

**Working Group for the June 2021 Convergencia Colloquium**  
***Boundaries, Borders, Segregation***  
**Après-Coup Psychoanalytic Association, New York**  
**Chengdu Psychoanalytic Association**  
**Cercle Freudien de Paris**  
**Escuela Freudiana de Buenos Aires**  
**Escuela de Psicoanálisis Sigmund Freud - Rosario**  
**Grupo Grita de México**

As we stated in the announcement of our group, the notion of a boundary seems apt to us for representing the function of the subject that concerns psychoanalysis, a subject structurally divided by language. In fact, the subject finds its abode in the signifying gap, the interval "between two," divided between truth and knowing, sliding along the shoreline, the littoral, formed by knowledge and jouissance.

It should be pointed out that psychoanalysis maintains a proximity to poesis insofar as words contribute a range of interpretations, slippages, metaphors, and bits of nonsense. Among them are frontiers, littorals, passageways. Language and, more precisely, *lalangue*, entail emerging jouissances produced in the saying between letter and signifier.

The space the subject inhabits in depending on language is not a geometrical space, which presupposes a firmly set boundary between inside and outside, interior and exterior, but rather a topological, Moebian space, whose single-edge surface brings continuity to one side and its reverse. Similarly, the subject's relation to jouissance reveals a space characterized by "extimacy," where the most intimate and internal can be transformed into the strangest and most external.

The *parlêtre's* structure concerns the fact of speaking, a dit-mension, to cite Lacan's neologism condensing the said (*dit*) and the measure of *mension*. In this way Lacan illustrates the place and space of the said, where the subject is located, knotted by the three dimensions R.S.I. (Seminar 22, *RSI*, class 3).

The letter Lacan posited as the unconscious's reason (take, for example, the letters of the formula for trimetilamina in Freud's dream of Irma's injection) allows us to note that the littoral is always in motion, in flux between knowledge and jouissance. Between unconscious and real. The letter is what insists, what repeats, returning in the productions of the unconscious, and above all in the symptom, where it sustains a function of jouissance.

Lacan distinguishes the letter from the signifier. "The letter and writing are in the real, while the signifier is in the symbolic" (Sem. 18). Jouissance, signifier, and letter take root in analytic experience. In "Lituraterre" Lacan plays with the dual meaning of *lettre* in French, as both alphabetic character and as missive, yet differentiates the letter from the signifier that bears it.

As in the text of Edgar Allan Poe's tale "The Purloined Letter," the signifying function of *la lettre* is to sustain the message throughout the various detours its circulating creates, detours whose effects the various characters in the story suffer. The addressee of this signifying function is the Other, whose presence establishes the retroactive effect through which a subject receives his or her own message in inverted form. On the other hand, in its real aspect, the letter's function is sustained by the letter/mmissive in its materiality as object, independently of the message it bears, which is to say, as Lacan does in

"Lituraterre," "without recourse to its contents." Indeed, the tale illustrates this separation, since the message the delivered letter brings, its contents, is forever being evaded.

The letter implies erasure, [in Latin,] *litura*. In that sense the letter borders on a hole in knowing, where sense as meaning is halted and the point of non-sense reached. The hole's outer edge is precisely what the letter delineates, aspiring to fill it in with jouissance. And it is jouissance which demands that this littoral should come to be literal, inhabiting the person who speaks ("Lituraterre").

For this reason, the letter as erasure of the trace creates a structural shift that prevents the subject from being attached to a meaning, to an origin, without, however, failing to produce the marks that will orient the subject in its desire and its jouissance. The letter is also tied to the function of the written, as differences in spelling illustrate, producing equivocations and slippages that become fertile ground for the creation of new readings.

Jouissance, signifier, and letter are at the roots of analytic experience. Border differs from littoral to the extent that its effects in the clinic differ. The psychoanalytic clinic makes it quite clear that the letter is not a border. If the letter were equivalent to the border, it would be a sign in service to, and with the function of, crystallizing a subjective position.

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The signifier and its combinatorics are established in the unary trait that in turn is the medium for identification. When the single trait crystallizes into an identity it runs the risk of being turned into the basis for racism and segregation.

In his lecture "Notes on the Father" for the Strasbourg conference of October 12, 1968, Lacan firmly states, "We believe that universalism, the communication of our civilization, homogenizes relations among people. I think, on the contrary, that what characterizes our century -- and we can't fail to notice it -- is a ramified segregation, strengthened, intersecting at all levels and which merely multiplies barriers." The exaltation of small differences feeds the identification processes that aim to highlight the other's otherness: what is considered different is persecuted and destroyed. Segregation commands an apparatus of jouissance whereby another's jouissance becomes unbearable. In certain cases the phantasmatic effect and intolerable imminence of the Other's jouissance may ease the emergence of the rejection, the *Verwerfung*, of difference; its effect leads, on occasion, to a *passage à l'acte*, in which one's fellow human, construed as other, is both denied and murdered -- as the 'Final Solution' demonstrates.

