Envois

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I

I refuse any system. I uncover a thought in motion. I call it the dialectic. My task is to reintroduce the register of meaning. I do my dissecting with concepts, not with a knife. The man speaking to you is a man like any other—I make use of the wrong language. I allow the other to bring his language in line with mine. I think of what goes through his head when I speak to him. My ideal is not the absence of passion.

II

I am describing things the way they are today. I am not in a position to say more about this for the moment. What am I going to say now? I would say—when all is said and done—it is less a matter of remembering than rewriting history. I tell you what there is. I could counterpose completely different conceptions of the experience. I am certainly not the only one to have asked myself the question—I say it is a slip of the pen.

I would like to give you a still clearer sense. I would say that our actual behaviour is far from the account we give of it. I am only opening up the question. I am referring to the concrete system which doesn’t have to be already spelled out for it to be
there. I think I have opened up the question sufficiently for you now to see the point of what we can do together.

I am not sure if this is the exact wording, but it is very striking. I would almost say that it is a notion with retroactive effect. I portrayed for you the sum of silence after which another speech again makes its appearance. What do I want? — if not to get out of this genuine impasse. You will see that I push what I say quite far.

I am only repeating what can be found. I believe that what has happened there is a very significant failure. I believe that one must be extremely careful here. When I talk, it's so as to venture into it with unqualified analytic prudence. I think that's… It doesn't seem to me to arise out of the same cupido, if not of the same libido. I always have reservations about lots of things which aren't specified. I will try to show you in what way the danger emerges. I am not putting your opinions on trial.

III

I think I am being accurate in calling this style inquisitorial. I was about to say the trial of psychological strength. I will try to show you. When I say projection, I am not saying erroneous projection. Let there be no mistake about what I am explaining to you. Before I became an analyst, I had — thanks to what little psychological gifts I had — taken a formula as the principle of the little compass with which I appraised some situations. I was quite happy to say to myself — *Feelings are always reciprocated*. As soon as you put two subjects together — I say two, not three — feelings are always reciprocated. In fact, you need more than that, and I hope to be able to prove it to you. But I am only opening up the problem today.

It is late. Which will not allow us to go as far as I would have liked. Nevertheless, I would like to give you some sense of where we're heading. I have shown you the risks; I think it necessary to lay down some guidelines. I am pointing this out to you. I am not going to tell you the conclusion. I don’t think I am being unfaithful. I would like to offer a certain number of basic con-
cepts. I am therefore going to take an example which will make you understand clearly the questions raised by recognition, and which will keep you from drowning. I am going to tell you a little story.

I wake up in the morning with my curtain, like Semiramis, and I open one eye. I don't see this curtain every morning because it's the curtain of my house in the country, where I go only every week or so, and among the lines fomented by the fringe of the curtain I notice, once again—I say once again, I have only ever seen it once like that in the past—the silhouette of a face, all at once, sharp-edged, caricatured and old-fashioned, which for me is like the face of an eighteenth-century marquis. I can say that the curtain hasn't moved an inch since precisely eight days before. A week ago, on waking up, I had seen the same thing. I had, of course, forgotten it. If I didn't have a certain number of fantasies on what the profile represents, I wouldn't have recognised it in the fringe of my curtain.

Have you got hold of the implication of what I am saying to you? You will see that I am bringing the question to bear at the point where the re-lived is at its most ambiguous. That's where we'll start off again next time.

IV

I want to lead you to one of those points that offers perspective. I gave you advance notice. I am going to try to keep to my promise. I warn you. I am aware all of a sudden of the fact of your presence. I want to put this sharply focussed phenomenon before you. I want to stay for a moment. The little note appended to the passage that I read to you is important. I bring it up solely as an aid. I'd say it is a feeling we are always trying to efface from life. It isn't a feeling that we have all the time. I think it is something we cannot dwell upon for too long.

I am just following. It's the centre of attraction, I'd say that that is the very essence. I'll leave the theme hanging. One must play dumb each time. That's exactly what I've been telling you—there is nothing left of the dream. God knows that I have
learnt to realise that desire slips runs away, appearing and disappearing before my eyes. And whose desire, anyway?

