

## Vision as Event in the Experience of an Analysis

*Clotilde Leguil*

In what way can we say about vision – in the sense of Lacan- that it constitutes a veritable event in analysis? Between shadow and light, between obscurity and dazzling, the experience of the unconscious is an experience of “seeing” and of “not seeing”. If the analysand begins by realising that he *does not see* the cause of what happens to him in his life, he gradually comes to be confronted with a blind spot of his destiny. The experience of “being blinded”, of “seeing nothing”, of “seeing blurred”, or also of “being dazzled”, are different modalities of the relation to the unconscious in the form of “seeing.”

Vision as event would therefore coincide with the moment where the unconscious-light, *that which does not yield its place to the shadow*, as Lacan wrote in 1967,<sup>1</sup> is encountered in an unprecedented way. There where I blinked, dazzled by a *too much of light*, I come to see what I had never seen. I come to read *that which left a trace and which could not reveal itself at first*.<sup>2</sup> Finally, I am able to read the cipher of my destiny. At last, the lost letter has reached its destination.

### The Status of the Analytic Event

Before accounting for vision as an event in an analysis, let us begin by defining the event as experience of speech and of subjective transmutation. The analytic experience is a journey, during which specific things happen to us by the fact of speaking about our suffering, by the fact of speaking of that which repeats itself in our existence.

---

<sup>1</sup> Lacan, J., “La méprise du sujet supposé savoir”, in *Autres écrits*, Champ freudien, Seuil, p. 334.

<sup>2</sup> Lacan, J., “Radiophonie”, in *Autres écrits*, Champ freudien, Seuil, p. 428.

In the original: “[...] pour faire trace de ce qui a défailli à s’avérer d’abord”, *ibid.*, p. 428.

That which happens to us is of the order of this *advenire* emphasised in his aphorism Where *Id* (*it*) was [...] it is my duty that *I* come into being”<sup>3</sup> (*Wo Es war, soll Ich werden*).<sup>4</sup> This “it is my duty that *I* come into being,” when it happens, is of the order of an event that transforms our way of being alive. For this “where *Id* [it] was,” also refers to a “there, where death encroached upon life”, “there where the death drive was.” The “I” that makes an event, is the one that emerges to say what he did not know it could say.

What is the event in the analytic treatment about? It is about being able to decipher (in the sense of), then about being able to identify (in the sense of a particular *seeing*), then finally about being able to read (in the sense of the letter) the misunderstandings of destiny. When Jacques-Alain Miller states that “In psychoanalysis as a practice, the real is defined from what took place, in other words from the event”<sup>5</sup>, we can also hear that what makes an event in the cure, is what happens to the subject when he/she manages to touch on something of the real. An analysis is made both of multiple events, as well as of a fundamental event that allows something new to come into being in a definite way.

I propose to make a distinction between the multiple events of an analysis and the event of denouement, which I will circumscribe as vision and as reading. François Leguil<sup>6</sup> has recently put forward a distinction between micro-events that are produced during the analytic trajectory and the event of the end of the analysis. The event of the end, analogous to that of a historical event, is the fruit of everything that took place before. To define these multiple events that prepare the event of the end, I propose to distinguish events that touch on truth from the final event (between vision and reading) which touches on the real.

Let us begin with events that touch on the unconscious truth. Firstly, these multiple events that take place in the course of an analysis, are of the order of the formations of the unconscious. They occur to me, in analysis and through analysis, as produced by the experience from the

---

<sup>3</sup> Lacan, J., *Écrits. The First Complete Edition in English*, trans. Fink, B. in collaboration with H. Fink and Russell Grigg, New York, Norton & Company, p. 347. [TN]

<sup>4</sup> Source, Freud, S., “31. Vorlesung. Zerlegung der psychischen Persönlichkeit“, *Neue Folge der Vorlesungen zur Einführung in die Psychoanalyse (1933)*, [www.psychanalyse.lu](http://www.psychanalyse.lu), no page indication. [The Standard Edition translates: “Where *Id* was, there *Ego* shall be.” In the Lacanian Orientation it is often rendered as “Where *Id* (it) was, there *I* shall become.” [TN]

<sup>5</sup> Miller, J.A., “Les us du laps”, cours du 8 mars 2020, in *La Cause du désir* no 100, p.31. No official English translation.

