

Limited foreclosure- generalised foreclosure

Lacan formalises foreclosure as a symbolic abolition bearing on a signifier, that of the Name-of-the-Father. Yet an informed reader of Lacan's work realises quite soon that foreclosure has other uses too. Lacan does not make use of it only when he wants to designate a failure of the symbolic and a lack of the signifier, but in other occasions too.

In his preliminary question, Lacan remarks that *verwerfung* will be considered as a foreclosure of the signifier. However, in the same text, he uses the term foreclosure, in three other occasions, in a context that does not concern the signifier. He refers to Schreber's God as "foreclosed from every other aspect of the exchange"¹. It seems to us that this concerns a foreclosure of the Other rather than the signifier. Lacan chooses to use the term of foreclosure to illustrate the non-relation of God with the living man. In another occasion, he uses the term foreclosure in relation to reality. He talks about the foreclosed reality of the subject. Finally, he makes use of the term foreclosure associating it with the penis. It is not that Schreber is foreclosed of the penis, he clarifies, it is that he should be the phallus, that he is doomed to become a woman.

Likewise, some months later, in his seminar *Le désir et son interprétation*, Lacan evokes the foreclosure not of the signifier, but of the phallus.

In his *Remarks on Daniel Lagache's Presentation*, he mentions the foreclosure of the drive.

In his seminar *La logique du fantasme*, it is in the sexual act that foreclosure is set. Furthermore, *the sexual act does not exist*, that he enunciates in this seminar, precursor of his famous *the sexual relation does not exist*, has the value of foreclosure.

¹ Lacan Jacques, «On a Question Prior to Any Possible Treatment of Psychosis», *Ecrits*, New York: Norton, 2006, p. 469

Likewise, two years later Lacan will use the term foreclosure in what concerns the sexual jouissance: “The phallus is the signifier outside the system and, in a word, the conventional one to designate what is involved in sexual jouissance as radically foreclosed.”²

In 1972, foreclosure couples with castration, this time not about the Wolfman, but the discourse of the capitalist.

In the seminar *...ou pire* he speaks of foreclosure as foreclosure of the said. “The only foreclosure is of the said, whether that something exists, can be said or not”³, he will say. This phrase is proof that foreclosure is not limited to a signifier or to the signifier. Foreclosure is a structural mechanism, established by the nature of language itself. It is a mechanism that one can find in every speaking being. Foreclosure of the said implies that foreclosure is a trans-structural mechanism and it does not only concern psychotic subjects but every spoken-being.

One can distinguish two usages of the term foreclosure, one limited to psychosis and one generalised. Jean-Claude Maleval estimates that under the concept of *verwerfung* two different processes are involved. “On the one pole lies the *Ausstossung* that designates a primary process of an expulsion necessary for the structuring of the subject. On the other lies Schreber’s symbolic abolition that founds a pathological mechanism of psychotic nature.”⁴ Two types of foreclosure are designated; the first structuring and normative, the second pathological and psychotic.

Yet what is the principle of generalised foreclosure? In language reference lacks. There is the void of reference for every speaking being. Jacques-Alain Miller claims that “if it is true that in language as such reference always fails, if it is true that language cancels the reference, if it is true that the words of language are established on the grounds of foreclosure, then Lacan’s provocative proposition, which is that the whole world is delirious, is justified”

² Id, Le séminaire livre XVI, 1968-1969, *D’un Autre à l’autre*, Paris : Seuil, 2006, p.321

³ Id, Le séminaire livre XIX, 1971-1972, *...ou pire*, Paris : Seuil, 2011, p.22

⁴ Maleval Jean-Claude, *La forclusion du Nom-du-Père*, Paris : Seuil, 2000, p.55

⁵. *The whole world is delirious* is equivocal to *the truth has the structure of fiction*. *The whole world is delirious* signifies that the norm does not exist, that there is no common sense. In fact, the generalised delirium is a screen of the void.

Jean-Claude Maleval puts forward a very enlightening proposition to differentiate limited foreclosure from generalised foreclosure. The foreclosure of the Name-of-the-Father is written P0, it is related to the failure of the Borromean knot, whereas the writing of the generalised foreclosure is barred A and it is related to a gap of the Other and to the void of reference⁶.

Jacques-Alain Miller introduces the term generalised foreclosure in his lesson of 1986-7 *Ce qui fait insigne*. The principle of generalised foreclosure derives from the fact that the sexual relation cannot be enciphered. When there is no enciphering, one is not in the register of repression anymore, but that of foreclosure. The sexual relation as an element unable to encipher implies that the symptom reappears in the real. The symptom is the consequence of the impossibility to encipher the sexual relationship. Under this perspective, it is an effect of the symbolic onto the real. Any symptom, and not only the psychotic symptom, is an effect of the symbolic onto the real.

