

## The Letter From the Psychoanalytical Discourse. Between the Mathema and Art.

### *Antecedents*

It is necessary to understand a series of definitions so as to not stray with this term belonging to the psychoanalytical discourse, because the use of the letter isn't exactly the same as within other discourses. We will see at the end of this essay how the letter operates in the case of artists, but first we must go through the doctrine.

### *The Structure of the Language and the Signification of the Word*

Lacanian psychoanalysis, which takes language's structure so that the entire doctrine framework can be supported on it, imposes a differentiation of three elements: Language Structure, Word, and Writing. The two last ones can exist without being submitted to the first, though we will mind them when they are. Obviously, flaws in such an articulation will retroactively explain to us certain pathologies. Language structure isn't the structure of a specific tongue or of tongues in general: language structure must be established step by step in the extent that there is progress in the doctrine issuing from psychoanalysis' praxis.

Let us see some elements of the aforementioned doctrine. The minimal element is a signifier and, differently from the language theory of Saussurian basis, there is only a signifier if there are at least two. Therefore, in theory there isn't an isolated or sole signifier<sup>1</sup>. Differently from the Theory of Signs in language, it is not about the representation of a signified by a signifier -vertical representation- but about the horizontal articulation of a signifier with another signifier. This signifier doctrine leaves the syntax common to linguistic signs out of the doctrine.

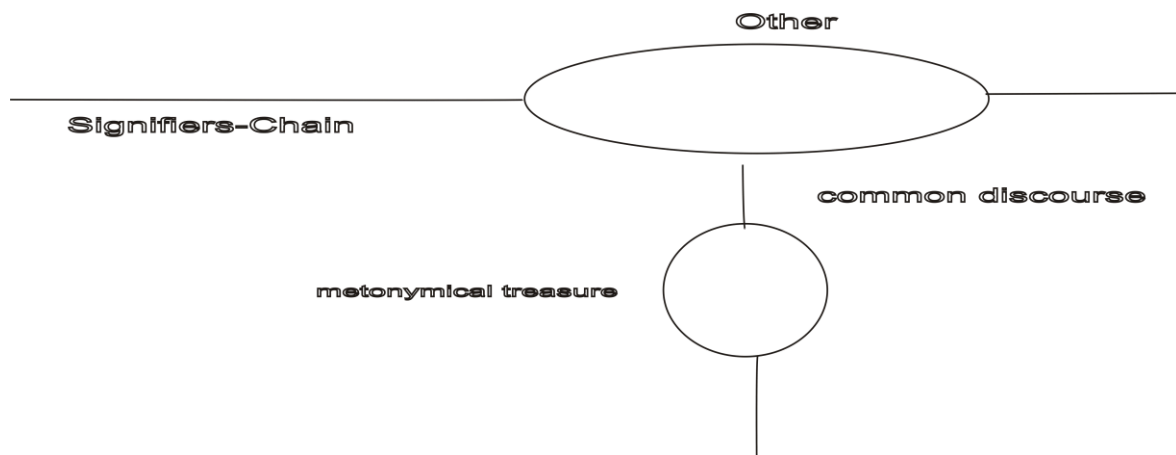
Syntax and semantics will be reused, adjoined to the rhetoric of significance, in what Lacan calls TheTongue, to obtain the sense effect from the language structure. Such effect is always posterior to the subject one and parallel to the significance one.

The minimal structure of language is formed by a grouping of signifiers, named battery of signifiers, a synchronic aspect of the signifier. It is one of the Lacanian Other's features. Such signifiers are arrayed in the diachrony in what Lacan theorizes as a signifier-chain. It has a logic of its own. Regarding this synchronic and diachronic structure, several fundamental possibilities are established: one, the election of a signifier; two, the *bricolage* with the signifier; three, the substitution of a signifier by another one. To establish the relationship of the language structure, Other, and the signifier-chain, and to articulate them with the Word, Lacan resorts to the intersection

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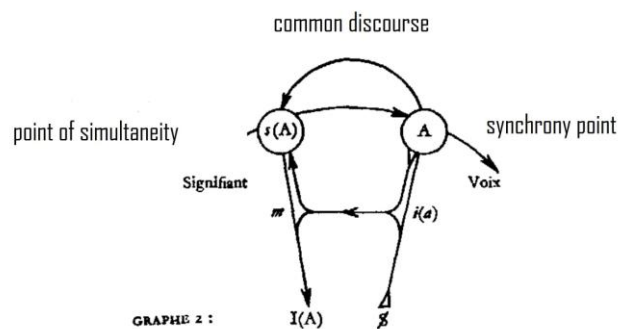
<sup>1</sup> At the end of his work, Lacan wonders if the One alone could exist.

between this signifier-chain and a second one called of the common discourse or of the intentionality. See diagrams:



This second chain has the system of theTongue<sup>2</sup>, metonymical treasure, in the synchronic place, and it has the empty word of the common discourse as a chain or pseudo-chain.

