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Jacques Lacan's *Encore*, read across French and English, disperses being in an insect-like suspension, a swarm of signifiers inflecting sexual division and mortality. Love would hide the sting of lives exiled in language, overrun the enigma of script in a smarm of incorporation. Visible language is contingency, encounter with the cells of abandoned hives, the serial surreality of the ubiquitous: the letters through which meaning comes to life. Today demographic mutations appear to rival the infinite combinations of words. Microchip humming extensions of biological man stir the breeze with unthinkable cross pollination, to end in honey or ashes. The killer bees are us.

*We are the bees of the Invisible.  
Nous butinons éperdument le miel  
du visible pour l'accumuler dans la  
grande ruche d'or de l'Invisible.*

– Rilke

By prospecting outside the bodily envelope, the cranial, sexual bumps and cavities, Jacques Lacan leads psychoanalysis to visible mysteries: the text of language as unconscious mind. Lacan insists that his reinterpretation of the psychoanalytic canon is faithful to the potential of Freud's most revolutionary discoveries. The traditional rallying points of instinctual drives, scientific modesty and the therapeutic goal of a unified ego, held back for Lacan a vision of the radical complexity of being and its scattering in the material of language. In Lacan's view, the exterior extensions of man, the linguistic and cultural codes which signify the sexed biological organism in private imagination and public representation, are all important. The imaginary unified self is to be dissolved in the scene of the Other, which is discourse soliciting response, an invitation to float the mirage of the subject, already undetermined.

That which looks without seeing, that which we usually look at without seeing, is that through which meaning comes: the materiality of the text, the signifier. The incarnate unity that speaks and resonates subcutaneously, reproduces itself in the body, but exists as a subject outside in a field of language also known as the Other or the Symbolic Order.

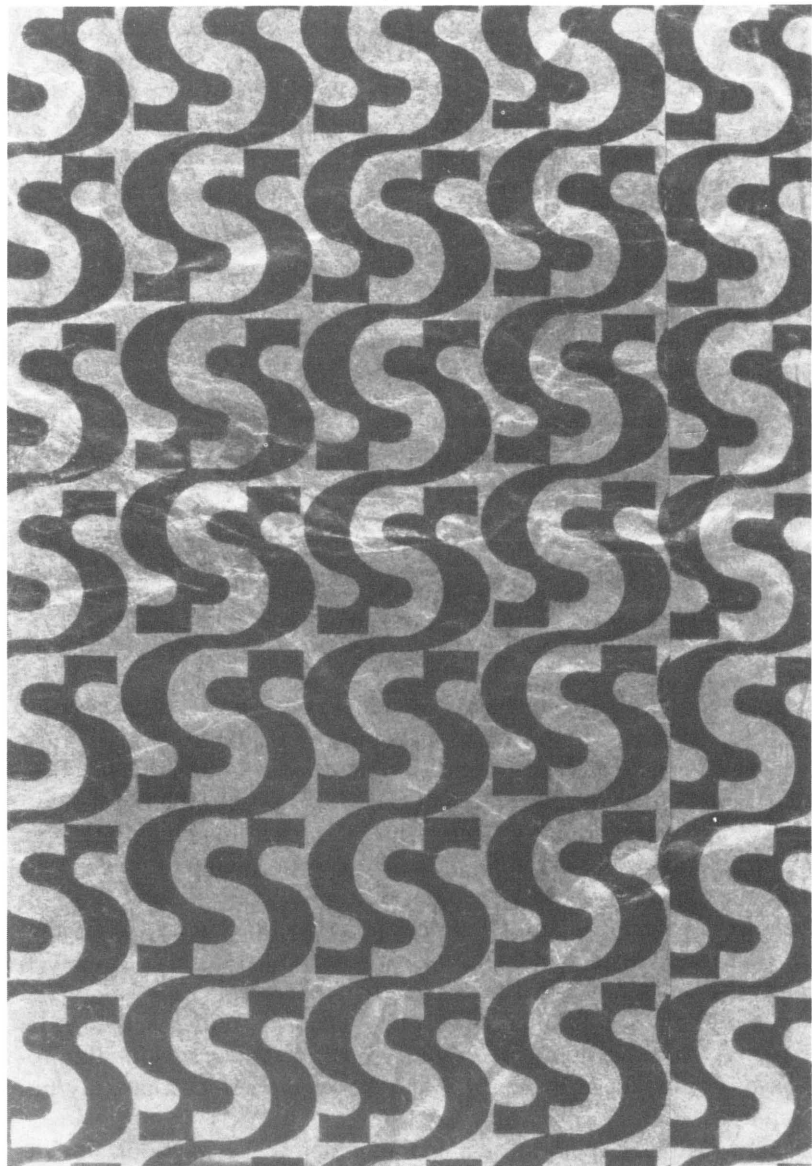


Figure 1: A Master Signifier or *S<sub>1</sub> S<sub>un</sub>* contains the homonym *essaim* in French, in English, swarm.

