

A Clinic of Love Disorder

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The question I would like to explore with you today, in preparation for the 9th Congress of the World Association of Psychoanalysis, whose title is “A Real for the 21st Century”, is based on a formulation proposed by Jacques-Alain Miller when he presented the theme for the Congress in his closing speech in Buenos Aires in April 2012 with the assertion: “there is a great disorder in the real (...) in the 21st Century”.¹ In fact, it was my task to write the entry for the word “Disorder” in the volume of *Scilicet* prepared for this Congress. My question for today does not refer to any order in love, which does not exist: it neither harks back to nor looks forward to a better time for loving – either before or after our modern Era. There is no nostalgia in my purpose here. My theme for today concerns the combined impact of the two discourses Miller speaks about in his paper – the discourse of science and the discourse of capitalism – and the force they exert on subjectivity and on lovers. To put it succinctly, I wonder if there is a kind of capitalistic way of loving, which has taken hold of the way people love today. In fact, I think I am going to take you for a stroll through the affairs of love – since, from time immemorial, there has been a real in play as soon as one begins to speak about love.

Yet psychoanalysis is the only discourse that formalises the fact that one can speak about love in order to say that it does not work out.² Therefore, no nostalgia is required here, the disorder is structural as far as the affairs and bonds of love are concerned. It does not bow to any established order, nor to any master of disorder who could negotiate with

¹ Miller, Jacques-Alain, “The Real in the 21st Century”, transl. Adrian Price, *Hurly-Burly* 9 May 2013, p. 200.

² Lacan, Jacques, “Television” trans. Hollier, Krauss, Michelson, *Television: A Challenge to the Psychoanalytic Establishment*, (London: Norton, 1990), p. 30.

the forces of chaos, as was the case in the rituals and traditions of antiquity, as a beautiful exposition in Paris, Barcelona and Berlin showed last year. Just as in these ancient cultures a compromise could be attained between unruliness and reason, in which limit crossers could be used to counter the order governed by reason by introducing a certain and necessary unreason there, thereby authorising a certain irruption of the drives, so today, like yesterday, each person is invited to invent what of the encounter can be written.

Analytic discourse does not lend itself to any form of mass subjective rectification, because it draws its power, precisely, from what is demassifying; psychoanalysis accompanies the subject in the protest that he or she makes against the discontents of civilisation. As Jacques-Alain Miller underlines in his presentation of the theme for the next Congress, and again in his text, "Speaking with one's Body", psychoanalysis accompanies the subject in his solitude, in his own exile, there where only the One all alone exists.³

An analyst is often the one you choose to be, for a long moment, the partner of your solitude.

In fact, it is because of a flaw in language, a lack which authorises nothing but misunderstanding between the sexes, that Lacan, dismissing the idea that analytic discourse offers any promise of happiness, gives his famous aphorism: "there is no such thing as the sexual relation". Yet while dismissing promises of happiness, Lacan indicates that the analytic discourse does in fact promise "something new in love" [*du nouveau dans l'amour*], a "novelty" which, as Lacan says in *Television*, is to be taken, "mathematically".⁴ This means that, since we are speaking beings, speaking beings affected by a language, which puts a lack to work, and since the always risky encounter

³ Miller, Jacques-Alain, "Parler avec son corps", *Mental*, 27/28 September 2012, pp. 127-135.

⁴ *Ibid*, p. 28-29. [T.N. "Something new in love" has been substituted for "the latest in love" which is the published translation of Jacques-Alain Miller's marginal reference, "*Du nouveau dans l'amour*", in the fifth section of *Television*.]

between words and bodies constitutes our real without law, harmony does not exist in the human world.

The “something new in love” that the analytic discourse promises, is something made with what we call “transference”, which both Freud and Lacan did not hesitate to name “a true love”...

The question that arises in relation to the love encounter is thus how does love, which demonstrates “a certain courage with respect to this fatal destiny”,⁵ that of the non-relation between the sexes, come to answer the real of this impasse.

