

## Existence and Exception in Lacan's 'L'étourdit'

A. R. Price

*This discussion pursues the specimen of a commentary on the section of the 1973 text 'L'étourdit' falling on pages 19–23 of Scilicet 4 (corresponding to the reprint in Autres écrits, Seuil: Paris, 2001, pp. 463–66).*

[23]

*Le sujet dans la moitié.* The bivalence here distributes between a subject fully located in one of the two moieties and, although less grammatically persuasive, a subject half-determined by the quantifiers, so stringing out the gently set equivocation between full subjection to two of the four quantifiers or else only partial subjection to the same, thus still to allow of movement between all four. This bivalence is enhanced by the verbless opening phrase, which even by sentence-end will not be embedded in a verbal clause, leaving the internal relations of syntactical coordination and subordination especially abstruse: the full sentence is twice cleft, fronted here by the topicalisation of 'the subject in the moiety'.

*où il se détermine.* The French *sujet* is pronominally substituted by the masculine *il*, even when the denoted subject has been pre-defined as feminine. Nevertheless, the grammatically assigned ambiguity here hosts the staging of a previously non-gendered subject (subsumed under the masculine 'default') who now self-determines as woman, henceforth, but not quite yet, to bear the feminine gendered pronoun. Alternatively, instead of repeating the subject's self-determination as stipulated in the previous paragraph, this masculine pronoun may be a dummy subject as taken by an impersonal verb, exploiting the multi-use *des* merely to connote the action-moment of the quantifiers as they assume determination.

*des quanteurs niés.* These are the negated quantifiers,  $\exists \bar{x}$  and  $\forall \bar{x}$ , from which are built the two arguments, or *modes*, described above.

*, c'est de ce que.* This second phrase-unit may operate in one of two ways, either as a content clause introducing the causal factor behind the auto-determination in the first unit, or else severing fully therefrom to stand as a cleft anticipating its cleft clause as headed by the second *que*. This latter is more solidly pitched to the extent that the present clause takes a subjunctive apparently necessitated by the first *que*, while the second *que* is followed by a conditional, thereby suggesting a functional distinction. Whichever, the clause stands independent of the opening phrase-unit, to which the syntactic expletive *c'* is bound by a mere comma splice.

*rien d'existant*. This clause qualifies the first of the two negated quantifiers: the existential quantifier carrying a negative bar to denote *There does not exist an x such that ... &c.* In the Sainte-Anne appointments, this is the 'absent *ἔτερος*', the 'syncope of existence' (*entretien* of 3 March 1972) or the fact of 'not being the Other' (*entretien* of 1 June 1972), whereby woman is inscribed 'in the non-existence of what might negate the phallic function'. In the latter *entretien* this absence instantiates for the female subject in 'the fact of absenting oneself', but is accompanied by a further, if inconclusive, exemplification in the variations on *vir*.

The silent allusion is to the reply to 'Question V' in 'Radiophonie' [of which a redacted version had been printed in the previous edition of *Scilicet*], where the two 'moieties' of the sexuation formulae are prefigured by the contrasting pair of *le vir* and *la virgo*. The passage develops from the remark that there is no aesthesia of the opposite sex that could account for the claimed sexual relation; instead there is a jouissance, which supports relation, but is in fact articulated to the surplus object, 'par quoi dans ce rapport le partenaire ne s'atteint' ['whereby, in this relation, the partner is not attained'] (*Scilicet* 2/3:90; *Autres écrits*, p. 438). A first version of this articulation is the personified *vir* who identifies surplus-jouissance with the object *a*; a second is the *virgo* who reduces it to the phallus, 'soit au pénis imaginé comme organe de la tumescence, soit à l'inverse de sa réelle fonction' ['either to the penis imagined as an organ of tumescence, else to the inverse of its real function']. Both versions testify to the presence of a 'virile' metaphorisation of the phallic function that operates on subject and object alike, yet this emerges only against the backdrop of the vanishing partner. The import of this passage with respect to a reading of the final *entretien* lies in its positioning of the *virgo* as a subject, and not as the male's fantasy-object, which is how the figure of the virgin is most commonly discussed in the analytic literature. The virgin that Lacan presents at Sainte-Anne is a subjective position, even while it is one marked out by impossibility, to wit: 'There does not exist any *x* that is determined as a subject of naysaying the phallic function'. Extrapolating further – for Lacan was not to proceed to the full elaboration he promised – the virgin would seem to embody one aspect of a specifically feminine subjectivity that has a bearing on woman as such, irrespective of whether the subject at issue is *virgo intacta* or deflowered. This aligns with Freud's focus in 'The Taboo of Virginity', where the factor of the young woman's frigidity and its potential endurance in marriage gradually assumes precedence in Freud's consideration over the fantasy of exclusive possession as induced by the deflowering husband.

*ne fasse limite de la fonction*. Where in the first 'moiety' there was a conjugation of *There exists one* ( $\exists x$ ) with the *forall* operator ( $\forall x$ ), the former setting down the boundary to the latter, here in the second 'moiety' no such frontier to the phallic function can be convincingly sustained, thus implicitly filling out the third argument:  $\exists x.\overline{\Phi x}$ . Where on one side of the foursquare table a limit is formed in the existence of *at-least-One* that eludes castration, on the other side the non-existence of any such One results in a 'duality', an indeterminate 'relation of 1 to 0' (*entretien* of 3 March 1972), later to be reformulated (*entretien* of 1 June) as an 'undecidable', with all the attendant mathematical connotations of non-computable, non-recursive, &c. It is not that the *virgo* incarnates the zero that would be a precondition for her being counted as One, which is how these allusions in the Sainte-Anne appointments have been construed by some (cf.

Lorenzo Chiesa in *The Not-Two; Logic and God in Lacan*, Cambridge MA: MIT, who rightly locates the counting-as-one within a fantasised perspective, but seems to credit this precondition as itself valid across a wider extension: mildly at first, on pp. 140, 154–5, then more emphatically on pp. 164–5). Rather, it is that she is ‘located between the 1 and the 0’; she is ‘not-one’ (*entretien* of 1 June 1972). To say that the virgin instantiates the ‘not-one’ is not to say that she instantiates zero, for this would be to enforce the very binary opposition that Lacan successively calls into question (e.g. ‘Is everything that is not man, woman? This is what tends to be accepted. However, since woman is not-all, why would all that is not woman be man?’ lesson of 10 May 1972).

*que ne saurait s’en assurer quoi que ce soit d’un univers*. The deliberated difficulty of grammatical parsing is matched semantically, and thereby is (again) enacted a rhetorical trope aligned with a logical turn both facilitated and compromised by these constraints of logical function. During the *entretien* of 3 March 1972, it is declared that ‘the contrary of the limit point, namely the fact that there is no exception, does not ensure the universal of womanhood’, thus implying that the movement from  $\exists x. \overline{\Phi x}$  to  $\overline{\forall x. \Phi x}$  is to some degree scripted in negative, even while it is non-prescriptive of how this movement might be actualised. The sentence thus presents a skewed analogue to the ‘equipollence’ operations developed in what came to be known as the *Logica vetus* (the procedures expanded from Aristotle’s term logic by Porphyry, Boëthius, and others) which amplify the assertion in *De Interpretatione* that “‘No man is just” follows from “every man is not-just”, while the opposite of this, “not every man is not-just”, follows from “some man is just” (for there must be one)’ (20a20–21, here the J. L. Ackrill translation; Bocheński detects a more systematic ‘doctrine’ in the *Prior Analytics* 51b36–52a14, see *A History of Formal Logic*, translated by I. Thomas, University of Notre Dame Press, 1961, p. 60). In what has since been designated ‘obversion’, the quality of a proposition is permitted to change from affirmative to negative (or vice-versa) and its predicate to be replaced with the negation or the complement of the predicate. Obversion is thus an equivalent inference rule, working bi-directionally. In the formulae of sexuation, there is on the one hand some sort of pseudo-obversion that performs across the two ‘moieties’, such that  $\exists x. \overline{\Phi x}$  confirms  $\forall x. \Phi x$ , and so both men and women share the common condition of a ‘mankind’ subject to the phallic function: ‘No  $x$  is non-phallic’ follows from ‘all  $x$  is phallic’. However, the crucial incongruity in the movement between the two is the switch from a universal proposition to an existential one. It transpires that there is no such exclusive bi-directionality in sexuation: the formula  $\overline{\forall x. \Phi x}$  as a further ‘implication’ indicates that the operation cannot be conclusively run back in the opposite direction, from the negated existential to the affirmative universal, for it branches off instead, or also, to the not-all.

