

PSYCHOANALYSIS: A MAPPING OUT, TURNING THE SYMBOLIC INSIDE OUT¹

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This paper considers the notion of psychoanalysis as a 'mapping out' which was put forward by Lacan in his 24th Seminar, L'insu que sait de l'une bévue s'aile à mourre. The implied synonyms for 'mapping out', such as, 'identifying with one's symptom' and 'turning inside out', are highlighted so as to gain some insight into this notion. How one is to understand and situate the symbolic intervention of the analyst and interpretation as a cut are also explored, as are the notions of the symptom – a symbolic representation with an effect in the Real and the possibility of dissolving this effect. Lacan's toric depictions of these ideas are also presented.

Keywords: inside; outside; inside-out; unconscious; mapping out; identification; symptom; sense; meaning; torus; Borromean knot; Real; Symbolic; Imaginary

This paper begins with two quotations from Jacques Lacan's (1976-1977) seminar, *L'insu que sait de l'une bévue s'aile à mourre*, in which, talking about the clinic of psychoanalysis and its aim, Lacan refers to an inside, an outside and a turning inside out:

That psychoanalysis is attached to putting outside what is inside, namely, the unconscious... – [though this] is not without posing some questions²

...what do we see by proceeding as we usually do by a cut, by a split, to turn the Symbolic inside out?³

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² Lacan, J. *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XXIV, L'insu que sait de l'une bévue s'aile à mourre, 1976-1977*, translated by C. Gallagher, www.lacaninireland.com. Session of 14 December 1976, p. 22.

³ *ibid.* p. 23.

These two quotations have in common the ideas of *an inside* and *an outside* and of the *unconscious* which, though inside, is outside. They also refer to a *turning inside-out* which is brought about by a *cut*. These are the points explored in this paper.

Lacan introduces his seminar saying that we have to admit 'that we have an inside that is called...psyche.'⁴ He references Freud's *endo* and *endo-psychical* – though he says that it is not self-evident that the *psyche* should be *endo* nor even, indeed, that the *endo* should be endorsed. However, while he is not here endorsing the notion of an inside, an *endo-psychical*, he nevertheless begins by talking about the *inside* as the unconscious (as already quoted) and he goes on to talk about identification as a *turning inside out*, with the effect that the inside is outside, and the outside, inside. He furthermore says, '...identification is what is crystallised in an identity.'⁵ You could say that identification is that which is crystallised in one's *symptom*. In this context, he refers to psychoanalysis as a mapping out, saying that this is what psychoanalysis does, and he asks, '...in what does this mapping out called analysis consist? Might it be or might it not be...to identify oneself to one's symptom?'⁶

Speaking thus of psychoanalysis as a mapping out, Lacan affirms that mapping out in this context is the equivalent of identifying oneself with one's symptom, and that this identifying with one's symptom is synonymous with a turning inside out.

This understanding of analysis as a mapping out raises the following questions about what it is that analysis does. Firstly, since the symptom is already a symbolic representation, how is one to understand or to situate this mapping out, this identifying oneself with one's symptom? Secondly, if this mapping out, which one is tempted to see as a symbolising but which, in this context, must be something other than a symbolising which produces the symptom, might it then be a *reversal* of the symbolising which is the symptom?⁷

Elaborating further on these questions and possibly verging on some answers in the process, it can be pointed out that, while the symptom is a symbolic

⁴ *ibid.* Session of 16 Nov 1976, p. 2.

⁵ *ibid.*

⁶ *ibid.* p. 3.

⁷ This notion of *reversal* brings to mind the *dialectical reversals* in Lacan's (1951) *Intervention on Transference*, (in J Mitchell & J Rose, *Feminine Sexuality*, London: MacMillan Press, 1982) in which, it could be argued, Dora progresses, with the work of analysis, by means of identifying with her symptom through each successive development of a truth and its reversal

representation, the fact is that what it represents is not known, it is a representation which is unbeknownst [*L'insu*]⁸, even if it is known [*que sait*] in that it is recognisable. It is, therefore, *outside* while at the same time being *inside*.

