

## To Open the Question

"Love," says Rimbaud, "has to be reinvented." It is in much the same spirit that we would like here to reinvent the seemingly self-evident question of the mutual relationship between literature and psychoanalysis. We mean indeed to suggest that not only the approach to the question, but also, the very relationship between literature and psychoanalysis — the way in which they inform each other — has in itself to be reinvented.

Let us outline this suggestion in a series of programmatic remarks, the purpose of which would be to analyze and to put in question the apparently neutral connective word, the misleadingly innocent, colorless, meaningless copulative conjunction: *and*, in the title: "Literature and Psychoanalysis." What does the *and* really mean? What is its conventional sense, its traditional function, its usual approach to the subject? In what way would we like to *displace* this function (to reinvent the "and"), — what would we like it to mean, how would we like it to *work*, in this issue?

Although "and" is grammatically defined as a "coordinate conjunction," in the context of the relationship between "literature and psychoanalysis" it is usually interpreted, paradoxically enough as implying not so much a relation of coordination as one of *subordination*, a relation in which literature is submitted to the authority, to the prestige of psychoanalysis. While literature is considered as a body of *language* — to be interpreted — psychoanalysis is considered as a body of *knowledge*, whose competence is called upon to interpret. Psychoanalysis, in other words, occupies the place of a *subject*, literature that of an *object*; the relation of interpretation is structured as a relation of master to slave, according to the Hegelian definition: the dynamic encounter between the two areas is in effect, in Hegel's terms, a "fight for recognition," whose outcome is the sole recognition of the master — of (the truth of) psy

choanalytical theory; literature's function, like that of the slave, is to *serve* precisely the *desire* of psychoanalytical theory — its desire for recognition; exercising its authority and *power* over the literary field, holding a discourse of masterly competence, psychoanalysis, in literature, thus seems to seek above all its own *satisfaction*.

Although such a relationship may indeed be satisfying to psychoanalytical theory, it often leaves dissatisfied the literary critic, the reader of a text, who feels that, in this frame of relationship, literature is in effect *not recognized* as such by psychoanalysis; that the psychoanalytical reading of literary texts precisely *misrecognizes* (overlooks, leaves out) their literary specificity; that literature could perhaps even be defined as that which remains in a text precisely *unaccounted for* by the traditional psychoanalytical approach to literature. In the literary critic's perspective, literature is a subject, not an object; it is therefore not simply a body of language to interpret, nor is psychoanalysis simply a body of knowledge with which to interpret, since psychoanalysis itself is equally a body of language, and literature also a body of knowledge, even though the mode of that knowledge may be different from that of psychoanalysis. What the literary critic might thus wish, is to initiate a real exchange, to engage in a real *dialogue* between literature and psychoanalysis, as between two different bodies of language and between two different modes of knowledge. Such a dialogue has to take place outside of the master-slave pattern, which does not allow for true dialogue, being, under the banner of competence, a unilateral monologue of psychoanalysis *about* literature.

In an attempt to disrupt this monologic, master-slave structure, we would like to reverse the usual perspective, and to consider the relationship between psychoanalysis and literature *from the literary point of view*. We would not presuppose, as is often done, that the business of defining, of distinguishing and of relating literature and psychoanalysis belongs, as such, to psychoanalysis. We would like to suggest — and the following articles will try to demonstrate this proposition each in its specific manner — that in much the same way as literature falls within the realm of psycho-

analysis (within its competence and its knowledge), psychoanalysis itself falls within the realm of literature, and its specific logic and rhetoric. It is usually felt that psychoanalysis has much or all to teach us about literature, whereas literature has little or nothing to teach us about psychoanalysis. If only as a working hypothesis, we will discard this presupposition. Instead of literature being, as is usually the case, submitted to the authority and to the knowledge of psychoanalysis, psychoanalysis itself would then here be submitted to the literary perspective. This reversal of the perspective, however, does not intend to simply reverse the positions of master and slave in such a way that literature now would *take over* the place of the master, but rather its intention is to disrupt altogether the position of mastery as such, to try to avoid *both* terms of the alternative, to deconstruct the very structure of the *opposition*, mastery/slavery.

The odd status of what is called a "literary critic" indeed suffices to mix and shuffle the terms of the alternative. It could be argued that people who choose to analyze literature as a profession do so because they are unwilling or unable to choose between the role of the psychoanalyst (he or she who analyzes) and the role of the patient (that which is being analyzed). Literature enables them not to choose because of the following paradox: 1) the work of literary analysis resembles the work of the psychoanalyst; 2) the status of what is analyzed — the text — is, however, not that of a patient, but rather that of a master: we say of the author that he is a master; the text has for us authority — the very type of authority by which Jacques Lacan indeed defines the role of the psychoanalyst in the structure of transference. Like the psychoanalyst viewed by the patient, the text is viewed by us as "a subject presumed to know" — as the very place where meaning, and *knowledge* of meaning, reside. With respect to the text, the literary critic occupies thus at once the place of the psychoanalyst (in the relation of interpretation) *and* the place of the patient (in the relation of transference). Therefore, submitting psychoanalysis to the *literary* perspective would necessarily have a subversive effect

the clear-cut polarity through which psychoanalysis handles literature as its other, as the mere object of interpretation.