The concentration camps were the most radical examples of this attitude. It is altogether necessary to distinguish the concentration camps from other forms of detention: the difference of the concentration camps remains incontrovertible, fundamental, since the main and ultimate purpose for subjugation in them was not confinement but death. Nevertheless, if the camp defines the space created when "the state of exception becomes the rule," as Agamben puts it, then camps are in no short supply today, in the form, for instance, of those for refugee and asylum seekers, where the divide between birthplace and nation is revealed in all its radicalness.

The creation of the camps as states of judicial exception forces the creation of enclaves of segregation in a state, "inner borders" which set up all sorts of persecution based on what Freud termed the narcissism of small differences. An exclusion within the inclusion, which creates a structural extimacy.

The wandering of millions of people we have taken to calling migrants - not even emigrants or immigrants, since they don't fit into either category - is much more than a

displacement in the common sense of the term. Often migrants find themselves facing a choice of life or death. They struggle not to lose their status as human beings.

The vagueness of the law where human rights have been violated has multiplied in modern life. This reproduction of "states of exception" - spaces without law - also leads today to growing sectors of the population living in conditions of *nuda vita*, "naked life." Achille Mbembe, analyzing 'necro-politics,' situates these practices that produce death through systematized violence, linking them to racism. We saw a clear example of these necro-political mechanisms in the implacable "zero tolerance" migration policies of Trump's government, which led to the building of a physical border between Mexico and the United States. With this border came the creation of detention camps for immigrants to the U.S., where children were separated from their parents with nothing enabling them to be identified later on thereby reunited with their family.

The creation of a wall as a border, as a limit that can't be crossed (commonly used to distinguish states) creates the illusion of a separation between two dominions posited as different. In this sense, establishing a border depends on a symbolic discourse, one of pacts and an agreement (for instance, between nations); although, as with any pact or symbolic and imaginary delimitation, this is marked by an essential instability and frailty that can easily veer toward conflict and war over territorial claims.

Freud and Lacan lay out for us that the alien, the foreign, the strange, *das Fremde*, is established within the structure, the operation, of a founding negation that situates what passes from the outside to the inside, leaving an unassimilable remainder. The jouissances - particularly, when angst comes into play, situated in the field of the Other's jouissance - appear with its real effect, a trace of the real as *fremd, umheimlich*: uncanny, eerie, ominous. What is similar and familiar becomes unfamiliar, strange, as a consequence of the effect of the real in the imaginary. The visible and different turns sinister. This is how we understand *das Ding*, which is isolated at the origins of the subject, in the experience of the *Nebenmensch*, who is constitutively alien. The other, starting from the thread of the imaginary, comes to be a rival to be quashed or segregated.

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What do the practices of psychoanalyst and architect have in common? Both work, as potters also do, around a void. A constitutive void, not only for the practice of a trade or profession, but also, fundamentally, for the constitution of the *parlêtre*. This grants us particular access to the neologisms Lacan coined with "extimate" and "extimacy."

Lacan was interested in Taoism. He uses a metaphor about the void and being, about being as the void's contrary. "Starting with an articulation, a signifying apprehension, signification is secondary, it teems between two signifiers, one opposite the other, which makes for small significations." (...) They're ways of showing the structuring value of the void, the hole without which there would be no possibility of writing, of making letters out of the burst of radiance and the hollow, the cavity, that inhabits us.

As for the relation between the Tao and things of this world (nature, society, the human body) Lao Tze uses the metaphor: 水利万物而不争 : "water helps all things without competing with them." Water benefits all things, lets all things thrive, yet competes with none. It is animated at one and the same time by action and by the void, what the Taoists call "无为之为," the void's non-void. The function of water in the Tao To King is to

engender all things, partaking in their development. Water always runs, it has neither boundaries nor borders, even if its volume is always limited.

This representation conjures up the function of the littoral, as Lacan stresses, to situate different topologically knotted dominions: water and things, knowledge and jouissance, language and body. If the traces of the real intertwine and live off language, producing new furrows, signifiers, and effects of transmission, the passage from the founding lack that inhabits the subject produces transmission of a politics, the politics of the symptom and of the not-all. A testing of the fertile difference that fellow humans, "those near one," one's *Nebenmenschen*, bring with them.

The feminine that makes a place for the *heteros*, recasts and rekindles the range of desire, difference, and the 'not-all'. It is in this that the value of psychoanalytic discourse lies.