

écritique

**letters of the freudian school of melbourne
school of lacanian psychoanalysis**



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Bespoke: The psychoanalyst, the tailor and the torturer

*David Pereira*¹

In a conversation with a colleague some years ago now, he made the following observation posed as a question: “Have you noticed how so many misfits are drawn to psychoanalysis?” In the brief discussion which followed it was clear that what was being given voice to in this question was not a moral judgment; that there was in any way a right kind or a wrong kind of person or individual who was fit for psychoanalysis. Rather, what the question importantly poses is precisely the possibility of a separation – a lack of fit, a mis-fit – between a *saying* and a person or individual. The importance of such a distinction lays in the fact that it allows the possibility of not succumbing to a fundamental psychological prejudice which makes a state of being - a person, an individual, a human being; me, you, he, she, even the precious “I”, fit with a *saying*.

If not as a moral judgement whose effects are profoundly personalising, humanising and individualising, how then are we to take this misfitting so characteristic of psychoanalysis and those drawn to it? What perhaps most characterises that species of misfit which is particularly drawn to psychoanalysis is that they are possessed of the realisation that they are not at one; that they do not make one, with what they say. The absence of fit we're referring to therefore, belongs to the speaking being itself; that being which is said to speak. An absence of fit between the saying and what is said makes of talking, of speaking, no easy matter; all the more so when it is the kind of speaking which is intensified within the experience of an analysis. Indeed, anyone who has taken up the invitation to free associate – “say, say anything without regard for what is said - and the value of what will be said is given in the fact of its saying,” will realise the kind of torture, of torsional force, inherent in the speaking being’s attempts to speak.

An analysand amidst convulsive sobbing says, “It hurts so much to speak today.” Today and every day, one might say, as this is not an entirely unknown occurrence in psychoanalysis, whether accompanied by frank tears and assertions of pain or not. The torture involved in speaking is always palpable as it is pushed to a point of encounter with its own impossibility.

Such a misfitting then, is fundamental or inherent to the speaking being itself to the extent that speaking is encumbered by the pediment of being, stitched into the fabric of the functioning of

language in an ill-fitting way. When someone addresses themselves to an analyst, when someone seeks an analysis, they arrive, precisely, with a sense of something ill-fitting in this relation of speaking and being. The analysand presents with an illness in the sense of an ill-fitting garment; ill-fitting in the manner in which the pediment of their being has been stitched, has been fitted, into the fabric of language.

So, what does an analyst do with a misfit? Well, make them fit of course! A question however which arises concerns the nature of the fitting proper to analysis.

We earlier noted the onto-psychological bias of the personalising, individualising or humanising of language given by the pediment of being. To make fit at this level would be to reconstruct the garment, to alter the garment, in the image and likeness of the person; to individualise it, to personalise it in an eminently humanist manner. This is our first hesitating entry into the domain of the bespoke. In this context, “bespoke” resplendent with the buttoning, pick-stitching and embroidery of humanist zeal, speaks of the “tailor made” as a tailoring to individual specifications. In the therapeutic field, it carries the highly personalised and even culturally sensitive notion of the tailor-made treatment which takes account of the fashionably “whole” person.

To the extent that no analysis is generic or indeed repeatable; to the extent that every analysis is singular, it is tempting, is it not, to situate it as coincident with this conception of the bespoke as a tailoring to individual specifications. We would do well, however, to exercise some prudence in not travelling so hastily in this direction. The notion of the bespoke which we are attempting to open here ought not allow the singular to be so readily stitched and sewn to the personal or individual. Such would constitute a return to the pediment or predicative aspect of being which becomes an encumbrance or impediment to speaking, to talking.

This, I am arguing, is not the kind of tailor the analyst is. If not to individual specifications, how then does the analyst make fit? Are we simply to introduce the reverse; that the analyst allows the analysand to fit with the structure of language? A neat reciprocal solution after all!

The fitting which analysis engages in is neither to make language fit with individual specifications, nor to make the individual fit with language in some kind of universalising, ideological submission. Rather, it becomes a matter of making language fit – to make it convulse; to engage the torsional, equivocating, twisting force of language. In short, to make language *torque*. The bespoke in psychoanalysis might be understood therefore as a *torquing* which twists free of the personal, the

individual and indeed, the human; twists free of the pediment of being which funds the “said” as the “said -i-ment” of saying.

The bespoken in psychoanalysis therefore arises when language is made to fit, to convulse, to equivocate, in order to twist free of the pediment of being and to stir the “said” laid down as the “said-i-ment” of meaning. At this point of twisting free, language is encountered as embedded or latent, not with meaning, but with “torque”. Language “torques” as a torsional or twisting force which begins to approach the tortuous as evidenced in Lacan’s assertion in *The Third Discourse of Rome* of November 1974, that “language, (which) is truly something which can only advance by twisting and winding itself up, by contorting itself in such a way that, after all, I cannot say I am not giving an example of it here. One must not believe ... that I do that so much from gaiety of heart. I would prefer that it be less tortuous.”²

The function of alteration or of fitting in this sense belongs to the torsional aspect - the torquing - of language itself; not to those speech impediments which acquire the title of individuals, persons or even humans. Do we not hear this when Lacan, having dissolved his School, says, “I expect nothing from individuals and something from a functioning” precisely at that point where a School of individuals loses its singularity in becoming a pediment, and therefore an impediment to speech?³ What we encounter in the bespoken however, is something of the voice which is free to be other than substance; a voice which no longer sounds like the voice of any individual, therefore dehumanised. Such a torquing, such a saying, constitutes a displacement of human speech in favour of the speaking of language itself as bespoken.

