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T·H·E P·O·S·T C·A·R·D

■ ■ From Socrates to ■ ■
■ ■ Freud and Beyond ■ ■

JACQUES DERRIDA

Translated, with an Introduction and
Additional Notes, by Alan Bass

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LE FACTEUR DE LA VÉRITÉ¹

They thank him for the great truths he has just proclaimed— for they have discovered (O verifier of that which cannot be verified!) that everything he has uttered is absolutely true;— although at first, the good people confess, they had had the suspicion that it might indeed be a simple fiction. Poe answers that, for his part, he never doubted it. —Baudelaire

DIVESTED PRETEXTS

Psychoanalysis, supposedly, is found.

When one believes one finds it, it is psychoanalysis itself, supposedly, that finds itself.

When it finds, supposedly, it finds itself/is found—something.²

To be satisfied, here, with deforming the generative, as it is called, grammar of these three or four statements.

Where then? Where does psychoanalysis, always, already re-find itself, where is it to be re-found?

That in which, finding itself, it is found, if finding itself it is found, let us call text. And let us do so not only in order to recall that the theoretical and practical inscription of psychoanalysis (in the text as “language,” “writing,” “culture,” “mythology,” “the history of religions, of philosophy, of literature, of science, of medicine,” etc., in the text as a “historical,” “economic,” “political,” “instinctual,” etc., field, in the heterogeneous and conflictual weave of *différance*, which is elsewhere defined as *general text* and without border) must have effects that have to be taken into ac-

1. TN. The title of this essay must remain untranslated in order to capture the double meaning of *facteur*: both postman and factor. Thus, the postman/factor of truth, the question of the delivery of truth in psychoanalysis.

2. TN. *La psychanalyse, à supposer, se trouve. Quand on croit la trouver, c'est elle, à supposer, qui se trouve. Quand elle trouve, à supposer, elle se trouve—quelque chose.* The double meaning of reflexive verbs in French is being played on here. *Se trouver* can mean both to find itself and to be found. Thus, these are three or four statements, since the third sentence must be read in two ways. The passage from three to four via irreducible doubleness is a constant theme in Derrida's works. Throughout this essay, I have given *se trouver* in brackets whenever this wordplay occurs.

count. But also in order to demarcate the space of a determined question.

Unless we are concerned, here, with a singular logic: the species including the genus.

For example: what happens in the psychoanalytic deciphering of a text when the latter, the deciphered itself, already explicates itself? When it says more about itself than does the deciphering (a debt acknowledged by Freud more than once)? And especially when the deciphered text inscribes in itself *additionally* the scene of the deciphering? When the deciphered text deploys more force in placing onstage and setting adrift the analytic process itself, up to its very last word, for example, the truth?

For example, the truth. But is truth an example? What happens—and what is dispensed with—when a text, for example a so-called literary fiction—but is this still an example?—puts truth onstage? And when in doing so it delimits the analytic reading, assigns the analyst his position, shows him seeking truth, and even finding it, shows him discoursing on the truth of the text, and then in general proffering the discourse on truth, the truth on truth? What happens in a text capable of such a scene? A text confident, in its program, of situating analytic activity grappling with the truth?

This surplus does not convey the mastery of an author, and even less the meaning of fiction. Rather, it would be the regular effect of an energetic squaring-off. Within which truth would play a piece: lifted, by the philosopher or the analyst, from within a more powerful functioning.

As an apologue or parabolic pretext, and in order first to rehearse the question of a certain multiplicative coefficient of the truth, I am opening the *Traumdeutung* approximately in its middle.

Examining the history of repression between *Oedipus Rex* and *Hamlet*, demolishing all the differences between (1) the “Oedipus complex,” (2) the legend, and (3) Sophocles’ tragedy, Freud establishes a rule: everything in a text that does not constitute the semantic core of the two “typical dreams” he has just defined (incest with mother and murder of father), everything that is foreign to the absolute *nudity* of this oneiric content, belongs to the “secondary revision of the material” (*sekundären Bearbeitung des Stoffes*). The formal (textual, in the usual sense) differences that come, as if from the outside, to affect the semantic structure, here the “Oedipus complex,” thus constitute secondary revisions. For example, when one views *Oedipus Rex* as a tragedy of destiny, as a conflict between men and the gods, a theological drama, etc., one has taken

as essential what actually remains an after-the-fact construction, a garment, a disguise, a material added to the literal *Stoff* precisely in order to mask its nudity.

The denuding of this *Stoff*, the discovery of the semantic material—such would be the end of analytic deciphering. By denuding the meaning behind the formal disguises, by undoing the work, analytic deciphering exhibits the primary content beneath the secondary revisions.

Is the nudity of the meaning hidden beneath the veiling forms of secondary revision a metaphor? Or already a metaphor of metaphor? A metaphor in order to say metaphoricity? Bouhours, as cited by Condillac in *On the Art of Writing*: “Metaphors are transparent veils which allow to be seen that which they cover, or costumes beneath which one recognizes the costumed person.”

After having opposed the (primary) semantic content to the (secondary) formal revision, Freud, in parentheses, refers to what he said above about dreams of exhibiting: “Its [the Oedipus legend’s] further modification originates once again in a misconceived secondary revision of the material, which has sought to exploit it for theological purposes. (Cf. the dream-material in dreams of exhibiting, pp. 243 f.)” (IV, 264.)

Exhibiting, denuding, undressing, unveiling: the familiar acrobatics of the metaphor of the truth. And one just as well could say the metaphor of metaphor, the truth of truth, the truth of metaphor. When Freud intends to denude the original *Stoff* beneath the disguises of secondary fabrication, he is anticipating the truth of the text. The latter, starting from its original content, is to be coordinated with its naked truth, but also with truth as nakedness.

The subchapter to which Freud refers us is very short: six pages. It deals with certain dreams of shame or embarrassment (*Verlegenheitstraum*). The dreamer is embarrassed about his nakedness (*Nacktheit*). These six pages contain two to four literary references. Two to four because in question each time is an “initial” text taken up and transformed by a “second” text: Homer by Keller, Andersen by Fulda, which, no more than the *illustrative* recourse to literary material, also provokes no question on Freud’s part.

Dreams of nakedness, then, provoking a feeling of modesty or shame (*Scham*). They are “typical,” precisely, only by virtue of their association with distress, embarrassment, discomfort. This “gist of [their] subject-matter” can then lend itself to all kinds of transformations, elaborations, changes. Nakedness gives rise to substitutes. The lack of clothing, or undress (*Entkleidung, Un-*

bekleidung), is displaced onto other attributes. The same typical core organizes the dream of the former officer pushed into the street without his saber, without his necktie, or wearing civilian check trousers. All the examples proposed by Freud concern men, and men who exhibit the lack of a phallic attribute, or rather who adopt this exhibitionistic activity. Or, more precisely still: nakedness does not exhibit the penis or the absence of the penis, but the absence of the phallus as an attribute supplementing a possible fault, the absence of the colossal double. Already a certain chain is indicated: truth-unveiled-woman-castration-shame. Schreber: "Besides, we know in our hearts that men's lust is aroused much less, if at all, by the sight of male nudes; yet female nudes arouse *both* sexes to the same degree."

Another typical invariant: the contrast between the unbearable shame of the dreamer and the apparent indifference of the onlookers. The dreamer alone sees himself naked. And in seeing himself naked he is alone. Here, Freud says, "is a suggestive point." Everything transpires as if two parts, two "pieces" (*Stücke*) were "out of harmony with each other" in the dream. The onlookers *should* look, should mock or become indignant, but they do not. There is here a force or a motion that the dreamer's desire must have set aside. Only the other motion, the exhibitionistic one, remains and maintains its power (*macht*). What is typical in such a dream is precisely this "contradiction." In order to describe this contradiction, and also in order to explain it, Freud needs an example, a literary illustration, what he calls "an interesting piece of evidence" which we happen to "possess" (*Wir besitzen ein interessantes Zeugnis dafür*). We possess an interesting piece of evidence: this is Benveniste's gesture and very word in referring to Aristotle's categories, which seem to crop up at just the right moment in order to illustrate his own demonstration.³ We see here another example of the illustrative jubilation which treats the very element of its "scientific" discourse as a marvelous paradigm *there to be found* [*se trouve là*], happily available for the instructing discourse. And most often in the form of a fable, a story, a tale. "For it [the content of the typical dream] has become the basis (*Grundlage*) of a fairy tale (*Märchen*) which is familiar to us all in Hans Andersen's version, *The Emperor's New Clothes*, and which has quite recently been put into verse by Ludwig Fulda in his *Der Talisman*. Hans Andersen's fairy

3. I have attempted to analyze the framework and implications of this procedure in "The Supplement of Copula," in *Margins*.

tale tells us how two impostors weave the Emperor a costly garment which, they say, will be visible only to persons of virtue and loyalty. The Emperor walks out in this invisible garment, and all the spectators, intimidated by the fabric's power to act as a touchstone, pretend not to notice the Emperor's nakedness.

"This is just the situation in our dream. It is hardly rash to assume that the unintelligibility of the dream's content (*der unverständliche Trauminhalt*) as it exists in the memory has led to its being recast in an *Einkleidung* [the word is more important here than ever: the translation reads "form designed," thereby reducing the metaphoric fold, the very one that I wish to emphasize here, and that Freud too had begun by erasing: thus, a garment that disguises and falsifies] designed to make sense (*sinnreich*) of the situation. That situation, however, is in the process deprived (*beraubt*) of its original meaning (*ursprünglichen Bedeutung*) and put to extraneous uses. But, as we shall see later, it is a common thing for the conscious thought-activity of a second psychical system to misunderstand the content of a dream in this way, and this misunderstanding must be regarded as one of the factors (*Faktor*) in determining the final form assumed by dreams" (IV, 243).

Freud then gives the key to the "transcription" (*Umdeutung*): "The impostor is the dream and the Emperor is the dreamer himself; the moralizing purpose [the modesty of those good subjects who cannot or will not see the king's nakedness] of the dream reveals an obscure knowledge of the fact that the latent dream-content is concerned with forbidden wishes that have fallen victim to repression. For the context in which dreams of this sort appear during my analyses of neurotics leaves no doubt that they are based upon memories from earliest childhood. It is only in our childhood that we are seen in inadequate clothing (*in mangelhafter Bekleidung*) both by members of our family and by strangers—nurses, maid-servants, and visitors; and it is only then that we feel no shame at our nakedness.* [Freud's note.]* A child plays a part in the fairy tale as well; for it was a small child who suddenly exclaimed: 'but he has nothing on!'" (IV, 244).

Freud pays no attention to a fold in the text, to a structural complication which envelops his discourse. Which is ineluctably to be found there (*s'y trouver*).

What does he state first of all? that the literary narrative is a secondary elaboration, and thus an *Einkleidung*—this is Freud's word—, a formal garment, a covering, the disguising of a typical dream, of its original and infantile content. The fairy tale dissimu-

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lates or disguises the nudity of the *Stoff*. Like all narratives, like all secondary elaborations, the tale veils a nudity.

Now, what is the nature of the nudity that it covers up in this way? It is the nature of nudity: the dream of nakedness itself and its essential affect, shame. For the nature of the nudity thus veiled/unveiled is that nudity does not belong to nature, and that its truth is in shame.

The hidden theme of *The Emperor's New Clothes* is the hidden theme. What the formal, literary, secondary *Einkleidung* veils and unveils is the dream of veiling/unveiling, the unity of the veil (veiling/unveiling), the disguise, and the denuding. Such a unity finds itself [*se trouve*] in a seamless structure, placed onstage in the form of a nudity and a garment that are both invisible, in the form of a cloth visible for some and invisible for others, a nudity both inapparent and exhibited. The same material hides and shows the oneiric *Stoff*, which is to say it hides and shows the truth of what is present without a veil. If one takes into account the more than metaphoric equation between veil, text, and textile, Andersen's text has the text as its theme. Or more precisely the determination of the text as a veil within the space of the truth, the reduction of the text to a movement of *aleitheia*. The fairy tale puts Freud's text onstage when the latter explains that the text, for example the text of the tale, is an *Einkleidung* of the nakedness of the dream of nakedness. What Freud states about secondary elaboration (Freud's explicating text) already finds itself placed onstage and represented in advance in the explicated text (Andersen's fairy tale). The latter also described the analytic scene, the position of the analyst, the forms of his discourse, the metaphoric-conceptual structures of what he seeks and what he finds. One text finds itself, is found [*se trouve*] in the other.

Does that mean, then, that there is no difference between the two texts? Yes, of course, many and many a difference. But their co-implication is more contorted than one might believe. It will be said that Freud's text has a scientific value, or pretensions to such: it is not a literary fiction. But what is the criterion of the last analysis for such a distinction? Its self-evidence appears no more certain from a formal point of view than from a semantic point of view. One might say that their content is equivalent, that they mean the same thing. As for the "form" of Freud's text, it derives no more from traditional scientific discourse than from any classified fictional genre. Is the *Traumdeutung* related to the *New Clothes* as the

The analyst? who's he? Le doesn't belong anywhere

what a brilliant interpretation of a fairy tale!
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statement of a law to the narration of an instance? But the instance here is one of language, where the event disappears into the veils in which the discourse of science is implied (the king, the law, the truth, nakedness, etc.).

In attempting to distinguish science from fiction, one finally will resort to the criterion of truth. And in asking oneself "What is truth?" one will come back very quickly, beyond the waystations of adequation or of *homoiosis*, to the notion of unveiling, of revelation, of laying bare what is, such as it is, in its Being. Who will allege then that the *Clothes* do not put the truth itself onstage? that is, the possibility of the true as a denuding? and as a denuding of the king, the master, the father, the subjects? And if the shame of the denuding had something to do with woman or with castration, the figure of the king would play all the roles here.

A "literature," then, can produce, can place onstage, and put forth something like the truth. Therefore it is more powerful than the truth of which it is capable. Does such a "literature" permit itself to be read, to be questioned, or even deciphered according to the psychoanalytic schemas that have emerged from what this literature itself produces? The denuding of denuding, such as Freud proposes it, the denuding of the motif of nudity such as it would be secondarily elaborated or disguised (*eingekleidet*) by Andersen's tale, will have been exhibited/dissimulated in advance by the tale, which therefore no longer belongs to the space of decidable truth. According to an abyssal structure to be determined, this space is overflowed by powers of simulacrum. The analytic scene, the denuding, and the deconstitution of the *Einkleidung* are all produced by *The Emperor's New Clothes* in a scene of writing that unclothes, without seeming to, the master meaning, the master of meaning, the king of the truth and the truth of the king. Psychoanalysis finds itself/is found [*se trouve*]^{vs}—everything that it finds—in the text that it decipheres. More than itself. What are the consequences of this, as concerns the truth and as concerns the text? Where are we led to?

vs knowledge

THE SURPLUS OF EVIDENCE
OR THE LACK IN ITS PLACE

a little too self evident

What is at stake in this question can be measured in very diverse ways. Within the limits of the cultural field to which I can refer, and

taking into account an analysis begun elsewhere,⁴ I believe that one of the stages of the elaboration of this problematic, today, must be the reading of Freud proposed by Jacques Lacan. And, more narrowly, within the space at my disposal here, the "Seminar on *The Purloined Letter*."⁵

In France, the "literary criticism" marked by psychoanalysis had not asked the question of the text. Its interest was elsewhere, as was its wealth. This can be said without injustice, apparently, of Marie Bonaparte's psychobiography, of the psychoanalyses of material imagination, of existential psychoanalysis, of psychocriticism, of the thematist phenomenology tinted with psychoanalysis, etc.

It is entirely otherwise in the "Seminar on *The Purloined Letter*." Or so it appears. Although Lacan has never directly and systematically been interested in the so-called "literary" text, and although the problematic of *Das Unheimliche* ["The Uncanny"] does not intervene in his discourse to my knowledge, the general question of the text is at work unceasingly in his writings, where the logic of the signifier disrupts naive semanticism. And Lacan's "style" was constructed so as to check almost permanently any access to an isolatable content, to an unequivocal, determinable meaning beyond writing.

Three other claims on our interest. They derive more precisely from the "Seminar on *The Purloined Letter*."

1. The "Seminar" deals with Poe, with an example of the so-

4. *Passim*, and more punctually, according to the basted effect of certain footnotes, all of them active in their program of ferreting out small texts of Freud's, prudently left in corners, animal-machines camouflaged in shadows, threatening the security of a space and a logic. Here, in particular, I must presuppose "Freud and the Scene of Writing" (as concerns "The Note on the Mystic Writing Pad," 1925), in *Writing and Difference* (1966-67); "The Double Session" (as concerns *Das Unheimliche*, 1919, see especially notes 32, 52, and 67), in *Dissemination* (1969-72); "Outwork" (as concerns *Das Medusenhaupt*, 1922, see note 38), also in *Dissemination*. A note in *Positions* (1971-72, p. 107 n.44) announced this reading of the "Seminar on *The Purloined Letter*," which was first the object of a lecture at the Johns Hopkins University in November 1971.

As concerns Freud, I refer throughout to the works of Sarah Kofman (*L'Enfance de l'art*, Paris: Payot, 1970; *Camera obscura—de l'idéologie*, Paris: Galilée, 1973; *Quatre Romans analytiques*, Paris: Galilée, 1974) and to Jean-Michel Rey, *Parcours de Freud* (Paris: Galilée, 1974). And, for a rigorous reading of Lacan, to the fundamental and indispensable book by Jean-Luc Nancy and Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, *Le Titre de la lettre* (Paris: Galilée, 1973).

5. TN. Throughout, I will refer to the English version of the Seminar, translated by Jeffrey Mehlman, in *French Freud, Yale French Studies*, no. 48, 1972. All references will be given in the text by the letter S and a page number.

called fantastic literature which mobilizes and overflows *Das Unheimliche*.

2. Although it is not chronologically the first of Lacan's *Écrits*, the "Seminar" is placed at the head of the collection, prefaced by an opening that grants it a determining strategic place.⁶ And, right from the opening, the analysis of *The Purloined Letter* is anticipated by a horizon: the question of the truth in its relation to fiction. After having granted the "Seminar" "the privilege of opening the progression [of the *Écrits*] despite its diachrony," Lacan names that which "is no more feigned than the truth when it inhabits fiction." To inhabit fiction: is this, for the truth, to make fiction true or truth fictive? Is this an alternative? a true or fictive one?

3. Finally, the "Seminar" belongs to an investigation of the "repetition compulsion" (*Wiederholungszwang*) which, in the group of texts from 1919 to 1920 (*Beyond the Pleasure Principle, Das Unheimliche*) transforms, at least in principle (see *The Double Session*, notes 52 and 67), the relation of psychoanalysis to literary fiction. All of Lacan's work supposes that one should take seriously the problematic of *Jenseits* (*Beyond . . .*), the very problematic that for so many psychoanalysts appears mythological, poetic, speculative. The issue, then, is to take the *Wiederholungszwang* back in

6. Given in 1955, written in 1956, published in 1957, it is in 1966 that the Seminar receives its place at the head of the *Écrits*, following an order which, although no longer chronological, perhaps is not simply derived from the theoretico-didactic system. This order could organize, perhaps, a certain scene of the *Écrits*. In any event, the necessity of this priority finds itself confirmed, recalled, and underlined by the presentation of the *Écrits* in the "Points" collection (1970): ". . . the text which maintains the gateway post that it has elsewhere will be essayed . . ." For whoever might wish to limit the import of the questions asked here, nothing prevents their being contained in the *place* which its "author" gives the Seminar: gateway post. "Le poste [in the sense of position] differs from la poste [in the sense of mail] only by gender," says Littré. [An explanation of the various editions and translations of Lacan: Derrida refers throughout to the two French editions of Lacan's *Écrits*, the complete one-volume edition (Paris: Seuil, 1966), and the two-volume selection, with a new preface by Lacan, published in the "Points" collection (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1970). I will refer to the former throughout as *Écrits* (F), and to the latter as *Points*. The English version, a selection, also called *Écrits*, translated by Alan Sheridan (New York: Norton, 1977), will be referred to as *Écrits* (E). The latter volume does not contain the "Seminar," which is why I refer to the Mehlman translation here. In his translator's note, Alan Sheridan states that the selection of essays for the English *Écrits* is "Lacan's own" (p. vii). Thus, for reasons to be determined, something has changed: the "Seminar" no longer has the gateway post that Lacan previously had emphasized, and, as just stated, does not appear in the volume at all.]

hand, and to pursue its consequences in a logic of the signifier: "Our inquiry has led us to the point of recognizing that the repetition automatism⁷ (*Wiederholungszwang*) finds its basis in what we have called the *insistence* of the signifying chain. We have elaborated that notion itself as a correlate of the *ex-sistence* (or: eccentric place) in which we must necessarily locate the subject of the unconscious if we are to take Freud's discovery seriously." (S., p. 39) These are the opening lines of the "Seminar."

Which will demonstrate, in effect, "the pre-eminence of the signifier over the subject," "the supremacy of the signifier in the subject." The subject is no more the master or author of the signifier than meaning is. The subject does not command, emit, or orient, give rise to place, meaning, or origin. If there is a subject of the signifier, it is in being subject to the law of the signifier. The subject's place is assigned by the signifier's recourse, by the signifier's literal topology and by the rule of its displacements. First consequence: this analysis of a "literary" text does without⁸ any reference to the author (Freud never believed this had to be given up), that is, to Poe, whose psychobiography organizes Bonaparte's entire analysis. So much for the reference to the author of the text. But the latter is not "the author of the letter" whose *circulation* (my italics) Lacan examines. Thus, second consequence, "the author of the letter" too, "remains out of play." "From then on, the responsibility of the author of the letter takes second place to that of its holder" (S., p. 58). There is a holding, but not an appropriation, of the letter. The latter is never possessed, either by its sender or by its addressee. "We say: the *holder* and not the *possessor*. For it becomes clear that the addressee's proprietorship of the letter may be no less debatable than that of anyone else into whose hands it comes . . ." (S., p. 58).

This letter, apparently, has no proprietor. It is apparently the

7. TN. Lacan consistently renders *Wiederholungszwang* as "repetition automatism," for reasons that Mehlman explains (S, p. 39, n.1). The more familiar English term is "repetition compulsion."

8. Let us specify immediately, for more clarity: does without any reference to the author almost totally, does without reference to the author apparently, as we will see further on.

On several occasions the *Ecrits* denounce the "resistance" the analyst betrays via the psychobiographical reference to the writer. While subscribing to this suspicion, one can extend it to a certain formalist neutralization of the effects of the signature. Which supposes the opening of another (theoretical and more than theoretical) space for the elaboration of these questions. The very opening in which we are engaged here.

property of no one. It has no proper meaning, no proper content, apparently, that bears on its itinerary. Structurally, then, it is *volante* and *volée*.⁹ And this theft/flight would not occur if the letter had a meaning, or at least if it were constituted by the content of its meaning, if it limited itself to being meaningful and to being determined by the legibility of this meaning: "And the mobilization of the elegant society whose frolics we are following would as well have no meaning if the letter itself were content with having one" (S., p. 56).

Lacan does not say that the letter has no meaning: it is not content with having one. This can be understood: with having, meaning, and there is something else, more or less, than meaning in this letter which displaces itself and mobilizes. This can also be understood: with having one, one meaning, and the possible multiplicity would provide the impetus. In any event, as concerns meaning, according to Lacan, the letter itself is not content with having one. What would happen if one could demonstrate that as concerns meaning, according to Lacan, the letter itself were content with having one, and one alone? We are not there yet.