To look at language and not beyond it, is to encounter emptiness of meaning, to ask how that we know, how we claim possession of knowledge. A word or a name under which we try to incorporate our knowingness, a master signifier or  $S_1$ , *Sun*, in the French of Jacques Lacan's *Encore*,<sup>1</sup> contains the homonym *éssaim*, in English, swarm, as well as the question in French, *Est-ce un?* Is it one? These extremely suggestive homonyms serve to disperse the alleged subject in a multitude of words that hover, take flight, and are soon out of sight and mind. So does a swarm of bees from a hive fly off, accompanied by a queen, to start a new colony. The abandoned hive, often an artificial shelter, can reappear multiplied, as in the eruptive skin disease, hives. These pimples, *capitons* on the surface of the text/skin, are those mattress anchoring points that would pad being with substance.

The drone of language goes beyond hearing, the hearing of some "getting off" (*de la jouissance*)? Or worse, it sighs ("ou pire, ça s'oupire"), says Lacan. Speaking of Bernini's Saint Theresa (Santa Teresa in Agone) in *Encore* (a title which, of course, can be translated, *In the Body*, from the French homonym, *en corps*, so that we read, *Again/In the Body*), Lacan affirms peremptorily that "she's coming, there's no doubt about it" (*elle jouit, Sainte Thérèse, ça ne fait pas de doute*). Is the look of the other coming the look of writing, of the Other with a big *O*? Must pleasure and meaning coincide for there to be knowledge that knows that it knows? What of pleasure that is apparently experienced but which cannot be reported? It may be the refinding of the forgotten in a knowing that is not yet conscious.

Sexual pleasure (*jouissance*), can also be seen as an "out," the omission of a word or words in printing. This printer's out is translated in French as *bourdon*, which also means bumblebee, not to be confused with *un faux bourdon*, the drone or male honeybee, *abeille*. If orgasm does not write, the blank cusp of pleasure is nonetheless overrun by the presumed author, eager for the score of a copyright. But the "not writing" of pleasure does not mean its non-existence. It suggests that the other's pleasure is the enigma of script, the ambiguous smile of the textual Other, the surface that without seeing or knowing, enjoys, stung by the signifier alone. Contingency of encounter begins the unconscious deployment, the knitting, knotting, scanning, i.e. "writing," between two speaking subjects, largely outside of their conscious control or awareness. To stop not writing ("cesse de ne pas s'écrire") means to have the occasion to be open, thanks to corporeal propinquity, to symptoms and signs, to discourse. The displacement of the not (*ne* is a homonym in French for *noeud*, knot in English) in "does not stop writing" ("ne cesse pas de s'écrire"), marks the conscious will