Jean Baudrillard in his work *Impossible Exchange* bemoans the creeping coextensivity between meaning and what is human; the fact that “We are moving everywhere towards an elimination of the Inhuman, towards an anthropological integrism which aims to submit everything to the jurisdiction of the Human.”⁴ In a chapter in this work entitled “An End to Freedom” his contempt for individualism is forcibly put. “Identity is a dream that is pathetically absurd. You dream of being yourself when you have nothing better to do. You dream of yourself and gaining recognition when you have lost all singularity. ... Identity is this obsession with appropriation of the liberated being, but a being liberated in sterile conditions, no longer knowing what he is.”⁵ Baudrillard calls for a destabilising of this drive to humanism and individualism by the infiltration of a viral or inhuman thought.

In this sense, it is not human freedom which is capable of producing this torquing voice, which will always falter and stutter at the point of its pretended individualism. With fitting, as the convulsing of language, however, we find in the saying as bespeaking, an echoing of language itself in its “it-saying”; an “it-saying” which does not condescend to the speech “impedimented” and “said-i-mented” “I-saying” as guarantee of the human, the person and the individual.

Now, the inhuman is not the inhumane. This is a first point to make in relation to what I will now go on to contend, with some hesitation concerning the possibilities of being misunderstood, regarding torture.

Firstly, I want to be clear that I am not making light of the sadism, cruelty and suffering visited upon people by torture. I am also however not wanting to make light of the action of psychoanalysis by making of it yet another individual psychotherapy. Psychoanalysis involves, as I have been arguing, a kind of torsional force, of torture, apparent to anyone who has been in analysis where they come to experience something of what it is to speak, to torque, in a manner which does not leave the speaker unaffected. The question which then arises concerns both the points of connection and the points of difference between psychoanalysis and torture.

I will begin with some of the differences as proposed in a paper – *A note on psychoanalysis and the crime of torture* - by Justin Clemens and Russell Grigg published in the Australian Feminist Law Journal in 2006.⁶

Grigg and Clemens ask: “What interest could psychoanalysis have in the crime of torture?” They cite Brian Staggol who, writing in the *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Family Therapy* in 1987, wrote that: “torture is the antithesis of the therapeutic process.” They conclude from this that: “The therapeutic process requires the testimony of victims, the (often public) listening to and inscription of their stories, over a protracted period of time. If torture drives at the hostile takeover of a victim’s entire existence, to the point where even the very words they speak are no longer permitted to be their own, psychoanalysis depends, above all, on ‘free association’, on the patient talking and talking about anything whatsoever - until the patient is finally able to assume responsibility for his or her freely uttered words.” (p. 173)

There is no contesting that this sounds very reasonable, very human, very responsible.

It is however a point of view - that psychoanalysis implies an assumption of responsibility for one's words, freely uttered and claimed as one's own – that I find myself in disagreement with. The position taken regarding torture by these authors is claimed with respect to an assertion of the rights of the individual enshrined in the “therapeutic process”. Accordingly, in their argument, if we are to differentiate torture from psychoanalysis, we have to accept the helping hand of psychotherapy. This is, in my view, and according to the argument I have been trying to develop here today, an insufficient differentiation, the cost of which is a renunciation of the singularity of psychoanalysis whose fate would be to find itself buried under the sediment of the therapeutic process.

Let us consider then the question of the differences between psychoanalysis and torture when we do not accept the helping hand of psychotherapy. Firstly, and most importantly, psychoanalysis unlike torture is not a means of gathering information, gaining knowledge or getting at the truth, through making an “individual” talk. It also ought not go without saying that the saying, the torquing which psychoanalysis seeks, does not proceed by way of a mortification of the flesh and the sadism with which it is overseen. The body, the flesh, is involved in psychoanalysis but not via its mortification. Rather, through a disturbance, a convulsion, a quivering produced through the action of the word which retains the capacity to displace the sentimentality of sadism as merely a personal profit drawn from the torsional force of language.

Now to the more difficult and provocative question of the fundamental points of connection between psychoanalysis and torture. Firstly, that both psychoanalysis and torture constitute an extreme form of speaking which, in separating itself from the domain of the therapeutic, moves within the realm of the inhuman. This is so to the extent that the person, individual, or human being is not the subject of primary concern. It is this very disregard for the human individual which allows for a torquing through which a saying is able to be heard twisting free of a stuttering "said", encumbered as it inevitably is by the ill-fitting weight of being. In twisting free, the voice becomes free to be something other than encumbered substance. Secondly, but not indifferent to the first, a recognition that the promise of the freedom or liberation of the individual, the person, does not bring about an overcoming of the impediment to speech, underwritten by being, but rather simply augments it.

