

Retrieved from:

The European Journal of Psychoanalysis

Feb 27, 2024

<https://www.journal-psychoanalysis.eu/articles/the-translations-of-psychoanalysis/>

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# Idiom: The Translations of Psychoanalysis

## Summary:

This essay aims to tackle the problem of the untranslatables within psychoanalysis by reviewing some aspects of the radical consubstantiality between the problem of translation and the psychoanalytic problem itself. The first part of this essay alludes to the trajectories and tendencies psychoanalytic theories have taken through the journey of its translations, necessary exiles and transfers that speak not only to the discourse of psychoanalysis as an untranslatable in itself, but more poignantly, as a discourse whose flight from normativity, more clearly seen with its exile with the rise of fascism, has shaped and structured the discourse we have today. The historical metamorphosis psychoanalysis suffered with its generative stumbles and slips will serve thus as a metaphor of its (un)translatability, both as a praxis and as theory.

The translations, versions, diversions and transfers in its “fleeing forward” from fascism will lead to the notion of “navels of untranslatability”, a notion elaborated by Nestor Braunstein throughout his body of work but more formally in his book, *Traducir el psicoanálisis: interpretación, sentido y transferencia*. In this yet to be translated work, Braunstein lays out the nuanced problem of the translation and re-translations (in a sense also akin to the translation/rotation/transfer of the Earth) as an essential topic that pertains both to the shape and ethos of the analytical discourse as well as to the matter, the stuff, psychoanalysis tries to grasp: psychic content, which in itself is the result of an always more or less failed, endeavor of translation.

The second part of this essay explores Freud’s schematic description of the psyche as a translation/translating device while keeping close to Braunstein’s supplemental elaborations to the Freudian scheme as we consider Néstor Braunstein, to whom this work is dedicated and from whom we borrow so many words, to be, without a doubt, the great translator of the Freudian and Lacanian discourse in the ultimate sense of the word. This is, the sense of transmission and re-elaboration as the exercise *par excellence* of translation. Braunstein’s elaborations are thus followed in an exploration that departs from the linguistic nature of the unconscious as a first translation that always fails to arrive, and lands on the Lacanian instance of *jouissance*: discourse as the very texture of (un)translatability “tamed” by the Lacanian style of equivocation, equivocity and fruitful error...the game of words and phonetic play, the style with which the complex relationship between the subject and his master, the unconscious, is *joyously* (in its interplay with *jouissance*) displayed.

By playing with the signifier, man calls his world into question, right down to the root.

(Lacan, *The Object Relation*, p. 287)

## I. The Translations of the Analytic Discourse

Not only does the human experience have the texture of the impossible endeavor to translate the untranslatable, that which is the poet's battleground, but the body of the "speaking-being" is one marked and knotted by the subjective translations and re-translations—correct, failed, truncated or perverse—of the psychic apparatus. The symptom itself, through its contortion and its complaint, pointed out certain obstacles of translation to both Freud and Lacan, showing that insurmountable bar between signified and signifier around which *jouissance* is socialized in discourse. An operation that is, to say it in "Lacanian": not without its remains, not without its consequences. The problem of translation is one with the essential problems psychoanalysis addresses, this is, the radical subjection we have to the tyranny of language, to the unconscious, which, structured as a language, destines its subjects to the eternal position of failed translators.

Just like the body of the speaking-being, always scared by the constant translations, both failed and successful, shuttering and revealing... within the history of psychoanalysis, in its body of thought, we will also find a territory marked by the vicissitudes of translation.

A corpus in which we can equally trace both the repressions and denials of the mother tongue of psychoanalysis and its loyalty/disloyalty to its' father. One cannot speak of an evolution of the psychoanalytic discourse, but rather of a metamorphosis: the chiseling of body of the Freudian discourse, knotted like the bodies of Freud's patients, by its many translations—its moving from one land to the other, from one tongue to the other, from one "master" to another. We will also say the "translations" of psychoanalysis instead of "its translation" as, consistent with the doctrine of the drive as a fundamental piece of Freudian discovery, psychoanalysis is neither standardizing nor univocal, but the opposite: scandalous and polyphonic, nimble, evanescent. Psychoanalysis has not evolved but "fled forward", as the Spaniards say when one has the talent of finding a way out of a problem generatively.

Braunstein (2020) tells us, "Everything in Freudian theory conspires against a normative reading" (p.167), and I add: it is because of psychoanalysis's subversion that we can translate the human drama from the nuclear concept of the "drive": that unhappy marriage between biology and the word that gestates the human condition and collects in its stumbling blocks, the constant conspiracies, against rational logic. This is, Freudian discourse has always been a transgressive translation of the symptom as a *mise-en-scène* of an encrypted, enigmatic logic only congruent when considering the consistently contradictory dimension of the human psyche... Freud translates the symptom, deciphers a dimension that could not find its own language, deciphering sense from non-sense or making non-sense acquire sense in its new language. And it is through translation, in its barest sense, in its moving from one place to the other, that Freud invents the psychic dimension, a locus that bundles contradiction and conflict and moves it from the land of hysterical insanity to the land of psychic sense. It invents a rightful place for the hysterical demand, instead of trying, like the obstructed medical ear of the era, to bend it back, to correct and rectify, and push the symptom back into the norm. In Freud's ear, blunders are generative, gaps break ground... Freud finds a way to translate the untranslatable in hysteria, something that cannot be held neither by medicine nor by religious discourse. It's in this no-man's-land that Freud invents the language of psychoanalysis, which emerges as a new ground on which one can translate, that which presented as cryptic, enigmatic, senseless and that can be now turned consistent under psychic logic.

In almost all ways, hysteria and psychoanalysis are consubstantial, Braunstein insists in *Tranducir el psicoanálisis...* as he highlights the impossibility of discerning who produces whom: does the hysteric produce the analyst or does psychoanalysis produce the hysteric? In this consubstantiality, in the Eulerian intersection of the realms of hysteria and psychoanalysis, for Braunstein, the question morphs into who translates whom, the analyst translating the hysteric's demands or the hysteric unknowingly translating the analyst's. The hysteric addresses her complaint to the other and lays the condition of possibility for analysis, she demands a translation: "doctor, what does this mean?", "why is this happening to me?". Psychoanalysis will then be the invention of language that holds the encrypted translation in a language that serves as a middleman with society as it translates the effects of the signifier on the body. In this strange confluence of

the signifier and the body, with the analyst as the metaphor of the audience and the hysteric as entrapped bearer of contradiction, all efforts to take a stab, translation, interpretation, decryption, all reek of the compressed ambivalence of the *traduttore, traditore*.

Examples within the Freudian canon that revolve around translation as a basic operation of the psyche are known. Translation whose deviations, jumps and obturations insist on analytical listening. For Freud, the psychic apparatus will be a double path marked by translation as a “moving through” of materials in the perception-consciousness system. The signifier addressed to the other, the word seeking a Meaning, the hysterical complaint that demands an explanation from the doctor, the analyst, or the priest, is only a search for translation that materializes in the transference relationship with the analyst, to whom the power of ultimate deliverance is conferred. Transference and translation, we must remember, are siblings.

Translation and psychoanalysis are consubstantial, as the classical case in Freud’s 1927 essay on fetishism illustrates by showing us the psychic consequences of the hasty transfer of a phrase gestated in the mother’s English as a “shine on the nose”, the “*Glanz auf der Nase*” that when dragged from the maternal womb into the social order, from one tongue to the other, a “mis-translation” that carries the phonetic weight, the materiality of the maternal voice. The signifier, dragged from one land to the other is uprooted from its logic and its sense, thus re-emerges across borders as a fetishistic insistence devoid of contextual meaning. The translation in this case, the bumpy transfer from one territory to the other, marks a course, its own sense: sense is not meaning but direction, sense is a course<sup>[1]</sup> -in this case- one must go up-river and trace the course that draws a line from the patient to the mother.