<sup>6</sup> Leguil, F., «La passe et l’au-delà de la clinique». Journée sur la passe du 7. Octobre 2023, Couvent des cordeliers, ECF.

dimension of transference. Dreams, nightmares, things we forget, slips of the tongue, bungled actions, happen to me as if by chance and make an event. These different encounters with the unconscious produce effects that allow us to discover an unconscious truth. They are *eye-openers* in the metaphorical sense, in other words, they allow to *see* a truth by deciphering it. Secondly, these events are of the order of interpretations that transform me. Among the thousand and one sessions of an analysis, some will never be forgotten. Why? Because they make an event, because they have produced an effect of subjective crossing, because they have precipitated a veritable metamorphosis of my being. Indeed, in an analysis, the subject is transformed, not in the sense that he could wipe the slate clean of all that he has ever been, not in the sense that he might reprogram him/herself, but in the sense that his or her relation to desire becomes transformed. The subject's history will never be changed, that is to say, what has made destiny in his existence cannot be erased, but what will be transformed are the harmful effects of this destiny on desire and the living [*le vivant*].

Thirdly, these events are also of the order of reminiscences (memories). Here, I do not use the term *reminiscence* in the Platonic sense, which Lacan criticises by saying that the lost object will never be found again. I use it in the Freudian sense, in the sense that certain words come back to me, certain experiences of my history are reminded to me. In the course of an analysis, I come to remember what I have always known, but which I had forgotten that it concerned me. To remember myself of it, produces an effect on my way of being alive, as if I remembered myself back to life [*je me rappelais à la vie*]. This allows me to extract myself from the hole in which - unbeknownst to me - I had fallen. The verb to remember [*se rappeler*] can mean recalling, but also what has a abseil structure, like when mountain climbing<sup>7</sup>. I will come back to that. To remember [*se rappeler*] is much more than recalling, as Lacan puts it in 1967. Because it is to remind oneself to/of oneself, that is to say, to pull myself out of the hole into which I had fallen under the traumatic effect of certain words.

To remember, in the two senses of ‘finding oneself there, where representation failed’, and ‘to extract oneself’, makes event in an analysis. This third event modality, in the strong sense of ‘reminding oneself’ [*se rappeler*] is articulated to the unconscious-light and has a modality of seeing.

---

<sup>7</sup> Lacan, J., “La méprise du sujet supposé savoir”, in *Autres écrits*, Champ freudien, Seuil, p. 334.

These three forms of the analytic event in the form of formations of the unconscious, metamorphosis and reminiscence-vision, prepare the event toward which the analytic voyage is headed, toward the final denouement.

The denouement of this whole dramatic narrative that may have been an analysis, propels me into a new region, which is no longer of the order of the narrative, but of the regime of the letter. If “the letter goes wending off without it [the message],”<sup>8</sup> as Lacan writes in *Lituraterre*, it is because the analytic adventure is constituted of a certain number of peripatetic events which, in the end, turn out to be those of the letter. All the twists and turns [*peripeties*] that could have been reported in an analysis and that have occurred at the level of discourse, bear witness to a letter that has not yet been deciphered. This letter has circulated between words, but it is only at the end that it arrives at its destination. The denouement is therefore of the order of a reading event. What will constitute an event at the end of the treatment [*cure*], is in fact that the analysand can read that which until then remained illegible [unreadable]. Something comes to be able to be read of what was written about the relation to jouissance, in other words, of the relation to the life-drive and the death-drive.

The writing *Lituraterre* (1977) bears witness to an event that occurred to Lacan himself on his return from a trip, an event that also sheds light on the end of analysis. There are very few writings in which Lacan bears witness to what happens to himself, but in this one, this is the case. Lacan formulates what occurred to him when he was returning from Japan in the airplane flying over the Siberian plain. What became an event, was something like a new vision. What he saw from the window of the plane, was an event for him. Lacan shares with us an experience of vision that led him to give an account of what makes a trace in an analysis, and which only becomes apparent at the end - on the return journey, a return to oneself, a return to one's itinerary, a return to the inaugural point. This vision-event – that Éric Laurent called “a vision of streaming of the One”<sup>9</sup> – and this reading-event concerns both what left a trace from the viewpoint of destiny and what left a trace in an analysis. This is what I am going to demonstrate, to attempt to account for the final event, insofar as it unties something of the relationship between life and death.

---

<sup>8</sup> Lacan, J., “Lituraterre”, *Autres écrits, ibid.*, p. 12. [*la lettre fait péripétie du message sans lui*] “Lituraterre”, translated by Beatrice Khiara-Foxton & Adrian Price: *Hurly-Burly* 9 (2013), p. 31.