Our impeded stuttering speech, divorced from its torquing, remains merely an aspiring convulsion insofar as it retains a reference to the promise of freedom of the individual rather than the promise of language. It is the promise of language itself where psychoanalysis places its bet; a promise of language given as its fitting, convulsing, torquing. In this, psychoanalysis may at times

be a torture, but the analyst not a torturer. The analyst is not the one who wields the hammer, or turns the screw. What the analyst wields is an invitation; an invitation to speak allowing a torquing saying to be produced in analysis; a saying which leans more to torture than ever to the well-owned words of the psychotherapy said-to-be, individual.

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² Lacan, Jacques. 'L'Etourdit', in *Scilicet*, Editions du Seuil, Paris, 1973.

³ Lacan, Jacques. 'Letter of Dissolution', in *Television: A Challenge to the Psychoanalytic Establishment*. Norton, NY, 1990.

⁴ Baudrillard, Jean. *Impossible Exchange*, Verso, London, 2001.

⁵ Baudrillard, Jean. 'An End to Freedom', *Impossible Exchange*, Verso, London, 2001.

⁶ Clemens, J and Grigg, R. 'A note on psychoanalysis and the crime of torture', *Australian Feminist Law Journal*, 2006.

The analyst and the School: A restless and asymmetrical association of pluralities

Alexander Karkar¹

There has been a lot of talk within *The Freudian School of Melbourne* of late – talk which, in orienting itself around the implementation of changes to the structure of the School’s annual conference, and following significant renovations made to its Foundations of Psychoanalysis Seminar, may begin to resonate with the tremor of *torque*, David Pereira’s formulation of a saying or enunciation which twists itself free from what has been said.²

A School of psychoanalysis, which could perhaps be described as a *collective assemblage of enunciation*,³ insofar as it sustains a flow of discourse through the transference of work, does not content itself with simply *being* a School of analysts, but deploys itself restlessly in the direction of *becoming One*. It is within the nervous tension of this torque that the Freudian School of Melbourne is stirred and agitated into a direction.

Let us then acknowledge our debts in this direction, as David Pereira’s torque itself compels us to do, and devote ourselves briefly to an analysis of the spirit in which the School was formed and continues to form – namely, as a de-formation of the foundations which compel us to suppose a knowledge of what the School, and as a corollary psychoanalysis, is.

The task of the School concerns the transmission of psychoanalysis – transmission being a term not unrelated to torque, each invoking a shifting into gear which might drive analytic doctrine out of a stasis of familiar conventions, and into new registers, territories, and possibilities for mobility. The enigmatic basis for this transmission as a widening of the horizons of analysis has been the subject of discussions in several of the School’s recent meetings, and in constituting the subject of the present paper will take its direction from two tough currents still tossing the waves of analytic discourse, as well as putting wind in the sails of the School which perhaps does more than simply not sink within it.

These tough currents now have names: Oscar Zentner and David Pereira, two analysts of the School – one its co-founder and former director, having since stepped aside from that position, and the other one of its current co-directors. Both have been responsible for the theoretical direction of the

work of the School at one time or another – never alone, moreover, but in pairs with other analysts at their respective periods of founding and appointment.

But can we really speak of *two* analysts here? Can we speak of the one forming a continuity with the other, if indeed we have invoked a legacy in which the School was formed and continues to form as a deformation – the deformation, that is, of a persistent order of a former knowledge? If we can speak of them as *two*, and moreover continuous, then surely they are thus with respect to a common knowledge, a common lineage or ancestry to which we, members, analysts, and analysts in formation, share in an analytic genepool stretching back to Lacan and Freud before him.

The question I wish to explore in this paper, therefore a question which circulates within the talk of the School – and other schools as well, as is evidenced by the subject of the recent Dublin conference – is the following: what is the status of a psychoanalytic group, or to pose it differently, are psychoanalytic alliances possible?⁴ Can analysts form a coalition through a common allegiance to psychoanalysis, and is this allegiance the basis of an analytic School and of the transmission of psychoanalysis? Lacan's formulation, that there is *no such thing as a sexual relation*, would seem to suggest that he himself did a lot more than simply doubt that any such coalition of psychoanalysts could be formed if this inaugural discovery of psychoanalysis was to be preserved – or better, to be worked.

If he did a lot *more* than doubt it, moreover, then as an effect of submitting this doubt to a thorough reading was able thereby to produce something more from it.

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In the opening chapter of *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari write:

“The two of us wrote *Anti-Oedipus* together. Since each of us was several, there was already quite a crowd.”⁵

Not two, then, but several. Perhaps not *really* a crowd either – as one discovers reading further into this non-book – but a multiplicity. But before getting this deleuzian-guattarian multiplicity to explain why it is not two, let us first ask whether it is so different for psychoanalysts within a school of psychoanalysis. Indeed, might the same assertion not apply when speaking of the authors Freud and Lacan, of whom one might hesitate before proposing that the two of them wrote the book on psychoanalysis together?

Of course, not unlike *A Thousand Plateaus*, the discourse of psychoanalysis does not easily constitute itself as a book. Lacan's *Ecrits*, as he himself describes it, is *unreadable*. And what does Freud's discovery of the unconscious as an unknown knowledge and the primacy of overdetermination which bears fruit within it ultimately say about authorship and the legibility of significations?

