

# betraying lacan or some remarks on the skin of the twat <sup>1</sup>

## Ricardo Goldenberg<sup>2</sup>

J'ai eu la peau du con  
(Sade via Lacan, via Jacques-Alain Miller)

Je triomphe ! j'ai de la peau du con  
(Sade, from his own pen)

### Overture

*How to read Lacan?* That is the question. Or perhaps: *what does reading mean?* I am not so much referring to reading in general – although it could be an interesting subject of research: the place of the letter, that sort of thing – as to how we read in psychoanalysis, and, especially, how we (mis)read Lacan.

Because Lacan is for us a *being of writing* (in the way that Barthes intended this). What he himself called his teaching is for us a question of reading. And having said this we become aware of some background noise, which amounts to the difference between what we know came from the master's own pen, and the mountain of 'established' transcripts of the things he said. And said to audiences of all sorts, although he never stopped hammering on about only addressing psychoanalysts.

I will not go into the problems of the establishing of his spoken seminars in written form because the issue has been discussed *ad nauseam*. I only wish to recall that the so called establishing of the text is a reading, not a simple transcription. And even if it were, the choice of punctuation is an interpretative decision and determines the meaning. I do not think this is a controversial issue. The dream of a complete transfer of the sense of the message of an author through the transcription of his public speeches, without distortion, is nothing more than that, a dream.

I am drawing your attention to things so widely known because psychoanalysts of my generation, and the former, carry written on our backs an adjective that defines us as privileged readers of Lacan. The chosen people overseas. We have been named *lacanoamericans*. I wonder if there is anybody who does not know the story of how, on the eve of coming to plant the flag of Lacanian colonization in Caracas, the master bade farewell to his students in Paris with a *blague*: "I'm coming to visit my *lacanoamericans*, they are the future of what I teach, because they only read me, never saw me or heard the way I speak"?<sup>3</sup> It was not the first time that a joke from Lacan not only did not make anyone laugh since it was treated with the seriousness of a slogan, but in Buenos Aires, furthermore, it triggered a veritable frenzy. Quite a few who were nobody's fools were heard saying that after thirty years Lacan had made his ultimate psychoanalytic act: disowning all his French disciples and friends and choosing people he had never set eyes upon as the legitimate heirs of his spiritual heritage.

As the master passed away soon after Caracas, this absurdity became his last word, his testament. And the war, more or less cold, that began then and there, goes on up to this very

day, between *lacanoamericans*, keepers of the letter, and the *apostles* (from Greek: ἀπόστολος, ‘envoy’; from *apo*: out, away; and *stelle*: send) who, as everybody knows, are those who saw him and heard him in person. Not long ago one of them refuted my reading of some passage of a seminar with the argument “I saw, I was there, I know”. Nonetheless, if there is a hermeneutic war between exegetes and Talmudists, it will be fought in the fields of the letter, not in the memories of his living sermon. It is no coincidence that one of these apostles introduces himself as reader: *the* reader, perhaps the only one that knows how to read him.

Be that as it may, this is what I am coming to: we *Lacanoamericans* or apostles all speak a common idiom, an idiolect known as *Lacanese*. Dozens of dictionaries, more or less exhaustive, have been published to serve as guides for the tourists, to help them communicate with the inhabitants of Lacania, as Perrier – one of the first apostles, who died a renegade of his master’s word – used to call this land. This common idiom not only makes us believe that we are children of the same clan, members of the same community, faithful of the same parish, but also that we understand each other. Moreover, it allows us to imagine that we *think*; that putting together pieces of crystallized formulae, like Lego blocks, is the same as making conceptual castles for the glory of the kingdom of Lacania.

Jargon or not, there exists a huge written opus and it is written in French. And when I say Lacan is a being of writing, I am also asserting that, for better or for worse, this being exists only within the French language. Now the problem with so called *Lacanoamericans*, those of us who relate only to a Lacan of writing, has less to do with not being apostles than with our not being French. And this is a problem that concerns us and nobody else. Let us accept for the moment, despite all the difficulties with it, that there is an established ‘original’ text of Lacan. It is here that the monumental task of *translating* these works begins. And in this task of translation it is no longer possible to forget that it is a question of a reading. If, in the effort to establish a text in French it is still possible to produce a sleight of hand and conceal the place of the reader, this is no longer possible in the translation.