That the signifier apparently cannot permit itself to be taken back to its emitting origin, that it depends neither on the signified, nor on the subject, which on the contrary it determines via its own movements ("the displacement of the signifier determines the subjects in their acts," S. p. 60)—all this *would have* as its consequence that the signifier, in its letter, as a sealed text and as a locality, remains and falls in the end. Thus, we *would have* two remainders. 1. A remainder that can be destroyed precisely because it is a surplus. The minister has left behind a letter in order to replace the one he has stolen: "A *remainder* that no analyst will neglect, trained as he is to retain whatever is significant, without always knowing what to do with it: the letter, left in exchange by the Minister, and which the Queen's hand is now free to roll into a ball" (S., p. 42, mod.). 2. A remainder that is indestructible precisely because it is elusive, the "unforgettable" insistence of the purloined letter which determines repetition and the "persistence of conduct": "The Minister then is not *altogether* mad in his insane stagnation, and that is why he will behave according to the mode of neurosis. Like the man who withdrew to an island to forget, what? he has forgotten—so the Minis-

9. TN. *The Purloined Letter* in French is *La lettre volée*. *Voler* has the double sense of to steal and to fly: thus the meaning of the stolen letter always flies off, it is structurally *volante* (flying, stealing) and *volée* (flown, stolen).

ter, through not making use of the letter, comes to forget it. As is expressed by the persistence of his conduct. But the letter, no more than the neurotic's unconscious, does not forget him. It forgets him so little that it transforms him more and more in the image of her who offered it to his capture, so that he now will surrender it, following her example, to a similar capture.

"The features of that transformation are noted, and in a form so characteristic in their apparent gratuitousness that they might validly be compared to the return of the repressed" (S., p. 65).

If the critique of a certain semanticism constitutes an indispensable phase in the elaboration of a theory of the text, then one may discern in the "Seminar" a very distinct advance in relation to an entire kind of post-Freudian psychoanalytic criticism. Without precipitation toward the semantic, that is, thematic, content of a text, the organization of the signifier is taken into account. In its materiality as well as its formality.

In its materiality: not the empirical materiality of the sensory signifier (*scripta manent*), but the materiality due, on the one hand, to a certain *indivisibility* (this "materiality is *odd* [*singulière*] in many ways, the first of which is not to admit partition. Cut a letter in small pieces, and it remains the letter it is—and this in a completely different sense than *Gestalttheorie* could account for with the dormant vitalism which informs its notion of the whole." S., p. 53, mod.), and on the other hand, to a certain *locality*. A locality which itself is non-empirical and *non-real* since it gives rise to that which is not where it is, that which is "missing from its place," is not found where it is found or (but is this the same thing?) *is found* [*se trouve*] where it *is not found*. The notions of indivisibility (protection from partition) and of locality are themselves indissociable; they condition each other, and later we will have to examine them simultaneously. Somewhere, perhaps, their function could be to rivet us, to make us arrive, once more, at that which properly links the signature to the singular. Which the unity of the signifier would guarantee, in exchange for an assurance that it receives in return. But we are not there yet. Here, first of all, is what solders, beneath the conceptual heading of the *letter* or of the *materiality of the signifier*, the indivisible to the local: "But if it is first of all on the materiality of the signifier that we have insisted, that materiality is *odd* [*singulière*] in many ways, the first of which is not to admit partition . . . For the signifier is a unit in its very uniqueness, being by nature symbol only of an absence. Which is why we cannot say of the purloined letter that, like other objects, it must be *or* not be in a

particular place but that unlike them it will be *and* not be where it is, wherever it goes . . . For it can *literally* be said that something is missing from its place only of what can change it: the symbolic. For the real, whatever upheaval we subject it to, is always in its place; the real carries its place glued to its heel, ignorant of what might exile it from it." (S, pp. 54–55; mod.)

Question of the letter, question of the materiality of the signifier: perhaps it will suffice to change a letter, perhaps even less than a letter, in the expression *manque à sa place* [lack in its place, missing from its place], perhaps it will suffice to introduce into this expression a written *a*, that is, an *a* without accent mark, in order to make apparent that if the lack has its place [*manque a sa place*]¹⁰ in this atomistic topology of the signifier, if it occupies a determined place with defined contours, then the existing order will not have been upset: the letter will always refind its proper place, a circumvented lack (certainly not an empirical, but a transcendental one, which is better yet, and more certain), the letter will be where it always will have been, always should have been, intangible and indestructible via the detour of a *proper*, and properly *circular*, itinerary. But we are not there yet.

Lacan, then, is attentive to the letter, that is, to the materiality of the signifier. To its formality also, which determines the subject as much as does the site of the literal atom: "Subjectivity originally is of no relation to the real, but of a syntax which engenders in the real the signifying mark."¹¹

A break with naive semanticism and psycho-biographism, an elaboration of a logic of the signifier (in its literal materiality and syntactic formality), an assumption of the problematic of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*: such are the most general forms of an advance legible in the "Seminar" at first glance. But the excess of evidence always demands the supplement of inquiry.

Now we must come closer, reread, question.

From the outset, we recognize the classical landscape of applied psychoanalysis. Here applied to literature. Poe's text, whose status is never examined—Lacan simply calls it "fiction"—, finds itself invoked as an "example." An example destined to "illustrate," in a

10. TN. Derrida is playing on the fact that Lacan's conception of the phallus as signifier, *le manque à sa place*, the lack in its place, sounds the same as *le manque a sa place*, the lack has its place. This reading should be extended to the subtitle of this section, which can be read in many ways, e.g. "or the lack in its place," "where the lack has its place," etc.

11. TN. *Ecrits* (F), p. 50.

didactic procedure, a law and a truth forming the proper object of a seminar. Literary writing, here, is brought into an *illustrative* position: "to illustrate" here meaning to read the general law in the example, to make clear the meaning of a law or of a truth, to bring them to light in striking or exemplary fashion. The text is in the service of the truth, and of a truth that is taught, moreover: "Which is why we have decided to illustrate for you today the truth which may be drawn from that moment in Freud's thought under study—namely, that it is the symbolic order which is constitutive for the subject—by demonstrating in a story the decisive orientation which the subject receives from the itinerary of a signifier.

"It is that truth, let us note, which makes the very existence of fiction possible" (S, p. 40).

Again, illustration, and the illustration of instruction, Freud's instruction: "What Freud teaches us in the text that we are commenting on is that the subject must pass through the channels of the symbolic, but what is illustrated here is more gripping still: it is not only the subject, but the subjects, grasped in their intersubjectivity, who line up . . ." (S, p. 60).

The "truth which may be drawn from that moment in Freud's thought under study," the truth with which the most decorative and pedagogical literary illustration is coordinated, is not, as we will see, this or that truth, but is the truth itself, the truth of the truth. It provides the "Seminar" with its rigorously philosophical import.

One can identify, then, the most classical practice. Not only the practice of philosophical "literary criticism," but also Freud's practice each time he demands of literature examples, illustrations, testimony, and confirmation in relation to knowledge, truth, and laws that he treats elsewhere in another mode. Moreover, if Lacan's statements on the relation between fiction and truth are less clear and less unequivocal elsewhere, here there is no doubt about the order.

"Truth inhabits fiction" cannot be understood in the somewhat perverse sense of a fiction more powerful than the truth which inhabits it, the truth that fiction inscribes within itself. In truth, the truth inhabits fiction as the master of the house, as the law of the house, as the economy of fiction. The truth executes the economy of fiction, directs, organizes, and makes possible fiction: "It is that truth, let us note, which makes the very existence of fiction possible" (S, p. 40).

The issue then is to ground fiction in truth, to guarantee fiction its conditions of possibility in truth, and to do so without even indicating, as does *Das Unheimliche*, literary fiction's eternally re-

newed resistance to the general law of psychoanalytic knowledge. Additionally, Lacan never asks what distinguishes one literary fiction from another. Even if every fiction were founded in or made possible by the truth, perhaps one would have to ask from what kind of fiction something like literature, here *The Purloined Letter*, derives, and what effects this might have on that very thing which appears to make it possible.

This first limit contains the entire "Seminar," and it reprints its marks indefinitely on it: what the literary example yields is a *message*. Which will have to be deciphered on the basis of Freud's teaching. Reprint: "The Opening of This Collection" (October 1966, ten years after the "Seminar") speaks of "Poe's message deciphered and coming back from him, the reader, in that to read it, it says itself to be no more feigned than the truth when it inhabits fiction" (*Ecrits*, p. 16).

What Lacan analyzes, decomposing it into its elements, its origin, and its destination, uncovering it in its truth, is a *story* [*histoire*].

The word *story* [*histoire*] appears at least four times from the second page. What serves as an example is a "story":

a) "Which is why we have decided to illustrate for you today the truth which may be drawn from that moment in Freud's thought under study—namely, that it is the symbolic order which is constitutive for the subject—by demonstrating in a *story* [*histoire*] the decisive orientation which the subject receives from the itinerary of a signifier" (S, p. 40).

b) "It is that truth, let us note, which makes the very existence of fiction possible. And in that case, a fable is as appropriate as any other *story* [*histoire*] for bringing it to light . . ." (S, p. 40; mod.).

c) "Which is why, without seeking any further, we have chosen our example from the very *story* [*histoire*] in which the dialectic of the game of even or odd—from whose study we have but recently profited—occurs" (S, p. 40).

d) "It is, no doubt, no accident that this *story* [*histoire*] revealed itself propitious to pursuing a course of inquiry which had already found support in it" (S, pp. 40–41; mod.).

This story is certainly that of a letter, of the theft and displacement of a signifier. But what the "Seminar" treats is only the content of this story, what is justifiably called its history, what is recounted in the account, the internal and narrated face of the narration. Not the narration itself. The "Seminar's" interest in the agency of the signifier in its letter seizes upon this agency to the

extent that it constitutes, precisely, on the first approach, the exemplary content, the meaning, the written of Poe's fiction, as opposed to its writing, its signifier, and its narrating form. The displacement of the signifier, therefore, is analyzed as a signified, as the recounted object of a short story.

One might be led to believe, at a given moment, that Lacan is preparing to take into account the (narrating) narration, the complex structure of the scene of writing played out within it, the very curious place of the narrator. But once it is glimpsed, the analytic deciphering excludes this place, neutralizes it, or, more precisely, along lines we will follow, allows the narrator to dictate an effect of neutralizing exclusion (the "narration" as "commentary") that transforms the entire "Seminar" into an analysis fascinated by a content. Which makes it miss a scene. When it sees two ("There are two scenes." S, p. 41), there are three. At least. And when it sees one or two "triads," there is always the supplement of a square whose opening complicates the calculations.

How is this neutralization operated, and what are its effects, if not its aims?

There is a first moment, then, when it seems that the position of the narrator and the narrating operation are going to intervene in the deciphering of "Poe's message." Certain distinctions made at the moment when the "tale" is presented lead in this direction: "As you know, we are talking about the tale which Baudelaire translated under the title: *La lettre volée*. At first reading, we may distinguish a drama, its narration, and the conditions of that narration" (S, p. 41). The "drama" is the recounted action, the (narrated) *history* which forms the "Seminar's" proper object. As for the narration, at the very moment when it is invoked, we find it reduced to a "commentary" that "doubles" the drama, something that stages and makes visible, with no specific intervention of its own, like a transparent element, a general diaphanousness. Later on, the issue will be one of the "general narrator." "The narration, in fact, doubles the drama with a commentary without which no *mise en scène* would be possible. Let us say that the action would remain, properly speaking, invisible in the theater—aside from the fact that the dialogue would be expressly and by dramatic necessity devoid of whatever meaning it might have for an audience:—in other words, nothing of the drama could be grasped, neither seen nor heard, without, dare we say, the indirect lighting which the narration, in each scene, casts on the point of view that one of the actors had while performing it.

"There are two scenes . . ." (S, p. 41; mod.). There follows the analysis of the two triangles, the content of the "tale," the object of the analytic deciphering.

After which, the narrator, the narration, and the operation of the *mise en scène*, the staging, are dropped. The original place of the narrator on both sides of the narration, the specific status of his discourse—which is not neutral, or whose effect of neutrality is not neutral—, his interventions, and even his psychoanalytic position will never be questioned in the rest of the "Seminar," which will remain the analysis of the so-called "intersubjective triads," the triads which constitute that which is inside the recounted story, what Lacan calls the "history" or the "drama," the "real drama" ("each of the two scenes of the real drama is narrated in the course of a different dialogue" S, p. 47). All the allusions to the narrator and to the act of narration are made in order to exclude them from the "real drama" (the two triangular scenes), which is thus to be delivered to the analytic deciphering of the message in clearly demarcated fashion. This is accomplished in two moments, following the two *dialogues* which divide *The Purloined Letter*.

First moment. The exclusion is quite clear, facilitated by Poe's text, which seems to do everything it can to favor it. This is the moment of what Lacan calls *exactitude*. The narrator is named the "general narrator"; he is like the neutral, homogeneous, transparent element of the narration. He "adds nothing," says Lacan (S, p. 48). As if one had to add something to a relation in order to intervene in a scene. Especially in a scene of narration. And as if his questions and remarks and exclamations—these are the forms of the so-called general narrator's interventions in what Lacan demarcates as the "first dialogue"—added nothing. Further, even before this "first dialogue" gets underway, the "general narrator" says things to which we will have to turn later. Finally, the narrator who is onstage in what he places onstage is in turn placed onstage in a text more ample than the so-called general narration. A supplementary reason not to consider him as a neutral place of passage. The "Seminar" gives no specific attention to this overflowing text: rather, it isolates, as its essential object, the two "narrated" triangular scenes, the two "real dramas," neutralizing simultaneously the fourth character who is the general narrator, his narrating operation, and the text which puts onstage the narration and the narrator. For *The Purloined Letter*, as a text and as fiction, begins neither with the triangular dramas, nor with the narration which puts them onstage by implicating itself in these dramas in a way whose analysis we are de-

laying here. And no more does Poe's text end with these dramas. *The Purloined Letter* places onstage a narrator and a director who—feigned by *The Purloined Letter*—feign by *The Purloined Letter* recounting the “real drama” of the purloined letter, etc. So many supplements which undermine the narrated triangle. So many reasons to think that the so-called general narrator always adds something, and from before the first dialogue; that he is not the general condition of possibility for the narrative, but an actor with a highly unusual status. So many reasons not to be satisfied with what Lacan says about him in what I have called the first moment of the exclusion. If the filter of the general narrator is not “a fortuitous arrangement,” if it reminds us that the “message” “indeed belongs to the dimension of language,” then one cannot exclude this fourth position, under the rubric of its being a general medium, from the triangular scenes which would form the object contained under the rubric of the “real drama.”

Second moment. In question is what Lacan demarcates or frames as a “second dialogue,” again overlooking, this time between the two dialogues, a long paragraph not in dialogue form in which the narrator says things to which we will have to turn later. In the course of this “second dialogue” we would pass from the register of “exactitude” to the register of “truth,” “strictly speaking . . . the very foundation of intersubjectivity” (S, p. 49). This time one expects an analysis of the specific position of the narrator. Lacan writes in effect:

“Thus the indirect telling sifts out the linguistic dimension, and the general narrator, by duplicating it, ‘hypothetically’ adds nothing to it. But his role in the second dialogue is entirely different” (S, p. 48).

No: for his role already was entirely different in the first dialogue, and Lacan does not treat things in an entirely different way in the second one. He describes the narrator as the receptacle or the mediator or the purely formal assistant whose only function would consist in permitting Dupin to delude, to delude us by deluding the passive narrator, to play his tricks “in still purer form” at the very moment when he feigns exhibiting how they work, at this point tricking us (the narrator and ourselves) “truly.”

“What could be more convincing, moreover, than the gesture of laying one's cards face up on the table? So much so that we are momentarily persuaded that the magician has in fact demonstrated, as he promised, how his trick was performed, whereas he has only

renewed it in still purer form: at which point we fathom the measure of the supremacy of the signifier in the subject.

“Such is Dupin's maneuver . . .” (S, pp. 49–50).

But from whence does it come that the narrator was content to listen passively and to let himself be tricked truly? Who can be tricked truly as soon as the narrator is narrated by himself? Etc.

To what does this neutralization of the narrator commit the “Seminar”?

1. The narrator (himself doubled into a narrating narrator and a narrated narrator, not limiting himself to reporting the two dialogues) is evidently neither the author himself (to be called Poe) nor, less evidently, the inscriber of a text which recounts something for us, or rather which makes a narrator speak, who himself, in all kinds of ways, makes many people speak. The inscriber and the inscribing are original functions that are not to be confused with either the author and his actions, or with the narrator and his narration, and even less with the particular object, the narrated content, the so-called “real drama,” which the psychoanalyst hastens to recognize as “Poe's message deciphered.” That the inscribing in its entirety—the fiction named *The Purloined Letter*—is covered, over its entire surface, by a narration whose narrator says “I” does not permit us to confuse the fiction with a narration. And even less, of course, with any given narrated section, however lengthy and apparent. There is here a problem of framing, of bordering and delimitation, whose analysis must be very finely detailed if it wishes to ascertain the effects of fiction. Without ever saying a word about it, Lacan excludes the textual fiction from within which he has extracted the so-called general narration. An operation made that much easier, and all too self-evidently easier, by the fact that the narration does not surpass by a word the fiction entitled *The Purloined Letter*. But that is the fiction. There is an invisible, but structurally irreducible, frame around the narration. Where does it begin? With the first letter of the title? With the epigraph from Seneca? With “At Paris, just after dark . . .”? The question is even more complicated than that—we will come back to it—and this complication even now suffices to indicate everything about the structure of the text that is misconstrued in overlooking the frame. Within this neutralized or naturalized frame, Lacan takes up the narration without border and operates another extraction, again by dropping the frame. From within the narration he lifts out two dialogues which form the narrated history, that is, the content of a rep-

resentation, the internal meaning of a story, the all-enframed, which demands all the attention, mobilizes all the psychoanalytic schemas (Oedipal ones here), and pulls toward its center the entire deciphering enterprise. There is missing here an elaboration of the problem of the frame, the signature, and the *parergon*. This lack permits the scene of the signifier to be reconstructed into a signified (a process always inevitable in the logic of the sign), permits writing to be reconstructed into the written, the text into discourse, and more precisely into an "intersubjective" dialogue (and it is not fortuitous that the "Seminar's" commentary concerns only the two dialogued parts of *The Purloined Letter*).

2. There is here, first of all, a *formal* limit of the analysis. The formal structure of the text is overlooked, in very classical fashion, at the very moment when, and perhaps in the extent to which, its "truth," its exemplary message, allegedly is "deciphered." The structure of fiction is reduced at the very moment when it is related to its condition of truth. This leads to poor formalism. Formalism is practiced because one is not interested in the subject-author, something which might, in certain theoretical situations, constitute progress, or even a legitimate demand. But this formalism is rigidly illogical once that, on the pretext of excluding the author, one no longer takes into account either the "scription-fiction" and the "scriptor-fictor," or the narrating narration and the narrator. This formalism guarantees, as always, the surreptitious extraction of a semantic content, within which psychoanalysis applies its entire interpretive work. Formalism and hermeneutic semanticism always support one another: question of the frame.

3. The limit, then, is not only a formal one, and for the moment it does not concern a science of poetic fiction or of narrative structure. The issue here is not—quite to the contrary—one of rescuing something like literature or literary form from the grasp of psychoanalysis. There is a deep historical and theoretical complicity between psychoanalysis *applied* to literature and the formalist withdrawal which would pretend to escape this application. We have just seen how this works in principle. What is important here is that the formal deficiency implies a semantic and psychoanalytic decision. Once the narrator is distinguished from the author and then the "scriptor," he is no longer the formal condition of the narration that might symmetrically be opposed to the content, as the narrating to the narrated, for example. He intervenes in a specific fashion, is simultaneously *too self evident* and invisible in a triangle, and therefore in a triangle that touches the other triangle at one of

its "angles," touching both "intersubjective" triangles. Which singularly complicates the "intersubjective" structure, and this time from within the framed, the twice-framed, scenes, from within the represented content. Not to take into account this complication is not a failure of "formalist" literary criticism; it is an operation of the semanticist psychoanalyst. The narrator is not effaced as the "general narrator," or rather, in effacing himself within the homogeneous generality, he puts himself forward as a very singular character within the narrated narration, within the enframed. He constitutes an agency, a "position" with which the triangle, through the intermediary of Dupin (who in turn himself represents all the positions), maintains a very determined, very invested relation. By framing in this violent way, by cutting the narrated figure itself from a fourth side in order to see only triangles, one evades perhaps a certain complication, perhaps of the Oedipal structure, which is announced in the scene of writing.

Before demonstrating this more concretely, let us follow Lacan within the framed content, in his analysis of the two triangles: this constitutes the specific contribution of the Seminar. Let us start with his own premises and his own framing. Let us act as if the frame could be neutralized, both as a de-limitation and as a precarious construction, an artifact with four sides, at least.

The expressions "trio," "triangles," and "intersubjective triangle" arise very frequently in the description of the two scenes of the "real drama" thus deciphered. A long citation first, in order to recall and place in evidence this logic of the excluded fourth. Of the Oedipus complex:

There are two scenes, the first of which we shall straightway designate the primal scene, and by no means inadvertently, since the second may be considered its repetition in the very sense we are considering today.

The primal scene is thus performed, we are told ['told' neither by Poe, nor by the "scriptor," nor by the narrator, but by G., the Prefect of Police who is put into this dialoguing scene by all the latter—J.D.], in the royal *boudoir*, so that we suspect that the person of the highest rank, called the "exalted personage," who is alone there when she receives a letter, is the Queen. This feeling is confirmed by the embarrassment into which she is plunged by the entry of the other exalted personage, of whom we have already been told [again by G.] prior to this account that the knowledge he might have of the letter in question would jeopardize for the lady nothing less than her honor and safety. Any doubt that he is in fact the King is promptly dissipated in the

course of the scene which begins with the entry of the Minister D . . . At that moment, in fact, the Queen can do no better than to play on the King's inattentiveness by leaving the letter on the table "face down, address uppermost." It does not, however, escape the Minister's lynx eye, nor does he fail to notice the Queen's distress and thus to fathom her secret. From then on everything transpires like clockwork. After dealing in his customary manner with the business of the day, the Minister draws from his pocket a letter similar in appearance to the one in his view, and, having pretended to read it, he places it next to the other. A bit more conversation to amuse the royal company, whereupon, without flinching once, he seizes the embarrassing letter, making off with it, as the Queen, on whom none of his maneuver has been lost, remains unable to intervene for fear of attracting the attention of her royal spouse, close at her side at that very moment.

Everything might then have transpired unseen by a hypothetical spectator of an operation in which nobody falters, and whose *quotient* is that the Minister has filched from the Queen her letter and that—an even more important result than the first—the Queen knows that he now has it, and by no means innocently.

A *remainder* that no analyst will neglect, trained as he is to retain whatever is significant, without always knowing what to do with it: the letter, left in exchange by the Minister, and which the Queen's hand is now free to roll into a ball.

Second scene: in the Minister's office. It is in his hotel, and we know—from the account the Prefect of Police has given Dupin, whose specific genius for solving enigmas Poe introduces here for the second time—that the police, returning there as soon as the Minister's habitual, nightly absences allow them to, have searched the hotel and its surroundings from top to bottom for the last eighteen months. In vain,—although everyone can deduce from the situation that the Minister keeps the letter within reach.

