devotion to truth and knowledge and the anthropophagus' devotion to eating human flesh. They are stripped off their social and moral connotations, positive and negative, and placed alongside as effects of kinship. At this point the narrator tells us that the anthropophagus' name is Nico Tiberio, like his father's Nicanor Tiberio. He tells us that

his mother's pregnancy lasted eleven months, which seems to have resulted in the boy's inclination for human flesh and substances. As he grew up, his mother wanted him to become a medical doctor, to which his father disagreed, even if both disciplines in fact deal with human flesh. Eventually, the boy showed a natural disposition to meat, slaughtering and butchering. Therefore, he was to become a butcher like his father. This caused so much sorrow on his mother that she died. His father got drunk for six days, and in an inverse creational metaphor, rested forever on the seventh day, that is, died. This allusion to the creation and the resting of god seems to hint an alignment of the patriarchal lineage with divinity. In any case the boy was left an orphan at a very early age. These early events, I assume, are the marks that later on would unleash Nico Tiberio's anthropophagy.

The narrator explains that nothing much occurred in Nico Tiberio's life up until he became twenty-five years old. He then married a girl and two years later had a son, whom they also called Nico Tiberio. From this point onwards, the narrator refers to Nico Tiberio as Tiberio (father) and to his son as Nico. However, throughout the story there is some degree of undecidability regarding the names, and therefore the identities, of the three Nicanor Tiberios of the story.

The narrator continues and what comes next strikes us as a repetition of Nico Tiberio's childhood played out in his son's. The boy was remarkably intelligent, like the father, and a very 'just' boy. Therefore the mother wanted him to become a lawyer. The reader does not get the extent of the effects of this on Nico Tiberio (father), except that he dislikes the idea and that he 'grumbled' about it. Perhaps the inability to speak of Nico Tiberio (Father) is more crucial at this point than anywhere else in the story. The similarity between the boy's intended future profession and that of the narrator himself

is left uncommented, but strikes us quite telling of a form of identification between them. Furthermore, the choice of Law as a profession for the boy strikes us as having particular relevance in the destiny of Nico Tiberio and his form of madness.

The night when it all happened, we are told that Nico Tiberio went out drinking with his friends and that he did not behave in any unusual way. It is of course unclear whether this was something usual for him, however the only other allusion to drinking in the story is the precedent to Nicanor Tiberio's death. A link between both events can be therefore hypothesised, at least in Nico Tiberio's horizon of significations.

The description of Nico Tiberio's desperate, savage, lustful crave for sex and flesh, certainly makes an impact upon the reader. It also takes the reader by surprise and the reader feels these urges are sudden in the character as well. Despite having all the antecedents of Nico Tiberio's life, the sudden arising of this violent need is disconcerting. The narration of the assault of Nico Tiberio upon his wife and son is powerful, disgusting, morbid and gripping. It is derisory that Nico Tiberio should call his wife an 'animal'. The derision, arguably, is an effect of the projective quality of Nico Tiberio's speech upon his wife. In fact all his actions strike us like a projection, a mise-en-scène of his past and of what he, thus far, had been unable to articulate. The scene has a regressive quality as well, to what may be thought as a state of pure instinct without repression. This state is fictional, an ideal dream at best for any subject who has been civilised, that is, for whom relinquishment of pleasure has taken place by the traversement of language and civilisation. In this sense, it could be described as a moment of fiction within fiction. This 'fictional' logic seems to have gripped the narrator throughout the story. This becomes visible in his total suspension of any moral judgement of anthropophagy and is even more evident when the neighbours end the

carnage, about which the narrator seems disappointed. Using legal lingo he states there is 'no justice in the world' when Nico Tiberio's lustful pleasure is forcefully brought to an end. The narrator thus announces the end of that fictional state of absolute submission to instinct satisfaction within the story.

The ending of the story is quite interesting for it highlights that very double fictional dimension using a pun, an equivocal phrase. In a point-de-capiton fashion, the story ends bringing together the dimensions of Nicanor Tiberio, Nico Tiberio, the narrator and the reader by using the double meaning of the Spanish word 'crea' (that means 'creates' and 'believes'). In the last phrase, the narrator begins by saying 'if I believed the imbeciles', that is, 'if I thought in the way everybody else mistakenly does' (i.e. the narrator adopts a critical stance towards what he is going to say next) 'Tiberio (father) is like those who eat what they create'. It is a phrase that may refer to Nicanor Tiberio and Nico Tiberio at once, we do not know really who is the phrase about. It is a critique of fatherhood, without a doubt, and of the supposed impulse to devour children, of the father exerting his jouissance on his children. In this sense the 'creation' at stake is the child that was eaten. Another sense of this phrase is something analogous to the English phrase 'what goes around, comes around': one eats what one creates. In this sense, the phrase means that Tiberio (father) got what he deserved, namely being imprisoned, punished and excluded from social exchange.

However, if the verb 'crea' is understood as 'believes' instead of 'creates', a whole new dimension of the story comes to the fore, namely the power to delude oneself, to deny reality and to engage in the reality that one has created for oneself, that is, 'to eat what one believes'. This sense of the phrase highlights the self-deluding fashion in which the narrator, and presumably the reader as well, have adopted a positive stance to the

act of devouring other human beings. Furthermore, it may highlight the universal way in which every subject may delude himself within his own horizon of significations and the lability of such self-deception. In short, the story makes use of irony to make the reader aware he is under the sway of moral relativity just like everyone else.

Furthermore, in every meaningful case of the pun the verb 'eat' seems an act of relation to ideas, creations and beliefs, In Spanish, to use this verb metaphorically in this way has a negative connotation of having to 'deal' with one's ideas, that is, to 'endure' rather than 'relate' to them. In this sense, it seems that the phrase points to the narrator's at once critique and submission to the hard fact of life that with reality – whether inherited, created, delusional, imposed, fictional or real– one has to *deal* with. Given the universal character of this imperative, anthropophagy would be nothing but a way, a fashion of doing so. The same is true for moral relativity, understood as an uncomfortable truth for moralists.

### Analysis

This short story, I argue, although undeniably traversed by mad elements cannot be accurately accounted for as psychotic. The elements of the diegetic dimension of the story may be quite uncommon or out of the usual. They may be deemed scatological even and thus bare resemblance to psychotic phenomena at first glance. Nevertheless, we cannot say there are any moments in the texture of the story where symbolic mechanisms of psychosis may have been recognised or could be pointed out as such. This story recounts, indeed, unusual events, reactions and characters. But it does not reflect this unusual diegetic dimension in the symbolic, imaginary and real configurations of its texture. With the exception of the effect that the last pun has on the whole story, the text is written in an ordinary fashion, the symbolic law seems

to operate in the texture throughout, signifiers link to each other and there are no moments of performativity of psychosis as such in the text.

However, there are a number of elements in the story that lead us to argue that in this particular story there may be perverse elements at play, possibly accounted for by recourse to irony. The effect of the last pun, it may be argued, may be understood as having a perverse effect in the signification of the text, that is, in the meaning it produces, in the diegetic dimension of the story. It could be understood thus because it plays upon the relativity of the symbolic law that determines the way the story may be understood. To play upon the relativity of the law in this particular form seems to highlight its 'malleability', its at once being and not being there; which is the condition of possibility of its transgression.

The purposeful play with the signification of the whole text produces an effect of what may be called 'ridiculing' of the reader. The reader whilst being convinced of reading a story that has a determined meaning, finds himself as being at the mercy of the purposeful manipulation of the narrator. The reader finds himself at the end of the story 'eating what he believed and had created'. In other words, he realises that he has created for himself the meaning of the story, its morality, his identifications with the characters, and so forth. This seems to be the result of a perverse form of relation to the symbolic law imposed on the reader by the narrator in which he, the reader, who 'believes' or 'creates' the law, ends up having to 'eat it'. To qualify the text as perverse and the effect on the reader as 'ridiculing' has no derogatory intent whatsoever. They are simply forms in which within language we can designate the subjective effects caused by a form of operation and dwelling of the symbolic law – which can be experienced in this way and may be characterised as 'irony' in literary terms.

To sum up, the last pun of the text produces an imaginary perverse effect on the diegetic dimension of the story by significantly altering the signification of the text (in one single sentence) and revealing the possible (*père*) versions of the story by highlighting, as well, that he who creates his version, eats it. Therefore, the law would not be really a law; it would be just an individual creation; not really universal. Yet, since it is there nonetheless, it is a point of reference necessary for its very transgression.

The act of devouring and the explicit sexual enjoyment of this act in the story are firstly reminiscent of the traditional notion of perversion as a deviant sexual act. Nevertheless, Lacan's notion of *père-version* is of aid to understand in which sense this act may be understood as perverse. In the seminar R.S.I. (1974 -1975) (the title itself being a homonym of the word 'heresy' in French) Lacan introduces the equivocal 'père-version' that means movement towards, and version of the father. This form of understanding perversion as a form of localisation and movement towards the father has been understood in manifold forms. Brazilian psychoanalyst Contardo Calligaris (1987) explains that Lacan understands perversion as a movement towards the father in which the subject aims to occupy the place of the father. It is a symbolic takeover of the place of the father, which results in the objectification of the subject, in the offering of the subject to the Other's *jouissance*. The act of Nico Tiberio (devouring his son and wife), therefore, aims to place known knowledge, that is, an accomplished act oriented towards the father in the place where before there was a supposed form of knowledge. In other words, before that act, Nico Tiberio had a disposition towards slaughtering and butchery, but his mother also thought he could be a doctor. The *mise-en scène* of the act of devouring his wife and son leaves no doubt what is Nico Tiberio's identity -

and in this sense he offers himself as a subject to the Other's jouissance. In fact, his identity becomes thereafter 'the anthropophagus' and no longer Nico Tiberio – an objectified, indeed, *known* version of himself. In this sense, this act may be understood as père-verse. Arguably, if Nico Tiberio would have been able to express his refusal to his wife's desire of his son becoming a lawyer (or his own to his own mother), or had he been able to choose for himself he may have been able to find a solution within the symbolic realm and the *mise-en-scène* of the devouring would not have taken place. Instead, he acts out this refusal in a concrete form, but against a perverse backdrop, not a psychotic one.

The symbolic feature of the story that supports this claim is, precisely, the Name-of-the-Father. This symbolic element is not absent in the story, but the exact same name is inherited from father to son and to grandson. This, although not always having the effect it has in the story, points to a movement towards the father which does not allow the subject his own place – his own place *is* the father, his name and his profession – Nicanor Tiberio the butcher, for all three subjects. Indeed, the three of them are versions of the eating-eaten father.

Furthermore, it may be argued, there are other allusions to perversion in the story that may aid us to understand the form of 'madness' at stake in the diegetic – in the character's makeup and reactions. The narrator is a Law student, and that was the same profession that Nico Tiberio's wife wanted for the little Nico in the story. One can argue that a preoccupation with law in the diegetic, and with morality and immorality throughout the story, is an imaginary expression of an underlying symbolic state of things.

To be able to read completely in an extra-moral sense the story of a human being devouring another points to a state of things of transgression of the symbolic law. This form of reading the story corresponds to a way of being 'as if' the law was not there, as if the impulse of devouring the other did not invoke its prohibition ipso facto in the otherwise neurotic horizon. However, of course the law is there, because it is not just any impulse which is talked about in the story, it is specifically an impulse that is forbidden in social exchange, that overrides social exchange. It is purposefully selected *because* it is forbidden. Since it is forbidden, it is treated as if it were not. In this sense we see a double operation of the Law, it is there and it is not simultaneously, in other words, denial of castration. This is akin to Freud's description of the fetish (Freud, 1927), at once an affirmation and a denial of castration, hence a simultaneous acceptance and a refusal of the symbolic law, and the fetish being a 'monument' to such simultaneous affirmation and denial. Indeed, Nicanor Tiberio's act is a performed monument to at once the existence and non-existence of the Symbolic Law.

The story is a remarkable example of the infusion of jouissance in the diegetic dimension of a text. The initial description of the anthropophagus, as well as the scene in which he devours his wife and son, excite a morbid curiosity, an effect of an undifferentiated pleasurable disgust in the reader. The jouissance that inhabits Nico Tiberio in the last scene, as I have described, may be understood as a form of jouissance produced by a fantasy that may be called 'regressive'. It is a fantasy of a 'primitive' state of the subject in which there is no prohibition of the impulse, therefore its total gratification is possible. In this state there would be no symbolic law, and perhaps in this sense, the story may be deemed psychotic. However, given that it would be a pre-linguistic subjective state of things, it would be more akin to what Lacan

describes as 'delta' in the first graph of desire (1960), that is, a supposed form of subject prior to any symbolic traversal for whom no language operates – therefore no law exists and any impulse can be fully satisfied. This state of things is a fiction for any speaking subject, it can only be longed for, imagined, supposed, recounted a posteriori. Therefore this fictional state, in itself, points to a form of jouissance at play in every subject – the longing for a pre-linguistic state of things.

The actualisation of such longing into an act, such as that of Nico Tiberio, transforms the neurotic fantasy of longing of a 'paradise lost' in which the other is 'devourable' into a perverse action of devouring that transgresses the symbolic law. The symbolic law binds signification and the operation of the signifier in the signified, but in its imaginary form, as Freud claimed in *Totem and Taboo* (1913), the law manifests itself in the prohibition of incest and the re-engulfment of the child into the mother. What I find in the story, the sexually pleasurable devouring of the other, it may be argued, is a fantasy that combines two functions: re-engulfment and devouring. In this sense, it may be understood as perverse as well in the traditional sense because the function of eating and engulfment are confounded, muddled, and hence both transgressed. Yet simultaneously they are kept as separate functions in a similar way as the fetish is.

Furthermore, we encounter the phylogenetic fantasy of the devouring primal Father (Freud, 1913), who devours his children after having had intercourse with all the women of the totem. The fantasy of eating, or being eaten by the other is transformed into the actual act of eating within the story, as has been explained. Therefore, arguably there may be a psychotic element to this act as well. Because the function of the metaphor fails – the 'as if' eating the other at play in the fantasy of the primal father, at play in the act of kissing or 'wanting to *eat* a baby with kisses' or a loved one, for

example, breaks down into an actual, concrete, objectified act. It ipso facto loses the tenderness of the expression of love that it is otherwise. The concretisation of such metaphor into factual reality has the power, in fact, to destroy the whole of reality.

Nevertheless, the psychotic elements of the story occur within the diegetic dimension of the story only and there are no traces of it in the texture. As such, it is but the product of the narrative, which makes it *stricto sensu*, a neurotic form of dealing with such fantasies. One would have to observe, for example, a devouring dynamic in the texture of the story, in its symbolic, imaginary and real dynamics, so as to be able to assert that there is indeed a psychotic element to the story in which devouring is performed. This dimension, I argue, is not at play in this particular story. One may venture a hypothesis of 'splitting' when a dynamic is so blatantly present in a dimension of a story and so dramatically absent in the others. This, however, requires further research in different directions than the ones I have taken up to this point.

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## **The One and Double Woman (1927)**

### Summary

This is a short story told by a protagonist narrator in 'the first person'. The narrator is a conjoined twin; she can be characterised as two women united from the back. The story is a subjective account of the vicissitudes of her being. She thinks of herself throughout the story sometimes as one and sometimes as two individuals. These two possibilities are supported by her bodily as well as subjective status. In other words, she can be either thought as one or two individuals, from a bodily as well as a subjective perspective.

The story begins by the narrator undertaking a troublesome description of herself. She apologises for the grammatical inadequacies of her speech, since her condition does not fit any pre-established grammatical structures. She describes in detail her bodily disposition, for example she describes her back as the 'chest of hers', she has four arms and four legs, two faces, four breasts and so forth. She refers to each of her sides as 'I-first' and 'I-second'. 'I-first' is the younger of the two, however I-first dominated over I-second from the moment the former overpowered the latter in the act of standing up walking.

She continues describing her psychological makeup. She explains that her thoughts and volitions appear in both of her sides, although sometimes what one side forgets, the other side remembers and utters. She describes her perception as being wider than that of 'unique human beings'. She explains she can maintain a conversation from each of her sides, and she can do simultaneously different tasks – which at this

point of the story leads her to refute her oneness. Nevertheless, she explains that there is a 'centre' in her, which she locates in a place she calls "between me", for which she cannot account.

The account of her past and childhood is full of painful memories. She attributes the cause of her dual being to her mother having been disturbed by pictures and stories of monsters that the doctor showed to her when she was pregnant. She explains that her mother always felt a sort of patronising pity for her. Her father, on the other hand, was ambivalent and cruel towards her to such an extent that he would be kind and loving to her in public, and hit her when no one was there to witness it. She explains that her biggest fear was to be sent to a hospice, as she was aware of the tortures inflicted upon those who lived in these places. After her father's death she moved out of her mother's house and thanks to her father's inheritance she settled in a flat of her own.

She then describes her furniture. She explains that her furniture had to be designed and built bespoke for her condition. Her chairs, tables, dressing table are described as somewhat amorphous pieces of furniture that only when used by her acquire their full sense, or function as such. Each piece of furniture was designed to accommodate her double being, therefore chairs, for example, are stools with no backrest upon which she can sit down. Her back and double disposition therefore complete the 'stool' as 'chair'. Her tables have a sort of bullet shape that cater for both of her sides, and so forth.

She feels she is a lonely person. Her condition makes her social interactions difficult and she prefers avoiding them. She explains that she has one single friend, whom in fact got made a special chair for her at her place. However, she explains that she does

not visit her friend a great deal. She recounts with sadness that she would like to hold a child in her arms, but in fact children fear her and run away from her immediately. She explains that she has not had the chance to have a love affair in the past and she has renounced that wish. She ponders how an intimate encounter with a man would pan and she feels that the ignored side would envy the 'prettier' one; the unsatisfied would feel rejected, as the other would engage in intercourse. All these thoughts have made her abandon that idea.

The story finishes by her description of the itch on 'my lips of hers' that she has experienced of late. She explains that she has gone to the doctor and he has diagnosed a neoplasm growing on her lip. She sarcastically addresses how a 'growth', another body in the body, might lead her to die. This leads her to ponder whether she has one soul or two, whether her soul has the same makeup as her body. She extends her hope for this not to be the case since living an eternity with her condition is something she would terribly dread.

### Phenomenological Reading

The story begins by the anonymous narrator and main character of the story explaining that she has had to adapt herself to a series of phrases and expressions that only *her*, in her *particular* case can use. This initial statement bears a linguistic stamp that repeats throughout the subjective account that the story is. Arguably, italicised personal and possessive pronouns in the first person denote particular dynamics of that which in the narrator says "I", "me", "my" or "mine". Italics, in this context, denote a special, unusual or, indeed at least double meaning to these signifiers. In this case,

I cannot help but notice that the italicised forms of letters imply a *crooked* disposition of otherwise ordinary, normal letters.

She furthermore notes that her case is extraordinary and exceptional as opposed to that of the rest, whom she calls 'the animals that laugh'. In this sense, the comparison or mirroring of her identity against that of others is an express concern of the narrator. Furthermore, the meaning of this description of others may be taken in its taxonomical or intersubjective sense. 'Laughing animals' may refer to humans or monkeys, on the one hand, but it may also refer pejoratively to the individuals that make fun of her condition. This double meaning of the phrase inaugurates for the reader the concerns of the narrator, precisely an ambiguity at the level of her taxonomical and relational subjective status.

The third paragraph is a form of apology in which the character excuses herself expressly for the grammatical oddities of her sentences. She also pledges moralists to 'stretch their morals' so that they do not judge her for the positions she occupies amongst 'unique beings'. Arguably, this apology indicates that the position that the character occupies, in some form or another, defies grammar and morals in her view. This gesture is an attempt to pre-empt the misunderstandings caused by her existential and therefore grammatical uniqueness (and duplicity). This indicates that the narrator is quite aware of the differences between her and others. Furthermore, an apology, that is a speech act in which a transgression upon the other is recognised and a concomitant pledge to its overcoming extended, indicates that the narrator interprets her position as transgressing, defiant or offensive to others. The offense to the other does not seem to stem from any action, but from her very presence, body and speech. Extending an apology over this not only makes the reader aware that she

perceives that others perceive her body and speech offensive, but that the offense that her existence supposedly cause to others may be overcome by means of an apology: an act of reparation or correction of the real, or the damage visited upon the other by means of language.

It is noteworthy, furthermore, that the first and third paragraphs are written within brackets. Brackets, in this context, are *written signs* of that for which the character apologises. Brackets themselves are double, one is the reflection of the other and they are only visible in the written form. The unusual beginning of the text by a bracketed paragraph may denote at the level of the letter, therefore, the dynamics the narrator described in the diegetic. In this sense, they can be interpreted as a sign of her subjective duplicity and an indication that, like the bracketed paragraph, she digresses from the rest. Simultaneously, one may venture that the particular duplicity *enables* the unfolding of all the speech within the brackets.

The second paragraph describes her physical makeup and features some of the aforementioned grammatical distortions:

My back, my behind is, if no one opposes, my breast of hers. My abdomen opposes my abdomen of hers. I have two heads, four arms, four breasts, four legs, and they have told me that my vertebral spines, which are two up until the height of the shoulder blades, join there and carry down, robust, to the coccyx region (Palacio, 1927, 121).

Thus the narrator, at once one and two women, describes her own body. Possessive pronouns 'mine' and 'hers' refer to at once the same and another subject, indicating singularity and duality or duplicity of subjects concomitantly. Furthermore, it is an

indication of at once first and third personal relations to the body, in this case her object of possession, and therefore to herself as a subject. But in her case what first and third person *are* is unclear; to some degree separated and to some degree muddled. The objects referred to are parts of the same body that are 'shared' between two subjects, or conversely, two joined bodies shared by one subject who refers to herself as I-first or I-second. The puzzling discordances between body, language and subjectivity are thus manifest. The paradoxically 'one' or 'unique' position that she occupies in relation to everyone else is not given by her oneness but by her duplicity. She is unique in that she is double; she is the unique double; she is doubly unique; she is two ones. Arguably all of these sentences hold true.

The narration continues with the description of the struggle between her 'sides' and the sometimes illogical or contradicting account of the vicissitudes of her duplicity. It becomes clear that one 'side' of the narrator has overpowered the other. Often the reader feels that he is, in fact, in a dialogue with this side of this woman whilst the other is silent. However, there are moments in the narration as well as grammatical instances that destabilise such feeling and produce a degree of confusion in the reader.

She describes her bodily dimension as the strongest sign of duplicity, that is, of there being in fact two subjects. However, the narrator explains that the points of connection between these two putatively different bodies are in fact infinite, making therefore dubious that she has indeed two separate bodies. In fact, she affirms that shared organs keep alive both subjects. Therefore neither her body nor her subjectivity as such allow us to conclusively and univocally understand her as neither one nor two individuals.

The narrator largely rejects the idea of having a double 'personality'. About her mind, thinking and cognitive functions, she explains that thoughts come about in her two brains with a degree of synchronicity as well as independence. Perception, she explains, occurs in both her brains independently, but these communicate producing thus a broader perception of objects. She further explains that her memory functions in parallel and alternatively. For example when I-first speaks and forgets a word or a name, I-second may utter it completing her own sentence. About these psychological characteristics and their metaphysical implications, she declares she is in fact incapable of explaining them in full. This leads her to affirm how dubious and non-evident is Descartes' 'cogito ergo sum'. In other words, her metaphysical or subjective transcendental condition cannot be fully elucidated and proved clearly and distinctively based on the fact that she thinks.

The account of her childhood and family history strikes as tinged with hatred and pain. It is noteworthy that she attributes her condition to the stories her mother heard from the doctor when she was pregnant. These stories are imaginary and symbolic in nature, yet they supposedly affected the unborn baby's body. Further, the role of the bishop absolving the mother's sin, presumably of having such a child, is noteworthy as well. Absolution may be thought of a speech act and as such is a symbolic entity that shapes the real. The symbolic and imaginary indeed shaping the real in these two snippets of her childhood account are therefore evident; they are somewhat analogous in their functioning to her apology at the beginning of the story.

Furthermore, duplicity plays a role affectively in her account of her relations to her parents. Her mother is compassionate and patronising and her father is publicly loving and privately abusive. Her house seems a safer place than the hospice to which she

fears being sent as a child. In other words, the logic that her account of her childhood observes is twofold as well; often one 'side' bears positive and the other negative attributes; as reader one witnesses a great deal of splitting.

As the narration continues, she gives an interesting account of the furniture in her house. They are pieces of furniture that by themselves could not really be called ordinary 'chairs', 'desks', 'tables' and so forth. They are odd pieces of furniture that only acquire their full identity as 'chair', 'desk' and 'table' as she uses them. They, of course, must allow for a double-sided use. When she takes her position, for instance, in a sort of stool, then it becomes clear that it is in fact a chair without backrest – as she incarnates the backrest. This account produces a sense of bizarre incompleteness of the objects; their identity is not stable and permanent. They only become definite pieces of furniture and are complete when they are used as an extension of her. Her duplicity grants these odd pieces of furniture their identity by means of the adequate use that only she can make of them. Conversely, her furniture establishes her unity as being and produces for the reader, for the first and perhaps only time in the story, a sense of her existential adequacy.

The last part of the narration is about her social and intimate relationships. The reader gets a sense and an understanding as to why the narrator feels lonely, for she explains her difficulties in situations such as socialising, holding a baby, flirting and so forth. When it comes to intimate relations, the narrator explains, the feelings of jealousy between the 'sides' of her bodily disposition become truly exacerbated. Interestingly, that which the narrator can endure in almost every other scenario of her life becomes unbearable and unmanageable in the context of sexuality. The simultaneous, parallel or alternate functioning of her cognition, memory or mind in general does not operate

in the domain of sexuality; in this case her duplicity is total. Each of her sides treats the other as an object; what hitherto had been considered as one or was only somewhat dual about the subject, becomes a definite duality. The narrator describes, for example, her doubts about which side of her would a hypothetical partenaire consider most beautiful or choose for sexual intercourse and how utterly dissatisfied the other side would feel. Interestingly, the partenaire, in this case, a man whom the narrator fancies, is definitely one and unique. Arguably in the domain of sexuality, the uniqueness of each 'side' as well as of the love object, or *the other* more generally, is exacerbated and undisputable. Therefore, when it comes to sexuality, the undisputable uniqueness of her sides makes her be two subjects; the affects that each of her sides experiences mirrors and oppose the other's and the object of desire is indisputably one. All of this leads the narrator to renounce her aspiration to an intimate relationship and she painfully withdraws from social gatherings.