*Ainsi à se fonder*. Rather than being acted upon by a linguistic, logical or mathematical mechanism, the subject is presented as enacting a reflexive auto-founding or self-grounding, as already hinted above (‘le sujet se propose d’être dit femme’, and ‘il se détermine’) and as repeatedly connoted in the wording of vital passages in the oral teaching of 1972–73: cf. ‘woman presents herself to the phallic function by way of an argument in contingency’ (lesson of 12 January 1972); ‘woman, in regard to the phallic function, only situates herself as being *pas toute*, not all subject to it’ (*entretien* of 3 March 1972); ‘one is not forced, when one is male, to put oneself on the side of  $\forall x. \Phi x$ .

One can also put oneself on the side of the *pas-tout*' (lesson of 20 February 1973). More explicitly still, this positioning is twice in *Encore* pitched in terms of a 'choice' (lessons of 20 February and 13 March), prefiguring in turn the pithier formula in *Seminar XXI*: 'l'être sexué ne s'autorise que de lui-même' ['the sexuated being authorises himself only on his own account'] (lesson of 9 April 1974). Sexuation is thus cast as a matter of personal responsibility, a notion that will also be articulated more boldly over the following years (cf. lesson of 13 January 1976: 'the only responsibility that exists is sexual responsibility').

*de cette moitié*. Yet again the *de* operates bivocally: the subject finds grounding 'by means of' this logically articulated moiety but also by bringing it forth as a plausible entity, thus now prefiguring the immediate rounding off of the 1974 formula: '... ne s'autorise que de lui-même et de quelques autres' ['...authorises himself only on his own account and on account of a few others'], these 'others' being the very formulae of sexuation themselves (still the lesson of 9 April 1974).

, "elles". The singular 'default-gender' subject of the first sentence now is liable, subsequent to performed auto-determination, to be conjugated in the plural feminine, but not without a proviso, here conveyed by inverted commas, that no grouping or totalising is established by this moiety. This dominant reading does not exclude a less forceful though no less cogent denominating of the moieties themselves (feminine gendered in French), which are afforded their grounding through the subject's choice of sexuation and which together are rendered not-all, the condition of the second holding over the pair.

*ne sont* pastoutes. The quantifier  $\overline{\forall x}$  (*pas-tout*) and the plural feminine subjects (*pas toutes*) thus coalesce and are assimilated to the single moiety (*pas-toute*). Yet by the same stroke the previously announced repudiation of the generality of 'les femmes' is hereby delivered.

, *avec pour suite*. This 'suite' is at once the ensuing part of the argument and a *suite logique*, a logical sequence of cases that instantiate the non-totalised *pas-toutes*. It is tempting, at risk of superfluity and divagation, here to turn to Lacan's contemporary mentions of L. E. J. Brouwer and his concepts of *veel-eenigheid* ('multi-unité' in the lesson of 17 March 1971), of *scheppende subject* ('sujet créatif' in the lesson of 10 May 1972), and of *Wahlfolgen* (the freely proceeding infinite sequences alluded to at the close of the lesson of 10 April 1973). Brouwer holds that such choice sequences reflect the constant presence of a 'creating subject', an ideal mind that would be performing and hosting mathematical operations, pace by pace, without interference from individual psychological factors. The sequences are thus generated contingently, in the flow of time, and at whichever point the development of the sequence has reached at any given moment one finds there the subject who is responsible for them. These freely proceeding sequences came to be termed 'lawless':

Gödel says they should be called 'absolutely lawless' and not 'absolutely free' because freedom implies that one may impose a law. The meaning is to be this: I decide in advance never to impose a restriction. (Letter from Georg Kreisel to

Arend Heyting, 4 February 1963, quoted in van Atten, M., *Brouwer meets Husserl: On the Phenomenology of Choice Sequences*, Springer, 2007, p. 43)

Mark van Atten's claim that the 'additional indeterminateness' of the non-lawlike sequence 'justifies the richer qualifications "open-ended" or "dynamic"' (*Brouwer meets Husserl*, op. cit., p. 15) brings it into line with the same condition as described by the *not-all* quantifier: there is neither closure of the set, nor conclusive determination of an all-embracing law.

*et du même fait*. Whichever case arises as a sequential effect does so by virtue of the same initial fact of an auto-determination, a founding deed that dictates 'in advance' that no bounded universal shall ever be established.

, *qu'aucune non plus n'est toute*. And so the sentence leads from a *not-all* that is specifically indexed to a plurality – the gendered and plural *pastoutes* – to a singular connotation, now in negated form. This latter feeds back into the former, allowing a deduction to be made as to the status of any one of the subjects who align themselves with the *not-all*, yet without combining them into a totality. Extending (perhaps improperly) the reference to intuitionism, it may be stated that one singular 'creating subject' is present across each step of the *suite* that is being generated, which sequence is individuated from its moment of inception, so rendering the condition of the subject as *not-all* equivalent to the condition of the sequence itself. In more general terms, each case in the enumerated *suite* contributes to the description of one single variable that is thereby defined in the argument  $\overline{\forall x}. \Phi x$ .

## [24]

*Je pourrais ici*. Does the ensuing content of this single-sentence paragraph constitute the full development of what the first-person author claims to be within his capacity, or merely an outline of what such development would embrace? The treatment is terse given the magnitude of the subtheme here announced, though this is partially justified by its somewhat digressive aspect alongside the overarching theme of woman's sexuation. In itself this compels an especially attentive reading of the points of correspondence between the formulae of sexuation and the widely attested and inventoried psychiatric phenomenon at issue in this passage.

, *à développer l'inscription*. The qualification *inscription* is loose, and must be assumed to be purposefully so. Previously, 'inscription possible' and 'Leur inscription' were used to introduce the existential quantifier and to group together the two argument-functions carrying negated quantifiers, but the hypernym has since been superseded by a refined technical lexicon of hyponyms ('arguments', 'fonctions', 'quanteurs', even 'formules'), such that a retrograde step is here taken, leaving the reference deliberately to ambiguate, certainly to accommodate an exophora.

*que j'ai faite*. While acknowledging authorial responsibility for the said inscription, the first-person subject still defers firm identification of the referent. The *passé composé*

further equivocates deictically between a relatively far-off past and the freshly redacted endophoric content of ‘L’*étourdit*’.

*par une fonction hyperbolique*. Having provisionally entertained for the present discussion Le Gaufey’s emending of the previous notation ‘fonction exponentielle’ [§13¶3–4] so as to give ‘fonction hyperbolique’, a further quandary now arises as to what authorial intention may be ascribed to a recurrence, some seven pages on, of a same referent, if not on the conspicuous level of the signifier then at the very least implicitly on the level of the signified. Whichever may ultimately hold good, a close parsing of the function  $f(x) = 1/x$  as deployed in the earlier description of the existent exception to  $\forall x. \Phi x$  is indispensable with respect to the same function as here explicitly and accurately denominated in its application to a restricted selection of bibliographic material.