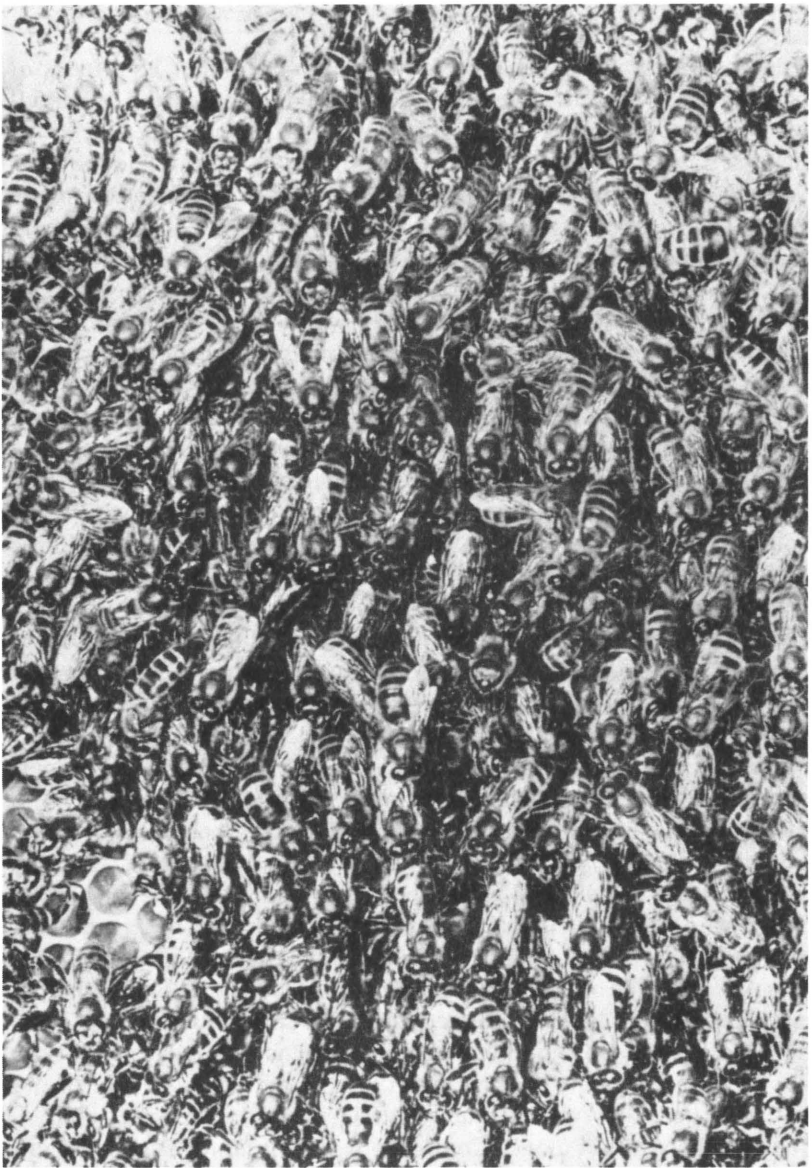


Figure 2: "Demographic mutations appear to rival the infinite combinations of language."

to connect, communicate, possess – “write” as a felt necessity, in other words, to love. Lacan maintains that the destiny and drama of love is the substitution of this negation, as in not/knot (*ne/noeud*), for the nothingness our apprehensions corroborate in the flash point of pleasure.

We identified being with body, it was up to us to know what kept us going, our god, our pleasure, but we have always been bodies in trouble with language. We would throw off the hive, *jeter un essaim*, with a master signifier *encore*. We would begin again writing, knotting into the loop, the noose, meeting ourselves coming, “cesse de ne pas, ne cesse pas,” the knot follows and precedes the stoppage, always already there, in spite of the little death of orgasm, *la petite mort*, always the trace we would idealize, incorporate as coming from us.

Strategies of self-preservation have kept the subject from knowing too much. The belief was circulated that sexuality was instinct, function, biology – a drive grounding the *élan* of a beautiful personal soul. Sexual pleasure was contained in a narcissistic auto-erotic communion with the dream of the continuous self, ignoring the death of the individual encoded in sexual reproduction. *Jouissance* has been hedged with legal, commercial language, seen as an economy of pleasure to be enjoyed without diminishing its substance, pleasure as usufruct. The essence in question being the sanctity of the subject as “used fruit,” never oversqueezed or spent. May we run out of ink before we overwrite, Derrida seems to be suggesting in *Limited Inc.*<sup>2</sup>

The relation of love to knowledge is the repetitive articulation that separation makes necessary. In the question *Tu m'aimes?* (Do you love me?), the beautiful soul, maimed, named, can't see the Other for the partner, his reflection hiding the impersonal nots/knots on the noose from the B-for-being, scene/seen. The drama of love is that articles of incorporation hide the noose in a seeming suspension of negation, it is slippage from unconscious tangency to self-conscious possessiveness. Internalized is the loneliness of capital, of that which counts, the One. “Y a de l'un,” says Lacan, there is some one, or is it two? Is it from them? Is it God? (*Est-ce deux? d'eux? Dieu?*) Is it you, dear? No, it is just the one, not the double you of swarm, but the letter “m” (pronounced as *aime* in French), the love of *smarm*, of cloying sentimentality and affectionate service. UN DO IT! the ad screams. It is the division of the subject *smarm* would deny.