<sup>9</sup> Laurent, É., “A vision of streaming of the One”, *Psychoanalytic Notebooks* 37/38, pp. 47-58.

I propose to think this distinction between the multiplicity of analytic events and the unicity of the final event<sup>10</sup>, by defining the final event-denouement in terms of vision and reading. This is why I link it to the clinic of the gaze, and even to a *beyond of the clinic* proper to the experience of the end of an analysis. This final event occurs without us being able to say exactly what made it happen. It happens when the analysand consents to it. Everything happens as if it were a matter of consenting to a destiny, to a “it is written”, without rebelling any longer against what has made destiny. But at the same time, this consent has nothing to do with resignation, since it is also what makes it possible to read and to extricate oneself.

Yet, the event is *what should never happen*.<sup>11</sup> This is what Éric Laurent highlighted in response to a remark I made during a Study-Day on the Pass. Indeed, what *must always* happen, or what never ceases, is the repetition of the same. The event is therefore what happens despite repetition. The final event is the contingency that manages to find its way into the analysis, easily thwarting *what was never meant to happen*. The analytic event emerges as a *tuché* that breaks with the *automaton*.

In the course of this exchange, Éric Laurent compared the end of analysis with the experience of the stunned spectator in front of Holbein’s *Ambassadors* who, on leaving the room, discovers that the cuttlebone at the bottom of the painting is a skull. This is the event that was never supposed to happen, and yet, it does. I would like to bring together this vision, which allows the anamorphosis to emerge, with the vision of *Lituraterre*, which is the vision of traces against a backdrop of signifying desert, thus articulating my theme today to the clinic of the gaze and its beyond.

The event of the end of an analysis occurs when, turning around one last time, the analysand sees what he had in front of his eyes but had never been able to read until now. The denouement happens in this crucial experience, where the analysand, looking back one last time on what has been his analytic journey, before separating from it, can finally see the anamorphosis of his destiny straightened up.

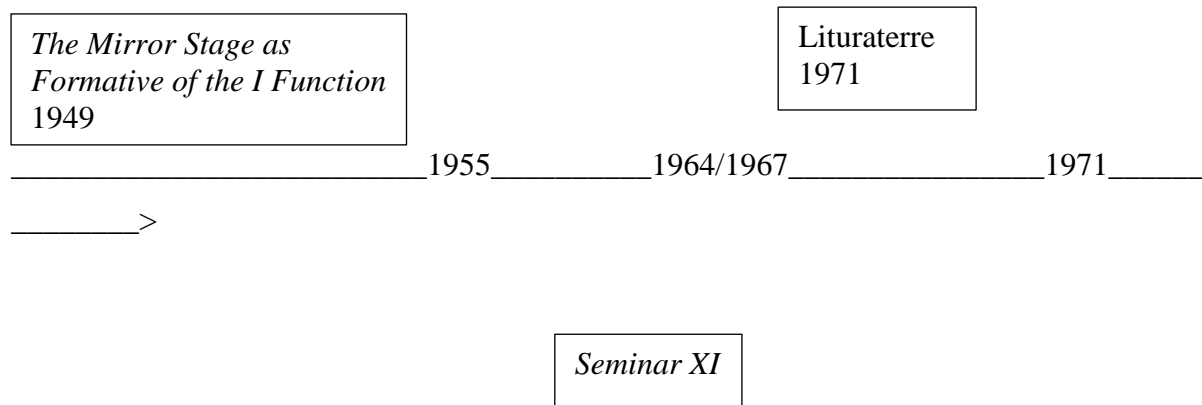
---

<sup>10</sup> Journée de la passe, École de la cause freudienne, Couvent des cordeliers, Paris, 7. octobre, 2023.

<sup>11</sup> Laurent, É., *ibid.*

## Reading the “Mirror Stage” from “Lituraterre”

After this introduction to the event in analysis, let us return to the gaze in Lacan’s teaching. To think about vision in the teaching of Lacan, and also as an event at the end of analysis, let us bring together two fundamental writings on vision, one from the end – *Lituraterre* (1971)- and one from the beginning – *The Mirror Stage as Formative of the I Function* (1949).



If we take this notion of *vision* seriously, and if we introduce between the *Mirror Stage* and *Lituraterre*, the lessons from 1964 on the eye and the gaze from *Seminar XI*, we can then consider that Lacan has a veritable conception of vision as a way of thinking about the analytic event. We can read the 1949 text on vision as an experience of the imaginary, from the point of culmination that is *Lituraterre*, where the experience of vision becomes the reading of the trace. Vision as a way of accessing the real, the vision between the clouds, the vision of the event of reading, is no longer a vision relative to the image.