I would like to use some other examples. This is what I have been wanting to get at with these examples. Hooking onto the other is not alien. A little further and it will be seduction.

V

I showed you. I have shown you. I made you realise. I will probably not have the opportunity to return to these questions again. Our experience is not that of affective smoochy-woochy. I showed myself to be extremely guarded. I use much more clumsy expressions quite on purpose. This only opens up new problems for us.

VI

I intend to draw you into the area marked out. We have to get it moving. What I am saying to you is related to what I pointed out. The assumption of sex is decided.

VII

It wasn’t without some preconceived plan. I would go as far to say that it is on the basis of a kind of refusal of understanding that we push the door open to understanding. It isn’t enough for it to seem to hang together. Obviously it hangs together within the framework of pat phrases we’ve grown used to instinctual maturation, primitive aggressive instinct, oral, anal sadism, etc. I have taught you to identify the symbolic with language. I have concocted a little model for you. So let us rejoice. I am sorry. This little experiment pleased me. It would be fun — we’ll discuss that some other day.

It isn’t language I’m covertly slipping in. You will see it in the spectacular demonstration of what I am always giving to you. How can I put this in yet another way? I only wanted to introduce a bouquet. It would be worth your while to ponder
the questions, to get a little feel for the schema so you could see for yourself what use you could put it to.

VIII

It is not surprising that it should be here and now that we are led. I don’t think I am pushing it. We tried to define resistance within its own field. You will be well aware of the great distance that separates … that will take us to the heart of the notion. What questions do you still want to raise? I think that one can’t say any more about it.

IX

That’s where the opacity begins. To expect an explanation, you’ll perhaps tell me, is to expect too much, to manifest too great a thirst. Several hard-headed characters would perhaps like to impose a damper on us at this point. One of the important questions is to know what is the connection between the bonds of transference and the characteristics of the love relation. We know all that. I am not taking about the course of action we sometimes undertake. It seems that there is some mysterious resistance at work, acting so to keep the question in darkness. It exerts some sort of repulsion. We are not dealing with love in the guise of Eros, but of passionate love, as a sort of psychological catastrophe. That is what is precisely at issue — what is this love?

Well, for us, what we have to locate is the structure which articulates the narcissistic relation, the function of love in its widest sense. There is more than one way to help you find your sense of direction in the midst of all the ambiguities which, as I think you have become aware, make their appearance again and again. I hope to teach you new categories. I am aiming at progress in understanding. I have my limits. I will teach you. I am going to show you. Today is only a curtain-raiser. But when it comes to matters as important as these, you can’t raise the
curtain too slowly. It will give you a little time to turn things over in your mind.

X

Can one say yes or no, when one is the shadow of the other? Let me clarify this. It isn’t the existence of the sexual partner, the particularity of one individual, but something which has an extremely intimate relation with what I have been calling a type, namely an image. You do know, don’t you, that step by step, I want to take you somewhere. Let’s go back to where we first left off. And if I’m giving in on that, it’s because there’s a reason I’m giving in. I’ve been trying to explain to you for years. I’m quite happy with that. You’re right in thinking it’s not for the fun of it that I’ve made up these delightful constructions. I know not what vague fusion, or communion between genitality and the constitution of the real is recommended. It’s either one or the other. We’ll try to go one step further next time.

XI

I am trying to use simple terms to guide your thinking. I would like … perhaps I won’t do it, I don’t know. Genital love— is it a natural process? What is the point? It is through the exchange of symbols that we locate our different selves in relation to one another. We have a certain symbolic relation, which is complex. What else are we talking about when we refer to an oral, anal, genital reality? What is my desire? Love reopens the door to perfection. Next time we must clarify why this attachment is fundamentally fatal. That’s what love is. It’s one’s own ego one loves in love. It’s not every day that you come upon something that is constructed so as to give you the image of your own desire. I see that the clock ticks on.
I’m beginning to slip into abstraction. You know what a delicate matter it is. There’s a radical difference between the satisfaction of a desire and the pursuit of the fulfilment of desire. It’s the distinction between our consciousness and our body. We recognise ourselves as body… the body as fragmented desire seeking itself out. In a moment, if you want, we’ll go further. We are completely agreed that love is a form of suicide. I see that I haven’t shown you enough petticoat, since you’ve seen the frills but not how they’re tied on. If we didn’t have to sort it out, we wouldn’t need to be here. And that would be a great pity. Do you grasp the mechanism here? I am happy enough to use the term. This desire, we find it or we don’t find it. I want to take up this point again, and at length, even if that means breaking off in the middle today. I know that I am saying these words quickly, but I will go over them again more slowly. I cannot tell you why just now. I can’t satisfy you today. If you think you have understood, you are bound to be wrong. Let’s leave it there for today.