The ending of the story conveys a sense of despair but also of irony to the reader, as she narrates about the neoplasm that grows in *her lips of hers*, that is, on the mouth of I-second. She noticed this as *her lips of hers* began to itch and bleed. It is noteworthy that what might put an end to her life is a 'third' element in her body, a further growth which she describes as a malignant entity that will slowly poison all of her body. Paradoxically, a third 'body' growing in her unites her back again for it addresses her totality, threatens all of her to death. It seems that her oneness can only be established in the absolute bodily finitude that death supposes for her. However, this leads her to wonder whether there is life beyond death, whether she has one or two souls. The story ends with the exclamation 'oof!' which denotes weariness and annoyance. The

use of such an expression conveys an emotive state but it does not, however, convey a definitive signification.

## Analysis

The story is an autobiographical account told by a protagonist narrator. This narrator could be considered an unreliable type of narrator given that she is in a liminal place between 'normality' and 'abnormality' akin to E.A. Poe's *Tell-Tale Heart* (1843). The difference between these two cases is that the latter is an assassin feeling persecuted by the guilt he feels about the murder he committed, whereas the former is a sort of conjoined twin, a double woman whose sense of identity is disturbed by her bodily makeup - and vice versa, whose psychic makeup given his bodily dimension does not fit the norm.

The story may be described as the autobiographical account of a fictional character. Traditionally, a fictional autobiography is such that parts or all of the events recounted by the author in an autobiographical fashion are fictional (Cuddon et al, 2013). This story is not a biographical account of the author but of the narrator – a fictional character. In other words, the character and the events are purely symbolic and make no reference to the real. However, there is a tension between the non-referentiality and the 'autobiographical' character of the story. Although there is no express intention to make believe the reader that the events in the story are *real*, they are told in an *autobiographical manner*, a subjective tale of someone's *true* or *real* life. It follows that such type of story highlights the tension between a form of knot that ties imaginary, symbolic and real and a knot in which the symbolic and imaginary are homogenous to the real. The latter is the case of the genre of this story, for, within the story, fictional reality occupies the place normally occupied by that which is extra-linguistic.

In cases where artistic experimentation with faux biography and documentary take the medium to its extreme, the psychotic flavour of the vicissitudes between the symbolic and the real come to the fore. Although different from a hallucination in which the signifier is foreclosed and reappears in the real in the form of a 'false perception', a faux biography places the whole of the symbolic and imaginary in the stead of the real. This can be understood as a critique to the very notion of the real in which the real is but *produced*. However, a *produced real*, that is, symbolic and imaginary in the place of the real are reminiscent of Freud's notion of psychotic projection in which psychic reality supplants 'reality' (Freud, 1923). Faux documentaries and biographies play upon this tension as well, for 'true' and 'produced' reality become indistinguishable. In other words, this structural state of things, symbolic and imaginary replacing the real, are to a degree akin to the functioning of delusional elaboration in paranoia.

One could relate these notions as well to Jean Baudrillard's account of third order simulacra (1994), which describe for instance 'reality shows' in which the medium becomes the message thereby replacing the real with the imaginary and symbolic. In third order simulacra the absence of the real is hidden, dissimulated and replaced with a symbolic stencil. This may be understood as akin to Lacan's trefoil knot in which registers are indistinguishable from each other and which characterises the structure of paranoia:



Trefoil knot

Whilst this may be taken as a structural understanding that applies to the genre of autobiographical accounts by fictional characters, faux documentary and biography, these dynamics unfold with a noteworthy specificity in this story. As a whole, one can argue that one of the story's preoccupations is precisely the relation between the symbolic and imaginary on the one hand and the real on the other. At stake there is a constant tension between the former's primacy over the latter and vice versa. Throughout the story it is unclear whether the body or the subject, taken as real, and symbolic and imaginary respectively, determine if she is one or two individuals. In fact, both perspectives, real, and symbolic and imaginary support both hypotheses: her being one subject as well as two, her having one body as well as two - it would be expected that the definition of one pole would anchor the other. One could argue that her situation is one in which the symbolic and imaginary do not find an anchor on the real (and vice versa) and therefore neither of them operates as they otherwise would. This can be accounted for as a knot that keeps coming undone.

The narrator recounts a story about her identity, her bodily constitution, her history, her social and erotic aspirations, and so forth. With Lacan, I argue that the quintessential discursive entities that stand for identity are personal and possessive pronouns in the first person, that is, signifiers that stand for the ego – coined by Freud as *Ich*, a psychic structure denoted by a first personal pronoun (Freud, 1923). The subject, explains Lacan, speaks himself with his ego (Lacan, 1955 – 1956). Therefore, even though the meaning of these signifiers may be taken by *méconnaissance* from the outset, signifiers 'I' 'me' or 'mine' epitomise the imaginary and are the symbolic expression of identity and the ego. Following Felman's contention of Lacan's 'grammar

of the unconscious understood as geometry' (Felman, 2005) I argue that these grammatical points are vertices, points of union or cleavage.

In the story, the narrator uses bizarre forms of personal and possessive pronouns: 'I-first', 'I-second', 'mine of hers', and so forth. On the other hand, she insists on being a single being and explains in many ways how *stricto sensu* she cannot be considered two individuals. Arguably, this points to an at once singular and double subjectivity. It is tempting to resort to Freud (1921) and Melanie Klein's (1935, 1946) notions of splitting of the ego. Nevertheless, the bodily anatomy of the narrator is such that one is also tempted to grant the possibility of there being in 'her' two different egos simultaneously, or two egos in such a unity that they might perform some functions together (thereby appearing as a unified ego) and some functions separately. This would be conclusive were the anatomy of the narrator not inconclusive about its oneness, duplicity or 'united duality'.

In this sense, neither the body (understood as the locus of the real) nor the imaginary and symbolic registers are conclusive about the status of the narrator nor are they mutually determining. In fact, one can state that the notion of a fictional subjective narration in the first person, which is how the story could be described, is nonsensical in this case for no definite 'subjective' or 'first person' status can be really granted to this narration. In other words, in the story the symbolic and the real do not provide an anchoring for each other, they fall in a chicken-and-egg vicious circle in which one would be this were the other that and vice versa. In this sense, whilst the genre of the story obeys what I have called a paranoid dynamic in which the symbolic supplants the real, in the story itself the symbolic, imaginary and real registers are undetermined due to their mutual failing to 'anchor' or knot each other.

There is, furthermore, a point of coincidence between this story and Lacan's analysis of Schreber's memoirs that is noteworthy. Lacan notes, as explained in previous chapters, that the voices hallucinated by Schreber 'get interrupted at the ending point of the group of words that one can call 'index-terms', that is, those terms designated before as shifters (in Jakobsonian grammatical terms), precisely the terms that indicate within the code the position of the subject based on the message itself' (Lacan, 1955, 18). The terms that the narrator cannot univocally and unproblematically use in the story, that is personal and possessive pronouns, coincide to the terms referred to by Lacan as shifters in Schreber's hallucinations.

Schreber's hallucinations, as explained before, may be understood as signifiers in the real. This is a paradigmatic feature of many psychotic structures. But, there is a noteworthy coincidence between Lacan's observations about alterations in the index terms and what occurs in this story. Arguably, alterations of the symbolic order to the degree in which the subjective status within the symbolic code is undecidable may be understood as a paradigmatic psychotic feature as well. In the case of this story, the bizarre use of personal pronouns points to a subjective status within the code that can be described as unique yet double. The subject as a notion is only intelligible if it is unique. Therefore, subjectivity beyond the intelligible, that is an unthinkable subject, may be understood, viable and thinkable only within a psychotic structure. In this sense, the narrator's challenge to Descartes' *I think therefore I am* would not be mistaken, for there would be other ways of being, *unthinkable* ones, only possible perhaps within psychosis as a structure.

Furthermore, the bizarre use of possessive pronouns points to an undecidably first or third-personal relation to the body, attitudes, feelings, thoughts or any imaginary object

with which the ego may establish a relation of possession. The story, therefore, challenges the traditional notion of object relations in which projection and introjection are at play. The notion 'mine of hers' for instance, manifests how inadequate the traditional notion of projection would be in this case. Projection, attributing 'what is mine or what I am' to the other cannot logically operate in a state of things where 'mine of hers' is the possessive at once first and third personal pronoun. In such a situation there cannot be a true distinction between the ego and the object or other, therefore no true projection is possible. Rather, there is a state of things akin to Colette Soler's description of psychosis as "the unconscious being out in the open"<sup>66</sup> (Soler, 2002), where there is no repression nor distinction between the ego and the other. That which should remain as a trace after repression in neurosis, in this case the relation ego-object, in psychosis is manifest and out in the open. A hypothesis that can be advanced is that the unconscious being 'out in the open' is what makes possible for a psychotic text to perform its aboutness.

There is an exemplary instance of the text performing its aboutness. The brackets at the beginning of the story are instances of the letter in fact performing the ambiguity and duplicity of the status of the text. Further to the brackets in fact being unpronounceable *doubles* and *mirrors of each other*, they grant to the lengthy text they enclose a dubious status: that of relevance, being an integral part of the story, and that of being not an important part of the story, only a digression. Indeed, the text they enclose is at once important and digressing, as such telling of the *double character (of the story)*.

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<sup>66</sup> Colette Soler's phrase in French is "l'inconscient à ciel ouvert de la psychose".

There is, furthermore, a feature of the texture that I have called before *insight into the apparatus*. There are in the story, time and again, attempts and fails to draw an infinite straight line that would confirm a false knot. Insofar as this is a functioning of the symbolic itself, it is noteworthy that it would be so obviously evident on the texture. The main character's double, non-anchoring dialectics between body and subject as well as the completion effect she has on her furniture are good examples of attempts to bring together an otherwise false knot by a symbolic operation that would confirm it. A third element in each case, the image of her use of the furniture, or the cancerous tumour that brings the story to an end are good examples of this. These moments in the story have an effect of 'everything finally being in its place', which I attribute to the performance of this feature of the symbolic register. Nevertheless, the knot is not once and for all tied, it keeps coming undone as the story of her duplicity is not resolved but continues.

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## Summary of Literary Analysis

### Introduction

This chapter collects and summarises the key findings of the analysis performed on Pablo Palacio's short stories and novel. Each section describes interpretations of some of the textual phenomena found across texts that can be likened to those described by Lacan apropos psychosis. Each of them contributed to the understanding of the text apropos which they were formulated.

This literary analysis yielded delimitations of textual phenomena that can be more deeply understood in terms of Lacan's notions of psychotic structural dynamics (i.e. symbolic, imaginary and real configurations and interactions), a radical relation to the signifier, specific linguistic structures of psychotic symptoms, psychotic subjective dynamics, the notion of the *sinthome* and the foreclosure of the Name of the Father and the vicissitudes of the symbolic law. The texture performing its aboutness and the notion of insight into the apparatus are discussed under this light.

In each section, specific literary phenomena are highlighted and the extent to which they can be understood in terms of Lacan's theory of psychosis is discussed. Different textual phenomena are compared and thus connections between phenomena are attempted and differences discussed.

## Knots: Symbolic, Imaginary, Real

A recurrent theme across stories that touches upon the relation between the registers is the preoccupation about the relation between discursive disciplines that are symbolic and imaginary on the one hand, and those which claim to make reference to the real on the other.

This preoccupation, for instance, comes to the fore at the beginning of *Women Gaze the Stars* (Palacio, 1927). At the beginning of the story, the tension between history and storytelling is brought about. The narrator is a storyteller, whereas the main character of the story is a historian. The narrator reflects upon history and storytelling and concludes that history is much more interesting than storytelling given its explicit reference to facticity, to *true events*. In other words, history corresponds to the set of disciplines that make reference to the real, and storytelling - or fiction - does not.

These two sets of discursive disciplines are underpinned by two different forms of intertwinement between the symbolic, imaginary and real. In one of them, the linguistic system understood as signifier and signified make reference to the real, and in the other it does not. To make reference, in this case, means that the symbolic and imaginary, understood as the meaning produced by signifiers (i.e. the signified) would be a stencil copy of the real. In other words, if meaning and real are the same, if the real is understood as *factual events* or *happenings*, it follows that in the case of history the meaning of the text or what it conveys, ought to be a faithful duplicate of facticity.

Therefore, in the 'referential' set of discursive practices characterised thus the real and the imaginary would be analogous. It would follow that signifiers are able to 'produce' the real analogously to the chain of signifiers enabling meaning (or the

imaginary). In other words, the signifier would produce imaginary and real. To that extent, we can characterise this type of knot as delusional, for it is akin to that mechanism of paranoia in which subjective meaning overarches the dimension of facticity. In other words, in this particular context and understood thus, history would be underpinned by symbolic, imaginary and real mechanisms akin to those of delusion.

Conceptualised thus, the real does not hold as a notion given that facticity should be heterogeneous to language, but if the meaning of language is identical to facticity, it ought to follow that facts and meaning can be produced by signifiers. It is a contradiction in terms to say that facticity, or the real, is heterogeneous to language as well as produced by signifiers concomitantly. To that extent, a knot thus conceived is not one of a Borromean kind.

Nevertheless, the question at hand is whether the substance of the imaginary and the substance of the real are exactly the same in history understood as a referential discursive practice. Arguably, in psychosis the substance of the symbolic becomes homogenous to that of the real. Therefore a claim about a delusional form of history ought to follow the same structure. In history understood thus, 'facticity' and 'language' are not homogeneous in terms of substance, but the understanding of the 'real' as facticity overarched by language does follow a structure akin to that of delusion.

A different sort of tension between language and facticity comes to the fore in *The Double and Only Woman*. The story is a fictional autobiographical account, that is, the narrator is a fictional character who narrates her own autobiography. There is no pretence of the narrator being a real person *stricto sensu*. But given the

*autobiographical* character of the story, it could be characterised as subjective 'history'. Therefore, this story is an example of fiction operating, as it were, as facticity. In this sense, this story's dynamics are akin to what we have described previously: the imaginary operating as the real.

In a different sense, furthermore, the symbolic, imaginary and real do not knot with one another in the story. The narrator is a woman (or two women) whose body and subjectivity are at once double and one. Therefore, identity and subjectivity understood respectively as imaginary and symbolic, do not find univocal anchors on the body, understood as the real, and vice versa. In this sense, the diegetic (and the resulting linguistic attributes of the story discussed further down) conveys a knot in which the registers do not anchor each other and the subject is left therefore undetermined. Subjective indetermination, I argue, can be characterised as a psychotic feature.

Summing up, across the stories there are a few examples of knots that can be characterised as psychotic. Firstly what we called a 'delusional knot' in which the imaginary and real are putatively identical and produced by the symbolic. Secondly an 'undetermined knot' in which none of the registers anchors itself on the others. There is a tension between these knots and a Borromean knot in which the three registers would be tied to, participate from, anchor and determine each other. This tension, I argue, is a feature that traverses the texts throughout: a tension between Borromean and non-Borromean knots. In other words, in the examined texts there is a tension between two structural states of things: one in which language and facticity (i.e. real events or the bodily) would be either putatively equal or so detached that they would

remain reciprocally undetermined; and another in which language and facticity are so intertwined that they participate from each other without becoming the other.

### Speaking and Spoken-to Subjectivity

There is a series of extra textual phenomena that occur notably in the text *Lateral Light* (Palacio, 1926). In the story, the narrator describes that he is suddenly called for lunch, which annoys him very much. He interrupts the narration and the prose comes to a halt for he, in fact, attends to such call. The call is extra-textual, it happens beyond the domain of the text. The narrator, the speaking subject, becomes a spoken-to subject, which recalls the hallucinatory phenomena reported by Schreber (Schreber, 1903). Unlike Schreber, the narrator does not describe the 'calls for lunch' as voices that only address to him. However, the subjective effect of the interruption that the call produces is visible; the annoyance is remarkable and in a sense the subject responds to the calls by commenting on how much he is annoyed by them. This phenomenon can be likened to the one described by Lacan apropos the signifier on the real (Lacan, 1955 - 1956).

In this sense, a speaking subject becoming a spoken-to-subject by an extra-symbolic element is a phenomenon that has a profoundly destabilising effect for the subject. In the story, this is observable in the annoyance of the narrator and in the subsequent halt of the narrative. Indeed, an extra textual linguistic element recalls a type of organisation of the symbolic, imaginary and real registers in which a symbolic element can become detached from the chain, being foreclosed instead of repressed, and return from the real. If interpreted thus, the narrator recounts that he is called for lunch

from an extra-textual locus, that is the real, instead of being able to say that he is hungry. The call happens as the narrator recounts that as soon as the legs of his girlfriend thickened, he decided to marry her. The sexual and oral context of the extra-textual call make sense in the story, for we learn that the narrator finds their mutual sexual desire unacceptable, anxiety-provoking and persecutory, hence the foreclosure of the set of signifiers relating to food.

Another instance of an interruption of the narration by a somewhat extra textual phenomenon occurs in *Women Gaze the Stars* (Palacio, 1927) as the diegetic of the story 'interrupts' the narrator. The events of the story come to the fore sporadically and silence the narrator. Immediately, the narrator continues his soliloquy interrupting the diegetic until eventually he yields to the occurrence of diegetic events. In this sense, we observe an interesting phenomenon of interruption of the symbolic and imaginary by another equally symbolic and imaginary dimension that has, I argue, gained autonomy within the narrative. This autonomous quality can be likened to the way in which the signifier imposes itself from the real to the subject: at once willingly and imposingly.

## Sinthome

The sinthome is one of Lacan's most original contributions apropos James Joyce's literature and outlines the possibility of a symptom becoming that which keeps the subjective knot from coming undone. Locating the sinthome in the examined texts, however, proved difficult. Arguably, the sinthome can be understood as the identification of the ego with the symptom, or the act whereby the symptom is

reintroduced into the symbolic or imaginary orders so that the subjective knot does not come undone. It follows that the dynamics of the sinthome depend upon the specific understanding of the registers, the symptom in a work of literature and the subject to whom this concerns.

Lacan's conceptualisation of the sinthome addresses Joyce's literature as a *life endeavour* and weighs the effects it may have had in Joyce's psychic economy. To put it simply, the fact that Joyce was a writer, thought of himself as The Artist and wrote in his distinct fashion kept his putative psychotic knot from coming undone. But, in order to use the notion of the sinthome in the present literary analysis, we have conceptualised the sinthome as being a *momentary* conjunction of symbolic, imaginary and real in the text. The reason for this is that the analysis takes the work of literature in its autonomy as its object of analysis without focusing on the author qua subject. Hence the notion of the sinthome has been used to identify not symptoms that keep the knot together per se, but textual moments that allow a glimpse of the three registers and which have a stabilising, or knotting effect in the texture itself.

In the last scene of *Lateral Light*, there is a moment which could be interpreted as performing the function of the sinthome. After having gone through what we characterised as a breakdown, the story regains its pace and flow of narrative. As explained previously in the analysis of the story, the signifier Treponema Pallidum gets reintroduced into the symbolic order, which enables the main character to shout it into the open space in the middle of the night as opposed to being persecuted by it. In the texture of the story, this is visible in that Treponema Pallidum no longer interrupts the flow of the story, but is woven in the texture and narrative. I argue that this

reintroduction into the symbolic order of what hitherto disrupted it presupposes that the knot has been knotted again.

The immediately previous scene of the story enables this operation. In it, the main character walks into an old church and sees a sculpture and a painting of the Virgin Mary, wearing a garb that reminds him of the colour of his old, broken utensil with an inscription that reads:

HEIGHT &  
SHAPE & GA  
RB OF THE H  
EST VIRGIN A  
CCORDING TO  
WHAT ST  
ANSELM WRO

This scene, I argue, can be thought as performing the function of the sinthome given the express presence of the three registers. The association of the colour of the garb to the old, broken utensil points to it as pertaining to the real, understood as that which returns. The image of the Virgin Mary that recalls the green old utensil is the imaginary element. The inscription on the painting is testimony of the symbolic operating continuously albeit in a reified form. That which is alive in the narrator is at play in this encounter. This momentary encounter of the three registers around the Virgin Mary can be thought of as a sinthome as it restores the flow of the text and witnesses the reintroduction of the signifier *Treponema Pallidum* into the signifier chain.

Linguistic Features

Each story has a variety of linguistic features akin to those characterised as psychotic by Lacan. Furthermore, there are some linguistic features in the stories that may extend Lacan's proposition of the psychotic radical relation to the signifier (Lacan, 1955 - 1956). The meaning of 'radical' is pivotal for the understanding of such linguistic features.

The story *Lateral Light* (Palacio, 1926) is perhaps the most florid in terms of psychotic linguistic phenomena. In the story, the narrator recalls an old tin-made object (cacharro roto in the original Spanish). The sound of the two syllables of rolling r's and o's (rro-rrro), the ending and commencing of the two corresponding words, is a purely linguistic entity with which the narrator, he explains, would like to cuddle. I argue that the subject objectifies and relates to signifiers by their real aspect, that is, by the letter. The ending and beginning of these two signifiers (ro-rrro) becomes a new signifier itself if taken by its material aspect. 'Rorro' in Spanish is a colloquial form to call a baby, which resonates with the way the narrator relates to the broken, old tin utensil. The narrator does not say explicitly that the broken, old utensil reminds him of his childhood but he associates it with his mother and conveys the desire to cuddle in the sound of the rolling r's of 'rro-rrro'. It is the signifier ro-rrro, I argue, which reminds him of his childhood; he misrecognises the broken, old utensil as the object he cares about when, in fact, its importance lies in the possibility of the equivocity of the signifier that names it.

In *Lateral Light*, furthermore, signifiers manifest their persecutory potential where the main character dreads the signifier *Treponema Pallidum*. This signifier appears in the story in a somewhat disjointed manner, menacing the narrator, announcing his catastrophic end. *Treponema Pallidum* is the name of the bacteria of syphilis, indeed

a signifier that points to the dreadful potential effects of sexual intercourse: death and madness.

Throughout the stories, there are interesting instances of reified language in which signifiers operate with a weighty quality, as it were, like objects. In *Lateral Light*, the dreaded expression of the main character's partner "*Obviously!*"<sup>67</sup>, in his own words, has the power to obscure his life. He explains that he would like to shove this word down his partner's throat or up her nose. He explains that he would rather spit this expression to a spittoon rather than saying it. Similar examples of words damaging the body in a concrete manner are found in *Women Gaze the Stars*, where the main character, Juan Gual, has been scratched in the face by history, whipped in the face by his partner's reproaches and has been forced to swallow loneliness down his throat. This points, yet again, to a sort of flatness or uniformity between language and the body, that is, between the imaginary and symbolic, and the real.

Lacan noted that the message phenomena that Schreber reportedly heard halted in the place of the group of terms called shifters, that is, the group of terms that indicate the place of the subject in the phrase (Lacan, 1955 - 1956). *The Double and Only Woman*, although not a hallucinatory phenomenon per se, is the case of a story told 'in the first person'<sup>68</sup> with alterations precisely at this level. As explained, the narrator protagonist is a conjoined twin who is at once one and two women, therefore personal and possessive pronouns in her discourse operate unusually. She refers to herself as I-first or I-second; she refers to a pair of her lips as 'my lips of hers', and so forth. This strange linguistic state of things yields a subject who is uncertain about its oneness or

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<sup>67</sup> "Claro!" in the original Spanish, which in a different sense opposes to "oscuro", obscure in English.

<sup>68</sup> This phrase is an oxymoron considering her impossibility to use the first person univocally.

duplicity, and therefore its identity. Further, the subject cannot establish a first personal relation to objects, as her first personal relation to them is at once third-personal. Interestingly, the notion of projection is nonsensical in such subjectivity.

Given that her body and subjectivity, as discussed previously, leave her uniqueness and duplicity undecidable, the registers do not anchor each other and the subject is left in perplexity. It could be argued that an anatomical disposition out of the ordinary explains this phenomenon. However, a psychotic structure would be the fittest structure to accommodate such form of subjectivity, prey of the undecidability of its oneness or duplicity given, arguably, the absence of the operation of the law. It may be argued, furthermore, that the statements found across stories about mad men 'having a higher viewpoint' or 'being able to access deeper layers of truth' result from the possibilities of linkage of signifiers that are not 'possible' within, for instance, a neurotic structure governed by the operation of the law and the rules of language. This viewpoint is supported by the main character's initial apology to 'moralists and grammaticians' whereby she locates herself as a subject outside the domain of the symbolic law.

In many of the texts, and specifically in the novel *Débora* (Palacio, 1927), language has a clunky feeling, as if it tripped over its own flow. Linguistic effects between words (i.e. qualifications of nouns by adjectives, or verbs by adverbs, and so forth) are weakened by the distance between them. Breaks, punctuation marks and unusual sentence structures severely weaken the link between words. This loosening of relations results in words often acquiring undecidable meanings. Given the loosening of relations between words and their resulting undecidability (yet not hyperbolicity), I argue that the reader to 'attributes' more meaning to them, and hence a 'higher

viewpoint' to the text. In other words, textually, more meaning is possible when the law that constraints language (yet concomitantly makes it possible) does not operate as it otherwise would in neurotic structures. The resulting flavour of language is one that allows more or unexpected meaning that stems from unexpected linguistic forms or combinations of words, yet it undeniably has a strange flavour too.