The writing of the *Mirror Stage* refers to an event that happens to the child, who is not yet able to walk and who has not yet acquired the function of the *I* in speech. It is about what happens to him when he recognises for the first time the image of his body in the mirror. Lacan raises this experience of the recognition of the image of the body to the rank of a subjective event. This event anticipates the function of the *I* and marks, in this sense, a crossing. Lacan says that

this *stopping on the image* produces an identification in the full sense, when an analysis reaches its end, namely *the transformation that takes place in the subject when he assumes an image*.<sup>12</sup>

However, what Lacan wanted to show through this experience of the mirror Stage, are also the impasses of the purely imaginary mode of relating to the other. The mirror Stage is both a formative of the function of the *I* and the place of alienation to an image. In 1949, Lacan conceived of the imaginary identification as the first logical stage of an experience that must continue dialectically to produce a symbolic identification. The moment of imaginary alienation is destined to be traversed by the subject, so that he can situate himself in relation to the other from the symbolic point of view. So, if Lacan summons up the mirror stage, it is not just to make a point about child development, but also to make a point about the experience of analysis. In the experience of an analysis, it will well be about traversing the mirror, in the sense of traversing the imaginary axis as modality in relation to the other in the mirror.

So, Lacan began by using vision as a way of relating to others as an impasse. He began by making of vision the very locus of passion. What unleashes passion is vision: the vision of what the other has, the vision of how the other is. Seeing the other fulfilled in a relation to *jouissance*, gives rise to envy. Narcissism has to do with the passions unleashed by the image of the body: “prisons of *jouissance*,”<sup>13</sup> as Jacques-Alain Miller called them. The word ‘envy’ [*envie*], in Latin *invidia*, has its root in the verb to ‘see’ [*voir*]. *Invidia* comes from *video*, and “what I see arouses envy.” In this respect, the scene Lacan liked to quote is the one reported by Saint Augustin. At the beginning of the *Confessions* Augustin reflects on sin and evil. How can we know if evil exists already in children? To answer this question, Augustin recalls a memory. “Myself have seen and known even a baby envious; it could not speak, yet it turned pale and looked bitterly on its foster-brother.”<sup>14</sup> Augustin uses the term *invidia* here: *seeing with envy*.<sup>15</sup> The child was no longer hungry, but he envied the position of the other in the arms of the nurse after him. For Augustin, it is that there was already evil in him.

For Lacan, the imaginary is also the register of jealousy and competition. The experience of analysis can only begin when the subject perceives that his being is situated elsewhere than in

---

<sup>12</sup> Lacan, J., “The Mirror Stage as Formative of the I Function”, in *Écrits. The First Complete Edition in English*, trans. B. Fink in collaboration with H. Fink and R. Grigg, New York, Norton & Company, p. 76.

<sup>13</sup> Miller, J.-A., “Les prisons de la *jouissance*” (1994), *La Cause freudienne* 69, Navarin Éditeur.

<sup>14</sup> Augustine, Saint, *The Confessions of Saint Augustine*, Book I, chapter VII, translated by E. B. Pusey, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/augustine/confess.html>, p. 20.

<sup>15</sup> *Envie*: “envy” but also “want”. [TN]

the imaginary register. Analysis can only begin when the subject realises that his destiny is written in another register that can only be discovered through speech. The analytic journey only begins once the belief of “seeing yourself in the other” is left behind. The subject then consents to get rid of the armour that is this imaginary identity. So, the experience of an analysis begins when the subjects consents to detach himself from the narcissistic approach to his being and stops worrying about how the person he is talking to will see him. He agrees to detach himself from what he wants to be seen to be, through what his saying, and he realises that the truth of his being lies elsewhere than in this image of himself.

The analytic journey begins, therefore, when the subject is introduced to a another regime of “seeing.” He is introduced to a metaphorical regime of “seeing” that may lead him to say “Oh, I had not seen that!” as response to an interpretation by the analyst. The last sentence of the essay on the *Mirror Stage* situates this moment where the veritable analytic journey begins.