And if, between men and women, what may exist is the symptom, that is to say a sort of exile from the other, the question is: what forms do the responses, the sayings [*les dire*s] about love and the love partner take today, one by one, as so many fragments of amorous exile?

I propose, as a kind of thesis I will have to demonstrate, that a psychoanalyst is someone who, for the disorder provoked by this lack and the mad laws of modernity that rush to fill it, substitutes another disorder that disturbs the defences against this real without law, in order to reach what, in each person, constitutes their own singularity, their absolute difference, as a lost part that they will know how to use in the encounter with the partner or partners of their life.

*Should anyone here not know the art of love,
read this, and learn by reading how to love.
By art the boat's set gliding, with oar and sail,
by art the chariot's swift: love's ruled by art.
(Ovid, *The Art of Love*)⁶*

And so the poet sings of love, inviting us to instruct ourselves in the art of love by reading. For Ovid, love, the relation between the sexes, can be spoken, it can also be read, and so, written. Closer to us, by contrast, Woody

⁵ Lacan J. *Seminar XX, Encore*, trans. Bruce Fink (London: Norton, 1998), p. 144.

⁶ Ovid, *The Art of Love*, transl. A. S. Kline, 2001, available online at: <http://poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Latin/ArtofLoveBkI.htm>. Add line number

Allen initiates us into the impossibility involved in learning how to love and the triumph of emotional confusion. Here, one could quote a fragment of dialogue typical of Allen from his 1975 film *Love and Death*:⁷

Natasha: It's a complicated situation, cousin Sonja. I'm in love with Alexei. He loves Alicia. Alicia's having an affair with Lev. Lev loves Tatiana. Tatiana loves Simpkin. Simpkin loves me. I love Simpkin but in a different way than Alexei. Alexei loves Tatiana like a sister. Tatiana's sister loves Trigorin like a brother. Trigorin's brother is having an affair with my sister, whom he likes physically but not spiritually...

Sonja: Natasha, to love is to suffer. To avoid suffering one must not love. But then one suffers from not loving. Therefore, to love is to suffer; not to love is to suffer; to suffer is to suffer. To be happy is to love. To be happy, then, is to suffer, but suffering makes one unhappy. Therefore, to be unhappy one must love or love to suffer or suffer from too much happiness. I hope you're getting this down.

Natasha: I never want to marry. I just want to get divorced.⁸

And so, in referring to the art of love, the poet of Eros and the director who makes comic films about love are both a little Lacanian, each in their own way, by making it understood that there is something very difficult to understand in the affairs of love...

Very early in his teaching, Lacan introduced a sense of disorder and comedy in his treatment of love. In his *seminar*, *The Formation of the Unconscious*, he made Molière's play, *The School for Wives*, the last word on the comic aspect of love.

"As everything depends on the Other", says Lacan when speaking of Arnolphe, the old man who has made the sweet, young Agnes his student and

⁷ Allen, Wood, dir. *Love and Death*, 1975.

⁸ *Op. Cit.* clip available at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BCxCRI2Qv6U>. This fragment was quoted in *Le Diable Probablement*, n° 10, Amoureux, Verdier, 2012, p. 53.

his captive (in the hope of making her a perfectly guileless bride for himself, by preserving her in a state of utter simplicity to the extent that she thinks children are conceived through the ear), “the solution”, for this man whose sole passion has become jealousy, “is to have an Other all of one’s own. It’s what is called love”.⁹

How does wit come to girls? he asks a little further on. Well, as you might expect given what I’ve just said, it comes through the ears. For Agnes is captivated by speech, enthralled by the words of Horace, the young man, who is, as Lacan says, nevertheless quite dull: “*fa lot*”. In fact, Agnes is captivated by a speech that breaks the system of learnt speech and educative speech. She is charmed by words; she is charmed by wit and, without knowing it, she tells Arnolphe everything, because she doesn’t know his true feelings or intentions.