, *de la psychose de Schreber*. With exophoria now manifest, a textual source for an alternative or expanded referent for the reticent *inscription* becomes compelling in the diagram entitled ‘Schéma I’ from §VI.9 of Lacan’s 1958 article ‘D’une question préliminaire à tout traitement possible de la psychose’, there defined as an attempt to map points qualified as ‘géométriques’ from its predecessor the ‘Schéma R’ (§III.6) onto ‘un schéma de la structure du sujet au terme du procès psychotique’ (‘a diagram for the structure of the subject at the end-term of the psychotic process’). Where the R-diagram was concerned with representing ‘les lignes de conditionnement du *perceptum*, autrement dit de l’objet, en tant que ces lignes circonscrivent le champ de la réalité’ (‘the lines conditioning the *perceptum*, in other words the object, in so far as these lines circumscribe the field of reality’) (§III.3), its successor diagram schematises findings derived from scrutiny of ‘l’apparition du phénomène dans la réalité’ (‘the apparition of the phenomenon in reality’) (§IV.3) as this features in the *Denkwürdigkeiten eines Nervenkranken* by Daniel Paul Schreber (Leipzig: Oswald Mutze, 1903). The I-diagram presents a peculiar ‘distorsion’, in relation to its predecessor, but also in relation to the major axes onto which a basic hyperbolic curve is by convention plotted:

Pointons ici seulement dans la double courbe de l’hyperbole qu’il dessine, au glissement près de ces deux courbes le long d’une des droites directrices de leur asymptote, le lien rendu sensible, dans la double asymptote qui unit le moi délirant à l’autre divin, de leur divergence imaginaire dans l’espace et dans le temps à la convergence idéale de leur conjonction.

[Let us point out here in the double curve of the hyperbola that the diagram traces, only with a sliding of the two curves along one of the straight lines that direct their asymptote, the bond that is rendered *sensible*, in the double asymptote that unites the delusional ego to the divine other, from their imaginary divergence in space and time to the ideal convergence of their conjunction.]

What is here casually termed *glissement* denotes a major rupture in the usual Cartesian coordinate system onto which the hyperbolic function is plotted, shaping the two characteristic curvilinear branches. While the central upright axis has here merely been skewed out of the orthogonal, the horizontal axis has been broken in two and widely misaligned (furnishing perhaps the referent behind a later allusion, in §IV.5, regarding a

*désaxement* of the relationship with the big Other). If the I-diagram is indeed to be assumed to derive its generation from a standard hyperbolic curve, what would ordinarily correspond to the  $x$  axis has undergone diremption such that its positive and negative coordinates no longer lie on a single line. There is no origin at ordered pair (0, 0) as there would be in the Cartesian plane, since the two sundered halves have effectively slid – upwards on the left, downwards on the right – to bring the two branches into closer proximity. It should be noted, however, that the diagram is never presented by its author as dependent upon a mathematical generation, conventional or otherwise, and is instead discussed solely in its geometric connection with the R-diagram.

The first move in this respect in the ‘Question préliminaire’ is to plot the coordinates from Schreber’s *Memoirs* directly onto the R-diagram (§IV.5), in anticipation and preparation of the supervening construction of the I-diagram. Having stated the case for a reconsideration of the ‘symbolic solidarity’ of the trio of ‘Creator’, ‘Creature’, and ‘Created’ (§IV.3), a trajectory between Creator and Created is first established, where ‘Schreber voit même les transmissions signifiantes se conduire le long de fils (*Fäden*), qui matérialisent le trajet parabolique selon lequel elles entrent dans son crâne par l’occiput’ [‘Schreber even sees signifying transmissions being conducted along filaments, which materialise the parabolic trajectory by which they enter the back of his skull’]. The sentence is a paraphrase of the following passage from the *Memoirs*:

I wish to add some points concerning visions (visual hallucinations). The first is that the filaments aiming at my head and apparently originating from the sun or other distant stars do *not* come towards me in a straight line but in a kind of circle or parabola, similar perhaps to the way the chariots in the games of old Romans drove around the *Meta*, or a special variety of skittles where the ball fastened to a string is first thrown around a post before it strikes the ninepins. I clearly saw this circle or parabola in my head (with my eyes open in the sky itself); the filaments which function as carriers for the voices do not as a rule come from the direction of where the sun actually is in the sky (although they issue at least partly from it) but from a more or less opposite direction. (*Memoirs of My Nervous Illness*, translated by I. Macalpine and R. A. Hunter, Harvard, 1955, pp. 275–6)

This ‘parabolic’ trajectory is figured in the I-diagram as the curvilinear branch running from *M* to *I*. It is modified to accommodate spatial and temporal convergence towards its asymptotes, this being acknowledged in the ‘Question préliminaire’ as a borrowing from Freud: ‘d’une telle forme Freud a eu l’intuition, puisqu’il a introduit lui-même le terme: *asymptotisch* à ce propos’ [‘such a form was intuited by Freud, since he himself introduced the term *asymptotisch* in this regard’] (§IV.9). Indeed, in the ‘Psycho-Analytic Notes on An Autobiographical Case of Paranoia’, Freud sets down the following conclusive remark:

Emasculation is no longer a disgrace but comes to ‘accord with the World Order’, entering into a grand cosmic scheme of things, and serving the purpose of a renewed creation of the human world after its demise. ‘New Humans born of the Schreber spirit’ will honour as their ancestor this man who thought himself the object of persecution. A way out is thereby found that satisfies both sides in the conflict. The ego is recompensed by the megalomania, while the wishful fantasy of femininity has made its way through, become acceptable. The struggle and the

illness can cease. The only thing is that the thus strengthened sense of the claims of reality makes him postpone the solution from the present to some distant future, making do, so to speak, with an asymptotic wish-fulfilment. (Translated by Andrew Webber in *The Schreber Case*, London: Penguin, 2003, pp. 37–8)

Furthermore, where Schreber likens the focus of the parabolic movement to one of the *metae* standing at either end of the Roman *spina*, the I-diagram shows this line to be conceived of as ‘contournant le trou creusé dans le champ du signifiant par la forclusion du Nom-du-père’ [‘circumventing the hole hollowed out in the field of the signifier by the foreclosure of the Name-of-the-Father’] (§IV.5), this being the focal point: (P<sub>0</sub>).

Schreber’s parabola is converted into a hyperbola by the addition of a second curvilinear in the left-hand portion of the diagram. A hyperbolic function, or some sort of non-specific simulation thereof, has thus generated two segments of a curve held apart by a point of discontinuity. The left-hand segment, here denoted as a ‘point tournant’ (§IV.9), also possesses two asymptotes and a focus: the points *i* and *m* denote the sites of infinite convergence (the *appeaux* of imaginary capture where each of the branches ‘take root’), while the line turns around another hole (Φ<sub>0</sub>), wherein ‘soul-murder has installed death’ (§IV.7).

Briefly to digress into a more speculative indication, it may be recalled that when Schreber first describes the act of *Seelenmord*, he makes mention of the rhetorical hyperbole of souls, thus plausibly adducing a factor behind Lacan’s recourse to the geometric hyperbola model:

One might even raise the question whether perhaps all the talk of voices about somebody having committed soul murder can be explained by the souls (rays) deeming it impermissible that a person’s nervous system should be influenced by another’s to the extent of imprisoning his will power, such as occurs during hypnosis; in order to stress forcefully that this was a malpractice it was called ‘soul murder’, the souls for lack of a better term, using a term already in current usage, and because of their innate tendency to express themselves hyperbolically. (*Memoirs*, op. cit., p. 9)

This influence exerted by a pseudo-hypnotic effect accounts for the selection in the ‘Question préliminaire’ of the term *appeau*, a call-mimicking device used for hunting wildfowl, which also chimes with Schreber’s descriptions of miraculously produced ‘talking birds’ who utter ‘senseless phrases learnt by rote’ and who ‘fall for similarity of sound’ (*Memoirs*, op. cit., p. 190–96). Imaginary capture is thus not merely visual but auditory also, effected by means of the acoustic image, and even tactile (*à-peau*) given the finery Schreber was wont to don.