### Name-of-the-Father and the Symbolic Law

The operation of the symbolic law comes to the fore as such particularly in the story *the Anthropophagus* (Palacio, 1926). Quite literally, the story features three characters called Nicanor Tiberio: grandfather, son and grandson. Often in the narrative, the reader does not know which of the three characters the narration is about, which may be interpreted performing of the undecidability of the Name of the Father. In other words, lack of clarity about the name of the character entails an unclear position in a kinship system (whether grandfather, son or grandson if taking the first Nicanor Tiberio as reference). The kinship system is a symbolic structure par excellence. However, we argue that this corresponds to a perverse structure rather than a psychotic one, understood as père-version as conceptualised by Lacan (Lacan, 1973; Caligaris, 1987). This hypothesis, as explained in the analysis of the story, is further reinforced by the final pun of the story that mockingly plays upon the relativity of morality in the story. In other words, by recourse to irony, it plays upon the relativity of the law; it simultaneously affirms it and negates it.

Nevertheless, there are aspects in the story that relate to the symbolic law and that, interestingly, converge with some of Lacan's analysis apropos Schreber's

autobiography and therefore with psychosis. One of Schreber's psychotic episodes took place after he was promoted to a senior judge position, which is interpreted by Lacan as significantly related to the symbolic law and a sort of kinship system given by the hierarchy system (Lacan, 1955 - 1956). The narrator of *the Anthropophagus* is also a law student and refers to the anthropophagus as his defendant. The name of the character is often undecidable; instead he is referred to as 'the anthropophagus'. In other words, the identity of the character is given concomitantly by that which first enables any social link (being named by others) and that which disrupts any possible social link, in this case anthropophagy. In this sense, we can observe the simultaneous operation and non-operation of the symbolic law, which grants a symbolic place and the possibility for a social link to the subject if it operates, or results in the objectification of the subject if otherwise, for instance, by being named after a function or a behaviour (i.e. the anthropophagus).

In contrast, in *Lateral Light* there is a moment of breakdown of the symbolic law in which the effects, I argue, can be conceptualised as more straightforwardly psychotic. This breakdown is related to the aforementioned phrase used by the main character's partner (i.e. obviously!) This phrase 'obscures his life' as she uses this word when she wants to let him know that they will not be able to do what they originally wanted (i.e. we won't be able to go out because I'm tired, obviously!) In other words, for the character the symbolic law finds support on this phrase - it forbids him from pursuing his wishes. At one point of the story, she uses this phrase as a sexual innuendo, that is, she uses it not to *forbid* but to *enable* a sexual encounter. As a result, the main character suffers an anxiety attack, punches her in the face, runs off to another woman with whom he stays for ten days. Then he has terrible persecutory, anxious daydreams

and so forth. The prose, as this happens, indeed becomes clunky, interrupted, somewhat senseless and confusing. In this sense, we can argue that this is an instance of the story and the text performing a breakdown of the symbolic law.

The signifier “*Treponema Pallidum*” seems to disrupt the flow of the story. In this sense, it may have real properties. In connection with it, the signifiers “*pálida*” (pale, as the narrator describes his girlfriend) and “*paletadas*” (shovelfuls, when the narrator describes the ‘letters r’ of “*cacharro roto*”) all seem to observe bizarre dynamics, strange deformations. It cannot be ignored that ‘pal’ is the piece of symbolic code that can be sifted out of these key signifiers of the story. Furthermore, it cannot be ignored either that ‘Palacio’, the author’s last name, is yet another instance of the same signifier. Valencia explains that Palacio was the writer’s mother’s last name. His father’s last name, Costa, was rejected by the writer upon his father’s offer to give it to him. Although indeed there is a temptation of continuing this line of enquiry to and thus link the story, rejection of the name of the father and psychosis, how could we really be sure that this is the case? This can, nevertheless, remain as a hypothesis.

### Insight into the Apparatus

Freud’s observation about Schreber’s delusional system being similar to his theory of libido (Freud, 1911) as well as Lacan’s of it being similar to the theory of the signifier (Lacan, 1955 - 1956) refer to a similar psychotic feature that can be termed ‘insight into the apparatus’. This can be interpreted as resulting from what Lacan called ‘a radical relation to the signifier’ in which psychic phenomena take the form of the very functioning of the signifier.

As discussed, insight into the apparatus does not mean a conscious or even unconscious 'act of insight'. It means that the subject's psychic phenomena take the form of an aspect of a given structure or type of functioning of the psychic apparatus. Therefore, the structure of these phenomena can be called almost epistemological. In other words, it would seem that the psychotic subject (or its psychic productions) know the structure of the mind that is in fact unknowable by an effort of individual cognitive introspection.

Across the examined works of literature, there are several instances of such phenomenon, but they become particularly evident in the novel *Débora*. The initial description of the narrator 'detaching himself off the main character' shows a remarkable knowledge of the functioning of signifiers and the act of speaking. This, in conjunction with Juan Gual's care of his 'symbolic productions' in *Women Gaze the Stars* leads us to hypothesise that in both cases there is an awareness of a signifier linking to other signifiers (i.e. not to the real) and of an understanding of the symbol akin to Lacan's definition of the signifier in the seminar of the Purloined Letter as being what represents a subject for another signifier (Lacan, 1964).

Furthermore, these reflections upon the vicissitudes of the symbol entail also insight into the temporalities at work in the act of speaking as described by Lacan in *Subversion of the Subject...* (1960). The signifying chain in its diachronic dimension underpins the idea of a symbol circulating and becoming what it may (i.e. infinite possible meaning) given the infinite possible signifiers that may be called to form the chain in the act of speaking. However ephemeral and infinitely brief, these dynamics also entail a *fixation of meaning* in the act of speaking that corresponds to the retroactive diachronic aspect of the chain of signifiers. Only from a diachronic

dimension signifiers *mean* this or that given their retroactive linkage with other signifiers. Arguably, the description of the act of literary creation made by the narrator of *Débora*, in the very same act of narrating, carries an implicit knowledge about these dimensions of language.

The main preoccupation that unfolds across *Débora* is contingent, bleak and disconnected truth being precluded by 'literaturising' or garlanding a story. This is a remarkable portrayal of the functioning of the symbolic and imaginary registers upon the real. The protest against garlanding a story; attributing to it unity, sequence, logics and necessity can be interpreted as a subjective insight into the operation of the symbolic and imaginary, understood as the sense making dimension, and upon the real understood as that which is heterogeneous to language - bleak and crude truth. The protest, however, points to a preference towards the real rid of the sense-making dimension, a preference for 'the desert of the real'. This, in this case, can be interpreted as advocating for a knot in which the three registers are not knotted together in a Borromean knot, one in which the real would be lose. Furthermore, in *Débora* there are instances of these kernels of truth bluntly emerging and piercing narration. The blunt emergence of the real (or kernels of truth) that pierces the homogenous sense-making dimension is akin to Lacan's depiction of the psychic apparatus in the schema R. Arguably, this can be interpreted as implicit insight into the psychic apparatus as well.

In the Double and Only Woman we described repeated attempts in the story and in the texture of failing unary traces, that is, straight lines that would confirm falsely tied knots and that would make of a knot that comes undone, a Borromean knot. This is visible in the story when she completes the pieces of furniture by using them, or when

the ambiguity of her duplicity or oneness is put to an end by the emergence of a cancerous tumour in her lip of hers. In these instances, what is caught in an endless dialectics of not finding anchors in each other (i.e. imaginary-symbolic and real) finally are brought to an anchoring point, a third element that ties them up and that produces a feeling of 'things falling into place'. Nevertheless, the psychotic fashion of the tying of the knot is such that no infinite straight line is enough to confirm that particular knot.

### Performativity

Resulting as well from the radical relation to the signifier of psychosis, we find that a psychotic text is one that is able to perform its aboutness. To support this idea, I have drawn J. L Austin (1955) notion of performativity, to the extent discussed previously. In this sense, we find several instances of such dimension of performativity across the examined works of literature.

Particularly in *Débora*, there is a sense of discontinuity of the prose. Given what has been previously explained about the syntactic distance between words, the narrative seems to trip over its own flow and conveys a sense of discontinuity. As has been discussed, fragmentariness gives the novel its purpose and a sense of wholeness. In this case, the text performs its aboutness. In other words, the texture of the novel is fragmentary so that the theme of fragmentariness is not only 'reflected upon' in the narration, but experienced in the very composition of the text.

Furthermore, an exemplary moment of performativity can be found in *Women Gaze the Stars*. In Spanish, the words for history and story are homonymous (*historia*),

hence the effectiveness of the textual performative. The objective of the text, it may be argued, as explained before, is to critique the sharp distinction between referential and non-referential discursive disciplines, which we characterised as underpinned by psychotic and Borromean knots respectively. This critique is performed by the text, rather than simply 'told'. The narrator (a storyteller of fiction) introduces the main character, Juan Gual, a historian. In the story, however, the historian is but a storyteller as he simply dictates a story to the scribe. One can immediately interpret that the identification between narrator and character is manifest; but the irony lies in that the historian is fictional. The narrator then affirms that history is a much more effective discursive practice than fiction, since the 'truth' of the events that it tells makes it more poignant and compelling. He begins then to narrate 'facts' which in themselves are also fictional. Therefore, and summing up, the text performs the undecidability and conflict between history and storytelling, the Russian-doll logic in which these two disciplines in fact are caught up. In short, this stems from the ability to make language *do* its object of discourse which results, I argue, from a radical relation to the signifier.

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## Discussion

### Reading psychosis

One of the main questions traversing this research has been about the meaning and conditions under which reading psychosis is possible. Reading psychosis and psychotic symptoms in the literary means, I argue, bringing about features of the text that recall those which have been described within the psychoanalytic clinical field about the speech and dynamics of psychotic analysands (or those of subjects not in an analytical setting like Daniel Schreber or James Joyce). This proved fruitful as it allowed us to bring to the fore the dynamics that underpin psychotic symptoms or dynamics instantiated in literary substance (i.e. diegetic, textural, linguistic). So doing opens the very understanding of what we believe these dynamics *may be*, therefore new psychoanalytic-literary theoretical understandings become possible as well as new understandings of the text and the meaning it enables.

Reading, understood as a *category* at once passive and active of *symbolic agency* traversed this research throughout. On the one hand, it could be said that in my act of reading them I *encountered* psychotic symptomatic features and dynamics in the texts. On the other hand, it could be argued that I *interpreted* such features as instances of what I had in mind. The former emphasises the autonomous quality of psychotic symptoms and phenomena within the text whereas the latter emphasises the attributional, transformational or interpretative act of *reading* it in a specific way.

Throughout this research I insisted on the first understanding of reading - as an encounter rather than an attribution or transformation. I have time and again focused

on the autonomous character of the literary work qua symbolic artefact, which consequently implies the autonomy of its psychotic or nonpsychotic attributes. This viewpoint, arguably, has resulted in positing psychosis as a fashion of linguistic play within a literary text that is, to an extent, beyond individual readings. Therefore reading psychosis, understood as the act of encounter of psychosis in a literary work amounts to an act of reckoning that language operates in a specific way within that particular context. In sum, retrospectively I can conclude that reading psychosis, in these terms, is underpinned by a claim about the kind of operation of language in a specific context. In other words, one of the meanings of 'reading psychosis' can be understood as aiming to read, think and feel - experience - written language to characterise it as something, name it. Without a doubt, the resulting attributes of the name are as interesting as the problems that arose in the process of naming it. Aiming to name language means characterising language by means of language, which consequently amounts to dealing with language and its limits.

Notwithstanding, any given act of reading psychosis (psychosis in literature or literature in psychosis) is in fact an act of writing psychosis as well. This relates to what I have referred to as 'individual measures of interpretation' throughout this research and without a doubt is related to the attributional or transformational form of reading mentioned above. The ever-ephemeral instant of encounter of a phenomenon that offers itself seemingly to be read is *already*<sup>69</sup> subjectively inhabited, almost created, and to that extent *written*.

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<sup>69</sup> The role of 'already' cannot be stressed enough in this phrase. It points to that mysterious encounter with a symbolic phenomenon occurred before the chronological moment of encounter, in this sense attributable to the play of synchrony and diachrony.

It cannot, therefore, be concluded neither a total objective or subjective origin in what is being read, nor a total immanence or transcendence to the meaning at the interface of reading-writing. A naive subjectivist stance would ignore that certain phenomena call for particular readings and have, at the very least, a materiality of their own. A naive objectivist stance would ignore reading as pertaining to the domain of linguistic subjective agency. “The symbolic register preceding the subject”, a well-known Lacanian principle discussed in the first chapter, not only evokes the paradox that we are discussing given the temporal terms of the symbolic and the subject, but also given the paradox of immanence and transcendence of the symbolic in or beyond the subject respectively.

Questioning what does it mean to read psychosis, therefore, has led me to confront immanence and transcendence as well as subjective preceding and proceeding of language. In other words, this research has been traversed by questions about the limits of language in what touches subjectivity, objectivity and linguistic agency. No conclusion *can* be advanced on these points, only perhaps the experience, the pathos resulting of the desire to open up meaning beyond the limits of subjectivity. In other words, I can only aim to convey the desire to open up meaning beyond one’s own believed limits of the possible. Ipso facto, nevertheless, this meaning appears as having been in fact subjectively written, and again the subjectively I am unwittingly, belatedly implied.

Rey (1982) suggests that knowledge *will have appeared*, that is, will appear once its lack yields in a repetitive, retroactively resignifying fashion (i.e. in *après-coup*). But psychoanalytic theory about psychosis is knowledge too, nevertheless, that does not follow that dynamic entirely. Derrida (1980) and Felman (1982) argued precisely

against this kind of knowledge and the power it supposedly inevitably exerts over the literary and, in this case, the psychotic phenomenon it is about. The desire underlying psychoanalytic knowledge would be, according to Felman, “to be a non-dupe i.e. at once uncover and avoid the traps of the unconscious” (Felman, 1982, 187). Psychoanalytic knowledge about psychosis, analogously to Derrida’s criticism of Lacanian “phallogocentrism” (Derrida, 1980), would therefore seemingly shape meaning and language pre-emptively for the reader and prevent the effects of the reader’s unconscious, of his writing whilst reading.

My research led me to question the status of this knowledge, psychoanalytic theory about psychosis in particular, in the act of reading. My experience is that psychoanalytic theory does not perform a pre-emptive function over the unconscious, it does not find what is looking for whilst building an epistemology of the same and as such does not exert this putative power over the phenomenon encountered or read. Psychoanalytic knowledge about psychosis only lent me the language needed to write about what I read so I could unwarrantedly call things in some way. More importantly, it enabled me to adopt a somewhat impossible, or at least paradoxical position akin to that of the analyst, namely that of *anticipated surprise*.

At the moment of the encounter with the text, some preliminary theoretical knowledge on the to-be-interpreted psychotic phenomena was undeniably in my mind - it would be naive and mendacious to negate it. This knowledge, however, was immediately over-brimmed, rendered insufficient by the dynamics I *observed* and *underwent* with the text. Psychoanalytic knowledge, nevertheless, was not rendered useless by the initially unaccountable effect of the text and the reader’s relentless impulse to write. Psychoanalytic knowledge, perhaps (and at the end of the day) is that which can

sustain a subject who poses questions about the liminal, radical conditions of possibility and dynamics of language as he is battered by the profound perplexity these evoke. Equally, psychoanalytic knowledge sustains the subject as he unsettles language by cornering it to its most radical play. Aren't these two descriptions of the function of psychoanalytic knowledge yet another way to call reading and writing psychosis? To this extent, furthermore, I agree as well as disagree with Felman and Derrida's contentions about the power of psychoanalysis over literature and meaning. Anticipating the surprise of psychotic literary phenomena presupposed in this research to recognise them at once as *different* and *repetible*, in this sense unprecedented yet expected as discussed in chapter four. This is true, however, for every literary unfolding - or every linguistic phenomenon confronted from the point of view of psychoanalysis. When it comes to psychosis not only there is novelty in the sense that every instance is different from another. Given the *immediacy to the materiality of language* with which psychotic linguistic instances occur, I found as well an effect of bewilderment on the reader given that language appears radically different to its "habitual" form. The surprise occurs in a different, foreign sense<sup>70</sup>. The quality of the *novelty (hence its intensity and its kind)* makes of the anticipated surprise, in fact, incredibly surprising in a *strange fashion*.

Specific understandings of the nature of literature, furthermore, were in close interplay with what reading psychosis meant throughout the analysis. As discussed in relation

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<sup>70</sup> This experience, for instance, may to a degree account for Woolf's reaction to Joyce's *Ulysses* as she wrote to philosopher Roger Fry: "The pleasure [of reading Proust] becomes physical--like sun and wine and grapes and perfect serenity and intense vitality combined. Far otherwise is it with *Ulysses*; to which I bind myself like a martyr to a stake, and have thank God, now finished-- My martyrdom is over. I hope to sell it for £4.10" (Woolf, 1922).

to Felman and Rey's ideas, literature may be understood as a *subsuming space* or a *carrier* or *source of meaning*. Meaning in literature being something *subsuming* or something *encountered*, in this sense, determines what the interpreter may do in any possible literary interpretative act. The former points to the interpreter enacting language as imposed on him by literature, in the dimension of which he is subsumed. The latter points to the interpreter encountering the language of the text as if 'face to face'. Each possibility stems from a particular understanding of what meaning and literature are, and consequently place an accent in the subjective or objective nature of the object of literary interpretation. My experience leads me to conclude that the interplay of these two dimensions renders any interpretative task at once *speaking* and *spoken*. The interpreter or critic speaks of literature *as much as* he is spoken by it. To that extent, the interpreter speaks about the works of literature he has read, but equally he finds literature speaking by and through his interpretations, making of him *spoken* mostly belatedly.

Each viewpoint, furthermore, places an accent on the self-visibility or transparency of the interpretation to the interpreter, on whether and to what extent the interpreter is blind or not, and specifically blind to his blindness. Felman (1985) refers to Oedipus blinding himself when criticising the blindness of psychoanalysis about being under the sway of literature and the meaning it enables - psychoanalysis being blind to literature as its unconscious or unthought. Felman fails to take into consideration, however, that just like Oedipus, psychoanalysis - and indeed psychoanalytic literary critics - anticipate such blindness. Just like Oedipus', psychoanalysis blindness is expected, an announced omen of the oracle. Anticipating blindness (anticipating blindness as well as surprise in this sense) does not pre-empt it, but highlights the

extent to which that particular moment of blindness, itself, is repetition as well as difference. In other words, psychoanalysis makes of blindness an experience of at once being at home *and* in the unknown rather than being immersed in pure darkness. Darkness, although darkness indeed, is also psychoanalysis' light.

But the interpreter must envisage his blindness as blindness. Felman's (1982) account of the literary critical scene of the 'Turn of the Screw' overdetermined by the literary piece is a good example of such blindness. This places an accent on the extent to which language speaks by and through subjects; *spoken* rather than speaking literary critics. I am led to conclude in this sense that the extent to which the literary critic is spoken remains as an aperture that functions as the condition of possibility for more literary criticism to come about, something that occurs constantly, at different times, even in the most unexpected rooms of one's house. The extent to which the literary critic is spoken may not be visible to the literary critic himself, or it may appear belatedly, in fragments and in different guises. This I learn from my experience in this research, from my own blind spots many of them yet to come, yet to be even understood, conceived or constituted as blindness. I can anticipate their surprising appearance. 'Surprising' is nothing short of a euphemism in this case, for this comprises being responsible for the unknown as if known - the Freudian imperative.

Regarding the speaking dimension of the literary critic, I can conclude that reading psychosis, that is, understanding that what one is reading is 'psychotic' enables calling or understanding *unwarrantedly* a literary phenomenon as psychotic. This opens up new possible meanings of the work of literature. Understanding a particular literary phenomenon as psychotic means that the structure and dynamics of psychosis are thought to be at play in it, and in turn these dynamics and structure are inhabited by

the substance of the literary (i.e. narration, characters, linguistic dynamics, prose, texture and so forth). This enables new meaning of the literary work thus opened, as well as a frequent subversion of psychoanalytic theory given, as Felman suggests (1982) the operation of literature as its unthought.

Can we, lastly, assert that psychosis, its symptoms and related phenomena are *readable* in a different, perhaps more *practical* sense?<sup>71</sup> One of the objectives of this research has been to assess whether this is the case by means of our psychoanalytic literary analysis. The present research suggests that these are possible to read in a literary text if certain theoretical adaptations are made to accommodate the conditions of literary analysis. These theoretical reinterpretations result, indeed from *reading as writing*. Making them explicit is, therefore, interesting in the context of these conclusions.

I understood momentarily the ever-problematic notion of the real as the extra-textual space intrinsic to the literary piece. This understanding of the real led me to interpret, for instance, the 'callings for lunch' made to the main character of the short story *Lateral Light* (Palacio, 1926) as signifiers returning from the real. I followed Lacan's contention of a psychotic subject *answering*, completing the phrases uttered by the voices he says he hears. In this case, what '*without*' meant is the unwritten dimension of the text. Thus I aimed to characterise a phenomenon that is internal to the diegetic of the story, but external to the text - thus unsymbolised - via a voice which he says he hears and that we as readers cannot read.<sup>72</sup> It is not being asserted that this literary phenomenon is identical to the phenomenology of the return of the signifier in the real

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<sup>71</sup> Placing in brackets, therefore, at least momentarily the debate that asks about the conditions of possibility and limits of language and psychosis.

<sup>72</sup> More detailed explanation of this in the analysis of 'Lateral Light'.

as theorised by Lacan in the Seminar III. To an extent, our contention amounts to a reformulation of this characterisation so that we may understand under this light the dynamics of a literary piece at a particular time.

Another example is the modified understanding of the sinthome used in this research. Lacan characterised it as potentially being able to stabilise the structure. I therefore posited the sinthome as a moment within the text rather than it being the *savoir-faire of a lifetime of the subject* analogous to Joyce's life endeavour of becoming The Artist (Lacan, 1975 - 1976). This allowed me to locate and reflect upon textual and literary dynamics that may have effects analogous to those that the sinthome would have upon subjectivity, namely its *stabilisation*. Agreeing to this conclusion depends on whether we agree on the possibility of a stabilised or destabilised literary texture and its interdependence with the rest of the dynamics of the text. This research leads me to conclude that moments of textual destabilisation can take place and that a literary sinthome can be conceptualised as that which brings back the text to a stabilised flow.

### Psychotic works of literature

As explained in chapter three, Rey asserts that the written and the clinical have similar *après-coup* dynamics in terms of their knowledge and lack of it (1982); Felman argues that the interpreter may be immersed in what may be called "transferential relations" with the text (1982) or even possibly with the author according to Skura (1981). Literary texts can be said to have similar features to psychic formations such as fantasy (Skura, 1981) or have metaphoric functions whereby subjectivity is represented (Harari, 2002). These features, I argue, support our interpretative endeavour as well as the

conclusions of our research as a whole, for why would literary texts be receptive of all these understandings (i.e. writings of the readings) and not of psychotic ones in particular?

However, unlike analysands, texts are unable to respond to the reading made and therefore the interpreter is left in suspense about the effectiveness, novelty or bias of his interpretations. Clinical analysts do not receive notice of the effectiveness of their interpretations as such either, but the distance between the silence of the text and the response of an analysand is worthy of attention. Indeed, one of the limitations of literary psychoanalytic analyses is that the measure of effectiveness, interest and novelty of the analysis can only be given by the impact of the meaning of the story thus opened for another reader and not by the *effect* of the interpretation itself upon the text.

Therefore, our conclusion in relation to the question of whether is it possible to know that a work of literature is psychotic is that this calling, signifying act or attribution of the signifier *psychosis* to a given work of literature amounts to tracing an infinite straight line that verifies a hitherto false Borromean knot<sup>73</sup>. In other words, calling a work of literature thus amounts to unwarrantedly making a new knot to come about, which means highlighting dynamics and a structure of psychosis at play in that particular literary piece hitherto unthought. The naming act thus knots work of literature and psychosis. Psychosis knots work of literature and naming act. Work of literature knots naming act and psychosis. The knot depends on each of its three parts equally.

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<sup>73</sup> We discuss and explain in detail this mechanism in chapter two.

*If granted*, meaning about the work is enabled in a hitherto unthought fashion, which is precisely the aim.

This needs to be *granted or not*, and upon this rests the possibility of this particular new meaning to come about. Granting, in this sense, is an act that recalls authoritatively agreeing or disagreeing - linked to the symbolic phallus (i.e. the *granting* of the relation between word and meaning). This contention follows Lacan's assertion about infinite straight lines being analogous to the symbolic phallus - authoritative yet unguaranteed; they organise meaning but are contingent (i.e. not *necessary*). Hence, we argued in chapter five, another reader can give the only observable measure of *effectiveness* of the new meaning of the piece thus opened. And in short, this new meaning is in itself contingent and not necessary.

Knowledge about a work of literature being psychotic does not necessarily mean, furthermore, that every single aspect about it follows what Lacan described about psychosis - at times it does but at times it certainly does not. A particular aspect of a text may appear psychotic and another aspect of it may appear neurotic. Calling a subject psychotic, equally, does not mean that all of his speech is delusional or that he may be incapable of formulating metaphors at all times. In the same measure, a work of literature may *not-all* have psychotic attributes and still be worthy of the name. Nevertheless, this uncertainty follows the same logics of writing as characterised by Rey (1982) as we discussed in the third chapter, based on Lacan's understanding of resignification as depicted in the graph of desire (1960). Knowledge follows its lack in *après-coup*. In this sense, knowledge about the nature of the structure is never final. Knowledge about a work of literature being psychotic is possible, therefore, from this

particular perspective and under these particular circumstances: it is an unwarranted and never final kind of knowledge.

Different understandings of psychosis (i.e. kinds of knowledge about psychosis, in a different sense) may yield various kinds of meaning about what this knowledge is about. For example, our analysis rested upon understanding symptoms as *manifest and localisable entities* (i.e. delusions, hallucinations as manifest to the experience phenomenologically). We followed Lacan's early theory of psychosis and the way he described and characterised psychotic symptoms and phenomena at the time. Nevertheless, Lacan's much later indication of the symptom being *enigmatic* (Lacan, 1975 - 1976) subverts this approach as symptoms would be now understood as *pure enunciation without statement*, that is pure *form*, pure *mode* of jouissance rather than discrete phenomena.