What is the distinguishing sign that, like the omen of a circling vulture, or a bee in a bonnet, makes the signifier into a subject for another signifier? It is the phallus, son of the unmentionable mark of sexual difference, that would be the guarantee of meaning, the scepter (except

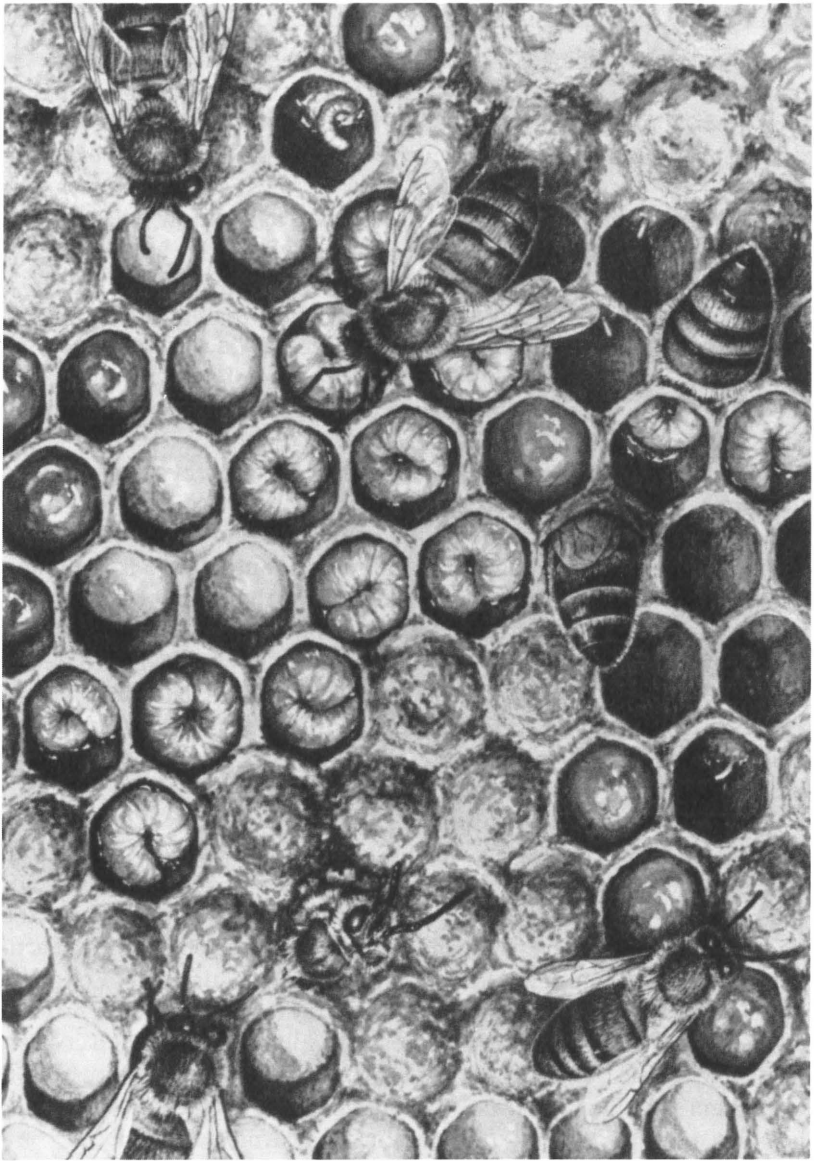


Figure 3: Visible language is an encounter with live, the hive.

her), that lets her come, not knowing, not having less or more than the limited ink that signs the name of the father that copies right. Lacan promotes the notion that consciousness can become the awareness that the place of speech, of some one (*de l'un*), is not the place of being. No, that rock, that island, bunched muscle, pumped-up senescence is not. The condition of language is that it exists without us, in spite of us, the letter can be read in the absence of sender and receiver. Life, the biological life of sexed reproduction, has to be ambivalent about the inscription of language which distributes its being as a subject and is at the same time, visible evidence of death, of the disjunction between meaning and the marks on the gravestone. The signifier inflects the relation of the subject to a sex, to the Symbolic Order and to desire. The topological knot that structures the evanescent mirage of the subject is a drift of differential relations that exceed and fall short of the one, of the one-on-one, or one on/in of sexed pairing. Love swarms over suspension, the void or *béance* of abeyance, the omission/emission of *jouissance*; it is the after effect linked with the always already of the continuous one, now two, incorporated.