Dupin calls on the Minister. The latter receives him with studied nonchalance, affecting in his conversation romantic *ennui*. Meanwhile Dupin, whom this pretense does not deceive, his eyes protected by green glasses, proceeds to inspect the premises. When his glance catches a rather crumpled piece of paper—apparently thrust carelessly in a division of an ugly pasteboard card-rack, hanging gaudily from the middle of the mantelpiece—he already knows that he has found what he is looking for. His conviction is re-enforced by the very details which seem to contradict the description he has of the stolen letter, with the exception of the format, which remains the same.

Whereupon he has but to withdraw, after "forgetting" his snuff-box on the table, in order to return the following day to reclaim it—armed with a facsimile of the letter in its present state. As an incident in the street, prepared for the proper moment, draws the Minister to the window, Dupin in turn seizes the opportunity to snatch the letter while

substituting the imitation, and has only to maintain the appearances of a normal exit.

Here as well all has transpired, if not without noise, at least without commotion. The quotient of the operation is that the Minister no longer has the letter, but far from suspecting that Dupin is the culprit who has ravished it from him, knows nothing of it. Moreover, what he is left with is far from insignificant for what follows. We shall return to what brought Dupin to inscribe a message on his counterfeit letter. Whatever the case, the Minister, when he tries to make use of it, will be able to read these words, written so that he may recognize Dupin's hand: ". . . *Un dessein si funeste / S'il n'est digne d'Atrée est digne de Thyeste,*" ("So infamous a scheme, / If not worthy of Atreus, is worthy of Thyestes"), whose source, Dupin tells us, is Crébillon's *Atrée*.

Need we emphasize the similarity of these two sequences? Yes, for the resemblance we have in mind is not a simple collection of traits chosen only in order to supply their difference. And it would not be enough to retain those common traits at the expense of the others for the slightest truth to result. It is rather the intersubjectivity in which the two actions are motivated that we wish to bring into relief, as well as the three terms through which it structures them.

The special status of these terms results from their corresponding simultaneously to the three logical moments through which the decision is precipitated and the three places its assigns to the subjects among whom it constitutes a choice.

That decision is reached in a glance's time. For the maneuvers which follow, however stealthily they prolong it, add nothing to that glance, nor does the deferring of the deed in the second scene break the unity of that moment.

This glance presupposes two others, which it embraces in its vision of the breach left in their fallacious complementarity, anticipating in it the occasion for larceny afforded by that exposure. Thus three moments, structuring three glances, borne by three subjects, incarnated each time by different characters.

The first is a glance that sees nothing: the King and the police.

The second, a glance which sees that the first sees nothing and excludes itself as to the secrecy of what it hides: the Queen, then the Minister.

The third sees that the first two glances leave what should be hidden exposed to whomever would seize it: the Minister, and finally Dupin.

In order to grasp in its unity the intersubjective complex thus described, we would willingly seek a model in the technique legendarily attributed to the ostrich attempting to shield itself from danger; for that technique might ultimately be qualified as political, divided as it here is among three partners: the second believing itself invisible because the first has its head stuck in the ground, and all the while let-

ting the third calmly pluck its rear; we need only enrich its proverbial denomination by a letter, producing *la politique de l'autruche* [the politics of the ostrich, *autruche*, of the Other, *autrui*, and of Austria, *l'Autriche*], for the ostrich itself to take on forever a new meaning.

Given the intersubjective modulus of the repetitive action, it remains to recognize in it a *repetition automatism* in the sense that interests us in Freud's text (S, 41–44).

We will analyze later the singular relation between the "subject" (the narrated narrator) of the narration and Dupin, to the extent that this relation from the outset definitively complicates the triangular structure. For the moment, let us consider what this exclusion of the fourth, or of the third-plus-or-minus-one, implies in the precipitation toward the truth. And how the demand for truth leads to putting aside the scene of writing, to putting aside that which almost always in and of itself permits itself (feigns) to be put aside, apart, as the fourth.¹² One must take into account the remainder, that which can fall, and one must do so not only in the narrated content of the writing (the signifier, the written, the letter), but in the operation of writing.

Lacan leads us back to the truth, to a truth which itself cannot be lost. He brings back the letter, shows that the letter brings itself back toward its *proper* place via a *proper* itinerary, and, as he overtly notes, it is this destination that interests him, destiny as destination. The signifier has its place in the letter, and the letter refinds its proper meaning in its proper place. A certain reappropriation and a certain readequation will reconstitute the proper, the place, meaning, and truth that have become distant from themselves for the time of a detour or of a non-delivery. The time of an algorithm. Once more a hole will be stopped: and to do so one does not have to fill it, but only to see and to delimit its contour.

We have read: the signifier (in the letter, in the note) has no place identical to itself, it is *missing from its place*. Its meaning counts for little, it cannot be reduced to its meaning. But what the Seminar insists upon showing, finally, is that there is a single *proper* itinerary of the letter which returns to a determinable place that is always the same and that is *its own*; and that if its meaning (what is written in the note in circulation) is indifferent or unknown for our purposes (according to the hypothesis whose fragility nevertheless sup-

12. TN. An untranslatable play on words: ". . . ce qui se laisse toujours pres- que (feint) de soi-même (se) mettre de côté, à l'écart, comme le quart." The fourth, le quart, entails division, l'écart, which the demand for truth cannot tolerate.

ports the entire logic of the Seminar), the meaning of the letter and the sense of its itinerary are necessary, unique, and determinable in truth, that is, as truth.

Certainly the place and meaning of the letter are not at the disposition of the subjects. Certainly the latter are subjected to the movement of the signifier. But when Lacan says that the letter has no proper place, this must be understood henceforth as objective place, a place determinable in an empirical and naive topology. When he says that it has no proper meaning, this must henceforth be understood as the exhaustible content of what is written in the note. For the signifier-letter, in the topology and psychoanalytico-transcendental semantics with which we are dealing, has a proper place and meaning which form the condition, origin, and destination of the entire circulation, as of the entire logic of the signifier.

The proper place, first of all. The letter has a place of emission and of destination. This is not a subject, but a hole, the lack on the basis of which the subject is constituted. The contour of this hole is determinable, and it magnetizes the entire itinerary of the detour which leads from hole to hole, from the hole to itself, and which therefore has a *circular* form. In question is indeed a regulated *circulation* which organizes a return from the detour toward the hole. A transcendental reappropriation and a transcendental readequation fulfilling an authentic contract. That the itinerary is proper and circular is what Lacan literally says: "Thus we are confirmed in our detour by the very object which draws us on into it: for we are quite simply dealing with a letter which has been diverted from its path; one whose course has been *prolonged* (etymologically, the word of the title), or to revert to the language of the post office, a letter that has not been delivered (*lettre en souffrance*).

"Here then, *simple and odd*, as we are told on the very first page, reduced to its simplest expression, is the singularity of the letter, which as the title indicates, is the *true subject* of the tale: since it can be diverted, it must have a course *which is proper to it*: the trait by which its incidence as signifier is affirmed. For we have learned to conceive of the signifier as sustaining itself only in a displacement comparable to that found in electric news strips or in the rotating memories of our machines-that-think-like-men, this because of the alternating operation which is its principle, requiring it to leave its place, even though it returns to it by a circular path" (S, pp. 59–60; Lacan's italics).

Quitte: "leave [*quitte*] its place, even though [*quitte à*] it returns to it by a circular path." Circulation, the acquitting of a debt, comes

to repair the dehiscence which, in opening the debt and the contract for a time (the time of the signifier), has expelled the signified from its proper origin. Circulation permits the signified to return to its origin. This readequation (the truth) therefore indeed implies a theory of the proper place, and the latter implies a theory of the letter as an indivisible locality: the signifier must never risk being lost, destroyed, divided, or fragmented without return.

The proper meaning, next. The letter having a (single) place of origin and destination, and remaining what it is *en route* (what guarantees this?), it has a proper meaning: the law of its itinerary first of all, if not its content, although the latter gains from the deciphering a minimal determination which says enough about it. The letter must have a relation to whatever constitutes the contract or the "pact," that is, a relation with the subjection of the subject, and therefore somewhere with the hole as the proper place of the letter. Its place has an essential relation with its meaning, and the latter must be such that it makes the letter come back to its place. In fact, we know what is in the note. Lacan indeed is obliged to speak of and hold onto its meaning, at very least as that which threatens the pact which constitutes the letter's meaning: the phallic law represented by the King and guarded by the Queen, the law that she should share with him according to the pact, and that she threatens to divide, to dissociate, and to betray. "But all this tells us nothing of the message it conveys.

"Love letter or conspiratorial letter, letter of betrayal or letter of mission, letter of summons or letter of distress, *we are assured of but one thing*: the Queen must not bring it to the knowledge of her lord and master.

"Now these terms, far from bearing on the nuance of discredit they have in *bourgeois* comedy, take on a certain prominence through allusion to her sovereign, to whom she is bound by pledge of faith, and doubly so, since her role as spouse does not relieve her of her duties as subject, but rather elevates her to the guardianship of what royalty according to law incarnates of power: and which is called legitimacy.

"From then on, to whatever vicissitudes the Queen may choose to subject the letter, it remains that the letter is the symbol of a pact, and that, even should the recipient not assume the pact, the existence of the letter situates her in a symbolic chain foreign to the one which constitutes her faith . . . Our fable is so constructed as to show that it is the letter and its detour which governs their entries and roles. If it is not delivered [*en souffrance*], they shall endure the

pain. Should they pass beneath its shadow, they become its reflection. Falling in possession of the letter—admirable ambiguity of language—its meaning possesses them" (S, 57–58, 60; my italics).

A formulation that is Heideggerian in its type, as is most often the case in these decisive pauses.

Therefore the letter has a proper meaning, its own proper itinerary and location. What are they? In the triangle, only Dupin seems to know. For the moment, let us set aside the question of this knowing, and let us concern ourselves first with what is known. What does Dupin know? He knows that finally the letter *is found*, and knows where it must *be found* in order to return circularly, adequately to its proper place. This proper place, known to Dupin, and to the psychoanalyst, who in oscillating fashion, as we shall see, occupies Dupin's position, is the place of castration: woman as the unveiled site of the lack of a penis, as the truth of the phallus, that is of castration. The truth of the purloined letter is the truth, its meaning is meaning, its law is the law, the contract of truth with itself in logos. Beneath this notion of the pact (and therefore of adequation), the notion of veiling/unveiling attunes the entire Seminar to the Heideggerian discourse on the truth. Veiling/unveiling here concerns a hole, a non-being: the truth of Being as non-being. The truth is "woman" as veiled/unveiled castration. This is where the signifier (its inadequation with the signified) gets underway, this is the site of the signifier, the letter. But this is also where the trial begins, the promise of reappropriation, of return, of readequation: "the search for and restitution of the object" (S, p. 45). The singular *unity* of the letter is the site of the contract of the truth with itself. This is why the letter *comes back to, amounts to* [*revient à*] woman (at least in the extent to which she wishes to save the pact and, therefore, that which is the King's, the phallus that is in her guardianship); this is why, as Lacan says elsewhere, the letter amounts to, comes back to Being [*la lettre revient à l'être*], that is to the nothing that would be opening itself as the hole between woman's legs. Such is the proper place in which the letter is found, where its meaning is found, where the minister believes it to be in the shadows and where it is, in its very hiding place, the most exposed. Possessing the letter in the shadows, the minister begins to identify himself with the Queen (but must not Dupin, and the psychoanalyst within him, do so in turn? We are not there yet).

Thus ". . . everything seems intended for a character [*the minister*], all of whose utterances have revealed the most virile traits, to exude the oddest *odor di femina* when he appears.

"Dupin does not fail to stress that this is an artifice, describing behind the bogus finery the vigilance of a beast of prey ready to spring. But that this is the very effect of the unconscious in the precise sense that we teach that the unconscious means that man is inhabited by the signifier: could we find a more beautiful image of it than the one Poe himself forges to help us appreciate Dupin's exploit? For with this aim in mind, he refers to those toponymical inscriptions which a geographical map, lest it remain mute, superimposes on its design, and which may become the object of a guessing game: who can find the name chosen by a partner?—noting immediately that the name most likely to foil a beginner will be one which, in large letters spaced out widely across the map, discloses, often without an eye pausing to notice it, the name of an entire country . . .

"Just so does the purloined letter, like an immense female body, stretch out across the Minister's office when Dupin enters. But just so does he already *expect to find it* [my italics—J.D.], and has only, with his eyes veiled by green lenses, to undress that huge body.

"And that is why without needing any more than being able to listen in at the door of Professor Freud, he will go straight to the spot in which lies and lives what that body is designed to hide, in a gorgeous center caught in a glimpse, nay, to the very place seducers name the Castle Sant'Angelo in their innocent illusion of being certain that they can hold the city from there. Look! between the jambs of the fireplace there is the object already within reach of the hand the ravisher has but to extend . . ." (S, p. 66; mod.).

The letter—place of the signifier—is found in the place where Dupin and the psychoanalyst expect to find it: on the immense body of a woman, between the "legs" of the fireplace. Such is its proper place, the terminus of its circular itinerary. It is returned to the sender, who is not the signer of the note, but the place where it began to *detach* itself from its possessor or feminine legatee. The Queen, seeking to reappropriate for herself that which, by virtue of the pact which subjects her to the King, i.e. by virtue of the Law, guaranteed her the disposition of a phallus of which she would otherwise be deprived, of which she has taken the risk of depriving herself, that she has taken the risk of dividing, that is, of multiplying—the Queen, then, undertakes to reform, to reclose the circle of the restricted economy, the circulatory pact. She wants the letter-fetish brought back to her, and therefore begins by replacing, by exchanging one fetish for another: she emits—without really spending it, since there is an equivalence here—a quantity of money which is

exchanged for the letter and assures its circular return. Dupin, as (the) analyst, is found [*se trouve*] on the circuit, in the circle of the restricted economy, in what I call elsewhere the stricture of the ring, which the Seminar analyzes as the truth of fiction. We will come back to this problem of economics.

This determination of the proper, of the law of the proper, of *economy*, therefore leads back to castration as truth, to the figure of woman as the figure of castration *and* of truth. Of castration as truth. Which above all does not mean, as one might tend to believe, to truth as essential dislocation and irreducible fragmentation. Castration-truth, on the contrary, is that which contracts itself (stricture of the ring) in order to bring the phallus, the signifier, the letter, or the fetish back into their *oikos*,¹³ their familiar dwelling, their proper place. In this sense castration-truth is the opposite of fragmentation, the very antidote for fragmentation: that which is missing from its place has in castration a fixed, central place, freed from all substitution. Something is missing from its place, but the lack is never missing from it [*Quelque chose manque à sa place, mais le manque n'y manque jamais*]. The phallus, thanks to castration, always remains in its place, in the transcendental topology of which we were speaking above. In castration, the phallus is indivisible, and therefore indestructible, like the letter which *takes its place*. And this is why the motivated, never demonstrated presupposition of the materiality of the letter as *indivisibility* is indispensable for this restricted economy, this circulation of the proper.

The difference which interests me here is that—a formula to be understood as one will—the lack does not have its place in dissemination.

By determining the place of the lack, the topos of that which is lacking from its place, and in constituting it as a fixed center, Lacan is indeed proposing, at the same time as a truth-discourse, a discourse on the truth of the purloined letter as the truth of *The Purloined Letter*. In question is a hermeneutic deciphering, despite any appearances or denegation. The link of Femininity and Truth is the ultimate signified of this deciphering. Fourteen years later, re-introducing the Seminar at the head of the *Ecrits* with an *Unpublished Presentation*, Lacan insists above all on this link and this meaning. He gives to Woman or to Femininity a capital letter that elsewhere he often reserves for Truth: "What Poe's tale demon-

13. TN. The Greek *oikos* means the house, the dwelling, and is also the root from which the word *economy* is derived.

strates through my efforts is that the signifier's effect of subjection, in this instance the purloined letter's, bears above all on whoever wields it after the theft, and that along its itinerary what it conveys is the very Femininity that it has taken into its shadows . . ." ¹⁴ Femininity is the Truth (of) castration, is the best figure of castration, because in the logic of the signifier it has always already been castrated; and Femininity "leaves" something in circulation (here the letter), something detached from itself in order to have it brought back to itself, because she has "never had it: whence truth comes out of the well, but only half-way."

This first castration (pre-castration) afterward affects with castration, and with femininity therefore, whoever holds the letter that signifies the phallus and castration: "This is why the Minister comes to be castrated, castrated, the very word of that which he still believes he has: the letter that Dupin was able to pick out between the legs of his very smooth fireplace.

"Here is but completed that which initially feminizes him [the minister] as in a dream (. . .) To which extent our Dupin shows himself equal in his success to the success of the psychoanalyst." ¹⁵

POINT DE VUE ¹⁶

TRUTH IN (THE) PLACE OF FEMALE SEXUALITY

What about this success? In order to answer, let us await reconsideration, in all its complexity, of the relation between Dupin's position and the analyst's position, and then the relation between the analyst and him who says Freud and myself in the Seminar and in the introductions to the Seminar. This requires a long detour.

Until now, our questions have led us to suspect that if there is something like a purloined letter, perhaps it has a supplementary trap: it may have no fixed location, not even that of a definable hole or assignable lack. The letter might not be found, or could always possibly not be found, or would be found less in the sealed writing whose "story" is recounted by the narrator and deciphered by the Seminar, less in the content of the story, than "in" the text which escapes, from a fourth side, the eyes both of Dupin and of the psychoanalyst. The remainder, what is left unclaimed, would be *The Purloined Letter*, i.e. the text bearing this title whose location,

14. TN. *Points*, p. 1.

15. TN. *Ibid.*, pp. 7-8.

16. TN. *Point de* means both "point of" and "no, none at all." Thus, point of view/no view, blindness.

like the large letters once more become invisible, is not where one would expect to find it, in the framed content of the "real drama" or in the hidden and sealed interior of Poe's tale, but rather in and as the open, the very open, letter that is fiction. The latter, because it is written, at the very least implies a self-divesting fourth agency, which at the same time divests the letter of the text from whoever deciphers it, from the *facteur* of truth who puts the letter back into the circle of its own, proper itinerary: which is what the Seminar does in repeating Dupin's operation, for he, in accord with the circularity of the "proper itinerary," "has succeeded in returning the letter to its proper course" (S, p. 69), according to the desire of the Queen. To return the letter to its proper course, assuming that its trajectory is a line, is to correct a deviation, to rectify a departure, to recall, for the sake of the rule, i.e., the norm, an orientation, an authentic line. Dupin is adroit, knows his address, and knows the law. At the very moment one believes that by drawing triangles and circles, and by wielding the opposition imaginary/symbolic one grasps *The Purloined Letter*, at the very moment one reconstitutes the truth, the proper adequation, *The Purloined Letter* escapes through a too self-evident opening. As Baudelaire bluntly reminds us. The purloined letter is in the text: not only as an object whose proper itinerary is described, contained in the text, a signifier become the theme or signified of the text, but also as the text producing the effects of the frame. At the very moment when Dupin and the Seminar find it, when they determine its proper location and itinerary, when they believe that it is here or there as on a map, a place on a map as on the body of a woman, they no longer see the map itself: not the map that the text describes at one moment or another, but the map [*carte*] that the text "is," that it describes, "itself," as the deviation of the four [*l'écart du quatre*] with no promise of topos or truth. The remaining ¹⁷ structure of the letter is that—contrary to what the Seminar says in its last words ("what the 'purloined letter,' that is, the not delivered letter [*lettre en souffrance*] means is that a letter always arrives at its destination." S,

17. TN. "*La structure restante de la lettre . . .*" For Derrida, writing is always that which is an excess remainder, *un reste*. Further, in French, mail delivered to a post office box is called *poste restante*, making the dead letter office the ultimate *poste restante*, literally "remaining mail." Thus, Derrida is saying that Lacan's notion that the non-delivered letter, *la lettre en souffrance*, always arrives at its destination overlooks the structural possibility that a letter can always remain in the dead letter office, and that without this possibility of deviation and remaining—the entire postal system—there would be no delivery of letters to any address at all.

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p. 72)—a letter can always not arrive at its destination. Its “materiality” and “topology” are due to its divisibility, its always possible partition. It can always be fragmented without return, and the system of the symbolic, of castration, of the signifier, of the truth, of the contract, etc., always attempt to protect the letter from this fragmentation: this is the point of view of the King or the Queen, which are the same here; they are bound by contract to reappropriate the bit. Not that the letter never arrives at its destination, but it belongs to the structure of the letter to be capable, always, of not arriving. And without this threat (breach of contract, division or multiplication, the separation without return from the phallus which was begun for a moment by the Queen, i.e. by every “subject”), the circuit of the letter would not even have begun. But with this threat, the circuit can always not finish. Here dissemination threatens the law of the signifier and of castration as the contract of truth. It broaches, breaches [*entame*] the unity of the signifier, that is, of the phallus.

At the moment when the Seminar, like Dupin, finds the letter where it is found [*se trouve*], between the legs of woman, the deciphering of the enigma is anchored in truth. The sense of the tale, the meaning of the purloined letter (“what the ‘purloined letter,’ that is, the not delivered letter [*lettre en souffrance*], means is that a letter always arrives at its destination”) is uncovered. The deciphering (Dupin’s, the Seminar’s), uncovered via a meaning (the truth), as a hermeneutic process, itself arrives at its destination.

Why then does the Seminar re-find, along with the truth, the same meaning and the same topos as did Marie Bonaparte when, skipping over the text, she proposed a psycho-biographical analysis of *The Purloined Letter* in 1933.¹⁸ Is this a coincidence?

Is it a coincidence if, in allegedly breaking with psychobiographical criticism (see *Ecrits*, p. 860), one rejoins it in its ultimate semantic anchorage? And after a perhaps more simplifying textual analysis?

For Bonaparte too, the castration of the woman (of the mother) is the final sense, what *The Purloined Letter* means. And truth means readequation or reappropriation as the desire to stop up the hole. But Bonaparte does what Lacan does not: she relates *The Purloined Letter* to other texts by Poe. And she analyzes the gesture

18. Edgar Poe, *sa vie, son œuvre: Etude analytique* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1933). [References to Bonaparte will be given in the text, and will refer to *The Life and Works of Edgar Allan Poe*, trans. John Rodker, London, 1949.]

of doing so. Further on we will comprehend the *internal* necessity of this operation.

For example, *The Black Cat*, in which “the castration fear, embodied in the woman as the castrated being, lies at the core of the tale” (Bonaparte, p. 481). “Nevertheless, all the primitive anxieties of the child, which often remain those of the adult, seem to be gathered here as if by appointment, in this story of extreme anxiety, as if at a crossroads” (Bonaparte, p. 481). Within this quadrifurcum, named absentmindedly, omitted like a frame, there is the representation of a circle or a triangle. The Seminar: “Here we are, in fact, yet again at the crossroads at which we had left our drama and its round with the question of the way in which the subjects replace each other in it” (S, p. 60). Bonaparte continues with a page of generalizations about castration anxiety that could be summarized by a statement of Freud’s that she does not cite here: the assertion that the mother’s lack of a penis is “the greatest trauma”; or of Lacan’s: “Division of the subject? This point is a knot.

“Let us recall where Freud spells it out: on the mother’s lack of a penis in which the nature of the phallus is revealed” (*Ecrits*, p. 877).

After treating the Law and fetishism as a process of rephallicizing the mother (what has been stolen or detached from her is to be returned to her), Bonaparte writes the following, in which the knot of the Lacanian interpretation is to be found, along with several other things:

Finally, with the gallows theme, we see death-anxiety, or fear of death.

All these fears, however, remain subordinate to the main theme of fear of castration, with which all are closely interwoven. The cat with the white breast has also a missing eye; hanging represents not only death, but rephallicization; the urge to confess leads to the discovery of a corpse surmounted by an effigy of castration; even the cellar and tomb, and the gaping aperture of the chimney, recall the dread cloaca of the mother.