I’ve led you here step by step. I’m putting things very crudely. I could put them in more sophisticated, philosophical language, but I want to make you see them clearly. Careful. We’ve already gone over these steps together. I beg you not to be too hasty. We operate as if all that goes without saying. It’s a long way from what we really think. See=saw. Before desire learns to recognise itself… let us now say that word. Each time we get close, the most radical aggression arises … this all-consuming, uncontrollable jealousy. The perpetual reversion of desire to form and of form to desire… we must really understand that this game is an all-consuming one. The masochistic outcome — I never fold when raised. I am trying to respond. This seems foolish, and to go without saying. But you still have to say it and reflect on it. We still haven’t got as far as I had hoped. Perhaps I am going a bit too quickly. Bear this in mind, that desire is only ever reinte-
grated in a verbal form. Here we find an essentially ambiguous relationship. Next time…

**XIV**

As I said to you, it doesn’t stop there. Here we have a destructive and fatal relation. Are you satisfied, however? It seems to me that we got further last time. Desire is realised in the other, as you put it. It enters into the symbolic relation of I and you. I talked about the fort and da with you. I’ve repeated this time and again. All I need to do is talk about it. We must never lose sight of it. You think it’s a bit much to call it the grand X? I would have no difficulty in showing you…. What is it, this supposedly accomplished genital love? If you found this too difficult… I left open the question. And we do everything. One lets go of a certain number of the moorings of speech. We are forced to see that this alone introduces a certain uncoupling. I have talked about small oscillations. I don’t need to enlarge on what makes up their smallness right now. Clearly there is some braking, several occasions when things grind to a halt. Being in love happens in an entirely different way. It doesn’t just happen with any partner or with just any image. I am grateful. Don’t you have the feeling that this is an extremely unsatisfying game, a Utopian ideal? — which something in us is bound to be disappointed by. It is not a question of the satisfaction of desire. We will leave it there for today. I chose to climb the mountain. But let us leave matters there.

**XV**

I find it satisfying. The point is to bring it to its completion. That is the fertile moment. It is neither around, not roundabout, neither before, nor after, but at the exact moment when what is close to bursting open…. The copulatory position could only be restored. Let us get back to the essentials. I cannot tell you the whole story. Aren’t you amazed? I will not leave it there. Are you with me? I hope this is sufficient indication of direction I
am taking. I haven’t exhausted it. I am going to try to get you to understand. That is pushing things very far. You are going to think that I am overstepping the limits. It is always a delicate matter. We are no way relieved of the problems raised by the relations of desire. That is what we just now encountered. Where should this adjournment come to a stop? That is where I will leave you today.

XVI

Do let us try to get something out of it. Everything which is good for me is right for you. It is not for nothing that the real is always in the background. It is late now. Is it emotions that are transferred? Till next Wednesday.