Yet, “while always telling Arnolphe the truth, she nevertheless deceives him, because everything she does amounts to deceiving him”. In fact, “the stone” that Arnolphe asks her to throw at the young man she is besotted with, in order to discourage him, “also serves as a means of sending him a love letter”.¹⁰

Although ignorant of all worldly wiles, the thing that interests Agnes, is speech. It is a wonderful example of what, for both Molière and for Lacan, introduces disorder into the relation between speaking beings: it is language. And yet, the paradox is striking: what can appear new in love, what has the power to surprise the subject, is something said [*un dire*], something said that constitutes an event and creates a resonance in the unconscious of the other.¹¹

There is thus a knot in this affair that we will try to untangle.

⁹ Lacan, Jacques, *Le Séminaire, livre V, Les formations de l’inconscient*, Paris, Seuil, 1998, p. 133.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 139.

¹¹ Lacan, J., *Le Séminaire, livre XXI, Les non-dupes errent*, session of 12 February 1974, (unpublished).

As for the psychoanalyst, what use does she make of love? What reading does she give it, if not one that allows her to situate, in love, one of the operative semblants of her action? “In the beginning is transference”, says Lacan in his *seminar* of the same name.

As Miller specified in his interview with a journalist from *Psychologies Magazine*, in October 2008, transference is founded on the patient’s demand for knowledge about his being. It is a love addressed to knowledge. Jacques-Alain Miller specified the founding principle of psychoanalysis in the following terms: “We love the he or the she that harbours a response to our question: “Who am I?”¹²

A subtle detail, for harbouring the response is not the same as responding to demand. Just like Socrates, “the pure desiring”, as Lacan named him (in other words, the one who holds the *agalma*, the precious thing, within himself in order to instil the desire to know in his interlocutor), the analyst occupies the locus, the place of response. And if he operates in the name of truth, it is as a pure semblance, designated by Lacan as semblance of the object cause of desire. It is because he does not take himself as truth that the analyst becomes the cause of a desire to say. And what the analysands say thus comes to organise itself within the framework of this unknown knowledge - the unconscious - and in so doing shows the style of disorder that makes the subject suffer in a particular way, like no one else.

This is why Lacan described transference love as a new love, a new reason, the resolution of which calls for invention. He also speaks of it as a more dignified love, in order to show that, having consented to do without a relation that does not exist in logic (we will return to this non-existence shortly) it is a love that is aimed at the knowledge that stems from one’s own unconscious and of which the subject no longer feels ashamed or indignant.

He describes this love as a game whose rules one would know, hence its dignity. It is thus a question of knowing whether transference is a form of

¹² Miller J.-A., “Êtes-vous sûr d’aimer ?”, *Psychologies magazine*, n° 278, October 2008.

love more dignified than all other forms of love, or if it gives the rules for a love that is able to embrace a knowledge about what constitutes the subject's exile, the solitude that can be deduced from it, like that of the partner, who in the love encounter, remains on the brink.

Thus, to speak of love is thus what characterises analytic discourse. You can say that it's not working out and what's more, you must say it until you are blue in the face, until the moment you change discourses, where you change reason. Here, Lacan is referring to the poem by Arthur Rimbaud, "*À une raison*", "To a Reason", where the poet sings that it takes only a trifle, a clap of thunder, a turn of the head, for a new love to emerge so that he exclaims: "the new love!"¹³

A mere trifle, a nothing! Therein lies the contingency of love; it is what constitutes its law, its order and also its disorder. As Freud described it in his own time, and this remains true today, love is always narcissistic and it aims at identification. As in the myth told by Aristophanes in Plato's *Symposium* on love, the lover wants to make One with two, with the beloved, who is a lost part of himself: "Into the yolk and white of the one shell", as the Irish poet W.B. Yeats put it in his poem "Among School Children".¹⁴

This myth from the *Symposium* led Lacan to formulate the impossible logic of two with the impossibility of writing of the sexual relation, from which the love partner's structural flaw can be deduced.