Other tales by Poe also express, though in different and in less aggressive fashion, regret for the missing maternal penis, with reproach for its loss. First among these, strange though it seem, is “The Purloined Letter.”

The reader will remember that, in this story the Queen of France, like Elizabeth Arnold, is in possession of a dangerous and secret correspondence, whose writer is unknown. A wicked minister, planning political blackmail and to strengthen his power, steals one of these letters under the Queen’s eyes, which she is unable to prevent owing to the King’s presence. This letter must at all costs be recovered. Every

attempt by the Police fails. Fortunately Dupin is at hand. Wearing dark spectacles with which he can look about him, while his own eyes are concealed, he makes an excuse to call on the Minister, and discovers the letter openly displayed in a card-rack, hung "from a little brass knob just beneath the middle of the mantelpiece."¹

Here, then, is Bonaparte's note:

1. ". . . that hung . . . from a little brass knob just beneath the middle of the mantelpiece." Baudelaire's translation: "*suspendu . . . à un petit bouton de cuivre au-dessus du manteau de la cheminée.*" The imprecision of Baudelaire's translation, as far as this sentence is concerned, is obvious: in particular, "beneath" is translated by "*au-dessus*" [above], which is completely wrong. (Bonaparte, p. 483)

This note is not without importance. First, it shows that Lacan had read Bonaparte, although the Seminar never names her. As an author so scrupulous about debts and priorities, he could have acknowledged an exploration which orients his entire interpretation, to wit the process of rephallization as the proper itinerary of the letter, the "return of the letter" to its "destination" after having been refound between the legs of the fireplace. Or could have silenced it. But since footnotes are, if not the truth, the appendix in which is shown that which must not be said, or that which, as Schelling cited in *Das Unheimliche* says, "should remain hidden," the Seminar lets fall a footnote in response: "Look! between the jambs of the fireplace, there is the object already within reach of the hand the ravisher has but to extend . . . The question of deciding whether he seizes it above the mantelpiece, as Baudelaire translates, or beneath it as in the original text, may be abandoned without harm to the inferences of cooking."¹⁹ Here, then, is Lacan's note: "38. And even to the cook herself" (S, p. 67).¹⁹

Without harm? On the contrary, the damage would be irreparable, within the Seminar itself: on the mantelpiece of the fireplace, the letter could not have been "between the jambs of the fireplace," "between the legs of the fireplace." What is at stake, then, is something major, even if one sets aside, imagining it not relevant, the

19. TN. I have modified Mehlman's clever translation of Lacan's phrase ("*. . . peut être abandonnée sans dommage aux inférences de la cuisine*"). Mehlman gives it as ". . . the inferences of those whose profession is grilling," which captures the sense of *cuisiner* as interrogation. Thus, Lacan is mocking Bonaparte as a member of the "psychoanalytic police," perhaps comparing her to the police in *The Purloined Letter*, and perhaps also referring to his own expulsion from the International Psychoanalytic Association.

Seminar's disdainful nervousness as concerns a psychoanalyst and her legacy.²⁰ Why relegate the question to the kitchen, as if to an outbuilding, and the woman who answers it to the status of cook? Certain "masters of the truth" in Greece knew how to keep the kitchen a place for thinking.

Just before this note, it will be recalled, the Seminar had invoked the "toponymical inscriptions," the "geographical map" of the "immense body," and the location of that which Dupin "expects to find," since he is repeating the gesture of the minister, who himself is identified with the Queen whose letter still, properly, occupies the same place: the place of detachment and reattachment.

After her note, Bonaparte continues:

By a further subterfuge, he possesses himself of the compromising letter and leaves a similar one in its place. The Queen, who will have the original restored to her, is saved.

Let us first note that this letter, the very symbol of the maternal penis also 'hangs' over the fireplace, in the same manner as the female penis, if it existed, would be hung over the cloaca which is here represented—as in the foregoing tales—by the frequent symbol of the fireplace. We have here, in fact, what is almost an anatomical chart, from which not even the clitoris (or brass knob) is omitted. Something very different, however, should be hanging from that body. (Bonaparte, p. 483)

20. Legacy [*legs*] and rephallization: 1. "Could it be the letter which brings Woman to be that subject, simultaneously all-powerful and enslaved, such that every hand to which Woman leaves the letter, takes back along with it, that which in receiving it, she herself has legated (*fait lais*)? 'Legacy' [*lais*] means that which Woman bequeaths in never having had it: whence truth emerges from the well, but only halfway" (Presentation of the *Ecrits*, *Points* 7–8). 2. "To the grim irony of rephallizing the castrated mother, by hanging, we must now add the irony that relactifies her dry breasts by the broad spattering of the splotch of milk . . . even though the main resentment comes from the absence of the penis on the woman's body" (Bonaparte, p. 475).

Further on we will come back to the question of the "part object" that is implied here. As for the well, in *The Murders in the Rue Morgue*, Dupin, after the discovery of the "fearfully mutilated" "body of the mother," recalls: "He (Vidocq) impaired his vision by holding the object too close. He might see, perhaps, one or two points with unusual clearness, but in so doing he, necessarily, lost sight of the matter as a whole. Thus there is such a thing as being too profound. Truth is not always in a well." *Selected Writings of Edgar Allan Poe*, ed. Edward Davidson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1956), p. 153. All further references to Poe will be to this edition. Also note that the French for "legacy" is *legs*; Derrida constantly plays on the *leg* in *legacy*. Moreover, the older form of *legs* is *lais*, which is the homonym of *lait*, milk. Thus the question of legacy, rephallization, and relactification.

After this brief allusion to the knob (which the Seminar does not pick up), Bonaparte reattaches her interpretation to an Oedipal typology and clinical practice. Her interest in "the-author's-life" no more simplifies her reading of the text than the Seminar's lack of interest suffices to guarantee a reading. The accent is placed on a "pre-genital, phallic and archaic" Oedipal struggle for the possession of the maternal penis, which is here determined as a part object. Bonaparte is never tempted to grant Dupin the position of the analyst, not even in order to watch over him with an other kind of mastery. Dupin's lucidity comes to him from the war in which he is engaged, as he himself states at the end, ("You know my political prepossessions. In this matter, I act as a partisan of the lady concerned. For eighteen months the Minister has had her in his power. She has him now in hers; since, being unaware that the letter is not in his possession, he will proceed with his exactions as if it was. (. . .) D—, at Vienna once, did me an evil turn, which I told him, quite good-humoredly, that I should remember"),²¹ and this has motivated him throughout. As it has situated him on the circuit of the debt, of the phallus, of the signifier in its letter, and of the money which, unlike Lacan, Bonaparte does not consider as neutralizing or as "destructive of" "all signification." She writes: "Small wonder that Dupin, the embodiment of the son, when speaking of his 'political prepossessions,' should declare himself 'a partisan of the lady concerned.' Finally, in return for a cheque of 50,000 francs, leaving to the Prefect of Police the fabulous reward, Dupin restores to the woman her symbolic letter or missing phallus. Thus, once more, we meet the equation gold = penis. The mother gives her son gold in exchange for the penis he restores. So, too, in 'The Gold Bug'" (Bonaparte, p. 484).

The circle of this restitution indeed forms the "proper course" of the Seminar. What, then, of the Seminar's attempted thrust to identify Dupin's position with the analyst's position? This idea never tempts Bonaparte. And it is strangely divided or suspended in the Seminar. The signs of the identification first:

1. The third glance, which is not ensnared, sees the triangle. Certainly Dupin occupies within the triangle a position identical to the minister's, but to the minister's in the first scene and not in the second, where the minister occupies the place of the powerless Queen. Dupin, thus, would be the only one not to let himself be

21. TN. Poe, pp. 224–25.

plucked like an ostrich. ("The third sees that the first two glances leave what should be hidden exposed to whoever would seize it: the Minister, and finally Dupin . . . Three partners: the second believing itself invisible because the first has its head stuck in the ground, and all the while letting the third calmly pluck its rear." S, p. 44). Dupin finally: at the end Dupin breaks off his provisional identification with the minister, and remains alone in seeing all, thereby withdrawing from the circuit.

2. This is confirmed by an initial interpretation of the money demanded by Dupin in exchange for the letter, by "the business of Dupin's remuneration." The process of debt that this story raises finds itself examined by Lacan soon after the note on the cook. And a supplementary space of several lines. The "we" is that of the community of analysts, among whom the author of the Seminar at first seems to count himself. "Do we not in fact feel concerned with good reason when for Dupin what is perhaps [this "perhaps" will be forever suspended—J.D.] at stake is his withdrawal from the symbolic circuit of the letter—we who become the emissaries of all the purloined letters which at least for a time remain not delivered [*en souffrance*] with us in the transference. And is it not the responsibility their transference entails that we neutralize by equating it with the signifier most destructive of all signification, namely: money" (S, p. 68).

As the "perhaps" indicates, as these questions without question marks also announce (along with the "But that is not all" that opens the next paragraph), the question will remain without a clear answer. The very position of the question, in its form, in its terms, is constructed to forbid the answer: in effect, how is one to determine the conceptual rigor of the expression "equating it with the signifier most destructive of all signification"? The question, we know, is not a formal one, nor is it simply one of knowing who is being the ostrich in wielding a greater or lesser quantity of destruction. If money is not totally destructive of all signification, if it is only what is "most destructive," then it cannot "be equivalent" to a "neutralization." And it does not provide for a "withdrawal" from the "symbolic circuit of the letter."

3. This is confirmed again in the new introduction to the *Écrits* (in the *Points* edition) already cited above: "This is why the Minister comes to be castrated, castrated, the very word of that which he still believes he has: the letter that Dupin was able to pick out between the jambs of his very smooth fireplace. (. . .) To which ex-

tent our Dupin shows himself equal in his success to the success of the psychoanalyst.”²²

With the help of the indeterminateness that we have just noted (“perhaps,” “the most destructive”), these signs of an identification between Dupin and us-psychoanalysts will become more complicated. Not simply in order to refuse Dupin admission into the analytic institution which would neutralize “the responsibility” that the “transference entails,” but in order to divide “us-psychoanalysts” into two Dupins: the fool, the Dupin who remains an integral part of the triangle while believing himself the master of it, and the other Dupin, the Dupin who sees all from the place whence he apostrophized all the psychoanalysts who understand nothing about Dupin, about his “true strategy,” that is, about the author of the Seminar who knows how to return to the letter of Freud, how to find it where it is found [*se trouve*] for purposes of restitution, and by whose efforts both Freud’s teaching and Poe’s demonstration are dispensed: the entire Seminar is opened by the project, repeated elsewhere a hundred times, of “taking Freud’s discovery seriously” and of basing “the instruction of this Seminar” on this discovery, and to do so against the corruption which the letter of Freud has suffered in his colleagues’ institution; and “what Poe’s tale demonstrates through my efforts” collaborates with the return of Freud’s text to its proper place. From this position the Seminar ridicules the too rapid identification of (all) the other analysts with Dupin, with a Dupin about whom they do not see that in possessing the letter he still resembles the minister, and thus finds himself in the latter’s place and begins like the minister to become feminized, to become identified with the Queen. The author of the Seminar excludes himself from the analytic community. We, henceforth, are Freud, Poe, one of the two Dupins, and I: “To which extent our Dupin shows himself equal in his success to the success of the psychoanalyst, whose action can be brought to bear only on some unexpected blunder by the other. Usually, his message is the only effective failure of his treatment: as is Dupin’s message, which is to remain unrevealed, although it closes the affair.

“But, would I explain, just as the text, which here maintains the post at the entryway that it has elsewhere, will be judged, these terms always the more, the less will they be understood.

“The less understood by psychoanalysts, for whom these terms

22. TN: *Points*, pp. 7–8.

are as clearly in sight as the purloined letter, and who even see the letter in these terms, but on the basis of this believe themselves, like Dupin, the masters of it.

“In fact they are only masters of using my terms without rhyme or reason. At which enterprise several have made themselves ridiculous. And these are the very same ones who tell me that what the others are suspicious of is a rigor to which they feel themselves unequal.”²³

The ridiculous heirs or disciples thus corrupt, without rhyme or reason, the master’s proper terms; and the master reminds them that they must not take themselves for masters by identifying with the naive Dupin. And to use the master’s terms properly, to bring them back to him, is to remind oneself also of the right direction, and to remind oneself that the master, like Dupin (which one?), is master of the return to Freud of his proper letter.²⁴ (To be continued.)

In beginning by identifying Dupin with the psychoanalyst, a

23. TN: *Points*, p. 8.

24. Also not delivered [*en souffrance*], Freud’s letter awaited restitution. The analytic community is organized like a *poste restante*, keeping sealed the threatening power of an inheritance. The literal return to/of Freud’s literality (*le retour à la lettre de la lettre de Freud*) motivates, as we know, the entire itinerary of the *Écrits*. This is stated everywhere, particularly under the heading *D’un dessein*, (further on we will read this word between quotation marks within quotation marks), in an introduction proposed afterward (1966) to the *Introduction to Jean Hyppolite’s Commentary on Freud’s Negation*. This note concerning denegation begins by insisting: above all do not go off thinking about a “consecration” of the letter of Freud, nor about some “rendez-vous” given in advance for a meeting there: “The two samples, which follow, of our seminar impel us to communicate to the reader some idea of the design [*dessein*] of our instruction . . . For to let oneself be guided in this way by the letter of Freud even up to the illumination that it necessitates, without giving it any rendez-vous in advance, not to recoil before the residue, found again at the end, of its departure from an enigma, and even not to consider oneself at the end absolved from the proceeding via astonishment which provided the entry into it—this is what an experienced logician brought us the guarantee of as that which composed our quest, when, three years ago already, we set out to depend upon a *literal commentary* of Freud.

“This *demand for reading* has none of the vagueness of culture that one might think was in question.

“For us, the privilege granted to the letter of Freud has nothing superstitious about it. It is when one is most comfortable with it that one brings to it a kind of consecration highly compatible with its degradation to a routine usage.

“That every text, whether proposed as sacred or profane, sees its literality increase in prevalence to the extent that it properly implies a confrontation with the truth, is that for which the Freudian discovery shows the structural reason.

“Precisely in that the truth which it brings us, that of the unconscious, owes to

double profit is prepared: 1. The lucidity of the one who is able to see what no one else has seen: the place of the thing, between the legs (and the author of the Seminar says then: we-psychoanalysts, we withdraw ourselves from the symbolic circuit and we neutralize the scene in which we are not participants); 2. The possibility—by emphasizing that Dupin remains a participant (and how), by maintaining the identification Dupin-psychoanalyst—of denouncing the naïveté of the analytic community, of saying: you-psychoanalysts, you are deluding yourselves at precisely the moment when like Dupin you believe yourselves to be masters.

In effect. After the paragraph whose indecision we have delineated (“perhaps,” “the signifier the most destructive,” etc.), a very clever game is played, but in order to demonstrate how Dupin’s ruse—the biggest of all in the Oedipal scene—bears within its own trap a *motivation*, the game will go to the point of getting carried away with itself.

In question are the last pages of the Seminar, pages punctuated by a “But that’s not all” (S, p. 68) and an “Is that all . . .” (S, p. 72). As soon as one interprets the retribution demanded by Dupin as an analytic procedure in order to withdraw from the circuit thanks to “the signifier most destructive of all signification, namely: money,” it is difficult to account for all the signs of non-neutrality multiplied at the end of *The Purloined Letter*. Is this not a shocking paradox? “But that’s not all. The profit Dupin so nimbly extracts from his exploit, if its purpose is to allow him to withdraw his stakes from the game, makes all the more paradoxical, even shocking, the partisan attack, the underhanded blow, he suddenly permits himself to launch against the minister, whose insolent prestige, after all, would seem to have been sufficiently deflated by the trick Dupin has just played on him” (S, p. 68). Thus, that was not all. And Dupin’s “explosion of feeling at the end of the story” (S, p. 68), his “rage of manifestly feminine nature” (S, p. 71) when he claims to be settling his account with the minister by signing his own maneuver, must be pointed out. Dupin, then, reproduces the process called feminization: he subjects himself to the (desire of the) minister, whose place he occupies as soon as he possesses the letter—the place of the signifier—and conforms to the Queen’s desire. Here, by virtue of the pact, one can no longer distinguish between the place of the King (which is marked by blindness) and the place of the

the letter of language, to what we call the signifier.” *Ecrits* (F), pp. 363–64. See also, for example, p. 381.

Queen, the place to which the letter, in its “right course” and following its “proper itinerary,” must return in circular fashion. As the signifier has but one proper place, fundamentally there is but one place for the letter, and this place is occupied successively by all those who possess it. It must be recognized, then, that Dupin, once he has entered into the circuit, having identified with the minister in order to take the letter back from him and to put it back on its “proper course,” can no longer depart from this course. He must go through it in its entirety. The Seminar asks a strange question on this topic: “He is thus, in fact, fully participant in the intersubjective triad, and, as such, in the median position previously occupied by the Queen and the Minister. Will he, in showing himself to be above it, reveal to us at the same time the author’s intentions?”

“If he has succeeded in returning the letter to its proper course, it remains for him to make it arrive at its address. And that address is in the place previously occupied by the King, since it is there that it would re-enter the order of the Law.

“As we have seen, neither the King nor the Police who replaced him in that position were able to read the letter because that *place entailed blindness*” (S, p. 69).

If Dupin now occupies the “median position,” has he not always done so? And is there any other position in the circuit? Is it only at this moment of the narrative, when he has the letter in hand, that he once more finds himself in this position? We cannot stop here: from the outset Dupin acts with his sights set on the letter, on possessing it in order to return it to its rightful owner (neither the King, nor the Queen, but the Law which binds them), and thus finds himself preferable to his (brother) enemy, his younger or twin brother (Atreus/Thyestes), to the minister who fundamentally pursues the same aims, with the same gestures. Therefore, if he is in a “median position,” the differentiation of the three glances given above is no longer pertinent. There are only ostriches, no one can avoid being plucked, and the more one is the master, the more one presents one’s rear. Which will be the case for whoever identifies with Dupin.

Concerning Dupin, a strange question, as we said: “Will he, in showing himself to be above it, reveal to us at the same time the author’s intentions?”

This is not the only allusion to “the author’s intentions” (see also S, p. 41). Its form implies that the author, in his intention, is in a situation of general mastery, his *superiority* as concerns the triangles placed on stage (supposing that he is staging only triangles) being representable only by the superiority of an actor, to wit Du-

pin. Let us abandon this implication here: an entire conception of "literature."

Will Dupin have shown himself superior? The Seminar, because it proceeds from what Dupin sees where he expects to find it, because it repeats the operation of the restitution of the letter, cannot answer no. Or yes, since Dupin too is an ostrich. Thus Dupin's "true" position will be left in the obscurity of something unrevealed or in the suspension of a hypothesis, nonetheless without giving up (and here there is no more obscurity, nor is there a hypothesis) the idea of having "deciphered Dupin's true strategy." Here is the unrevealed: "To which extent our Dupin shows himself equal in his success to the success of the psychoanalyst, whose action can be brought to bear only on some unexpected blunder by the other. Usually, his [?] message is the only effective failure of his [?] treatment: as is Dupin's message, which is to remain unrevealed, although it closes the affair."²⁵

Here is the suspended hypothesis: "But if he is truly the gambler we are told he is, he will consult his cards a final time before laying them down and, upon reading his hand, will leave the table in time to avoid disgrace" (S, p. 72). Will he have done so? Nothing in the Seminar states this, although it has dwelt on the spot long enough to be certain, despite what is unrevealed, or despite the hypothesis, of possessing the cipher of the letter, Dupin's true strategy, and the true meaning of the purloined letter. The "yes" here is a "no doubt." Just as Dupin, whom the narrator lets speak at the end of the story, appears certain of having succeeded in his maneuver. The Seminar's conclusion: he "will leave the table in time to avoid disgrace."

"Is that all, and shall we believe we have deciphered Dupin's real strategy above and beyond the imaginary tricks with which he was obliged to deceive us? No doubt, yes, for if 'any point requiring reflection,' as Dupin states at the start, is 'examined to best purpose in the dark,' we may now easily read its solution in broad daylight. It was already implicit and easy to derive from the title of our tale, according to the very formula of intersubjective communication we have long submitted to your discretion: in which the sender, we tell you, receives from the receiver his own message in reverse form. Thus it is that what the 'purloined letter,' nay the 'undelivered letter' (*lettre en souffrance*) means is that a letter always arrives at its destination" (S, p. 72. These are the final words of the Seminar).

25. TN. *Points*, p. 8.

FIRST SECOND

THE TRUTH OF THE LETTER FROM FREUD'S HAND

In seeing what Dupin sees (not seen by the others), and even what Dupin himself does not see, or sees only, double that he is (on and off the circuit, "participant" and out of play), halfway (like all the others, finally), the Seminar is proffered from the place in which everything is seen "easily," "in broad daylight."

Like Dupin, in sum, at the moment when, without taking into account his blindness as a "participant," he is called "the third (who) sees that the first two glances . . . , etc." And like Dupin, the Seminar returns the letter to its destination after having recognized its place and its trajectory, its law and its destiny, to wit, destination *itself*: arrival at destination.

But Dupin-the-lucid can be so only by entering into the circuit to the point of successively occupying all its places, including, although unwittingly, those of the King and the Police. Like all the others he has perfectly doubled, he is set in motion by the desire of the Queen and by the pact which contracts itself in this desire. And "to show himself superior," even if in relation to all the other masters, his rivals, twins, brothers or confreres, is to repeat the trick without being able to look behind. Which does not necessarily deprive him of pleasure at the moment when another holds the plume in hand.

Repetition of Dupin then. In that he may "now easily read its solution in broad daylight," the author of the Seminar, let us not forget, is making a scene for his confreres, the bad, and unfaithful, guardians of the legacy of Freud. With the "explosion of feeling," whose signs we have pointed out, he is seeking, at least, to get back on course: to rectify, to redress, to put back onto the right path that which is not delivered [*en souffrance*], and, "armed" with the "return to Freud," "to correct a deviation too manifest not to have been avowed as such at every turn." He reproaches his brother, but also his sister, confreres for having corrupted, because they believe themselves masters of them ("like Dupin," see above), his "terms," his very own, those of the author of the Seminar. He reappropriates his terms for himself, then, but he too does so in order to give them back, to return them to Freud, for the issue here is to restore the true instruction, the correct doctrine.²⁶ Just as Dupin, by calling

26. More literally "the Freudian experience along its authentic lines." *Ecrits* (E), p. 171.

himself a "partisan of the lady," both obliges the Queen and mimes the contract which links her to the King, so there would be something like a pact between Freud—who, dead too soon, and like the King, then, will never have known anything of the consequences—and the author (the place of the author) of the Seminar. But is a King bound by a pact? Or are the dead? The question must wait.