Having established the main lines of the new configuration following their distortion from the geometric points of the R-diagram, the area that previously corresponded to the circumscribed field of the real object now appears as a double sector, divided by the central slanting axis: to the right of the axis is the zone that is infringed upon by the curve along which are produced the ‘remaniements excentriques’ of the symbolic; to the left, the zone infringed upon by the curve along which plays out an imaginary that falls ‘under the sign of the creature’ (§IV.9). This double-sector, identified in the I-diagram by vertical linear hatching, is taken up by the entire *épaisseur* of the ‘real



creature’, thereby implying some degree of continuity between the field of the real object in the R-diagram and Schreber’s state of an objectalised subject; one who has not only dropped into the real at a moment of catastrophe, but who has found there ‘les conditions sous lesquelles la réalité s’est restaurée’ [‘the conditions in which reality has been restored’]. This *épaisseur* is said to interpose between ‘the narcissistic jouissance of his image’ at the vertex of the left-hand branch, and the ‘alienation of speech in which the Ego Ideal has taken the place of the Other’, this being marked on the diagram by the capital I alongside ‘Parole où se maintient le créé’ [‘Speech, in which the Created One is maintained’]. The enduring *épaisseur* is thus an ‘îlot’, a place of consistency and constancy, held in place by what Schreber describes as a ‘tying-to-celestial-bodies’:

When this looser form of fastening seemed not to afford sufficient defense against my power of attraction and the danger of dissolving in my body, a more resistant form was chosen which was called ‘tying-to-celestial-bodies’ [*Anbinden an Erden*]. As the expression denotes, a tying to some distant stars occurred which from then on excluded the possibility of a complete dissolution in my body in consequence of my power of attraction; on the contrary withdrawal was safeguarded through the mechanical fastening so established. (*Memoirs*, op. cit., p. 122)

It is noted in the ‘Question préliminaire’ that, ‘Lors de l’acmé de la dissolution imaginaire, le sujet a montré dans son apperception délirante un recours singulier à ce critère de la réalité, qui est de revenir toujours à la même place’ [‘At the height of the imaginary dissolution, the subject showed in his delusional apperception a singular recourse to this criterion of reality, which is to return always to the same place’]. Schreber’s account runs thus:

I realise that such a conception, according to which one must think of my body on our earth as connected to other stars by stretched out nerves, is almost incomprehensible to other people considering the immense distances involved; for me however as a result of my daily experiences over the last six years there can be no doubt as to the objective reality of this relation. (*Memoirs*, op. cit., p. 123)

This insistence on a peculiar reality grounded in the real explains the qualification of the diagrammatised hyperbola as tracing a ‘lien rendu sensible’, with its Kantian nuance of a *mundus sensibilis*, a tangible yet unintelligible world that is essentially a ‘thickness’ or ‘density’, the limits of which correspond to the limits of the Creature himself.

Yet this *épaisseur* is fully bounded neither as a domain nor as a range, for it bears four outlets, at *i*, *m*, I and M, each to be taken as a ‘point at infinity’: the transsexualist jouissance at *i* (for *ideal ego*), a state of voluptuousness that arises from contemplating ‘sans cesse’ the transvested mirror image; which at the other extremity of the curve leads towards the mutual relation of a blessedness-of-the-soul in *m* (for *moi*), ‘un au-delà du monde, qui s’accomode fort bien d’un ajournement indéfini de la réalisation de son but’ [‘a zone beyond the world, which is altogether accommodating of an indefinite deferment of the realisation of its goal’]; while to the right of the central axis, the ‘Created One’ maintained at the capital I (of ideal identification) takes up the place in Paternity (P) that has been ‘laissée vacante de la loi’ [‘left unoccupied by law’]; just as the place of the Creator is marked by the perfidy (§IV.6, in reference to *Memoirs*, p. 205) of a

fundamental and enduring *liegen lassen*, a leaving in the lurch ‘où paraît se dénuder [...] l’absence qui a permis de se construire à la primordiale symbolisation M de la Mère’ [‘where appears to be denuded the absence that enabled him to construct himself out of the primordial symbolisation M of the Mother’].

The present digest of the material covered in section IV of the ‘Question préliminaire’ aims not to be compendious but merely to highlight those elements that may appertain to an unspecified application of the hyperbola model. At risk of attributing autonomy to the I-diagram in excess of what may verifiably inhere therein, it can even so be admitted that its central slating axis, which would correspond to the excepted case of  $x = 0$  where the hyperbolic function is excluded, is also the main axis along which Schreber’s ego is bound to the Creator, so figuring the two temporal extremes of exception from the phallic function: the primordial dropping that foreclosed access to the phallic universe, the effects of which persist in the fact of God’s progressive retirement (the upward exponential movement towards infinity), and at the opposite extremity the plot which would leave Schreber newly ‘forsaken’ (p. 63) were it not for its ultimate transformation into what is accepted as ‘un compromis raisonnable, dès lors parti pris irrémédiable, et motif futur d’une rédemption intéressant l’univers’ [‘a reasonable compromise, thereafter a binding commitment, and future grounds for an atonement concerning the whole universe’] (§IV.6; Macalpine translates ‘*aus Vernunftgründen*’ as ‘*common sense*’ and ‘*nicht ändern*’ as ‘cannot change’, *Memoirs*, pp. 164 & 165n), namely that he should become the ‘future ancestor’ of a race who will venerate him as their *Nationalheiliger* (p. 113). The case of exception that excludes the phallic function is thus projected simultaneously, up and down the unbroken axis, into a prospective dimension and a lapsed one.

*y démontrer*. The I-diagram is presented in the ‘Question préliminaire’ in guarded terms: ‘Il vaudrait pourtant mieux ce schéma de le mettre au panier, s’il devait, à l’instar de tant d’autres, aider quiconque à oublier dans une image intuitive l’analyse qui la supporte’ [‘Still, it would be better to cast this diagram into the waste-basket were it to avail anyone, as so many others do, in forgetfully passing over its underpinning analysis to an intuitive image’] (§IV.9). What it might achieve by way of demonstration is always liable to slip into a *monstration* that will require, even as it evades, further efforts of transmission, and perhaps indeed Lacan deemed the conceptual framework of the fourth section of his 1958 article to carry potential for a more formally developed account of Schreber’s psychosis; this in any case would be one way of conceiving the implicit promise of the closing words: ‘Nous laisserons là pour le moment cette question préliminaire ...’ [‘We shall leave at that for the time being this preliminary question ...’]. The raised expectation could be comprehended as being strung out yet further in ‘L’étourdit’, but this would be to overlook the return movement to what is already inscribed in the diagram and the demonstrative properties it harbours, as asserted in 1958:

Ce schéma démontre que l’état terminal de la psychose ne représente pas le chaos figé où aboutit la retombée d’un séisme, mais bien plutôt cette mise au jour de lignes d’efficience, qui fait parler quand il s’agit d’un problème de solution élégante. (§VI.9)

[This diagram demonstrates that the terminal state of the psychosis represents not the frozen chaos left in the fallout from a quake, but much rather the bringing to light of lines of efficiency, which gives rise to speech when an elegantly solved problem is at issue.]

Here, ‘qui fait parler’ alludes to Schreber’s emergence from his period of ‘almost total silence’ (*Memoirs*, p. 117n) throughout which he ‘kept silent and suffered’ (p. 140), then to address the *Memoirs* to his wife and circle of close acquaintances in earnest hope of ‘some understanding’ (p. 15). The demonstrative lines of efficiency are thus first and foremost those that Schreber lays out for the readers whom he holds to be his interlocutors, and who are inscribed on the I-diagram at *a* and *a'*.