Remember Alice by Lewis Carroll who goes through the mirror to be introduced to a strange world - das *Unheimliche* - in which she will no longer know very well who she is, or how old she is, in which she will find herself both tiny and far too big for the place in which she finds herself. That is how the real journey begins, when you step through the mirror. Traversing the mirror means consenting to fall into another world. To experience the unconscious, to decipher the misunderstandings of destiny, is to go through the mirror and consent to lose yourself in an attempt to find yourself elsewhere. “In the subject to subject recourse we preserve, psychoanalysis can accompany the patient to the ecstatic limit of the ‘*Thou art that*’, where the cipher of his mortal destiny is revealed to him, but it is not in our sole power as practitioners to bring him to the point where the journey begins.”<sup>16</sup> In this last sentence of his essay from 1949, Lacan seems to tell us something about the end of analysis and also of its beginning. It is a question of a limit point, and, at the same time, the moment when the journey begins. In short, for the journey to be possible, the analysand must consent to it, with no possible return. Once the journey has begun, Pandora’s box is open, and it is not easy to stop before the end. On the one hand, we do not force anyone to take this journey, but on the other hand, once you have started, you are on board. Just as Lacan said in *Television* “I do not force anyone to do the pass”, he emphasises that we do not force anyone to do an analysis either.

---

<sup>16</sup> Lacan, J., “The Mirror Stage as Formative of the I Function”, in *Écrits. The First Complete Edition in English*, trans. B. Fink in collaboration with H. Fink and R. Grigg, New York, Norton & Company, p. 81.



Psychoanalysis thus accompanies the patient on this journey to a certain limit point, seen as the horizon of the analysis and perhaps as the end of the analysis. *Who am I? [qui suis-je?]* and *what am I [que suis-je?]*<sup>17</sup> are the two questions that will open up in an analysis until the point where a message of the order of “you are this” will arrive at its destination. It is a question of commencing a journey that consists in deciphering what is ciphered. To decipher that which is obscure, that which is difficult to interpret, that which is hidden is first of all decoding a message. Yet, to decipher means also “to read what is ciphered.” So, it will then be a question of deciphering down to the zero point, of reading until the point of origin in order to arrive at the departing point, from which the significations of destiny have become wound up, entangled, tangled up in such a way that the subject can no longer see anything. From 1949 onward, Lacan thus introduces us to another register of seeing, which is seeing in the sense of reading this secret writing and to read it up to the “point of insemination for a symbolic order.”<sup>18</sup>

### **Seeing and Not Seeing (*The Purloined Letter*)**

From the 1950s onwards, Lacan gave thus a new value to vision in the metaphorical sense. Sophocles and Edgar Allan Poe give him material to give an account of this *seeing*, which is also an invitation to travel in the symbolic order. In the *Seminar on “The Purloined Letter”* (1956), Lacan introduces a new conception of vision starting from the dimension of the symbolic. It is about thinking blindness departing from the displacement of the signifier. The latter determines the subjects in their destiny and in their refusal to see. The return to Freud also takes the form of this metaphorical approach to blindness. “If what Freud discovered, and rediscovers ever more abruptly, has a meaning, it is that signifier’s displacement determines subjects’ acts, destiny, refusals, blindnesses, success, and fate, regardless of their innate gifts and instruction, and regardless of their character or sex; and that everything pertaining to the psychological pre-given follows willy-nilly the signifier’s train, like weapons and baggage.”<sup>19</sup>

With the unconscious, Freud discovered what determines the subjects in their destiny and their blindness. With the unconscious, Freud demonstrated that subjects are played by the

---

<sup>17</sup> Also “*what/who do I follow?*” [TN]

<sup>18</sup> Lacan, J., “The Direction of the Treatment and the Principles of Its Power”, *Écrits: the first complete edition in English*, trans. B. Fink in collaboration with H. Fink and R. Grigg, New York, Norton & Company, p. 497.

<sup>19</sup> Lacan, J., “The Seminar on “The Purloined Letter”, *Écrits: the first complete edition in English*, trans. B. Fink in collaboration with H. Fink and R. Grigg, New York, Norton & Company, p. 21.

displacement of the signifier. Let us go back to Poe's tale. What characterises every character in *The Purloined Letter*, is indeed that they do not see. Not a single character sees where the purloined letter, that the minister stole, is hidden. At the beginning of the story, the Queen sees a letter, that is addressed to her, being stolen under her eyes by the minister, but in the presence of the King, she cannot say anything. If she does, she herself, will be accused of having received a letter from someone else. She acts as if she does not see, so that the king does not see anything [*n'y voit rien*]. In the rest of the story, no one can find the letter, even though it is there for all to see [*sous les yeux de tous*]. The minister did not put it under a mattress or in a safe. He simply turned it over and crumpled it up a little, hanging it on the mantelpiece as if it were a worthless object. But he left it there for all to see. At the same time, nobody sees it. The analogy with the cure is made at the level of the displacement of the letter and the blindness of the subject. In the experience of an analysis, there is also something like a letter missing to decipher my destiny. This letter is the missive that I received from the Other, but about which I can say nothing. In an analysis, I have this letter in front of my eyes, but I cannot see it. I take it to be a worthless object, like a crumpled letter.