If these things are unreadable, perhaps it is because what they demand is a different kind of reading.⁶ On this score Lacan, employing the term *equivocation* to elucidate the direction towards which the act of interpretation orients itself, hints at what the status of this reading of the unreadable might be. And it is to the effect that, in his *return to Freud*, Lacan resists the temptation to take refuge in an unequivocal fixation of signifiers to significations, instead deploying a critique to find the true endorsement of analytic experience in what is overdetermined within it. To put it differently, through his reading of Freud, Lacan always aims to draw several from two, to cut signifiers loose from the symmetry of their supposed determinations to unleash a multiplicity of senses and voices.

Reading Lacan's return to Freud on these terms, Oscar Zentner puts forward a "heretical proposition," striking what he refers to as a "dissonant note for the occasion" on the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the birth of Freud – that "from Freud to Lacan there is no continuity."

"Undoubtedly there are common grounds between the two, but only *a posteriori*, after the extraction and isolation of some concepts of the Freudian theory from its main theoretical body. Such a de-contextualization warrants the question of whether, after this process, the so-called concepts remain the same. Our *dissonant note* holds that this is rather improbable, and as such, our heretical position is that from Freud to Lacan there is no continuity."⁷

Such a dissonant note tentatively locates Lacan's reinvention of psychoanalysis in a line of flight moving away from Freud's body of work the closer he interrogates it. The dissonant note is one which sounds the discord between Freud and Lacan, which could be recast in terms as Lacan's chromaticisation of Freudian tonality, activated through this "de-contextualization" – or in the terminology of the deleuzian-guattarian collective, *detritorialisation* – namely, of parts of Freud's theory from the contextual territory of its significations. Such a detritorialisation or de-contextualisation allows for fragments of the analytic discourse to pursue a destiny, it could be said, that might not be a semblance.

One can put this chromaticisation of Freudian tonality into sharper relief if we continue to modulate this manoeuvre Lacan makes in his reading, his return to Freud, which is far from representing a fidelity to or continuity with the Master, rather inscribing what Zentner refers to as a “point of no return to Freud.”

“Certainly [the so-called return to Freud] restores the Freudian field, but not the Freudian unconscious, because as he [Lacan] stated elsewhere, Freud was not Lacanian.”⁸

Freud was not Lacanian, and the Lacanian unconscious is not of Freud. The symmetry between Freud and Lacan thus takes a turn at this point of no return. Pereira perhaps puts this in a different way when he says that Lacan’s return to Freud effected an over-turning. Whatever turn-of-phrase we employ, this infamous return is from the first a manoeuvre which precipitates a discontinuity, a non-reconcilability between one psychoanalyst and another, permitting us to *read* a discordance where one may be tempted to *suppose* an allegiance.

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In his seminar *Psychoanalysis, Philosophy & Theology* David Pereira undertakes the explosive admixture of Peter Sloterdijk’s concept of *foams* with some of the more hardened notions of Lacanian psychoanalysis – an undertaking which, far from making allies of Sloterdijk and Lacan, has perhaps found a chemistry between them which has produced many curious and wonderful things.

Starting with his *Spheres* trilogy, Sloterdijk maps a process of deformation – the deformation, namely, of the concentric and bipolarised forms of society and subjectivity into a-centric and multipolar networks and processes which he calls *foams*. In order to grasp the implications that the introduction of the concept of *foams* might have for the conceptualisation of the psychoanalytic group, let us first consult Sloterdijk on what the meaning of a group or society might be when conceived on the basis of a concentric and bipolar continuity between its subjects:

“Only as long as societies hypnotise themselves as homogenous units, for example as genetically or theologically substantiated national peoples, can they view themselves as monospheres united through their origins (or by an exceptional constitution).”⁹

We might thus repose our question in the luxury of Sloterdijk's lyrical foam, as to whether a School or society of psychoanalysts finds its guarantee in a common origin or in this form of an "exceptional constitution" (Freud and Lacan's doctrines forming something like first and second amendments respectively) in relation to which psychoanalysts might gather themselves into monospheres, "hypnotising themselves as homogeneous units." ¹⁰

For does this formation of allies around a common constitution – this *form-allies-ation*, if I may, of psychoanalysts – does it not ultimately subtract something essential from analytic experience insofar as it might otherwise premise itself on the singularity of an act whose authorisation comes not from a common ideal or exceptional constitution, but rather emerging in the face of a real in excess of a constitution *sui generis* – an excess which is encountered precisely within the impossibility of alliance?

So what might the status of a School of psychoanalysis then be if not that of a hypnotised solidarity (recalling that Freud very early on distanced himself from the practice of hypnosis)? How might we conceive the functioning of a School which pursues a discourse that might not be semblance, and thus may not foreclose for its members the very challenge of reading the unreadable and thus of the subversion of *formalliesation*? Sloterdijk, echoing the deleuzian-guattarian multiplicity – not two, but several – offers us the words that we might appropriate to conceptualise the functioning of a School that does not permit itself to be condemned to the stasis of a form. His polysphereology invites the reader to reckon with societies explicated as *foams*, or:

“...restless and asymmetrical associations of pluralities of space and processes whose cells can neither be truly united nor truly separate.” ¹¹

