

could have signposting that this is a critique of D on L.

Truth Is Not The Thing

In analysis, of course, truth *is* the thing: healing, that which is presumably the whole reason one seeks out analysis, is no more nor less than an "added benefit";¹ and what but truth and healing—truth and contentment, truth and the papering-over-the-gaps which is called happiness—truth and untruth, unconcealment and concealment (which only present as opposites to the idiot child who obviously spuriously indicts the king for public indecency, who misunderstands the bit and in doing so ruins it?)—figure anywhere at all? *Knowledge*, one rather intelligently posits, *language, the Symbolic, that sort of thing*; but the problem is that *knowledge* does not *figure*: knowledge is that in the presence of which or around which figuration takes place. *Reality*, one may also posit, less intelligently, for when I ask the *one* what exactly such a real consists in, they are unable to do anything but point: if they venture a saying they will simply be imparting a knowledge which purports to be of the real but is not; if they venture an acting they will simply by figuring a truth which purports to be of the real but is not. That is: reality, being unlike truth and knowledge trivially, *stupidly* transmitted—your *Umwelt* is become mine when I simply walk over to where you are standing, crane my head a little—has its transmission just as trivially and stupidly denied: one shuts oneself up in one's room and refuses to leave; or one simply scuttles off into the elsewhere into which the rest of the family dares not venture. In that one has perhaps turned into a bug,³ perhaps a crab.⁴

In any case, we are merely left with, as Pound puts it, "Truth and Calliope / Slanging each other sous les lauriers,"⁵ an opposition which only runs as deep as the pronouncing of a four-letter word or two being clearly no opposition at all. Real hate is bitterer, bloodier.

And then one, apprehending this, adds: *there is something else out there, which I cannot name, the conditions for the transmission of which being an open problem—the open problem. Something which analysis cannot abide: for it murders truth, or will stop at nothing to do so.* Murder, it must be said, not in the sense of effecting-death, mere assassination; murder, rather, in the sense of forcing-out-of-the-picture, removing-all-options: that murder, say, an accusation of which ends *Malina*; that which strips one of all the falsehoods (*not* untruths) to which one might have resorted in avoidance of intellectual honesty.

What exactly is unnameable about what is here left nameless? After all, what the *one* has just described seems to be no more than that which disassembles the Imaginary (truth being what the Imaginary deals in—as knowledge for the Symbolic, and obviously reality for the Real), which reverses the self-objectification, the positing of oneself as just another person-thing, that is characteristic of misrecognition in the mirror. And this is precisely the schizophrenic's or schizoid's dereism.

Insofar as Lacan posits the truth-knowledge-real triad to be irreducible, indivisible (the exemplary image is the Borromean knot in which Imaginary, Symbolic, and Real are implicated),⁶ that which murders truth,

¹ Jacques Lacan, *Écrits*, trans. Bruce Fink (W.W. Norton, 2006), 270.

² Jacques Derrida, "The Purveyor of Truth," in *Yale French Studies*, no. 52 (1975): 36-7.

³ As in Kafka.

⁴ As in Schulz.

⁵ Ezra Pound, "Canto VII" in *The Cantos* (Faber and Faber, 2023), 28.

⁶ See Alain Badiou, "Formulas of *L'étourdit*," in *There's No Such Thing as a Sexual Relationship*, trans. Kenneth Reinhard and Susan Spitzer (Columbia University Press, 2017), 53.

Derrida's criticisms of Lacan - mistaken. Lacan's terminological shift - joke in return to Freudian

Setting up of the concepts as Lacan is doing.

that which murders knowledge, and that which murders reality must at least be three consubstantial persons: must, to reuse a Heideggerianism, "proceed out of these [duties] upward into unity."⁷ It is this unity which is what is unnameable; we end up having the names *schizophrenic dereism*, *anorexia* (the attempt at murdering the reality one's body burdens one with⁸), and *selectivity disorder* (the attempt at murdering language in its capacity as schema in which knowledge is known⁹) for its moments, but I do not think we have a name which sublates the three names listed and nothing more than them.

But it is only the existence of this unnameable—an existence that can be established beyond argument, though I shall not do so here—which matters here: for it limits the pretension of the Imaginary, points out that there is a somewhere outside the Imaginary (rather, at its skin), that the analyst is not all: *pastout*, just as the man castrated by the Symbolic.¹⁰ (The *man*, yes; we will return to this point.) Truth, in Lacan, is limited to that which emerges out of the relationship-dance of the atomic individual, the Robinson-particle.¹¹ their elective affinities. The analyst is often reproached for, like Lawrence Durrell, reading everything as an erotic complication of some sort; such reproaches miss the point that *that is what analysis is supposed to do*.