These two diachronic chains intersect<sup>3</sup> at two points: one, synchronic, in which the Other of the battery of signifiers and the metonymical treasure (antique crystallized metonymies) of theTongue coincide; two, simultaneous, in which the product of elections and substitutions in a significance<sup>4</sup> or metaphor that is not only a substitution ends<sup>5</sup>. Lacan doesn't locate a point for the metonymy that is not solely the combination<sup>6</sup>. Consult the two formulas that he offers for them in the wording cited below. See diagram in which the common discourse arrow has been bent to intersect a second time over the signifier-chain:



<sup>2</sup> "Lalangue" in French

<sup>3</sup> The nomination of the father, antique father metaphor, must have been accomplished to assure the point of significance -if not psychosis-; as well as the introduction of the language structure to assure the intersection of the Other and the metonymical treasure, or else we have autism.

<sup>4</sup> We use the term meaning to translate the French term "sens" and we use the term significance to translate the French term "signification". They are translations of the German terms used by the German mathematician Frege - sense and "bedeutung".

<sup>5</sup> Remember the formula regarding the metaphor that requires three signifiers. Therefore, it is a knotting for it to be supported.

<sup>6</sup> It's a combination that replaces a signifier.

The two operations are generators, moreover, of sense if we add the syntax and semantics of the Tongue to the metaphor's and metonymy's rhetoric. This first one trespasses the signifier's barrier and the last one doesn't. Although at the end of his work Lacan locates the metonymy as the one that trespasses the aforementioned barrier in the opposite sense: as accounting of the *jouissance*.

To carry out the elections, the *bricolage*, and the substitutions - support to the metaphor and metonymy operations-, the Unconscious grounds itself on the signifier's material support. This support is the first definition for letter, it is the letter's phonetic definition, and they are the allophones and their constitution through traits: palatal, fricative, dental, etc. Letters can be written from the phonetic discourse<sup>7</sup> with the International Phonetic Alphabet. If we continued to decompose such letters, we would end on the sound frequencies, written like letters from the sound physics discourse. *Without this material support, there would be no possibility of a bricolage with the signifier.* The letter is an intermediary, not a beginning nor an end.

We have, hence, that the letter, without ever being the primary element of the language structure, is the tool or the instrument on which the Unconscious supports itself to carry out its operations. Without it, it would be impossible to build a *lapsus* or any formation of the Unconscious with a similar structure. Even the symptom.

Between the synchrony point and the simultaneity one, as if it were a bellows that has been plugged and opens, we have logical time. It is the instant to look for the synchrony point, the time to comprehend in the retroaction between the two intersections, the moment to conclude for the simultaneity point. As the process must be repeated, Lacan introduces the *scansion* as a "temporal signifier". With it, the conclusion at the point of simultaneity returns to the synchrony point where it is stored, and at this moment, the graph is plugged. We thus have a movement of aperture and conclusion from right to left and again to the right in the graph. In the case of a subjective process, this aperture and conclusion must be repeated several times, so the graph reopens and there is the return of the comprehending time and the concluding time and once more in a new scansion. The process can be repeated many times, finishing when the moment to conclude is reduced to the instant of the look. Also, implying that to each significance there is, as well, a corresponding sense and a secondary identification if we bear in mind the narcissistic topography supported thanks to another order: the Imaginary and its complexity.

The Other's structure and the chain-signifier are perfectly worked in the *Écrits* Seminar on "The Purloined Letter" and "The Instance of the Letter in the Unconscious..." It can also be read in the first part of *Seminar V* on "The Formations of the Unconscious" in relation to the meaning's effect, or in *Seminar VI* "Desire and its Interpretation". The

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<sup>7</sup> We justify below the need for a discourse to write.