This line of thought leads to hypothesise that symptoms understood thus may not be localisable within the text. The dimension of enunciation and statement<sup>74</sup> would need to be taken up as the focus of the analysis. An initial hypothesis to venture is that symptoms would not be located in *the written* dimension of the text per se but in *the unwritten* which may nevertheless affect the dynamics of the written. Therefore, further research ought to focus on the unwritten, not understood as the context of the literary piece nor its plausible dialogue with other literary pieces, but on the unwritten dimension of the text as *immanent* to it. This would yield different kinds of literary analysis methodologies yet to be researched in which, for instance, the mode of

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<sup>74</sup> *Ennonciation* et *énoncé* in French.

jouissance at stake in the text, and not the more heavily *linguistic* dynamics of the signifier, would act as the compass of reading as writing, now understood in this sense.

### Psychotic Language

Throughout this research I have been guided by Lacan's contention of psychosis consisting of the relation between man and signifier at its most radical (Lacan, 1955 - 1956). Arguably, this is visible in the *transpositions of entities* across registers coupled with the *kind of immediacy* between signifier and subject that psychotic phenomena comprise. In the literary analysis I have located instances of *homogeneity of registers* (i.e. the effective, visible effect of a transposition of entities from one register to another). I observed, for instance, coincidences between the materiality of words and the meaning they produce; between texture and signification. This is an important finding and can be taken as an indication that confirms the theoretical congruence of these principles about psychosis on the one hand, and their applicability to literary analysis on the other.

Two theoretical developments that stem from these findings are the notions of *language performing its aboutness* and *insight into the apparatus*. These principles result from an attempt to operationalise the transposing, immediate and radical attributes of psychosis in terms of observable dynamics of literary pieces. Indeed, further research into these two developments is needed in order to categorically claim that they are attributes of psychotic literary texts. Nevertheless, the recurrent instantiations of these two phenomena across the texts that were examined, their theoretical coherence with the framework and their accordance with *the flavour of psychosis*, lead us to posit them as generalisable dynamics in psychotic literature.

As discussed in the fifth chapter, the notion of 'performative' understood as *illocutionary speech act* (Austin, 1955; Butler, 1997) does not fit perfectly the textual phenomena I am describing given that in these phenomena words are not always in themselves the action they name. Furthermore, in my research I did not find evidence of 'words' being identical to 'things' as I had originally hypothesised would be the case. Nevertheless, performativity points to the dimension in which actions are performed with words. In the literary analysis, this notion highlights the immediate relation between texture and diegetic, signifier and signified, akin to the immediate relation between word and action of illocutionary speech acts.

When a text *performs its aboutness*, we encounter signifiers and meaning being homogenous. The best examples of this are of course neologisms in which sound is at once signifier and signified. With Lacan, we have argued that James Joyce mastered language in such a way that he could split sound from the written whilst deconstructing the phonemic identity of signifiers in the text. The works of literature that were analysed have analogous but not identical dynamics.

I observed the texts performing in different ways the *diegetic*, the events of the stories at the level of the letter: convergence of texture and meaning. However, it cannot be argued that the phonemic identity of language is deconstructed akin to what occurs in Joyce's works.

The instances found across the stories are an analogous, but in a sense less radical operation than the paradigmatic Joycean example. They are, perhaps, closer to Schreber's *Grundsprache*, a delusionally textured discourse describing delusional occurrences. In this sense the texture and the diegetic of the texts we analysed do correspond to each other.

Regarding language specificity, Spanish (the original language in which the pieces we analysed were written) has different dynamics than German, English and French. Given that in Spanish graphemes and phonemes correspond to each other almost identically, probably the reduction of the signifier to its phonemic character à la Joyce would not be a psychotic path, nor the deconstruction of the phonemic identity of words possible, as it is given. Nevertheless, equivocal meanings in Spanish are possible, but rely much more upon the play between words and their homonymy. These ideas are nevertheless preliminary and need further enquiry.

The stories and the novel examined feature several instances of what we have termed *insight into the apparatus*. Certain principles that account for psychic dynamics like *temporality* (i.e. synchrony and diachrony), the *unary trace* (i.e. an infinite straight line that would verify a false knot) and the very functioning of *signification referring only to further signification* (i.e. the non-referentiality of the signifier and its linking only to other signifiers in the chain) are depicted neatly in the stories within the diegetic dimension. These are instances of transpositions as well, of the *structures* that account for psychic functioning into the *effects* of psychic functioning themselves.

As we have argued, *insight into the apparatus* stems from the phenomenon that Freud and Lacan (Freud, 1910; Lacan, 1955 - 1956) described about Schreber's 'divine rays' or 'nerves of God' in which the delusional entity is a stencil copy the *apparatus that produced it* (i.e. the structure of libido or the chain of signifiers). The elements in the narratives that were pointed out as being instances of insight into the apparatus bear remarkable similarities to the very symbolic functioning that make them possible. In other words, *entire segments or entire dynamics of the structure (understood as the unconscious structured like a language) become signified and are thus transposed*

*into the imaginary*. This is akin to Bion's notion of bizarre object (Bion, 1957), understood as an object that has a similar structure to psychic functions themselves (i.e. ego functions) upon which they have been projected.

The scope of *language performing its aboutness* and *insight into the apparatus* should be subjects of further research. As discussed in chapter three, Barbara Johnson paraphrased Fish stating that "literature is language (...), but it is language around which we have drawn a *frame*, a frame that indicates a decision to regard with a particular self-consciousness the resources language has always possessed" (Fish, 1974, 52). In this sense, turning these general principles of psychotic language upon literature itself would motivate asking whether psychotic literature could be characterised as *literature literaturising itself*, drawing a frame around the frame.

#### Lacan's depictions and psychosis

As argued in chapter two, the kinds of *depictions* (i.e. schemas, formulae, graphs, topological bodies...) used by Lacan to *describe* subjective dynamics across his theory and the linguistic properties of psychotic speech that I am describing bear some resemblance. Although symbolic, Lacan's depictions are not strictly speaking *linguistic*. They are linguistic to the extent that mathematics is language. As discussed in the same chapter, the way in which Lacan used them juxtaposes synchrony and diachrony (i.e. simultaneously they are 'all at once' as well as 'successive'). This juxtaposition, I argued, can pierce human experience as it short circuits the dynamics of the otherwise habitually intertwined synchrony and diachrony.

We raised the question of whether is it possible to liken this *juxtaposition* to the *transpositions* I described about psychosis? In other words, is juxtaposing synchrony and diachrony similar to the transposition of entities *across* registers of psychosis? Indeed, Lacan's depictions and psychotic linguistic phenomena can be posited as being at the brink of the intelligible, both of them operating at the limits of language but they are not identical.

A difference between them can be formulated as follows. On the one hand, the more one enquires into Lacan's depictions, the more they make 'perfect sense' (i.e. they fit, juxtapose perfectly precisely because of their symbolic nature). For instance, the inverted eight topological figure can be applied to cut the topological figure of the torus to perfectly explain *jouissance* and desire in the graph of desire understood as a topological map (Eidelsztein, 1998). The graph of desire without a doubt 'fits' to perfection in perhaps all its readings. Whilst this 'fits-all' characteristic would deserve further explanatory and argumentative attention, undeniably Lacanian psychoanalytic theory *fits with itself* almost like a mathematical equation (or topological body) would<sup>75</sup>.

On the other hand, psychotic transpositions of entities across registers (i.e. signifier in the real, signifier at the place of the signified) do not produce that 'perfect fitting' effect, in fact it may be characterised as having a thwarting and disconcerting effect initially. Perhaps this is due to the contrasting 'registrality' of the transposed entity and the register, that is their contrast given that they are different registers brought to operate as if homogenous. Further, this thwarting effect may be due to the structural effects that this transposition may have on all entities and registers thereafter.

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<sup>75</sup> This comprises instances of 'perfect fit' such as the inverted eight and the torus, as well as instances of 'mis-fitting' such as the Möbius strip and its non-specular mirror image.

## Specific psychotic linguistic attributes

One of the main research questions has been whether the linguistic attributes of psychotic speech and symptoms as described by Lacan in the third and twenty third seminars (Lacan, 1955 - 1956; 1975 - 1976) can be said to be at play in works of literature. The answer to this question is one of the main determinants of whether we can call a work of literature *psychotic*, whether we can conclude that psychosis is at play in that particular text. Following Shoshana Felman's characterisation of Lacan's psychoanalytic project (Felman, 1985) the question is whether the *geometry* that underpins the rhetoric of a particular literary piece is similar to the geometry Lacan conceptualised apropos psychosis, in particular around delusions and hallucinations.

This research, in this sense, has followed a deductive method, going from the general to the particular, asking whether 'psychosis' can be found in a particular text. But it has also followed an inferential, particular to general method by means of which several particular literary instances have served to confirm the existence of a general 'geometrical' rule that underpins them all. This logic, however, is somewhat circular because each particular instantiation of the general rule entails *interpreting* it as an instantiation of such general, geometrical system. In other words, the proof that the interpretation is true is an interpretation itself. This is another dimension in which the epistemological hierarchy of psychoanalysis applying its knowledge onto literature criticised by Felman (1982) becomes visible. This is a fair criticism to the psychoanalytic method. However, perhaps it is generalisable to any interpretative exercise of literary criticism and discourse analysis of sorts as they would, like the psychoanalytic endeavour, participate of such epistemological power struggle in no

lesser measure. The reason for this is that, ultimately, any literary criticism endeavour ascribes meaning to a literary piece, that is interprets it according to a given structure (be it geometrical or physical) of meaning or knowledge.

Regarding the specific instances of psychotic linguistic attributes found in the literary pieces, I conclude that although not in every text I observed all of these features, indeed I found in them phenomena that are analogous to Lacan's descriptions. Each of the texts that I analysed features, nevertheless, some of these attributes, which leads me to assert that these pieces operate *radically* within language.

*Débora* (Palacio, 1927) and *Lateral Light* (Palacio, 1927) are characterised by constant derailments of sense, halts in the sliding of meaning and a sense of reification of words. *Débora* and *Women Gaze the Stars* (1927) feature instances in which the dynamics of the text have remarkably similar dynamics to Lacan's description of the subjective structure in the Schema *Rho*, that is, real entities seem to pierce the symbolic and imaginary veil that makes up *reality* (Lacan, 1956). *Lateral Light* features what I have called a delusional prose and indeed an instance of reification of words such that relates to, and reduces several signifiers to their signifying materiality. As I have explained, several instances of language performing its aboutness and insight into the apparatus are present in several instances of the texts. I discussed the meaning that each of these phenomena opens in the context of each particular literary analysis.

One specific, striking example of this is *The One and Double Woman* (1927), which features an interesting phenomenon of alterations in the shifter of the phrase (i.e. personal and possessive pronouns) which indicate the *subject* of a phrase. These point to an alteration of identity that makes sense within the story, which nevertheless

can be accommodated only by a psychotic structure. This is the case of a partial accordance between Lacan's notions and our findings. Schreber's interrupted hallucinations as well as the alterations of *The One and Double Woman* occur at the same linguistic topos, the *shifter*, which Lacan characterised as bearing witness to the subjective split that *speaking* and *being spoken to* entails in psychosis. In the case of the *One and Double Woman*, it bears witness not of speaking and being spoken to, but of being at once one and two subjects. Although these phenomena are not stricto sensu identical, it is remarkable that they are both linguistic attestations of subjective dynamics attributable to psychosis pointing to *subjective division beyond 'the norm'*. This, furthermore, supports Lacan's project of a geometry of the unconscious by showing that, linguistically, the shifter bears the marks of the subjective structure. This would only be possible in a conceptualisation such that a place of a phrase is connected with other linguistic elements having *subjective implications*. In other words the place of the shifter can be characterised as a *vertex*, that is, a point in which links to other points converge.

There is one text, however, that despite having a puzzling theme does not feature any psychotic linguistic properties as such. *The Anthropophagus* (1927) is the case of a story that touches upon some themes that could be characterised as psychotic but is written entirely *neurotically* in terms of its linguistic properties. Nevertheless, in a curiously analogous way to Felman's characterisation of *The Turn of the Screw*, the scandal of *the Anthropophagus* is that by virtue of the irony of the story, the reader cannot but participate of the scandal. The moral 'relativisation' of anthropophagy occurs in the text and in the reader concomitantly. The narrator, by recourse to a final pun, mocks the reader for having *fallen* for it (or having *eaten* it). In this sense, we

agree with Felman's contention about irony in literature having a force that may subvert psychoanalytic authority.

Nevertheless, the story does feature three characters: grandfather, father and son whose names are often undecidable throughout the story. The devouring father may be a fantasy of which neurotic, perverse and psychotic subjects all participate. However, the undecidability of the name of the father and the proper name may be understood as a psychotic feature. The undecidability of these names seems to call for decidability - the father finds decidability in the imaginary scene of devouring his children. The paternal devouring is a metaphor for the maternal re-engulfment. In this sense, the imaginary 'supplements' a function that the symbolic cannot perform and in this sense a psychotic dynamic may be found in the story.

These findings support the view that *some* texts written by a specific author can be said to have psychotic attributes or to have psychotic properties and others not necessarily. Furthermore, they support the view that each text may have *some* psychotic attributes, but not necessarily all of them or that every part of a text may be psychotic. In other words, and in sum, not every reading and concomitant writing of the same story *must* obey the same logics.

*Genre* and its relation to psychosis remains a subject of further enquiry. Daniel Schreber's *Memoirs* is an autobiographical text. The texts analysed in this research, on the other hand, are fiction and therefore have from the outset different properties, a different status in relation to their putative referentiality to *reality* or *real experience* of the subject. This further supported our view, by which we stand, about the author not being a suitable object (or subject) of analysis via an analysis of his texts. We

argued that the scope of this form of analysis is the text itself, its texture and their interplay with the diegetic.

Notwithstanding, this stance itself is not absolute. As explained in the literary analysis of *Lateral Light* and further outlined in the conclusions of the literary analysis section, it is possible to speak about the author in an akin form to Lacan's contentions on Joyce, but this remains largely as a hypothesis. I outlined how in my view the signifier 'Pal', at play in *Lateral Light* may have a connection with Palacio's family name, which in turn may hold a causal explanation for Palacio's psychotic structure. Palacio's writing, in this sense, may have had a sinthomatic function for him and, when he stopped writing he experienced a breakdown.

Palacio studied law, like Schreber, and was involved in government. This may be taken as an indication of Palacio's effort to find a replacement for that which in the symbolic realm he lacked. Palacio rejected his father's last name and adopted that of his mother. Bastardy, the non-recognition of his father, may have had something to do with his psychosis. Equally, however, Palacio may have had syphilis. Maybe *Lateral Light* was actually far more autobiographical than I had taken it to be thus far and maybe syphilis holds a stronger causal relation to his psychosis. How can we, in fact, argue for either? Are they not both hypotheses? They arguably are, but perhaps their measure of effectiveness, interest is, like our own literary analysis, the new meaning they may open up for another.

But the relation between author and text, or artist and work of art will be surely topics of further research. For instance, artistic creation has been conceptualised by Hannah Segal as reparation (1952; 1974) and as having an intimate connection with symbol formation. This conceptualisation presupposes and *focuses* on the link between artist

and work of art or literature and author. Our framework remains to be contrasted to what has been discussed within the object relations, particularly regarding the notion of the author or artist and the apparently contradictory contention of the relation between creation and (depressive) reparation with psychosis.

### Signifier in the Real

I argued in the first chapter that the signifier in the real presupposes a transposition of a symbolic element into the dimension of that which is unsymbolisable. I understood the consequences of foreclosure in two main ways. Firstly, the unsymbolisable behaves symbolically, that is it links to and opposes other symbolic elements and underpins production of meaning. Secondly, the foreclosed signifier acquires features of the real or the unsymbolisable. The former gives focal priority to the real whilst the latter to the signifier and therefore the symbolic. In this sense, I hypothesised that this mechanism should operate over that which is *inadmissible* for the subject analogously to repression in neurosis.

In the literary analysis we encountered phenomena that may support both forms of understanding of the signifier in the real, focusing on the real and on the signifier respectively. Firstly, the main character of the story *Lateral Light* (Palacio, 1927) responds and reacts angrily to voices calling him for lunch. He says he hears these callings but they are nevertheless extratextual. The character feels angry, annoyed by these callings, which he feels interrupt him from his daily activities. I hypothesised, in this sense, that subjective division (for the main character) is expressed via signifiers relating to being called for lunch. In a sense the calls for lunch ought to have that

inadmissible quality for the subject, although it is not clear why. This understanding focuses on the real, the extratextual behaving like the symbolic realm and accounts for the profound division of the main character whose identity is given by what he says and what he says he hears.

In addition, the short story features the signifier 'Treponema Pallidum' in several key places. The main character describes his girlfriend as 'pálida<sup>76</sup>', a close signifier to Pallidum" and further on he makes allusion to a 'paletada'<sup>77</sup>, an also incredibly close signifier to Pallidum if taken by its materiality rather than its meaning. The signifier Treponema Pallidum appears objectified, disconnected from the texture, has persecutory properties on the main character and seems to explain the otherwise puzzling events of the story and certain changes (destabilisation) of the texture. In this sense it has similar dynamics as a signifier encountered in the real, disconnected from the signifying chain. 'Pal' as a unit of symbolic code without signification, a bit of the three signifiers (Pallidum, palida, paletada) disrupts the flow of meaning, to this extent has *real* properties. It has a deadly sexual connotation which could also account for that which is inadmissible for the subject. To this extent, the notion of signifier in the real understood thus is helpful to reveal and open up the meaning of the story differently. What otherwise may appear bizarre in the story - sudden reactions, senseless events accompanied by puzzling shifts of the prose - now reveals itself as being explained, overdetermined by the intrusion of the signifier 'pal' from without.

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<sup>76</sup> Pale, light-skinned.

<sup>77</sup> Shovelful

## Psychotic works of literature as knots

One of the research questions has been to explore the possible meaning opened by understanding a work of literature as a knot in the sense meant by Lacan in the Seminar XXIII. Indeed, from the outset it was recognised the failure to which we are bound when attempting to convey the sense of this understanding in *the written form* (as we do now) and perhaps dwelling in the reasons behind it (i.e. the limits of the written in relation to the topological) exceeds our scope.

However, we have observed across *the One and Double Woman* an example that, arguably, is akin to Lacan's contention of each of the registers not being able to 'anchor' each other and therefore keep the tripartite knot knotted. In other words, the main character's body, subjectivity, identity and all she says about herself is undecidably one and two and none of these elements is enough to determine whether the other elements are one or two, singular or double, first personal or third-personal. To put it simply, neither imaginary, symbolic or real entities hold strong enough to keep the other steady, together, tied and operational; they are not univocal even for a split second, they are always undecidable. Each attempt of the main character(s) fails at 'defining herself/ves as one or two', immediately the real, symbolic or imaginary entity (depending on where does she/them depart from to reach this definition) appear insufficient to hold the knot together. Had this not been the case, the element that finally would have held the three registers together, would have operated as *an infinite straight line*, that is, as a ring such that under any circumstance would not allow the other two rings around it cut lose. Nevertheless, no such infinite straight line came about in the story locking the main character in circular despair and revealing itself in

the linguistic deformations of the story. Indeed, this is, conceptually, a knot that does not hold together.

In *Women Gaze the Stars* and *Débora*, I observed a different kind of dynamic that could also be conceptualised as a knot. As explained in both analyses, the relation between *language* and *things in themselves* could be understood as a knot in which symbolic and imaginary continue into the real, akin to Lacan's trefoil knot (1975 - 1976).

The recurrent preoccupations and performances about referentiality in these two texts seem to point to an unsettled relation between registers, one that does not grant them their stead and function. This results in a discordance between the narrator and reality that the reader experiences in the form of the narrator's battle against 'the way things are'. Not in the sense of a neurotic discontent, but the pathos of the homogeneity between things and words. This preoccupation can be said to be underpinned by knots of a psychotic kind - those in which each ring becomes the other.

#### The Symbolic Law, the Symbolic Phallus and Metalanguage

No interpretation, be it literary or clinical, nor psychoanalytic knowledge can ever be *certain* or *guaranteed* by anything. This is yet another way to express the conclusion that there is no Other of the Other, otherwise characterised as the impossibility of metalanguage; language has no *truth guarantee*<sup>78</sup>. Conversely, only if metalanguage were possible, or there were Other of the Other, meaning and truth of language would be *universal and necessary*.

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<sup>78</sup> Derrida's criticism of the truth value of the letter (1980) point in this direction.

This research led me to reflect, however, on a specific danger to conflate ‘there not being metalanguage’ to the ‘lack of operation of the symbolic law’ and the symbolic phallus. Arguably, there not being Other of the Other is true for all structures. Nevertheless, within specific configurations of the Other, the symbolic law may or may not operate and the symbolic phallus may or may not signify lack. This depends on whether the structure is neurotic, perverse or psychotic, that is on the kind of operation of the symbolic law within that specific structure. Therefore, neither in psychotic, perverse or neurotic pieces of literature meaning is *ultimately* guaranteed, but only in psychotic pieces of literature the non-operation of the law and the non-signification of lack by the symbolic phallus enables the specific linguistic properties of psychosis.

In other words the ‘deformations’ of psychotic language are possible partly because the *entities* (i.e. the symbolic law and the symbolic phallus) that organise meaning in neurosis do not operate in it. This means that psychosis is a structure in which meaning is *not even* ‘*arbitrarily*’ organised as it would be in neurosis. This point is of importance to clarify, since it may be argued that ‘no metalanguage’ means that there is no theory about psychosis possible and that the symbolic law amounts to a form of metalanguage given it limits language. This is fairly common criticism, and for the reasons explained it does not stand.

Throughout this research, nevertheless, we have confronted the difficulty of having to characterise a *kind* of language (psychotic) using a different *kind* of language (neurotic), if that may be argued<sup>79</sup>. Hence I have faced throughout the feeling of constantly needing to ‘stretch’ language (like calling psychotic linguistic attributes

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<sup>79</sup> For the sake of the argument, I will assume I am neurotic although time will tell.

'deformations'). Given I am able to use discourse only *from within a neurotic organisation* and I have tried to address psychotic phenomena, the sort of discourse that has resulted is one that somewhat 'schematically' describes phenomena of meaning that it cannot linguistically *incarnate*. I am therefore left to agree with Felman's contention about the close relation between "sanity" and "madness" to that of two different languages that demand an effort of translation.

In other words, the aim consisted of opening meaning by means of a specific use of Lacan's theory of psychosis. As explained, I encountered texts in which *meaning is not fixed* in a much more radical fashion than in neurosis. Attempting to convey meaning about these texts with a language whose meanings are arbitrary and not guaranteed to begin with, except by that which precisely lacks in the structure that we are aiming to interpret posed complex questions to say the least. Under this light, the question is posed once again. What guarantees the veracity or efficacy of these interpretations? Were 'guaranteeing' not the right term to formulate this, the question can be posed as what can be a measure of veracity or novelty of these findings?

Beyond the impact that the new meaning may have upon another reader - the new meaning it may open up - perhaps a form to assess whether these findings are *true* or *new* is to ask whether I have described linguistic phenomena at play in literature that have no instantiation within neurotic or perverse linguistic structures. This would support the claim of having described phenomena that pertain to the domain of psychosis as a structure; asking whether the phenomena we have described are exclusive to psychosis is a fair question to ask.

The phenomena that I am describing produce meaning in an utterly different fashion than neurotic or perverse phenomena. Neurotic phenomena, as explored in chapter

one, correspond to phenomena of meaning governed by metaphor and metonymy - phenomena 'under the sway' of meaning. Perverse phenomena convey meaning (as analysed in relation to the text *the Anthropophagus*) by the play that at once affirming and negating the symbolic law enables. But the *radical* quality of the phenomena of language that with Lacan I have argued pertain to psychosis, means they are product of linguistic dynamics of transposition and immediacy of entities (*radicalness*) and not products of metaphors or metonymies (neurosis) or changes in the definition of the affirmative and negative coordinates of the structure which makes oppositions collapse (perversion). In this sense, this visible, general phenomenological characteristics of the linguistic phenomena that I have described apropos the literary pieces I analysed leads me to affirm that on this basis these phenomena can occur only in a psychotic structure.

### Psychoanalytic Literary Critical Model

In the third chapter, I explored various approaches to psychoanalytic literary criticism. I outlined the characteristics of my approach to literary analysis in relation to that of other authors, its similarities and differences. It is of interest to ask, however, what does this approach contribute to the field of psychoanalytic literary analysis?

Unlike the authors discussed, I have sought in the literary pieces instantiations of the dynamics of the three registers (imaginary, symbolic and real), the dynamics of foreclosure, I have conceptualised literary dynamics with the aid of knots theory, I have aimed at locating sinthomatic moments of the text, and so forth. I have understood works of literature as autonomous linguistic artefacts or entities with autonomous

symbolic, imaginary (and real) attributes, which of course participate of language as it pre-exists and therefore determines them. The contention has been throughout that literary works as *entities* participate of linguistic dynamics that otherwise are true for subjects. Therefore, a way to outline this research project a posteriori from a literary perspective is as a literary analysis that sees in the work of literature *autonomous linguistic qualities* akin to those of psychotic subjects that may open up the meaning of the literary otherwise.

This analysis has stemmed from Lacan's conceptualisation of psychosis as a structure. This characterisation of psychosis as a structure yields, indeed, limited yet infinite instantiations that psychosis may have. This, as argued in chapter two, results in an infinite number of possible instantiations of psychotic phenomena that nevertheless observe a specific structure. In this sense, our literary analysis can be argued to observe 'ethical' principles akin to those of Lacan's psychoanalysis: to prescribe without proscribing following a limited yet infinite kind of logic.