If we can begin to think of the analytic School in terms of foams, it is thanks to the work of David Pereira and the chemical reaction that his philosophico-analytic alchemy has produced through the stirring and agitation of the concept of *psychoanalytic formation* – a term somewhat hardened by the weight and rigidity of *form* – recomposing it through polyspheric uplift and aeration. From his cross-pollinated reading of Sloterdijk and Lacan, we are offered instead the lighter, airier and precariously pluralistic *foamation of the psychoanalyst*, a production which begins to speak of a multiplicity beyond form or a formal constitution. Thus if there is such a thing as analytic formation, it is not a process which culminates in the final stasis of a form – neither that of a psychoanalyst, nor that of a School of psychoanalysts. Formation or *foamation* constitutes a process productive not of a

continuity or formal symmetry between like-analysts, but rather gives rise to *the* psychoanalyst as a singularity, as a *One*, discontinuous and asymmetrical with respect to each other analyst.¹²

The question we started with thus returns to us: what is the nature of the analytic group, and are alliances between analysts possible – hypnosis or no? For in a School conceptualised as a network of foams, whereby each psychoanalyst is already several – neither truly united nor separate, discontinuous both between and *within* themselves – it no longer makes sense to talk about analysts as allies or even as individuals, rallied around a shared constitution and constituting their practice on the basis of the same formal materials. Nor does their association obey the symmetry characteristic of enemies. Rather, it could be said that they are a-symmetrically composed as anti-allies, or even – *an-allies*.

Here it could be said that where the formalised association between common and definitive entities (like-analysts) reaches its limit, a proper and infinitive function – *anallies* – may come to attune itself to the dissonant asymmetry of a free association, in the shape of a dividend, moreover, of the alliance that it decomposes.¹³ A free association, therefore, which comes to be initiated in a different sense in each instance: analysts do not take-turns analysing, coordinating interpretations like an *ally-oop* (Freud sets up the shot, Lacan slam-dunks it). Rather, in the deformative movement from two to several each one ups-the-*anti* in turning-the-tables on psychoanalysis itself – in their own way *and* as co-conspirators – in the destabilisation of the very constitutional precedent upon which their supposed alliance is formalised, as a definitive alliance between individuals.

Recalling now Lacan's redressing of interpretation as an act of equivocation, where a signifier is uprooted from its signification to unleash a multiplicity of senses and voices, the equivocated sign is rendered discontinuous to a signifying constitution which would otherwise substantiate an analytic common sense – thus subverting, in the parlance of the present paper, the *formalliesation* of analysts. It follows that analytic formation or *foamation*, insofar as it might hinge upon the psychoanalytic act qua equivocation, would not be a prescribed process deployed toward a formalised outcome (invoking the critique levelled by Lacan against ego-psychology as a reproductive formalisation of alliances effected through the analysand's identification with their psychoanalyst). Rather, to the extent that the term formation has meant something different from formalisation since its initial deployment by Lacan, the analyst can really be said to be the outcome

of the *deformation* of such reproductive identifications – namely, the deformation of the proportionality between two like-entities into the restless and asymmetrical disproportionality of several singularities – via a process of speech, moreover, brought under the influence of the transference.

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Which brings us to the next part of this paper, and thus to an important moment in psychoanalytic history where this comfortable continuity between *two* seems to have short-circuited the transmission of a restless multiplicity, the shifting into gear which might otherwise have driven psychoanalytic doctrine into “uncharted waters.” Oscar Zentner speaks of this moment in his paper *Lacan: Caracas Station*,¹⁴ in which he interrogates an error made by Lacan in his Seminar XXIV of 1976-77,¹⁵ where the latter incorrectly writes his formula for the *discourse of the psychoanalyst* in the following way:

$$\begin{array}{c} \underline{a} \rightarrow \underline{S_1} \\ \$ \quad S_2 \end{array}$$

It is known, of course, that the four discourses are neatly organised in such a way that each one is articulated through a rotating series of quarter turns, forming a closed circuit:¹⁶

$\underline{S_1} \rightarrow \underline{S_2}$	$\underline{\$} \rightarrow \underline{S_1}$	$\underline{a} \rightarrow \underline{\$}$	$\underline{S_2} \rightarrow \underline{a}$
\$ a	a S ₂	S ₂ S ₁	S ₁ \$
Master	Hysteric	Analyst	University

Thus in writing the discourse of the psychoanalyst incorrectly, Lacan does not merely mistake one discursive organisation for another – which would maintain something of a duplicitous proportionality – but disorganises a fundamental organisation, giving rise to a disproportionate exception to his signifying constitution. As in his own return to Freud which was an over-turning, his own discourse of quarter-turns slips out past a point of no return, rendering Lacan discontinuous with his own teaching, and leaving his audience and himself in a palpable state of restlessness.¹⁷ With the erroneous formula, analytic discourse emerges as analytic *discordance*, where it could be said that it ceases to justify its existence in relation to any signification, whatsoever.