Furthermore, Lacan has already drawn attention to the fact that the symptom is a symbolic representation that manifests in the Real. For example, in his 22nd Seminar (1974-1975), *RSI*, he had said that 'the symptom is the effect of the Symbolic in the Real.'⁹ He goes further in this 24th Seminar, *L'insu*, where he elaborates on this notion and adds, 'The symptom is real; it is even the only real thing, namely, which has a *sense*, which preserves a *sense* in the Real. It is indeed for *that* reason that the psychoanalyst can, if he is lucky, intervene symbolically to *dissolve it in the Real*.'¹⁰ [Italics added]

Perhaps this is where the key to a certain understanding lies; the symptom preserves a *sense* in the Real and can therefore be dissolved, not entirely, but dissolved *in the Real*. The symptom *means* something and it is precisely because the symptom, though real, preserves this *sense* in the Real that it is therefore possible, through analysis, to dissolve it *in the Real*. That is to say that, because the symptom preserves a *sense*, the analyst can therefore *intervene symbolically* to dissolve this *effect* of the Symbolic in the Real.

Relating this to what Lacan has said about psychoanalysis as a mapping out, an identification with one's symptom, what is said here suggests that the aim of the analyst intervening symbolically is to get the patient to identify with his/her symptom, thereby turning this symbolic representation *inside out* and thereby dissolving the symptom *in the Real*. Would it be accurate to say, therefore, that 'identifying with one's symptom' means, or it has the effect of, relegating the symptom purely to the Symbolic, with the result that there is a dissolution of the symptom *in the Real*, that is, a dissolution of this effect of the Symbolic in the Real?

This explanation seems to be consistent with what is meant by the depiction, in toric terms, of the Symbolic torus enveloping that of the Real and the

⁸ The *L'insu* (or the *L'insu que sait*) of the title is Lacan's allusion to Freud's *das unbewusste*, the translation of which from the German as 'the unconscious' somewhat complicates a term which simply means 'the unknown, the unwitting' or 'the unbeknownst'.

⁹ Lacan, J. *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan. Book XXII. R.S.I., 1974-1975*, translated by C. Gallagher, www.lacanireland.com. Session of 10 December 1974, p. 15.

¹⁰ Lacan, J. (1976-1977), *op. cit.*, Session of 15 March 1977, p. 105.

Imaginary, seen in the *Figures II-11* and *II-12*¹¹, where the Symbolic torus, *turned inside out*, envelops the Real and the Imaginary?

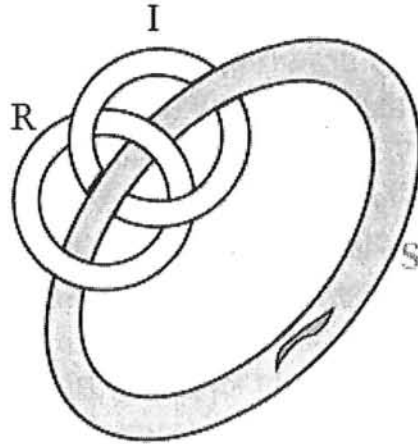


Fig. II-11

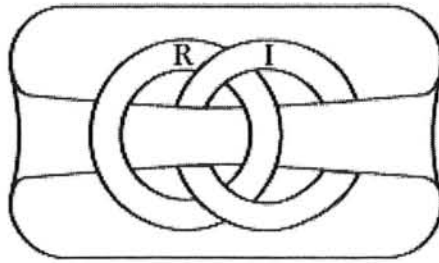


Fig. II-12

Going one step further, it is clear from *Figure II-11* that, in order for this turning inside out and enveloping to happen, there must be a 'cut' in the Symbolic torus. The 'cut' that Lacan talks about in this context actually is, or certainly is brought about by, the symbolic intervention of the analyst, that is to say, it is, or is brought about by, 'analytic interpretation' – bearing in mind that this intervention/interpretation is possible, Lacan says, precisely because the symptom 'preserves a *sense* in the Real'.

Lacan elaborates on what he means by the analytic interpretation and *sense* by turning to poetry, poetic writing and the signifier. What is common to every signifier, he says in this elaboration, is its 'duplicity of sense'¹², its 'double sense'¹³. He says, the signifier 'has, what people call, sense-effects, and it would be enough for me to connote S_2 as not being the second in time, but as

¹¹ *ibid.* Session of 14 Dec 1976, p. 22.

¹² *ibid.* Session of 15 March 1977, p. 103.