Life infected by language must hide the sting, the *pique*, the pique cure of bee-ing, the resentment of the subject's dispersion. Some love is the effort to side step the always threatening crisis to/of being. Pleasure has been enmeshed in laws of self-preservation, continuous dispensing provided capital is untouched. The distributive chains of signifiers that put the play and the name, the one, in the game that gives being to life, are the only experience of death consciousness can have.

Visible language is contingency, the chance encounter with the bones of being, the empty cells of the live, the hive, stumbled on in the abeyance of a misreading, a wretched pun, difference passing as the same in a homonym. As Michèle Montrelay puts it, "It is revolting to think that desire, that which man imagines is his most precious possession, fixes itself in the minuscule debris of little sense that are words."<sup>3</sup> The effect of seeing the production of meaning writ large, those mute, dead, graphic materials, is reminiscent of science fiction, entomology as etymology: enormously enlarged insects, mutants from atomic radiation, their grinding mandibles and hairy antennae striking terror or hilarity into the hearts of warm-blooded, smarmy humanists, affectionate mammals with beautiful souls and imperishable prose.

*La Belle Histoire d'amour*, as Edith Piaf called it, lovingly, bitterly, can be ravished again. It suffices to bring to the fore the serial surreality of the trivial arrangements through which meaning comes to life, as in visible language, that which abides usually unnoticed, a sightless nightwatch, a scattering of dots as in the blown-up replications of

newspaper photos. Dotted rectangles of bone, twenty-eight of them arranged by chance in a chain, make up the game of dominoes. Lovers play such a game with the bones of language, twenty-six letters and their two initials. Letters of desire are like the hooded capes of the masquerade ball also known as dominoes. Lost in the multiplying sameness of dancers, the lovers must struggle to recognize each other. Love is the contingent encounter that inaugurates the necessity of close reading, the writing of difference as style, the phantasm of destiny discovered . . . *encore*.

There is a radical outside of thought that a self-possessed subject cannot imagine, but the riddle of life and death is not buried at the end of earth or time, it repeats itself in our every attempt to articulate the world. This perpetual cleaving of being makes us cling to what separates. Relation is totally democratic: difference and interval are equally distant from nothing. This very egalitarianism, however, may now be threatened.

Living human organisms have multiplied in such numbers that a balance between human host and language virus could be upset. The word has not been recognized as a virus because it has enjoyed a symbiotic relationship with the host, speculates William S. Burroughs.<sup>4</sup> While the ultimate goal of a virus may well be the consumption of the host cells, the host, too, in this instance, has metastasized so that a shifting imbalance, a rivalry, is observed. Something like this may in fact be taking place.

Illusions of speech-centered individual sovereignty have given way. The constant playback of word and image and the information explosion, have given us the daily *frisson* of mobs swarming the representatives of incorporated impaction. Consciousness and conscience had been thought to be a private relation to language and the writing it inferred. Today the human languages are like the sound of tiny wings amplified to the roar of electric static broken only by the harsh bark of the police radio. Words fry like bacon on airwaves drowned out by the sound of tramping feet writing a wordless future. Demographic mutations appear to rival the infinite combinations of language. Yet, solid-state, microchip humming extensions of biological man, ubiquitous, insect-like, stir the breeze with unthinkable cross-pollination to end in honey or ashes. The killer bees are us.

1. Jacques Lacan. *Le Séminaire livre XX: Encore*. (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1975). My reading of *Encore* across French and English is an effort to connect it with contemporary mutations and knottings, private and public, of being and language. All subsequent references to Lacan are from this text.
2. Jacques Derrida. *Limited Inc: a b c ...* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1977).
3. Michèle Montrelay. *L'Ombre et le nom: sur la féminité*. (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1977), p. 10.
4. William S. Burroughs advances this idea in "Playback from Eden to Watergate," the introduction to the revised edition of *The Job* (New York: Grove Press, 1974).

Figure 1: S pattern wrapping paper, Christmas 1980, in flight between San Francisco and San Diego.

Figure 2: H. Doering, *A Bee is Born* (New York: Sterling Publishing Co., 1962).

Figure 3: Ibid.