Jacque Allain-Miller, present in the audience at this moment, restores some *sense* of symmetry and continuity to this restlessness with the assertion: “that is not how you wrote it last time.”¹⁸ After Miller alerts the room to this mistake, Lacan wastes no time in correcting it by re-writing the analytic formula in the way it was known to be written, thus restoring it to convention. Here, Zentner proposes that through this exacting correction of Lacan’s error by Miller, something novel in Lacan’s teaching – something outside of the order and organisation of a former knowledge – while it had *taken place*, did not *come to pass*. To pass, we might add, a point of no return. Where something began to restlessly *torque* its way free, a reference to a former knowledge “plots a point, fixes an order,” turning Lacan’s discourse back before it’s too late by having the disordered and displaced *take place* within an order of analytic common sense.¹⁹

Now, it may be that this “that’s not how you wrote it last time” is just an innocent correction of a forgivable mistake, no doubt the sort of correction we could all be prone to making in response to such an obvious slip of the pen. However, let us recall that Lacan had often referred to himself as the analysand of his audience, thus placing the audience in the position of analyst. Picture yourself for a moment as an analysand lying on the couch and uttering something or other, before being interrupted by your analyst with the words: “that’s not how you wrote it (or said it) last time.” Imagine, long after being told to say whatever comes to mind, suddenly being alerted by your analyst as to an inconsistency in your speech, in the flow of *free* associations which is nothing if not a flux of inconsistencies!

Now open your eyes. I am reminded of a moment in the *Psychoanalysis, Philosophy & Theology* seminar – let us not forget this tough current of direction – where I heard it spoken how it is that one might discern the precipitation of an atmosphere of transference within the treatment. Precisely, that is, at the point that the analysand’s articulation of their history loses its consistency and ceases to obey the conventions of order, organisation, or chronology – disrupting the status of knowledge for the subject. Transference, the field in which analysis plays out, is materialised as a disorganisation of speech, a discontinuity of speech from the circuitry of history or former knowledge, unwedded from what was said “last time” – allowing, let’s say, for the emergence of a restless and asymmetrical (free) association of pluralities. Thus, it may be that what was at stake in the correction exacted upon Lacan’s error was a categorical rejection of the transference.

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In his 1994 paper *Being in Love and Psychoanalysis: On Reading Lacan*, David Pereira takes up the question of how the supposition of and allegiance to a conventional Lacanian discourse acts as an obstacle to *reading* Lacan:

“If the writing made not to be read questions a conventional reading, then the love at play in the supposing of a knowledge, the love that Lacan poses as an obstacle to reading, is a conventional, let us say, limited love which by no means exhausts the field of love.”²⁰

To the extent that Lacan’s erroneous formula falls outside of the conventions of his discourse, it could perhaps be said that it constitutes a writing made not to be read – not to be read, that is, according to the conventions of reading. Thus, the correction that this error was met with may have constituted a conventional sort of reading marked by a certain fidelity or allegiance to a supposed knowledge. As stated above, such a fidelity to a supposed knowledge concerns a limited or conventional form of love – what we have come to term in the present paper as a proportionate or symmetrical coalition between *two*.

What took place, of what may otherwise have come to pass, in the correction of Lacan’s error of *L’insu* concerned a restless and asymmetrical association, precipitated in the emergence of an inconsistency, becoming subjected to a conventional *form* of love/reading which supposes that there is a sexual relation after all – a consistency and continuity between two, and which, we might add, thus seeks to *formallies* in that love.²¹ This type of formalisation was identified by Freud as the hypnotic effect of the group closing in upon itself as a homogenous unit, church or institution, and which Lacan testified to witnessing in his own School, the *École Freudienne de Paris*, prompting his ultimate dissolution of it:

“Lacan’s concern is with the ‘hypnotic symptom’ in the psychoanalytic group; the love and loyalty attached to his person, the lack of criticism, the paralysis and lack of initiative, all of which contributed to his School being rendered an institution.”²²

The conventional or “hypnotic” love in question here, therefore, is that which formalises or colonises discourse through a conventional reading, which becomes the basis for a like-minded coalition, paralysing the inaugural effects of speech, of a properly psychoanalytic discordance which otherwise awaits the “subject of a reading”²³ that its very fumbling calls into existence from the real:

“This *subject of a reading* is not one which exists prior to a reading, but a subject produced in relation to such an encounter with the text.”²⁴

The type of encounter that is being referred to here is precisely an encounter with a *discordance* in the text which inaugurates this *subject of a reading* – not of a prior, former existence, but as the correlate of an unconventional type of love materialised in the transference. While this subject of a reading might be construed itself in terms of the equivocation of the status of knowledge within the transference (outlining the figure of the analyst as subject supposed of knowing), we might nevertheless come to confer on this peculiar field its proper and infinitive function, as *anallies*, here where the analytic act tends in the direction of a maximum of discontinuity and disproportionality – of restlessness in the text, as in love.

A heterogeneous movement, tending in the direction of a maximum of discontinuity and disproportionality, is a direct homage to what Lacan called *the desire of the psychoanalyst*, which he describes as deploying itself towards “the attainment of a maximum of difference” – the difference, namely, between the cause of desire and the ideal or personification of continuity that is supposed to animate it in a dialectic of proportion. In attempting to pin Lacan’s articulation to what was said the *last time*, love is rendered continuous within the limited field of fidelity and allegiance. The restless agitation of this proportionate or *partial* love precipitates in the transference an “axis of desire” that twists itself free from the guarantee love finds in an imaginary consistency with a common knowledge – activating the *co-conspiratorial maximalisation of inconsistency in speech* – a restlessly asymmetrical free association of speech, or *torque*.²⁵

Here, when invoking the term *desire* in connection with love, we might find our bearings in the various works of Deleuze and Guattari, in understanding by this a desire no longer wedded to the classical *lack* of the *erastes* (the lover) – a lack which drives possession and conquest of the other – but rather a desire bound to the axis of production, the production of a *surplus* which escapes the limits of the known and accountable.²⁶ What is at stake in the transference is an unconscious knowledge not accountable to a *last time*, but which emerges as a novelty, a *never before*, an inconsistent and even monstrous difference-in-itself which manifests in the fabled episode of *L’insu* as a blunder in the text, a *deformula* – and which, in emerging, demands a reading.