Another classic example is that of the failed translation that serves as the operational model in hysteria, from which the hidden, invisible logic of the signifier and its paths are recognized, which affect, define, and innervate the suffering body while inaugurating a new biological and anatomical logic. When examining the translation that innervates the body in psychoneuroses, Freud finds the paralyzed arm that does not respond to the nerve patterns as described by science, instead he uncovers the arm that innervates precisely where the seams of the dress fall and thus is paralyzed under another logic, that is, the language of everyday social forms. This logic that Freud finds is one that evades the rational sense and the “correct” translation (that of the Sense-meaning) as that which cannot be sustained anymore in the realms of medicine or science responds more to the everflowing perversions of homonymy, to the dragging across registers of coded messages, to the dictatorship of the signifiers of the Other.

If the translation, Braunstein tells us in *Traducir el psicoanálisis...*, is demonstrably consubstantial to psychoanalytic discourse, then the history of psychoanalysis itself has something to say about this consubstantiality, about the path of generative stumbling blocks without which the discourse psychoanalytic would not have survived the vicissitudes of censorship that go with its subversive nature. The analytic discourse, Braunstein finds, is one chiseled (like the body to the hysteric) by the failed but generative attempts at translation that arise from each “fleeing forward” from one language to another, to the appropriations of one geography to another as each translation is, one way or another, an incarnation of its translator. Just like the innervation in the hysteric is tied to her as a translating subject and is possessed by her signifier, each translator of the Freudian discourse also took possession of his words. Each transference, each transmission allowed the discourse to survive in its status as a subversive practice, as it re-defined it as a practice: “...the lack is what is not lacking in translation. From the perspective of psychoanalysis, this lack—nostalgia for the time before Babel—is constitutive of the richness of translation. Every translation is an “interpretation” of what is translated that enriches it...because of what it fails to say, because of its encounter with the untranslatable” (Braunstein, 2012, p. 53, translation is mine).

Let’s take the Freudian invention in the context of its mother tongue, in its German compression that hides plurality in plain sight: one signifier can agglutinate a noun, a verb and its adjectives. There are those who argue that only German could have gestated psychoanalysis. Its migration to other tongues will necessarily show the sometimes-aberrant mutation of the signifier, its partitions, a pulverization that runs through the theoretical body of analysis. Translations from the mother tongue, successful or failed, will thus necessarily

imply a symptomatology governed by the *jouissance* of Unity: what was it that Freud said or wanted to say, what is that which he meant?... the question of the correct translation when German is like no other tongue... the insistence on the faithful translation. In its *separation* (to use the Lacanian term) from its mother tongue, the psychoanalytic signifier will be, if not lost, always in *souffrance*—like a purloined letter, hiding in plain sight, conferring its power to whomever holds it in his hand.

I will hammer on the issue of consubstantiality between hysteria and the discursive body of analysis to say: just as the body of the hysteric does not respond to her biology or her anatomical design in its supposedly universalizable and standardizable measure, the theoretical body of analysis does not fully respond either to its Freudian anatomy, to its “natural” origin. What we have today of Freud is also the product—just as consciousness is the product of psychic operation—of retroactive work that points to translations and betrayals of its mother tongue. Just like between hysteria and analysis, translations—both successful and erred—of the signifiers innervate the body of psychoanalytic discourse to articulate, give consistency to, and generate our theoretical symptoms. Thus, psychoanalysis, like the symptom, “will not cease to not be written”...

The cuts and incisions, the paralysis and parapraxis of the theoretical body or of the Freudian discourse will have to do with what revisionism, the work of constant translations that the French analysts established as a practice. Interventionism whose paternity we owe to Lacan. There will be, Braunstein tells us, a symptomatology in Freud’s thought that will be revealed by his translations, which, as the honest practice of translation demands, are many, constant, and always hysterically unsatisfied: some refuting others, some questioning others. Some motivated by a joy of fidelity to the original and promising Unity with the One, and others, assuming their particularity, their castrated singularity that has learned the lesson of the linguistic bar, that bar which breaks into the happy marriage between signified and signifier. Perhaps, the analyst who subscribes to the instinctual reading of the body will (*joyously*)<sup>[2]</sup> always be torn between loyalty to the Freudian mother tongue and the interventionist law of the father who castrates.

From there, from the recognition of the linguistic bar, we can give rise to a human condition that follows not instinct nor biology, but a surplus force called drive. And it will be thanks to the fact that “the drive” has been translated “in a standardized way” as “instinct” that the floodgates have been open to the transgression of commentary, expungement, and irreverent revisionism. Polymorphous, perverse, childish, nonconforming, a *bottomless pit*, the drive as a fundamental *motif*, guides the translation from its essence: *Trieb*, is also a shoot, that which insists on sprouting, pushing an opening path beyond the central course of the trunk in which it was born. Its raw material is *Drang*, the naked impulse which is squeezed into the orthopedics of the translated word, the grammar that the Other has shaped. Drive is thus the innervation of the body, the energetic flow of the nineteenth-century young woman, twisted, contorting, paralyzed in the transgression of the rules of good neurology... very far away from the instinctual. “The drive is an “*aiming at*” whose result is the inscription of failure” (Braunstein, 2006, p. 152, translation is mine) ... a statement where the word “drive” could be easily replaced by “translation”.

Two key aspects shape the current analytic body of thought through its many translations: the consubstantiality of psychoanalysis with German, and the retroactive effect of translations on the original. When one thinks on the consubstantiality that psychoanalytic thought and the German language share, one must also think of deterritorialization: the exile and surgeries that discourse undergoes so that it can be translated<sup>[3]</sup> into other languages. Translation and exile go hand in hand, and in the 30’s this is soon magnified with the censorship and persecution of fascism. An ordeal and persecution to which the mother tongue of psychoanalysis will be re-subjected after the Second World War when the German language, the language in which fascism was also gestated, was morally banished from the status of the apparatus *par excellence* for theorizing.

The second aspect, also related to the diaspora and exile, will have to do with the retroactivity that translations, versions, diversions, and perversions (*père-version, father-versions*) that other languages had on the Freudian body. On the retroactive impact that translations have on the original, Braunstein (2012) offers

a revealing and emblematic example:

The noun “mind” (from the Latin *mens*, in Spanish *mente*) does not exist in German, nor in French. Neither Freud nor Lacan could have used it at the time of writing: their respective mother tongues did not allow it. Is it legitimate for a translator into Spanish or English to make appear the non-existent word —“mind”— that does not exist in the “source language” (the original, the translated, the one that is subjected to and resists the efforts of the translator), but does exist in the “aimed language” (the secondary, translating, active and selective one), in the sentences where these founders of psychoanalytic discursivity used terms such as *Geist*, *Seele*, *Gemüt*, —in Freud—*esprit*, *âme*, *psychisme*, *psychogénèse*—in Lacan—? Can the adjective “mental”—which does exist in French despite the fact that the noun from which it is derived does not exist—correspond to *psychische*, *geistig*, *seelische* in German and that the translator prefers the word “mental”—more secular—to the concepts of “psychic” or “animic” which would be more precise in a literal translation from German, but which are loaded with mythical, scholastic and religious resonances? (p.18, translation is mine)

In the series of difficulties intrinsic to the translation of psychoanalytic discourse, both in what is translatable and in what is untranslatable, in what is initially lacking and in what ends up being superfluous in the original, there is *jouissance* on the horizon: that naivety that sustains the idea of being able to translate words and their meaning<sup>[4]</sup>, take a text and pour it entirely and without mistakes in another language. That is, the translator is always faced with that same *jouissance* that mobilizes psychoanalysis (and also the linguistic drive *per sé*), that totalizing enjoyment of medical omnipotence that Freud resists, opening the way to a singular, difficult, anti-religious, anti-capitalist, anti-fascist listening.