Edgar Allan Poe offers a very beautiful metaphor of blindness based on this dialectic between the legible and the illegible [the readable and the unreadable]. He refers to a game, where you have to read the names on a geographical map. On a map, there are effectively different levels of writing and different scales: names of cities, names of regions, names of rivers. However, the name written on a much larger scale, in large characters, is right there in front of your eyes, but you can't see it. Why can't you see it? Because it is written too big, it is almost too visible. "These, like the over-largely lettered signs and placards [...], escape observation by dint of being excessively obvious."<sup>20</sup> They are shown to you without you being able to read them. To see them, at some point, you have to change scale. You have to look from another place.

The event of "*seeing*" in an analysis is of the order of this moment when you will be able to read from another scale. This geography of your being and your history, which will be written in the course of an analysis, will, at some point, require to apprehend an overall region, which has to do with destiny. But, it is important to take a step back from our being, our history, and our psychical geography, to be able to decipher the misunderstandings of destiny, which are nevertheless written there in large letters. So here's a metaphor for the experience of the event

---

<sup>20</sup> Poe, E. A., "The Purloined Letter", *The Fall of the House of Usher and Other Writings*, Penguin Classics, 1986, p. 296.

of *seeing* in an analysis as event of reading what was previously illegible. In the end, this metaphor also encapsulates what Lacan called, in another writing, the *instant of the glance and the time for comprehending*.<sup>21</sup>

### **An Unconscious-Light**

However, far beyond this metaphorical vision, which is a *vision-pathway to access the symbolic*, we find in Lacan in the 60s a vision-pathway to access the real. What the analysand cannot see, is no longer of the order of a signifying truth, but of the order of an intensity of jouissance. This intensity can show itself in a dream as an *excess of light* that is dazzling [*éblouit*].

Let us go back. In *La méprise du sujet supposé savoir* (1967), the emergence of the unconscious is defined by dazzlement [*éblouissement*], by *too much light*, which means that the subject is unable to see or read that which is at stake. This unconscious-light, introduced by Lacan, is completely new. It is no longer about *the unconscious structured like language*, nor about the unconscious that pushes to be realised, but about the unconscious that is a factor of dazzlement, of the unconscious that is luminous intensity. What the analysand cannot see is also what he cannot remember. This is how I will interpret it today, after the experience of the pass. And yet, not being able to remember can be shown in the dream as not being able to see under the effect of too much light. Indeed, this unconscious-light is introduced in this footnote within a discussion about reminiscence. Let us begin with the question of reminiscence. “This reminds us that the unconscious is not to lose one’s memory; it is not remembering what one knows. Lacan defines the verb “to remember” [*se rappeler*] not only within the binary of remembering [*souvenir*] and forgetting [*oubli*]. What does it mean *to not remember what one knows*? “*I no longer remember it*” is a statement that every analysand makes at some point of his or her treatment. “It means: I do not find myself there. It provokes zero representation from where it would be proven that I have lived here.”<sup>22</sup> So, not to remember, is not to remember where the subject has lived among signifiers. The subject does not find himself there, in other words, does not feel concerned. The event that will lead him both to decipher something of the misunderstandings of destiny, and to see what was invisible and illegible until now, this event

---

<sup>21</sup> Lacan, J., Lacan, J., “Logical Time and The Assertion of Anticipated Certainty”, *Écrits: the first complete edition in English*, translated by B. Fink in collaboration with H. Fink and R. Grigg, New York, Norton & Company, pp. 167-168.

<sup>22</sup> Lacan, J., «La méprise du sujet supposé savoir», 1967, *Autres écrits*, Champ freudien, Seuil, p. 334. No official English translation.

can be thought of as a *reminder*, a *recall*. We can think of it as the fact of seeing where was the subject implicated. What is so beautiful, is that in a way, Lacan shows us that there is a knowledge that is not known which has been there from the start. The subject knew it, but did not remember that he knew it.