The most remarkable disputation, shall we say the most insidious "under-handed blow," the "rage of manifestly feminine nature," is unleashed concerning the brother or sister confrere, Bonaparte, who in France long believed (him)herself the most authorized depository, the legatee of Freud's authority, maintaining a correspondence with him, personal ties of confidence, and even representing him in our country like a kind of minister whose simultaneous betrayal and blindness is known to the author of the Seminar. This minister even sought, in her book, to place her hand²⁷ on *The Purloined Letter*. And first of all on the letter diverted from Freud. And she has at her disposition, placed at the head of her book on Poe, an attestation signed by Freud, a kind of letter which seals both the pact and the betrayal (depending on the place), which places the father of psychoanalysis *simultaneously* in the place of the King, the Queen (to whom "her" letter must be restored in order to reconstitute the pact, erase the betrayal, and "correct the deviation"), and the mysterious signer of the purloined letter, the Queen's friend or fellow plotter. As will be said further on about the truth (*causa sui* in being both cause and effect), Freud is the only

27. The question of the hand: as the so-called detainer of the Freudian message, Bonaparte was destined for assault. Insistently, repetitively, automatically. The footnote attacking the cook, which confined itself to a discreet disdain for cooking, was added to the *Ecrits* almost ten years after the first publication of the Seminar in *La Psychanalyse*. But actually from the time of Rome, in the discourse of the same name, five years before, the major accusation against Bonaparte already had been launched: secondhand! Her texts do not at first hand hold the letter of Freud. A given author is "hardly aware" of Freudian theory, "since he tackles the theory through the work of Marie Bonaparte, which he repeatedly cites as an equivalent of the text of Freud—without the reader being in any way advised of the fact—relying no doubt on the good taste of the reader, not without reason, not to confuse the two, but proving no less that he has not the remotest understanding of the true level of the secondary text (*seconde main*)" *Ecrits* (E), p. 39. And since one must simultaneously keep the first hand for oneself and not generalize too much about the second, there are therefore two "levels," a good and a bad second hand. The "good" one, as we will see, takes the letter of the Freudian text as a "text which is the vehicle of speech, in that it constitutes a new emergence of the truth," knows how "to treat it as a true speech," "to experience it in its authenticity" as "full speech," *Ecrits* (F), p. 381; it is a question of Freud's text. And the zealous setting aside of Bonaparte's "second hand" can be read several lines before the chapter to the glory of "full speech."

one (and by virtue of his decease, since he also occupies the place of the dead (king)) to contract only with himself.

This signed attestation, from Freud's hand, must be read here. For amusement, but also in order to appreciate how the King, in effect, will have seen that in carrying off the last plume at first hand, he finds himself having mobilized many since his death, while awaiting restitution, that is, restoration. In the position of being dead too soon, *a priori*, he will have never prefaced the Seminar, which took this task on itself, and on several occasions. But one can dream of the figure a foreword by Freud would have made. In order to encourage the reverie, here is the one he did sign, with his own hand and at very first hand, and for Bonaparte alone (from the *pretextis* on, the theory of the *facteurs* is there only to be forwarded):

In this book my friend and pupil, Marie Bonaparte, has shone the light of psycho-analysis on the life and work of a great writer with pathological trends.

Thanks to her interpretative effort, we now realize how many of the characteristics of Poe's works were conditioned by his personality, and can see how that personality derived from intense emotional fixations and painful infantile experiences. Investigations such as this do not claim to explain creative genius, but they do reveal the factors (*facteurs*) which awaken it and the sort of subject matter it is destined to choose. Few tasks are as appealing as enquiry into the laws that govern the psyche of exceptionally endowed individuals. Sigm. Freud. (Bonaparte, p. xi)

Without suspecting its exactitude, but rather in order to concede that it does not appear in an authenticity of absolutely first hand, let it be said that this seal arrives initially in Bonaparte's translation.

At the very moment when he cuts off the identification with Dupin the "participant" in order to maintain only the other identification; when he deciphers Dupin's "real strategy" at the moment of leaving the table; when "no doubt, yes" he exhibits in broad daylight the true meaning of "the purloined letter," it is at this very moment, then, that the analyst (which one? the other) most resembles Dupin (which one? the other), when the chain of identifications makes him run through, in the opposite direction, the entire circus, automatically, compulsively repeating the minister, the Queen, the King (the Police). Each one, at one moment or another, occupying the place of the King, there are at least four kings (to be continued) in this game.

The Purloined Letter indeed demonstrates, without one's having

to attend to this, the crushing repetition compulsion. It is even on this point that Freud's inheritors, cook or master of truth,²⁸ repeat each other most faithfully. Like Lacan, Bonaparte inscribes her entire analysis under the heading of the *Wiederholungszwang*. She explains this in order to justify the monotony of a monosemic truth. Freud also excuses himself for this in his analysis of Schreber: "The sun, therefore, is nothing but another sublimated symbol for the father; and in pointing this out I must disclaim all responsibility for the monotony of the solutions provided by psycho-analysis" (XII, 54). Bonaparte: "Before going on with this macabre review of Poe's heroines, I must excuse myself for the monotony of the theme . . . For five or six consecutive tales, not much else will be found here. Doubtless the reader will be overcome by some fatigue in reading these pages. Nevertheless, I cannot spare him this lassitude (. . .) this monotony of the theme as of its expression permits one to feel the crushing *repetition compulsion* . . ." (Bonaparte, p. 283).

Here, the insistent monotony has at least led to the construction of a textual network, the demonstration of the recurrence of certain motifs (for example the chain castration-hanging-mantelpiece) outside *The Purloined Letter*. Thus the letter hanging under the mantle of the fireplace has its equivalent in *The Murders in the Rue Morgue*.²⁹ For us, the interest of this recurrence, and of pointing it out, is not that of an empirical enrichment, an experimental verification, the illustration of a repetitive insistence. It is structural. It inscribes *The Purloined Letter* in a texture that overflows it, to which it belongs, and within which the Seminar had effected a cur-

28. "We play a recording role by assuming the function, fundamental in any symbolic exchange, of gathering what *do kamo*, man in his authenticity, calls 'the lasting word' (*parole qui dure*).

"As a witness called to account for the sincerity of the subject, depositary of the minutes of his discourse, reference as to his exactitude, guarantor of his uprightness, custodian of his testament, scrivener of his codicils, the analyst has something of the scribe about him.

"But above all he remains the master of the truth of which this discourse is the progress. As I have said, it is he above all who punctuates its dialectic. And here he is apprehended as the judge of the value of this 'discourse.'" *Ecrits* (E), p. 98.

29. "Now, Rosalie is found here, her 'body quite warm,' stuffed head downward in the fireplace of the bedroom, just like the infant in the maternal genitals before birth, by the powerful arm of the anthropoid. The bedroom was the body of the mother, the fireplace, according to an equally common symbolism, is her vagina—or rather her cloaca, the cloaca alone corresponding to the infantile sexual theories which survive in the unconscious." Bonaparte, pp. 548–49. [TN. A curious mistake here. The daughter in "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" is named Camille, not Rosalie.]

sory framing or cross-section. We know that *The Purloined Letter* belongs to what Baudelaire called a "kind of trilogy," along with *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* and *The Mystery of Marie Roget*. The "Seminar" does not breathe a word about this Dupin trilogy; not only does it lift out the narrated triangles (the "real drama") in order to center the narration in them and to make them bear the burden of the interpretation (the destination of the letter), but it also lifts one-third of the Dupin cycle from an ensemble that it omits like a naturalized frame.

As for the equivalence of hanging and the phallus, Bonaparte places more than one text in the network, and suggests that here the man's point of view is not the same as the woman's, thus leading one to think that veiled/unveiled/castrated Femininity is the figure of the Truth only for the man. Who would be master of the truth only from this *point de vue*.³⁰

When Bonaparte, following Freud, recalls that "the castration of the woman" is one "of the little boy's central fantasies," she is certainly articulating this proposition, via an immediate symbolic system and a very spontaneous semanticism, with Poe's biography, and in fact with a real observation of the primal scene. But it happens that her laborious psycho-biographical concern, her very applied psychoanalysis, (if one is to do it, let one apply oneself to the application), opens up textual structures that remain closed to Lacan. So, to retain just this one index, in examining Poe's unconscious (and not the author's intentions), in identifying him with a given position of his characters, Bonaparte herself is quite attentive to the position of the narrator, not only in *The Purloined Letter*, but also "before" it, from the moment when his relation to Dupin is constituted.³¹ Quite attentive also, and consequently, to all the phenomena of the double: the very phenomena which orient, and then disorient and fictionalize, *Das Unheimliche* (which Bonaparte speaks of no more than Lacan, apparently). Bonaparte, interested in Poe's division into two characters who represent him equally, the narrator and Dupin, thereby finds herself moved to remark upon the

30. Cf. what is said about "fiction" in which everything is organized "from the male point of view (*point de vue*)": from which Bonaparte, however, does not simply escape, especially in these two pages. She refers with gratitude to the letter in which Freud provided her with certain clarifications "concerning 'The Black Cat,' which I discussed with him" (Bonaparte, pp. 566–68). [TN. On *point de vue* see note 16 above.]

31. Bonaparte, pp. 518ff. "The Purloined Letter" is the *third* appearance of Dupin.

in fact remarkable fact—omitted by the Seminar—that the narrator, who is himself double (narrating-narrated, which Bonaparte does not pick up), insists a great deal on the double nature of Dupin: Dupin is double, doubles himself, and splits himself in two by himself. If Dupin is a double by himself alone, and if he is the double of a double (the narrator), etc., this risks creating some disturbance in the delimitation of triangles in the “drama” called “real,” as well as in the identification of positions and glances within the “drama.” All the more so in that, as we have seen, in the “real drama” itself, Dupin successively identifies with all the characters, as do all those who find the letter in its proper place and evident meaning. The Seminar forecloses this problematic of the double and of *Unheimlichkeit* without mercy. And does so, doubtless, in order to deem it contained in the imaginary, in the dual relation which must be kept rigorously apart from the symbolic and the triangular. Of course it is this division between the symbolic and the imaginary which, in problematical fashion, appears to support, along with the theory of the letter (place of the lack in its place and indivisibility of the signifier), the entire discourse of the Seminar in its recourse to the truth. All the “*unheimlich*” relations of duplicity, which unfold without limit in a dual structure, find themselves omitted or marginalized in the Seminar. They are of interest only at the moment when they appear neutralized, dominated, mastered in the constitution of the triangular symbolic system, when the intersubjectivity called “veritable,” which forms the object of the instruction and of the return to Freud, appears. “It is thus that in order to demonstrate for our listeners what distinguishes the dual relation implied in the notion of projection from a veritable intersubjectivity, we had already used the reasoning reported favorably by Poe himself in the story which will be the subject of the present seminar, as that which guided an alleged child prodigy in order to have him win more often than he should have in the game of odd or even.”³² What thus finds itself controlled is *Unheimlichkeit*, and the anguishing disarray which can be provoked—without any hope of reappropriation, of closure, or of truth—by references from simulacrum to simulacrum, from double to double. If one wished to make it the example of a law at any price, the Dupin trilogy, and we will come back to this, exemplifies this uncontrollability, disrupting every verification of an identity. By neutralizing the double in the trilogy, the Seminar does everything necessary in order to avoid

32. TN. *Ecrits* (F), p. 57.

what “Aggressivity in Psychoanalysis” calls “uncontrollable anxiety.” The analysand’s anxiety, of course: “But let us imagine what would take place in a patient who saw in his analyst an exact replica of himself. Everyone feels that the excess of aggressive tension would set up such an obstacle to the manifestation of the transference that its useful effect could only be brought about extremely slowly, and this is what sometimes happens in the analysis of prospective analysts. To take an extreme case, if experienced in the form of strangeness proper to the apprehensions of the *double*, this situation would set up an uncontrollable anxiety on the part of the analysand.”³³

Perhaps now it is more understandable why, since they both operate on the basis of Freud and from within a certain functioning of the purloined letter, Bonaparte and Lacan both interpret it according to the same meaning: the castration of the mother as the ultimate meaning and proper site of the letter. But the two of them do not jump over the text in the same way. Differences of style and of proportion are not negligible here. Thus, the one always falls back, with all the well-known risks and habitual dogmatic imprudence, onto the author’s unconscious. The other, with a philosophical vigilance incomparable in this field, onto Truth. Not only the truth of the text, but Truth. Itself, precisely. The “truth which may be drawn from that moment in Freud’s thought under study” (S, p. 40), “that truth, let us note, which makes the very existence of fiction possible” (*ibid.*), the “register of truth” which “is situated entirely elsewhere, strictly speaking at the foundation of intersubjectivity” (S, p. 49), “real intersubjectivity” (elsewhere called “authentic”), “real subject of the tale,” “course which is proper to it,” “Dupin’s real strategy,” “solution in broad daylight,” etc.—the value of truth mobilizes the entire Seminar. It articulates all the Seminar’s concepts as soon as it is found at the proper site of the signifier. At the place of the lack which finally has but one—to be distributed—and always comes back to itself in it, properly, the proper having become the relation of the lack to itself, in a proper place of the proper body. “Proper,” “real,” and “authentic” relay the value of truth according to a necessity that we will analyze.

What about the truth according to Lacan then? Is there a doctrine, a Lacanian *doctrine* of the truth? We might doubt this for two reasons. The first is a general one, and has to do with the terms of the question. That a purely homogenous system is structurally im-

33. TN. *Ecrits* (E), pp. 15–16.

possible we have seen elsewhere. The second reason has to do with the mobility of the discourse which concerns us here. In the publications subsequent to the *Ecrits*, in their indications of a continuing oral instruction, one perceives a certain withdrawal [*retrait*] that muffles the incantations on *aletheia*, *logos*, speech, the word, etc. And one perceives an even more palpable erasure of the post-war existentialist connotations, if not concepts. It remains that a certain type of statement on the truth has been made, and enlarged, at a specific moment, in the form of a system. And these statements bore all the characteristics necessary for this effect. Since the Seminar belongs to this system (such, at least, is my hypothesis), as do a certain number of other essays to which I will refer (in order not, in turn, to enclose the *Ecrits* in the Seminar), it must be demarcated if one wishes to understand the reading of *The Purloined Letter*. One can and must do this, even if after 1966, in a transformed theoretical field, the Lacanian discourse on the truth, the text, and literature lent itself to a certain number of major rearrangements or decisive reworkings, although this is not certain.³⁴ The chronological and theoretical outline of this system would always be subject to caution, moreover, given the distant aftereffects of publication.

Whatever may have happened after 1965–66, all the texts situated, or more precisely published, between 1953 (the Discourse said to be of Rome) and 1960 appear to belong to the same system of the truth. Or, quantitatively, almost the entirety of the *Ecrits*, including, therefore, the Seminar (1955–57): works of the young Lacan, as will perhaps be said one day, and once more, by the academics who are always in a hurry to cut to the quick that which does not bear partition.

We are not going to give an exposition of this system of the truth, which is the condition for a logic of the signifier. Moreover, it consists of what is *non-exposable* in the exposition. We will only attempt to recognize those characteristics of it which are pertinent to the Seminar, to its possibility and its limits.

First of all, what is at issue is an *emphasis* [*emphase*], as could

34. The doctrine of the truth as cause (*Ursache*), as well as the expression "effects of truth," can be aligned with the system we are about to examine. The effects of truth are the effects of the truth, as "The Direction of the Treatment" (in which it is a question of "directing the subject towards 'full' speech," or in any event of leaving him "free to try it," *Ecrits* (E), p. 275), had already said: "it is a question of truth, of the only truth, of the truth about the effects of truth" (*ibid.*). Circulation will always be circulation of the truth: toward the truth. Cause and effect of the circle, *causa sui*, proper course and destiny of the letter.

equally be said in English, on the authentic excellence of the spoken, of speech, and of the word: of *logos* as *phonē*. This emphasis must be explained, and its necessary link to the theory of the signifier, the letter, and the truth must be accounted for. It must be explained why the author of *The Agency of the Letter in the Unconscious* and of the Seminar on *The Purloined Letter* ceaselessly subordinates the letter, writing, and the text. For even when he repeats Freud on rebuses, hieroglyphics, engravings, etc., in the last analysis his recourse is always to a writing spiritualized (*relevé*) by the voice. This would be easy to show. One example, among many others: "A writing, like the dream itself, may be figurative, it is like language always articulated symbolically, that is, it is like language *phonematic*, and in fact phonetic, as soon as it may be read."³⁵ This *fact* has the stature of a *fact* only within the limits of the so-called phonetic systems of writing. At the very most, for there are non-phonetic elements in such systems. As for the non-phonetic field of writing, its factual enormity no longer has to be demonstrated. But small matter. What does count here, and even more than the relation of the *de facto* to the *de jure*, is the implied equivalence ("that is") between symbolic articulation and phonematicity. The symbolic occurs through the voice, and the law of the signifier takes place only within vocalizable letters. Why? And what relation does this phonematism (which cannot be attributed to Freud, and thus is lost in the unfolding of the return to Freud) maintain with a certain value of truth?

Both imports of the value of truth are represented in the Seminar, as we have seen. 1. *Adequation*, in the circular return and proper course, from the origin to the end, from the signifier's place of detachment to its place of reattachment. This circuit of adequation guards and regards [*garde et regarde*] the circuit of the pact, of the contract, of sworn faith. It restores the pact in the face of what threatens it, as the symbolic order. And it is constituted at the moment when the *guardianship* [*la garde*] of the phallus is confided as guardianship of the lack. Confided by the King to the Queen, but thereby in an endless play of alternations. 2. *Veiling-unveiling* as the structure of the lack: castration, the *proper* site of the signifier, origin and destination of its letter, shows nothing in unveiling itself. Therefore, it veils itself in its unveiling. But this operation of the truth has a proper place: its contours *being* [*étant*] the place of the lack of Being [*manque à être*] on the basis of which the signifier

35. "Situation de la psychanalyse en 1956." *Ecrits* (F), p. 470.

detaches itself for its literal circuit. These two values of truth lean on and support each other (*s'étaient*). They are indissociable. They need speech or the phonetization of the letter as soon as the phallus has to be kept [*gardé*], has to return to its point of departure, has not to be disseminated en route. Now, for the signifier to be kept [*pour que le signifiant se garde*] in its letter and thus to make its return, it is necessary that in its letter it does not admit "partition," that one cannot say *some* letter [*de la lettre*], but only a letter, letters, the letter (S, pp. 53–54). If it were divisible, it could always be lost en route. To protect against this possible loss the statement about the "materiality of the signifier," that is, about the signifier's indivisible singularity, is constructed. This "materiality," deduced from an indivisibility found nowhere, in fact corresponds to an idealization. Only the ideality of a letter resists destructive division. "Cut a letter in small pieces, and it remains the letter it is" (S, p. 53): since this cannot be said of empirical materiality, it must imply an ideality (the intangibility of a self-identity displacing itself without alteration). This alone permits the singularity of the letter to be maintained [*se garder*]. If this ideality is not the content of meaning, it must be either a certain ideality of the signifier (what is identifiable in its form to the extent that it can be distinguished from its empirical events and re-editions), or the "*point de capiton*"³⁶ which staples the signifier to the signified. The latter hypothesis conforms more closely to the system. This system is in fact the system of the ideality of the signifier. The idealism lodged within it is not a theoretical position of the analyst; it is a structural effect of *signification* in general, to whatever transformations or adjustments one subjects the space of *semiosis*. One can understand that Lacan finds this "materiality" "odd" [*singulière*]: he retains only its ideality. He considers the letter only at the point at which it is determined (no matter what he says) by its content of meaning, by the ideality of the message that it "vehiculates," by the speech whose meaning remains out of the reach of partition, so that it can circulate, intact, from its place of detachment to its place of reattachment, that is, to the same place. In fact, this letter does not only escape partition, it escapes movement, it does not change its place.

Aside from a phonematic limitation of the letter, this supposes an interpretation of *phonē* which also spares it divisibility. The

36. TN. *Capitonner* means to quilt; *point de capiton* is Lacan's term for the "quilted stitch" that links signifier to signified.

voice occasions such an interpretation in and of itself: it has the phenomenal characteristics of spontaneity, of self-presence, of the circular return to itself. And the voice retains [*garde*] all the more in that one believes one can retain [*garder*] it without external accessory, without paper and without envelope: it finds itself [*se trouve*], it tells us, always available wherever it is found [*se trouve*]. This is why it is believed that the voice remains more than do writings: "May it but please heaven that writings remain, as is rather the case with spoken words" (S, p. 56). Things would be quite otherwise if one were attentive to the writing within the voice, that is, before the letter. For the same problem is reproduced concerning the voice, concerning what one might still call its "letter," if one wished to conserve the Lacanian definition of this concept (indivisible locality or materiality of the signifier). This vocal "letter" therefore also would be indivisible, always identical to itself, whatever the fragmentations of its body. It can be assured of this integrity only by virtue of its link to the ideality of a meaning, in the unity of a speech. We are always led back, from stage to stage, to the contract of contracts which guarantees the unity of the signifier with the signified through all the "*points de capiton*," thanks to the "presence" (see below) of the *same* signifier (the phallus), of the "signifier of signifiers" beneath all the effects of the signified. This transcendental signifier is therefore also the signified of all signifieds, and this is what finds itself sheltered within the indivisibility of the (graphic or oral) letter. Sheltered from this threat, but also from the disseminating power that in *Of Grammatology* I proposed to call *Writing Before the Letter* (title of the first part): the privilege of "full speech" is examined there. The agency of the Lacanian letter is the *relève* of writing in the system of speech.

"The drama" of the purloined letter begins at the moment—which is not a moment—when the letter *is retained* [*se garde*]. With the movement of the minister who acts in order to conserve it (for he could have torn it up, and this is indeed an ideality which then would have remained available and effective for a time),³⁷ certainly, but well before this, when the Queen wishes to retain it or refind it [*la garder ou la retrouver*]: as a double of the pact which binds her to the King, a threatening double, but one which in her

37. For a time only: until the moment when, unable to return a "material," divisible letter, a letter subject to partition, an effectively "odd" letter, he would have to release the hold over the Queen that only a destructible document could have assured him.

guardianship [*sous sa garde*] cannot betray the "sworn faith." The Queen wishes to be able to play on two contracts. We cannot develop this analysis here; it is to be read elsewhere.

What counts here is that the indestructibility of the letter has to do with its elevation toward the ideality of a meaning. However little we know of its content, the content must be in relation to the original contract that it simultaneously signifies and subverts. And it is this knowledge, this memory, this (conscious or unconscious) retention which form its properness [*propriété*], and ensure its proper course toward the proper place. Since its ultimate content is that of a pact binding two "singularities," it implies an irreplaceability, and excludes, as uncontrollable threat and anxiety, all double simulacra. It is the effect of living and present speech which in the last analysis guarantees the indestructible and unforgettable singularity of the letter, the taking-place of a signifier which never is lost, goes astray, or is divided. The subject is very divided, but the phallus is not to be cut. Fragmentation is an accident which does not concern it. At least according to the certainty constructed by the symbolic. And by a discourse on the assumption of castration which edifies an ideal philosophy against fragmentation.³⁸

In principle this is how the logic of the signifier is articulated with a phonocentric interpretation of the letter. The two values of the truth (adequation and movement of the veil) henceforth cannot be dissociated from the word, from present, living, authentic speech. The final word is that, when all is said and done, there is, at the origin or the end (proper course, circular destination), a word which is not feigned, a meaning which, through all imaginable fictional complications, does not trick, or which at that point tricks *truly*, again teaching us the truth of the lure. At this point, the truth

38. What we are analyzing here is the most rigorous philosophy of psychoanalysis today, more precisely the most rigorous Freudian philosophy, doubtless more rigorous than Freud's philosophy, and more scrupulous in its exchanges with the history of philosophy.