There will never thus be identity between the original and its translation, just as there is no identity, a fact intrinsic to the reality of language, between the Thing and its name, between *Das Ding und die Sache* between the enjoyment of the One (*jouissance*)<sup>[5]</sup> and the enjoyment of Sense (*j'ouis sens*). A lot happens, Braunstein tells us, in translation, otherwise understood as the transference act (both summed up in the German *Übertragung*) in its dimension of “displacement” ... a displacement/dislocation that speaks to that symptomatic denial of the distance between the word and the thing, between *jouissance* and the body. Translation is thus, also a way of avoiding the Real, an unstable path that leaves, in its translation, balances and remains without metabolizing:

A concept is not a “thing in itself”, it is an imperious invitation to translate it. No translation will express it perfectly. All of them build a Babelic labyrinth around it and the concept approaches pure language in such a way that it reaches with its insufficiencies a new dimension: it is not an isolated signifier provided with equivalents but a web of equivocations in its translations, in its synonyms, in its uses and in its rules of use. (Braunstein, 2012, p. 52, translation is mine)

The distance between the words “mind”, “psychic” and “animic” illuminates the difficulty of translating a text from one language to another, a difficulty one runs into when trying to transfer a notion from a binding and flexible language like German to a more rigid and pulverizing language like English. This difficulty, for example, is bypassed with some Lacanian inventions: the *parlêtre*, for example, which translates seamlessly into the neologism “*hablente*” in Spanish, does not show the same consubstantiality between the being and the word when translated into English as the *speaking-being*, separated by a dash...separated, barred, a segregated in its intermittence between speaking and being. Like in the case of the *parlêtre*, there is a plague of cases that reveal the symptoms of each language that psychoanalysis would have to deal with.

One could say then that psychoanalysis deals, from scratch, with an “original *sin-ptom*” that pertains to an original untranslatability tied to the consubstantiality between German and psychoanalytic thought. In “A Psychoanalytic Translation of Freud”, Patrick Mahoney will point to how the grammatical logic of Freud’s mother tongue was an intrinsically fertile ground for psychoanalytic thought because of its particularities:

...the many verb forms to express a passive mode, the ready convertibility of the passive sentence into the active, and vice versa, and the existence of certain passive forms that obscure the notions of active and passive. In addition, the flexibility in German to convert one part of speech into another softens the demarcation between verb, noun and adjective, with the result that a primary-process flow may be evoked within a strictly maintained secondary-process discourse. (Mahoney, 1992, p. 24)

German, one could elaborate from Mahoney's (1992) work, would thus have one foot in the primary process and the other in the secondary, as it is a "lexical construct propitious for condensation and displacement" (p. 25). In the exodus of psychoanalysis from its German/Freudian there will then be nothing but betrayal: as German unfolds into less binding languages, as the "secondary" content in the word is attended to and underscored, the "primary" materiality is neglected. Translation, in its condition of exodus, is always an exodus to the realm of loss.

The second reality illuminated by Braunstein's example, deals with another theoretical trope of psychoanalysis: retroactivity. That noun "mind", that was never originally in the Freudian or Lacanian texts, but that can be found in their translations, will point to the transformative power of the translation over its original. Braunstein (2012) tells us:

... translation does not oppose or complement the work, but rather, supplements the original... translation shows a certain hidden "truth" within the source text when the translator stumbles upon untranslatable cores. The "original" will then be read through an anterior future, the original's fulfillment will be a product of "the task of the translator" just as the dream is fulfilled when it is layed out in a session for its translation. (p. 31, translation is mine)

Braunstein will conclude then on how the languages into which the text is translated have an impact on the source language by revealing the "symptoms" (a repression in the case of "mind") in the original. This symptom will indicate a closure both in the text and in its author as a radical subject to his mother tongue, who, for example, could not have the category "mind" in mind. These "linguistic symptoms" (Braunstein, 2012, p. 18) do not become evident until they are "père-verted", that is, until something of the original law is refused or something of the translator, as incarnator of the signifier, is imposed as a law over the author's logic. The good translator, Braunstein tells us, "understands that an essential aspect of his task consists in making the author suffer, contaminating him, even revealing his deficits" (Braunstein, 2012, p. 18, translation is mine), showing his fault or the -1. Translation, then, in its broadest sense and in its most passionate version, is the work of the translator-analyst. The letter of psychoanalysis is one carried on the body of the translator, a text that by "hiding in plain sight" bypassed censorship, translation was not only mere transportation but a generative practice to the discourse itself: "Without translations, for better or worse, psychoanalysis would not have survived the diaspora of its officiants and the book burnings that occurred between 1933 and 1940" (Braunstein, 2012, p. 43, translation is mine).

Braunstein pin points a first moment in the genealogy of translations of the Freudian discourse, a first explosion of the discourse stemming from the *Five Introductory Lectures* originally dictated in German and translated into English by Freud himself for his trip to Clark University that set the pace for psychoanalysis as an innovative and scandalous practice. A trip from which the mythical association of psychoanalysis as a plague arises, anecdote that apocryphal or not, underscores the relationship within psychoanalysis of translation/ transmission and scandal. In Seminar IV, Lacan is insistent that a myth is always an attempt to express a solution to a problem by being a form of explanation. The myth of Freud arriving to America and remarking that he had just brought the plague to the Americas functions at that a sort of explanation for the upending of that dimension that the psychoanalytic experience brought: this is an upending in the socio-political, medical, spiritual and sexual reading of the subjective experience that is confronted in capitalism. In other words, psychoanalysis made a groundbreaking, scandalous translation of the human experience, and it stuck, in many ways, as a curse (a "*mal-dición*") as the burden of the discourse that can speak Truth from the "half-said", from contradiction and against productive normativity. An ongoing practice that never ceases to re-write itself, the explosive plague of those *Five Introductory Lectures* ... would soon be

translated into Dutch, Russian, Polish and Hungarian, as psychoanalysis quickly managed to capture world interest.

Amongst the translational vicissitudes into different languages, Spanish had a privileged status. Long before Freud had finished his work, Ortega y Gasset, a connoisseur of German, had already instigated Freud to the translation of his “complete” works to be undertaken by López Ballesteros. The translation into Spanish was inaugurated, sowing the seed for a warm and generative reception of Freud in Latin America, a prodigious relationship—almost without resistance—that would not be repeated in any of the translations into other languages. France, for example, suffered exactly from “the other” fate: “the misfortunes of psychoanalysis in France (in the French language) which has never, not even today, come to have a reliable translation of Freud’s text” (Braunstein, 2012, p. 22, translation is mine) opens space for the meticulously critical reading and the tireless revisionism of the originals in German. In the French case, Freud’s work was never hermetically translated, and no scholar functioned as a guarantor, organizer and transmitter of the analytical discourse, so the opportunity, perhaps the need, arose for an innovative, blasphemous, desacralized reading led by Lacan. In Braunstein’s (2012) words:

The Austrian Jew, inventor of the unconscious, came out renewed and brighter after the incalculable pains of his translators to French. ...The symbolic, the imaginary and the real, invented as “registers” by Lacan, arrived to fertilize and, many times, divert Freud’s vocabulary. Discussions about the translation into French of terms such as *Umheimlich* (ominous), *Enstellung* (disfigurement), *Anlehnung* (propping/support), *Trieb* (drive), *Instinkt* (instinct), *Wunsch* (desire), *Verneinung* (denial), *Lust* (pleasure), *Unterdrückung* (*suppression*) *Vorstellungrepräsentanz* (representative-representation), etc., became endless. After each stumble with the difficulty of translating psychoanalysis, Freud’s concepts came out revitalized. (...) Each signifier was insufficient, but all together in their dissonance, they represented Freud’s concept. There was true learning...precisely in its untranslatability. Furthermore, the commitment that the French readers had to the Freudian original as the original referent at a time when the translation of the “standard edition” into English had already been published. At that time when it was already functioning as the “official” language of psychoanalysis, through the International Psychoanalytic Association... (pp. 23-24, translation mine)

The practice of translation, led by the French, would generatively reform the way of practicing psychoanalysis while fascism added to the psychoanalytic diaspora and dissemination. –English then became the target language of psychoanalysis when persecuted analysts fled to the United States and England. Soon, a dichotomy emerged: the official language of academic psychoanalysis became English, while that of subversive psychoanalysis became French. A dichotomy magnified by the publication of the *Standard Edition* which has never stopped producing debates stemming from both its undeniable successes and its clear mistakes. “Criticizable as it is in many respects for some unusual choices and terminological innovations (for example, *instinct* for *Trieb* (drive), *cathexis* for *Besetzung* (investment), *ego* and *superego* for *Ich* and *Überich*, *Id* for *Es* was, in other points, also exemplary” (Braunstein, 2012, p. 25, translation is mine). The edition’s standardizing aspirations evoke, through its translation choices, a taming effort that one could find dissonant to the Freudian spirit. But despite that clear domestication effort, Braunstein finds a silver lining: a unifying effect on the original work thanks to the immense critical apparatus built around it, which no edition, not even the German one, possessed. The *Standard Edition* was also key to a second and monumental translation into Spanish by José Luis Etcheverry, which managed to unify and synthesize the successes of the Ballesteros and Rosenthal translations, to establish itself on the critical body of the *Standard Edition*, to enrich itself with the work of Laplanche and Pontalis as Lacanian interlocutors and consequently to lay the ground for the incomparably solid and widespread transmission of psychoanalysis in Latin America.

The historical interweaving of *the many translations* that Braunstein lays out will open the way to two apparently contradictory conclusions: there is something of the mother tongue, German, that cannot be refused, that is consubstantial to psychoanalytic thought and that in some way is untranslatable. But in its untranslatability, in that encounter with the impossible a portion of the Real is revealed, that which, for

Lacan, will always return to its place. Untranslatability, that navel where the translator/analyst simultaneously stumbles and reaches his goal has two paths: the invention that closes, the invention that opens. The first one, the standardized, canonical, lapidary and univocal translation that speaks to a certain degree of denial for lack and ambivalence ... in the second, the translation that subscribes to lack, surrenders from the beginning to insufficiency of language and thus ascribes itself to plurivocity, which is perhaps, the translation that assumes its own castration. This second tradition, inaugurated by Lacan in which the consubstantiality between theory and practice is shown, will be consistent with the discourse of lack. Braunstein (2012) tells us, “the task of the translator consists in moving from (imaginary) impotence to (Real) impossibility” (p. 43, translation is mine). We can now see how the translator overlaps with the task of analysis. This is, the practice of translation open to re-translation, reworking and reapproaching is one that assumes -1. A task that would be consistent with the adulthood reached with resolution of the Oedipus complex: the game of translation would be very much like playing the game of castration or the “game of loser wins” (Lacan, 2020, p. 201).

On this associative line, translation will be the operation that revives the complex between the mother tongue and the incidence of the law within the scenario of lack as psychoanalysis will be the “retroactive effect of the more or less successful translations it has received” (Braunstein, 2012, p. 26, translation is mine):

...the classic *translator traitor* is understood as a fatality (a *double bind*) inherent to the work of the translator who is led to an insurmountable aporia... That *double bind* means that contradictory demand, that moving forward between two equally criminal abysses: parricide, which would imply annulling the originality of the father out of respect for the mother tongue, or matricide. (Braunstein, 2012, p. 41, translation is mine)

Thus, the univocal translation, “The translation”, can be understood as an effect of the master’s discourse and will appear today in its versions commodified by the capitalist discourse that offers a single “ready-made” translation for each of its evils, each of the curses of our time: the infinitely repeated automatism of “the solutions”, the linguistic banishment of impossibility; the possibility of rescuing primary *jouissance* through the practices of bodily technology, psychedelia or “enlightenment”. On the other hand, thinking in the plural, in the “translations” of psychoanalysis, would subscribe to the reverse of that discourse that eats up knowledge in its relentless consumption of knowledge. The translational plurality subscribes to the discourse of questions, of not-knowing, of the change of position that the difficult, unproductive task of making a place for lack. If ever psychoanalysis was saved from the ordeal of fascism, today, the ordeal that we would need to survive are the lapidary translations of late capitalism with its banishings of the unconscious.

## II. The Psychic Apparatus is a Translating Apparatus

In *Traducir el psicoanálisis...*, Braunstein underscores the double use of the genitive in “translations of analysis” and finds something essential to the double sense that can be heard in the phrase. Not only has the analytic discourse been historically nurtured and brought to adulthood in the many translations and migrations from a mother tongue traversed by its spokespersons, but the subsequent re-translations that the clinical work prompts, but the matter itself to be analyzed, the psychic apparatus, is in its core a translational apparatus whose vicissitudes describe the subjective condition, as established by Freud (1966) in his “Letter 52”.

The psychic apparatus as a linguistic apparatus, will thus be read in the Lacanian aphorism as: “the unconscious is structured as a language”. The magic blackboard, as an inscription machine and a collection of remains and traces is a useful supplement to the translation, which, in the Lacanian metabolization of the Freudian discovery demonstrates: the anatomy of the subject beyond its biology responds to the



determination of the signifier, a signifier that translates into flesh. The repercussions of the translation, as one thing moves into another, as dislodged and displaced from word to body are demonstrated as the sifting of experience through the sieve of language that rules over neurology, as expressed by the *Studies on Hysteria*.

In the Lacanian structuralist reading, nothing can be thought of as divorced from its linguistic expression: the corporeal, the social, the political are pure verbal textures... their translations, the texture of the world. Language in its translations and in its translation errors (resistance, for Freud, is a failure in translation), not only rules over the dethroned empire of nerve impulses, but also produces the world. The psychic apparatus, like any other translation machinery, will be a producer of remains and balances that in their displacement, accumulate and insist, return to the body as symptoms knocking on the door of a new opportunity to be translated—and moved through. And although Freud will keep the medical language for a long time, talking about the cellular and the nervous, what he is talking about according to Lacan's re-translation, is the linguistic subject animated by the channels of (non)sense. The genealogy of the servitude to linguistics is simple: the moment the subject utters its first word and is thus separated from the *jouissance* of being One and the autism of being one and complete with the body of the mother, it becomes *de facto* and forever introduced and trapped in the kingdom and the power of the social and political Other. This subject will be thus susceptible to be paralyzed or innervated in accordance with the laws of language in its limited stock of goods (objects for the drive) and evils (sufferings). At the core of the enigma of hysteria – that body whose suffering summons the Other through the other – is the subject not of anatomy, but the subject innervated precisely under the rule of the dressmaker's garment, whose cuts and seams belong to the repertoire of Language. In other words, what Freud demonstrates, and Lacan re-translates is that the body is articulated, in the frankly literal and real sense of anatomical articulation, by the word.