There is another point on which literature can inform psychoanalytical discourse in such a way as to deconstruct the temptation of the master's position and the master-slave pattern. There is one crucial feature which is constitutive of literature but is essentially lacking in psychoanalytical theory, and indeed in theory as such: irony. Since irony precisely consists in dragging authority as such into a scene which it cannot master, of which it is *not aware* and which, for that very reason, is the scene of its own self-destruction, literature, by virtue of its ironic force, fundamentally deconstructs the fantasy of authority in the same way, and for the same reasons, that psychoanalysis deconstructs the authority of the fantasy — its claim to belief and to power as the sole window through which we behold and perceive reality, as the sole window through which reality can indeed reach our grasp, enter into our consciousness. Psychoanalysis tells us that the fantasy is a fiction, and that consciousness is itself, in a sense, a fantasy-effect. In the same way, literature tells us that authority is a *language effect*, the product or the creation of its own *rhetorical power*: that authority is the *power of fiction*; that authority, therefore, is likewise a fiction.

The primacy granted here to the literary point of view would therefore not simply mean that literature, in its turn, would claim — as has been done — priority and authority over psychoanalysis as its influential *historical source*, as its ancestor or its predecessor in the discovery of the unconscious; but rather, the reversal of the usual perspective is here intended to displace the whole pattern of the relationship between literature and psychoanalysis from a structure of rival claims to authority and to priority to the scene of this structure's deconstruction.

In view of this shift of emphasis, the traditional method of *application* of psychoanalysis to literature would here be in principle ruled out. The notion of *application* would be replaced by the radically different notion of *implication*: bringing analytical questions to bear upon literary questions, *involving* psychoanalysis in the

scene of literary analysis, the interpreter's role would here be, not to *apply* to the text an acquired science, a preconceived knowledge, but to act as a go-between, to *generate implications* between literature and psychoanalysis — to explore, bring to light and articulate the various (indirect) ways in which the two domains do indeed *implicate each other*, each one finding itself enlightened, informed, but also affected, displaced, by the other.

In its etymological sense, "implication" means "being folded within" (Latin: *im-plicare* = *in* + *fold*): it indicates, between two terms, a spatial relation of *interiority*. Application, on the other hand, is based on the presumption of a relation of exteriority; a presumption that, in the case of literature and psychoanalysis, can be shown to be a deceptive one. From the very beginning, indeed, literature has been for psychoanalysis not only a contiguous field of external verification in which to test its hypotheses and to confirm its findings, but also the constitutive texture of its *conceptual framework*, of its theoretical body. The key concepts of psychoanalysis are references to literature, using literary "*proper*" names — names of fictional characters (Oedipus complex, Narcissism) or of historical authors (masochism, sadism). Literature, in other words, is the language which psychoanalysis uses in order to *speak of itself*, in order to *name itself*. Literature is therefore not simply *outside* psychoanalysis, since it motivates and *inhabits* the very names of its concepts, since it is the *inherent reference* by which psychoanalysis names its findings.

However, the relation of *interiority* conveyed by the inter-implication of literature and psychoanalysis is by no means a simple one. Since literature and psychoanalysis are *different* from each other, but, at the same time, they are also "enfolded within" each other, since they are, as it were, at the same time outside and inside each other, we might say that they compromise, each in its turn, the interiority of the other. The cultural division, in other words, of scholarly "disciplines" of research is by no means a natural geography: there are no *natural* boundaries between literature and psychoanalysis, which clearly define and distinguish them; the

between them is undecidable since they are really *traversed* by each other.

Each is thus a potential threat to the interiority of the other, since each is contained in the other as its *otherness-to-itself*, its *unconscious*. As the unconscious traverses consciousness, a theoretical body of thought always is traversed by its own unconscious, its own "unthought," of which it is not aware, but which it contains in itself as the very conditions of its disruption, as the possibility of its own self-subversion. We would like to suggest that, in the same way that psychoanalysis points to the unconscious of literature, *literature, in its turn, is the unconscious of psychoanalysis*; that the unthought-out shadow in psychoanalytical *theory* is precisely its own involvement with literature; that literature in psychoanalysis functions precisely as its "unthought": as the condition of possibility and the self-subversive blind spot of psychoanalytical *thought*.

The articles that follow are heterogeneous, varied in their interests and in their insights. What they have in common is that none of them simply takes for granted the relationship between literature and psychoanalysis: they all reflect upon the textual and theoretical encounter between literature and psychoanalysis not as an answer, but as a question, questioning at once its possibilities and its limits. They thus suggest, each in its specific, different manner, how the question of the relationship between literature and psychoanalysis might begin to be articulated—*otherwise*: how psychoanalysis and literature might indeed begin to be rethought, both in their otherness and in their common wisdom.

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Desire and the Interpretation of Desire in *Hamlet*

*The Object Ophelia*

As a sort of come-on, I announced that I would speak today about that piece of bait named Ophelia, and I'll be as good as my word.

Our purpose, as you remember, is to show the tragedy of desire as it appears in *Hamlet*, human desire, that is, such as we are concerned with in psychoanalysis.

We distort this desire and confuse it with other terms if we fail to locate it in reference to a set of co-ordinates that, as Freud showed, establish the subject in a certain position of dependence upon the signifier. The signifier is not a reflection, a product pure and simple of what are called interhuman relationships—all psychoanalytic experience indicates the contrary. To account for the presuppositions of this experience, we must refer to a topological system without which all the phenomena produced in our domain would be indistinguishable and meaningless. The illustration shows the essential co-ordinates of this topology.

The story of *Hamlet* (and this is why I chose it) reveals a most vivid dramatic sense of this topology, and this is the source of its exceptional power of captivation. Shakespeare's poetic skill doubtless guided him along the way, step by step, but we can also assume that he introduced into the play some observations from his own experience, however indirectly.

Shakespeare's play contains one shift in the plot that distinguishes it from previous treatments of the story, including both the narratives of Saxo Grammaticus and Belleforest and the other plays of which we possess fragments. This shift involves the character Ophelia.

Ophelia is present, to be sure, from the beginning of the legend on. She appears in the early versions, as I've said, as the bait in