Although much remains to be reconciled between clinical psychoanalysis and literature, we attempted partly to defy stances such as Felman's on the epistemic-existential power of psychoanalysis over literature. I argued that subverted nosological categories do not exert necessarily such dreaded violence over the literary, at least not more than any attempt at engaging with it critically. The literary analysis also aims to defy the likes of the psychoanalytically informed critics of 'The Turn of the Screw' who aimed to indeed, pathologise literature (Felman, 1982).

Provided we grant that nosological categories in Lacan's psychoanalysis are *subverted*, it is not difficult to agree to the term 'nosology', from this specific

perspective, being simply unwarranted names for recurrent phenomena of language, image and the extra-linguistic that inhabit the human, be it literary or not.

### Psychosis and Creativity

Lastly, the scope of this research's findings could be developed further to contribute to the discussion of the nature of psychotic creativity, particularly but not exclusively of an artistic nature. I have explored Lacan's contention on the creative process potentially becoming a fourth ring which may prevent a Borromean knot from coming undone. I am referring particularly to Lacan's interpretation of the work of Joyce and the effects it had on his subjectivity (Lacan, 1975 - 1976; Lacan, 1976; Soler, 2002, Harari, 1995, Miller, 1996).

Plenty of empirical research supports the link between different forms of psychosis and creativity. Psychiatric research into schizoid types of mental illness, manic-depressive disorders and mood disorders and their relation to creativity points at there being a remarkable interest in this relation (Batey et al., 2009; Furnham et. al., 2009; Ludwig, 1995; Redfield, 1996;). The discussion and contrast of these lines of research to our own exceeded the scope of this research, but is undoubtedly pursuable in the future.

Some initial contributions, however, can be made to the theoretical conceptualisation of the mechanisms at play in psychosis that account for the *kind of novelty* of artistic objects, literary and otherwise, that obey a logic or a kind of play akin to that of psychosis. The claim of course is not that every form of artistic novelty can be accounted for in this sense, nor that we may be able to account for every type, or everything at stake in psychotic creation. The argument is that some of the attributes

of psychosis that were described throughout this research and applied to the literary analysis may serve to characterise some aspects of the creative potential of psychosis.

The *radicalness of language* that characterises psychosis as a structure is a way into interrogating the conditions that enable the unprecedented flavour or the kind of novelty often attributed to psychotic creation. In this sense, psychotic creation could be called radical analogously to the symbolic, imaginary and real phenomena described by Lacan apropos psychosis as a structure.

As has been explained throughout this research, 'radicalness' in this context can be characterised in two senses. Firstly in terms of immediacy between subject and signifier, and secondly in terms of the transposition of *entities* across *registers* which destabilises the conformation and dynamics of the *entity itself* as well as *the register* as a whole.

As explored and argued throughout, the signifier returning from the real that is characteristic of psychosis means that a symbolic entity is transposed into the real, thereby altering the dynamics of the signifier, the symbolic, the imaginary and the real. This transposition across registers has a destabilising effect on an otherwise 'neurotic' structure. An *entity*, let us say a signifier, may be transposed into the real, causing it to cease to operate and be a usual signifier. The symbolic register ceases to operate as it otherwise would, as do the real and the imaginary by implication. This in turn implies, as explored in the first chapter, that a synchronic is transposed into a diachronic temporality thereby overtaking itself. Or as has been characterised, an effect akin to a building whose foundations are in fact its facade, that is, a kind of system in which that which is meant to *underpin* is in fact the most *visible*.

I argue that psychotic creation, although inscribed in the series of repetition and difference of the possible, to an extent redoubles the effect of novelty and repetition it produces. Psychotic creations at once destabilise the structure that serves as vehicle of repetition and difference themselves on the one hand, and produce a strange sense of familiarity on the other.

In addition to the intrinsic difference of every iteration, on the one hand, in psychosis the difference would reside in the foreignness of the transposed entity to the register which now would operate 'otherwise than normally' (i.e. neurosis). Conversely (and as argued throughout) given that psychotic creation has a stencil-like form of the 'apparatus' that created it, it appears meta-familiar as it resonates with the very structure of the structure. Thus psychotic creation entails foreign difference and familiar repetition but in a more radical sense than the intrinsic repetition and difference of every iteration. In other words, the kind of novelty and familiarity resulting from the interplay of repetition and difference may be characterised as radical as well.

One notes in passing, time and again, the linguistic difficulties of attempting to name phenomena that occur precisely in the fringes of language. These difficulties themselves, of course, can be thought as research findings. They bear witness to somewhat failed or at least problematic attempts to address a dimension which a language that 'abides by the law' cannot address - the scandal of not being able to help participating of the scandal.

I argue that these psychotic mechanisms, when understood in the creative process, result in the object of creation being transposed into a different register or realm - or medium. The object, therefore, collapses and makes the medium itself collapse as well. These characteristics of psychosis in the creative process in general, although

not identical to the ones described about psychosis in fictional literature, are meant to bring about more general principles of what would psychotic creation be, or what kind of results psychotic creativity may produce.

An example of this would be a painting in which the explicit use of paint would bear structural properties to the structure of paint itself, to the point in which the 'psychotic creation made of, with or by paint' and 'paint as such' would be identical and creation would dissolve into medium and vice versa. When creation and medium become identical, they become indistinguishable and in this sense they collapse into each other. This is akin to the phenomenon described by Lacan apropos psychotic *neologisms* in which signifier and signified are one and the same thing, hence a neologism is at once symbolic and imaginary, is meaningful and meaningless, and so forth.

Let us bring about as a mode of conclusion an illustrative example that would respond to these dynamics and operate as such qua artistic object understood as creation. The reservation must be made as to the fragmentariness of this account, the aim of which is to simply open possible ways into further research.

Japanese visual artist and writer Yayoi Kusama is a prolific artist of the second half of the twentieth century. Throughout her career she has experimented with media such as painting, collage, sculpture, performance, happening and others (Kusama, 2013). Izumi Nakajima argues that Kusama's creation, particularly her 'obsessional art' opens a "symbolic signification that allows some room outside and beyond the dominant, phallogocentric Symbolic realm of two cultures [Japan and the US] between which her work is stretched" (Nakajima, 2008, 128). I agree with Nakajima's contention; not from a feminist point of view, but from a structural one (i.e. neurosis, perversion and

psychosis) in the sense meant throughout this research. Indeed, I argue that Kusama's work opens a dimension outside the law.

Kusama has spent considerable time in psychiatric institutions throughout her life which, nevertheless, has not hindered her artistic productivity. On the contrary, it may be argued that her work fascinates audiences as it dialogues openly with her psychic reality and that of the viewers by conveying a contundent psychotic *flavour* - a sense of radical difference and repetition; foreignness, familiarity and immediacy.

From the end of the 1950 onwards, Kusama painted a body of works commonly known as "Net Paintings" (Nakajima, 2008). They appear to be, explains Nakajima "simple monotonous patterns of a net. Yet the monotonous look may prompt various associations..." (Nakajima, 2008, 143). Nakajima paraphrases artist and psychoanalyst Bracha Ettinger in her contention about Kusama's work through which we can "enter the function of art by way of the libido and through extensions of the psyche close to the edge of corporeality" (Nakajima, 2008, 143). I do not disagree with this claim, as it sets forth, in the terms I have been using through this research, an unsettled relation between registers. My argument, however, is that the depiction of a net, whilst not necessary aiming to be just that, is a remarkable example of insight into the apparatus as I have described it. The symbolic structure itself *is* a net, and therefore it is remarkable that Kusama chose it as one of her favourite objects of depiction. I argue that Kusama has dedicated her career to depict the structure itself and that is one of the reasons her work is so gripping, for it makes explicit to the viewer's visual perception something akin to the very 'system' by virtue of which the symbolic register itself is structured - the building whose foundations are in fact its facade. The very structure of the structure is what I argue Kusama aims at in her

depictions of nets as well as the polka dots patterns she depicted throughout her life. If we were to go back to Bion's notion of bizarre object, we would characterise Kusama's creation as the object that she created that is able to be the receptacle of her psychotic projection: her paintings are bizarre objects in that they are the result of the projection of the very *structure* of the unconscious structured like a language - akin to the paranoid object being the projection of the seeing or hearing functions of the ego.

Kusama's work entitled 'Obliteration Room' (2013) is another good example of the creation that I am here characterising as psychotic. It is an exercise of depiction of objects which become pure saturation because of the transposition of colour into shape. Shape is all colour and therefore all objects radically appear and therefore disappear. Obliteration consists of an installation of a furnished room in which viewers are invited to stick circular stickers of solid primary and secondary colours on the surface of every object (tables, chairs, stairs) and wall of the room covering them totally. Stickers covering every surface result in objects and room collapsing into sameness: pure saturation of colour. Making everything *radically* appear has the effect of making everything disappear. In this sense depiction and object collapse into one another - the object is transposed into its depiction and depiction is transposed into the object, yielding an infinite 'visual' philosophical regression which makes the object and its depiction disappear into pure, absolute saturation. In this instance, medium and object collapse similarly to signifier and signified collapsing into one another in the case of a neologism, becoming thus pure sound, at once over-meaningful and meaningless.

How, we may ask, is a psychotic subject able to note the structurality of the structure, that which makes his mind a mind? How is the psychic apparatus able to project a function into an object of the world and then perceive its 'apparality' back? With which means does it do it? These are questions that I have certainly not answered and that surely will guide my research in the future. Equally, we may ask in which other instances, be they literary or not, are we able to observe the structure playing in this way? I take these questions to be but invitations, speech acts at once addressed to myself and to another, to continue observing language and to dwell in the uncomfortable yet fascinating position of characterising language by means of language.

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**Débora**

After it All:

the final bitterness will wink to every man.

Like in a film

- hand on forehead, head leaning back-,  
the thyroid body, ascending and descending,  
will be an index within the solitary sea of  
memory.



Lieutenant

you have been my guest for years. Today I throw you off me so that you can be the mock of some and the melancholy of others.

Many will see themselves in your eyes like they see themselves in the depths of the mirror.

Since you are a man, you could have been a foreman or a shoeblick.

Why do you exist? It would have been better you did not exist. You bring nothing, you have nothing nor you will give anything. Some people inflate their chest, and they do not want to know they are inflating it with other people's breadth<sup>80</sup>. Everyone has inflated their chest with the breadth of their peers, and after doing so, very calmly, they cross their arms as if saying 'who are these bastards?'

It is true you are useless. But you are sustained by the same rationality as Juan Pérez and Luis Flores<sup>81</sup>. I have placed in front of each other

## THE EMPTINESS OF VULGARITY

AND

## THE TRAGEDY OF GENIALITY

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<sup>80</sup> To inflate the chest in Spanish is a metaphor for 'feeling proud'.

<sup>81</sup> These names are the equivalent of 'John Smith', that is, any given man.

and I think the former fits you better. Being ridiculous, the – mathematical sign corresponds to your moral values (– ridiculous) as opposed to the huge + that will suffocate the martyrized by that same tragedy.

The genius ones are choked by the genius moment like the cud chokes those who choke.

That is why you are vulgar. One of those few mannequins made of paper and print letters, with no ideas, that go through life as a shadow: you are a Lieutenant and nothing else.

They believed that those mannequins, existing by themselves, should receive an external sap, stolen from others' lives, and that there was above all the copy of A or B, bodily and known. So much so that Edgardo, novel hero, soul in despair, sniffs around the smelly woods of toilet rooms, knocks on maidens' doors and inflates the sails of desire between the linen sheets. Edgardo, novel hero, martyrized by the perpetuity of evocations, one day will wake up hanging off the window of gregariousness, ended by the silk scale of disdain. There will only remain the presumptuous, running away more and more, thirsty of revelation.

But the book must have the same order of sociology books and grow and evolve. One has to cast the net of emotions starting from a point. This point, between us, is a bit of soul hung to dry, I make it for others, for it to be torn off during a Sunday rest, or scornfully rolled and put on a broken table or a busy bedside table.

And how do I leave you, Lieutenant? Already willingly torn off me, I want to hurry the loss. Before a definitive and essential threat comes the expectancy of the threat, and is so strong like the expectancy of a bride.

I want to see you as you came off me. Without the visual illusion of childhood, you will not put your hand in front of your eyes, believing that the whole real and frightening world is ten centimetres away of your pupils.

To go, holding each other's arms, paying attention to the casual. Being foolish, really foolish, making the schoolmaster smile, who bloated will say: 'But, what is this? This man is crazy'.

–Go– stretching my arm with the index finger stretched.

And whilst you go, I will leave on my tiptoes, bowing, horizontalising my arms to keep the balance...

Alone.

- Good morning, my captain.

- Good morning, lieutenant.

And hands towards the guts, perpendicularly.

(I am under the effect of whipworm toxins).

Very straight, the knee pits arched, the chest high: memories of Prussian stamps.

Loud stomps of the heels on the stones and long steps, think on the possible potency of a very well given punch. How strongly we felt the psychic influence of the sharpened tapping tips. It may be said: the dangerous moral support of guns accentuates magnificently the vigour of muscles. This recipe would be unsurpassable by those who seek fat women.

Lieutenant, you have made of your soul a niche for the grave face of the mother.

The memory boats, having to depart from you, sail off the static internal moment.

School times:

Under the oblique vigilance of the friars, piled lines of children await the moment to leave. The “click” –the persistence of which in children’s minds will evoke later the scream of ‘Stop!’ in the Academy-, the click of the Master commanded silence. And when some boy’s the fugitive laughter burst, the layman principal, just after drinking sodium sulphate:

“You!” “Come to the front!”

To receive the punishment of ‘the wall’.

All of that is misty; only fixed are the white, punished legs of the punished. Why this isolated and useless memory? To the schoolmaster, the lieutenant must give a haughty face, seen after, because the first one he left forgotten somewhere within the skull. What he did not forget, the legs (‘but why the legs?’), scares the lieutenant like an unexpected spar of catechism. “What is the sign of the Christian?”

-The sign of the Christian is the holy cross”.

And on that same vein, another moment of passed times:

For some reason, that he will never know, he is punched in the stomach, his face is left off extended and leaves him off ‘dry’; precise ending of childhood. The lieutenant responds with another blow, that leaves an enemy dry as well. I can imagine the pale faces of the rogues and their efforts to reach serenity, weary of being left ‘by the wall’. Now, hastily one looks for the wall, weary of being left ‘as a rogue’.

“In the commonplace of a family evening, on the bricks of the wall, I rubbed the pieces of nails that I tore off horse shoes. My grandfather, who inherited the smithy off his dead son, told me that to make those old horseshoes shine, one has to rub them with bricks. The ghost under the sofa watched my determination. A huddled, reddish ghost that was chased by my aunties’ bullet-like doubts. I shouted and got excited – excitement for me is now METRO GOLDWIN PICTURES, because I have never managed to observe any another emotion and it is similar to an insistent chest swing. That ghost still exists for me, watching me from the inside, from where I carry it”.

“Afterwards it was in the bedroom, when the lights were still off but were already needed. Maybe it was because they told me to go to bed early or because I was ill. My bed had taken possession of me: this possession happened so many times that now I hate it, along with the horror I have of emptiness. My father’s sister, a faded stain, went out, taking a little bit of light as she closed the door. She came into the room again, and without being ill I saw her as a walking stick. Long and arched, pressing her abdomen, easing some pain. When I spoke with a quiet voice I was scared. When I spoke out loud she answered me from without.

Today I wrote a song:

My auntie left

My auntie entered...

And her, tall dark stain, enlarges, almost over my pupils, the bitter triangle of the mouth.”

All that emptiness hits the forehead of the man.

Who can assure me that this haze, like hands, has not made the face he has today?

The rounded legs would have lengthened the sniffing nose; the hit in the stomach would have stolen his muscles; the ghost would have messed his hair; the auntie that came in and did not come in would have left an empty hole in the spirit.

This will disrupt the book with a deep sensation of desire. Which will unbalance it with the undefined that obsesses us some days, that we cannot fill, that disquiets the mood, that makes one think about running in all fours or drink moonshine.

Since everyone fills memories with some sweetness, one has to make suppositions, looking for the artifice, and give the Lieutenant what he did not have, the cousin of the novels and of life, that carries a fresh sense of quince. But the story will not lie there: one will look for it in the index of some romantic novel and thus we will have that some white hands stroke some blonde hair and that the owner of that blonde hair felt malice growing on the scalp, a sleepy malice. This supposed memory, that ought to be in every man's chest of drawers, makes the Lieutenant sigh.

Nothing new he brings, and being like everyone else, he is just the perfect social copycat that sighs because others sigh: he has got a cousin because others have had it. The milieu stalks him with sameness; he is commanded to shave his beard and define State: social ensemble that...

“Blimey, I have hardly any money and my shoes are dirty...”

He looks in every pocket. He knows he has got nothing, but still he looks in every pocket.

“That white edge on the petticoat –a woman passes by- means that she is looking for a boyfriend.”

But, why does he think of these things? And of course he thinks of them in a different way, much more foolishly and emptily. In an undefined form like the colour of an old suit. No: maybe like the one that is about to be made, because in the thought of it has not yet been poured, therefore it is something only potentially but not actually.

“Whose house is this?”

I beg a little thought about the mental instability.

Every man of State, the gravest of them all, always gets surprised by this:

“It is late and I have not been to the toilet even once”.

This profane mix of the hygienic facility that only has a name in English<sup>82</sup> and high businesses, is the secret of life’s complication. This is why order is outside of reality, visibly comprised within the limits of the artifice.

Thus, historians and philosophers, men of letters, whose garlanded work in numerous semicircles work in a straight line, based on the vertexes of these semicircles that cut each other, they trace the useless arch of life outside their work and isolate every usable point that afterwards will shape, in union with all the rest, the rosary that has common sense as a soul.

The animal of abstractions becomes popular.

A given chemist, for example, sells drugs and presides whispering reunions of the people, only this. We forget that he is tortured by callus between his toes and the

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<sup>82</sup> In Spanish ‘water’ is the equivalent of the French word ‘toilet’ used in English.

bad smell of the “safe” of the boy, and the exact weight of the onions bought by the lady.

That same chemist, when seeing his toes after having had an organic satisfaction, has had that same gesture of he who was betrayed by the consistency of used paper; but thinks, to let it out, that Napoleon Bonaparte and St Bartholomew may have gone through the same.

To avoid these painful clarities, the work has been garlanded in the aforementioned way.

Thus, the Lieutenant suffered an imaginative flight after the lapse that the question suggested, and seeing the windows of that house, from which a woman may have stormed out, he remembered that he is a coward because a month ago his room became filled with unruly voices that took away his sleep and when he came out he found that the woman from across the street writhed, spat foam out of her mouth and clenched her teeth like when bones are washed. She was fat; due to the writhing she lifted her dress and her legs showed. Two women were strongly holding her, trying to open her closed hands. Those that were with them had left. Then the Lieutenant went pale, and the women focused on trying to restrain the woman within the limits of morality. There was also an old woman looking for alcohol and another girl that opened her eyes. This old woman and the ugly one exhaled their bodies behind a doctor. The other felt alone, but he was tragically mute, even if he saw her directly in her eye and she lowered her head, accomplice in the motive of her friend’s illness, surprised with her hands in the doubtful divertissement.

The rest does not matter. Of course neither does the deed; only matters that it remained in the Lieutenant's spirit, embittered by the exam of his situation in front of her with whom he might have had a relationship, inevitable due to the special rapprochement that happens when two people share an intimate moment.

Affection will emanate from its possibility –an insistent pleasant buzz began to surround her– from having long glanced at each other in different occasions, from the same aforementioned, predisposing circumstances: a man enters unexpectedly in the intimate life of the girlfriends who are alone, after having had fun with other men, and who now ask his help, giving him some familiarity and acceptance in return.

Besides, she would confess her naivety: “Look how coward THEY ARE... Since HE knows her, and knew she was going to have a fit soon, he went to get a doctor and has not come back”.

The words ‘THEY ARE’ may be subject to consideration. Did they exclude the Lieutenant from the common denominator of cowards? Or this ‘THEY ARE’ applicable to the male gender, placed him in a special place, intimate or doubtful, akin to the talk about monks amongst seculars or between shoemakers and tailors about moneylenders: “they are saints”, “they are good”, “they are bad”, “they are rogues”?

The Lieutenant thought about that, focusing, and then he had to focus back on the case, in his condolences, he would ask and assure: “It seems that she has drank a bit. This must be avoided. It must have excited her nervous system. Surely something similar has occurred to her other times”.

He added more nonsense, and, owned perfectly the analysis, but not the agreeable convenience, frustreign<sup>83</sup> politeness, against which he fought without triumph. Maybe it is closer to the reader the case of the drunk who understands he is acting wrongly, but nevertheless the more he does the worse he acts.

That woman did not say anything. Afterwards she had found her many times on the street and he felt sorry, because everyone else thought she was well.

He did not know how to make the most of a circumstance full of ease.

Since some time ago, she had been employed in the post. Surely, due to trouble with the Ministry. A whole lesson of love that job is. He would feel content in the future with skipping the queue and getting his post before everyone else, without having to give his name. And the post would come with a sarcastic smile.

And in this matter, the specimens of passing females, noisily marching like a battalion.

Intimacy is peacefully filled with women's yearning. With them, comes the "what for?" or indifference, or carelessness, or consideration, despite the right moment having arrived, distant even within their proximity.

Then one has to use the EMPTIO-VENDITIO that crumbles life insensitively.

This is the lesson of love.

That dissatisfied yearning brought about the idea of a woman emerging out of the window of that house, whose owner is unknown. A Sunday woman, different to others, seeming to have her face cleansed with the special rest of Sunday.

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<sup>83</sup> The original word is *frustránea* which does not exist in Spanish, but maybe an Italianism. It seems like a mix between *frustrante* (frustrating) and *foránea* (foreign).

The imaginative aspect arises, based on a ridiculous supposition. –This like anything else.

“If the woman I await came out...

She smiled. Oh, this is going great! the hand placed in the gut. The beating heart that is the curtain that rises before happiness. And I shall get closer to talk to her. But what should I say?

-Good morning... You are very pretty... Will you excuse the bluntness of approaching without even being your friend?

-It is no bluntness! I am delighted, Lieutenant.

-You are very kind... Have you noticed how lovely this morning is?

-Sorry? What did you say?

-That the morning is lovely.

-Oh! Yes, very lovely indeed... But, why don't you come in? Come in for a moment, Lieutenant.

-You are very kind...

-Oh this is going so well.

And since it seems her folks have gone out, we sat comfortably. This honeyed life. I kiss her and she kisses me. Her teeth are tiny teacups and I am delighted to caress with my tongue the new varnish. Since her cheeks are sore, I soften my epidermis in this new oven of love. The clear wickets of her eyes are now open and I can see her skittish soul. Open wickets for me! (I shall have her every afternoon and whilst I smoke she will caress my hands. It will be wonderful to be with her when it

rains. If I read, she will stroke my hair with her fingers. The warm malice that begins in the scalp! It is voluptuousness that begins in the fingertips).

Micaela or Rosa Ana.

Life that thus prolongs unites the scattered particles of the spirit and relaxes the muscles like a good rest under a shadow. In the countryside it is good to take shelter under the orange trees. Micaela or Rosa Ana. Awaited Sunday woman. I shall bury my hands in your affection like between the folds of woollen throws. Since I am tired of useless life, I prefer the naughtiness of your eyes. The pleasure that accelerates heartbeat will disinfect my lungs and cleanse my veins off the mud of this new life.

We cuddle like this and I quench this secret thirst.

But, the husband arrives... No, it is not fine that she is married... Although it may not be bad either. Or are the parents arriving? Out! May this romantic Sunday dream continue which, like reality, also quenches my thirst. I buy her beautiful earrings to excite her cinematic joy. And the little circle, that is almost like a sweet dot, of her mouth, gets closer to my skinny cheeks. She lays me out to extend the warm pier of her arms; she drips off me, she rubs her breasts against my chest, so much that she kindles and exalts this hidden passion.

Well, all of this I have seen on the screen, precisely because I have seen it, it traces this parable from the invisible point of memory.

I have seen the essential loving complication of another man; but not being my mind apt for intrigues, I imagine this beginning of love the ending of a film that will lengthen in every good mind the idea of happiness. Then I will be sure of my

representative happiness smile and of having promoted in others a similar kind of smile, if they are not sceptical and outstanding.

Sweetly I slide along these infinite parallels...

And the Lieutenant had walked over two blocks when a coup of sudden presentiment drove their gazes to the ground, not far off their feet:

A little dirty scrap of paper, wrinkled, like cuddled in the ground.

Quicker than a Swedish gymnastics professor, "our" Lieutenant picked that piece of paper up, holding it in his closed hand.

Afterwards he kept on walking, dissimulating, questioning with his eyes if anyone else shares his little secret. He dissimulated "like he who has done nothing". It was not under his own control getting a strong and quickened heartbeat, in a way that, stealing first the blood off his face and then giving it back in violent flood, he quickened the pace in an emotive tachycardia that was strange for others and known only to himself. He had lost control over that capricious organ, the spiritual sense of which lost ground as time went on: fifty years earlier it presided loving attitudes or the heightened emotive states, now, deeply misunderstood, it gets excited over low changes of normality. A vulgar and real joy that unbalances the whole circulatory system, due to the little fact of finding a penny –a note– amongst the dusty stones of the pavement. That little blue conglomerate was a simple bank dejection, a representative of a series of needs to be satisfied for 100 pennies.

Our Lieutenant went pale and blushed like when facing a woman. Because this was for him an incalculable triumph; the triumph of he who had dirty shoes and empty pockets.

Then, with textual logic, numbers occupied modestly his spirit:

Thus:

|                          |          |
|--------------------------|----------|
| To polish shoes.....     | S/. 0,10 |
| To go to the cinema..... | ” 0,60   |
| For tobacco.....         | “ 0,30   |
| Total.....               | S/. 1,00 |

The simple accounting sheet shaped with numeric exactitude, impressed his brain in different perspectives, and even if he could not realise this, he could see in the first plane the numbers, well engraved and thick, and in the second plane the letters, the motive.