It would be impossible to exaggerate the import of the proposition about the indivisibility of the letter, or rather about the letter's self-identity that is inaccessible to fragmentation ("Cut a letter in small pieces, it remains the letter it is"), or of the proposition about the so-called "materiality of the signifier" (the letter) which does not bear partition. Where does this come from? A fragmented letter can purely and simply be destroyed, this happens (and if one considers that the unconscious effect here named letter is never lost, that repression maintains everything and never permits any degradation of insistence, this hypothesis—nothing is ever lost or goes astray—must still be aligned with *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, or other letters must be produced, whether characters or messages).

permits the analyst to treat fictional characters as real, and to resolve, at the depth of the Heideggerian meditation on truth, the problem of the literary text which sometimes led Freud (more naively, but more surely than Heidegger and Lacan) to confess his confusion. And we are still only dealing with a literature with characters! Let us cite the Seminar first. The suspicion that perhaps the author's purpose was not, as Baudelaire said, to state the true has just been awakened. Which, however, does not always amount to having a good time. Thus: "No doubt Poe is having a good time . . .

"But a suspicion occurs to us: might not this parade of erudition be destined to reveal to us the key words of our drama? Is not the magician repeating his trick before our eyes, without deceiving us this time about divulging his secret, but pressing his wager to the point of really explaining it to us without our seeing a thing? *That* would be the summit of the illusionist's art: through one of his fictive creations *truly to delude* us. And is it not such effects which justify our referring, without malice, to a number of imaginary heroes as real characters?

"As well, when we are open to hearing the way in which Martin Heidegger discloses to us in the word *aletheia* the play of truth, we rediscover a secret to which truth has always initiated her lovers, and through which they learn that it is in hiding that she offers herself to them *most truly*" (S, pp. 50–51).

Abyss effects are severely controlled here, a scientifically irreproachable precaution: this is science itself, or at least ideal science, and even the truth of the science of truth. From the statements I have just cited it does not follow that truth is a fiction, but that through fiction truth properly declares itself. Fiction manifests the truth: the manifestation that illustrates itself through evasion. *Dichtung* (poetic saying or fiction, this is both Goethe's and Freud's expression: just as for Heidegger, the issue is one of literary fiction as *Dichtung*) is the manifestation of the truth, its being-declared: "There is so little opposition between this *Dichtung* and *Wahrheit* in its nudity that the fact of the poetic operation rather should give us pause before the characteristic which is forgotten in all truth, that it declares itself in a structure of fiction."³⁹ Truth governs the fictional element of its manifestation, which permits it to be or to become what it is, to declare itself. Truth governs this element from its origin or its telos, which finally coordinates this concept of literary fiction with a highly classical interpretation of *mimesis*: a de-

39. *Ecrits* (F), p. 742.

tour toward the truth, more truth in the fictive representation than in reality, increased fidelity, "superior realism." The preceding citation called for a note: "The suitability of this reminder for our subject would be sufficiently confirmed, if need be, by one of the numerous unpublished texts that Delay's opus provides us, enlightening them in the most appropriate way. Here from the *Unpublished Journal*, said to be from la Brevine where Gide dwelled in October 1894 (note on page 667 of his volume 2).

"The novel will prove that it can paint something other than reality—emotion and thought directly; it will show to what extent it can be deduced, *before the experience of things*—to what extent, that is, it can be composed—that it is a work of art. It will show that it can be a work of art, composed entirely out of its own elements, not out of a realism of petty and contingent facts, but a superior realism." There follows a reference to the mathematical triangle, and then: "It is necessary that in their relation itself each part of a work prove the truth of each other part, there is no need for any other proof. Nothing is more irritating than the testimony that M. de Goncourt gives for everything he asserts—he has seen! he has heard! as if proof via the real were necessary." Lacan concludes:

"It has to be said that no poet has ever thought otherwise . . . , but that no one follows through on this thought." And in the same article it is confirmed that it is a "person" who "bears" the "truth of fiction." This person is the "seductress" of the "young boy."⁴⁰

Once one has distinguished, as does the entire philosophical tradition, between truth and reality, it immediately follows that the truth "declares itself in a structure of fiction."⁴¹ Lacan insists a great deal on the opposition truth/reality, which he advances as a paradox. This opposition, which is as orthodox as can be, facilitates the passage of the truth through fiction: common sense always will have made the division between reality and fiction.

But once again, why would speech be the privileged element of this truth declared as fiction, in the mode or structure of fiction, of verified fiction, of what Gide calls "superior realism"?

As soon as the truth is determined as adequation (with an original contract: the acquitting of a debt) and as unveiling (of the lack

40. *Ecrits* (F), p. 753.

41. For example: "Thus it is from elsewhere than the Reality with which it is concerned that the Truth takes its guarantee: it is from Speech (*la Parole*). Just as it is from Speech that it receives the mark which institutes it in a structure of fiction.

"The primal word (*le dit premier*) decrees, legislates, aphorizes, is oracle, it confers upon the real other its obscure authority." *Ecrits* (F), p. 808.

on the basis of which the contract is contracted in order to reappropriate symbolically what has been detached), the guiding value is indeed that of appropriation, and therefore of proximity, of presence, and of maintaining [*garde*]: the very value procured by the idealizing effect of speech. If one grants this demonstration, it will not be surprising to find it confirmed. If one does not, then how is one to explain the massive co-implication, in Lacanian discourse, of truth and speech, "present," "full," and "authentic" speech? And if it is taken into account, one better understands: 1. That fiction for Lacan is permeated by truth as something spoken, and therefore as something non-real. 2. That this leads to no longer reckoning, in the text, with everything that remains irreducible to speech, to the spoken word [*le dit*], and meaning [*vouloir-dire*]: that is, irreducible dis-regard, theft without return, destructibility, divisibility, the failure to reach a destination (*le manque à destination*) (which definitively rebels against the destination of the lack [*la destination du manque*]: an unverifiable non-truth).

When Lacan recalls "the passion for unveiling which has one object: the truth"⁴² and recalls that the analyst "above all remains the master of the truth," it is always in order to link the truth to the power of speech. And to the power of communication as a contract (sworn faith) between two present things. Even if communication communicates nothing, it communicates to itself: and in this case better yet as communication, that is, truth. For example: "Even if it communicates nothing, the discourse represents the existence of communication; even if it denies the evidence, it affirms that speech constitutes truth; even if it is intended to deceive, the discourse speculates on faith in testimony."⁴³

What is neither true nor false is reality. But as soon as speech is

42. "You have heard me, in order to situate its place in the investigation, refer with brotherly love to Descartes and to Hegel. These days, it is rather fashionable to 'surpass' the classical philosophers. I equally could have taken the admirable dialogue with Parmenides as my point of departure. For neither Socrates, nor Descartes, nor Marx, nor Freud can be 'surpassed' to the extent that they have conducted their investigations with that passion for unveiling which has a single object: the truth.

"As one of those, princes of the verb, and through whose fingers the strings of the mask of the Ego seem to slip by themselves, has written—I have named Max Jacob, poet, saint, and novelist—yes, as he has written in his *Dice Cup*, if I am not mistaken: the true is always new." *Ecrits* (F), p. 193. This is true, always. How not to subscribe to it?

43. TN. "Empty and full speech in the psychoanalytic realization of the subject" in the Rome Report (*Function and Field of Speech . . .*), *Ecrits* (E), p. 43.

inaugurated, one is in the register of the unveiling of the truth as of its contract of properness [*propriété*]: presence, speech, testimony: "The ambiguity of the hysterical revelation of the past is due not so much to the vacillation of its content between the imaginary and the real, for it is situated in both. Nor is it because it is made up of lies. The reason is that it presents us with the birth of truth in speech, and thereby brings us up against the reality of what is neither true nor false. At any rate, that is the most disquieting aspect of the problem.

"For it is present speech that bears witness to the truth of this revelation in present reality, and which grounds it in the name of that reality. Yet in that reality, only speech bears witness to that portion of the powers of the past that has been thrust aside at each crossroads where the event has made its choice."⁴⁴ Just before this passage there is a reference to Heidegger, which is not surprising; the reference resituates *Dasein* in the subject, which is more so.

As soon as "present speech" "bears witness" to the "truth of this revelation" beyond the true or the false, beyond what is truthful or lying in a given statement or symptom in their relation to a given content, the values of adequation or unveiling no longer even have to await their verification or achievement from the exterior of some object. They guarantee each other intrinsically. What counts is not whatever (true or false) is communicated, but "the existence of communication," the present revelation made within communication of the speech that bears witness to the truth. Whence the necessary relaying by the values of authenticity, plenitude, properness, etc. The truth, which is what must be refound [*retrouvé*], therefore is not an object beyond the subject, is not the adequation of speech to an object,⁴⁵ but the adequation of full speech to itself, its proper

44. TN. *Ecrits* (E), p. 47.

45. "True speech" is the speech authenticated by the other in faith sworn or given. The other makes speech adequate to itself—and no longer to the object—by sending back the message in inverted form, by making it true, by henceforth identifying the subject with itself, by "stating that it is the same." Adequation—as authentication—must pass through intersubjectivity. Speech "is therefore an act, and as such supposes a subject. But it is not enough to say that in this act the subject supposes another subject, for it is much rather that the subject is founded in this act as being the other, but in that paradoxical unity of the one and the other, by whose means, as has been shown above, the one depends upon the other in order to become identical to itself.

"Thus one can say that speech manifests itself not only as a communication in which the subject, in order to await that the other make his message true, is going to project the message in inverted form, but also as a communication in which this

authenticity, the conformity of its act to its original essence. And the telos of this *Eigentlichkeit*, the proper aiming at this authenticity shows the "authentic way" of analysis, of the training analysis in particular. "But what in fact was this appeal from the subject beyond the void of his speech? It was an appeal to the very principle of truth; through which other appeals resulting from humbler

message transforms the subject by stating that it is the same. As is apparent in every given pledge, in which declarations like 'you are my wife,' or 'you are my master,' signify 'I am your husband,' 'I am your disciple.'

"Speech therefore appears all the more truly speech in that its truth is less founded in what is called adequation to the thing: true speech, thereby, is opposed paradoxically to true discourse, their truth being distinguished by the fact that the former constitutes the subjects' acknowledgment of their Beings in that they have an interest in them, while the latter is constituted by the knowledge of the real, to the extent that the subject aims for it in objects. But each of the truths distinguished here is changed by intersecting with the other in its path." *Ecrits* (F), p. 351 (*Variantes de la cure-type*). In this intersecting, "true speech" always appears as more true than "true discourse," which always presupposes the order of true speech, the order of the intersubjective contract, of symbolic exchange, and therefore of the debt. "But true speech, in questioning true discourse about what it signifies, will find that signification always refers to signification, there being no thing that can be shown otherwise than with a sign, and henceforth will show true discourse to be doomed to error." *Ecrits* (F), p. 352. The ultimate adequation of the truth as true speech therefore has the form of making quits (*l'acquittement*), the "strange adequation . . . which finds its response in the symbolic debt for which the subject as subject of speech is responsible." *Ecrits* (E), p. 144. These are the final words of "The Freudian Thing." Adequation to the thing (true discourse) therefore has its foundation in the adequation of speech to itself (true speech), that is to the thing itself: in other words of *the Freudian thing to itself*: "The thing speaks of itself" (*Ecrits* (E), p. 121), and it says: "I, the truth, speak." The thing is the truth: as cause, both of itself and of the things of which true discourse speaks. These propositions are less new, particularly in relation to the Rome Report, to *Variantes de la cure-type*, and to the texts of the same period, than their author says: "This is to introduce the effects of truth as cause at a quite different point, and to impose a revision of the process of causality—the first stage of which would seem to be to recognize the inherent nature of the heterogeneity of these effects."⁵ *Ecrits* (E), p. 127. (The footnote: "5. This rewritten paragraph antedates a line of thought that I have since explored further (1966)." *Ecrits* (E), p. 145.)

"True speech" (adequate to itself, conforming to its essence, destined to be quits of a debt which in the last analysis binds it only to itself) therefore permits the contract which permits the subject "to become identical to itself." Therefore it reconstructs the ground of Cartesian certainty: the transformation of the truth into certainty, subjectification (the determination of the Being of beings as subject), and intersubjectification (the chain Descartes-Hegel-Husserl). This chain ceaselessly captures, in the *Ecrits*, Heideggerian motions which would appear, rigorously speaking, to be allergic to it, and would appear to have "destructive" effects on it. For the moment, let us abandon these kinds of questions—the most decisive ones—that Lacan's discourse never articulates.

needs will vacillate. But first and foremost it was the proper appeal of the void [*appel propre du vide*] . . ."⁴⁶

From the proper appeal of the void to the achieving of full speech, the "realization" of full speech through the assumption of desire (of castration)—such, then, is the ideal process of analysis: "I have tackled the function of speech in analysis from its least rewarding angle, that of empty speech, where the subject seems to be talking in vain about someone who, even if he were his spitting image, can never become one with the assumption of his desire . . . If we now turn to the other extreme of the psychoanalytic experience—its history, its argumentation, the process of the treatment—we shall find that to the analysis of the here and now is to be opposed the value of anamnesis as the index and source of therapeutic progress; that to obsessional intrasubjectivity is to be opposed hysterical intersubjectivity; and that to the analysis of resistance is to be opposed symbolic interpretation. The realization of full speech beings here."⁴⁷

Speech, here, is not full of something beyond itself which would be its object: but this is why all the more and all the better, it is full of itself, of its presence, its essence. This presence, as in the contract and the sworn faith, requires irreplaceable properness [*propriété*], inalienable singularity, living authenticity—so many values whose system we have recognized elsewhere. The double, repetition, recording, and the mimeme in general are excluded from this system, along with the entire graphematic structure they imply; and they are excluded both in the name of direct interlocution and as inauthentic alienation. For example: "But precisely because it comes to him through an alienated form, even a retransmission of his own recorded discourse, be it from the mouth of his own doctor, cannot have the same effects as psychoanalytic interlocution."⁴⁸

The disqualification of recording or repetition in the name of the act of living and present speech conforms to a well-known program. And is indispensable to the system. The system of "true speech," of "speech in act," cannot do without the condemnation, which stretches from Plato to a certain Freud, of the simulacrum of hypomnesis, hypomnesis condemned in the name of the truth, in the name of that which links *mnēmē*, *anamnesis*, *aletheia*, etc.

Materiality, the sensory and repetitive side of the recording,

46. TN. *Ecrits* (E), p. 40.

47. TN. *Ecrits* (E), pp. 45–46.

48. TN. *Ecrits* (E), p. 49.

the paper letter, drawings in ink, can be divided or multiplied, destroyed or set adrift (since authentic originality is always already lost in them). The letter itself, in the Lacanian sense, as the site of the signifier and symbol of a sworn faith, and therefore of a true full and present speech, has as its property, its "singular," "odd" property in effect, "not to admit partition."

"Present speech," then, as "full speech": "I might as well be categorical: in psychoanalytic anamnesis, it is not a question of reality, but of truth, because the effect of full speech is to reorder past contingencies by conferring on them the sense of necessities to come, such as they are constituted by the little freedom through which the subject makes them present."⁴⁹

Henceforth, a text, if it is living and animated, full and authentic, will be of value only by virtue of the speech it will have as its mission to transport. Therefore, there also will be full texts and empty texts. The former only "vehiculate" a full speech, that is, an authentically present truth which simultaneously unveils and is adequate to or identical with that which it speaks about. Which is itself, therefore ("the thing speaks of itself"), at the moment when it makes its return to the encircled hole and to the contract which constitute it. For example, as concerns Freud's text, which must be returned to, and be returned to itself as well (see above): "Not one of those two-dimensional, infinitely flat (as the mathematicians say) texts, which are only of fiduciary value in a constituted discourse, but a text that is the vehicle of a speech, in that speech constitutes a new emergence of the truth." Such a text, as present, inaugural, and constitutive speech, itself answers for itself if we question it, as is said in the *Phaedrus* of the logos which is its own father. It simultaneously gives the questions and the answers. Our activity of mobilizing "all the resources of our exegesis" is only in order "to make it [Freud's text] answer the questions that it puts to us, to treat it as a real speech, we should say, if we knew our own terms, in its transference value." Our "own terms": let us take this as the terms of the discourse which questions and answers, Freud's discourse. "Of course, this supposes that we interpret it. In effect, is there a better critical method than the one which applies to the comprehension of a message the very principles of comprehension of which it is the vehicle? This is the most rational mode in which to experience its authenticity.

49. TN. *Ecrits* (E), p. 48.

"Full speech, in effect, is defined by its identity with that which it speaks about."⁵⁰

The exegete's full speech fills itself when it assumes and takes upon itself the "principles of comprehension" of the other's—here Freud's—message, to the extent that this message itself "vehiculates" a "full speech." The latter, since it is inaugural and "constitutes a new emergence of the truth," contracts only with itself: it speaks of itself by itself. This is what we are calling the *system* of speech, or the *system* of truth.

One cannot define the "hermeneutical circle," along with all the conceptual parts of its system, more rigorously or more faithfully. It includes all the circles that we are pointing out here, in their Platonic, Hegelian, and Heideggerian tradition, and in the most philosophical sense of responsibility:⁵¹ to acquit oneself adequately of that which one owes (duty and debt).

Authenticity—the pole of adequation and of circular reappropriation for the ideal process of analysis. Certainly it is not a question of the crude readjustment which would come back to us from America. One must above all keep oneself [*se garder*] from such a mistake. No one here, of course, makes this mistake, we must insist. And this authenticity, which is a very rare thing, reserved for exceptional moments, does not qualify the speech of an "ego," but the speech of the other, and a certain relation to the speech of the other. In order to gain access to it, the psychoanalyst must pass through the screen of narcissism, returning it to a state of pure transparency: at this point, with "the authentic speech of the other," he

50. TN. *Ecrits* (F), p. 381.

51. This responsibility is defined immediately after, and on the basis of, the exchange of "full speech" with Freud, in its "true formative value": "For in question is nothing less than its adequation at the level of man at which he takes hold of it, no matter what he thinks—at which he is called upon to answer it, no matter what he wants—and for which he assumes responsibility, no matter what his opinion." *Ecrits* (F), p. 382. As concerns the "level of man," we do not have enough space to verify the essential link between metaphysics (several typical characteristics of which we are pointing out here) and humanism in this system. This link is more visible, if not looked upon more highly, in the conglomeration of statements about "animality," about the distinction between animal and human language, etc. This discourse on the animal (in general) is no doubt consistent with all the categories and oppositions, all the bi- or tri-partitions of the system. And it condenses no less the system's greatest obscurity. The treatment of animality, as of everything that finds itself in *submission* by virtue of a hierarchical opposition, has always, in the history of (humanist and phallogocentric) metaphysics, revealed obscurantist resistance. It is obviously of capital interest.

has the chance to grasp again the origin of speech and truth in the "sworn faith." He can engage his "revealing interpretation" in the circular and reappropriating chain of the "true speeches," even if these are not true words. But these moments of authenticity, like those of Heideggerian *Eigentlichkeit*, are rare in existence. For example, concerning the "subject's bad faith," through which is to be refound "the speech in which truth has its foundation," the truth to which bad faith still bears witness:

If, then, the ideal condition for the analyst occurs, that the mirages of narcissism have become transparent for him, it is so that he may be permeable to the authentic speech of the other, and the question now is to understand how he can recognize it through its discourse.

Certainly this intermediary discourse [that of "the subject's bad faith"], even as the discourse of deception and error, does not fail to bear witness to the existence of the speech in which truth has its foundation, in that it maintains itself only by proposing itself as such, and that, even in yielding itself openly as the discourse of the lie, it only more forcefully affirms the existence of this speech. And if one again finds, via this phenomenological approach to the truth, the key whose loss leads positivist logicism to search for the "meaning of meaning," does not this approach also recognize in it the concept of the concept, in that it reveals itself in speech in action?

This speech, which constitutes the subject in his truth, is, however, forever forbidden to him, outside the rare moments of his existence when he attempts, however confusedly, to grasp it in sworn faith, and forbidden in that the intermediary discourse condemns him to misconstrue it. Nevertheless, it speaks everywhere that it can be read in his Being, that is at all the levels at which it has formed him. This antinomy is the very antinomy of the meaning that Freud gave to the notion of the unconscious.

But if this speech is nonetheless accessible, it is because no true speech is only the subject's speech, since it is always toward grounding it in the mediation of another subject that it operates, and that thereby it is open to the chain without end—certainly not indefinite, since it closes itself again—of the speeches in which the dialectic of recognition is concretely realized in the human community.

It is in the extent to which the analyst can stifle within himself the intermediary discourse [bad faith] in order to open himself to the chain of true speeches, that he can place his revealing interpretation.

Since he sees himself each time that one considers in its concrete form an authentic interpretation . . .⁵²

In sum: there is an authentic and revealing interpretation, and it supposes that one stifle bad faith in order to gain access to "speech in act" and to the (good) sworn faith⁵³ without intermediary discourse, in the transparency of intersubjective dialectics. Only the unconscious in Freud's sense, therefore, can open our ears to this speech which speaks if one knows how to read it.⁵⁴

52. TN. *Ecrits* (F), pp. 352–53 (*Variantes de la cure-type*).

53. On the "relation to the Other who is the guarantor of Good Faith," on the "manifested presence of intersubjectivity," and on "the paths along which analysis proceeds not only in order to restore an order, but in order to set in place the conditions for the possibility of restoring it," see *The Agency of the Letter in the Unconscious* (*Ecrits* (E), pp. 172–73), in which it had just been recalled: "The end that Freud's discovery proposes for man was defined by him at the apex of his thought in these moving terms: *Wo es war, soll Ich werden*. I must come to the place where that was (*Là ou fut ça, il me faut advenir*).

"This end is one of reintegration and harmony, I could even say of reconciliation (*Versöhnung*)" (p. 171).

54. The values of presence (in person), of proximity, plenitude, and consistency form the system of authenticity in the analytic dialogue, in opposition to the "discourse of the one." For example: "What does Freud tell us here in effect? He uncovers for us a phenomenon that structures every revelation of the truth in dialogue. There is the fundamental difficulty that the subject encounters in what he has to say; the most common one being what Freud demonstrated in repression, to wit, the kind of discordance between the signified and the signifier, determined by every censorship of social origin."

This discordance due to repression perhaps will necessitate a correction of Saussurian semiology, but somewhere this is not irreducible, therefore essential. For the time of a detour or of a turning away: a provision. The development that immediately follows: "In this case the truth can always be communicated between the lines. Which is to say that whoever wishes to make it understood can always recur to the technique indicated by the identity of the truth with the symbols that reveal it, that is, to achieve one's ends by deliberately introducing into a text the discordances that correspond cryptographically to those imposed by censorship.

"The true subject, that is, the subject of the unconscious, does not proceed otherwise than through the language of its symptoms, which is not sufficiently deciphered by the analyst if he does not come to address himself to it in more and more consistent fashion, for the always renewed satisfaction of our experience. In effect, this is what has been recognized in the phenomenon of the transference.

"What the subject who speaks says, however empty his discourse, takes its effect from the approximation that is realized in his discourse from the speech into which he could fully convert the truth that his symptoms express . . . we have used the image that the speech of the subject fluctuates toward the presence of the auditor.

(Footnote: "Here will be recognized the formula which we have used to introduce what is in question since the beginnings of our instruction. The subject, as we said, begins analysis by speaking of himself without really speaking to you, or by

Only a speech, with its effects of presence in act and of authentic life can maintain [*garder*] the "sworn faith" which links it to the desire of the other. If the "phallus is the privileged signifier of that mark in which the role of the logos is joined with the advent of desire,"⁵⁵ the privileged site of this privileged signifier, then its letter is the voice: the letter as spokesman, the letter-carrying-speech. The letter alone—as soon as the *point de capiton* of the signified ensures its repeatable identity—carries the necessary ideality or power of idealization that can safeguard (in any event this is what it means) the indivisible, singular, living, non-fragmentable integrity of the phallus, of the privileged signifier to which it gives rise. The *transcendental* position of the phallus (in the chain of signifiers to which it belongs, while simultaneously making it possible)⁵⁶ thus

speaking to you without speaking to you about himself. When he is able to speak to you about himself, the analysis is over."