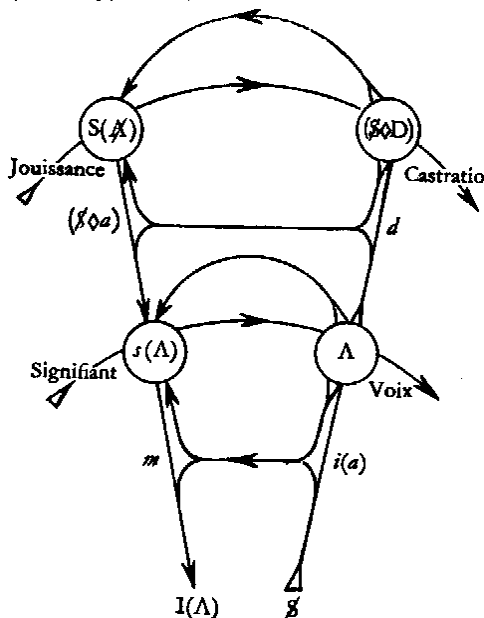
temporal dimension is worked in the *Écrit* "Logical Time and the Assertion of Anticipated Certainty..."

Lacan names an Instance, the letter which is a replica, because in order to define those as letters one must think that, in a text with a double sense of texture, the same letter appears being a part of many signifiers but it remains the same letter. Logician Peirce said that every realization of a letter in a text is an instance.

### *The Language's Structure and the Discourses*

The psychoanalytic discourse is not only based on the significance and the effect of sense, the term *jouissance* must be added as well, which Freud started to theorize with the concept of drive. To articulate the drive with the Unconscious and the Word, Lacan adds a second chain-signifier, that of the enunciation, leaving the first defined as the one belonging to the statement. But the synchronic point of this second chain in its intersection with the first pseudochain is treated with much care so as to not let it turn into a second Other, which would bear the consequence that there would be an Other for the Other. To do so, he locates a synchronous formula of the drive; see the *Écrit* "Subversion of the Subject...",  $\$ \diamond D$ . He transforms the second section of the common discourse's pseudochain into the Demand chain and, due to operations that we will not explain, the drive signifiers appear which, though synchronic, can diachronically be unfolded in this enunciation's second chain.

GRAPHE COMPLET :



If we now name the signifiers within the chain of statement  $S_2$  and those within the chain of enunciation  $S_1$  we have that the Unconscious and the Id, drive reservoir, copulate through the two chains to produce the subject in its temporality and in its logical anteriority to any arrival from the signified. This copulation is not assured and produces serious problems, which is where the cure's direction is located.

It is here where the definition of the subject takes on importance for what represents a signifier,  $S_1$ , for another signifier,  $S_2$ , that doesn't represent it in any case. This is why if this copulation is lost and only the first floor remains, the subject is dead and we are in psychosis. It is not the breaking of the retroaction in the statement floor what produces psychosis, but the dis-articulation between the statement and the enunciation<sup>8</sup>.

We can place this temporal constitution of the subject through the mathema of the master's discourse:

$$\frac{S_1}{\S} \rightarrow \frac{S_2}{a}$$

We can apply the same logic of time to the second floor in its symmetry to the first, but what matters now is that a new concept appears, that of *pulsation*. It is the aperture between the statement and the enunciation, that is, the vertical aperture from below to above. This is the way in which one must understand now the aperture and the closure of the Unconscious: the double articulation of aperture towards the left of the three chains at the same time, two of the signifier and one of the signified, and the aperture towards above of the two chain-signifiers. In this sense, one must understand Lacan's phrase that to the question about desire "What does the Other want from me", one must respond in the bottom floor, but with signifiers belonging to the top floor. That is, in terms<sup>9</sup> of drive. This is why in the graph he locates *jouissance* and castration in the enunciation floor.

### *The Question of the Object and the Lack in the Other*

We have explained the articulation amongst different signifiers but not why the object @ appears, the object that clogs the Unconscious when it closes. The axiom is that the signifier cannot signify itself. That is why the Other is barred and cannot account for itself. This is a fact of a structure that is synchronic or diachronic? We think that it is a synchronic fact located through the diachrony but with the simultaneity operation. The enunciation's chain-signifier cannot be a metalanguage for Demand's pseudo-chains<sup>10</sup>; it's the same the Freud indicated stating that identity of perception doesn't exist. If there is no possible homology between the two chains belonging to the signifier and the

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<sup>8</sup> Such is the case of paranoia, in which simultaneity, significance, is assured as a delirium. On the other hand, in schizophrenia the aforementioned simultaneity point is also lost. This is the essential difference between one psychosis and the other.

<sup>9</sup> The concept of terms in Russell's logic, which is the one that Lacan used at that time, is equivalent to the one of Class. We will further understand how later on, in the Seminar "From one Other to the other", Lacan returns to the theory of classes, different from the one on sets, to better theorize the difference between the two types of signifiers and most of all the relation to the object @.