It is what Oscar Zentner reminds us is at stake in Lacan’s point of no return, his “de-contextualization” of the Freudian unconscious as no longer playing host to a signifying

determinism, producing the Lacanian unconscious as *gaffe*: the slipping out or passing through of the “never intended, never expected, never to be assimilated,” forever unsettling the build-up of “said-iment” in the restless flows of speech and language.

The practice of psychoanalysis transpires as a co-conspiracy through this restless field of transference, a nonsensical type of love articulated through a desiring production disorienting itself from a determinate object of knowledge, and driven in the direction of the production of an indeterminable cause. A love that may allow for a maximum of discontinuity and disproportionality to come to pass, or as Pereira writes, a love that may:

“...push us to the point of an encounter with a lack in the text – the text as absolute Other – and produce a point of discordance.”²⁷

This “lack in the text,” to reiterate, understood not as the classical lack underpinning an unassuageable possession and conquest, but the lack of a common, *absolute*, and definitive sense in the text, as Other, to which Miller, in 1977, could pin his *Eros*. From this discordance between two brought about by the lack of or disruption to a common sense, a way may be opened for a restless and asymmetrical *free association* of pluralities to fall through, if not a lack, then a crack in the text as Other – for the coming to pass of the psychoanalyst and the School of psychoanalysis.

Postscript

In his paper *Lacan, Caracas Station*, Oscar Zentner argues that the erroneous formula which was subjected to a corrective formalisation in 1977 – “that’s not how you wrote it last time” – managed to be transmitted 3 years later in his Caracas seminar, when Lacan botched it again, this time saying the word *frog* (*la grenouille*) instead of *toad* (*le crapaud*) when describing Bramantino’s painting of the Madonna.²⁸ Crucially, no one in Caracas corrected Lacan’s mistake, which may have allowed for a love to be realised not in a *common* signifier representative of a knowing subject, but in an error which was the insignia of a knowledge that was missing and thus of the impossibility of a common understanding.²⁹ Zentner thus proposes that by not being corrected in Caracas, Lacan’s audience allowed for the possibility of a reading. As outlined above, it is the *coming to pass* of a discordance in analytic doctrine that “produces this subject of a reading, for the text.”³⁰ Sloterdijk puts forth a not dissimilar proposition that again we may commandeer for the purposes of our argument:

“It is only with reference to such passing-through of the foreign that a tenable concept of what subjectivity *could mean* can be articulated in our time” [my italics].³¹

For Sloterdijk, the only tenable concept of subjectivity is one which may no longer rest upon the supposition of a prior existence, thus raising the question of subjectivity to the dignity of a foreign, and *future* affair. It concerns an articulation that passes from the future into the present, a voice which *torques* in foreign tongues, twisting a collective assemblage of enunciation free from a mode of *relation* constrained within the contextual dimensions of a conventional love and reading. Where a crack appears in the text, as Other, the certitude of a relation, a communication, in reference to a context or common tongue, can no longer be guaranteed, and here the future meaning of subjectivity may be written anew, in our time, through the reading of this unreadable writing. Did the founder of this School, *The Freudian School of Melbourne*, encounter in Caracas such a writing, a discordance in a passage of doctrine where, from a crack in the Other, Lacan let slip a croak – *la grenouille!* And as an effect of submitting this insolent croak to a reading, was able to produce something from it – something discontinuous with respect to what was *said*, the relation of something, let’s say, beyond a *ributtal*.

Today, we participate in the work of a School that may still be riding on the breath of an error and its interpretation. A School whose currents of direction agitate an association to torque its way free from its own conventions – evident in its history with a founder’s stepping-aside and more recently in the disassembly of its foundational Seminar – agitations which may activate a treatment of the ‘hypnotic symptom’ which threatens to seize the psychoanalytic group in the cohesion of a formalised structure. Perhaps it is in this sense that the Director’s report, distributed to members of the School early on in the year, invites us to engage the psychoanalytic act “as it applies its methods to the School itself,” provoking a confrontation with its conventions, its “structures and limits in such a way as to force them to fracture and break in the direction of the creation of the new.”³² Such an act, which is no doubt held in horror before such crucial questions as the deformation of the School’s Homage Conference – a *convention* of speech and writing whose concentricity may be imposing a certain constraint upon the passage of the foreign and unreadable – such an act might allow for the disorganised articulation of the School as a *free association* that restlessly sets itself the task of turning the tables on psychoanalysis, and upping-the-anti on *psychoanalysts!*