Memory is “the subject’s link to a discourse from which he can be repressed, that is, not know that this discourse implicates him.”<sup>23</sup> So, in the strongest sense, memory is precisely a repressed memory which, until then, had not affected the subject, as if he did not realise that he was involved in it. To “remember it” is also to get out of it, to lift oneself out of it. When we climb mountains, we also talk about rappelling. Rappelling is what enables you to catch yourself when you are in the process of falling. You catch yourself by pulling yourself up. This is also the meaning Lacan gives to the verb “se rappeler” (remembering) in analysis. It is not just a “recalling” at the level of signifiers, at the level of the forgotten event that comes back to memory, it’s a “recalling” that touches on the real. It is a “recollecting” that pulls me out of the hole. I had fallen into a hole, the hole of trauma, and the event of recollection - recalling what I already knew but did not remember I knew - this event pulls me out of the hole. Vision, as an event, is the moment when the subject remembers what involves him, in his body. The event in analysis can be thought of as that moment of revelation when the subject *sees*, *hears* or *reads* the point at which his body is implicated in what he is saying. Here we are beyond what Lacan called the *instant of seeing* and the *time for understanding*. This event brings us closer to the *moment to conclude*.

In note I of page 334, Lacan further unfolds his interpretation of the experience of *not remembering*. “This, says the subject, I do not remember.”<sup>24</sup> What does this mean? “In other words: when a signifier is called upon which should represent me for another signifier,” I do not respond “present” for the reason that, as a result of this call, I no longer represent anything to myself.”<sup>25</sup> So, there is at the same time the emergence of a signifier and the subject who is absent. I do not respond “present” as if I was confronted with a black hole. In a way, the black hole, an astronomical metaphor, captures well what it is like to encounter the real. The real in the treatment, insofar as I do not reply: “present”, “I no longer represent anything for myself”;

---

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, note I, p. 334, AE.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

it is a black hole that I encounter. “I am a dark room that has been lit: there is no way the image of what is going on outside can be painted through its pinhole.”<sup>26</sup>

“I no longer recall it” means according to Lacan that, I myself, become the *camera obscura*, dark room in the photographic sense, and that I can no longer photograph what is going on outside. And yet, the lights are turned on, and yet, there is light, but precisely too much light. The event of seeing in analysis is situated between light and shadow, between radical obscurity and the too much of light that *jouissance* confronts me with. Lacan says then “the unconscious is not subliminal, dim light. It is the light that does not make room for the shadow, nor to insinuate its contour.”<sup>27</sup>

This *unconscious-light* comes to complete the analysis of the anamorphosis done by Lacan in 1964. Like in Holbein’s *The Ambassadors*, there is a point in the analysis where my representation is missing. Seeing the blot, the stain in the picture of history, also means moving forward towards the territory of *jouissance*. It was by considering the painting as analogous to the vision of a dream, that in 1964, Lacan introduced the object *light* at the heart of the analytic experience. Paying homage to painting and to what he calls the *point of light*,<sup>28</sup> he questioned vision and the gaze. When I look at a painting, I do not know what I am seeing. The *point of light*, radiating from the canvas, captures my gaze. The experience of the unconscious is also an encounter with the *point of light* at the heart of the dream. Dazzling light.

So, the unconscious is not behind the scenes of consciousness. It is not a “dim light”, as if consciousness were the light and unconsciousness the dim light. Reversing the entire philosophical tradition, Lacan argues that the unconscious is of such intense clarity that it dazzles us. It is *light, but it leaves no room for shadow*, rather like a Rothko canvas, which is nothing but light, without shade, the diffusion and intensity of a light that envelops me. Now, you know that in order to see, you need *chiaroscuro/twilight*, you need a relationship between light and shadow, otherwise the image will dazzle you. The image is too white and does not let any contours show through. So, sometimes you have to blink to see what the unconscious shows us, at the heart of a dream or a nightmare. Seen from the *point of light*, the unconscious is no longer message but light. It is no longer history, but painting. Painting of our destiny.

---

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> Lacan, J., *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*, ed. By J.-A. Miller, translated by A. Sheridan, Routledge, London & New York, 2018, p. 95.

## The Letter, Beyond Shadow and Light

Beyond shadow and light, what remains? What remains that which left a mark, a trace. I will end with this trace to be seen [*trace à voir*]. A new and final regime of *seeing* comes into play, that of reading. In 1971, Lacan shared with us an experience of seeing, in order to think about what makes a trace in an analysis. This experience of vision is of the order of an event of reading. Just as the perspective of the anamorphosis is straightening out, when we look at the painting up to a certain point, something comes to be read in the analysis, there where this *something* had hitherto remained illegible. The reading of *what is written* occurs as an event, when the subject who speaks in analysis, has reached a certain point in the deciphering of his destiny where the narrative seems unable to be closed. The end is of the order of a vision as event, and of reading as denouement. To conclude, I propose to read the vision of *Lituraterre* with the trace of *Radiophonie*.

