

Grupo de Trabajo: El sinthome

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April 27th: Old father, old artificer, stand me now and ever in good stead (last phrase of *A portrait of the artist as a young man*).

Shortly after the publication of the book about ““Sinthome: incidencias de escritura”¹, after some hesitations, this group of work decided to keep on meeting so as to go over the last lessons of Seminar XXIII. The idea of our last meeting was to start from the last lesson (May 11th, 1976) with the aim of writing some lines for this Congress.

On that rainy day of April, we were at the house of one of the members of the group, sitting around a table on which were lying the Seminars, the books and other exquisites. It seemed to me right from the start, that the subject that headed the meeting was the body. I mean right from the start because, as soon as we arrived, we all drew our attention to a thick volume bearing on its cover an illustration of one of those deformed, excessive bodies, typical of a well-known contemporary painter, whose name is very familiar to us: Lucien Freud. And so, from the cover of that book, and from the bookshelves, that body guarded, accompanied our reunion, in which the subjects tackled made reference -as well- to the body. The body and its disorders.

It is in this lesson where Lacan describes Joyce's knot and where he states that *his writing is essential to his Ego*. Joyce's Ego is constituted by his writing, a writing that would rack the brains of the intellectuals for over 300 years.

Lacan grounds this affirmation on a single episode of which many biographers of Joyce give account, and which is reproduced in Chapter II of “A portrait of the artist

¹ A. Bauab de Dreissen, G.Berraute, A.Favre, E. Feinsilber, C.Ini, E.Tenembaum, *Sinthome: Incidencias de escritura*. Ed. Letra Viva (colección Convergencia), Buenos Aires,2008.

as a young man"², book that displays a series of autobiographical paragraphs of the writer's childhood and youth.

That is why that very same day I searched "A portrait of the artist as a young man", and read it back once again, eagerly looking for the paragraph where Lacan sustains that in Joyce, the Ego is his sinthome. Like in the lack, the error in the knotting is other than that of neurosis, it is its structure what forbids the Imaginary from slipping away, from separating itself from the symbolic and the real.

The book has five chapters and the sequence takes place in the second chapter of the book. It makes reference to the recall of a thrashing he got from some school mates, who called him heretic, and tying him to a barbwire, they beat him with sticks. What triggered this episode was the fact that -during a literary debate with his peers- Stephen had chosen Lord Byron as the best poet of the British language, even if the latter did not enjoy the best reputation due to his somewhat licentious personal life.

What is remarkable is that Stephen feels no hatred, no rancor, no anger against his cruel mates. Recalling the fateful event, he expresses himself in the third person:

The recall of the picture did not incite his anger. All the descriptions of fierce love and hatred which he had met in the books had seemed him therefore unreal. Even that night, as he stumbled homewards along Jones's Road, he had felt that some power was divesting him of that suddenwoven anger as easily as a fruit is divested of its soft ripe peel.

It does not seem ingenious that what precedes the recall of that episode of the slashing and what comes next makes reference to the father of Stephen Dedalus. An alcoholic father whom the young man has to accompany, along the streets of Cork, word that may as well be read as *cork*³, on his way to put in auction the remaining last inherited properties, in order to survive. That cork that was the city in

² James Joyce: Retrato del artista adolescente. Alianza, Editorial. Spanish version of the original, *A portrait of the artist as a young man*.

³ The term *cork* is translated into Spanish as *corcho*. [Collins Spanish Dictionary 8th edition published in 2005].

which his father had grown up, that was as well the material out of which the frame of a picture of Cork was made, but was as well the cork of his father who managed to keep afloat once that drinking led him astray⁴. However, his son James, was still able to deal with that, with that paternal abdication (in fact, verwerfung) and, at the expense of that, he made use of his language, he played with it, he transformed it, he made up riddles. He reinvented it. He made out of that frame his own mark.

But resuming the issue of the body, why does Lacan read in that episode, that Joyce requests of an Ego as sinthome?

It deals -he says- with the psychology of Joyce's relation to his body. That psychology, which is the imaginary of the body, doesn't work. There is no imaginary function; rather, this one slips away from it as it does the skin of a ripe fruit. That psychic relation to the body, that what is the imaginary function that implies the mingled bond of the body with affection and which -in fact- generates the most varied answers of the body, anxiety, inhibition, sinthome, - as all neurosis constantly shows us- separates in the case of Joyce and asks nothing but letting go of it.