— Truth in the imaginary — interpersonal

Even in different schemata, Lacan is careful to adhere to this principle, that the analyst is always within the mechanism he insists he is objectively studying, can never take on the position of the ideal and vaguely ironic spectator-from-afar: as Derrida would have it, is only another ostrich.¹² The discourse of the analyst as articulated in Seminar XVII is after all not somehow privileged compared to the other three—is in its own way no less pompous than the master's speaking, no less unreliable than the speech of the hysteric, no less stifling than what the university sees fit to impose on its subjects. And in Seminar VII, Lacan is quite careful to designate the ethics he eventually proposes as *of the analytic gaze*, specific to this gaze: to never give ground when it comes to one's desire is one approach, is not *the* approach, is not anywhere insisted to be the *right* approach. Lacan is not endorsing analysis, is not defending analysis, or failing to defend it adequately by resorting to a lazy relativism; Lacan is found to be consistently *offering up analysis* as an entity able to hold its own; as not entirely hopeless philosophically as, say, the champion of concealment or hedonism turns out to be; but as not radical enough really to be called a *solution*. Given that I, the would-be analysand, am being hurt gratuitously by the Imaginary, what is ignoble is a bargaining with the Imaginary for a lessening of or end to the hurt—the analytic program, ultimately—what is noble is to hurt it back. And moral goodness in thought is precisely this nobility: so realized Nietzsche, I would think.

Lacan, it should be mentioned, does not seem to approach the problem I have outlined, of actually, principledly exceeding the Imaginary, directly; he is not concerned with undermining the reification of ourselves and others that grounds, enables our having of a *Mitwelt*, a "social life." His interest is after all

Showing your position + difference, fab!

⁷ Martin Heidegger, *Ponderings II-VI*, trans. Richard Rojcewicz (Indiana University Press, 2016), 5.

⁸ This particular conception is, I think, approached in Binswanger's case-study of Ellen West. That being said, there is an undercurrent of Maine de Biran here—the definition of one's body as the resistance one feels, the weight one bears—which I'm not read enough to explore properly.

⁹ This is essentially Jakobson's point in "Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasic Disturbances"; the actual transmutation of his conclusions into that which I wield here turns out however to be quite involved.

¹⁰ In e.g. Jacques Lacan, "L'Étourdit," trans. Cormac Gallagher, *The Letter* 41 (2009).

¹¹ I borrow the term from Gilles Châtelet, *To Live and Think Like Pigs*, trans. Robin Mackay (Urbanomic, 2014).

¹² Derrida, "The Purveyor of Truth," 77.

primarily in the neurotic patient (understandably, given that he himself was one) whose incomprehension is more a Symbolic matter than an Imaginary one; that is, his interest (as is made explicit at the beginning of the "Seminar on the Purloined Letter") is in the coopting of the Symbolic under the analytic Imaginary, the triadic play which structures the novel's content: making a deal with the devil, so to speak, to avoid the deep sea. He is willing to posit, on the other hand—as in Seminar XX—a *lalangue* which amounts to an escaping from the Symbolic by means of language, a using of language to non-communicative ends (Lévi-Strauss would call this *incest*...¹³).

We turn to Derrida's criticism of Lacan in "The Purveyor of Truth" and come to notice: Derrida's real *bête noire* and victim is the ingenue Freud, no literary critic himself, not Lacan who is well aware of e.g. the wholesale ignorance exhibited by the psychoanalytic method of the narrator, the author, the scriptor... of all that which might be lumped together as *paratext* or *syuzhet*. He is only able to make this critique out to be a critique of Lacan by reading horribly unkindly—misreading, one might say—several concepts of Lacan's. I will end this essay by briefly glossing five such ungenerosities:

← Good, clear breakdown of the D-L disagreement -

(i) For Derrida, *mastery* is what Dupin has exhibited by the end of the story;¹⁴ this is fine enough. But such mastery on his part makes him for Lacan not an analyst but something else entirely, insofar as the discourse of the master is not the discourse of the analyst; that is, there is no tension in Lacan's interpellation of Dupin's discourse—he is never analyst, and always master, and always still participant within the triadic scheme rather than observer of it (that is: he possesses knowledge of all that has occurred, but no truth, insofar as his presence and motions only reveal truth purely instinctually—he does not *grasp* that he is enacting *Wiederholungszwang*; he certainly does not do so on paper)—and there is certainly no endorsement of, identification with Dupin on Lacan's part, as Derrida seems in places to insinuate might have occurred.

- Why so?