And it is on the basis of an 'it is not working out', of a structural failure equivalent to the real, that Lacan invites us, in a dialectical turnaround, to consider love as the result of what he calls "a certain courage with respect to this fatal destiny";¹⁵ in other words: a courage with respect to the fatal destiny of the failure of the sexual relation. "Isn't it by confronting this impasse, this impossibility by which a real is defined, that love is put to the

¹³ Rimbaud, A., "To a Reason", *Illuminations*, transl. John Ashbury, London, Norton, 2011, p. 54.

¹⁴ W.B. Yeats, "Among School Children", *The Tower*, London, Macmillan, 1928.

¹⁵ Lacan J. Seminar XX, *Encore*, trans. Bruce Fink (London: Norton, 1998), p. 144.

test? Regarding one's partner, love can only actualize what, in a sort of poetic flight, in order to make myself understood, I called courage – courage with respect to this fatal destiny. But is it courage that is at stake or pathways of recognition?"¹⁶

A certain courage

[...]

And so...

When love can combine desire and the real of *jouissance*, when the latter can be written, when the subject has found his own mark in it, outside its ravages and upheavals, and when he can locate himself there and even, in his language [*langue*], sometimes excel there, then a sort of clear solitude appears that no longer isolates the subject from the rest of the world, but makes a link with other solitudes through the art of saying.

This is what the famous French Lacanian writer, Catherine Millet, (analysed by Lacan himself, and becoming an analyst), describes with a rare talent in her books, *Abîmes ordinaires*, *La vie parfaite*, or again in *O solitude*, a work that bears the epigraph: "My sweetest choice!"¹⁷ an allusion to the music of Purcell interpreted through the sublime voice of Alfred Deller:

[...] I felt the interior silence of writing take hold. To write is always to revive the depths, the great original silence. [...] With time, I made of this solitude a happiness in which the vast world served as a partner, where one forgets oneself yet without losing oneself, for I created a life made-to-measure, a life by my own hand, if I might say, made to my liking and to my taste.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ The words, quoted in English, are by Katherine Philips. It is a translation of St Amant's poem "La Solitude".

(...) In this solitary life, I have embraced pleasure as one stretches out one's limbs in a large bed, occupying the whole of it voluptuously. I have readily cultivated the silence of my empty apartment, traversed by the morning light. I moved noiselessly, with light steps so as not to disturb it. The space expanded, while my presence thinned out. The edge of nonexistence became familiar to me and sweet. This was my favourite dwelling place, rendering more intense, because more naked, the simple pleasure of living, that fundamental sense of well-being that, as Bachelard says, is deep-rooted in our most archaic being and that I enjoyed [*jouissais*] without ulterior motive.¹⁸

Later, in the same book, describing the gaping hole [*béance*] that opened when her first love left her and with it “the innocent assurance of security”, Catherine Millot describes how she came to terms with this chasm of absence and how she made it her muse: “An edge [or rim] of anguish was formed there, that I have tried my whole life to tame. When I have the courage, and I can have this courage when I write, I force myself to stand on this edge, closest to the void.”¹⁹

“But to write”, she adds, “is also to engage in a form of *ascesis* that brings its own pleasure.”²⁰

Chancing the real

Now what does it mean: “chancing the real”? From a Lacanian point of view, love is thus what makes up for a failure of the relation between the sexes,²¹ and it is also a sign. It is the sign that one is changing discourses, and that one does not recoil before the thing that is there to be discovered and that is situated in what of language has left a trace. Consenting to this inexpressible real that does not change, that escapes the symbolic and that

¹⁸ Millot C., *O solitude*, Gallimard, collection *L'infini*, Paris, 2011, p. 11 à 16.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 48.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 80.

²¹ Lacan J., *Le Séminaire, livre XX, Encore*, op. cit., p. 44 : « Ce qui supplée au rapport sexuel, c'est précisément l'amour. »

repeats, ceasing to ignore it, and having subverted the dimension of pathos attached to it, is a pass in the sense in which Lacan understands the pass in one's analysis as the resolution of an impasse. As Eric Laurent underlines,²² it is a question of chancing this real [*faire de ce réel hazard*], beyond the text of the fantasy. For the fantasy always writes the same thing, for example: that I was loved too much; or that I wasn't loved enough; or was loved badly'; or that the other was loved and not me; that I was excluded from love; that I am not worthy [*digne*] of it; that I cannot live without it; that I was a disappointment to the other; that I should be punished, etc.