<sup>10</sup> *Mutatis mutandis*, the enunciation chain cannot be such for the pseudochain of the common discourse.

signified, the metalanguage doesn't exist<sup>11</sup>. However, this rupture in the metalanguage,  $\mathbb{A}$ , has two consequences:

- a) The signification in the enunciation floor must produce a positive signifier that indicates such to us -that indicates, from the signifier and through a signifying operation, that the Other is barred: it is the signifier of the Other's lack,  $S(\mathbb{A})$ . It is fundamental to understand that it is a signification that doesn't produce an effect of sense, but a signifier. It produces a signifier because in the enunciation floor, the signifier from the chain applies on the signified that is formed by the Demand's signifiers, and not on the signifiers from the common discourse. This has much importance because it implies already being in the domain of what is written and not just of the Word.
- b) That which escapes in the intent of synchronizing the chains belonging to the enunciation and the Demand, which cannot pass to the signifier matter, and thus can never be a signifier, is denoted by Lacan as an object, the object @. We hereby understand that the signifier of the Other's lack and the object @ are a bending one of the other. Modern logic studies it through combinatorial classes and deduces from them that the attributive holism cannot be equalled to the distributive holism. But they didn't construct as a consequence of the object @, it is of psychoanalytic harvest and of Lacan's doctrine following Freud's and various authors' lead.

#### *The Question of Discourses and the Unconscious. The Writing Apparatus*

The following step that Lacan takes is broadening to more combinations the chains' copulation structure, the quadripoles, within the relationship between the subject's field and the Other's field. In this way, between the subject's field and the Other's field there can be 4 different structures amongst the four constitutive elements of the subject that never finishes constructing itself. These are the four discourses. We will not develop them, but indicate how it is important to us. We believe that the Unconscious, insofar it has a temporal dimension that we have already specified -pulsation, which must be further studied-, is beyond a concrete discourse, although where it is best reflected is in the discourse of the master as a constituent. But on the other hand Lacan indicates that something belonging to the Unconscious is only perceived in the hysteric discourse. Evidently, it would be necessary for us to build three graphs similar to the one in the "Subversion of the Subject..." to give account of the articulation of the other three discourses and their temporality. In a way that the temporal dimension of each discourse, for which we only dispose of the spatial mathema, doesn't escape us.

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<sup>11</sup> It is often indicated, mistakingly, that the metalanguage doesn't exist between the enunciation chain and that of the statement, taking the first as the one belonging to the signifier and the second as the one belonging to the signified in the Unconscious' topography. We insist once more: the signified's chain is that belonging to both the common discourse and the Demand; and the chain-signifier is divided in two chains.

Now, between the signifier and the signified, in the bar, the discourses act insofar they are an articulation structure of the chain-signifiers amongst them. A question rises: how and through what does the signifier's passion, articulated in discourses or not<sup>12</sup>, act on the signified? Lacan's answer in the *Écrit* "Lituraterre" is crystalline: through a writing apparatus. Lacan gathers the question that Einstein asks himself for science. We thus approach what he indicates to us in "The Mistaking of the Subject Supposed to Know". In the scientific discourse there is a writing, or better said, the scientific discourse yields letters in the form of formulas and with them a real is orthopedized. Albeit respecting its laws, it is put to work in a convenient way: it's the Wirklichkeit. We thus have a discourse that produces a theory about the real. Such theory produces letters, and with them we have reached the Moon.

It is worth remembering that a doctrine can be delirious and the experimental method is the condition for this theory to be tied to the real and not loose. It's the *method* so expensive to science. However, the fact that the method assures that the formula is correct and applies well onto the real doesn't cease to be surprising. Newton, when asked, "How can it be this way?", answered, "Hypothesis *non fingo*". But Einstein is a bit more restless and wonders beyond the experimental justification: How is it that formulas done with letters coincide with the real?

Einstein realizes that a discourse yields (*ruisseler*) letters and that it is through these that we act on the signified. Exactly like the analytic discourse yields the letters belonging to Lacanian algebra. No matter how much experimentation justified it, he wanted to know why. Which is why he builds a God for science, a mathematic God and not dishonest. A God that wouldn't change laws overnight in a way that the experiment today could be compared with tomorrow's. That God is the one that Lacan relates to Pascal's, that would yield a science without a conscience, and we must remember that Lacan doesn't start from the good Faith of the Other nor from the bad Faith but from the no Faith of the Other. This algebraist God and scientific is the God behind our current subjectivity and, as it is a God to which the lack must be saturated, the consequence is that we live a depression and euphoria pandemic, an "affective" era. It's not coincidental that with this God Nazism was built as a perverse-psychopathic machine. For it, the passage to the act of Leninism from a doctrine of a self-pretended scientific history was necessary. What was missing? Well, the imputation of bad Faith that wasn't in science, but it was in class hate.