Translating is an impossible task, and I mean this in the same sense Freud said that analyzing, educating and governing were impossible. Responsibility for a translation, therefore, cannot be the task of an isolated hero, no matter how gifted he or she might be. If the establishing of the text should not be the work of one person alone (it suffices to compare the Seuil version with the one by the team working on *Stecriture*<sup>4</sup>, of the seminar known as “*Transference*” to see what I mean), to take on the translation of Lacan’s work alone is nothing short of irresponsible. It is at this point that we realize the need of *another politics of language*.

### **Fluent in the idiom of the Lacanians**

It’s a movie. Long table, many guests. Father at the head of the table stands up, taps on the wine glass with his fork to attract attention, and says: “*Proponho uma torrada para a noiva e o noivo*”.<sup>5</sup> A Brazilian version of: “A toast for the bride and groom”. It might seem like something from the Marx Brothers, but I’m afraid we do not fare any better when dealing with Lacan’s text in Portuguese (or Spanish or English, for that matter).

I don’t mean to pontificate on how we should or should not read, I just wish to draw attention to the state of Lacan’s work when it gets to us and enquire about the consequences. What we get are twisted texts in which our language is abused to such a point that one may ask whether

somebody is not trying to prove the Lacanian thesis that publishing means just dumping rubbish.<sup>6</sup>

That the style of the man be as it may (aphoristic, Gongoristic, Mallarmean, cryptic, allusive, precious, manneristic, unbearable...) serves, only too frequently, as an alibi for an attitude that anything goes, as well as an editorial carelessness that borders on an absolute lack of respect for the supposed reader. As with so many products or services lacking the minimum quality control, maybe the saying applies that as long as there is a market for them they will be produced and sold as is. I said to a 'Lacanofrenchman' that his book in the Brazilian version was unreadable due to a translation that cannot be qualified (I had to buy it again in French, not due to snobbery but to be able to make some use of it). He replied that his editor told him "it was selling well in Brazil".

"It's selling well" as an answer to "it can't be read" means not only that the author is far less devoted to the cause of 'transmission' than he purports to be, but also that professionals for whom language is the land upon which they walk, the air they breathe, the meat they eat and the water they drink, are quickly satisfied with atrocities like the ones to follow that I will present; exemplary vignettes of what I would like to call, following Jean-Claude Milner, *the loathing of language*. My commentary on these vignettes will be minimal due to my interest being less in the matter at hand and more in the forms in which they arrive into our unhappy languages. I will not dwell upon the details, therefore, for longer than is necessary for the illustrations to be understood. Each one of them could be the starting point of a paper. If anybody feels duly provoked and takes up the challenge, so much the better.

### **Picking the lock**

In the "*Ouverture de ce recueil*"<sup>7</sup>, in *Écrits*, a book from 1714 by one Alexander Pope, *The Rape of the Lock*, is mentioned. This is a chivalrous romance whose plot concerns the circulation of a ringlet of hair stolen from a young lady named Belinda. As "lock", *boucle*, also means a fastening (as for a door) operated by a key, *fechadura* in Portuguese, the whole article dedicated to this passage digresses (to say the least) towards the violation of the fastening of the young lady's virginity. I am not saying that this is uncalled for, just that in any approach to this passage, before giving oneself over to the metonymy of the word 'lock', one must first recognize that it is in the first instance the young lady's lock of hair.

### **The happy sight of it**

Lacan plays with the French translation of *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, the title of an 1882 book by Nietzsche. In French *Le Gai Savoir*; for us *The Gay Science*, he plays by writing it in the following manner: *Le Gai Ça-voir*. A Brazilian paper on the matter falls into all sorts of lucubration about the joy of seeing (*voir*) the Id (the *ça* evoked by Lacan), not even once noting that we are talking about a homophonic play on words regarding a title of the German philosopher. This fact was well known to the French speaking public of the seminar, but this author, writing in Portuguese, remained solemnly ignorant of it. It seems only fair to quote from Nietzsche's book, which the author does not mention, something quite pertinent: "I live in my own house. I don't imitate anybody. I laugh at all the so-called masters who never laughed at themselves".<sup>8</sup>

### **My objection to *falente***

Claudia Berliner, translator and friend, defended because of its undeniable elegance, the translation into Portuguese of *falente* for *parlêtre* ('speaking being'). I argued that, when dealing with a concept and not solely with poetry, to replace 'being' (*ser*) with 'entity' (*ente*) in the portmanteau word (*mot-valise*), implied a problematic deviation on the side of theory. The old *falesser*<sup>9</sup>, though less beautiful, appears to be better adjusted to its function.