The virtue of the mathematic operations was to displace the sentimental dream; akin to a little bit of water in a recipient, and the numbers to a dense object that sinks and overflows sentimentality.

And the heaviness worked so insistently in the infinite imaginative backdrop that “the mad of the house” jumped off strongly.

Naturally, finding a cent –that in this case appeared like stalking closely a harmless wanderer– can lift the metallic aspiration of a man.

The inevitable conditional:

As if “it came out of a woman...” the crazy of the house said “if I had a million pennies”.

This sufficed for the familial cat to unravel the never-ending skein.

“A well-managed million pennies is enough to make any man’s life easy-going. Give me a million pennies and I would suppress all sighs. The loved ones would not die. The tap would not sing the monotonous song of water.

Let’s see: a million, one percent monthly, gives an interest rate of ten thousand. With ten thousand I would have enough to set up a magnificent house, full of... There would be a lot of smoke and friends would drink vintage wines. I could collect everything that has been written about the French Revolution.

Well, in Paris, five francs per penny, it would be fifty thousand francs... I think more or less it would be enough for the same.

Uproar of longhaired men.

Oh yes, in any case it would be better... “Their dresses are heavy for them and they do not know when to lighten up...” Someone had told him this and the memory appeared exactly in that moment.

It would be very comfortable being joyful, on pillows and under the shelter of a sweet temperature; even more so if outside were cold because a selfish idea gives us more apparent wellbeing...”

Then he drowned in infinite ramblings, abandoning himself, like we all do, to the consequences of the millionaire dream.

The supremacy of the dream over his acts rendered him useless like a warm bath. We are always thinking about the flattering of richness; but since we are men without energies, we rest too long in that flattering, and then real needs press us.

Lottery is the easy thing.

But the arch of life crumbles when we rest; when a desperate moment lifts our vigorous will to temper the arch, its cohesive force will not be enough to contain the explosion. Day full of yawns, dissociated molecule.

We have to get our spirits ready to receive the invigorating tonics: Orison Sweet Marden and frowning Atkinson.

The novel melts in laziness and I would like to whip it for it to jump, shout, prance around, fills with activity all the flaccid bodies, but with this I would have to literaturise. These pages parade like slouching men that have smoked opium: slow, slow, until it makes a cloud of smoke in the eyes of the curious; a disarticulate gallop by the ralentive in the horsemanship magazines of Saumur.

Our Lieutenant would like to have, in reality, a horse like that, one that as it jumps breaks his movements into dismayed and variable movements. It would be the most comic and distinguished in the world. Besides, it would be a secure way to becoming a celebrity. He would be known in the farthest corner and his girlfriends could tell him:

“Oh, your horse is so beautiful, every time we see it, it reminds us of you”, and such other appropriate things.

But what he currently needed is not a million pennies nor the image of the horses of Saumur, but two tables more or less in good conditions and about four chairs to get the room in good condition. If he thought of anything elegant it would be to buy a blue shade for the lamp and some blue fluffy carpets, like the novelesque ideal.

We must suppose he does not have a house and he lives of sales and doorsteps.

And the satisfaction of these needs meant an unbalance on the dead and inactive man, eternal quiescent parasite. So life rammed its claws and pressed him so as to perfect the formula "let be made", cause of his individual ruin.

Through the boiling, paradoxical and disorganised mental life, stretched the neighbourhood of

## SAN MARCOS

the central nerve of which, a narrow street, had developed with its little accidents different emotive dispositions. Tiptoeing through the city, its map would be a piece of leather laid to dry. San Marcos: a long extension on a roughness of soil. The most particular thing about it is its bell tower, under a zinc tile roof, attached to the wall of the old church.

From the end of the street one can see part of the city:

## SAN JUAN

in identical disposition.

Naturally, San Marcos does not lack a mural. No one knows why in this mural, a little mirror was incrustated; it can be mistaken by an eye or a skylight that brings morning from the other side. A saint, surely. In this city, even the walls are devoted: one cannot avoid finding symbols. For example:

The Green Cross

The corner of Souls

The corner of the Virgin

The Virgin of the Little Hill

The Lord of the Passion (sitting by the door of Low Carmen so that people kiss his feet)

and many others that I forget now.

Oh this would be so joyful for a novel in which there were a honeymoon or, after a long tragedy, a sweet and peaceful chapter:

The city of San Marcos had shiningly laid out its white houses. Especially in San Juan there was a celebration. The light of nine o'clock was a kind of light that threw the houses above the eyes. Precisely, like in those new landscapes: the light colours that get the shining lens to come closer, that tempt the hands to press them.

And since this neighbourhood climbed up the hill, climbing it up gave to it more of a floatability character: like objects hanging off the cranes in the port.

Here novels bring long meditations: for example, and of course more appropriate, to consider the twenty thousand morning joys wrapped under the red roofs. Boys and young mothers, pink grandfathers, fresh bread for breakfast, some caress so as to make time kinder, calm yawns of rest at the end of the weekly work queue.

If there was previous erotic emotion: a turbulent supposition of the infinity of orgasms that would be perpetrated, fiercer the less unpunished. Here the environment is warm, and logical is the sight of many dismayed eyes due to the nightly work.

But if the economy took a swipe, there will be the hateful image of emaciated men, of faces made bitter by selfishness, jealousy and rage; the guttural sound will be heard: "bread! bread!"

The Lieutenant, forgetting the novel to the point of insensitivity, is a tabula rasa on which emotion wrote nothing. He felt somewhat satisfied and nothing else. And enjoyed the freshness. He remembered: "The morning was so clear that I wanted to run, jump, and even feel happy. He opened the window and the air relieved him. He took a deep breath due to this memory. Also him. Of course, the old phrase of the book is stuck in us and it benefits us even literarily. It so happens that many times we get excited because we have to pay attention to emotion acquired in a page and that we keep it within us until a similar circumstance reveal it as if it were ours.

He took a deep breath and put his hands in his pockets. He put his hands... this has a moneylender tone, but this is how it was. It has to be said because it gives us the character of man.

A sudden idea: a military should not have his hands in his pockets. He took his hands off his pockets.

Naturalist abundance: he picked his nose with his little finger. It is a detail, but first should come observation.

He turned around and went back up the street.

-Hello, Lieutenant B.

Incidentally, here is the guy that could make a narration.

Came "pulled by the hair" but we ought to confess that there is no man who has not been brought pulled by the hair.

Lieutenant B is a friend of our Lieutenant.

They shook hands.

-How is it?

-How is it?

-How is everything with you?

-Very well, and you?

Etc.

-Hear what is happening to me.

-?

He had the eyes of good weather.

-Yesterday I was with her.

-Really? Tell me.

I have to get the readers up to speed with this. She –apologies for her ignorance on penetrative abilities– was a woman who maintained with Lieutenant B some love affairs. Some visual understanding. It started with time, because love is eternal. They waved and smiled. She married a black lawyer. Good business. An ordinary man, an ordinary woman; but he was a legal consultant. Of course, her beauty goes without saying. A magnificent oval, admirable colour; black eyes, sneaky naughtiness.

This is, aided by “literature”, the story of Lieutenant B:

Yesterday I was in a bad mood until four pm (very interesting). At that time they told me: “Today the doctor will not be home; she said she expects you”. Go figure. I was puzzled and I gave a magnificent tip. Afterwards I heard again, inwardly: “Today the doctor will not be home; she said he was expecting you” and I went pale. My legs were shaking. It was the first time I received a love message from her. When lovers receive a notice (why, Lieutenant B?) they read it time and again, I heard insistently the invitation. It prolonged my auditory receptivity like a good feast prolongs its lovely flavour in the taste buds. (Please be aware that Lieutenant B never said these things; they are a literary dissuasion, like spices of bad food). Maybe there was room for some doubt, but I knew the messenger well and I believed him. News makes us happier when it is verbal (another generalisation, our modest novelesque system is accentuated), maybe because a sort of complicity is established between the

messenger and receiver. The insensitivity of paper contributes to diminish the pleasure we ought to feel, or the pain. This is why I believe that tragic news is often given in paper, and happy ones in person. (Immortal pages!) “My pleasure was so much bigger since a few days before I had considered her lost forever; her marriage was an abyss”. That form of joy that makes us light as well as give money to the poor took “hold” of me. Thinking of good things the road seemed shorter to me and before I realised I was at her place. She was waiting for me with arms wide open. Imagine the madness it was going to be. We kissed and hugged desperately. I feared her kindled eyes. Then we went into the living room and we spoke nearly two hours, very delicately, remembering everything that had happened between us up until now, and saying to each other what we had never told each other before. Poor girl, blimey! She is so good and she has such white arms. Frankly I felt sorry for her; she surely must have such a horrible time with her husband. Had he only seen her joy when she was with me. But I am not done yet, here comes the tragic part: we were like this when we heard someone knocking on the door. We looked at each other, we became corpses.

-Him!

-Him!

And I jumped up on my feet.

-What do I do?

-What do we do?

-Oh my god...

-?

-Hide.

And she went out looking very jolly.

I was a reptile under the couch.

I was not afraid, but I was afraid for her, for her.

Then I heard voices: his brother was speaking. Oh, I know very well those voices. A long silence outside, whilst in here, in my chest, there was a daemonic uproar.

Some little steps came up to me and I thought I saw his sister, wearing flat shoes, looking for something. I became lost in thought.

-Hello, hello –she said coming up to me.

I felt my heart in my throat.

I stuck my head out. It was her! Transformed, she was dressed very homey, she wanted to show some intimacy.

-I sent him away, do not be scared.

Fancy that mate, fancy that. Remember how we started. We were almost eating each other.

Of course I had to leave at eight because it was impossible for me to stay. What an afternoon I had!

She rubbed her hands and moved her eyes until sparkles came off them. She had inside a barrel full of joy, like a wine barrel.

But these narrations annoyed our Lieutenant. He moved his shoulder blades like when the back hurts and make the end of his mouth tense.

Especially because Lieutenant B was a maniac of the first person in singular, every moment he just said: I am, I was, I used to be, etc. etc. And since our Lieutenant did not dislike it either, there was no time for them to understand each other. So, very good friends they were not, each had an aversive feeling towards the other that was left unsaid and that, if existed, it would not have bothered them so much so as to come up. Besides, some contact points, same number of stars and same dress, brought them close.

With the load of his friend beside him –it was a load because when we meet someone we need to think about his things besides ours– he kept getting his inoccupation busy. Walking about just to pass the time, just waiting for twelve o'clock (in every other case, a different number would be used), such an important hour in the life of a man that has nothing to do, lunch time, after which one will struggle to fill time until seven, dinner time. Common men live around those two hours and all their business and operations refer to them; thus they never say “at two pm” or “at nine pm”, but “after lunch”, “before lunch”, “after dinner”, “before dinner”. Time, in our opinion, has had food only once, the year 1 ad.

The friend is distracting us and is the cause of a focus fugue, we are losing track of what we so stubbornly had in our minds, important or stupid, but obsessing...

So: the two Lieutenants were buying time.

And since within the accidents of wasting time anything can happen, came up

## LA RONDA

the typical neighbourhood for whining.

When you write “La Ronda” everybody pictures a Spanish cape and one even imagine serenades with guitars and in stinky drunken words. The eye of the bridge overlooks that straight street. There is a defined feeling about the anachronism of a menacing modern man, who passing by would be weary of the intimacy of the houses not staining his clothes or leaving him like a sandwich between paintings of slaves. Now the neighbourhood is dying; “the Filling” that will modernise the city is coming over, because some are tired of the old streets. And reacting against “the Filling” moaners and neo-moaners are aligned. All of them are a bit ridiculous.

The moaners<sup>84</sup> are the ones legitimately hurt. Old, faithful to the old. They shed a fat tear, and like children they rub their eyes with their fist, protesting disconcertedly against criminal and profane hands that steal the characteristic of the city. They are honestly surprised of other centuries’ dejections. However, “the Filling” is coming over.

The neo-moaners are the pencil or pen revolutionaries. They have juggled or twisted words, but on the basis of memories. These streets that are like memories have unbalanced their spirit. They make new things out of old reasons, and thus are

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<sup>84</sup> The original word is ‘gemebundo’, a neologism that operates as a noun that combines the words ‘gemido’ (moan) and ‘vagabundo’ (vagabond or wanderer).

tied to tradition, flapping their hands in the air. It seems they will attempt letting go and their tears are rather sweat drops, from the effort. They do not really understand the disguise. But they disdain the moanerers and show their teeth at them. These too show their teeth at neo-moanerers. Oh, what a joy, everyone showing off their teeth.

Frankly I don't understand what the fuss is all about.

We should find out if that suburb has an intrinsic beauty or if the uninterrupted series of romantic affirmations has led our spirit to believe that it does. So many times the same thing has been said that the first man who peeks from the corner –is always of course “cultured enough”- can and ought admire himself:

-Oh, this is truly wonderful.

Hidden behind the shutters of the doors, there is an infinity of epigones that, when told, will come out and flap their hands. Our gates, apparently deserted, are populated by fungi.

Actually, it can be quite picturesque that a street being so narrow that busses cannot drive through it; streets can be charming due to their smell of urine, they can give the impression that suddenly, a bunch of all-nighters. But the pavement is newer than before, and the force of thousands of men who have laboured to earn the bread screams thereby. And since the song of progress sings dynamically, we should feel better in our chase after the tram than when we hear the steps in the pipe of the street.

The neo-moanerers believe in their liberation without noticing that they are slaves from the past. We are and we are not because resting upon the conquered is so comfortable; this is how what was given to us is paid, and we un-dwell the present time. Always facing back!

-Oh this is truly wonderful.

The pitfall is that our admiration is quite unproductive and that if we insist on cancelling what falls, to clean what they have built, we will be ridiculous in the eyes of our children.

And they will say about us:

“Our grandparents the squires”.

Or:

“The master cobblers”.

Many potbellied sages of our time work hard, “like blacks”, to conquer the glorious title of “master cobbler”.

The Lieutenants tapped their heels around La Ronda.

About the beauty of La Ronda there was nothing to worry.

At most, about being attentive for a possible welcoming smile that might light up a window.

And if they were visited by the remembering folly like every other novelesque hero, the Western sense of adventure would awaken like during the time of the manhunts in the military commissions. Like those in the coast in which, when the criminals aligned on board had lost the ability to reach the coast, at dawn after tidying their feet to shackles, Maestro Lucas would shout:

-Clear up the bum-fluff!

And a sailor behind a man would wait for the bell to ding, after which only one splash would sound in the sea; the same one that, the first few times, would long resonate within the spirit with the tormenting vision of the drowned.

At least, in this story of the sea remains a transparent sensation: “Maestro Luces”, the man who gave the signal, for his rank in the boat.

But still there is a man hanging off a tree, subdued to the torment of losing his phalanxes and members one by one, whilst he screams his menace: “Kill me, kill me, because if I am left alive...”

And the trick to let the prisoners run a few steps, just to shoot them in the fields.

All of this Lieutenant B has seen, and he could say it once again.

The Lieutenants went to eat to the Casino, but in a moment of wean, they could have gone to a restaurant, to perfect the Sunday.

Had they gone, let us say, to “the Condor”, this would have inevitably happened:

They would have found two men from up north, talking about the affairs of their village.

-Boy! Boy! (This is from the Lieutenants).

What happened afterwards is well known.

This too, but I will write it nevertheless:

-Oh, I found Antonio, guess where, poor man!

-Where?<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> The word ‘Onde’ stands for the word ‘Dónde’, but emphasizes the northern accent.

-In the loony bin.

-Is he mad?

Being mad, like working as a Political Lieutenant, Schoolteacher, priest. One can even be stupid without any major surprise of the audience.

Ah! Speaking of madmen, our Lieutenant received a meaningful letter, deep, that can drive anyone crazy. He received it some eight days ago.

It was written:

My dear Mr Lieutenant.

In the city.

I hope this finds you and your family well.

I will tell you that the servants of the Sun are for nothing, and nothing else.

“I will tell you that the servants of the Sun are for nothing”. “I will tell you that the servants of the Sun...” What did they mean by that? Why did they write “servants”...? Is this from the loony bin or my mates are pulling my leg... ha ha!

No need at all for a menu.

I will say something about the night, that makes the nerves of the idle men stand on end. Nights are expected like an inevitable visit to which one has to bow, the one that says nothing, the one that makes us yawn discreetly, the one that is the highlight of a boring day.

Indeed, night is empty after an empty day.

Since night was made to look into the windows of the houses, when this has been done all day long, this is absolutely useless. Obligated rest after resting.

A new nightmare of places threatens us, and we will be bound to suffer it coming up right before our eyes.

The Lieutenant, hands in his pockets, was killing time until the imposed hour of “having nothing to do”. Maybe in the naïve expectancy that something unexpected would give life a new rhythm. Renovation never arrives and this continuous wait is a continuous mockery to the novelesque plot that would never give enough material for a book if they would not lie so much, imposing seemingly a real supposition that would deceive the liar himself.

The touch of death is coming. The realist novel deceives pathetically. It abstracts facts and leaves everywhere full of empty holes; it gives them an impossible continuity, because what is true, what is not said, interests no one.

Who would be interested to know that the socks of the Lieutenant are torn, and that this is one of his major tragedies, the essential imbalance of his spirit? Who cares about the fact that when he woke up he was twenty minutes cutting his toenails? What is the value of knowing that his right toenail is crooked rightwards and is thick and coarse like a horn?

It so happens that big, bulky realities are addressed and the small ones are hushed due to their uselessness. But the small ones, when they accumulate, they shape a lifetime. The others are just suppositions: “it may be the case”, “it may be very possible”. Truth: almost no one pays attention to it, even if it were very possible. Lies,

lies and lies. It is so shameful that about these lies they say: here I give you a summary of real life, this, which I write, is the complete and honest truth, and everyone believes them. The only honest thing to say is: they are fantasies, more or less coated in gold so that you can swallow them comfortably, or, simply, do not golden fantasies and just entertain the John Raffles's and the Sherlock Holmes's.

Liars! Liars!

But no, it is of no importance. What I want is to give some form of transcendence to the novel. Everything is well, very well, jolly well. "Art is the thermometer of people's culture". "What would be of us without it, only dispeller of sorrows, peaceful oasis for souls?"

"God is a very perfect being, creator and ruler Lord of Heaven and Earth".

The Lieutenant, with his hands in his pockets, always tried to do something around the streets, like calculating house prices, and counting all the hats he could see.

And a sudden idea, given that we are beings of repetition:

"A military should not walk around with his hands in his pockets", along with the reaction against the unconscious curving of the will: the curvature of the back and the protuberance of the chest.

At night, a hidden force dragged him down the dark streets. A vision suddenly appears:

PLEASURE

## AND MEN OF BRIGHT EYES

Few of them, gathered, sinister, with their eyes fixed in the drunken houses.

The drunkenness of the houses is something deep, that does not come out but one can feel it. It is made of the indoor passions. Evidently all of them must make a huge drunkenness, revealed by the peeping candlelight or a special laughter, so well-known and such a desire shaker. One believes that after that laughter a spank will come. A wide sound, full of fat flesh.

Lights need proper phrases: they always come from a dripping candle, of sticky ashes, and since drafts blow through the cracks, they titillate, slouch and scream. When the façade is black, through the door one can see a white slash in the muddy courtyard. It is fixed and accurate. Appears and disappears, as the door swallows or vomits a man. There is always someone waiting for the nausea of the door. If there were no one, the indoors worry surely must be painful.

Those who walk these streets crouch in themselves, waiting for the inevitable moment of shame. In their eyes something twinkles. I have on my table an owl, with eyes made of light yellow crystal. Stubborn like donkeys they wait for love, and wait for the moment of discharge of desire.

And if the moment does never arrive, they will have their sad disgrace to chew.

Every citizen has done the same. Poor citizenship!

The visit to the

## POOR NEIGHBOURHOODS

gave the exact meaning of these incessant material and spiritual movements that leave a sediment in the mood.

Often visited by curiosity, finally they bring the miracle of desire, an obligation against ourselves that will chase us until satisfied.

Suddenly, memories came back to the Lieutenant: Those stairs that lead from the busy street to a black door! Known steps, made of brick, greasy because of the boys' touch, crumbled and damaged, dark, one has to climb them gropingly, disturbing because it seems that crime is behind the door, shameless, giving the climber a fun wink and a shield against disgust and dirt.

Dirt will not impress then on, nor will it make awkward the sudden encounter with that of the others'; rather, one will shake its hand in the street, even if Her category made her stockings and petticoat dirty. The one that made tremble due to her being skinny, wrinkled, greenish: that has a plaster of makeup, since we got so excited, we will get so used to it that we will leave decency for the flavour of the known woman. The flavour of the known woman deepens in us, making us reflect, imagine and kindle illusion. So we hesitate in front of another, and because the first one is so obedient that gives in with just a wink; with her one does not have to 'declare' one's love to her, or 'treat' her well. It does not matter that the neighbours chat and laugh and that there are any stinky drunks.

-Shut up, stupid!

And other exclamations.

Above all one gets excited about children, thrown like old rags, asleep, with the dirty skin in the air. Candidates, candidates.

Son of the busy bedroom, daughter of the human agency: your mother will kick you out to the street.

You will be a thief or a prostitute.

Out of hunger you will chew your own flesh.

One day rage will corner you, and having nothing else to do, you will vomit over the world your dejections. It will be good that you return the usurious loan; dejection of dejection, that is like the total in accounting numbers.

After, they will say: love and kindness. What love? What kindness?

Of course there are around holly paintings. Devotion is meant for them. When the Archangel Gabriel and Sebastian the Martyr go to the rag shops, we will hop and make pirouettes. Oh, we will make pirouettes! But why pirouettes? Why most of the paintings are about the Archangel and the Martyr? It is surely not because of the garments, nor because of Lucifer, nor the trunk of the tree. Oh well, who knows. Maybe it is because on Monday a dog was ran over

Taddee, tadda

The Lieutenant, 57 Pereira road (at the gate), felt steps following him and turned around to see, and since there was no one he kept walking carefully. More steps... then he felt fear. The kind of fear that starts with disquiet, as if his steps were being

followed closely and the cold wind blew on his face. Adjusting itself, increasing, like preparing the muscles for the run. It is so cold! This wind is annoying; it discomforts the back and makes the shoulders shrink.

“I had a spaniel once... In this darkness one cannot even see what is the time... Yesterday morning one man has played the fool... If I only played the fool!” There is here a tickling discharge that runs from head to toes.

And his legs grew more and more agile. He slammed the door, with the last tremor, freed already from the devil’s horns and the white ribs of the dead.

But after, one thinks: “Well, and why am I afraid?” Of course for no known reason. Except that the evidence of the fear beat the thighs mercilessly in addition to the cardiac contraction that intensified even more the pins and needles.

Inside, it seems that the danger is over. Small talk comes out calmly. Where does small talk come from? Oh!

And since the bed was not made and the sheets were cold and there was no one to tell to:

-Hello, how is life? How was your day?

and give a kiss to and receive a caress or two, the Lieutenant who was essentially a family guy and marriage material, began sighing: gee, if only there was here a nice woman.

Well, after all, in short, the wait for the woman has been a topic. He will never have that unique woman that is convenient to our interests, who exists and we do not know where she is.

## THE WAIT FOR THE WOMAN

A yawn after a yawn, sleepiness.

Now an important observation comes to mind, it is necessary to record it:

Cinema is the art of the deaf-mutes.

Some time ago I read in a book, full of model-phrases: "Injustice always triumphs over goodness and innocence". Poor man. Clearly he has never been to the theatre.

I have on the table two pipes that are not for smoking.

Hazy, like the arrival of a dream.

Will for paralysis, descending, soft, long.

Uh! –The jump on the bed, believing he was falling.

Again the will for paralysis.

Until the moment of the grape-harvest of the minds, when sixty thousand men stop thinking. When, in the city, silence holsters in the stillness of bodies.

When the subjective darkness has come about.

(Like this, in brackets, we are going to watch the episode

## SEDUCTION ATTEMPT

occurred at the time of the disquiet of loneliness being stronger and in the associative ideas it caused the loss of manly strength. It must be taken into consideration that such strength is useless, weakness comes finally, in any case, attracted by opposing forces.

A plump, young woman. The niece of the homeowner. The one whom the Lieutenant has greeted so many times at the gate, blushes and the white of her eyes becomes more noticeable.

There is a plan for the attempt. When the Lieutenant understood he must be freed from his tribute to the poor neighbourhoods, he then faced the series of existing possibilities of women whom he would desire. Having discarded the others due to their difficulty, he projected towards this one, whom although did not own any ideal prerequisite, he thought of her as being easier to attain.

Advantages: the auntie's absence, her availability because based on the external assessment, one understands that she is simple.

She is simple, simple, simple.

The house was empty.

Then he came up with the plan. He came to the resolution to besot without being besotted, which derived from the convenience of having a woman who is not beautiful, nor nice; that is more convenient than her belonging to another.

One must begin, sooner or later: let this be the occasion.

And he felt like a ladies' man.

Here the memory that a few months ago, when she moved into her sublet room, the man who went with her told her she had beautiful eyes and this turned her on.

Only missing was the day of the visit, belated due to laziness, because one must go out to the street, because one must go out to the cinema, because the shoes were dirty, because there were no products to shave his beard.

Until the idea was actualised, with a good spirit, cleaning very well the fingernails and scenting very well the mouth with mint chewing gum.

I cannot remember if the visit had been asked from her, but being courageous, he rang the bell, after having crossed many corridors – all the houses are old.

He was asked to come in and take a seat.

Photographs in the china cupboards, photographs on the walls, photographs on the tables: the mother, the grandmother, the auntie; the father, the grandfather, the uncle, blushed and wearing big moustaches.

Well, the niece of this single auntie, is she single?

The girl came in. A little half breed-looking and thick-haired. A halfway done lice race and braided hair. But she was exuberant and had a juicy mouth.

Ah, she was wearing that hat, the one she wore when he met her on the street.