¹³ *ibid.*

having a double direction [*sens*] for the S_1 to take its place, and its place correctly... The weight of this duplicity of sense is common to every signifier.¹⁴

He goes on to say that while ‘...poetry is founded precisely on this ambiguity,¹⁵ nonetheless, poetry must ‘all the same depend on the relation of the signifier to the signified.’¹⁶ This is Lacan’s rationale for saying that poetic writing is *imaginarily symbolic*. In this passage on poetic writing in *L’insu*, Lacan explicitly distinguishes between sense [*sens*] and meaning [*signification*]. If poetry has only meaning, he says, it has failed: ‘...what is proper to poetry when it fails is precisely to have only a meaning, to be a pure knot of one word to another word.’¹⁷ But, it is precisely because poetry is not just *imaginary*, nor is it just *symbolic*, but rather, it is *imaginarily symbolic*, that ‘it permits interpretation’. In fact, Lacan says that ‘It is *only* poetry... which permits interpretation.’¹⁸ And it is here that he explains that interpretation actually *is* the cut, implying that the interpretation is *already* contained, as it were, in true poetry. He says that the cut ensures that there is only *one* sense, that is, that the ‘double sense’ is eliminated. He elaborates, ‘...the willingness for sense [*la volonté de sens*] consists in eliminating the double sense, which can only be conceived by realising [*réaliser*]...this cut, namely, to ensure that there is only sense [*un sens*].’¹⁹ He clarifies, ‘How can a poet realise [*réaliser*] this *tour de force* of ensuring that one sense [*un sens*] is absent? It is, of course,’ he says, ‘by replacing this absent sense, by what I called meaning.’²⁰

What is suggested here is that the cut, in other words, analytic interpretation, endeavours to eliminate the *double sense* so as to produce ‘one sense’, *vis-à-vis* the symptom, by ‘replacing the absent sense by...meaning’. Furthermore, it seems to be plausible to suggest that it is precisely because there is produced *one sense* that it is therefore possible for the patient to identify with the symptom, thereby having the effect of dissolving the symptom in the Real. Lacan says that ‘with the help of what one can call poetic writing, you can get the dimension of what one could call analytic interpretation.’²¹ The cut, as analytic interpretation, the cut as the symbolic intervention of the analyst, can

¹⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁷ *ibid.* p.108.

¹⁸ *ibid.* Session of 17 May 1977, p. 125.

¹⁹ *ibid.* Session of 15 March 1977, p. 108.

²⁰ *ibid.*

²¹ *ibid.* Session of 19 April 1977, p. 115.

have the effect of dissolving the symptom in the Real. And so Lacan can go on to say that a 'correct interpretation extinguishes a symptom.'²²

Lacan had said at the start of this 24th Seminar, *L'insu*, that 'identifying with your symptom [means] knowing how to deal with your symptom...knowing how to sort it out, knowing how to manipulate it.'²³ He relates it to 'secondary narcissism'. This *savoir-faire* in relation to the symptom, therefore, has the effect of 'dissolving the symptom in the Real'. At this early stage of the Seminar, Lacan had been talking about the end of analysis and about the identification which actually marks 'the end of analysis.'²⁴ It is depicted in *figure II-12* where there is a complete envelopment of the Real and the Imaginary by the Symbolic. But, he says, there is a price: 'That psychoanalysis is attached to putting outside what is inside, namely, the unconscious, is something which obviously has its price.'²⁵ The price, he tells us, is 'a completely different arrangement of ...the Borromean knot'²⁶ in which the Symbolic completely envelops the Imaginary and the Real. That is why *figure II-13*²⁷ depicts another cut (top left-hand side) in the Symbolic torus, heralding the need for a further turning *inside out* the aim of which would be to reconfigure this arrangement so as to reinstate the usual positioning of the Real, Symbolic and Imaginary in the Borromean knot.

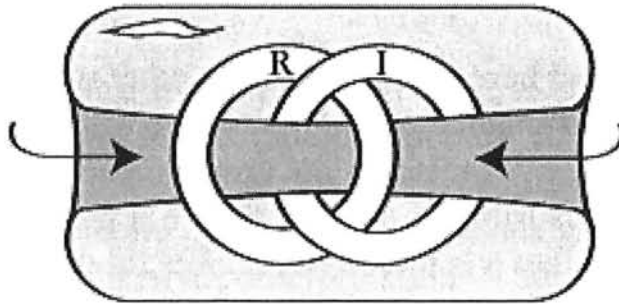


Fig. II-13

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²² *ibid.* p. 116.

²³ *ibid.* Session of 16 Nov 1976, p. 4.

²⁴ *ibid.* p. 3.

²⁵ *ibid.* Session of 14 Dec 1976, p. 22.

²⁶ *ibid.* p. 23.

²⁷ *ibid.*