For me, the process involved in chancing the real is not disillusionment, but responsibility. This was elegantly brought out by Anne Lysy, an Analyst of the School, in her last pass testimony, in which she stated that what was at stake at the end of her analysis was a subtle detachment from love dependency and its ravages. Detachment was what she discovered, as opposed to the series of "disses" that she was able to identify throughout her long successive analyses: disenchantment, disillusionment, desupposition, deflation. At the end, Anne seemed to say (and I proposed this version to her), one remains attached to another speech than the speech of love, one remains attached to the thread of speech and one's commitment in this speech. For example, as she has shown with great talent, a lively and embodied engagement to make psychoanalysis exist, by taking on multiple responsibilities.

"It is thus not a question of leaving the table of love and chance", says Eric Laurent, "but of knowing if one loves or if one hates, and of being consistent with the decision one makes to continue playing with the Other (to continue to bet with the Other), expending one's energy [*se dépenser*] without keeping count. And so, love will be able to meet you there."²³ Love along with a certain gaiety, I would readily add, for doesn't the sense of gaiety arise from

²² Laurent É., « Faire du destin hasard », *Tresses*, n° 3, Bulletin de l'ACF-Aquitania, septembre 1999.

²³ *Ibid.*

a relation to knowledge relieved of what determines it, as I testified at the time of my pass, at the end of my analysis?

Sociology of the love bond as a social bond

In his work, *Liquid Love: On the frailty of Human Bonds*,²⁴ the English sociologist Zygmunt Bauman interprets the sexes' new modes of partnership in terms of consumerism and the market. Faithful to Freud and *Civilisation and its Discontents*, Bauman speaks of a complex interrelationship between Eros and Thanatos in the era of the discourse of the capitalist.

This is what is at stake in our discussion today: The author qualifies the modern world and the new love relations that follow from it as liquid in the sense that the number of love relationships one has and their rapid obsolescence has taken precedence over what Ovid called "the art of love". In the same way that the culture of consumption (with its rapid fixes, instantaneous satisfaction, infallible recipes and guarantees against all forms of risk) has become an integral part of a new philosophy of life, so solid love has become liquid. It is marked, adds Baumann, by a morbid - suicidal - inclination, and according to the current model of consumerism ("ingestion-digestion, excretion"), desire has become identical to consumption, processing, and waste. The "urge to protect, to feed, to shelter; also to caress, cosset and pamper, or to jealously guard" in "loving respect for the other",¹⁹ all these ideals already well dented by the dawn of the last century by Freud in his *Discontents*, have given way to forms of relationships based on the buy now, discard later model of consumption.

In a way, one can say that this is the era of the disposable partner.

Indeed, following what certain of the new philosophers of ideas have said, one is tempted to ask if love (with a capital L), has now become an act of political resistance, a social struggle against capitalism's incitement to selfishness, with its push to solitary enjoyment, immediate satisfaction

²⁴ Bauman Z., *Liquid Love: On the Frailty of Human Bonds*, Polity Press, 2003, p. 10, p. 16.

(without paying the price of engaging speech), and the bond breaking that ensues?

We thus go from Musil's man without qualities to Bauman's man without bonds.

I will quote an opening sentence from an editorial by the journalist P. Nassif: "In the series of worsening threats that are currently pressing down on our existence, there is one that arises at the heart of our personal lives. What if love itself were to dissolve in the icy circuits of capitalism?"²⁵

The real that psychoanalysis deals with is not solely that of science and the modifications that it produces, the consequences of which we are not yet fully aware, except for the wild production of a world governed by gadgets, by things which do not speak, at the level of this market's domination. On the other hand, one could say that the real that comes from the experience of psychoanalysis sets itself against globalisation and human desire's fascination for things that do not speak. It is a real which escapes the universal of the modern discourse of the master, which, combined with that of capitalism, does not want to know about the affairs of love.