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- ¹ Member of the School. The Freudian School of Melbourne - School of Lacanian Psychoanalysis.
- ² David Pereira. Analyst of School and Director of the Freudian School of Melbourne.
- ³ A term coined and deployed in staggering ways in Deleuze, G., & Guattari, F. *A Thousand Plateaus*, London: Bloomsbury, 1987.
- ⁴ The 2018 Dublin Conference was entitled *The Symptom of the Psychoanalytic Group and the Transmission of Psychoanalysis*.
- ⁵ Deleuze, G., & Guattari, F. *A Thousand Plateaus*. London: Bloomsbury, 1987, p. 1.
- ⁶ See Pereira, D. 'Being in love and psychoanalysis: On reading Lacan', *Papers of the Freudian School of Melbourne*, 15, 1994; where he explains the proposition that Lacan's writings were "made not to be read" – that is, made not to be read "according to the conventions of reading."
- ⁷ Zentner, O. 'From the Freudian Unconscious as Cause to the Lacanian Unconscious as Gaffe', *Papers of the Freudian School of Melbourne*, 23, 2007, p. 364.
- ⁸ Zentner, O. Ibid, p. 366.
- ⁹ Sloterdijk, P. *Foams: Spheres, Volume 3*, Semiotext(e), California, 2016, p. 54.
- ¹⁰ Freud speaks at length about the homogenisation of group members under the effects of hypnosis in his 'Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego', while Lacan has described a "hypnotic symptom" in the psychoanalytic group as the basis for his School's becoming an institution, which we will discuss further on.
- ¹¹ Sloterdijk, P. Op. cit, p. 54.
- ¹² On the distinction between psychoanalysts (plural) and *the* psychoanalyst (singular), see Pereira's address to members of the Freudian School of Melbourne in his director's report, 2016.
- ¹³ In a letter of 1980, Lacan famously made the claim with respect to his School, "I expect nothing from individuals, and something from a functioning." See Lacan, J. 'The Other is Missing', *Television*, Norton, New York, 1990, p. 133.
- ¹⁴ Zentner, O. 'Lacan: Caracas Station', *Papers of the Freudian School of Melbourne*, 25, 2016.
- ¹⁵ Entitled *L'insu que sait de l'une-bevue s'aile a mourre*.
- ¹⁶ For example, see Lacan's Seminar XVII, *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*.
- ¹⁷ In *L'insu*, Lacan notes that a number of his students contacted him about the error, and Lacan seems to devote considerable time to dispelling the myths of its significance.
- ¹⁸ Miller's correction of Lacan's error can be found in Cormac Gallagher's translation of Lacan's *Seminar XXIV*, p. 100, however this version omits the specific comment quoted above. Zentner refers the reader to *Ornicar?*, 16, 1978, p. 13.
- ¹⁹ Regarding what is here being referred to as 'common sense', Oscar Zentner (op. cit, 2016) points out that the present episode took place not long before Lacan dissolved *L'école freudienne de Paris*, Lacan himself stating that his School 'had turned towards sense, thus becoming a Church', (my italics).
- ²⁰ Pereira, D. 'Being in love and psychoanalysis: On reading Lacan', *Papers of the Freudian School of Melbourne*, 15, 1994, p. 58.
- ²¹ Something Lacan says further along in the aforementioned letter of 1980, seems to touch on this question of a reading that establishes the convention of a coalition between like-analysts, albeit not without ambiguity: "Yes, the psychoanalyst holds his act in *horror*. This, to such an extent that he negates, disavows, and renounces it – and curses whoever reminds him of it, Lacan Jacques, lest his name be mentioned, even *calls for the scalp* of Jacques-Allain Miller, odious for having shown himself to be the at-least-one to have read him. *Without anymore attention than needed to establish 'analysts'.*" (my italics). See 'The Other is Missing,' *Television*, New York: Norton, 1980, p. 135.
- ²² Pereira, D. Op. cit. 1994, p. 58.
- ²³ That is, an *unconventional* reading. Pereira, D. Op. cit. 1994, p. 61.
- ²⁴ Pereira, D. Op. cit. 1994, p. 61.
- ²⁵ 'And, it is precisely such a movement which is impeded by the One of partial love – the *Sphairos* (sphere) of eros as *definitive* of the unifying function of love.' (my italics). Pereira, D. Op. cit. 1994, p. 60.
- ²⁶ See Deleuze, G., & Guattari, F. *Anti-Oedipus*, London: Bloomsbury, 2013, where they refer to processes of 'desiring-production', or the productive and pragmatic multiplicity that becomes of desire when it is liberated from any reference to a constitutive lack.
- ²⁷ Pereira, D. Op. cit. 1994, p. 61.

²⁸ A painting which itself is known for having departed from established convention by depicting the Virgin passing a palm to someone who is not a martyr. In the foreground of the painting lies a dead toad, not a frog, symbolic of the devil. See Zentner, O. 'Lacan: Caracas Station', *Papers of the Freudian School of Melbourne*, 25, 2016, p. 19.

²⁹ "Kata-Holon (according to All) Lacanian theory, that simply does not exist." See *ibid.* p 25.

³⁰ Pereira, D. *Op. cit.* 1994, p. 61.

³¹ Sloterdijk, P. *Bubbles: Spheres, Volume 1*, Semiotext(e), California, 2011, p. 30.

³² Pereira's address to members of the Freudian School of Melbourne in his director's report, 2018.