We thus have the fundamental point to establish the transference as the introduction of the afore-mentioned God into psychoanalysis: the "Subject supposed to Know. A God that would know that the subject has not yet accomplished to know. A God depositary of the Knowledge.

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<sup>12</sup> Some pathologies imply a bad construction of the discourse -holophrase.

Let us return to the letter: these letters that the discourse yield, that are written from the discourse, albeit can be the same materially than the phonetics of the signifier's materiality, have no longer the same function because they have gone on to be constituted by the written trait. And what we must not do, once more, is to locate the written as a metalanguage of the spoken; for this Lacan locates something that we must not forget in *Seminar IX*: the letter that the signifier's rupture has yielded, in its semblant dimension, needs an alphabet to be written, that is, it doesn't form a system or battery like the signifier does. An alphabet is no longer neither a system or battery or an Other, it's simply a support for the writing. And where does it come from? Well, from another discourse, commonly from the market's economic one, as we have already shown at the beginning of this text. Analysts must learn to read in their own Unconscious and obtain or build themselves, if such is the case, their own alphabet to be cured. Evidently, in a different way if they are neurotic or if they are psychotic, but these are those that lead the way. *The psychoanalytic doctrine is nothing more than the depositary of signifiers letterfied as mathemes of the letters that authors built themselves to be cured or that they heard in others' cure.*

The progress that Lacan accomplishes over Einstein is that he thinks that this is the way in which we scratch the real (*ravinement*) and this leaves us with a disturbing question: do we treat the signified with letters that we produce with our discourses based on the language structure, and therefore will we know nothing of the real? Well, yes, this is the thesis, hence the fact that we can only anchor to it through triskellization of the orders in operations of another type that he starts to contemplate after *Seminar XXI* "The Names of the Father". When applying this thesis to science, one can see how the isomorphism between the symbolic and the real of the methodologists disappears, and maybe one can understand why, the more there is science, the planet dies. The better life as a promise of the scientific discovery leads to a slow death and a poisoning of our environment and of ourselves. And why? Well, because there is an inverse path from the signified to the signifier, a path also mediated by the letter that he names the rapture (*ravisement*). For this to occur, something of the real<sup>13</sup> is written onto the symbolic, onto the signified in a first moment to then go on to the signifier, in the same manner as it happened to Madame Curie when she found a key's radiography where there shouldn't have been anything; the signified. That which the key wrote, wrote a cancer onto her organism, but along the way it went from the signified to the signifier being named radioactivity<sup>14</sup>.

With which one can grasp that the concept of writing in Lacan doesn't just refer to the usual orthographic writing, but it has two definitions: one, the mediation between the signifier and the signified, which writes the Unconscious or is written in it; two, the scratched onto the real. This second one is the chiseled onto the real from the

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<sup>13</sup> One can see that the signified is not the real.

<sup>14</sup> Once it went to the signifier via metonymy, the radioactivity theory could further be build via metaphor.



symbolic in which the letter is the support -and the instrument will be the "chisel and the hammer" that each one may use- and it requires operations on the three orders and not just from the Unconscious<sup>15</sup>. There is no real of the Unconscious, but the real acts or receives from it. In these operations there exists the inverse path as well -the letters that are engraved in our body when something is written from the real. Such letters must go on to become a part of the signifier and then the Unconscious can form a metonymy that bears the *jouissance's* accountancy. Or, likewise: that when the letter passes -as the real chisels for us- to the Unconscious, becoming a part of the metonymy, it transforms whatever it is that there's in the real into *jouissance* so that it can be worked by the Unconscious with signifying operations. Lacan's example is the spider spinning a web, first a mark, then a print, then a letter -a hexagon-, and finally a signifier if it is articulated with another one.