*dans ce qu’il y a de sardonique*. The French ‘sardonique’ and its outmoded synonym ‘sardonien’ are derived from *σαρδόνιος* and *σαρδάνιος*, an antique reference to Sardinia and its native species of *Oenanthe crocata*, a tubular water-dropwort used by the Punic people in lethal potions that produced in the corpse a rictus grimace, hence the appellation *risus sardonicus*. The earliest attestation is in the *Odyssey*, where Odysseus is depicted as inwardly smiling in a scornful or perhaps bitter manner, *μείδησε δὲ θυμῷ σαρδάνιον μάλα τοῖον* (20.301–2; for an overview of the proverbial use in antiquity see Sergio Ribichini’s study, *Il Riso Sardonico. Storia di un Proverbio Antico*, Sassari: Delfino, 2000). Conclusive botanical identification of the plant is comparatively recent (2009): cf. G. Appendino et al., ‘Polyacetylenes from Sardinian *Oenanthe fistulosa*: A Molecular Clue to *risus sardonicus*’ in *Journal of Natural Products*, 72(5):962–65; in which the authors note that it is ‘still a cause of often fatal poisonings’. Bloch and von Wartburg’s *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue française*, which as so often here stands as a likely source-text, cites Ambroise Paré in 1579 describing a potion that ‘rend les hommes insensés, induisant vne conuulsion et distension des nerfs telle que les léures se retirent, en sorte qu’il semble que le malade rie, dont est venu en prouerbe, *Ris Sardonien* pour vn ris malheureux et mortel’ in *Œuvres complètes*, Vol. 3, Book 23, Ch. XLIV, ‘De la venenosité de certaines plantes’, Paris: Ballière, 1841, p. 334.

Schreber’s acceptance of the redemptive pact whereby he would be transformed into the woman-begetter of a new race would occur subsequent to his physical demise. In the meantime, he is

often forced in self-defense to mock God with a loud voice; I simply have to do this at times to convince that distant place which tortures me so often unbearably with attacks of bellowing, with nonsensical twaddle of voices, etc., that one is not dealing with a dement, but with a human being in full command of the situation. But I must stress again that all this is only an episode which I trust will come to an end at the latest with my death. (*Memoirs*, op. cit., p. 289)

Whereupon he again marks his position of sardonic exception in humanity: ‘only I, and no other human being, have the right to mock God’.

While for Schreber his derisive and deathly jeering is prompted by God’s failure to grasp the corporeal inflictions entailed by the very feminine transformation that He has willed, there can be no doubt that this delineation in ‘L’étourdit’ of the sardonic as the

chief phenomenological correlate of the ‘pousse-à-la-femme’ encompasses a far wider clinical context than the single example of Schreber. Observations on the association between florid psychotic manifestations and grotesque or apparently pressured recourse to male-to-female cross-dressing accompanied by catoptric captivation are well attested in the psychiatric literature, e.g. Dr Paul Abely’s report from the 1920s on a patient on his ward:

On one morning’s visit, we were not a little surprised to find him crouching in a corner, horribly made up, his face covered with plaster he had torn from the dormitory wall, his eyes bistre from the lead of his writing pencil, and his lips horribly tinted with a red substance we were unable to identify, perchance a lipstick he had cadged from a female visitor the day before in the visiting room. There was nothing joyful about this carnivalesque Pierrot; he looked worried, morose and frankly hostile. Thereafter, he wrote countless letters to Parisian perfumeries requesting a motley array of beauty products. When his mirror was removed, he would try to look at himself in the windowpanes or in a brimming cup of herbal tea. (‘Le signe du miroir dans les psychoses et plus spécialement dans la démence précoce’ in *Annales medico-psychologiques*, 1930, 12(1):31)

However, broadening yet further the phenomenal scope of the sardonic grimace to include what in some quarters is alleged as the grimly inauthentic *pasticcio* getup of transitioning or post-transition male-to-female transgender subjects with no apparent comorbid psychopathology (cf. Germaine Greer’s ferocious ‘pantomime dames’ moniker and the riposte from Jacqueline Rose in the *London Review of Books*, 5 May 2016) would surely be excessive.

*l’effet de*. An effect arises as the most prominent lineament of the development, prior to any evocation of a cause, the latter emerging, when it does, only from subsequent inference, on the far side of a causal gap. One of the recurrent conceptual touchstones of the third Sainte-Anne Seminar is Kant’s 1763 essay, *Versuch den Begriff der negativen Größen in die Weltweisheit einzuführen*, in which the philosopher attempts a reframing, and by some accounts a revision, of Hume’s sceptical conception of causality (set out in *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*), all of which would be revisited two decades later in the *Prolegomena*. In the early *Essay*, Kant draws a distinction between two different groundings of causal opposition:

The first kind of ground I call the logical ground, for the relation of the ground to its consequence can be understood logically. In other words, it can be clearly understood by appeal to the law of identity. The second kind of ground, however, I call the real ground, for this relation belongs, presumably, to my true concepts, but the manner of the relation can in no wise be judged. (Translated by David Walford & Ralf Meerbote in *Theoretical philosophy, 1755–1770*, Cambridge University Press, 1992, p. 239.)

Thus, in the latter case, the consequence is not identical with the ground. This leads Kant to the conclusion that ‘the relation of a real ground to something, which is either posited or cancelled by it, cannot be expressed by a judgement; it can only be expressed by a concept’ (*Theoretical philosophy*, op. cit., p. 241). In the later vocabulary of the

*Prolegomena*, this would be rephrased to read that such positing cannot amount to an analytic judgement, since the concept of the effect cannot be contained in the concept of the cause. Kant's 1766 essay *Träume eines Geistersehers* will even assert that 'such relations can only be derived from experience', this being so 'for our rule of our reason only governs the drawing of comparisons [*Vergleichung*] in respect of *identity* and *contradiction*' (ibid., p. 356). These perspectives would not meet a concise presentation in Lacan's teaching until mid-way through the second lesson of the eleventh Seminar:

cause is a concept that, in the last resort, is unanalysable – impossible to understand by reason – if indeed the rule of reason, the *Vernunftregel*, is always some *Vergleichung*, or equivalent – and that there remains in the function of cause a certain gap, a term used by Kant in the *Prolegomena*. (Alan Sheridan's rendering; lesson of 22 January 1964)

So, while Schreber's 'elegant solution' may by his own assertion (underscored by Lacan in the 'Question préliminaire') arise '*aus Vernunftgründen*', the causal agent does not necessarily share the same grounding in reason.

*pousse-à-la-femme*. The French *pousse* is deverbal, from *pousser*, and largely cognate with its English derivative 'push', embracing the various significations of 'thrust', 'propel', 'drive', 'press', 'impel', 'jostle', 'steer', &c., but also spanning the botanical (and occasionally anatomical) signification of 'grow', with the noun form covering the same range as the Germanically derived 'sprout' or 'shoot'. A reader of French psychoanalytical literature will recognise the close proximity to *poussée*, which term conventionally renders the drive-component that Freud labelled *Drang* ('thrust' in Strachey's *Standard Edition*; 'pressure' in Graham Frankland's translation 'Drives and Their Fates' in *The Unconscious*, London: Penguin, 2005, p. 17). The preposition *à* is determined by the lexeme *pousse*, denoting the direction or bearing of the movement, but a more whimsical employment of the French *à la* form (for: *à la mode de*) is not to be discounted, especially given the suppositional sense of a sham or feigned womanliness.