The subject through its own parlance, that unique language whose anatomy Lacan compresses in the neologism *lalangue*, protests, accepts, negotiates its condition of being twisted, tensed between the two-sided coin called Language: the language of the Other as a structuring reality and organizer of the experience on the one hand, and language of the Other as alienator on the other. "*Extimacy*" will be the neologism coined by Lacan that compresses in a single image-word the dual and contradicting experience: the weaving and stitching of the body together by the discourse of the Other, whose stitches also pierce and puncture the false distinction between outside and inside, drawing on our psychic porosity. The body, sifted through the sieve of language, is the texture of an attempt on translation between what would appear to be two poles that, in reality, are a single Moebian strip. This form, which commands the sifting of the meshes of language, will also produce remainders that reminds us that everything that escapes the sifting of language is quite untranslatable and thus can only be seized in a tangential way: through the circulation of the signifier, which, by fabricating a new symptomatic mesh, tries to capture what previously escaped and has been called the Real by Lacan.

The psychic apparatus as translational machinery, as a linguistic compact, faces a double resistance to translation. On the one hand, the inventory for translation does not belong to us but to the Other; on the other, the inventory always falls short: language is exceeded by the imprint of *jouissance*. The body will be the canvas onto which said translation problem is drawn, a problem layed out, for example, in the dialectic (not dialogue) with the image: a translation that will always show the lack in its original, as the mirror image, that "orthopedic complement" that highlights the insufficiency in the archaic translation of the subject. As there is no-body outside the grasp of the Other or outside the grasp of the panopticon of the gazes of the other, the dialectic between the body and its image is an always a short-circuited translation that is heard in the irreducible distance, in the slippery slope between the subject of enunciation and the subject of the enunciation. This is, in the distance between the *je* and the *moi* an insurmountable problem of "translator's treason or betrayal" is announced, betrayal which can be read as the disloyalty between languages (between German and French, between the language of the mother and that of the father) or as the problem of constant betrayals between the *I* and the *self*... whatever that may be.

That which Freud discovers as one is not master in in its own house, and that the mastery of the self is a most hallucinated matter, can be classified as a problem of translation (*transladar, transalatus* “to move or carry over”) that can be traced from the first impressions of *jouissance* to the conformation of the unconscious as the hidden tyrant of the “official self”. The subject will always be radically subjected to this first translational leap and will carry the scars of this first deciphering of *jouissance*: unleashed, loose and meaningless imprints whose translation sense will remain unsuccessful and “does not cease not being written”. The translational operation that makes up for psychic life will thus be mandated by the insufficiency of words: the original *jouissance* to be translated always remains always “in translation”, like a purloined letter, in *souffrance*. There will never be a mastery over this first operation as *jouissance*, which is closer to The Thing (*das Ding*) than to word-object-things (*die Sache*), belongs a register (the Real) alien to that of language (symbolic and imaginary). (Freud does make a clear distinction between the Thing and the things but it gets more or less lost in its translations). The unconscious logic then, belongs to the subject only marginally, not only the alphabet with which he deciphers is insufficient as what is to be deciphered belongs to another register, but in addition to its insufficiency, the inventory of language comes from the Other who will necessarily alienate the translator with its grammatical rulings and its censorship and its need for good behavior. The subject, as Lacan (1993) tells us, will be thus governed by the logic of foreignness:

Within this perspective, quite instructive in itself, we can observe first of all that it is not purely and simply, as Freud always emphasized, from the negative trait of being an *Unbewusst*, a non conscious, that the unconscious derives its efficacy. Translating Freud, we say—the unconscious is a language. Its being articulated doesn’t imply its recognition, though. The proof of this is that everything proceeds as if Freud were translating a foreign language, even carving it up and reassembling it. The subject is, with respect to his own language, quite simply in the same position as Freud. (p. 11)

And so, Lacan introduces us to Freud as a first decipherer of that psychic realm which until his moment had remained untranslated, of that foreign logic that the psychic experience was. Both Freud and the subject of the unconscious are in the same position according to Lacan, both trying to decipher from scratch and with insufficient language that which exceeds words and pertains to the Real. In a blow to scientific narcissism: the subject is in the same position in regard to his “own” (but not owned) language as the translator is to a foreign language; he half knows it, he fully suffers from it. He suffers insofar as he is commanded, from the bottom of the psychic apparatus, by the untranslatable remains, balances, leftovers and navels that return fantasmatically. He remains commanded, organized, by the remainders of a translation that is mostly a displacement effort from one code to another that also will not accommodate it. As we only have the insufficient tools of a symbolic heritage, into which, according to Lacan’s Heideggerian re-translation, we have been thrown .

The human condition is thus, in Freud’s (1966) account, the product of the successful, inhibited, diverted, and censored translations as described in his “Letter 52”. The subject is governed then by a constant flow of material that crosses the psychic apparatus in an ever circulating and uninterrupted deciphering operation. The flow has a sense, of course, but the effort becomes infinite because it is also always blocked and impeded. The impediment is insurmountable, first off, due to the insufficient nature of language (*das Ding* does not fit in *die Sache*) but also because of the resistance, characteristic to neurosis: “A failure of translation—this is what is known clinically as repression. The motive for it is always a release of unpleasure which would be generated by translation: it is though this unpleasure provokes a disturbance of thought which does not permit the work of translation” (Freud, “Letter 52” in *Standard edition*, 1966, p. 235). The psychic apparatus will always work at a forced pace: it translates primary processes into secondary ones, taking us from raw experience to symbolization through the experience of unpleasure—an impossible task that owes its impossibility, Braunstein (2012) tells us, to that no two languages could be more alien to each other:

Translation, transfer, interpretation are concepts closely related to each other and we are satisfied with noting their proximity to the “untranslatable” (...) and the impossible task of the psychoanalyst set to “translate” and “interpret” the language of the primary processes in terms of the secondary processes,

the two most incompatible languages that exist, since one of them stands *against* of the other and actively manifests his *resistance* to the translation. (pp. 19-20, translation is mine)

This difficult translation— not without resistance— of the raw experience towards the symbolic amounts to a reordering and transcription that builds the “official self” of the subject and orients it towards consciousness. Difficulties that can be traced out in the very translation of the word “*Verdrängung*” as we play with the translations of the word into different languages. *Verdrängung*, translates in English as repression, in Spanish as *represión*, touching on the difficulty for translation that Freud is pointing out, a resistance that pushes back or pushes down material and resists unpleasure. But if we take the French translation into account, a fuller picture is painted. *Verdrängung* translates into French, as *refoulement*, and beyond describing the mere act of opposition, it implies the banishment process with which a foreigner is denied access to a territory of the pleasure principle. “Repression” thus fails to inscribe in the scene the *jouissance* of censorship involved in the operation, as “*refoulement*” goes farther in describing an operation that, while resisting an enjoyment that is erected against the social bond, generates as a byproduct an excess, an expatriate amount of energy that will remain insisting to gain entrance through the door to consciousness. In other words, the open balance that the image of “*refoulement*” includes speaks to the remains left on the “other side” of consciousness. As, Braunstein (2020) tells us, “speech is the diaphragm to *jouissance*” (p. 187), and, the many translations of *Verdrängung* supplement each other and allow us to think what is at stake in the problem of psychic translation when words are that which, like a diaphragm, modulate *jouissance*. One could free associate to the implications of the scene implied in “*refoulement*”, the frank opposition of the nationalist resisting foreignness, difference, discord by resisting the unpleasure of trans-lation. What is left on the other side of the door are the exiled and dis-located remains, waiting, insisting, to gain entry to consciousness.