Lacan's vision experience that he shares with us in *Lituraterre* when he came back from a trip to Japan, and that he sees through the airplane window, is not a vision in the mystical sense, but it is rather a vision in the sense of a perceptive and interpretative event. Lacan interpreted what he saw at the perceptual level in order to think about what is seen at the end of an analysis. With this vision, Lacan takes us beyond the aesthetic field. He turns the perception of traces into a metaphor for what is read at the end of the analysis. As Éric Laurent writes, "it is a question of traversing the aesthetic experience to bring it back to its kernel of the real."<sup>29</sup> Aesthetic experience is not just an experience referring to the satisfaction that can be derived from a the beautiful or the sublime. Aesthetic experience, in the literal sense of the word, the experience of seeing, can be a way of accessing this real which cannot deciphered, but which is shown. Between languages, between the signifier and the body, between letters. Éric Laurent highlights Lacan's choice of the word "streaming" [*ruissellement*] to describe the flow of a river. Streaming refers to an experience of vision, that of shimmering radiance. Lacan's vision allows him to write about the end of an analysis. At the end of the experience, the subject who speaks, encounters an almost deserted place, where the power of history has disappeared, where all that remains is a trace, a mark, indelible, the mark of the encounter between the subject's body and the language of the Other. This trace is the "memory of everything that was noted

---

<sup>29</sup> Laurent, É., "A Vision of Streaming of the One", *Psychoanalytic Notebooks* 37/38, pp. 47-58.

and erased in the experiences of *jouissance* where a subject encountered the forms of the impossible to say.”<sup>30</sup>

I, in turn, will interpret this vision-reading by linking it to the trace of time. This landscape, which Lacan sees from between the clouds, enables him to say something about the littoral, between the symbolic and the real. What he sees is beyond an image. Through these traces, which can only be seen from such a distance and height, he sees something that is no longer of the order of the image, but of the order of the time it took to *make trace of what failed to reveal itself at first*.<sup>31</sup> In short, it is a vision of traces as vision of time. In analysis, the event of vision as a moment when the subject can look back on his journey, coincides with a new distance, a detachment, that enables reading. It is because the subject has detached himself from the *jouissance* effects of his history, it is because he has been able to separate himself from the drive-effects produced by signifiers, that he can also see. What was blurring his sight was, in fact, a *jouissance* in excess, a too much of *jouissance*. For a whole period of analysis, the subject was unable to read because he was caught up in his *jouissance*.

This effect of reading the real, has to do with being detached from one’s destiny, as if one was flying over it in an airplane and seeing the traces left by a long journey. I would like to mention a dream I had at a time in my analysis when the question of the letter of destiny was not yet readable. I dreamt I was trying to read a letter addressed to me. The letter was written in blue ink, and the handwriting resembled that of a child. But I could not read it, because my vision was blurred. Two years later, the question of “seeing” and “reading” was reversed. In a new dream, I could read letters on a geographical map of Europe, letters that wrote a word between two languages, between two territories, between two places, and that made me cross the border between the symbolic and the real. I could now see and read what I had spent so long trying to decipher. I had moved from the signifying history to the geography of the real. I could situate my destiny from this regime of the letter, which sent me back to the place of *insemination into the symbolic*, and also confronted me with the misunderstanding from where I had come.

To conclude, I would like to say that this trace that one perceives at the end of the analysis, between signifiers, dissipating like clouds, this trace is itself unsayable. And this is why only poetry may express it. Lacan’s poetic vision on his return from Japan, is also what the

---

<sup>30</sup> Laurent, É., *ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> Lacan, J., “Radiophonie” (1970), *Autres écrits, ibid.*, p. 428. No official English translation.

analysand can experience at the end. Moving from *being dazzled* to *seeing blurred*, then from *not being able to read* to *being able to read*, writes the final sequence of an analysis from vision as event that presides over denouement. This sequence implies to consent to that part of destiny which is of the order of trace, rather than truth. That what *initially failed to reveal itself comes to make trace*, is an effect of time, the time it takes to say, the time it takes to see, and the time it takes to read the secret cipher of destiny. If the journey begins when the analysand detaches himself from the imaginary, it ends when, after a long journey among signifiers, the analysand can finally open his eyes onto the real. The letter- beyond shadow and light- finally read, has reached its destination.

*Translated by Eva Sophie Reinhofer  
with Florencia F.C. Shanahan*