### *What is Written and the Saying. Beyond the Signified*

The question that follows now we will modulate like so: our real is like the one belonging to science or like what science presumes? We must answer no, due to the fact that science is what is necessary. Evidently, from the symbolic we can include the impossible as its negation; on such negation the *Verneinug* acts if it is done with a discourse. In psychoanalysis, things get a little bit more complicated: Freud located the drive as a concept that mystified that writing from the real onto the symbolic, it was therefore what is necessary, but Lacan will emphasize not so much what is written but what is not written. This is not pictured by Freud; what is important for Lacan is that impossible and not so much the drive or the  $S_1$ , which is what is written as necessary -it doesn't cease to be written- in the place of what can't be written because it is impossible -it doesn't cease to not be written. It's a 180° turn. Science emphasizes what is necessary and the impossible is its negation; psychoanalysis, on the contrary, emphasizes the impossible -the sexual relationship between the two sexes of the species can't be written, there is no letter that can be metonymized with a signifier that will do that joint. And then the necessary appears as a negation of that impossible. In addition, it is timed in the form of a repetition with the "doesn't cease" to be written or to not be written. Then, when the drive is written, something doesn't go through the drive formula and, thus, it can't be diachronized in the enunciation chain. Then, how to recollect from a language apparatus this idea of what is not written and that is articulated with the Word?

This is where Lacan goes onto the *Saying (to say)* and the *Said*. It's in the saying as ex-isting to the said that the impossible stays located within the speech act. The said already implies therefore the dimension of what is, in effect, written in the Word act. The Unconscious is hence located between the Language Structure and the Saying act. It's important to realize that Lacan just located all of Freu'd drives in

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<sup>15</sup> This is why Lacan goes on to study the orders' structure and not just the Unconscious' one.

language. Everything that is written as necessary he does so in the going from the saying to the said, and it's as a said that the Freudian drive is located. Thus, the drive in the relationship to the Other is much better articulated, without it being necessary to unfold it in a metalanguage in a much more rigorous way than in the drive formula from the *Écrit* "Subversion of the Subject..." The impossible is what doesn't go through in the saying within the enunciation chain. It's an extremely intelligent rigorization of what Freud named the drive language.

Then, drives already remain detached from the biologic need and it will be in a second moment in which what was written will trap the organism and its needs<sup>16</sup>. It is fundamental to realize that once a certain real has passed onto the signifier will the Unconscious be able to act introducing the castration as the one that will account for such an impossibility through the path of what is contingent. It is with the writing of the phallus as a signifier, if such is the case, that the topography of the Unconscious will be built -the statement-enunciation bending supported by the phallic function, and it will do so as if it were a metalanguage, but as it doesn't exist in a point, language and metalanguage will join. They will do so in the point that we have worked on above as the signifier of the lack in the Other.

The phallus' *Verdrängung* constitutes the Unconscious structured as a language as a second element if in the saying the phallus was written. We thus have two signifiers whose forclusion -understood as an expulsion once it was written- produces paranoid psychosis in the first case and manic-depressive psychosis in the second. Logically, if the phallus is forcluded, it is impossible to locate the signifier of the Other's lack due to the fact that the enunciation floor differentiated from the statement floor is no longer constituted. Through this clarification we can think in "affective" psychoses, narcissistic psychoses, with just the forclusion of the signifier of the lack in the Other, and not the phallic forclusion.

### *The Object @ and the Third Type of Letters*

The writing introduces not just a signifier's writing, intermediate for the letter, in the form of a mark onto the real. In fundamental metaphors the chains-signifiers are triskellized and an element that isn't significant but neither is it real appears. In the center of the triskell formed by two chains-signifiers of the discourse and the signified chain, a third element appears, defined as the object @. Lacan theorized it first through the torus' hole<sup>17</sup> beyond the chains-signifiers, subject that we have already talked about above. This rigorization went very well for the face of the cause belonging to the object @'s desire. But when it approaches the inverse path from the real to the symbolic, the metonymic path, it must locate the face of the

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<sup>16</sup> The graph of desire from the *Écrit* "Subversion..." has already been superseded.

<sup>17</sup> Topological surface with which Lacan rigorized the extension of the signified in *Seminar IX*.

object @'s surplus-*jouissance*. It's in the *Écrit* "L'Étourdit" that he approaches it. It's not about a void that the object @'s imaginary face, petit @, fills, but it's about obtaining an object from the possible coverings of the *jouissance*'s Other. The drive object in Freud. This is the moment in which he offers an operation that he names Signifying Involution and offers to us the object @ as the Möbius strip, that results from cutting a Möbius strip through an interior 8-cut on it. This Möbius strip coincides with the central cut of a single turn on the strip. That is, that the path in which one obtains a Möbius Band cutting a torus in an interior eight and sewing the double band again remaining identified with itself on one of its sides, that could be inverted in a single turn on the cut, is equivalent to cutting an interior eight on the band and line both pieces to one another and rebuilding the torus.