This complex, polydynamic and multifaceted process will be better described by Braunstein (2020) in his book *Jouissance: a Lacanian concept*, offering a sharp and definitive proposition when reading the “Letter 52” in the light of *Television* and through the peculiar notion of *jouissance* (which has no precise translation to English) as a repetition engine. Braunstein will brilliantly insert the Lacanian concepts on the “simple” schema of the straight line, and with this, will re-read and re-translate the entire Freudian and Lacanian teaching.

This scheme of the psychic apparatus “intervened” upon by Braunstein will offer a complex and supplemental teaching when he inserts on the line drawn from perception to consciousness the notion of *jouissance* on the initial and final points of the apparatus. This “re-charged” scheme would condense the teaching in the following trajectory: from the *jouissance* of One, to the *jouissance* of Meaning:

W—————Wz—————Ubw—————Vb—————Bew  
(*Jouissance*)—————(j’*ouis sens*)

The journey between the two modes of *jouissance* and its sequence of translations goes as follows:

From *jouissance* (W) to the Id (Wz), from the Id to the Unconscious (Ubw), from the Unconscious to the Preconscious (Vb) and from the Preconscious to Consciousness (Bew) (Braunstein, 2020, p. 204)

In three intermediate states: encryption, decipherment, interpretation (as producer of meaning) the two Freudian topics are condensed: both the *Id* and the *Icc* are there, but they are most markedly, not the same). The schema then describes the two moments in Lacan’s teaching through the Freudian schema: from the enjoyment of the One (*jouissance*) or raw *jouissance* to the enjoyment of the Other. In other words, from *jouissance* to j’*ouis sens*.

The bulk of the psychic apparatus would then “carry the marks and fatigue of transiting through intermediary points of succession” (Braunstein, 2020, p. 193), due to transfers of material, compulsively repeated translations of a first *jouissance* that insists on its untranslatability as “always already lost”. This

first *jouissance* or *jouissance* of the One, cryptic imprint on the body, is transmuted, transferred, translated, deciphered by the primary processes —displacement and condensation— onto the language of the Other, framework in which the body inhabits in search of Meaning, in which, we pretend, The Thing to be fully contained within the word.

This translation is always a “battle lost and won”, Braunstein uses the neologism “*triunfracasar*” in Spanish to allude to this essentially human and blatantly futile gesture of trying to seize the world with words, where there will always be a Real that remains outside, that which is simultaneously impossible and possible in its dimension of that which always returns to its place (Braunstein, 2012, p. 111). In between *das Ding* and *die Sache*—between The Thing and the things, there is an untransferable balance, which insists. The problem in the translation of these terms is known—and echoes with the balance that remains from all translating operations— since only in German is “The Thing” distinguished (*das Ding*), transcendental, mute, ambiguous and related to the philosophical *res* in front of the “things”, the plural of the *res extensa*, the material objects on which we try to anchor “The Thing”.

That open balance that insists, between The Thing and the objects, between Good and goods (equivocity that Lacan exploits in “Kant with Sade”) condenses the impossibility of translational success between *jouissance* and the unconscious. The attempt to translate The Thing onto the material objects in which the drive is anchored will be insistent and repetitive insofar as what is desired is never that in which desire can be tangibly embodied. There will be a necessary amount of dissatisfaction that comes from the linguistic nature and that indicates the disparity between the primary and secondary tongues, a disparity that draws a hole around which the drive revolves. But dissatisfaction *per-se*, derived from untranslatability, also keeps us pulsating.

This non-rapport between The Thing and things in its everyday, this failed translation that shows up in the existential leaps between sense and non-sense that make up everyday life is best illustrated in a story by Rubem Fonseca, “Pride”. A story that underscores Braunstein’s (2008) repeated assertion in *Memoria y Espanto* that *jouissance* is never remembered, but always re-invented. A brief synopsis of the short story “Pride” illustrates the point: the texture of what is called life lies in the grounds of the mistranslation between the Thing and the things. In Fonseca’s one page story, the main character is a man with no name, who is suffering from what seems to be an anaphylactic shock. The story is told from within the bodily experience of this character whose airways are closing rapidly right in front of a doctor who, sunk in his own tide of personal concerns, is unable to notice his patient’s rapidly progressing emergency situation. The character quickly begins to feel how he is sliding to his death, his throat closes up, he begins to choke and slip into the flood of childhood memories, metonymies that, we have all been told, precede death: the wooden darning egg with which his mother mended his socks as a child, the poverty in which he lived as a boy, the humiliation of social rejection, the pride that motivated his mother to force him to paint his big toe black to disguise the hole in his sock... the flood of memory stops at that image, the whole in the sock that condenses his childhood. He can’t speak, he can’t signal as he becomes increasingly paralyzed by suffocation...the doctor, meanwhile, has been tied up in his own musings, going about his instruments ...The whole experience of the patient is summarized in the hole, the painted nail... one cannot overlook the similarity between the whole and the hole that functions as a narrative *capiton*, a navel, the signifier where the translation of emotional life meets with material life. He is suddenly embarrassed, most literally, embarrassed to death, mostly embarrassed because his mother had been embarrassed which sums up to his whole life’s experience... the hole is enough that he suddenly can summon enough strength, a pretext, enough to hit the stretcher as he can utter no words and he is gasping for air... BAM! He hits the stretcher. The doctor, lulled by his own silent dramas (the patient had found him dolled up and in a hurry to leave) is woken up to the fact that death is taking hold of his patient... immediately he looks for an antidote, he curses, stumbles and slams drawers. Our character’s throat totally closed, the signifier lurking, engages in a second blow against the metal of the stretcher: BAM!..., he remembers his mother...Bam! Bam!...he remembers the women he’s been with, BAAAAAAAAM! The obfuscated doctor unties the patient’s tie, begins to untie his shoelaces to remove his shoes... and as the shoe begins to come off, the character finally gasps for air. On the verge of uncovering the hole in the sock, the painted toe, the historical poverty, the

disapproving look of the mother when they took off his shoes, the character comes up to surface from asphyxiation, gathers up dear life and walks out of the office ....

In this fictional compact (*Seminar IV* is dedicated to how truth shows up through fiction) the habitable world of metaphors and metonymies is laid-out. That of object-signifiers, objects and/or signifiers, that of the mnemonic gorge that expresses the futile attempt to translate The Thing, deciphered, ambiguous, monstrous into the ciphered world of the possessions, the figures, which confer Meaning....

Lost *jouissance* lands as nostalgia, which, if fully translated, Freud tells us in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, would return us to the inanimate realm of the death: we enjoy and suffer both striving for the perfect translation, in the oceanic motifs, however, it is within the translation failures, in the humble, plain and awkward translation where the world is made and inhabited, Fonseca teaches us. In other words, “truth has the structure of fiction”. To which Lacan warns: “*The non-dupes err!*”

This is: sense is inhabited and Sense, enjoyed in a *j’ouis sens*-ical manner. In everyday life the mistranslation between the emotional and the material is suffered... in analysis, mistranslation could not be more generative. Remnants will fall from the more or less stable sequence of translations in the psychic apparatus, these remnants will be surplus material that will keep insisting to find other courses of signification outside of the word. The body will thus be articulated in symptomatic knots or sublimatory pathways in which the surplus of the untrtranslated is stuffed in: sublimation can become symptomatic, the symptom, sometimes, sublime: let us remember the horse’s muzzle in the Hans case or the *glanz auf der Nase* as a fetish resulting from mistranslation, or the musical swing of indecision materialized in the *que faire* ? that insists in material life as the recurring image of a beetle, a *Käfer, Kä—fer...*

The taxonomy of the operation of translation and its stumbling blocks can be seen in two great leaps that coincide with the mishaps from inscription to parlance as described by Braunstein. For Braunstein there is a need to underscore two moments in the translations of the psyche, these two moments need to be kept in mind when dealing with the taxonomy of sense and meaning: from raw *Jouissance* or the enjoyment of the One (*jouissance*) towards the Unconscious... and... from the Unconscious to the Conscious (*j’ouis sens*):

The first jump, from the raw *jouissance* (*enjoyment*) to the Unconscious: “...the Freudian unconscious, which operates by condensation and displacement, is the process by which ciphered *jouissance* is deciphered and transferred to the social link, articulated speech directed to someone, ready to be filled with meaning by whoever listens. Ready for misunderstanding. *Jouissance* is thus transplanted, exiled from the body towards language...” (Braunstein, 2020, p. 187).