XVII

Let us go straight to the knot. I cannot linger over this. If there exists a tendency towards perfect satisfaction, in all strictness exactly the same has to hold for the other side. There is a direct stitching together of desires which dovetail together, bind together. There’s no getting away from it. There will just have to be an object to satisfy and saturate it. The satisfaction of the one, I won’t say is concerned for the satisfaction of the other, but is saturated in this satisfaction. That is incredible. When we arrive at the level of the genital relation, there is no way of making it develop any further. You must extricate yourself from this fascination to fall on your feet again, that is what I am trying to remind you of now. Let us leave to one side the voyeuristic and exhibitionistic relations— that is too easy to prove. Let us take the sadistic relation… playing the waiting game, playing on the fear of the other, with pressure, with threat, keeping to the forms, more or less secret. One can go further. Have I wrapped things up enough to be able to leave you at this point? That doesn’t mean there won’t be a sequel. I will prove it to you next time.
I think you have understood what blind alleys this leads one into. I gave you an introduction to the experience of sadism, which I took to be elective in revealing this dimension to you. I pointed out that, in the gaze of the being I torment, I have to sustain my desire with an act of defiance, a challenge at every instant. If it does not arise above the situation, if it is not glorious, desire sinks into shame. Perversion as I have delineated it for you can only be sustained within a precarious status. It is always fragile, at the mercy of an inversion, a subversion. Perversion is an experience which allows us to enter more deeply into what one can call, in the full sense, the human passion. It becomes a profound experience. Either desire is extinguished, or the object disappears. That is why, at every turn, I take my bearings from the master-slave dialectic. The term doesn’t frighten me. I won’t push this today. We come upon the famous problem of two bodies. We can stop for a moment. And we make strenuous efforts. What does that imply? I have already talked about the state of narcissistic eruption in one of our meetings.

I am exceedingly happy. It is me, my being, my avowal, my invocation. Once more, I will try to make you see it. Let us try to be a little bit coherent. What I am saying is downright simple-minded. But it is only by making the structure a bit more explicit, and in saying simple things, that we will learn to spell out in words of one syllable the elements of the situation in which we act. We are talking about things, and not about some eternally unidentifiable I know not what. We find ourselves at the heart of the problem. It is true, and it isn’t. There is nothing present, nothing emotional, nothing real in this situation. None of this is easy. Are you with me? There are essential relations which no discourse can express adequately. On this note I will leave you today.
XX
You do realise, don’t you, the extent to which we are at the heart of what I have been trying to explain to you? Either we already know the truth in question, or we do not know it.

XXI
Today your fidelity, up to now unfailing, is flagging somewhat. And at the end of the race, it is I who will have had you. We have arrived at the central point. Either you’ve got it or you haven’t. I wish only to open a small door for you, whose threshold we will someday cross. We have seen that deception can only be sustained as a function of the truth. Is it unthinkable that it might come about? You can call this upheaval what you will. Our abortive actions are actions which succeed, those of our words which come to grief are those which own up. These acts, these words reveal a truth from behind. Reality is what makes it so that when I am here, you, my dear lady, cannot be in the same place. Haven’t I put you in a good enough position?

XXII
I am delighted by your question. There are profound reasons why you are left craving for more. What, in short, are you still craving for? If you are with me, we will be able to go a long way. The question is not so much one of knowing up to what point one should go, the question is more one of knowing if one will be followed. The position we are in is different, more difficult. Love is distinct from desire. Now learn to distinguish love as an imaginary passion. With hate, it is the same thing. Don’t get me wrong. In speaking about love and hate to you, I am showing you paths for the realisation of being. I beseech you. Where does this take us? You have to wait. You have to wait as long as it takes.
I started to write thinking about Lacan’s hair, having read an interview with his hairdresser (which may have been invented — I did not ascertain). This made me think, of course, about Derrida’s hair, a mane opposed to en brosse. However, I was distracted by Derrida’s envois in The Post Card, the sendings to an unnamed beloved (whom one may perfectly well name now as Sylviane Agacinski). This led me (a roundabout and illogical route) to an early seminar of Lacan, his teaching on the training programme of the Société Française de Psychanalyse, following Freud’s papers on technique, Lacan’s insistence on a return to Freud. This year-long seminar addresses resistance, narcissism, the imaginary, repression, desire, perversion, the creative function of speech…. I have in my careful re-reading and re-writing removed all of that, all that psychoanalytic theory, while retaining Lacan’s words and his alone (I have added nothing, I avow) as a series of twenty-two love letters, envois addressed to a beloved, unnamed (a ‘dear lady’), following the course of a love affair. And yet, well, and yet, all that remains as my master breaks the silence.