(ii) It must be pointed out, in connection with the above, that Dupin's actions in the story are *entirely immoral*: he has ensured the Queen may engage in whatever licentious or subversive acts she wishes, without any consequence, in exchange for payment. In what sense, then, is he any better than a common procurator: a Pandarus or Celestina? Admittedly, this is not the most Lacanian phrasing, Lacan not exactly being the puritanical kind—not the kind to disapprove particularly vehemently of extramarital dalliances, perhaps—one might say instead that *Dupin, by the end of the story, has only succeeded in submitting to the law, nothing more*: has in a sense given ground relative to his desire, by buying into the world-as-it-is; has *done nothing particularly interesting*, only come into some wealth and some quite petty revenge. Without the embrace of this realization—and Derrida makes the realization but does not embrace it—the *a letter always arrives at its destination* appears inexplicable:¹⁵ if Dupin had not acted, performed a brilliance, the letter would not have arrived, would it? Dupin's action, however, was not a brilliance but a *subjection*, a giving-in: the letter always arrives at its destination because *everyone is eventually seduced into submitting to the law*, despite the Queen's apprehension that this time it might be otherwise.

¹³ See Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*, trans. James Harle Bell and John Richard von Sturmer, ed. Rodney Needham (Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1969), 497.

¹⁴ See Derrida, "The Purveyor of Truth," 76.

¹⁵ As it does at e.g. Derrida, "The Purveyor of Truth," 65.

Complaining
mastery
with
colloquial

Great
// distinction
- that
D is
trying
to aim
at L,
but it's
about
Freud.

// Assessment
of Derrida's
position.

Distinguishing
yourself
from L.

(iii) Derrida repeatedly conflates *truth* as colloquially understood with *truth* in Lacan's highly technical usage of the word: so, for example, in his confusion over Lacan's making so much out of the truth of and in fiction.¹⁶ But this observation of Lacan's has nothing to do with those cleavages between truth and reality which other thinkers have posited, given that their understandings of truth have rather more to do with the traditional truth-as-veracity than with unconcealment in the truly Lacanian sense, analytic unconcealment, and thus that their efforts are toward establishing either the fallenness of reality (e.g. Leibniz, Kant, Heidegger) or the uselessness of veracity (e.g. Nietzsche, Bergson, also Heidegger). Lacan is only insisting that fiction, especially traditional narrative fiction, offers material perhaps better than real life for application to the analytic gaze: a substance the analyst can comfortably work with and draw analytic truths out of.

Great analysis
Again, we've talked about issue of close reading non-anglophone texts, but worth dwelling on the textual evidence to support this distinction.

Yes, good point.

(iv) Derrida adheres to the Freudian understanding of castration as something the woman undergoes, as literally involving the loss of a phallus. As I alluded to above, the Lacanian system very explicitly rewrites this bit of Freud: it is the man who is castrated in his filiation, in the privileging a specific bit of his previously entirely insensible anatomy as the *phallus*. Only a far longer paper could really come to terms with Derrida's understanding of feminine sexuality as coming into play in "The Purloined Letter," but at least this might be said: a Lacanian reading (a reading more Lacanian than Lacan's own, perhaps), in its taking of the letter, the pure signifier, as phallus, would see the Queen's always-possession of this letter as precisely indicative of her being-male. Should one read the letter as being let us say unchaste in character, as indicating adultery—a scarlet letter?—and should one accept my analysis in "Fear of Men" that it is precisely by marriage, by deflowering, by unchastity that the woman (the maiden) is coopted into the male Symbolic structure, then the maleness of the Queen when she has the letter or can rationally expect to have the letter (that is, always) is self-evident.

Great comparison + contrast.

Difference in interpretation of gendering of castration

L is limiting pretensions of method

(v) Derrida is very eager to indict the analytic understanding for its elimination of the narrator from the elective-affinity motions of the situation.¹⁷ This, however, is betrayal of the standard Heideggerian dictum that the I is fundamentally unlike the world: any representation of the *I* in the terminology that the world provides is factitious, uncouth. (This is visible in the very passages of "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" that Derrida analyzes! For what is the narrator doing, in his futile attempts to *be like Dupin*—the brilliant Dupin—but trying rather pathetically to find a place in the world for himself, a station in which he is wanted and feted and *praised*? A station which he, being, unlike Dupin, *imperfect*, cannot attain?) Then what Derrida is indicting in Lacan is precisely the latter's understanding that this dictum necessitates that the narrator qua narrator (perhaps it is exactly the point of the transference to plunge the narrator back into *participation*) not take any part in the analytic discourse; in light of the above discussion, this indictment can only be said to be, well, perverse.

Good to reflect upon the literary aspect.

Derrida thinks L is trying to do a metaphysics, totalising — L is not doing that, specific lens.

specific aspect of specific element of story.

¹⁶ See Derrida, "The Purveyor of Truth," 89.

¹⁷ See Derrida, "The Purveyor of Truth," 100ff.