The conception of foreclosure as Lacan formalised it in Seminar III and in his preliminary question, supposes an Other that exists. "The condition of the subject depends on what unfolds in the Other"⁷, he argues. He develops his doctrine on psychosis taking as a starting point that language exists before the subject; that the symbolic is already there. The bar on the Other as well as pluralising the Name-of-the-Father leads to a theoretical reformulation. With generalised foreclosure, the delirium is generalised as well, it becomes a montage of language constructed on the void, a screen in front of nothingness. "The word is the murder of the thing" means that the whole world

⁵ Miller Jacques-Alain, Cours 1987-1988, *Cause et consentement*, cour du 8 juin 1988, unpublished

⁶ Maleval Jean-Claude, *La forclusion du Nom-du-Père*, op.cit., p. 152

⁷ Lacan Jacques, «On a Question Prior to Any Possible Treatment of Psychosis», *Ecrits*, New York: Norton, 2006, p. 458

is delirious and also that language is the murder of jouissance.”⁸ According to Miller, the delirium is universal as an effect of language, as an effect of the fact that people speak. All our discourses aren't but defenses against the real: This is what he calls the universal clinic of delirium⁹.

In his last teaching, Lacan makes a generalised use of delirium. He declares he had become delirious with his linguistics, he evokes the delirium of philosophers, Freud's delirium on the truth of the traumatic core and he doesn't but leave us the choice between delirium and mental debility.

It is true that Lacan articulated the generalised delirium in a systematic way in his last teaching. He even reached the point of saying that psychoanalysis is a delirium, “a delirium which one expects to bear a science”¹⁰. Yet it is worth noting that in Seminar III, he attributed to the ego the “quality” of delirium. It seems to us that since the 1950s, the ego was delirious without reference to psychosis.

However, the phrase *the whole world is delirious* is not enunciated but once in 1978: “How to teach what can't be taught? This is Freud's pathway. He considered that everything is but a dream, and that the whole world (if one can use such an expression), the whole world is mad, which means delirious.”¹¹

Whatever attempts to give sense to the real is a delirium. One can't but lie about the real. The principle of the *whole world being mad*, according to Miller, “poses as radical the inadequacy of real and mental and comprises of one not being able but to be false in speaking about the real, one can't but lie”¹². There is a hole in the symbolic, which implies the generalised foreclosure. The non- inscription of a signifier in the field of the Other is not confined in psychosis but in every spoken-being. Foreclosure concerns the

⁸ Miller Jacques-Alain, « La psychose dans le texte de Lacan », *Analytica*, no58, 1989, p.139

⁹ Id, «Ironic Clinic», *Psychoanalytical Notebooks*, Issue 7, 2002

¹⁰ Jacques Lacan, séminaire 1976-1977, *L'insu que sait de l'une bevue s'aile à mourre*, séance du 11 janvier 1977, unpublished

¹¹ Id, «Lacan pour Vincennes», *Ornicar ?*, no17/18, 1979, p.278

¹² Miller Jacques-Alain, Cours 2008-2009, *Choses de finesse en psychanalyse*, cours de 1 novembre 2008, inédit

whole world. For every one, there is an ineffable, something that has not been symbolised, that has not passed through the signifier, that has not undergone the taming of the Name-of-the-Father. Every one invents what they can to fill this hole. As Lacan highlights, “we all invent something to fill the hole in the real. Where there is no sexual relation, there is traumatism¹³. One invents. One invents what they can of course.”¹⁴ It is this invention that has the function of the Name-of-the-Father.”

In 1970 Lacan puts forward that he always desired for someone to make a hole in the paternal metaphor: “It’s striking –someone could have got a little bit excited about this paternal metaphor and know how to make a little hole. This is what I have always desired, that someone should make some progress, make a trace for me, begin to show a little path. Anyway, be that as it may, it has never happened, and the question of Oedipus is intact.”¹⁵ He had made this attempt himself some years earlier by pluralising the Name-of-the-Father, but in doing so they silenced him, as he would say. Despite that fact, Oedipus becomes a residual myth for Lacan, a myth that won’t last, a dream of Freud’s, something lame. Since the Family Complexes and until the end of his teaching one encounters this dimension of Oedipus.

Miller recently clarified that the paternal function can function with elements other than the Name-of-the-Father of tradition. The use of the term function itself implies this possibility. Anything can become the element x in the paternal function. The function of the father that consists in the repression of the desire of the mother can be provided by an element x that is not the Name-of-the-Father¹⁶.

The affliction of the spoken-being is not the oedipal prohibition but the effect of language on its body. In this sense, castration is the lack of the signifier. Prohibition and castration are detached. The Name-of-the-Father does not condition reality anymore. If in the preliminary question reality is conditioned

¹³ A neologism, combining the words traumatism and hole in French

¹⁴ Jacques Lacan, séminaire XXI, 1973-1974, *Les non-dupes errent*, séance du 19 février 1974, unpublished

¹⁵ Id, The seminar XVII, 1969-1970, *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*, New York : Norton, 2007, p. 113

¹⁶ Miller Jacques-Alain, Cours 2010, *La vie de Lacan*, cours du 31 mars 2010, unpublished

by Oedipus, in the final teaching, the structure of conditioning is not Oedipus anymore, but the effect of language on the body of the spoken-being. Reality is approached by the device of jouissance that is no other than language. And if one does not enjoy better, it is not because the father prohibits that, but because the signifier introduces a loss of jouissance in the body. What makes jouissance halt, is the signifier. In other words, the law of the Name-of-the-Father is the law of language.