"This presence, which is the purest relation of which the subject is capable in regard to a Being, and which is all the more vividly felt as such in that this Being is less qualified for the subject, this presence which is for an instant rendered to the extremity of the veils which cover and elide it in common discourse to that extent that it is constituted as the discourse of the *one* precisely to this end, this presence is marked in discourse by a suspensive scansion often connoted by a moment of anxiety, as I have shown you in an example from my own experience." *Ecrits* (F), pp. 372–73 (*Introduction au commentaire de Jean Hyppolite sur la "Verneinung" de Freud*).

Of course, this is what "Freud tells us": "The purest relation," "presence," is in relation to a "Being," and it is felt all the more "vividly" in that this "Being" (this subject-being) is "less qualified," that is, obviously, more indeterminate. The presence of Being is all the more pure in that the ontic determination is less. This takes place only for a privileged "instant," beyond the "one," and in a state of "anxiety." The indeterminateness of Being (here of the subject-being-psychoanalyst), unveils nothingness, (non-being in totality), as the truth of presence. What "Freud tells us" very literally would be *What Is Metaphysics?*

55. TN. *Ecrits* (E), p. 287 ("The Signification of the Phallus").

56. This is the strict definition of the *transcendental position*: the privilege of one term within a series of terms that it makes possible and which presupposes it. Thus a category is called transcendental (transcategorical) when it "transcends every genus" (*transcendit omne genus*), i.e. the list of categories of which it is nevertheless a part while accounting for it. This is the role of the phallus in the logic of the signifier. Therefore this is also the role of the hole and the lack in their determinable contours: ". . . for the phallus of his mother, that is to say, for that eminent *manque-à-être*, for that want-to-be, whose privileged signifier Freud revealed to us . . ." *Ecrits* (E), p. 170 ("The Agency of the Letter in the Unconscious"). The transcendental eminence of this privilege is therefore placed in perspective, at its height, from the point of view of the horrified perception of the child—or more precisely of the little boy and his sexual theory.

This omnipresence of a condition of possibility, this permanent implication, in every signifier, of the "signifier of signifiers" ("The Direction of the Treatment,"

would have its proper place—in Lacanian terms, its letter exempt from all partition—in the phonematic structure of language. No protest against metalanguage is opposed to this phallogocentric transcendentalism. Especially if within *metalanguage*, language is centered on the voice, that is, on the ideal site of the phallus. If by some misfortune the phallus were divisible or reduced to the status of a part object,⁵⁷ the entire edifice would collapse, and this must be

Ecrits (E), p. 265), of the “unparalleled signifier” (ibid., p. 277), can have as its element of presence only a milieu of ideality: hence the eminence of the transcendental eminence whose *effect* is to maintain presence, to wit *phonē*. This is what made necessary and possible, in exchange for certain corrections, the integration of Freudian phallogocentrism with a fundamentally phonocentric Saussurian semi-linguistics. The “algorithmic” transformation does not appear to me to undo this tie. Here is the best definition of the transcendental phallus, in relation to which all the protestations of anti-transcendentalism (see *Ecrits* (F), p. 365) have the value of a denegation: “For the phallus is a signifier, a signifier whose function, in the intrasubjective economy of the analysis, lifts the veil, perhaps, from the function it performed in the mysteries. For it is the signifier intended to designate as a whole the effects of the signified, in that the signifier conditions them by its presence as a signifier.” *Ecrits* (E), p. 285 (“The Signification of the Phallus”).

57. We have seen that the signifier (and first of all the “privileged,” “unparalleled” signifier, the phallus) is not, in its place, in its letter, “to admit partition.” And no more is it (a separate, but convergent demand) to be treated as part object, subject like any other to the chain of substitutes. This is the axial demand, the most insistent plea, if not the most apparent criterion in Lacan’s sexual theory. It is very significant that this is what motivates the objection to Jones in the “quarrel” over phallogocentrism and female sexuality. One of the “deviations” from psychoanalysis has consisted of “reducing” the phallus “to the role of part object.” This “profound mystification” (*Ecrits* (E), p. 198) sent Jones over to the side of the “feminists” only to the extent that he could not separate himself from another suspect legatee, Klein this time, and her “hesitant” work (*Ecrits* (E), p. 197), her “lack of precision” (*Ecrits* (F), p. 728). All of this (“but . . . but . . .”) in order to exclude the “analytically unthinkable,” the analytically thinkable being limited to Freud’s good faith which could not be mistaken, given that “he was better *guided* than anyone in his recognition of the order of unconscious phenomena, of which he was the inventor” (*Ecrits* (E), p. 284). Thus: “In effect, this schema [schema R] enables us to show the relations that refer not to pre-Oedipal stages, which are not of course non-existent, but which are analytically unthinkable (as is sufficiently apparent in the hesitant, but *guided* work of Melanie Klein), but to the pregenital stages in so far as they are ordered in the retroaction of the Oedipus complex.” “On the Possible Treatment of Psychosis,” *Ecrits* (E), p. 197; trans. mod. “In fact, what has he gained in normalizing the function of the phallus as a part-object if he has to invoke its presence in the mother’s body as an internal object, which term is a function of the phantasies revealed by Melanie Klein, and if he cannot separate himself from Klein’s view that these phantasies originate as far back as in early childhood, during Oedipal formation?”

avoided at all cost. This can always happen [*arriver*] if its occurrence, its taking-place, does not have the ideality of a phonematic letter (what the Seminar so bizarrely calls the “materiality of the signifier,” on the precedent that it survives the burnt or torn paper, and that it endures in not permitting itself to be divided). This always does *happen* [*arrive*], but the voice is there to deceive us about this strange event, and to leave to us the ideal guardianship [*garde*] of that which falls to the rank of partial or divisible object: a disseminable bit.

The lure—but the word no longer suffices—would not come from the imaginary, but from the alleged limit between the imaginary and the symbolic. The consequence: remains to be followed.

The systematic and historical link between idealization, the *re-lève* (*Aufhebung*), and the voice—if one now takes it as demonstrated—is insistent, therefore, in “The Signification of the Phallus.” Elevation to the function of signifier is an *Aufhebung* of the “signifiable” (p. 288): which is therefore true in a privileged way of the “privileged signifier” (the phallus) and of its literal locality *par excellence* (the voice). Whence the structural complicity between the motifs of the veil and the voice, between the truth and phonocentrism, phallogocentrism and logocentrism, which is exposed thus: “All these propositions merely veil the fact that it can play its role only when veiled, that is to say, as itself a sign of the latency with

“It might be a good idea to re-examine the question by asking what could have necessitated for Freud the evident paradox of his position. For one has to admit that he was better *guided* than anyone in his recognition of the order of unconscious phenomena, of which he was the inventor, and that, failing an adequate articulation of the nature of these phenomena, his followers were doomed to lose their way to a greater or lesser degree.

“It is on the basis of the following bet—which I lay down as the principle of a commentary of Freud’s work that I have pursued during the past seven years—that I have been led to certain results: essentially, to promulgate as necessary to any articulation of analytic phenomena the notion of the signifier, as opposed to that of the signified, in modern linguistic analysis.” “The Signification of the Phallus,” in *Ecrits* (E), pp. 284–285. My italics; follow what is *guided*.

“We must retain the fact that Jones, in his address to the Vienna Society, which seems to have scorched the earth for any contributions since, already found nothing more to produce than his pure and simple solidarity with Kleinian concepts in the perfect brutality in which their author presents them: that is, the lack of precision in which Melanie Klein keeps herself,—including the more original Oedipal fantasies in the maternal body—, from their provenance in the reality supposed by the Name-of-the-Father.” *Propos directifs pour un Congrès sur la sexualité féminine*, in *Ecrits* (F), pp. 728–729.

which any signifier is struck, when it is raised (*aufgehoben*) to the function of signifier.

"The phallus is the signifier of this *Aufhebung* itself, which it inaugurates (initiates) by its disappearance."⁵⁸

It appears that the Hegelian movement of the *Aufhebung* is reversed here, since the Hegelian *Aufhebung* lifts [*relève*] the sensory signifier into the ideal signified. But since Lacan has granted to verbal language (the preconscious, that is, consciousness for Freud) the best local guardianship [*garde*] of the phallus (the privileged signifier), the preeminence of the voice annuls the reversal. The preeminence of the voice is common to the two dialectics and idealizes the signifier.

The same thing always takes (the same) place. Again, the issue is one of not abandoning the proper place in question.

Phallogocentrism is one thing. And what is called man and what is called woman might be subject to it. All the more in that, as we are reminded, the phallus is neither a fantasy ("an imaginary effect"), nor an object ("part-, internal, good, bad, etc."), and "even less the organ, penis or clitoris, that it symbolizes."⁵⁹ Androcentrism, therefore, could be another thing.

But what happens? All of phallogocentrism is articulated on the basis of a determined *situation* (let us give this word all its imports) in which the phallus *is* the mother's desire to the extent that she does not have it.⁶⁰ An (individual, perceptual, local, cultural, historical,

58. TN. *Ecrits* (E), p. 288.

59. TN. *Ecrits* (E), p. 285.

60. "... the signification of castration in fact takes on its (*clinically manifest*) full weight as far as the formation of symptoms is concerned, only on the basis of its discovery as castration of the mother" (*Ecrits* (E), p. 282), that is, her lack of a penis and not of a clitoris. "The fact that the phallus is a signifier means that it is in the place of the Other that the subject has access to it. But since this signifier is only veiled, as the ratio of the Other's desire, it is this desire of the Other as such that the subject must recognize. . . . If the desire of the mother *is* the phallus, the child wishes to be the phallus in order to satisfy that desire. . . . *Clinical experience has shown* us that this test of the desire of the Other is decisive not in the sense that the subject learns by it whether or not he has a real phallus, but in the sense that he learns that the mother does not have it. . . . in effect, the man finds satisfaction for his demand for love in the relation with the woman, in as much as the signifier of the phallus constitutes her as giving in love what she does not have. . . ." *Ecrits* (E), pp. 282-90 *passim*.

I have italicized "*clinically manifest*" and "*clinical experience has shown*" without having the slightest suspicion concerning the truth of these statements. Rather, in order to examine all the bearings of a *situation* of psychoanalysis in XXXX.

"What she does not have" . . . "bequeaths in that she has never had it": recall

etc.) situation on the basis of which what is called a "sexual theory" is elaborated: the phallus is not the organ, penis or clitoris, that it symbolizes, but it mostly and primarily symbolizes the penis. What follows is obvious: phallogocentrism as androcentrism, along with the entire paradoxical logic and reversals this engenders; for example, that in "phallogocentric dialectics, she [woman] represents

that "Woman" and the Queen are in question here: the proper place orienting the proper course of the letter, its "destination," what it "means," which is deciphered on the basis of a situation that theorizes what "clinical experience shows us."

This *situation* (a theoretical discourse and an institution built upon a *phase* of the male child's experience and the corresponding sexual theory) supports, for both Bonaparte and Lacan, the interpretation of "The Purlined Letter." This interpretation corresponds rigorously, and here there is no infidelity of the legatees to the description given by Freud in the propositions that were debated during the "quarrel" just mentioned. As a reminder: ". . . the main characteristic of this 'infantile genital organization' is its *difference* from the final genital organization of the adult. The fact is that, for both sexes, only one genital, namely the male one, comes into account. What is present, therefore, is not a primacy of the genitals, but a primacy of the *phallus*."

"Unfortunately we can describe this state of things only as it affects the male child; the corresponding processes in the little girl are not known to us. . . . [Little boys] disavow the fact [of the absence of a penis] and believe that they *do* see a penis, all the same. They gloss over the contradiction between observation and pre-conception by telling themselves that the penis is still small and will grow bigger presently; and they then slowly come to the emotionally significant conclusion that after all the penis had at least been there before and been taken away afterwards. The lack of a penis is regarded as a result of castration, and so now the child is faced with the task of coming to terms with castration in relation to himself. The further developments are too well known generally to make it necessary to recapitulate them here. But it seems to me that *the significance of the castration complex can only be rightly appreciated if its origin in the phase of phallic primacy is also taken into account* . . . At the . . . stage of infantile genital organization . . . *maleness* exists, but not femaleness. The antithesis here is between having a *male genital* and being *castrated*." "The Infantile Genital Organization" (1923), SE 19, pp. 142-45.

One might be tempted to say: Freud, like those who follow him here, is only describing the necessity of phallogocentrism, only explaining its effects, which are as obvious as they are massive. Phallogocentrism is neither an accident nor a speculative error that can be imputed to any given theoretician. It is an old and enormous root that must also be accounted for. Thus, one can describe it, as one describes an object or an itinerary, without having the description participate in that whose recognition it operates. Certainly. But this hypothesis, which then would have to be extended to cover all the texts of tradition, encounters in these texts, as it does in Freud, and as it does in those of his heirs who on this question wish to transform no part of his legacy, a strictly determinable limit: the description is a "participant" when it induces a practice, an ethics, and an institution, and therefore a politics that insures the truth of the tradition. Then, it is no longer only a question of knowing, showing, and explaining, but of remaining. And of reproducing. Lacan declares his ethico-institutional discourse: the motifs of authenticity, of full speech, of sworn

the absolute Other.”⁶¹ This consequence had to be marked in order to recognize the meaning of the purloined letter in the “course which is proper to it.” From the end of “The Signification of the Phallus,” a twice repeated assertion of depth, profundity: “Correlatively, one can glimpse the reason for a characteristic that had never before been elucidated, and which shows once again the depth of Freud’s intuition: namely, why he advances the view that there is only one *libido*, his text showing that he conceives it as masculine in nature. The function of the phallic signifier touches here on its most profound relation: that in which the Ancients embodied the *Nous* and the *Logos*.”⁶² Depth is height. It flows out [*débouche*] toward the high, precisely the mouth [*bouche*] in which is “incarnated” the *Nous*, the *Logos*, and which profoundly says: there is only *one* libido, and therefore no difference, and even less an opposition within libido between the masculine and the feminine, and moreover it is masculine by nature. The “reason for this never elucidated characteristic” can, in effect, only be “glimpsed”: because there is no reason for it, it is reason. Before, during, and after Freud. The characteristic [*trait*] drawn from reason. By it, for it, beneath it. In the logic said to be “of the kettle”⁶³ (a check

faith, and of the “signifying convention” show this adequately. “Analysis can have for its goal only the advent of a true speech and the realization by the subject of his history in his relation to a future” (*Ecrits* (E), p. 88). “Just before the summits of the path on which I will place its reading [that of the work of Freud], before considering transference, then identification, then anxiety, it is not by accident, and no one would think of this, that this year, the fourth before my seminar at Sainte-Anne is to end, I have thought it necessary to assure ourselves of the ethics of psychoanalysis.

“It seems in effect that we risked forgetting in the field in which we function that an ethics is its very principle, and that henceforth, no matter what he might say to himself, and equally well without my own statements, about the end of man, it is with a formation that can be qualified as human that our principle torment is concerned.

“Every human formation has as its essence, and not for accidental purposes, the restraining of pleasure” (*Discours de clôture des Journées sur les psychoses chez l’enfant*, in *Recherches*, special issue *Enfance aliénée*, December 11, 1968, pp. 145–46).

61. TN. *Ecrits* (F), p. 732.

62. *Ecrits* (E), p. 291. As for the systemic link between the logic of the signifier and phallogocentrism, everything in Lacanian discourse here answers the question he asks in the *Propos directifs pour un Congrès sur la sexualité féminine*—and answers yes: “Is it then the privilege of the signifier that Freud has in mind in suggesting that perhaps there is only one libido and that it is marked by the male sign?” *Ecrits* (F), p. 735.

63. TN. The “logic of the kettle” is used by Freud to illustrate how the dream-work accumulates contradictory arguments so that the dreamer is always right. The

[*traite*] drawn from reason), reason will always be right [*aura raison*]. By itself. It hears itself, agrees with itself [*s’entend*]. “The thing speaks of itself.” It hears itself say what it cannot hear or understand.

MEETING PLACE:
THE DOUBLE SQUARE OF KINGS

But it cannot *read* the story it tells itself. Or the scene of writing—before the letter—in which the narrative is inscribed. Let us return to *The Purloined Letter* in order “to glimpse” its disseminal structure, that is, the without-possible-return of the letter, the other scene of its remaining [*restance*].

Because there is a narrator onstage, the “general” scene is not exhausted in a narration, a “tale” or a “story.” We have already recognized the effects of invisible framing, of the frame within the frame, *from within which* the psychoanalytic interpretations (semantico-biographical or triado-formalist) lifted out their triangles. In missing the position of the narrator, his engagement in the content of what he seems to recount, one omits everything in the scene of writing that overflows the two triangles.

For the issue, first of all, and with no possible approach or bordering, is one of a scene of writing with ruined (*abîmé*) limits. Right from the simulacrum of an opening, from the “first word,” the narrator advances by narrating to himself several propositions which engage the unity of the “tale” in an interminable drift: a textual drift of which the Seminar takes not the slightest account. But in taking this drift into account here, above all the question is not one of making of it the “*real true subject* of the tale.” Which therefore would not have one.

man accused of returning the kettle he borrowed from his neighbor in damaged condition retorts (1.) that the kettle he is returning is new, (2.) that the holes were already in it when he borrowed it, and (3.) that he had never borrowed a kettle in the first place. What Derrida is saying is that there is no philosophical argument to be made against Freud’s position that there is only *one, male* libido: this is the essence of philosophy itself, which, like the man who borrows the kettle, will accumulate all and any arguments to support this position, all of which will be *true* in the traditional sense, and blind to their mutual contradictions. Thus Derrida’s reference earlier in this paragraph to the equivalence of “depth” and “height.” This is an allusion to the double meaning of *altus*—both lowest and highest—as the definition of truth: the singular *origin* at the *bottom* of things raised to the level of the *highest truth*. What reason never recognizes is that it depends upon “unreason,” double meanings, in order to conceptualize itself.

αὐτὸς ὁ φθὸς ἰσοψηφιστικῶς
ἀπὸ τῆς ἀμεταφυσικῆς

I. Everything begins "in" a library: in books, writings, references. Therefore nothing begins. Only a drifting or disorientation from which one does not emerge.

II. Additionally, an explicit reference is made in the direction of two other narratives onto which "this one" is grafted. The "analogy" between the three accounts is the milieu of *The Purloined Letter*. The independence of this tale, as presumed by the Seminar, is therefore the effect of an ablation, even if one takes the tale in its totality, with its narrator and his narration. This ablation is all the more absent-minded in that the "analogy" is recalled from the very first paragraph. It is true that the word "analogy," "coincidence" more precisely, authorizes the ablation, invites it, and therefore acts as a trap. The work of the Seminar begins only after the entry of the Prefect of the Parisian police. But before this, the title, the epigraph, the first paragraph gave us to read (silence in silence):

THE PURLOINED LETTER

Nil sapientiae odiosius acumine nimio.
Seneca

At Paris, just after dark one gusty evening in the autumn of 18—, I was enjoying the twofold luxury of meditation and a meerschaum, in company with my friend C. Auguste Dupin, in his little back library, or book-closet, *au troisième, No. 33 Rue Dunôt, Faubourg St. Germain*. For one hour at least we had maintained a profound silence; while each, to any casual observer, might have seemed intently and exclusively occupied with the curling eddies of smoke that oppressed the atmosphere of the chamber. For myself, however, I was mentally discussing certain topics which had formed matter for conversation between us at an earlier period of the evening; I mean the affair of the Rue Morgue, and the mystery attending the murder of Marie Roget. I looked upon it, therefore, as something of a coincidence, when the door of our apartment was thrown open and admitted our old acquaintance, Monsieur G—, the Prefect of the Parisian police . . . We had been sitting in the dark, and Dupin now arose for the purpose of lighting a lamp, but sat down again without doing so . . . (P. 208)

Everything "begins," then, by obscuring this beginning in the "silence," "smoke," and "dark" of this library. The casual observer sees only the smoking meerschaum: a literary decor in sum, the ornamental frame of a narrative. On this border, which is negligible for the hermeneut interested in the center of the picture and in what is within the representation, one could already read that all of this was an affair of writing, and of writing adrift, in a place of writing open without end to its grafting onto other writings, and that this

affair of writing (the third of a series in which the "coincidence" with the two preceding ones already caused itself to be remarked upon), suddenly breaks into its first word "*au troisième, No. 33 Rue Dunôt, Faubourg St. Germain*." In French in the text.

Fortuitous notations, curling eddies of smoke, contingencies of framing? That they go beyond the "author's intention," about which the Seminar is tempted to question Dupin, that they are even pure accidental "coincidence," an event of fortune, can only recommend them all the more to the reading of a text which makes of chance as writing what we will indeed refrain from calling "the *real subject* of the tale."

Its remarkable ellipsis, rather. In effect, if we do as we are invited, and go back from the internal bordering of the frame to what is before *The Purloined Letter*, the remarkable insists: scene of writing, library, events of chance, coincidences. At the beginning of *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* what might be called the meeting place between the (narrating-narrated) narrator and Dupin is already an "obscure library," the "accident" (which Baudelaire this time translates as "*coincidence*," and not as "*analogie*")⁶⁴ "of

64. Kitchen questions: in translating "coincidence" by "*analogie*" at the beginning of the tale, at the very moment of the reference to the two other "affairs" (the *Rue Morgue* and *Marie Rogêt*), Baudelaire misses not only the insistence of this word but also the fact that *The Purloined Letter* itself is presented in a series of these coincidences, as one of them, the coincidences whose network is elaborated before this third fiction. One detail from among all of those that now can be analyzed in an open reading of the trilogy: the epigraph to the *Mystery of Marie Rogêt*, a citation from Novalis both in German and in English translation, which begins: "There are ideal series of events which run parallel with the real ones. They rarely coincide . . ." Baudelaire purely and simply omits the last three words. The word *coincidences* then appears three times in two pages, always underlined. And the last time it has to do with the intersection of the three affairs: "The extraordinary details which I am now called upon to make public, will be found to form, as regards sequence of time, the primary branch of a series of scarcely intelligible *coincidences*, whose secondary or concluding branch will be recognized by all readers in the late murder of MARY CECILIA ROGERS at New York." The subtitle of the *Mystery of Marie Rogêt*: "A Sequel to *The Murders in the Rue Morgue*."

These reminders, which could be multiplied endlessly, are to make us attentive to the effects of the frame and to the paradoxes of parergonal logic. The point is not to show that "The Purloined Letter" functions within a frame (a frame that is omitted by the Seminar, which thereby can assure itself of the tale's triangular interior by means of an active and subreptitious limitation on the basis of a metalinguistic overlay), but that the structure of the effects of framing is such that no totalization of the bordering can even occur. The frames are always enframed: and therefore enframed by a given piece of what they contain. Parts without a whole, "partitions" without unification: this is what checks the dream of a letter without partition, a letter al-

our both being in search of the same very rare and remarkable volume." And the least one might say about the relationship formed in this meeting place is that it will never leave the so-called general narrator in the position of a neutral and transparent reporter who does not intervene in the narration in progress. For example (but this time the example read on the frame is not at the beginning of the text. The frame describing the "meeting" cuts through the narration, if you will. Before the appearance of Dupin in the narrative, the frame is preceded by a feint in the guise of an abandoned preface, a false short treatise on analysis: "I am not now writing a treatise, but simply prefacing a somewhat peculiar narrative by observations very much at random." Not a treatise, a preface (to be dropped⁶⁵ as usual), and random observations. At the end of the preface the narrator feigns the Seminar):

lergic to partition. On the basis of which the linguistic unit "phallus" [*le sème "phallus"*] wanders, begins by disseminating, and not even by disseminating itself.