But, despite all, they chatted and chatted.

And how is your mammy called?

Words came out nasal –from her– and pompous, like to the one who has not blown their nose.

Of course the story was sad and fostering. Telling that you do not really have it, that the father had passed away. To deserve a gloomy silence, and since the afternoon was already well there, a tea-like sigh.

-Let me kiss your hand.

Innocence. These things ought not be asked.

It is funny that kiss of reverence, fugacious because he was also excited. On the back, a little bit above ancient times, but with the same bow as ancient times.

Turning the eyes up, until he was able to see her expression: blushing, burning from being kissed on the hand.

It must be, all in all, joyful.

He went out, making the spurs tinkle.

My Lieutenant, even when he is about flirting, he always wears spurs.

Deficiencies and features of the first session:

Distance. The first session adopted a distance; due to the lack of intimacy or fear of the other discovering our truth. One cannot quite believe they are actually so simple that they can be taken by surprise by the script that one has prepared. And when one takes a close look at their eyes one has the imperious need of putting a folding screen around one's own, to cover them decently. The one about loneliness is magnificent: I have read everywhere that it is often confessed: "I am alone", "you are alone". It is a cunning and sarcastic conjugation. Entrenched, waiting for the target to attack it. Distance is cold and inconvenient; but it cannot be erased from the preface.

Although it has the advantage of facilitating sadness.

The pompous voice loosens the strengths, but after all, it matters very little.

If only through that door would not continuously come the woman with smallpox marks in her face. She is an annoying gatekeeper, with a jealous face like a dog's.

There were long silences, predisposing or embarrassing. Silence in a love visit is good...

But this resolution that prefixed beforehand the unfolding of the events is curious, and we have formed it so many times, congratulating ourselves inwardly for the great success, and if not, pulling an oblique gesture to a bad moment.

She is simple, with the aggravating circumstance of proving it right.

We are inclined to never going back, as if we had been let down. But something ties just like a commitment. A friend from another time once told me: "A love declaration carries enormous responsibilities. Fancy the illusion we may leave upon a woman whom we have made glimpsing an affect". This may be the truth. Maybe, rather, it may have been.

And we do not forget it.

The following day she will be found with her eyes laid on the domestic tasks.

Surely she was waiting.

This session was friendlier than the first one. It had greater intimacy. And now I am thinking that the intimacy built from one session to the other was due to the presence, or rather to the absence, to the interval between the two that may have been filled by the meditation and the rigorous ponder of the advantages and disadvantages that a friendship entails.

In any case, there are new ties cast between the protagonists. The first steps were taken speaking of men. Ah, men! Like simple girls say; and as always they tend to exclude one from the rule, they are satisfied by the gallantry. They see ahead the nuptial adventure, primordial idea, to which they never cease paying tribute.

-My mother was called like you; it is a sweet name and it sounds nice like a memory.

Then will come the remorse of having brought about the mother in a dirty business.

She thanked him and the chair had to be pulled out to attempt a brush of the fat arms. It is an emotion that spreads up becoming trembling of the hands. The trembling of the hands during an infatuation seemingly forgives all lies; this nervous excess is tinged by a virtual sincerity.

And since she would not move her arm away he looked for the softness of the neck.

-Let me kiss you.

-Oh, no, not in the mouth, no: no one has kissed me until now.

The idea of kissing her hands was almost exciting. In the hands, yes! Ha, ha.

But since one should not ask for that...

Stop!

Her cheeks were burning and finally she cast her mouth.

She cast her mouth the way one puts a teacup closer so that tea may be poured.

-No one has kissed me until now; I swear you are the first one.

It is a phrase that one says, most of the times, in a mouthful. They say it with their mouth full and one does not believe them, even if it is true.

They are always waiting for it:

Oh, really? Then I am marrying you.

And the emotion can make them fall to the ground.

But since he did not say it, silence stayed suspended like a doubt.

Thus ends, unbalanced, the second session: but she keeps the hope and, like a promise, she begged for his return.

On the third day something else kept him busy so that he may be asked: why did you not come? And then his hesitation hurts her whim.

Once in intimacy, the nervousness of the hands roams around the neck and moves forward up until the daring stroke of the breasts, even if she fights it and burns like the red ink used for writing novels.

If only the door need not be open, through which one hears the voices of the tenants from downstairs and the shouts of the boys outside...

-They can see us here...

-Yes, it is true; the things they may believe we are doing...

-Hey, if you want to do something we should meet elsewhere.

- No, not that. What do you want with me? Don't even think about that, if you want to, come here.

Good grief. She imagines that... If there was just a bit of patience...

-You know... Don't be like that...

[The commonplace of the discussion continues].

Hasty, or clumsy, or used to the easiness of the wink.

It is going so bad!

The lack of another day.

Besides he saw her in the room of an old tenant. Right of tenure or kinship. That is not the worst.

Due to his disillusionment he will pull a face like the cheated, like those who carry inside a heavy weight.

Until one day they will say something foolish:

“Been sent to say that the table you have has been stained by the glasses put on it, and since it was not given to you in this state, and since it does not belong to the house but is borrowed, it is your obligation to get it varnished”.

Well, well).

## LIEUTENANT

Your sudden death makes a vertical cut in the smooth slope of the facts, therefore in this hazy sliding I stop and watch the night.

Débora is too far away and that is why she is a magnolia. We would have gone to see her.

Débora: a yankeelandian dancer. Two blue eyes. She could make her arms flexible like swans' necks.

I imagine she has a distant honey flavour.

Fearful of corrupting that memory I keep your ridiculous I. All men will keep a moment their I so they can relish Débora's distant flavour, the one that will fight to come back to mind every time more tiringly and in longer intervals, like a pier that loses strength over time.

In this initial and final moment I suppress all minutiae and blur the edges

OF A SOFT WHITE COLOUR

## Lateral Light

That elegant phenomenon of the lengthening of the eyelids has already taken place in me—hands bowed on oranges falling in sweet nebulosity, like time on memories.

This elegant phenomenon that, generally, corresponds to an epoch, stroke me very quickly due to specific circumstances.

I'm not old, I'm thirty years old. I see myself like those men whose muscles are exhausted in one hour, as opposed to others who work eight hours with wise and economic calmness.

Also, my eyebrows have fallen off somewhat and I am quite bold.

It is due to... Ah! It is due to that girl, Amelia, who reminded me clearly of the image of the hero of a novelist man; to whom her parents (or herself?) ordered (or did she order to herself?) to keep her plaits quite long, either because they suited her or because she wanted to keep her childhood appearance.

Man! And she was quite pale. Now I see her. Under each eyebrow she must have had a blue ink moon, which made her so interesting. And since her lips were so pale as well, I feel in love with her. I think this is a very powerful reason: women who have crimson lips make us men nervous; they seem to have eaten half a pound of meat of freshly slaughtered pork.

Ok, so. Given she was a girl, I waited for her to become more mature, and as soon as I saw her legs thicken, I married her.

Hello, Maria!

Blimey! They just told me that lunch is served and I have to go. Don't lose your good mood. Wait a moment. I get nervous when they tell me that lunch is served.

As I was saying, I married Amelia. Well, I am sure of having lived a year with her almost in perfect harmony, almost, because there was a fierce reason obscuring my life.

She had a petulant way of saying, repeating, sticking into her conversation a little word that gets on my nerves. That "*obviously!*" which she seemed to throw at my face with her cynical little laughter and that made my face flush and temper my jaw.

If we were going out and the weather worsened, she would provoke me:

-You know that we cannot go out now because... obviously!, it's looking like it's going to rain.

If we were going out shopping and there was a hat I liked for her, she would tell me off with her little:

-You know I don't like this one because... obviously!, these hats are out of style.

If someone came home to visit us, and something stupid came over her, she would ruin my good mood, as if yelling at me:

-You know I'm not going to be able to leave my room because... obviously!, I feel a little bit ill.

Is that a way of speaking, my friends? Doesn't it seem like one is being called an idiot or being challenged to a duel? You'll see, I'll shove you that obviously! Even up your nose<sup>86</sup> and see how angry you get<sup>87</sup>, because obviously!... Damn! If right now they tell me that lunch is served, I'll go mad and tear them apart.

This *obviously!*, that initially annoyed<sup>88</sup> me and made me want to suffocate it down her mouth with one of those kisses that angrily press the mucosae until they make it bleed, has been the single cause of my unhappiness.

Had she not had that stupid habit, I would still be by her side, clung to the blue ink under her eyebrows. Because I loved her spectacularly and I love her still, like the love one has for the discoloured portrait of the unknown mother or the broken old utensil... What am I saying? Oh! I'm being romantic here... I remember the crystal urn that keeps the pieces of a broken old utensil, which I love with reverence because it is unable to say:... No! I refuse to say the word, I spit the word in the spittoon, feeling queasy is dangerous... Shall I say it? No.

The broken old utensil! I like that shovelful of r's which I would like to be covered by up to my nose to be like that, cuddled, looking... Oh, the Treponema! Obviously!

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<sup>86</sup> Figurative phrase that means to harass with an action.

<sup>87</sup> The literal translation is "see how your blood boils", which in Spanish is a figure of speech that means to get angry.

<sup>88</sup> The literal translation is "that initially just poke my tongue" which is a figure of speech that means to get annoyed by something.

She<sup>89</sup> told this to me one night when I was excited dancing over a table of logarithms.

Antoñito<sup>90</sup>, do you know that we should go to bed now? Because... obviously! it is late<sup>91</sup> and I feel very sleepy.

And the traitor would hug me by the hips. I went mad!<sup>92</sup> I punched her in the face and ran away.

I did not come back because around the corner I bumped into Paula, a rabble that was a friend of mine since I was young.

I grabbed her firmly by the wrist.

-Hey, you don't know how to say obviously!?

She tried to dodge me, I must have hurt her.

-What has got into you, man?

-Oh! Yes, you don't know how to say.

And I caressed her chin.

She smiled at me, letting show the lack of a front tooth, and then she made sound in my ear, suggestively, her nasal voice.

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<sup>89</sup> Palacio writes the conjugated verb without the pronoun, so it is unclear who told him that until the following phrase when he writes about Amelia.

<sup>90</sup> Antoñito is a grammatically incorrect diminutive for Antonio, which sounds overly familial, slightly childishly annoying.

<sup>91</sup> Palacio writes "tardecito", is a diminutive and colloquial form for the adverb 'tarde' that means late. It conveys a slightly childishly annoying way of speaking.

<sup>92</sup> Palacio writes "I was possessed by the devil" which is a figure of speech for being terribly angry.

-Let's go so that you see the house where I live; we haven't seen each other in over a year. We left. And in her house she enticed me to kiss her, I did, and I stayed with her for around ten days.

On the eighth day I had a very special dream that filled me with restlessness. Due to my inherent disposition I believe in mysterious things and I didn't doubt, nor doubt to this day, the truth of certain dreams that to me are prophetic. In a different time I would have accepted that dream with a sort of pleasure, the reality of which would totally modify my life by giving me an essentially new character, placing me in a different plane to all men; a sort of superiority entailed by the danger that I would be to everyone else, which would force them to see me—at least those who knew about it—with a trembling curiosity similar to the attraction of abysses.

As I was going to see the doctor, I began reflecting about the situation in which I would be, were it true, this strange novelty I foresaw. In such circumstances, my desire was not the aforementioned one; it was replaced by a fearful feeling that was drilling my brain, getting me all worked up insinuating in my spirit some confusing and not-rational<sup>93</sup> chaos, that warmed up my forehead and swell up my veins like an invitation to the served lunch; my love for Amelia, I still respected her, despite the enormity of her sin, and I clearly understood that my out-dated desire represented under this circumstances an electrical current established between us that would not

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<sup>93</sup> Palacio uses a neologism “apensante” that means “a not-thinking entity”. He adds the suffix a (negation, lack of) to the word “pensante” that means thinking or rational. Hence I used not-rational instead of irrational.

let me approach to her even if the disinfectant of regret washed her and would present her to me pure for our subsequent conjugal life.

Huh? What? Help! A man is breaking my head with a 53-kg mace and then sticks 5 cm pins in my heart. There, he's hiding under Paulina's bed, showing me four open shaving blades, passing them around the neck to make me clench and break my teeth out of fear and paralyse my reflexes, making my legs stiff like those of an old man. Where are the signs of Romberg and Achilles, and where is the light that ought to contract the pupil into a line? Maria! Go to say I'm not having anything to eat. There goes the *Treponema Pallidum*, galloping, breaking my arteries. And the poor old utensil in my crystal urn rattles like a living thing... And it seems it's lifting up a finger... huh?

I see my children, I foresee my children blind or with white eyes wide open: my children mutilated or dry and implausible like fossils; my children disguised under the erythema masks; I foresee the mush that moves, lifts a finger and wants to hug me and kiss me. I foresee the tragic athetosis that will go through my neck and will tear my thyroid gland; and the hook-like, trembling legs of Amelia: she will draw circles of grey ink under her prominent cheekbones.

In this town I like the old church that has green mosaics in the flat domes because its back faces north. (What would be of this poor little town if they turned their church around?) I also like it because at the centre of the stone façade there is a small stone virgin.

Inside I open my mouth before a carved picture that has a fine and pale face; in the lower-left corner, there is this legend, sort of:

|               |    |              |      |
|---------------|----|--------------|------|
| HEIGHT        | &  | ESTATURA     | I    |
| SHAPE         | &  | FORMA        | I TR |
| RB OF THE H   |    | AGE DE LA S  |      |
| EST VIRGIN A  |    | MA VIRGEN S  |      |
| CCORDING TO   |    | EGUN LO QUE  |      |
| WHAT          | ST | ESCRIBIO SAN |      |
| ANSELM WRO    |    | ANSELMO I    |      |
| TE & ST LUKE  |    | LO QUE PINT  |      |
| P A I N T E D |    | O SAN LUCAS  |      |

and what seems to me a little preposterous, even if from the superimposed wide chapel, a beautiful sharp hand sticks out of it. The colour of her garb is identical to that of my old broken old utensil.

Ah! It's night already. The sky is pitch black; and since in it the tiny pin-heads of the stars are showing, I have to go out to the fields, far out so that no one hears me, and shout very loud, even if I hurt my throat, to the concave loneliness:

Treponema Pallidum! Treponema Pallidum!



## Women gaze the stars

Juan Gual, who loves history<sup>94</sup> like a loved one, has suffered her pulling his hair and scratching his face.

Historians, literates, footballers, psh! all of them are maniacs, and maniacs are as good as dead<sup>95</sup>. They walk down one line, balancing like those who walk on a tightrope, and they become prisoners of air with the sunshade of reason.

Only madmen squeeze the absurd up to the glands and are in the highest plane of intellectual categories.

Historians are blind men who grope<sup>96</sup>; literates say they *feel*; footballers are polycephalic, guided by the quadriceps, calves and soleus.

Juan Gual the historian. From the great forehead trapezium hang the nose pyramid and the triangular gesture of the mouth contained in the quadrilateral space of the chin.

He is 1 meter 63 centimetres high and weights 120 pounds. –This piece of information is more interesting than any other that a novelist could give: María Augusta, stepping out of the warm bath, dried herself up with an ample and soft towel

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<sup>94</sup> In Spanish the words 'history' and 'story' are homonyms. Initially, it seems that the author refers to 'history'. But further on, he talks about 'storytellers' and plays equivocally with the structures of story and author.

<sup>95</sup> The literal phrase is 'maniacs are dead men', but I have translated it for 'as good as dead' to keep its sense.

<sup>96</sup> The verb used by the author 'tactear' is a Lusitanism, therefore it strictly does not exist in Spanish.

and then she put on the fine cotton shirt, not without first amusing herself by contemplating with kinky delight her round and voluptuous forms.

Juan Gual, sniffing the snuff of the old papers, deciphers slowly the pale and ancient writing.

“Sor. Captain General<sup>97</sup>: Knowing that the *inabitants*<sup>98</sup> of the little town of Callayruc...”

The copyist, after a moment answers:

“...of Callayruc”

“they we’re<sup>99</sup> unimpressed with spices whose coarseness...”

“...whose coarseness”

Well, and what does Mr Gual care about the inhabitants of the little village of Callayruc? As much as I care about Mr Gual himself.

The storyteller is another maniac. We are all maniacs, those who are not are strange animals.

One should go out and enjoy the good weather: the musical gargling of canaries; shadows of Picasso’s geometric shapes that are assembled in bodies like one life into another; a Chagall-like girl, who picks her nose with her index finger.

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<sup>97</sup> The author uses the abbreviated form of the word General (Gral.)

<sup>98</sup> The author writes the word in Spanish ‘habitantes’ without the first ‘h’ noting a spelling mistake. I have therefore translated it as ‘inabitants’. Italics are from the original.

<sup>99</sup> The author writes the verb were (in Spanish ‘estaban’) with a common spelling mistake “estavan”, therefore I have translated it as ‘we’re’.

But the man of study does not see these things: either he remains picking the dirt of a date in time's nose or sketching the uselessness of an image, or inconsiderately abusing the inductive and deductive systems.

And the copyist? Oh! The copyist, a dapper lad: 20 years old, 1 meter 80 centimetres high, and 140 pounds. They spoiled him naming him Temistocles. Certain ladies of Mr Wilde would have never loved him.

Besides being a historian, Mr Gual makes delicious fried fish. This epicurean little sin is not a strange thing. I know an engineer who cooks admirably Valencia-style rice and a holly priest specialised in legumes dressing.

“he could not discard, and being almost everyone a soldier...”

“everyone a soldier”

Suddenly, the door lets in a wide beam of light.

Both faces rise from the pieces of paper.

-Who is it? What is it about?

Temístocles blushes.

-Come in, milady.

Mr Gual straightens his tiny body and goes to kiss his wife in the forehead. This woman, giving a sideways look to Temístocles, makes of her mouth a parenthesis.

Three pieces of information: the historian is 45 years old, the wife of the historian is 23 years old; the historian is a little bit lazy.

“of those who deserted, when I destined myself...”

“...destined myself”

Mr Gual is weary of kissing his wife in the mouth in front of the secretary.

The tonics have no effect. He has to, the poor guy, gently wait hours and hours until potency is greater than resistance.

It seems that history has that little defect as an effect.

Dear man! If only he was a bit more innocent to send him for the *Seafood of mister Chabre...*

All that is more painful than a thousand poems to the deceased beloved and more artistic than all the springs that a man has seen.

Not even having the seafood!

Lord! Lord!

Faces fall off out of shame.<sup>100</sup>

A son of Mr Gual is an absurdity.

So? The fingers stretched on the cheeks or the hands under the chins, in a sort of rodinean<sup>101</sup> attitude to avoid faces falling off out of shame.

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<sup>100</sup> Common idiom in Spanish that means to be very ashamed (i.e. my face falls off out of shame).

<sup>101</sup> Neologism used by the author to qualify an attitude. It may mean ‘Rodinean’ as akin to the French sculptor Auguste Rodin.

One must wait. Life is a waiting paralysis. We are always looking, through the window, for the good weather to pass. We wait for the solutions of time itself to fall. Sitting in our seats, we watch the cinema of our events. We look upwards to find the skylight through which we will exit, pale and amazed, and be able to be spectators of our own drowsy drama, if it is possible, if life allows it.

Rosalía and Temístocles wait, tied to destiny's rope, with the head down like tired beasts.

Mr Gual jumps scandalised.

Mr Gual was waiting for that which he always awaits: for potency to be greater than resistance, and trying to aid the former, he sought strength by passing his hand over the silk of her abdomen.

And when he felt the spring of life, Mr Gual raised his hand and upper body; he laid his hand again to verify and raised it again.

-Rosalía...Rosalía...

She has also raised her upper body and defended herself with her hands.

Mr Gual's anger is that of he who sees being fruitful what he owns, yet never possessed it. Maybe it is similar to that of the mother whose son becomes a soldier and, conversely, to that of the woman who gave birth a dead.

His face becomes conic and his eyes swell out of anger.

-What have you done bitch?

She feels the spit and fixed her gaze on him as if to split him.

-And what have you done?

-What have I done?

-Yes, what have you done?

Mr Gual swallows the anger's cone effect: he has not done anything and the sin is in not doing anything. The reproach whips his face. He has not done anything and should not say anything.

He feels loneliness above him. The loneliness that punches us in the face until our face falls on our chest.

Alone with himself.

And loneliness brings bitterness, long-faced, rectangular, with a strange lock on the forehead.

She is right, but so is he and he reproaches her with the eternal reproach, thin like a comma<sup>102</sup>:

-Oh! Rosalía...

Bitterness falls upon her as well, shaking her by the shoulders making her cry.

Mr Gual has had to go to see his copyist, bring him over by the ear and get him into the house like one does to little boys.

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<sup>102</sup> The author uses the word 'vírgula', which may be a Gallicism or Lusitanism of the word 'coma' (comma), which strictly does not exist in Spanish.

Even if Temistocles shrank out of shame, he reacted like a man, hardening the muscles. But under the gaze of the historian, he has gone back to his positions, fearing the accusation of his eyes.

Mr Gual sat him on his usual chair. He has put in front of him the copy paper. Has stepped back, crossing his arms over his back. He frowned upon the difficult moment.

Big silence.

-Go on, man, go on. This morning it rained and I have had a headache. I was somewhat rushed with that thing of Jaén and Don José Ignacio de Checa, but I could not get up early. I am a little tired of these old papers.

Silence.

Well, blimey! It must be told as it is and that is why you are here!

Mr Gual swallows something so large that it seems the page of a monologue, and continues, more difficultly due to the choking.

-That thing about the girl... It is over now. Oh well, blimey! What are we going to do... Only dogs are faithful...to men...Only dogs: dogs.

Silence.

-Well, well. Let's begin with Mr Checa's thing. We were...here.

His voice trembles.

“In order to prevent any surprise that might damage my reputation...”

“...reputation”

Up until today, they have two children.

## The Anthropophagus

There he is, at the prison, sticking his big and oscillating head from between the bars, the anthropophagus.

Everybody knows him. People drop by like showers to see the anthropophagus. They say that nowadays he is a freak<sup>103</sup>. People are weary of him. They go in triads, at least, armed with knives, and when they see his big head they are left shivering, trembling by the feeling of the imaginary bite that gives them goose bumps. Slowly they gain confidence; the most courageous have gone as far as provoking him, introducing for a short moment a trembling finger through the bars. Like that, repeatedly as one does with caged birds that peck away.

But the anthropophagus stays still, watching with empty eyes.

Some believe that he has turned into a complete idiot; that that was only a moment of madness.

But do not listen to them; be very careful of the anthropophagus: he will be waiting the right moment to jump at a curious person and snatch off his nose with only one bite.

Think about how would you look if the anthropophagus had your nose for lunch.

I can see his scull-like face!

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<sup>103</sup> The word used by Palacio is 'phenomenon'. In Spanish it means both 'phenomenon' and 'freak' or 'unusual'.

I can see his miserable beggar's face, his syphilitic or cancerous face! With his fang sticking out the bruised mucosae. With the folds of the mouth looking deep, closed like an angle.

You will put a magnificent show.

See how even the guards, sinister men, fear him.

They throw at him his food from a distance.

The anthropophagus reaches for it, sniffs around, chooses the meat – which he gets raw – and chews it tastily, full of pleasure, and the rotting blood drips all over his lips.

First they put him on a diet: legumes and nothing but legumes; you should have seen the uproar. The guards thought he was going to break the bars and eat them all. And they deserved it, those cruel bastards! To torture in that way a man who is used to eating tasty meat! No, that is unacceptable. They had to give him meat, no way around it, and raw.

Have you ever eaten raw meat? Why don't you try it?

Maybe not, you could get used to it, and that would not be good. It would not be good because newspapers, when you least expect it, will call you beast, and when one is not a beast, that is annoying.

They would not understand, poor them, that yours is a pleasure like any other; like eating fruit off the tree, reaching out with the lips and biting until the sweet syrup runs down the chin.

But, oh my! Don't think that my digressions are honest. I don't want anyone getting the wrong idea about me, me, such a harmless person.

The anthropophagus thing, that is true, inevitably true.

Las Monday, all the criminology students, we went to see him.

They have him locked in a cage, like the ones for beasts.

And what a face that guy has! I have always said so: nothing like a scoundrel to disguise what he is.

All the students, we laughed, in a good mood and got really close to see him. I think that neither them nor I will forget it. We were bedazzled, and how did we enjoy his almost childish look and the total failure of our professor's lectures!

-Look at him, look how he seems like a child –said one.

-Yes, a boy seen through a lens.

-His legs are full of pimples.

-They will put talcum powder on his armpits to avoid the burnings.

-They will wash him with Reuters soap.

-He surely vomits white liquid.

-And he smells like breasts.

In this way the despicable boys made fun of that poor man that looked vaguely and whose huge head oscillated like a magnetised needle.

I felt sorry for him. Truth be told, it was not his fault. How is an anthropophagus guilty! Even less so if he is the son of a midwife and a butcher, that is to say, of Sophroniscus the sculptor and Phaenarete the midwife. Being an anthropophagus is like being a smoker, or a paedophile, or a sage.

But judges will condemn him for sure without making those considerations. They will punish such a natural inclination: this annoys me<sup>104</sup>. I do not want anyone to proceed in detriment of justice. For that reason I want to leave here a proof of my support of the anthropophagus. And I believe I support a fair cause. I am referring to the irresponsibility of any citizen of satisfying a desire that destabilises in a tormenting fashion his organism.

Every hurting word that I have ever written against that poor irresponsible character must be forgotten. I, repentant, beg his forgiveness.

Yes, yes, I sincerely believe that the anthropophagus is right; that there is no reason why the judges, representatives of public justice...

Such a strong trance... Well... I am going to simply refer to what happened. I do not want any malicious person saying later that I am a relative of my defendant, like an inspector has already told me in relation to that affair of Octavio Ramirez<sup>105</sup>.