### **My appraisal of the signifier *sê-lo***

M.D. Magno made the lucky find of the signifier *sê-lo*, to 'transcreate'<sup>10</sup> *signifiant m'être* ('me-being signifier', homophonic with 'master signifier'). His translation, in my opinion, improves the original and is closer to what Lacan seems to aim at with his neologism.<sup>11</sup>

### **About a purloined card**

Ne boudez pas, j'évoque de biais ce que je répugne à couvrir de la carte forcée de la clinique. A savoir, la juste façon de répondre à la question: "Qui parle?" quand il s'agit du sujet de l'inconscient.  
(Lacan, via Jacques-Alain Miller)<sup>12</sup>

Don't go into a sulk, I am merely referring obliquely to what I am reluctant to cover with the distorting map of clinical medicine. Namely, the right way to reply to the question "who is speaking?", when it is the subject of the unconscious that is at issue.  
(Lacan, via Jacques-Alain Miller, via Alan Sheridan)<sup>13</sup>No lo tomen a mal, evoco al sesgo lo que me resisto a cubrir con el mapa forzado de la clínica. A saber, la manera justa de contestar a la pregunta ¿quién habla?, cuando se trata del sujeto del inconsciente.  
(Lacan, via Jacques-Alain Miller, via Andrés Segovia)<sup>14</sup>Não façam cara feia, evoco de viés o que me repugna encobrir com a carta marcada da clínica. Qual seja, a maneira certa de responder à pergunta quem está falando?, quando se trata do sujeito do inconsciente.  
(Lacan, via Jacques-Alain Miller, via Vera Ribeiro)<sup>15</sup>Não façam beicinho, evoco de viés o que me repugna cobrir com a carta forçada da clínica. A saber, a maneira certa de responder à pergunta "quem está falando?", quando se trata do sujeito do inconsciente.(Lacan, via Jacques-Alain Miller, via Ricardo Goldenberg)

Nobody mentions translating while talking about the impossible professions. It seems quite unfair because to me it is the most impossible of all. This "forced card" that Lacan, invited by Jean Wahl to hear him speak about dialectics, waved in front of his audience of philosophy students, may be of some use in making my point.

In French the expression *forcer la carte à quelqu'un* is not forced. It means to coerce someone to do something they would not want to do, at least not right there and then. It is like when we say we are 'forcing someone's hand'. The French expression comes from the art of the magician. The illusionist offers the deck of cards to the audience, and someone selects a card. He does so without realizing that he is not choosing freely. We shall return briefly to the manner in which clinical practice might be a forced card. In the meantime, let's consider the options that the translator has with Lacan's text.

Alan Sheridan and Andrés Segovia got lost in the geography of Translacania, armed as they were with a cartography worthy of Jorge Luis Borges or Italo Calvino. That "forced map", I recall, elicited all kinds of remarks from a sailor who wanted to set out to sea from the port of Buenos Aires, and came to the conclusion that the problem must have been one of scale.<sup>16</sup>

The American, in the meantime, explains to us that it is the “distorting map of clinical medicine” which prevents the walker finding his way towards the subject of the unconscious. Vera Ribeiro with the marked card she deals us seems to set off in a better direction, but we cannot quite see what is in play in clinical practice with this marked card, and marked so as to deceive which player?

Only Bernardo Carvalho understood how psychoanalytic clinical practice could serve as a *forced* card, when he refused to take it from the hands of a psychoanalyst in a panel discussion regarding art and madness. I do not remember his exact words, but I do recall his irritation with what he called ‘the attitude of the psychoanalysts’ when they put forward their practice as a joker, in order to complete every hand and win the game. And I agree with this writer that clinical practice, like God’s bolt of lightning in the tale, is not an argument.<sup>17</sup> *This* was the card Lacan refused to give to the philosophy students.