Schreber writes that in his opinion 'the tendency innate in the Order of the World' is that 'a human being ("a seer of spirits") must under certain circumstances be "unmanned" (transformed into a woman) once he has entered into indissoluble contact with divine nerves (rays)' (p. 53). This *Verweiblichung* is more fully described with overtones of what in the psychiatric literature would commonly be classified as Koro syndrome:

This process of unmanning [*Entmannung*] consisted in the (external) male genitals (scrotum and penis) being retracted into the body and the internal sexual organs being at the same time transformed into the corresponding female sexual organs, a process which might have been completed in a sleep lasting hundreds of years, because the skeleton (pelvis, etc.) had also to be changed. (*Memoirs*, p. 60).

Schreber claims at first to have 'twice experienced (for a short time) the miracle of unmanning' on his own body (p. 61), and these episodes pave the way for a plot to hand over his corpse to another human being 'for sexual misuse' (p. 63) 'in the manner of a female harlot' (p. 66). Following the two experiences, he was left with 'a thing between

my legs which hardly resembled at all a normally formed male organ' (p. 65n), and thereafter 'received the impression of a female body' or a body 'with a feminine stamp', trembling 'with feminine anxiety' (p. 124–5), until, following acceptance of the aforementioned compromise, he will admit to having 'wholeheartedly inscribed the cultivation of femininity on my banner' (p. 164). The compromise entails that henceforth, 'as soon as I am alone with God, if I may so express myself, I must continually or at least at certain times, strive to give divine rays the impression of a woman in the height of sexual delight' (p. 249).

In the 'Question préliminaire', the fact of a foreclosure of the Name-of-the-Father ( $P_0$ ) in the field of the symbolic leads to an exclusion of the phallic function across the range of effects by which *jouissance* may be absorbed and rationalised in the imaginary ( $\Phi_0$ ).

Sans doute la divination de l'inconscient a-t-elle très tôt averti le sujet que, faute de pouvoir être le phallus qui manque à la mère, il lui reste la solution d'être la femme qui manque aux hommes. (§IV.6).

[ 'Doubtless the divination of the unconscious alerted the subject very early on that, unable to be the phallus that the mother lacks, there remains to him the solution of being the woman that men lack.]

This indication predates the maxim 'La femme n'existe pas', first aired on 17 February 1971, but a push towards the exceptional case of *La femme* as designated by the definite article is here formalised in the particular initial solution it took for Schreber, in advance of the 'elegant solution' that would arise from the delusional elaboration recorded in the *Memoirs*. But a far more widely pitched paradigm is at stake here, where in psychosis the exceptionable, and indeed the exceptional, is promoted to the rank of the privileged exemption, marked out in this instance by the signifier of the definite article. In this sense, psychotic recourse to the 'banner' of femininity stands as a last-ditch rationalisation of the pervasive non-phallic *jouissance*, the subject falsely availing himself of the reckoning that 'all that is not man is woman', that is to say, of the complement to the very misreckoning that Lacan holds up to impugnation. It is in accordance with this logic that the *pousse-à-la-femme* can be observed as much in an anatomical female as an anatomical male.

Lastly, Claude Duprat posits a textual provenance for the coinage *pousse-à-la-femme* in Antonin Artaud's correspondence with Jacques Rivière (the *Cahiers de Rodez*, April-May 1946, in *Œuvres Complètes*, Tome XXI, Paris: Gallimard, p. 219: 'L'être ne commence pas par l'âme, il se fait par la forme d'un corps principe que j'anime peu à peu et pousse jusqu'à la femme', though the subjective investment of 'j'anime [...] et pousse' is clearly at variance with the connotation of subjugation and sufferance here so firmly pressed in 'L'étourdit'.

*qui se spécifie du premier quanteur*. The claimed specification is decidedly wry in tone, for bearing neither a stated value of affirmative or negative, nor an articulation with such atomic formula as would stipulate a function, the quantifier  $\exists x$  specifies very little. This delicate irony has been lost on a train of commentators who have dutifully supplemented the existential quantifier with a negating bar, thereby stretching the referent into the

argument:  $\overline{\exists x}.\overline{\Phi x}$ . (e.g. Christian Fierens in the 2002 *Lecture de L'étourdit*, Paris: Harmattan: 'This double effect is first of all specified from the first quantifier (namely, starting from the third formula)'; Alain Deniau in the 2006 'Du fantasme au pousse-à-la-femme, la psychose' in *Che vuoi ?* 25:63–75: 'est ainsi une négation du premier quanteur'; Tom Dalzell in the 2009 'Schreber in *L'Étourdit*' in *The Letter* 41:117: 'The context here is Lacan's discussing the first and second feminine formulae (on the right)', adding 'the third formula – that is, the first feminine formula'; Nicolas Guérin in the 2012 'Contiguïté des jouissances et travail de l'inconscient' in *Psychanalyse* 25:77–86: 'et précisément du côté du quanteur nié'; and Colette Soler in the session of 7 May 2014 from *Humanisation*, translated by B. Farrow and H. d'Alascio, London/New York: Routledge, 2018, p. 82: 'the effect of the first quantifier: there does not exist any "dire que non"'). Such bias in the commentaries fails to make explicit that, while the argument  $\overline{\exists x}.\overline{\Phi x}$  may indeed be sustained as a formalisation of 'La femme n'existe pas' (this being indicated further along in Lacan's oral teaching, in the lesson of 11 June 1974), the *pousse* at stake here in 'L'étourdit' moves unambiguously towards *La femme*, and not towards her inexistence. To assume *pousse* to denote a transit from the left-hand moiety of the table of sexuation to the right-hand moiety is to lean on the further assumption that the two moieties correspond to independent and complementary states of manhood and womanhood. While the argument  $\overline{\exists x}.\overline{\Phi x}$  is open to description of the ultimate destination of a transsexualist impulsion enacted in the real, with surgical or other means bringing the subject to the untenable position of a feminine exception to the phallic function, it does not account for the impelling and enthralling mirage that draws the subject in, and which is nowhere formalised on the right-hand side of the foursquare scheme of sexuation.

: *ayant bien précisé*. To uncover what is specified by the existential quantifier the reader is more intently referred to material developed elsewhere, and again this can only be the detailed discussion of Schreber's *Memoirs*, 'auxquels nous avons consacré tant de soins' ['to which we have devoted so much care'] (*Autres écrits*, op. cit., p. 216), in the third Seminar at Sainte-Anne and its synopsis in the 'Question préliminaire'.

*que c'est de l'irruption*. The 'triggering' that was decisive for the evolution of Schreber's psychosis, occurring on 8 or 9 November 1893, a month after having taken up office as Senatspräsident to the Superior Court in Dresden (*Memoirs*, pp. 46–48), is formalised in the 'Question préliminaire' as resulting from an identification 'par quoi le sujet a assumé le désir de la mère' ['through which the subject took fully on board the desire of the mother'], and which 'déclenche, d'être ébranlé, la dissolution du trépied imaginaire' (§IV.7) ['triggers, by dint of being shaken, the dissolution of the imaginary tripod']. This 'trépied imaginaire' is what previously in the text features as the 'ternaire imaginaire' (§III.6), namely the triangle  $\varphi, i, m$ , wherein the ego and the specular image are held under the sway of phallic signification. What in the synoptic article is designated in terms of 'être ébranlé' corresponds to what in the Seminar suffers a 'mise en branle', there bearing expressly upon the mechanism of repression, which in this instance falters and gives rise to a 'return in the real' (lesson of 11 January 1956). The dissolution of the triangular scheme is tantamount to a profound reshaping of Schreber's 'solution' to the unsustainable position of being the mother's phallus, namely that of being 'The woman'.

For this solution, posited as arising ‘very early on’ in the subject’s history, to find the conditions of its dominance in the delusional system of late adulthood recorded on the I-diagram as the field *i, a, m*, a specific rupture of the imaginary fabric must have occurred, implicating the bursting-in of an element as foreign to the subject’s initial triangular scheme as it is to his fragile points of symbolic anchorage.