One goes then from a primal and archaic *jouissance*, which corresponds to *The Thing*, towards the unconscious, which, Braunstein tells us, is already a discourse but one that obeys neither syntax nor logic, a discourse that lets *jouissance* seep in, that “anti-economic *jouissance*, against the grain of the principle of pleasure” (Braunstein, 2020, p. 191), structured like a language that has not yet “cross-dressed” into meaning.

The unconscious as a first decipherment from raw *jouissance*, is a language still dis-located for the Other that consequently has its own and singular logic, what Lacan calls *lalangue*: one’s own private language, where the sense of the hole in the sock belongs.... symptom of the forced marriage of that first *jouissance* with the discourse of the Other. The subject, insofar as it speaks, will thus always be astride, divided between the realm of the Other (this superimposed, symbolic register, which presents itself as the (im)possible repertoire of translation) and the singular versions, diversions, and perversions in translation that form the *pastiche* we call the “I”.

The second moment of psychic translation comprises the journey that goes from the unconscious to the conscious, or, from the lapsus to the *jouissance* of Sense (*j’ouis sens*). In this moment, the Other is necessarily embodied in the analyst who is supposed to be able to give consistency or Meaning to the mistranslations of *jouissance* that manifest as symptoms or complaints. Thus, the symptom as the natural

result of a truncated translation insists on finding Meaning. Freud (1966) writes to Fliess in his “Letter 52”:  
“I should like to emphasize the fact that the successive registrations represent the psychical achievement of successive epochs of life. At the frontier between two such epochs of translation of the psychical material must take place. I explain the peculiarities of the psychoneuroses by supposing that this translation has not taken place in the case of some of the material, which has certain consequences.” (p. 235)

It is in these translations of the unconscious material into consciousness that Braunstein will say, in the Spanish version of *Jouissance*...that when enjoying meaning, we thus enjoy a certain cross-dressing”<sup>[6]</sup> into meaning. One “enjoys”/suffers (*goza de*) of the cross dressing of the signifier in so far as being, thinking, feeling and understanding entails agreeing on, making “as if” the spectacular flows of primal *jouissance* could be landed and expressed when filtered through the meshes of language into words that actually purport Meaning. Interpretation, intertwined with the making “as if”, thus:

...leads to meaning, a meaning that we can consider equivalent to the Freudian system of perception-consciousness and that is linked to the coherence that prevails in “our official self”. It is the secondary process, not the primary process, this is testimony to the ego. In dreams it is called secondary revision, an operation that serves to cover up truth, protect sleep and absorb the impact of the real on the ego of wakefulness that clings to reality: a reality made of meaning, in the knot between the symbolic, and the imaginary to the *exclusion of the real*. (Braunstein, 2020, p. 187, emphasis mine).

For Braunstein the drama of our psychic life lies (lays and lies) on the impossibility of the translation of *jouissance* that, impossible to put in words, “enjoys” disguising itself as meaning as it cross-dresses in an operation with heavy make-up in order to protect its pact with the pleasure principle. But there will always be, of course, a *Beyond the pleasure principle*...one denounced by repetition, as untranslated *jouissance*, *refouled* will insist as the tell-tale sign of the impossible dimension of translation. An impossibility which is found in the very impossibility of translating *jouissance* into English—*jouissance* as that untranslatable, that central navel of Lacanian theory that always operates against meaning.

The two ends of the scheme of the comb (metaphor of the stumbling translation that amounts to psychic life) will thus have two navels that only translate through equivocation. In the phonetical equivocation we will find more or less the gist of the problem of psychic translation: from *jouissance* to *j’ouis sens*...“I hear sense” is how *j’ouis sens* translates, enjoyment will then translates into “hearing sense”.

In Lacan’s return to Freud we’ll see a myriad of puns where misunderstanding is exploited, erecting itself against any conceptual reductionism, establishing a practice of meditation on the translation problems internal both to the analytical discourse and psychic life. The pun *jouissance– j’ouis sens* is one of the ways in which, through invention and equivocation, the internal untranslatability of the analytic experience which can only be described tangentially, in its mis-saying and mis-hearing, will be established. A practice that, consistent with the Freudian discovery, speaks about the segway into the unconscious through the slip—from the *Unbewusst* (unconscious) to the *Une-bévue* (a-blunder).

“So, we posit the following rule. No signifier-element, thus defined as an object, a relationship or a symptomatic act, in neurosis for example, can be regarded as having a univocal scope” (Lacan, 2020, p. 282). Within Seminar IV, Lacan will explore the signifier in its dimension of “bridge” regarding Hans’s phobia. The signifier will be a bridge to the unconscious insofar as it is a bridge between raw and primal *jouissance* and a *jouissance* of Sense, for both Hans and his analyst. The signifier, in Hans’s case that mutates from the *wiwi-macher* to the horse’s black muzzle, never is— and this is where psychoanalysis differs from its therapeutic unidimensional translations— the meaning “in itself”:

The signifier is a bridge in a domain of significations. The consequence of this is that the signifier doesn’t reproduce significations. It transforms and recreates them. This is what is at stake (...) we need to be attentive to the twist in the signifier that little Hans brings about. Which is its point of departure and what is its point of arrival? (...) we can see him turning his interest successively to

what is loaded and unloaded, or to what heaves into motions with more or less a jolt (...) Among all this linkages of variously fantasmatic signifier-elements revolving around the theme of movement, or more exactly, if you will allow this, within the theme of movement, the term of modification, acceleration, there is specifically the word *Bewegung*, *motion*. This element is absolutely essential in the structuration of the first fantasies and gradually brings out other element, among which are the mother's drawers, a pair of yellow ones, a pair of black ones. (Lacan, 2020, p. 291)

Neither the horse, nor the phobia for that matter, means anything, it is not an instrument of communication, but an element that syntagmatically articulates Hans's world. The symptom is only a starting point—and this will be the virtue of the Freudo-Lacanian translation of the psychic phenomenology: there is no Sense (signification), but a circulating decoy that describes a sense, direction or course—which is what needs to be translated. Just like in the “Seminar on the Stolen Letter”, the signifier's literal journey articulates a structure, a logic, a relation between elements, a systematic coherence given by the games of signification as decoy. The string or chain that weaves a text is that which insists on being translated, there is no One meaning within the singular parlance—the *lalangue* of the *parlêtre* (two more untranslatables). Lacan reads in Hans's case that the mutations of the phobic signifier, its translations (as movement from one place to the other) are the ones describing the problematic structure the child has been thrown into, namely, the heavy presence of “the mother's panties” in the face of a non-intervening of the father. The phobia is then a translation of a problem, a signifying course that relates more to movement of the questions it posits (the Earth rotates and translates) than to meaning. The phobia serves a vehicle to the ontological gorge overturning, as a bridge, as a thread that sews the world together. Embodied in the horse, the elusive material settles in the black muzzle that closes the black hole, the gap, between *The Thing* and the words that relentlessly strive to grasp it.