But why? Because clinical practice is precisely what calls for a *de jure* justification, and this is not achieved by appealing, with an air of authority, to its *de facto* virtues (whatever they may be). The psychoanalyst is willing to talk with the philosophers in order to proceed with the preparation of the criteria for such reasons, not to make them swallow a notion of *subject* that might be repugnant to their palates, habituated to a diet of *cogito*.<sup>18</sup>

The conditions of the possibility of clinical practice which brings this subject (*sujet*) into existence in the real are not empirical, nor is this subject a fact of nature. To put forward an argument is a necessity, as well as to do so in the same terms in which the notion of subjectivity was hitherto conceptualized. The subversion of the subject, if there were to be one, would be an event of discourse, and its real would indeed be clinically verified, but *not without* precise coordinates of theoretical reasoning, without which it could not even be recognized.

### **I had the screams of the translator, I finished him off!**

Je vous laisse à rechercher dans *Juliette*, voire dans *Les 120 journées*, ces quelques passages où les personnages, tout occupés à assouvir sur ces victimes choisies leur avidité de tourments, entrent dans cette bizarre, singulière et curieuse transe, je vous le répète, plusieurs fois indiquée dans le texte de Sade, et qui s’exprime en ces mots étranges en effet qu’il me faut bien ici articuler : « J’ai eu, s’écrit le tourmenteur, j’ai eu la peau du con ». (Lacan, via Jacques-Alain Miller)<sup>19</sup>

Les dejo buscar en “Juliette”, y hasta en “Los 120 días...”, esos pocos pasajes donde los personajes, ocupados en saciar sobre las víctimas elegidas su avidez de tormentos, entran en ese caprichoso, singular y curioso trance, lo repito, varias veces indicado en el texto de Sade, y que se expresa en estas extrañas palabras que tengo que articular aquí: “He tenido, exclama el torturador, he tenido la piel del imbecil.” (J’ai eu, s’écrit le tourmenteur, j’ai eu la peau du con). (Lacan, via Jacques-Alain Miller, via Irene Agoff)<sup>20</sup>

Deixo-os procurar em *Juliette*, ou então em *Les cent vingt journées*,...o punhado de passagens em que os personagens, inteiramente ocupados em saciar com suas vítimas escolhidas a sua avidez de tormentos, entram num transe bizarro, singular e curioso, que se exprime em palavras tão estranhas, na verdade, que preciso articula-las aqui: Tive os gritos do torturador, acabei com a raça do imbecil. (Lacan, via Jacques-Alain Miller, via Vera Ribeiro)<sup>21</sup>

I will leave you to search in *Juliette*, even in the *One hundred and twenty days*, these few passages where the characters, completely occupied in slaking on these chosen victims their

greed for torments, enter into this bizarre, singular and curious trance, indicated, I repeat, on several occasions in the text of Sade, which is expressed in these strange words, in effect that it is necessary for me to articulate here: “I had,” cries the tormentor, “I had the skin of the cunt”. (Lacan, via Cormac Gallagher)<sup>22</sup>

There are two types of strangeness here, and they are of different degrees: Lacan’s, regarding the words of Sade’s character, and the translator’s, facing the strangeness of Lacan. The latter would be a type of strangeness to the second degree.

The Spanish translator let us know in a footnote that *avoir la peau de quelqu’un* means, colloquially, ‘to take revenge on him’, but opts for a literal version and gives us a skinned idiot. The Brazilian translator decided to render the same perplexity as a figurative meaning, which forced her into a series of contortions and rewritings to throw into Lacan’s account a coherent sentence with what she understood of what he said. That is, as she had concluded that “*j’ai la peau du con*” should be understood as ‘*I’m gonna finish him off*’, well, she had to decide who was being destroyed at that time. She decided it was the executioner. So instead of “*cried the torturer*” she presents us with a “*I had the screams of the torturer*”. Portuguese-speaking readers will ask in vain who it was that made the poor torturer shout: was it Sade? Maybe Lacan? In my opinion, here we should have written: ‘I had the screams of the translator, I finished him off!’, signed: Jacques Lacan.

But Lacan’s astonishment is very different in nature.