*d’Un-père*. In cautious and lightly apologetic mode, Freud speculated on the prodromes to Schreber’s nervous collapse of November 1894 in the following terms:

Our lack of knowledge as to the psychic content of the first illness prevents us from getting further with this. Perhaps a tender affection for the doctor was left over from this condition, which, for reasons unknown to us, was now heightened to the form of an erotic inclination. A dismayed repudiation of the feminine fantasy, which was still kept on an impersonal level, followed immediately, a real ‘masculine protest’ [...]. In the severe psychosis that is now to break out, however, the feminine fantasy continued to impose itself, and we need to correct the paranoid uncertainty of Schreber’s way of expressing himself only slightly in order to guess that the patient feared sexual abuse on the part of none other than the doctor. (*The Schreber Case*, op. cit.)

Meanwhile, the first-hand account of the renewed contact with Flechsig, nine years after the first stay in the Leipzig asylum, reads thus in the *Memoirs*:

A long interview followed in which I must say Professor Flechsig developed a remarkable eloquence which affected me deeply. He spoke of the advances made in psychiatry since my first illness, of newly discovered sleeping drugs, etc., and gave me hope of delivering me of the whole illness through one prolific sleep. (*Memoirs*, p. 48)

This is from the translation by Macalpine, who in a footnote to the ‘Question préliminaire’ is scolded for leaning too heavily in her commentary on ‘delivering me’, which turns out to be an interpolation of her own concoction bearing no cognate in the German text, and on ‘prolific’, which bends the sense of *ausgiebig* in the direction of her hypothesis, ‘le sollicitant extrêmement’ [‘straining it in the extreme’] writes Lacan, doubtless smarting still at having been taken in sufficiently to build the peroration of the penultimate lesson of his third Seminar upon this exaggerated rendition. A decade later, however, on the occasion of the first French translation of the *Memoirs*, the focus falls less on the conjectured content of Flechsig’s eloquent speech than on the very zeal of deigning to take full charge of a subject and tender promise of psychical repair. Amplifying the observation already voiced in the Seminar that the beginnings of delusion lie in the Other’s taking, and holding, the subjective initiative (cf. the lesson of 11 April 1956), Lacan issues a word of caution to the clinician:

il ressort que comme sujet il n’est pas étranger au lien qui le met pour Schreber, sous le nom de Flechsig, en position d’objet d’érotomanie mortifiante, et que la place où il se tient dans la photographie sensationnelle dont s’ouvre le livre d’Ida Macalpine, soit devant l’image murale géante d’un cerveau, a en l’affaire un sens. (*Autres écrits*, op. cit., p. 217)



[it transpires that as a subject he is no stranger to the bond that places him for Schreber, under the name of Flechsig, in the object position of a sort of mortifying erotomania, and that the place in which he holds himself in the sensational photograph that opens Ida Macalpine's book, in front of a gigantic mural picture of a brain, carries a meaning in this affair.]

The allusion is to the closing remarks of the 'Question préliminaire': if Flechsig did not manage to 'suppléer au vide soudain aperçu de la *Verwerfung* inaugural' ['supplement the suddenly perceived void of the inaugural *Verwerfung*'], it was because he had already positioned himself by his own initiative as a subject who ought to be able to provide the stopgap, even the panacea, to the imaginary dissolution, failing throughout to countenance the chasm in the symbolic that lay beyond it.

Indulging the subject's appeal can open the path to the worst of possible outcomes, as foreshadowed in the cases discussed by Jean-Marc Alby in his medical thesis, *Contribution à l'étude du transsexualisme* (Paris Faculty of Medicine, 1956), in which Lacan flags up

l'insistance si singulière, que montrent les sujets de ces observations, à obtenir pour leurs exigences les plus radicalement rectificantes l'autorisation, voire si l'on peut dire la main-à-la-pâte, de leur père. (§IV.9)

[such a peculiar insistence shown by the subjects of these observations when it comes to obtaining, for their most radically rectifying requirements, the authorisation and indeed, so to speak, the mucking-in, of their father.]

The agent at stake here, while he may coincide with the subject's actual (biological and/or legal) father, is above all a 'real father' as defined contemporaneously in the Seminar as the one to whom is deferred the prominent function of what occurs in the castration complex (lesson of 13 March 1957), namely the symbolic dispossession of an imaginary object, the phallus.

*comme sans raison*. Just as the unfurling sentence seemed to be leading only further away from the thematic of the previous paragraphs, reaching deeper into the associated symptomatology of paranoid psychosis, the word-pair 'sans raison' repeats directly that of two paragraphs above to perform a duplication unprecedented in 'L'étourdit', which otherwise eschews so insistently any such reissue of concatenated signifiers, most often resorting to *exergasia* to give run to a theme without dulling its delivery. The conspicuously duplicated pair thus forms the tufting tie (*point de capiton*) between this single-sentence paragraph and the preceding content of the subsection, and surely harbours the secret behind the setting of this consideration of the *pousse-à-la-femme* within the more extensive development of the right-hand moiety of the foursquare scheme. Previously, 'sans raison' denoted a conceivable provenance of the non-existent exception to the phallic function in the term of the impossible:  $\exists x.\overline{\Phi x}$  equated with an articulation of impossibility, thus securing an oddment of the real. Here, in an irruption that in no lesser manner stands to no reason, that is no less devoid of 'common difference', the impossible emerges as a return of the real, not formalised but instantiated in a real father whose dramatic figuration is decidedly not *aus Vernunftgründen*. The

obscure conceptual association between womanhood and A-father is the fact of being 'more real' than what is conditioned by the possible and necessary modes of manhood, of which rational universe the bounds are breached by this enigmatic resurgence.

, *que se précipite ici l'effet*. Positioned causally with respect to the *pousse* that arises as an effect, the irruption of A-father stems from the 'real ground' that Kant posits in the *Versuch* as a second order of causal opposition. 'Precipitation' of the effect denotes both the pressured temporality of the conjuncture and a signifying materialisation of what previously was ephemeral and intangible, as previously articulated in 'Lituraterre' of the year before in a passage that figures the nature of the signifier: 'soit le semblant, par excellence, si c'est de sa rupture qu'en pleut, effet à ce qu'il s'en précipite, ce qui était matière en suspension' (*Autres écrits*, p. 17) ['this being semblance, par excellence, if it is with its bursting that rains down therefrom, an effect in that it is precipitated therefrom, what was formerly suspended matter']. The recurrence of a threefold articulation of rupture, effect and precipitation here in 'L'étourdit' is exegetically compelling, but can the advection/percolation model of 'Lituraterre' be so easily transposed to this passage? Is the existence of the real father a 'matière en suspension' for a subject who has yet to be called to the place in his unconscious where the paternal function lies unoccupied? Or, to turn the question around, given that the existence of at-least-one who says no to the phallic function belongs to the modality of necessity, when this existence is not accounted for by the father function, shall then the subject find, sooner or later, his non-phallic jouissance materialised there *necessarily* as though by precipitation?

*ressenti comme de forçage*. The sensation of a forcing here stands in urgent contrast to the self-determination of the previous paragraph. Contrary to what has been asserted elsewhere, neither *La femme* nor the *pousse* that motions thereto can be sustainably correlated with a subjectifiable mode of jouissance inscribed in the formulae of sexuation, and need it be added that the recently mooted claims for the variations of the Schreberian solution as facets of a multifarious paradigmatic stabilisation (never once tested out, theoretically or clinically, by the authors who brandish it as promotional placard and rallying cry) meets its contradiction in 1958 in the simple observation that signifier (this compassing the full domain and range of voiced speech on the right-hand branch of the hyperbola) and signified (compassing the full domain and range of the imaginisation of jouissance on the left-hand branch) become stabilised only in a metaphor unhesitatingly qualified as *delusional* (§V)? Try as one might, the depathologising of psychotic transsexualism will not be discharged by switching labels, proffering such hollow platitudes as 'self-invention' in the stead of delusional certitude, 'creative solution' in the stead of radical corporeal rectification, and 'sinthomatic identification' in the stead of the cenesthopathy of an obscure pressurisation.