We are going to draw to a close by saying that, in the mythical development of a symptomatic signifying system, one should always take into consideration its systematic coherence, at each step of the way, along with the kind of development that is specific to it in the diachrony of time. The development of any mythical system in a neurotic—I once called it *the neurotic's individual myth*—presents as the issuing, the progressive dislocation, of a series of mediations that are resolved by chaining-up signifiers which always bears a circular character. This may be more or less apparent but is nonetheless fundamental in that the point of arrival bears a deep relation to the point of departure, without being exactly the same. I mean that the impasse that is always there at the start is to be found again at the point of arrival, where it can be regarded as a solution in an inverted form, just with a change of sign. But the impasse from which one began is always found in some fashion at the end of the operative displacement of the signifying system. (Lacan, 2020, p. 293)

Once again, just like in the “the purloined letter”, what becomes the tell-tale is not the letter but its journey and the implications, its ripples on whoever briefly possesses the letter/signifier. In Hans's case, the symptom's mutations, its departures and arrivals draw a structure that maps out the child's anxieties. Something of the order of the real insists in the journey, that falls out from one untranslatable to another and compulsively repeats its attempt to cinch itself to another signifier, to an object or an image within that “set of signifiers that intervene to structure the real by introducing new combined relationships” (Lacan, 2020, p.293). Just like in the *Witz* (the witty joke), the symptomatic signifier shows itself to be impossible to translate fully into another language (the one of logical sense) other than its own (*lalangue*). The only portion translated is “its possibility of playing on the nonsense that is fundamental to any use of sense” (Lacan, 2020, p. 287). As the signifier is never fully translatable one will have to act “as if” we were accessing the Meaning without fully subscribing to it, one will have to play with it, in Braunstein's words, we would have to cross-dress. The signifier will then be always in *souffrance* never conveying the “everything” and always on the way to its destination in its appeal (*appellation*) to the Other:

The Other can never fully guarantee meaning because there is an inescapable stumbling block, a limit placed on meaning that is nothing other than its absence, due to the non-existence of the sexual relationship. Two aspects can be recognized in language: the aspect of meaning and the aspect of the

sign. Lacan warns us that one could believe that meaning is the proper path for analysis, Freud's path, and that this path would deliver tons of meaning and always, sexual. But it is not so, because meaning is reduced to the absence of meaning in the sexual relationship. (Braunstein, 2012, p. 77)

The navels of untranslatability, for Braunstein, will be the bedrock for the practice of translation both within the psychoanalytic dogma and the undertaking of translation that the clinical practice is. In the navels, both psychic and textual, in the impossible translations that can only derive into semblances of communication, the "as ifs" that never will find identity with what one "truly means" and threaten us with the error of "having understood". In this failure, something of the essential groundwork of psychoanalysis is found, this is, castration. These *Nabels* will thus be, for Braunstein, the royal route to the Real *dit*-mension of the text, they will point to the original *jouissance*, though they will have to be unsubscribed from its promise, from the *jouissance* of Ultimate Meaning in spite of having, inevitably, to flirt a little with it. Only in the commitment to making mistakes, in the commitment to being lost while still aiming for sense, castration is registered: as the famous Lacanian pun, *Les noms du père*, is also, "*The non-dupes err*".

What one plays with while translating at the end of it all, is castration: the game in which those who lose, win. Thus, the translator, or the analyst will have to interpolate footnotes and parentheses and ellipses and make use of fiction to try to *pin down* the ever sliding signification. The navel of the unconscious will be found under the condition of constant slippage (the slip of the tongue, *A-blunder*). The error, in psychoanalysis, is wide open to success, Lacan says: "The sense of the sense in *my* practice is captured (*Begriff*) by the fact that it escapes (...) It is by the fact that it escapes (...) that a discourse takes on its sense (...) We have said what the rod of Sense is worth. Ending there does not prevent it from making a hole" (Lacan, 2021, p. 579, translation is mine)

The hole is *jouissance* of the One, around which the signifier gravitates:

Re-citing: "the unconscious, structured like a language...for it is in the analysis (\*interpolate by adding: or with the symptom as a signifier or the signifier as a symptom) where it is organized as a discourse. And by ordering itself as a discourse, a word addressed to the other, it is charged with an unusual meaning, it reveals itself as a knowledge underlying the subject, it shows itself as the bearer of *jouissance* that crosses the now permeable diaphragm of the word to articulate it, translate it, pass it on to the checks and balances... . To do so, it is necessary to disassemble the discursive coherence, attempt against the grammar, play with the logical and homophonic equivocation, upend the customs of meaning and misplace the Humpty Dumpty who controls it, the one called by Freud, already in 1896, in this same Letter 52, "our official Self. (Braunstein, 2006, p.196, translation is mine)

"There is no metalanguage" with which we would have to think that the only product of *the translations* is the semblance of a meaning, just as the social bond is a semblance of the translation-transcription of *jouissance*. In line with the analyst's discourse, we would unsubscribe from the Ultimate Meaning knowing that there is no sexual relationship, *jouissance* is not rediscovered but reinvented, as Braunstein insists. We will have to unsubscribe where neither religion, nor science nor capitalist technology unsubscribe from Meaning and enthrone the (imaginary) other in the place of the (symbolic) Other. Only psychoanalysis has a privileged place for lack: it upholds that there is no Other of the Other while still upholding a discourse, a translation, in which the Real will be included—giving rise to the lack—as excluded. Including the exclusion of the real in language will therefore be what one can come to terms with.

Inhabiting language is inhabiting outside of Paradise, Braunstein tells us, it is "The *jouissance* whose absence would render the universe vain, not reached but evoked, circumscribed, demarcated, invoked, maintained at a prudent distance by metaphors that trap the meaning and of metonymies that postpone it" (Braunstein, 2020, p. 188).

(Translated from Spanish by the author)



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## Notes:

[1] TN. Braunstein uses “*cauces de sentido*” which would translate literally as courses to sense. Braunstein repeatedly makes the point to show the symbolic and the imaginary dimension of parlance as a course which indicate how the available courses and channels language and culture offers to metabolize raw *jouissance*.

[2] The original alludes to the bodily *jouissance*, the painful enjoyment of the back and forth implied between loyalties, between absolutes, between literalities and truths when one translates...

[3] Braunstein never forgets to go back to the etymological core of words, playing off in translation is always *tras-ladare*, to move from one place to the other, in other words, translation is always migration, displacement.

[4] Consider how words, in psychoanalysis, are many times un-tied to their meaning.

[5] The original states “*goce del Uno*” y “*goce de sentido*” as translations of *jouissance* and *j’ouis sens* respectively into Spanish. Untranslatability of the word *jouissance* in English is not discussed in this paper as the paper is a dissertation made in Spanish, in which *jouissance*, more or less, is “*goce*”, therefore there is an open omission.

[6]TN The word “cross-dressing” does not appear in Rossman’s translation of Braunstein’s book. I took the liberty of exploiting Braunstein’s concept of “cross-dressing”, “*travestismo de sentido*” in the original, as I find it underscores the “as if-ness” implied in the act of translation, especially when we think of the translations of that which amounts to *jouissance*. Cfr. (Braunstein, 2006, pp. 181-187).

## Bio:

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**Publication Date:**

January 8, 2024