Everyone seems to have taken for granted that *con* was being used as an adjective, in which case it actually translates our *babaca*: ‘twat’ or ‘dickhead’. That’s because nobody – except for Cormac Gallagher, whose version solves the enigma of the skin of the twat – went to the trouble of seeking out the bibliographical reference cited by Lacan. And the dishonesty goes so far as to include in a footnote “compare such and such an edition of *The 120 days of Sodom*, or such and such an edition of *Juliette*” without even having opened one or the other. If they had, as my friend Alejandro Viviani showed me, they would have discovered that there is nothing in *the 120 Days...*, and hence it is not a source, but in *The story of Juliette or the prosperity of vice* we find the following:

The cabinet in which the Duc received me was circular and everywhere paneled with mirrors; in the center was a column of porphyry, rising to a height of some ten feet, and before it was a dais. I was told to mount upon it; the valet we’d seen before and who served his master’s pleasure-ceremonies, attached my feet to bronze rings fastened to the block I was standing on, then he raised my arms, secured them by cords, drew them high above my head. It was only then the Duc approached; hitherto he had been reclining on the couch, quietly massaging his prick. Totally nude from waist down, a simple vest of brown satin covered his torso; his arms were bare to the shoulder; under his left arm he had a bundle of withes, thin and flexible, held together by a black ribbon. Of some forty years, the Duc had an exceedingly somber and harsh physiognomy, and I judged that his moral character was not much less severe than his outward appearance.

“Lubin” said he to his valet, “this one looks better than the others. A rounder ass, finer skin. A more interesting face. ’Tis a pity. She’ll but suffer the more.”

So saying, the villain pokes his muzzle between my buttocks, first snuffles, then kisses, finally bites. I emit a shriek.

“Goodness! She is not insensitive. Too bad. We’ve scarce begun.”

Thereupon I feel his talon-like fingernails dig deep into my buttocks, he rakes, he hauls, he tears my skin in several places. More screams from me only animate this scoundrel who next inserts

his fingers into my vagina; they come out bringing with them the skin he has scraped from the walls of that delicate part.

“Lubin,” he then murmured to his valet, exhibiting his bloody fingers, “my dear Lubin, I triumph. Cunt-skin. (*Je triomphe! j’ai la peau du con.*)”<sup>23</sup>

Is the work of reading done with the clarification of this *con*, derived from the Latin *cunus* which gave *cunt*, in English, *coño* in Spanish and *buceta* in Portuguese? Of course not! It has barely begun, but at least the surprise (or should I say the enchantment?) of Lacan, who at the time was collecting examples of the newly invented object (a), regarding the Duke’s ecstasy when displaying, as a trophy, the torn skin of the vagina, becomes far less enigmatic. And maybe this skin could even be put to better use to make a cap that fits a preeminent Argentinean psychoanalyst to wear in her delusional digression about a supposed skinned “cunt” or – why not? – “dickhead”. By the way, as the latter could be an acceptable translation for *con*, here we close (at least in English) the circle of misreading by which the cunt becomes a prick!

### Lacan, traitor of Freud

Nothing seems more opportune than ending these reflections with Lacan *reading* (the gerund is necessary here) a Freudian aphorism: *Wo es war, soll ich werden* and the four and twenty different manners in which Lacan translated it.

Whilst we might assume that he was looking for the version most faithful to the master, we should realize that he was confiscating the expression from Freud, twisting it every which way until he arrived at the form best suited to affect the French he spoke. That’s exactly it: he does something (or endeavours to do something) to his mother language; he abuses his French – as Sade’s Duke abuses his sweet girl.

It makes us wonder whether he is using the German of the other as a means to torture the language to which he himself is chained, perhaps to take it to the limit, to the very point of an impossible separation. The Mallarmean or Joycean gesture. The question is whether by cannibalizing Freud, Lacan not only assimilates his master, but also undergoes a transformation himself. I mean that to translate Freud, to produce a critique of the concept and to elaborate upon it, are one and the same movement.

Perhaps you might say that the Frenchman is more interested in his own language than in the other’s, that the German should serve him and not vice versa. How could I not agree with this opinion? But what about the *che vuoi?* – an expression in Italian but nevertheless a French literary reference – it is not directed to us by chance, when we are not French but are nonetheless faced with a “*là où c’était, [...] dois-je advenir?*”<sup>24</sup> Haroldo de Campos proposed ‘transcreation’ instead of translation, in order to indicate the book’s challenge to the translator as a writer. The book dares you to appropriate the author’s text, at your own risk, not so much to convey his meaning but to allow the passage of the spirit of the letter.

Our own conformist translators, the conservatives or the simply lazy, often abdicate the advantage we have in relation to the French (and the English, by the way), of owning two verbs, *ser* and *estar*<sup>25</sup>, where both the French and the English have but one, *être* and *to be*, and choose to normalize the version, translating *always là où c’était* as ‘onde isso *era*’ (i.e. *ser*).