See text in our International Virtual Seminar:

[La involución significativa hasta L'Étourdit](#)

(The Doctrine of the Cut Not Located in the Cross-cap but in the Möbius Band: L'Étourdit)

To put it more simply, the cut of a Möbius band through the center in a single turn is equivalent to cutting a Möbius band inside a Möbius band. The cut is equivalent to a Möbius band! Which is why Lacan says that the cut is the structure itself of the band<sup>18</sup>. We then see that the phantasm, as the aforementioned Möbius band, can appear and disappear, retract to this circle or expand into a Möbius band. It's a magnificent discovery for us to seize how when a signifier is written from the real and access to the symbolic appears, or can appear, that metonymic object to the cut itself that is equivalent to the cut itself and at the same time is a surface piece. The fact that, when a signifier One is written, at the same time an object is included inside it but can disappear without it being the real, locates us with an extreme rigor what in Freud was the drive object. A beyond the signifier but built with it and without it being the real but with partly inside it. If it's not a signifier and it isn't the real, what is it? Well, a third type of letters.

It's not about neither the letter as a material support for the signifier nor the letter that rushes as a writing from the discourse in the way from the signifier to the signified or inversely. It's about a letter that is written in the way from the real to the symbolic, there where the sexual relationship cannot be written, as a *jouissance* added to the *jouissance* introduced by the enjoying substance of the signifier where it can't be written -and therefore it is lost, the sexual relationship's *jouissance*<sup>19</sup>. The *jouissance* that has no sexual color due

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<sup>18</sup> Absolutely incomprehensible phrase if one doesn't understand what we just pinpointed.

<sup>19</sup> *Jouissance* whose only way to locate it from the psychic apparatus is through prohibition. Adhered to it, Lacan locates it. Which is why there is no better way of not accepting the castration, to continue to believe that the sexual relationship can be written, than staying in prohibitions. Crystalline in hysteric anesthesia, or in obsessive fears. It's the Superego's paradox -it presents as a *jouissance* prohibition what is an impossible *jouissance* pretending that it is possible. Freud fell for this deceit, Lacan did not.

to not having passed through the phallic order, the *jouissance* named by Lacan @-sexed.

This is why Lacan is so interested in reminding us of the distinct use of the letter in algebra and the use of the letter in set theory. The first is linked to the writing that the mathematic discourse yields. Writing that, coming from the signifier, creates letters that retroactively letterfy the signified to make it docile to science - algebra with which everything possible is letterfied and that is the Ideal for science. On the other hand, in set theory letters that designate sets, and that are sets themselves if we follow Lacan's thesis, allow us to work the *jouissance* space by pieces and not as signifiers. Each letter is a possible subset from it. As much as we try, from the contingency of the phallic function as a support to the Unconscious, from the Unconscious topography, to account for all the *jouissance* that the signifier introduces, we will have an un-attainable remain (if we go from the signifier to the signified) or a plus (if we go from the signified to the signifier) that will be a letter that was written first from the real. A letter that must be a part of the nomination of the subject embedded in the signifier that signifies it, embedded we say amongst the other letters with which this signifier has been constructed. But in order to understand this mechanism, one must radically differentiate the *jouissance* from the real. The real writes the signifier as well as the object @'s letter. Because the *jouissance* isn't the real, one must construct the sexuation formulas that differentiate various *jouissances*. This implies passing onto the Borromean knot and abandoning the projective plane to do the *jouissance* logic and its negations.

### *The Letter in Art*

Where to seize the difference amongst the different uses of the letter best than in art? When a painter paints, he "writes" his own alphabet in paintbrushes, if he has been able or not to construct one for himself, or else he uses another pal's one<sup>20</sup>. But there is usually always a point in which they write, especially if they are stabilized psychotics, a dominant letter. A letter that seldom appears here and there.

Think about Dalí: his fundamental letters are the geometry and the perspective obtained in the mathematic discourse. A different matter is the colour, which issues from his own palette as an alphabet. They are the material supports for his signifiers. The second type of letters that he writes from his discourse, to which he even gave a name - paranoid-critic<sup>21</sup>, and that allow him to work the signified, amongst others, are the deformed clocks, in the midst of which some believe to have seen the phallus. We don't see it in such a way. Those letters are a part of their signifiers. And the letter of object @? We believe that it's the one covered by the gaze, those eyes that appear everywhere. In

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<sup>20</sup> This is the difference between a professional and a master in any discipline or art.