At the opposite extreme, the real of the analyst's discourse, is a real which allows subjects to assume their absolute difference, their incomparability, their without a wherefore (like Angelus Silesius's rose), and assume the mark that makes us what we are and with which we may each face up to our destinies as speaking beings by subverting it, by introducing the dimension of contingency into it, contingency which is precisely the property of love.

In this way, Lacan was able to conclude his seminar, *Encore*, by proposing, paradoxically, that courage in love has to do with what he called the contingency of the encounter – an encounter, in the partner, with their symptoms, their solitude and everything that constitutes their own exile

²⁵ *Philosophie Magazine*, n° 48 April 2011.

from the relation that, between the sexes, does not exist.²⁶ This is reminiscent of the refrain of the pretty young woman quoted by André Breton in his famous book *Nadja*: “The home of my heart is ready and opens only to the future. Since there is nothing I regret, new love you may come in.”²⁷

Thus, put in relation with courage and the real of this amorous exile, what Lacan calls the on-the-off-chance [*à tout hasard*]²⁸ nature of the love encounter calls for a logical confrontation between these two terms, for their knotting. “It is owing only to the affect that results from this gap [that of the absence of the sexual relation] that something is encountered [...] which momentarily gives the illusion that the sexual relationship stops not being written (...)”.²⁹

What one encounters in the affect of love gives “the illusion that something is not only articulated but inscribed, inscribed in each of our destinies”, and, passing from illusion to mirage, he continues: “by which, for a while - a time during which things are suspended - what would constitute the sexual relationship finds its (...) mirage-like path.” This is what, continues Lacan, by way of the unconscious, “constitutes the destiny as well as the drama of love.”³⁰

If he or she who undertakes an analysis is battling against the limits of love arising from the impasse of the non-relation between the sexes, then the experience of an analysis traces a path that passes through the songs of love, be they happy or sad, and leads to the acceptance of another limit, a limit in relation to language, to the acceptance of a mark left by language that each person adopts? Consenting to the fact that not everything can be said and that there is an irreducible flaw in language, an impossibility of truth, is something that opens doors.

²⁶ *Op. cit.*, p. 145

²⁷ Breton A., *Nadja*, nrf, Gaillimard, 1996, p. 44.

²⁸ Lacan, J. *Television op. cit.* p. 40.

²⁹ Lacan J. *Encore*, tans. Bruce Fink, p. 145

³⁰ *Ibid.*

So then, in the analytic discourse, questions about love are posed like this: if “the jouissance of the body of the Other [...] is not the sign of love”,³¹ does the man love the woman he desires and enjoys? And if the woman is in love, does she desire the man she loves? If it happens that a woman lends herself to being the object of a man’s desire, does this mean that she has to be his captive? And of what order is this capture if not that of wanting to be everything for him, without ever succeeding.

Another fragment of amorous exile, a fragment of a clinical case

[...]

A case of a subject who passed from the failure of her wish to save her father to the attempt to save her couple; to save fragile men. And it is with this impossibility that her rendezvous is set today, for it falls to each person to invent another discourse to get out of the destiny that each person has constructed for themselves - a discourse in which it is “only love [that allows] jouissance to condescend to desire”, as Lacan puts it in his seminar on *Anxiety*.³²

So, the courage of love involves facing up to the impasse and ‘going through’ anxiety. A capacity for invention, a “will to chance” [*volonté de chance*], as Georges Bataille put it, a desire to be in the game that is being played, which, as everyone knows, makes oneself believe one is capable of anything - it “gives one wings”, as we say in French.

The wings of desire.

Translated from the French by *Philip Dravers*

The full version of this presentation will be published in *Hurly-Burly* Issue 11, 2014

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Lacan, Jacques, *Le Séminaire, livre X, L’angoisse*, Seuil, Paris, 2004, p. 209.