This is how it went, with precedents and everything:

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<sup>104</sup> Palacio writes: 'esto me rebela' translated literally as 'this rebels me'. It is a strange use of the reflexivity of the verb 'rebelarse' which means 'to rebel oneself'.

<sup>105</sup> Palacio makes reference to the investigation case he writes about in the short story *The Man Who Was Kicked to Death*.

In a little southern village, more or less thirty years ago, two well-known local inhabitants got married: Nicanor Tiberio, slaughterer by profession, and Dolores Orellana, midwife and grocer.

Exactly eleven months after they got married a child was born to them, Nico, the little Nico, whom eventually grew up and has given so much to talk about.

Mrs Tiberio had incontestable reasons to believe that the boy was born at the eleventh month of pregnancy, which is strange and dangerous. It is dangerous because who nurtures for so long from human substances will logically crave them later on.

I would like the readers to pay attention to this detail, which in my view justifies Nico Tiberio and myself, since I have taken matters into my own hands.

Well. The first row that the boy caused to the couple was when he was five years old, when he already wandered around and was beginning to be taken seriously. It was about his profession. Such a common and simple disagreement between parents that, almost, seems unworthy of attention. However, it is for me.

Nicanor wanted the boy to be a butcher, like himself. Dolores thought that he should have a honourable profession, Medicine. She said that Nico was intelligent and that should not go to waste. She would argue about aspirations –women are specialists about aspirations.

They argued about the issue so strongly and long-lastingly that after ten years they had not resolved it. One said: he should be a butcher; the other: he should go all the way to become a doctor. When he was ten years old, Nico had the same look as

a boy, which I think I forgot to describe. He had, poor thing, the flesh so soft that his mother felt tenderly for him; he had bread dipped in milk-like flesh, since he had spent so much time pickling in the guts of Dolores.

But so it happens that the poor boy had taken serious fancy of meat. So serious that there was no reason to argue further: he was an excellent butcher. He sold and butchered admirably.

Dolores, disheartened, died the 15<sup>th</sup> of May 1906 (is that also essential?) Tiberio, Nicanor Tiberio, saw fit to get drunk six days in a row and the seventh, that was rigorously a resting day, he rested eternally. (Uff, this is looking like a family tragedy).

We have, then, little Nico left to live his own way, alone at the age of ten.

Here, there is a lapse in the life of our man. Regardless of my efforts I have been unable to collect enough information to rebuild this part. It seems, however, no circumstance worthy of attention of his countrymen occurred in this part.

Some little adventure and nothing else.

What is known with certainty is that he got married, when he was twenty-five years old, with a well- proportioned and somewhat pleasant girl. They lived more or less well. Two years later, a son was born to them, Nico, again Nico.

Of this boy it is said that he grew so much in knowledge and virtue that when he was around three years old he could read, write and was an honest guy: one of those very serious and pale little boys on whose faces appears the frozen face of terror.

Mrs Nico Tiberio (the father's, don't you go on thinking the boy's) had already thought of Law, magnificent profession for the youngster. And had a few times tried to tell her husband about it. But he would not listen, grumbling. Those women always messing in other people's business!

Well, that is of no interest for you; let us carry on with the story.

The night of the 23<sup>rd</sup> of March, Nico Tiberio, who had settled in the capital three years before with his wife and boy –which I forgot to say before–, stayed up until very late in a bar of San Roque, drinking and chatting.

He was with Daniel Cruz and Juan Albán, very well-known chaps that gave, when it was time, their declarations to the competent judge. According to them, Nico Tiberio didn't behave in any strange way, which didn't help to shed light upon the judge's decision. They spoke about women and tasty meals. They played the dice a bit. Around one in the morning everyone made his way.

(Up until here the declarations of the criminal's friends. Afterwards comes his confession, made shamelessly for the audience).

When alone, without knowing how or why, a penetrating smell of fresh meat began to obsess him. Alcohol heated his body and the memory of the conversation produced in him significant watering of the mouth. In spite of the aforementioned, he did not lose his composure.

According to him, he didn't quite manage to distinguish well his sensations. However, what follows was crystal clear:

He was assaulted by an irresistible desire for woman. After he wanted to eat something very well-seasoned; but harsh, so that he would work his jaws. Then he got sadistic tremors: he thought of an angry intercourse amongst cries, blood and wounds made by stabbings.

I imagine he was staggering, congested.

He almost punched a man he walked past on the street, for no reason.

He arrived home furious. He kicked the door opened. His little wife woke up frightened. After turning on the light she stared at him trembling, sensing something in his bulging, red eyes.

Surprised, she asked him:

-What's got into you, man?

-And him, far drunker than he should have been, shouted:

-Nothing, animal; what do you care? Lie down!

But instead of doing so, she got up the bed and stood in the middle of the room. What lies had they been telling him now?

Mrs Nico Tiberio, Natalia, is thin and brunette.

Sticking out of the ample cleavage of her nightgown, a big and firm breast was hanging. Tiberio, furiously hugging her, bit it strongly. Natalia screamed.

Nico Tiberio, licking his own lips, realised he had never tasted anything so delicious.

How had he never thought of that before! How stupid!

His friends would not have believed their eyes<sup>106</sup>!

He was frantic, without knowing what came over him and with a justifiable desire to keep biting.

Luckily, he heard the cries of the little boy, of his son, who cried and rubbed his eyes.

He sprung at him lasciviously, lift him up and, opening his mouth wide, he started biting his face off, tearing off pieces of flesh each bite, laughing, hissing, getting more excited each time.

The boy tried to dodge him and he would eat him by the closest side, without bothering to choose.

The cartilages sounded sweetly between the father's molars. He sucked and licked his teeth and lips.

The pleasure that Nico Tiberio must have felt!

And since there is no justice in the world<sup>107</sup>, the neighbours came to tear him off his self-absorbed entertainment. They hit him with a stick, with limitless cruelty; they tied him up when he was unconscious and turned him to the police...

Now they will get back at him!

But Tiberio (son), was left without nose, ears, one brow, one cheek.

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<sup>106</sup> The original phrase in Spanish is "he would have left his friends with their mouths open".

<sup>107</sup> The original phrase in Spanish is: "since there is no sensible thing in the world".

Like that, with his bloody and torn look, he seemed to have on his face all the ulcers of a hospital.

If I believed the imbeciles I'd have to say: Tiberio (father) is like those who eat what they create<sup>108</sup>.

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<sup>108</sup> The author finishes the story with a pun. The verb 'believe' (creer) when conjugated in the third person singular of the present subjunctive tense is "crea", which is homonym of the third person singular indicative of the verb "to create". In this sense, the pun means: "one eats what one believes" and "one eats what one creates".

## The One and Double Woman<sup>109</sup>

(I have had to get used to using a series of phrases that only me, in my particular case, can use. They are necessary to explain my intellectual attitudes and *my* natural configurations, which present themselves in an extraordinary manner, exceptionally, as opposed to the case of the majority of the “animals that laugh”).

My back, my behind is, if no one opposes, my breast of hers. My abdomen opposes my abdomen of hers. I have two heads, four arms, four breasts, four legs, and they have told me that my vertebral spines, which are two up until the height of the shoulder blades, join there and carry down, robust<sup>110</sup>, to the coccyx region.

I-first am older than I-second.

(Here I would like, insisting in the previous clarification, to apologise for all the errors that I’m going to make. I submit these errors to the considerations of grammarians so that they can modify, in the likely cases in which the phenomenon might occur, the pet words of personal pronouns, conjugations of verbs, possessive and demonstrative adjectives, etcetera, when pertinent. It is worth extending as well this invitation to all the moralists and ask them to stretch their morals a little bit so that they cover and forgive me for the inconvenience naturally tied to the positions I occupy amongst unique beings).

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<sup>109</sup> The title of the short story in Spanish is ‘La Doble y Única Mujer’ which translates literally as ‘The Double and Unique Woman’. The translation to ‘The One and Double Woman’ was used to keep both senses of the phrase: the woman is only one, as opposed to double, and is unique on her kind.

<sup>110</sup> The adjective ‘robust’ is used in the original Spanish in the singular, denoting henceforth only one vertebral column, which is grammatically incorrect.

I say this because I-second am evidently weaker, of thinner body and face, due to certain manifestations I will not declare out of fineness, inherent to sex, that reveal the affirmations I just made. And because I-first go forward, dragging my behind, skilled at following me; and that puts me, although inversely, in a situation similar to that of certain religious communities that stroll down the hallways of their convents, after their meals, in lines, and always facing each other—being like I am, two and one.

I have to explain the origin of this direction that puts me in the front, ahead of I-her: that was the only divergence in my opinions that now, and only now, gives me the authority to speak of *me* as *us*<sup>111</sup>, because it was the single moment when each of us was apt to walk and each wanted to walk towards their side. She – and please note: the one that today is I-second – wanted to go, undoubtedly out of habit, like everybody goes, looking the way they go. I wanted to do the same, look the way I was going to, out of which a real mess<sup>112</sup> came about. It had solid foundations, for we were in all fours, and we tried to pull ourselves up with our arms, so that sitting as we were, with those in the centre, we were an octopod cluster with two wills and managed to remain in balance a few instants thanks to the opposing forces. I ended up defeating her, getting up and dragging her. It came about between us an undeniable superiority of my first part over my second, and the unity that I talked about between us formed itself.

But no; it is necessary to modify slightly my concepts, which now I realise have developed in this way due to lightness of reasoning. Undoubtedly, the explanation I have given to posterior facts, may well apply to what has been referred to; which will

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<sup>111</sup> This phrase has a double meaning in the original Spanish: “gives me the authority to speak of me as us” and “gives me the authority to speak of me as well as us”.

<sup>112</sup> The original word in Spanish is ‘perneo’ which means swine market – perhaps alluding to mess or the undifferentiated mass of pink flesh and many limbs of pigs stacked on one another.

clarify perfectly my insistence on designating myself in the way I have been doing: *I*, and that will tear apart the classification made by teratologists, who have classified similar cases as double monsters, and who insist in talking about these monsters as if they were two different beings, in plural, *them*. Teratologists only have paid attention to the visible part that originates an organic separation, although the points of contact are infinite; and not only of contact, for there are indivisible organs that support at once the life of the apparent established community. The hypothesis of double personality, that before made me talk of *us*, may be partially true because that was the initial time when the directive body of this visibly double and complicated life was going to be defined; but no, deep down, it is not true. I almost deem it interesting only at the level of expression, of words, that establishes an intelligible contrast for the minds stranger to this, and that instead of proving that in me there was at some point a double wilful aspect, proves that exists within this body only one intellectual motor that results in a perfect oneness of its intellectual attitudes.

Indeed: the moment I was able to walk, preceded by the brain spark “walk”, an idea that was created in both of my heads simultaneously, although somewhat confused due to the practical lack of knowledge of the deed and that tended only to imagine a phenomenon perceived in others, in my first brain the command of “go forward” came up; “go forward” came up of course in my second brain and the corresponding parts of my body obeyed to the suggestion of the brain that aimed at splitting, at separation of limbs. That attempt was overridden by the physical superiority of I-first over I-second and originated the analysed aspect. This is the true reason that supports my oneness. Had the brain commands been: “go forward” and “go back” there would have been no doubt about my duality, of the absolute difference

between the formative processes of movement; but that noted sameness puts me in the perfect spot to appreciate it. Regarding the particularity that there are two constitutive parts that obeyed two independent organs, I do not give it but the circumstantial value it has, for I have discarded the superficial criterion that according to other cases, would grant me a plural constitution. Since that moment, I-first, as the superior one, command acts, that are done by I-second without protest. When determinations or acts come, they come up at once in both of my brains; for example “I’m going for a walk”, and I-first direct the stroll and gather with priority all the sensations that come up to me, sensations that I communicate immediately to I-second. The same occurs with the sensations received by the other part of my being. Therefore, contrary to what I consider happens to all people, I always have an understanding, a double reception of objects. I see them, almost at once, from both sides –when I move– and when it comes to the static, it is really easy for me to notice their immobility by walking a bit faster so that I-second contemplate almost at the same time the still object. If it is a landscape I look at it, without moving, from both sides, gaining the amplest reception of it, in all of its aspects. What would be of me were I like most people, I think I would go mad, because when I close I-first or I-second’s eyes, I have the feeling that the part of the landscape I can’t see moves, jumps, comes up against me and I feel that when I open my eyes I will find it totally changed. Besides, lateral vision stuns me: it is like looking life from a little hole.

I have said that my general thoughts and wants appear simultaneously in my two parts; when it comes to acting, of executing orders, my second brain is silent, stops working, waiting for the first one’s determination, so that it is in identical conditions to the empty jug that will be filled with water or the white paper that will be

written upon. But in certain cases, especially when it comes to memories, my brains work independently, mostly alternatingly and that are always determined, for the intensity of those, by the priority in the reception of images. Sometimes I am thinking about this or that and suddenly in I urgently need a memory, surely, a dark pit in our evoking is what torments the most our intellectual life, and without evoking my lack of equilibrium, only due to my hesitation in my train of thought, my rear mouth answers out loud, illuminating that sudden darkness. Were it about a blurry subject, for instance, whom I have seen sometime, my mouth of hers answers, more or less: “Ah! Mr Miller, that German man I met at the Sanchez’ place and who explained enthusiastically the parallelogram of forces applied to vehicle crashes”.

What has led my viewers to affirm that in me exists the duality I have refuted has been mainly the ability I have to maintain a conversation through one or other *side*. They have been deceived by the *side*. If someone addresses my posterior side, I will answer with my posterior side due to manners and comfort; the same is true for the other. Meanwhile, the apparently passive side works just like the other one, by means of thinking. When someone addresses both of my sides, I almost never reply through them both, although it is possible for me to do it. I am very conscious of hesitations and I could not develop two deep thoughts simultaneously. The possibility I’m referring to is only of sensations and memories, in which I experience a sort of separation of myself, akin to that of people who can speak and write at the same time different things. All of this does not mean that I am two. The emotions, sensations, intellectual efforts of I-second are those of I-first; the same conversely. There is *between me* – first time ever that *between me* is correctly written– a centre to and from which flow all the spiritual, material or mental phenomena.

Truly, I don't know how to explain the existence of that centre, its position within my organism and in general all things psychological or metaphysical related to me, although the latter word has been completely suppressed lately from all philosophical language. This difficulty, which surely will not be lessened by anyone, will grant me the adjective of unbalanced because in spite of distance, still Cartesian philosophy dominates. It believes that in order to discover the truth, it is enough to listen to the clear ideas within oneself, according to the explanation of a certain French gentleman; but since I care little about the mistaken opinions of others, I have to state what I understand and what I don't about myself.

Now it is necessary for me to rush a little bit this narration by addressing facts and leaving speculation for later.

A few details about my parents, who were rich and therefore noble individuals, will be enough to clarify the mystery of my origin: my mother liked harmful and novelesque readings; it seems that right after conceiving me, her husband and my father went on a trip for health reasons. In the interim, his friend, a doctor, established a close relationship with my mother, of course a honourable friendship, and since the poor thing was so lonely and bored, he would come around and tell her very weird stories that made an impression on my mother's motherhood. To the stories, one must add a few stamps that the doctor used to bring to her; those dangerous stamps that some men draw nowadays, dislocated, absurd, and whilst they believe they give a sense of movement, they are only good to impress simple ladies who believe that ladies like those drawn actually do exist, with all their muscular imbalance, eye strabismus and all the rest of it. Not seldom children pay for their parents' inclinations; this lady friend of mine became the mother of a cat. I will try not to impress any ladies

with my story and thus not be the cause of a human repetition of my case. So, my mother, in a way helped by the stories of that man, began to imagine a phenomenon of which I am a portrait, with which she would entertain herself looking at it and getting horrified by it. In those moments she screamed and got goose bumps. (All of this I've heard from her in very long interviews she had with the doctor, inspector and bishop, who naturally needed to know the preliminary facts in order to grant her absolution). I was born more or less within the normal period of time, although I cannot guarantee that the suffering of my poor mother was normal, not only during labour but after too, because as soon as the doctor and his assistant saw me horrified, they told my father and him, being so enraged, insulted her and hit her, maybe by the same token of justice, more or less, of husbands who abuse their wives because they gave them a daughter instead of a boy as they would have liked.

Mother had a certain compassion for me that I felt patronising, that I was her daughter as much as any normal woman would have been, those who are born to do little *pouts* with their mouths, tap-dance and flirt. Father, when I was alone, would kick me and the run away; I wanted to kill him when seeing that as I cried he was the first one to come by my side; caressing my arm he would ask me with his hypocritical voice: "What is going on my darling". I used to keep silent, I don't know very well why, but one time I could not stand it any longer and I answered to him, wanting to whip him with my rage: "You kicked me just now and ran away, you hypocrite". But since my father was a serious man, and in front of everyone acted as if he loved me, and they had seen him come in the room surprised and of course, he deserved more credit than I did, everyone looked at me, opening their mouths wide and looking at each other's face. A moment after, when he left the room I heard my father saying quietly: "We will

have to send that poor girl to the hospice; I don't think she is very well in her head, the doctor has shared with me his concerns too. Oh boy, oh boy, what a disgrace. When I heard this, I could not believe it.

I did not realise what a hospice could be; but based on the sense of the phrase I understood it was some place where madmen were secluded. The idea of leaving my parents was in the least painful, I would have happily welcomed it, since I had the hatred of the one and the compassion of the other, which maybe was not too bad. But since I did not know the hospice, I did not know what was preferable. The hospice was sometimes menacing when I found in my house some comfort, or maybe amongst the cleaners some gesture of care, that would make me feel at home. But sometimes, before my mother's tight face or a poisonous gaze of my father, I wished to get out of that place that was so hostile to me. This wish would have prevailed in me were it not for a conversation amongst the cleaners in which I was called "poor thing". They said that in the hospice every mad person was whipped, washed with cold water, hung by their toes for three days, which overwhelmed me. I went as quickly as I could where my father was, who was arguing with his wife, and I started crying before him, saying that surely I was wrong the other day and maybe it was someone else who had hit me, that I loved him, respected him and that he should forgive me. Had I been able to I would have kneeled when asking him, because I knew that begging and lamenting and other nonsense are more grave and touching in that awkward position; men and women could give whatever was requested from them, if one requests it kneeling, because it seems that this position elevates those granting the wish to the position of the holy images in altars, from where they can squander without decrease of integrity or fortune. When my father heard me, he looked at me in a particular way, between

furious and bitter; he stood up violently. I believe I saw his eyes moisten. At last he said, putting his hands on his head: "this demon will end up killing me", and left the room without looking back. I thought that was the last moment of my life in that house. Not long after, I heard an extraordinary noise, followed by the cleaners' movements and crying. They took me, and in spite of my kicking they locked me in my bedroom and I never saw again my greatest enemy. After some time I learned that he had committed suicide, which I was very happy about because it proved one of the hypotheses that levelled my life and tranquillity, as opposed to other bitter ones that announced a disgraceful change in my life.

When I turned 21 I left my mother who was still a young woman. She faked a great pain, which may have had something true about it, for my leaving meant a notable decrease of the fortune she was making.

With the money I got as inheritance I have settled very well, and since I am not a pessimist, had the mortal disgrace that you will learn later, I would not have despaired in what comes to finding a *good match*.

My settling in was quite difficult. I need a huge amount of special furniture. But out of everything I own, what strikes the most are the chairs that are somewhat inert and human, wide, with no backrest because I am my own backrest, and that must work from one side and from the other. They impress me because I become a part of the object "chair"; when it's empty, when I'm not sitting on it, no one can form a perfect idea of such little piece of furniture, wide, long, with opposing armrests, and seeming to lack something. That something is me for, when I sit down, I fill a void that the idea "chair" as it is commonly shaped had motivated in "my chair" the backrest that I have added to it and that it could not have had it before because precisely, almost always,

the essential condition for a furniture of mine becoming furniture in other people's minds, is me becoming a part of that object that is useful to me and cannot have at any time a life of its own.

Almost the same happens with the worktables. My worktables spin –not actively, but passively– so that their longest edge is a semicircle somewhat flattened in its opposing sides: I mean they have the shape of a bullet, outlined, whose anterior edge is a semicircle. A synthesis of the Adriatic Sea, towards the gulf of Venice, I think, would be very similar to the exterior form of the boards of my table. The centre is cut out and hollow in the same shape as described, so that I can get in there in my chair and I have a table in both sides. Of course I could have omitted the difficulties of these innovations by just having two tables between which I would sit; but it has been a whim that establishes my exterior unity magnificently, so that no one can say: “she works on tables” but “on one table”. Being able to work only on one side unbalances me: I could not leave empty the front of my other side. This would be equivalent to the toughness of heart of a mother who has just some bread and gives it to only one of her children.

My dressing table is double: I have no need to say more, for its use in this way is entirely understandable.

The diversity of my furniture is the cause of the great pain I feel for not being able to be a guest anywhere. I only have a girlfriend who got done one of *my chairs* after I visited her a few times. But I rarely visit her; I prefer to be on my own. I cannot stand the absurd situation that I must go through, always in the middle of visitors, so that I come across as I-whole. The others, so that they understand the exact shape of

my presence in a reunion and my way of sitting like everybody else, should attend a reunion sideways and notice the annoyance of chatting.

And this pain is nothing when compared to others. Especially my love for children always ends up making me cry. I would like to hold one in my arms and make him laugh. But they, as soon as I get closer, scream in fear and run. I, disappointed, stay in a tragic gesture. I think some novelists have described this gesture in the last scenes of their books, when the protagonist, alone by the riverbank (they often forget about piers), contemplates the leaving of the boat that carries a friend or sibling. It's even more pathetic when the one leaving is the bride.

At my girlfriend's place I met a tall and attractive gentleman. He was looking at me with special attention. This gentleman was going to be the cause of the most acute of my crises.

I'll say to cut to the chase that I was in love with him. And as I have explained before, this love could not arise in isolation in only one of my I's. Due to my manifest unity, it appeared at once in both of *my sides*. All the phenomena previous to love, that here would be excessive to go through, appeared identically in both sides. The struggle that came up between me is easily imaginable. The same desire to see him and peak to him arose in both of my parts, which wasn't feasible, so alternating, one felt jealous of the other. I didn't only felt jealousy, but from the favoured part of my I, a manifest feeling of dissatisfaction. Whilst I-first spoke to him, I was stung by I-second's desire, and since I-first couldn't leave him, that pleasure was really a half-pleasure along with the remorse of not having let I-second speak to him.

Things did not go further than that because it was impossible for them to go further. My love with a man appeared in a special form. I kept thinking of the possibility of something more: a hug, a kiss, and I would start thinking immediately how would I be able to give such hug, with the arms of I-first, whilst I-second would shake her arms or would let them fall in an inexpressible gesture. Were it a kiss, I felt beforehand the bitterness of my mouth of hers.

All these thoughts, that were solidary ones, were accompanied by a mighty hatred to my second part, but the same hatred was felt by her against me first. It was confusing, an absurd mix, that spun in my head and emptied my brains.

But the maximum point of my thoughts, in this regard, was the most bitter... Why not say it? It occurred to me that maybe I could reach the satisfaction of my desire. This enunciation alone gives a clear idea of all the thoughts I would have. Who I should satisfy *my* desire, or *her* part of *my* desire? In what way could it ever occur to me its satisfaction? In what position would my other ardent part be left? What would that other part of me do, forgotten, overwhelmed by the same passionate rapture, felt with the same intensity, and with the vague tremor of the satisfied in the midst of the enormously dissatisfied? Maybe a struggle would come about, like in the dawn of my struggle, like in the dawn of my life. And I-first would defeat being the strongest, but at the same time I would be defeating myself. It would be only a priority triumph, accompanied by that torture.

Not only did I have to meditate on that, but on his possible attitude towards me and my struggle. First, is it possible that he feels desire to satisfy my desire? Second, would he expect that one of my parts would give herself to him or would he have a certain inclination that would render useless the war of *my I's*?

I-second have blue eyes and a fine pale face. There are sweet eyelash shadows.

I-first maybe am less beautiful. The same features are hardened by a frown and by an imperious mouth.

But I couldn't deduct out of this who / would be the preferred one.

My love was impossible, much more impossible than the novelesque cases of a poor, dark man with a young, noble girl.

Maybe there was a small chance, but it is so un-romantic! If it were possible to love two!

Oh well, I never saw him again. I managed to dominate myself by making an effort. Since he hasn't made an effort to see me, I thought afterwards that all my questions were useless fantasies. I began from the assumption that he liked me, and this in my circumstances, seems a little absurd. No one can like me, because they have made me carry this burden, this shadow, they have made me carry my duplication.

I really don't know if I should be pleased or angry with her. When I feel *other*; when I see things surely people cannot see, when I feel the suffering and influence of a complicated mechanism that is impossible for anyone other than me to understand, I think all this is admirable and I am for all the mediocre people like a small god. But certain demands of the life in common that I have to lead, and certain very human passions that nature, when it organised me thus should have logically suppressed or modified, have led me to constantly think rather the opposite.

Naturally, this different organisation makes me different and has obliged me to almost isolate myself completely. By force of habit and having to stand this adversity, I really don't feel any gregariousness in me. Forgetting all my questions I have become a loner.

More or less one month ago, I have felt an insisting itch on my lips of hers. Then a little white stain appeared in the same spot, which then turned purple, growing bigger, soring and bleeding.

The doctor came around and spoke to me about cells proliferation, of neo-formations. He was a little bit vague, but I understand. Poor guy, maybe he did not want to upset me. What do I care about that, given the life I lead?

Were it not due to those insisting pains I feel in my lips... In my lips... well, but they are not my lips! My lips are here, in the front; I can speak freely with them... But how do I feel the pains *of those other lips*? This duality and unity are going to kill me in the end. One of my parts poisons the second. That wound that opens like a rose and whose blood gets absorbed by my other abdomen will eat away my entire organism. Since I was born I had something special, I have carried in my blood toxic germs.

...surely I must have one soul only. But if after dead, my soul is like my body, I would rather not die!

And this unbelievable body, these two heads, these four legs, this burst proliferation on my lips?

Ugh!