Taking this option, which responds to a politics of language that is not recognized as such, they lose (and the readers in Brazil and Argentina along with them) all the theoretical and

clinical nuances that Lacan, with so much difficulty – precisely due to one sole verb – tried to pass onto the French, and which would have been so easy by taking advantage of our languages. That is, we deprive ourselves of a resource that gives us not only a more elegant version, but also a more precise concept. I believe that Cortazar was not just being kind when he wrote that Haroldo de Campos' version (to return to him) improved upon the original of one of his poems, I don't recall which, that is, he thought that what he tried to say in Spanish was better said in the Portuguese.

If it were not for the work of Lacan's reading, the *Wo Es war, soll Ich werden* would never have become the maxim of the end, and the ends, of psychoanalysis. There are several essays on this subject and I do not think we need to add another. Let us restrict ourselves to an overview of his reading.

The 31<sup>st</sup> of the "New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis" of 1932 concludes with this sentence: "*Wo Es war, soll Ich werden. Es ist Kulturarbeit etwa wie die Trockenlegung der Zuidersee.*"<sup>26</sup> "Where id was, there ego shall be. It is a work of culture – not unlike the draining of the Zuider Zee".<sup>27</sup> Therefore, as civilization claims land to cultivate from the sea, so psychoanalysis conquers territory from the It (id) for the I (ego).

Besides using a spatial figure of speech (*Wo* means "where"), Freud said neither *das Es* nor *das Ich* "as was his wont when designating the agencies he had used to organize his new topography for the previous ten years".<sup>28</sup> That is, he is using "I" and "it" as pronouns in the sentence, not as nouns, and this is not a nuance that escapes Lacan and which he tries to convey to his readers, even at the cost of some forcing of his own language: "*Là où c'était, peut-on dire, là où s'était, voudrions nous faire qu'on entendît, c'est mon devoir que je vienne à être*".<sup>29</sup> Vera Ribeiro renders the sentence thus: "*Ali onde isso era, como se pode dizer, ou ali onde se era, gostaríamos de fazer com que se ouvisse, é meu dever que eu venha a ser*". The choice of *ser* (here as both *era* and *ser*) is fully justified here because Lacan in 1955 was heavily under the influence of Heidegger's conception of language as 'morada do ser'<sup>30</sup> or 'house of being'. He does not leave room for doubt, since he had previously written:

[...] in the locus *Wo* (Where) *Es* (the subject devoid of any *das* or other objectifying article) *war* (was [*était*] – it is a locus of being that is at stake, and that in this locus), *soll* (it is a duty in the moral sense that is announced here, as is confirmed by the single sentence that follows it, bringing the chapter to a close) *Ich* (I, there must I – just as in French one announced "*ce suis-je*," "it is I," before saying "*c'est moi*," "it's me" *werden* (become [*devenir*] – not occur [*survenir*], or even happen [*advenir*], but be born [*venir au jour*] of this very locus insofar as it is a locus of being).<sup>31</sup>

Ten years later, however, it is not the same situation when he conjectures regarding a *logics of fantasy* and discusses the *act of the analyst*. And here the systematic translation of *être* by *ser* can no longer be justified in any way. My claim to *estar* may seem like a stylistic preciousness, but the description of the analytic act through the half-group of Klein he made in 1968 is incomprehensible if we deprive ourselves of the use of this verb. By way of illustration:

In this 'I think', 'am I there'? [...] In order to 'be there' (*estar*) as unconscious, it is imperative that I do not yet think, as thought, that which pertains to my unconscious. There, where I think, it is in order to no longer be (*estar*) in my place. I am (*estar*) no longer there. 'I am (*estar*) no longer there' in terms of language in the same way as when I get the person who answers my door to say: "Sir is (*estar*) not in", this is a 'I am not there' in so far as it is said.<sup>32</sup>

Why then complicate, with metaphysical considerations, the *là où c'était, je dois advenir*, if it already passes smoothly into Portuguese and expresses our experience as *lá onde estava, devo advir*? Where was I? *Onde é que eu estava com a cabeça*<sup>33</sup>, *mesmo*? Language seems to know that I am not a contemporary of my act, that I always was, but never am, in it. The fact that I might know this changes nothing, given that knowing the logic of what repeats never prevents anyone from once again tripping over the same stone. The duty of becoming is something else since it has the form of the Kantian categorical imperative. It would be the maxim that each analysand had to give of him or herself in each psychoanalysis: to take charge of an invention whose result no-one can foresee nor guarantee. Whether I am able to do it, or if I want to do it, that's another story altogether. In any case it is a question of asking myself if I can be (*estar*) in that which I am doing.