The naturalizing neutralization of the frame permits the Seminar, by virtue of its imposition or importation of an Oedipal contour, finding (itself within) this contour in truth—and, in effect, it is there, but as one part, even if a precisely central part, within the letter—to constitute a metalanguage and to exclude the text in general in all the dimensions that we began here by recalling (return to the "first page"). Without even going further into details, (the trap of metalanguage)—which in the last analysis is used by no one, is at the disposition of no one, involves no one in the consequences of an error or a weakness—is a trap belonging to writing before the letter, and shows and hides itself in the shown-hidden of the feigned title: "The Purloined Letter" is the title of the text and not only of its object. But a text never entitles itself, never writes: I, the text, write, or write myself. It causes to be said, it lets be said, or rather it leads to being said, "I, the truth, speak." I am always (I am still following) [*Je suis toujours*] the letter that never arrives at itself [*s'arrive*]. And right up to its destination.

65. Before dropping them, as everyone drops a preface, or before exalting them as the properly instructive theoretical concepts, the truth of the story, I will lift out, somewhat at random, several propositions. Which are not necessarily the best ones. One also would have to recall each word of the title, and again the epigraph on the name of Achilles when he hid himself among women. "The mental features dis-couraged of as the analytical, are, in themselves, but little susceptible of analysis . . . the analyst glories in that moral activity which disentangles [*dont la fonction est de débrouiller*]. He derives pleasure from even the most trivial occupations bringing his talents into play. He is fond of enigmas, of conundrums, of hieroglyphics . . . Yet to calculate is not in itself to analyze. A chess-player, for example, does the one without effort at the other . . . I will, therefore, take occasion to assert that the higher powers of the reflective intellect are more decidedly and more usefully tasked by the unostentatious game of draughts than by all the elaborate frivolity of chess [*la laborieuse futilité des échecs*] . . . To be less abstract—Let us suppose a game of draughts where the pieces are reduced to four kings ["draughts" in French is *le jeu de dames*, and Baudelaire's translation here speaks of four *dames*, not kings], and

The narrative which follows will appear to the reader somewhat in the light of a commentary upon the propositions just advanced.

Residing in Paris during the spring and part of the summer of 18—, I there become acquainted with a Monsieur C. Auguste Dupin. This young gentleman was of an excellent—indeed of an illustrious family, but, by a variety of untoward events, had been reduced to such poverty that the energy of his character succumbed beneath it, and he ceased to bestir himself in the world, or to care for the retrieval of his fortunes. By courtesy of his creditors, there still remained in his possession a small remnant of his patrimony; and, upon the income arising from this, he managed, by means of a rigorous economy, to procure the necessaries of life, without troubling himself about its superfluities. Books, indeed, were his sole luxuries, and in Paris these are easily obtained. (P. 142)

By means of a *remnant* of the paternal inheritance, apparently left out of account for the debtor, who by calculating (*rigorous economy*) can draw an *income*, a revenue from it, the surplus-value of a capital which works by itself, Dupin permits himself to pay for a single superfluity, a sole luxury in which the initial remnant is relocated [*se retrouve*] therefore, and which cuts across the space of the restricted economy like a gift without return. This sole luxury (*sole luxuries*: the very word found for the second time on the second line of *The Purloined Letter*, but this time as a singular *double luxury*, the *twofold luxury of meditation and a meerscham*)

where, of course, no oversight is to be expected. It is obvious that here the victory can be decided (the players being at all equal) only by some *recherché* movement [*tactique habile*], the result of some strong exertion of the intellect. Deprived of ordinary resources, the analyst throws himself into the spirit of his opponent, identifies himself therewith, and not unfrequently sees thus, at a glance, the sole methods (sometimes indeed absurdly simple ones) by which he may seduce into error or hurry into miscalculation . . . But it is in matters beyond the limits of mere rule [*les cas situés au-delà de la règle*] that the skill of the analyst is evinced [*se manifeste*] . . . Our player confines himself not at all; nor, because the game is the object, does he reject deductions from things external to the game . . ." (Poe, pp. 139–41 *passim*). Etc. the entire passage must be read, and in both languages. I have allowed myself to do some cooking based on Baudelaire's translation, which I do not always respect.

Meryon had asked Baudelaire if he believed "in the reality of this Edgar Poe," and had attributed his stories "to a society of very adept, very powerful litterateurs, up to date on everything." This society does not specify, therefore, if the "things external to the game" border a game recounted in the text or constituted by the text, nor whether *the game* which is *the object* is or is not (in) the story. Nor whether seduction seeks its prey among the characters or the readers. The question of the "narratee," and then of the addressee, which is not the same thing, never arrives at itself [*ne s'arrive jamais*].

is writing: the books which will organize the meeting place and the ruination [*mise en abîme*] of the entire so-called general narration. The meeting place of the meeting between the narrator and Dupin is due to the meeting of their interest in the same book; it is never said whether they find it. Such is the literal accident:

Our first meeting was at an obscure library in the Rue Montmartre, where the accident of our both being in search of the same very rare and very remarkable volume, brought us into closer communion. We saw each other again and again. I was deeply interested in the little family history which he detailed to me with all that candor which a Frenchman indulges whenever mere self is the theme. (P. 142)

Thus the narrator permits himself to narrate: that he is interested in Dupin's family history ("I was deeply interested in the little family history . . ."), the very history which leaves a remnant of income with which to pay for the luxury of books; and then, as we shall see, that Dupin's capacity for reading astonishes him above all, and that the society of such a man is without a price for him, beyond all evaluation ("a treasure beyond price"). The narrator, therefore, will permit himself to pay for the priceless Dupin, who permits himself to pay for priceless writing, which is without a price for this very reason. For the narrator, in confiding—in yielding [*se livrant*] as Baudelaire says—frankly to Dupin must pay for doing so. He must rent the analyst's office. And provide the economic equivalent of the priceless. The analyst—or his own fortune, more or less equivalent to Dupin's, simply "somewhat less embarrassed"—authorizes him to do so: "I was permitted to be at the expense of renting . . ." The narrator is therefore the first to pay Dupin in order to be certain of the availability of letters. Let us then follow the movement of this chain. But what he pays for is also the place of the narration, the writing within which the entire story will be recounted and offered to interpretations. And if he is paying in order to write or to speak, he is also making Dupin speak, making him return his letters, and leaving him the last word in the form of a confession. In the economy of this office, as soon as the narrator is placed on stage by a function which is indeed that of a public corporation [*société anonyme*] of capital and desire, no neutralization is possible, nor is any general point of view, any view from above, any "destruction" of signification by money. It is not only Dupin but the narrator who is a "participant." As soon as the narrator makes Dupin return his letters, and not only to the Queen (the other Queen), the letter divides itself, is no longer atomistic (atomism,

Epicurus's atomism is also one of Dupin's propositions in *The Murders in the Rue Morgue*), and therefore loses any certain destination. The divisibility of the letter—this is why we have insisted on this key or theoretical safety lock of the Seminar—is what chances and sets off course, without guarantee of return, the remaining [*restance*] of anything whatsoever: a letter does *not always* arrive at its destination, and from the moment that this possibility belongs to its structure one can say that it never truly arrives, that when it does arrive its capacity not to arrive torments it with an internal drifting.

The divisibility of the letter is also the divisibility of the signifier to which it gives rise, and therefore also of the "subjects," "characters," or "positions" which are subjected to it and which "represent" them. Before showing this in the text, a citation as reminder:

I was astonished, too, at the vast extent of his reading; and above all, I felt my soul enkindled within me by the wild fervor, and the vivid freshness of his imagination. Seeking in Paris the objects I then sought, I felt that the society of such a man would be to me a treasure beyond price; and this feeling I frankly confided to him. It was at length arranged that we should live together during my stay in the city; and as my worldly circumstances were somewhat less embarrassed than his own, I was permitted to be at the expense of renting, and furnishing in a style which suited the rather fantastic gloom of our common temper, a time-eaten and grotesque mansion, long deserted through superstitions into which we did not inquire, and tottering to its fall in a retired and desolate portion of the Faubourg St. Germain. (Pp. 142-43)

Thus we have two gloomy (melancholic) fantastics, one of whom does not tell us what objects he previously was seeking in Paris, or who the "former associates" are, from whom he now is going to hide the secret of the locality. The entire space is now one of the speculation of these two "madmen":

Had the routine of our life at this place been known to the world, we should have been regarded as madmen—although, perhaps, as madmen of a harmless nature. Our seclusion was perfect. We admitted no visitors. Indeed the locality of our retirement had been carefully kept a secret from my own former associates; and it had been many years since Dupin had ceased to know or be known in Paris. We existed within ourselves alone. (P. 143)

From here on, the narrator permits himself to narrate his progressive identification with Dupin. And first of all with the love of

night, the "sable divinity" whose "presence" they "counterfeit" when she is not there:

It was a freak of fancy in my friend (for what else shall I call it?) to be enamored of the Night for her own sake; and into this *bizarrierie*, as into all his others, I quietly fell; giving myself up to his wild whims with a perfect *abandon*. The sable divinity would not herself dwell with us always; but we could counterfeit her presence. (P. 143)

Himself doubled in his position, the narrator thus *identifies* with Dupin, whose "peculiar analytic ability" he cannot help "remark-ing and admiring"; and Dupin gives him multiple proofs of his "intimate knowledge" of his own, the narrator's, personality. But Dupin himself, precisely at these moments, appears double. And this time it is a "fancy" of the narrator, who sees Dupin as double: "his manner at these moments was frigid and abstract; his eyes were vacant in expression; while his voice, usually a rich tenor, rose into a treble which would have sounded petulantly but for the deliberateness and entire distinctness of the enunciation. Observing him in these moods, I often dwelt meditatively upon the old philosophy of the Bi-Part Soul, and amused myself with the fancy of a double Dupin—the creative and the resolvent" (p. 144).

The fancy of an identification between two doubled doubles, the major investment in a relationship which engages Dupin *outside* of the "intersubjective triads" of the "real drama" and the narrator *inside* what he narrates;⁶⁶ the circulation of desires and capital, of

66. The Seminar never takes into account the very determined involvement of the narrator in the narration. Ten years later, in a 1966 addition, Lacan writes the following:

"An effect (of the signifier) so manifest as to be grasped here as it is in the fiction of the purloined letter.

"Whose essence is that the letter could import its effects within: on the actors of the tale, including the narrator, as well as without: on us, readers, and equally on its author, without anyone ever having to be concerned with what it meant. Which of everything that is written is the ordinary fate" (*Ecrits* (F), pp. 56–57).

Although we subscribe to this up to a certain point, we again must specify that the Seminar said nothing about the effects on the narrator, *neither in fact nor in principle*. The structure of the interpretation would exclude it. And as for the nature of these effects, the structure of the narrator's involvement, the repentance still says nothing, limiting itself to the framing operated by the Seminar. As for the allegation that in this affair everything occurs "without anyone ever having to be concerned with what it [the letter] meant," *it is false for several reasons*. — *what?*

1st: Everyone, as the Prefect of Police reminds us, knows that the letter contains enough to "bring in question the honor of a personage of most exalted station," and therefore also that person's "peace": a solid semantic bond.

signifiers and letters, before and beyond the "two triangles," the "primal" and secondary ones, the consecutive fissioning of the positions, starting with the position of Dupin, who like *all* the characters, inside and outside the narration, successively occupies *all* the places—all of this makes of triangular logic a very limited play within the play. And if the dual relation between two doubles (which

2d. This knowledge is repeated by the Seminar, and supports the Seminar, at two levels:

a) As concerns the minimal and active meaning of the letter, the Seminar reports or transcribes the Prefect's information: "But all this tells us nothing of the message it conveys.

"Love letter or conspiratorial letter, letter of betrayal or letter of mission, letter of summons or letter of distress, we are assured of but one thing: the Queen must not bring it to the knowledge of her lord and master" (S, p. 57). This tells us the essentials of the message that the letter vehiculates: and the variations just proposed are not indifferent to this message, no matter what they would have us believe. In each of the possible hypotheses, the letter's message (not only its being-sent, its emission, but the content of what is emitted within it) necessarily implies the betrayal of a pact of a "sworn faith." It was not forbidden for just anyone to send just any kind of letter to the Queen, nor for her to receive it. The Seminar contradicts itself when, several lines later, it radicalizes the logic of the signifier and of its literal place by allegedly neutralizing the "message," and then brings to rest or anchors this logic in its meaning or symbolic truth: ". . . it remains that the letter is the symbol of a pact" (S, p. 58). Contrary to what the Seminar says (an enormous proposition, by virtue of the blindness it could induce, but indispensable to the demonstration), everyone had "to be concerned with what it [the letter] meant." On the subject of this meaning, ignorance or indifference remains minimal and provisional. Everyone is aware of it, everyone is preoccupied with it, starting with the author of the Seminar. And if it did not have a very determined meaning, no one would be so worried about having another one palmed off on him, which happens to the Queen, and then to the minister. At least. All of them assure themselves, starting with the minister and including Lacan, passing through Dupin, that it is indeed a question of the letter which indeed says what it says: the betrayal of the pact, and what it says, "the symbol of a pact." Otherwise there would be no "abandoned" letter: whether by the minister first of all, or then by Dupin, or finally by Lacan. They all verify the contents of the letter, of the "right" letter, and they all do what the Prefect of Police does at the moment when, in exchange for a retribution, he takes the letter from Dupin's hands, and checks its tenor: "This functionary grasped it in a perfect agony of joy, opened it with a trembling hand, cast a rapid glance at its contents, and then, scrambling and struggling to the door, rushed at length unceremoniously from the room . . ." (Poe, p. 216). The exchange of the check and the letter takes place across an *escritoire* (in French in the text) where Dupin had the document locked up.

b) As for the law of the meaning of the purloined letter in its exemplary generality, such, once again, are the last words of the Seminar. ("Thus it is that what the 'purloined letter,' nay the 'non-delivered letter' means is that a letter always arrives at its destination," S, p. 72)

letter en
and of France

Lacan would reduce to the imaginary) includes and envelops the entire space said to be of the symbolic, overflows and simulates it, ceaselessly ruining and disorganizing it, then the opposition of the imaginary and the symbolic, and above all its implicit hierarchy, appears to be of very limited pertinence: that is, if one measures it against the squaring of such a scene of writing.

We have seen that *all* the characters of *The Purloined Letter*, and those of the “real drama” in particular, Dupin included, successively and structurally occupied *all* the positions, the position of the dead-blind king (and of the Prefect of Police thereby), then the positions of the Queen and of the minister. Each position identifies itself with the other and divides itself, even the position of the dummy and of a supplementary fourth. This compromises the distinction of the three glances proposed by the Seminar in order to determine the proper course of the circulation. And above all the (duplicitous and identificatory) opening set off to the side, in the direction of the (narrating-narrated) narrator, brings back one letter only to set another adrift.

And the phenomena of the double, and therefore of *Unheimlichkeit*, do not belong only to the trilogic “context” of *The Purloined Letter*. In effect, the question arises, between the narrator and Dupin, of knowing whether the minister is himself or his brother (“There are two brothers . . . both have attained reputation”; where? “in letters,” p. 219). Dupin affirms that the minister is both “poet and mathematician.” The two brothers are almost indistinguishable in him. In rivalry within him, the one playing and checking the other. “You are mistaken,” says Dupin, “I know him well; he is both. As poet *and* mathematician, he would reason well; as mere mathematician, he could not have reasoned at all, and thus would have been at the mercy of the Prefect” (p. 219).

But Dupin strikes a blow against the minister, who is “‘well acquainted with my MS.,’” a blow signed by a brother or confrere, a twin, younger, or elder brother (Atreus/Thyestes). This rivalrous and duplicitous identification of the two brothers, far from entering into the symbolic space of the familial triangle (the first, second, or next triangle), endlessly carries off the triangle into a labyrinth of doubles without originals, of *fac-similes* without an authentic and indivisible letter, of forgeries without something forged, thereby imprinting on the purloined letter an incorrigible indirection.

The text entitled *The Purloined Letter* imprints (itself in) these effects of indirection. I have indicated only the most salient ones in order to begin to unlock a reading: the play of doubles, divisibility

without end, textual references from *fac-simile* to *fac-simile*, the framing of the frames, the interminable supplementarity of the quotation marks, the insertion of *The Purloined Letter* into a purloined letter beginning before it, through the narratives of narratives in *The Murders in the Rue Morgue*, and the newspaper clippings in *The Mystery of Marie Rogét* (A Sequel to *The Murders in the Rue Morgue*). The *mise en abîme* of the title above all: *The Purloined Letter* is the text, the text in a text (the purloined letter as a trilogy). The title is the title of the text, it names the text, it names itself, and thus includes itself by pretending to name an object described in the text. *The Purloined Letter* operates as a text which evades every assignable destination, and produces, or rather induces by deducing itself, this unassignableness at the precise moment when it narrates the arrival of a letter. It feigns meaning to say something, and letting one think that “a letter always arrives at its destination,” authentic, intact, and undivided, at the moment when and in the place where the feint, written before the letter, by itself separates from itself. In order to take another jump to the side.

Who signs? Dupin absolutely wants to sign. And in fact the narrator, after having made or let him speak, leaves him the last word,⁶⁷ the last word of the last of the three stories. It seems. I am not remarking this in order to place the narrator in turn, and even less the author, in the position of the analyst who knows how to keep silent. Measured against the squaring of this scene of writing, perhaps

67. One might even consider that he is the only one “to speak” in the tale. His is the dominant discourse which, with a loquacious and didactic braggadocio that is magisterial in truth, dispenses directives, controls directions, redresses wrongs, and gives lessons to everyone. He spends his time, and everyone else’s, inflicting punishments and recalling the rules. He posts himself and addresses himself. Only the address counts, the right and authentic one. Which comes back, according to the law, to its rightful owner. Thanks to the man of law, the guide and rector of the proper way. The entire “Purloined Letter” is written in order for him to bring it back, finally, while giving a lecture. And since he shows himself more clever than all the others, the letter plays one more trick on him at the moment when he recognizes its place and true destination. It escapes and entraps him (literature stage-left) at the moment when, at his most authoritatively arrogant, he hears himself say that he entraps while explaining the trap, at the moment when he strikes his blow and returns the letter. Unwittingly he gives in to all the demands, and doubles, that is replaces, the minister and the police; if there were only one, a hypothesis to be dismissed, he would be the greatest dupe of the “story.” It remains to be seen—what about the lady. He addresses-her-the-Queen-the-address-dupes-her. [. . . *s’il n’y en avait qu’une, hypothèse en congé, ce serait la plus belle dupe de l’“histoire.” Reste à savoir—quoi de la belle. Il-l’adresse-la-Reine-l’adresse-la-dupe.*]

there is here no possible enclosure for an analytic situation. Perhaps there is no possible analyst here, at least in the situation of psychoanalysis in X . . . Only four kings, and therefore four queens, four prefects of police, four ministers, four analysts-Dupins, four narrators, four readers, four kings, etc., each of them more lucid and more stupid than the others, more powerful and more disarmed.

Yes, without a doubt, Dupin wants to sign the last word of the last message of the purloined letter. First by not being able to prevent himself from leaving his own imprimatur—or at least the seal with which he will have to be identified—beneath the *fac-simile* which he leaves for the minister. He is afraid of the *fac-simile*, and insisting upon his very confraternal vengeance, he absolutely wants the minister to know where it is coming from. Thus he limits the *fac-simile*, the counterfeit, to the outside of the letter. The inside is authentic and properly identifiable. In effect: at the moment when the madman (who is a false madman paid by him: “the pretended lunatic was a man in own pay”) distracts everyone with his “frantic behavior,” what does Dupin do? He adds a note. He sets in place the false letter, that is the one concerning his own interests, the *true one*, which is an *ersatz only on its outside*. If there were a man of truth in all this, a lover of the authentic, Dupin would indeed be his model: “In the meantime I stepped to the card-rack, took the letter, put it in my pocket, and replaced it by a *fac-simile*, (so far as regards externals) which I had carefully prepared at my lodgings; imitating the D— cipher, very readily, by means of a seal formed of bread” (p. 224)

Thus will D. have to decipher, internally, what the decipherer will have meant and from whence and why he has deciphered, with what aim, in the name of whom and of what. The initial—which is the same, D, for the minister and for Dupin—is a *fac-simile* on the outside, *but a proper on the inside*.

But what is this proper on the inside? This signature? This “last word” in a doubly confraternal war?

Again, a citation by means of which the signer is dispossessed, no matter what he says “. . . I just copied into the middle of the blank sheet the words—

—Un dessein si funeste,

S'il n'est digne d'Atrée, est digne de Thyeste.” (P. 225)

Play of quotation marks. In the French translation, there are no quotation marks—Crébillon's text is in small type. The sentence that follows (“They are to be found in Crébillon's ‘Atrée’”) thus can

equally be attributed to the author of *The Purloined Letter*, to the narrator, to the author of the avenging letter (Dupin). But the American edition⁶⁸ that I am using leaves no doubt:

“ . . . He is well acquainted with my MS., and I just copied into the middle of the blank sheet the words—

—Un dessein si funeste,

S'il n'est digne d'Atrée, est digne de Thyeste.

They are to be found in Crébillon's ‘Atrée.’”

Thus it is clear that the last sentence is Dupin's, Dupin saying to the minister: I the undersigned, Dupin, inform you of the fate of the letter, of what it means, with what aim I am filching one from you in order to return it to its addressee, and why I am replacing it with this one, remember.

But this last word, aside from the invisible quotation marks that border the entire story, Dupin is obliged to cite between quotation marks, to recount his signature: this is what I wrote to him and this is how I signed. What is a signature between quotation marks? And then, within these quotation marks, the imprimatur itself is a citation between quotation marks. This remainder is (again) still (from) literature.

Two out of three times, the author of the Seminar will have forced *dessein* [design] into *destin* [destiny], perhaps, thereby, bringing a meaning to its destination: expressly, no doubt, for in any case nothing permits one to exclude a design [*dessein*] somewhere. (This coda dedicates itself to Abbé D. Coppieters de Gibson. The thing in truth—an alteration subtracting one letter and substituting another, in order to achieve its destiny while *en route*—did not escape him.)

“Whatever the case, the Minister, when he tries to make use of it, will be able to read these words, written so that he may recognize Dupin's hand: ‘ . . . *Un dessein si funeste/S'il n'est digne d'Atrée est digne de Thyeste,*’ whose source, Dupin tells us, is Crébillon's *Atrée*” (S, p. 43). Then, after a lapse of time: “The commonplace of the quotation is fitting for the oracle that this face

68. In the first publication of this text, the following remark concerning the quotation marks could be read: “It is incorrect, however, in presenting itself thus, and in leaving the internal quotation marks, the so-called ‘English’ quotation marks, suspended.” I was wrong: the last quotation marks signal the end of Dupin's discourse, which is what was important to me, and there is no error in the edition to which I am referring. The deletion of this phrase (which is inconsequential) is the only modification of this essay since its first publication.

bears in its grimace, as is also its source in tragedy: '. . . *Un destin si funeste, / S'il n'est digne d'Atrée, est digne de Thyeste*'" (S, p. 71). And finally (*Points*, p. 8): ". . . and I add (p. 52) that the song with which this Lecoq, in the love note that he destines for him, would like to awaken him ('*un destin si funeste . . .*'), has no chance of being heard by him."

DU TOUT