<sup>21</sup> That Freud unfortunately didn't value in its just worth. Lacan didn't let it get away.

his own self-portrait posse, Dalí forced the body,  $i(a)$ , to present us that look, the abject<sup>22</sup> in its “petit @” face. A gaze that evidently contained *jouissance*, the face of @ as a surplus-*jouissance*, there where, like any subject, he had to be confronted to the sexual relationship that can't be written and that left him stupefied in front of Gala's sex hole. It doesn't escape us that these eyes are always linked to a  $S_1$ : the penknife cut.

Another example is Pollock. Until he leaves the paintbrushes and starts to directly write with the paint pot, he doesn't move onto his most fructiferous age. It's an alphabet change; the dripping doesn't just imply a change of instrument but the strokes that he leaves on the canvas support, as illegible letters to the rest, a signifier world in its dimension of semblants. This painter will help us understand the mechanism through which the letter operates.

### *Images, signifiers, traces and marks*

The psychoanalytic discourse implements three orders and not two like science. An imaginary constructed out of images, even ideas in a Platonic sense. A symbolic constructed of signifiers and real as an impossible. Then in the real we can only, at most, read and write marks. The mark, like a lunar crater, doesn't signify anything and in fact doesn't exist in theory. The imaginary order is necessary, that gives it a form in a first moment, that is, turns it into an image. We then have the concept of trace: mark+image. Thanks to the imaginary -which is why we have set examples of painters-, the groove that there is in the real is “detected”. We insist in the need of the imaginary order to do so and the mirror or narcissistic topography so reviled in the Lacanian field. Hence the trace is the imaginization of the mark, written by Lacan like this:  $iR$ . Now comes the second step, the reading of the trace. This can only be done from a specific discourse, because by itself it isn't nor signifies anything. This is why Lacan insists in *Seminar XX* “Encore”, in the third chapter, that the letter isn't made to be read. To think there are letters in the real that must be read is returning to the Cabala. One must read traces and for it one needs the chain-signifier apparatus. It's within it that the trace can “represent the subject for another signifier”. In this moment, the trace has moved on to be a signifier, a One. But, of course, it contains the material support that contributes the language structure, that must be incorporated by the subject. It does not contain any materialness coming from the real. How is this reading and signifization of the trace done? Through the phonemization of the trace. It's by an act of reading in a *Saying* that this step can be done in which, as we showed above, “The drive-related” has remained located in a language mechanism like Freud always thought -“the language drive”, he named it. This phonemization uses the letters' material supports of the signifier. We thus have a signifier, engraved in the *jouissance body*, which can move from the

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<sup>22</sup> A neologism with which Lacan denotes, at the end of his work, all of object @'s faces at the same time.

signified floor onto the signifier floor, producing the usual rapture in these situations.

In Pollock's case, this appears when he has the crises and remains absorbed in front of his work, almost the death of the subject, and can't read anything. Until something from his interior can be read, he is in an almost catatonic atony, cannot accomplish to move onto the rapture (*ravisement*) common to painters. And then, suddenly, the chain-signifier is restarted and the subject represented by that signifier emerged from the phonemization represents it again, the subject revives and the signifying apparatus restarts. The discourses structure already works. With it we go on to the inverse path.

From this discourse constructed with signifiers, letters rush. This implies that the signifier in its semblant dimension breaks and drips over the signified. Precisely what happens when Pollock abandons the semblants "paintbrush" and "palette" and breaks the semblant "Stroking" and through a fantastic metonymy the signifier "dripping" appears. This is what, from literal to littoral, makes ink, like a realization, start slowly to turn into a new alphabet on the canvas. He gives to this writing the dimension of painting<sup>23</sup>, which means that he gives a form to the letters that emerge, "his alphabet", and therefore they are traces. They are, thus, imaginized, but from the canvas' point of view they don't cease to be "marks" on it. This imaginized aspect, the trace, is what gives an art status to its writing, as usual in all art. But another subject that admires it will be able to take the traces in their pure mark aspect and do their own reading to recommence the process from anew. This is why art is never mono-semic, being this one of its grandeurs -the proof that never ceases to prove that the Other for the Other doesn't exist. "The literature that is never quiet", Michel Foucault named it in his book *The Order of Things*. With this painter the question remains whether he was able to write something more than the real, besides dripping on the signified; we believe not. The subject didn't accomplish to write itself onto the real as a fundamental mark, which is why "he let go of himself" in the accident in which he lost his life.

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Translator: Ainhoa Simon

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<sup>23</sup> Or else he wouldn't be an artist.