*Translated from Portuguese by Ricardo Goldenberg and Michael Plastow*

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## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> A version of a paper presented at the *Lacanoamerican Reunion of Psychoanalysis of Brasilia*, September 2011.
- <sup>2</sup> Psychoanalyst, member of *Associação Psicanalítica de Porto Alegre*, practising in São Paulo.
- <sup>3</sup> "I didn't want to leave you without coming back with my own – once again. Not only because I told myself that I owed you a farewell for having assisted me this year, assisting the seminar where I have been very straightforward. There is besides, another reason for the farewell: and it is that I'm leaving you, just like that, for Venezuela. Those Latin-Americans, as they are called, unlike those who are here, have neither seen me nor heard me live – well – that does not prevent them from being *Lacanos*. Moreover it seems that it helps. I am transmitted over there through writing and it is said that I have put down roots. In any case this is what they believe. For sure it is the future. And for that reason, going to see interests me. I'm interested to see what happens when my person does not act as a screen for what I teach. It is quite possible that they can make good use of my mathemes. Who knows. If I like it I will stay there in Venezuela. Can you see why I wanted to farewell everyone? You cannot imagine the number of people who are discomforted that I will make an appearance over there, and that I have called together my *lacanoamericanos*. It disturbs those who have been so busy trying to represent me; so much so that my own presence is enough for them to miss the ball". Lacan, Jacques. "The Seminar, Paris, June 10<sup>th</sup> 1980". *Papers of the Freudian School of Melbourne* 1 (1980): 97-101, 98.
- <sup>4</sup> Critical edition of the seminar published in 1983 and condemned by law after the team that put this superb version together was sued by Jacques-Alain Miller. Danielle Arnoux et al. "Bulletin d'une association constitué en juillet 1983 pour produire la transcription critique du séminaire". *Le transfert dans sa disparité subjective, sa prétendue situation, ses excursions technique de l'année lective* 1960/61.
- <sup>5</sup> T.N.: Here the polysemy of the word 'toast' in English has been taken over into Portuguese to produce an absurdity which we can only ineptly render in English as: 'A piece of toast for the bride and groom'.
- <sup>6</sup> *Poubelliciation*. A neologism, like the rest of them, half pun, half criticism or the means of passage of a concept. This one blends *publication*, 'publication', with *poubelle*, 'rubbish bin', in my opinion a criticism of the politics of reading that reigned in the psychoanalytic and scholarly milieu throughout the 60s.
- <sup>7</sup> Lacan, Jacques. "Ouverture de ce recueil". *Écrits*. Paris: Seuil, 1966 : 9-10, 9f. I am referring here to the French edition since in the version of *Écrits* in Spanish this prologue has vanished.
- <sup>8</sup> Nietzsche, Friedrich. *La Gaya Ciencia*. Madrid: Tusquets, 1982, 86.
- <sup>9</sup> The latter has the advantage of allowing us to hear, in Portuguese, an unexpected echo of death (*falecer* means 'to pass away').