This is what is suspicious, that Joyce shows no sign of affection -hatred- for the violence he suffered, that allows him to let it fall, to abandon it, not to feel it as part of *himself*. That is the Ego which is not working in Joyce and which is supplied with the artifice of writing.

We may say that here the 4º, the Ego, replaces the name of the father, the Oedipal Complex and the psychic reality. Three modalities with which Lacan names the knot that ties the strings in a borromean form, when S1 reigns and S2 divides itself into symbol and sinthome⁵. In Joyce's knot, the Ego replaces the missing one, that of the name of the father, the phallic support. And takes care that the Imaginary does not slip away, while the symbolic and the real interpenetrate one another.

⁴ Vegh, Isidoro: Disc-Joyce. Seminar given at the Escuela Freudiana de Bs. As. (2004). In reference to this meaning of the term "cork".

⁵ Sinthome: Incidencias de escritura, "El sinthome en la clínica con niños" by Aurora Favre. In reference to the way in which the phallic support operates in the know of the structure.

What is interesting to remark is that the structure comes to us already knotted, it is in the *après coup* that we can make reading of the remedy he found to repair the failure. The lack is the place where lies the error in the knotting, but it is as well the lapse, the parapraxis, the sinthome, the place in which lacks the lack in the structure.

In Joyce, just as Lacan proposes, instead of a psychotic triggering, there is Ego, there is invention, there is writing and a *writing is, thus, an action that gives support to thought*⁶.

I think that in this chapter with which Lacan closes the seminar rather abruptly -since given the proximity of the exams, he finished one lesson before expected-, he intends to transmit us with the writing of the knots, with great care, a subtlety of the clinical practice, and that is how the imaginary function of the body operates or does not operate in the structure. This depends on whether the string of the imaginary is knotted or not.

To risk my thesis when it operates, we are in the field of the neurosis and we will find the so many varieties of combinations in which the body expresses, through its symptoms that what a transaction of the incestuous jouissance is.

I receive a patient; let's call her Ana, who is referred on account of strong headaches that extend to the cervical spine. However, the different studies performed revealed nothing that would justify them. She makes reference to those pains when she says that they started during a tour to a foreign country, organized by the dancing Company in which she plays a protagonic role. It was the first time that she was leaving her son Agustín, given that this time the tour was longer and more exhausting. Sometime later along the trip, the awkward pains caused her to be replaced in a couple of performances. When she comes to consult, back from the trip, she is very anguished; she says in tears, that dancing is what she likes to do the best and she cannot do it. She mentions that her mother would take her to her dancing lessons when she was a little girl, and that it was very sad for her to deal

⁶ Seminar XXXIII, lesson of May 11th, 1976.

with a metastasic cancer that would take her mother away when she was young and just when the patient was starting to succeed in her career. It is then when she remembers that shortly after her mother died, her first-born, Agustín, was born. She got pregnant, in that peculiar way that women sometimes have of getting pregnant, in critical moments of their life. She explains it in this way: "I got my head into Agustín"⁷. After some years, the tour and the distance that caused her to be apart from her son, *where she had got her head into'*, after her mother's death; she revived the pains that could not had been elaborated. They took place in her body, headaches and cervical pains that eased shortly after the analysis began.

In the neurosis, the knot of the phantasm⁸, that repairs the failure in a place other than where the error lies, allows to locate the effort that the soma demands to the psyche and the outcome of this: a parasitizing jouissance that the body endures.

The imaginary function operates and the imaginary body⁹ is the seat of what affects the body: the emotions. In our practice as analysts, it is from the body of the symbolic, operating with lack, that language comes to life and moves the real of jouissance.

⁷ In the original version, "*Me metí de cabeza en Agustín*".- the expression makes reference to the patient's *headaches* (in Spanish: *dolores de cabeza*).

⁸ See Sinthome. incidencias de escritura. "Construcción del sinthome" E. Tenenbaum remarks that there are two ways of borromean breath. That of the knot of the phantasm, when it is not in the place of the error of the crossing of the knot and when it responds to the equivalence between sexes –there is no sexual relation- and another breath, such of the sinthome, when the repair takes place in the place of the error of the crossing and gives way to invention.

⁹ Bauab de Dreissen, Adriana: De la angustia al deseo, Ed Letra Viva. See distinction between real, symbolic and imaginary body, page 114.