, *au champ d'un Autre*. In the same way that the definite article prefixing the Name-of-the-Father supervenes transfigured, in view of its foreclosure, at the moment of triggering in the indefinite article of A-father, while by reverse token the singular subject issuing from the fourth formula in the foursquare scheme of sexuation is held aloof in favour of the capitalised definite article of 'The Woman', the article that customarily prefixes the 'big' Other here shifts into the indefinite, denoting a particularised entity distinct from

that Alterity which supports, projectively, belief in a shared (non-personal) tutelary avatar, providential locus, or authoritative seat. In the place of the Other now stands the Ego-ideal, or ‘the Created One’ in Lacan’s scheme (a rare interpolation, and not a citation from the source-text of the *Memoirs*), the particularised ideal resulting from an elaboration that follows not the lawless sequence of a *creating* subject, but a lawlike sequence, from which the law of the phallic universal is exempt, and of which the rule was set at the outset: there is one who naysays the function  $\Phi x$ . The subject is thus envisaged as a *created* consequent.

*à se penser*. Quite possibly the most fugitive term in the paragraph, this reflexive infinitive replicates the conundrum of agency met above in the pronominal conjugation of the same lexeme (‘suivons-le à ce qu’il se pense’): who, or what, is here the agentive thinker? Can this Other think itself, in a properly reflexive or even autocausative manner, when in this very clause it will be qualified as foreign to all meaning? Alternatively, though less syntactically plausible given the punctuation, could the *à* bind back to *Un-père*, matching the triggering agency to an object to be thought over? Or is it rather that the Other is to be thought through by a yet unspecified agent, so implying an anticausative use of the verb: the subject of the psychosis (who not once is grammatically denoted in this sentence) or conceivably whichever participant whose implication in the clinical, domestic or legal contexts of the subject might entail some reckoning of the semantic properties of the field into which the latter is being further drawn? And then, is this thinking performed in the mode of consideration and reflection, or else does it rather present for the subject of the psychosis as a concomitant effect of the forcing, thus instantiating as an overawing and encroaching thought, thrust out beyond any rule of reason?

Schreber’s *Denkzwang* (‘compulsive thinking’ in Macalpine’s translation) is forced upon him incessantly to cogitate ‘the Order of the World’, or, later, to ‘picture’ more agreeable scenes (pp. 210–13), as though he were placed at the very locus in which signifiers are wrought and presentified. This Other as a locus of thought is dwelt upon in the ‘Question préliminaire’ in trans-structural terms as

une dimension qui se fait sentir comme celle d’Autre-chose dans tant d’expériences que les hommes vivent, non point du tout sans y penser, bien plutôt en y pensant, mais sans penser qu’ils pensent, et comme Télémaque pensant à la dépense. (§III.1)

[a dimension that makes itself felt as that of some Other-thing in so many experiences that men live through, not at all without thinking thereto, indeed rather in thinking thereto, but without thinking they’re thinking, like Telemachus who ponders expending.]

The notation of thinking ‘à la dépense’ is loaned from the twenty-sixth of Paul-Jean Toulet’s posthumously published *Contrerimes* (1921, proofs corrected by the author), where the *à* operates bivocally to denote at once the object of Telemachus’ thought and its condition of personal cost. The Oedipal thematic of the son searching for news of his absent father while his mother’s suitors ‘gavent leur panse’ at the family’s expense lies in full view, but more vital still in Lacan’s adoption of this equivoque between thought-

object and thought-condition is his furthering of the trope to produce a collapsing of object and place in the bivalent *y*. Thus is prepared his concluding point concerning the Other as: ‘le lieu, présent pour tous et fermé à chacun, où Freud a découvert que sans qu’on y pense, et sans donc que quiconque puisse penser y penser mieux qu’un autre, ça pense’ [the locus, present for all and closed to each, where Freud discovered that without one thinking thereto, and so without anyone being able to think of thinking thereto better than any other, it thinks’]. By this reading, the forced migration into the field of an Other entails a mental expenditure compelled to keep up and equate with each autocausative thought upon its begetting in the id.

*comme à tout sens le plus étranger*. A fresh *conduplicatio* of ‘comme’, which now makes its third appearance in this clause, intensifies the impression of uncertainty and simulation, further compounded by a final equivocally pitched preposition. In effect, the multi-purpose *à* allows ‘tout sens’ to oscillate between: an object in opposition to ‘étranger’ (cf. the 1866 translation by Abbot Tassin of *De la genèse contre les Manichéens*, Chapter XII, ‘Le sommeil d’Adam’, in the fourth volume of *Œuvres complètes de Saint Augustin*, Bar-le-Duc: Guérin & C<sup>ie</sup>, p. 113: ‘le regard de cette sagesse, parce qu’il est intérieur, secret, complètement étranger à tous sens corporel’) whereby the field of this particularised Other is foreign to all that is meaningful; an adverbial clause (opened by the preposition) binding to ‘se penser’ (cf. Pascal, ‘Plaisante raison qu’un vent manie et à tout sens!’, from ‘Imagination’ in *Pensées*, 1669, Michaut edition 601/Brunschvicg edition 82) whereby the superlative foreignness binds to the object, to be thought through ‘in every sense’ or ‘to all intents and purposes’; or else the first terms of an adjective phrase (cf. Montaigne, *Essais*, 1580, Book III, Ch. XIII, 1067b: ‘L’exemple est vn miroüer vague, vniuersel & à tout sens’, or Paul Hay du Chastelet’s 1638 *Recueil de diverses pièces povr servir à l’histoire*: ‘il est à tout sens, à toutes mains, & à tous vents’ p. 74) whereby pan-semantic meaning is inherently the most strange. And so again, but here more vehemently still, the reader is tacitly entreated to fall back on wider semantic resources which can then be re-worked into the grammatical and rhetorical involvement.

At first blush the *sui generis* field of ‘density’ or ‘fullness’ traced out in the I-diagram might seem to correlate in its sole characterisation with the ‘comme sans raison’ that predicated the irruption of the real father, but Schreber stresses, and the ‘Question préliminaire’ underscores, the *Vernunftgründen* that governs the ‘elegant solution’ of Schreber’s feminine reconciliation. Is a distinction thus to be drawn between the *pousse-à-la-femme* that follows in the wake of the triggering, and the resolution that incorporates this feminisation into a delusional stabilisation as a conclusion to the psychotic process? This might forbid a full superposition of the real, the particularised Other, and the father-exception in a single field that lies beyond meaning and reason, unless here it is to Schreber himself that the reader of ‘L’étourdit’ ought now to turn for the final word, as did its author fifteen years before in concluding the fourth part of his ‘Question préliminaire’:

All this again exemplifies the truth of the saying that every nonsense carried to extremes destroys itself in the end – a truth which the lower God (Ariman) repeatedly affirmed in the phrase ‘All nonsense cancels itself out [*Aller Unsinn hebt sich auf*]’ (p. 273).

A human being who in a certain sense can say *that eternity is in his service*, can afford to ignore all nonsense in the certain knowledge that ultimately a time must come when nonsense exhausts itself and a sensible state of affairs returns. (p. 288)

Psychotic *Unsinn*, which may enjoy no less of a 'positive' and 'organised' existence (lesson of 1 February 1956), brooks no assimilation into a sequence arising from the operator  $\overline{\forall x}. \Phi x$ . A restriction on universal meaning of which the undoing is projected to the asymptotic point of infinity is absolutely not the same thing as a non-restriction on the semantic field that has been set *ab initio*.