- <sup>10</sup> Haroldo de Campos urged translators to run the risk of the author in being creative, whence: ‘transcreation’.
- <sup>11</sup> *Selo* means ‘stamp’ and ‘seal’ and *sê-lo* means ‘be it!’ Of course, it misses the ‘master’ (maître) but who is not aware of this feature of the ‘first’ signifier?
- <sup>12</sup> Lacan, Jacques. “Subversion du sujet et dialectique du désir dans l’inconscient freudien”. *Écrits*. Paris: Seuil, 1966: 793-827, 800.
- <sup>13</sup> Lacan, Jacques. “The subversion of the subject and the dialectic of desire in the Freudian unconscious”. *Écrits, a selection*. Tr. Alan Sheridan. New York/London: Norton, 1977: 292-325, 299.
- <sup>14</sup> Lacan, Jacques. *Escritos*. Tr. Tomás Segovia. Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, 1971, 183.
- <sup>15</sup> Lacan, Jacques. *Escritos*. Tr. Vera Ribeiro. Rio de Janeiro: Jorge Zahar Editor, 1998, 192.
- <sup>16</sup> Borges imagined an ideal map with a 1:1 scale which coincided point by point with the geographical real.
- <sup>17</sup> Three rabbis are having an argument. Two of them agree, the third disagrees. The latter calls out: “Let God’s lightning strike if I am right!” The lightning does strike. The other two look at each other speechless, but one of them says, “That changes nothing, lightning is not an argument!”
- <sup>18</sup> I mention the ‘subject’ because it was the topic of discussion of the lecture: the subject that arises from the formations of the unconscious, and which Lacan opposes (this is the mentioned ‘repugnance’) to give it an empirical base by referring it to psychoanalytical practice.
- <sup>19</sup> Lacan, Jacques. *L’Angoisse : Le Séminaire livre X*. Paris: Seuil, 2004, 193
- <sup>20</sup> Lacan, Jacques. *El Seminario libro X*. Tr. Irene Agoff. Buenos Aires: Paidós, 2005, 198.
- <sup>21</sup> Lacan, Jacques. *O seminário livro X*. Tr. Vera Ribeiro. Rio: Zahar, 2005, 203.
- <sup>22</sup> Lacan Jacques. *Anxiety: Seminar X*. Tr. Cormac Gallagher (non-Millerian version of the seminar): <http://www.lacanireland.com>
- <sup>23</sup> Sade, Marquis de. *Juliette*. Tr. Austryn Wainhouse. New York: Grove Press, 1968, 195f.
- <sup>24</sup> Lacan, Jacques. “La science et la vérité”. *Écrits*. Paris, Seuil, 1966 : 855-876, 864.
- <sup>25</sup> These two different verbs *ser* and *estar*, both in Portuguese and in Spanish, correspond in different ways, to the English verb ‘to be’. In gross terms *ser* conveys a permanent quality, whereas *estar* conveys the sense of a changeable state.
- <sup>26</sup> Freud, Sigmund. “Die Zerlegung der psychischen Persönlichkeit”. *Gesammelte Werke*. Vol. XV. Frankfurt/M: Fischer, 1999: 62-86, 85.
- <sup>27</sup> Freud, Sigmund. “The dissection of the psychical personality”. *SE XXII*. London :Hogarth: 1-182, 79.
- <sup>28</sup> Lacan, Jacques. “The Freudian Thing or the Meaning of the Return to Freud in Psychoanalysis”. *Écrits*. Tr. Bruce Fink. New York/London: Norton, 2006: 334-363, 347.
- <sup>29</sup> Lacan, Jacques. “La chose freudienne ou Sens du retour à Freud en psychanalyse”. *Écrits*. Paris, Seuil, 1966: 401-436, 417f.
- <sup>30</sup> Although *Dasein* is very literally ‘being there’. In *The fundamental concepts of metaphysics*, 1930, when he explains that the “the stone is worldless”, he says “it is what it is, and it is there (*Da*) where it is” and all of that goes with the same *sein*.
- <sup>31</sup> Lacan, Jacques. “The Freudian Thing or the Meaning of the Return to Freud in Psychoanalysis”. *Écrits*. Tr. Bruce Fink. New York/London: Norton, 2006: 334-363, 347.
- <sup>32</sup> Lacan, Jacques. *The Psychoanalytic Act: Seminar 1967-1968*. Lesson of 10<sup>th</sup> January 1968. This passage was translated for this edition by Michael Plastow from: Lacan, Jacques. *L’Acte Psychanalytique: Séminaire 1967-1768*. Paris: Éditions de l’Association Freudienne Internationale, Publication hors commerce. It was translated for this paper as Ricardo Goldenberg considered that the Cormac Gallagher translation of the same passage, given below, seems to convey the notion that *being there*, as unconscious, implies that I think (consciously), as *thoughts*, something regarding my unconscious: “In this “I think” am “I there”? [...] Because it is there as unconscious, again I must not think of what is involved in my unconscious as thinking. Where I think it, I am no longer at home. I am no longer there. “I am no longer there [*je n’y suis plus*]” in terms of language in the same way that I make the person who answers the door say “Sir is not at

home”. It is an “I am not there” in so far as it is said.” Lacan, Jacques. *The Psychoanalytic Act: Seminar 1967-1968*. Lesson of 10<sup>th</sup> January 1968. Private publication.

<sup>33</sup> Brazilian expression for ‘What was I thinking!’, literally: ‘Where was I with my head?’