THE MEANING OF PSYCHOSES IN LACAN'S READING OF FREUD*

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The early Freud considered his main field of work to be the study of the psychoneuroses. In this, hysteria served him as both guide and paradigm. It was not, however, the same as Charcot's, Bernheim's or Janet's hysteria, and it was also very different from that of the medical and psychiatric tradition; it can rightly be seen as a product of Freud's own. It allowed him to decipher and name other neurotic structures as well as to distinguish these from the psychoses and perversions. To this day this organisation has retained its validity, despite numerous and severe criticisms from the biological sciences. A start had to be made somewhere. Freud succeeded in this through his interest in dynamics and his consideration of structures beyond phenomenology and the empirical diversity of observation. In so doing he succeeded in opening up and at the same time organising a clinical field that until then had not been dreamt of.

For him, too, Aragon's statement applies: 'La femme c'est l'avenir de l'homme'. It was women who installed him in his practice, who shaped his way of working in such a way as to allow him to go beyond Breuer's cathartic method. It was from his hysteric patients, 'ces bouches d'or', as Lacan called them, that the theory of the Oedipus complex evolved, which provided Freud with the answer to the origin of the neurotic symptom.

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This uncovering of a specific causality proved from the very beginning to be a characteristic of and major criterion for the analytic procedure and the discourse resulting from it. In this way the problematic nature of the father became central to it; something the medical world was as ill prepared for then as it is today.

Lacan's studies of psychoses led him to a new reading of this cornerstone that, above all else, he wanted to divest of its mythical reference. Subsequent to his seminar on psychoses,\(^1\) he developed his theory of the 'metaphor of the father'. By this time, a quarter of a century had passed since he had first begun to work with psychosis and this would serve him as a very important clinical guide, bringing him to his first detailed examination of the psychoanalytic discourse.

I now would like to look at the case study that Lacan worked on for his doctoral thesis. Published as a book by 1932 and reprinted in 1975, it provides an outstanding introduction to the study of psychosis; in addition, it gives a good insight into the beginnings of Lacan's debate with Freud's clinical theory.\(^2\) This case study is, therefore, exemplary of both his access into psychoanalysis and his first theoretical steps.

In this early writing we learn something very different from what one normally reads about psychosis in terms of a deficit in development. Our understanding of psychosis is still, up to this very day, formed by the concepts of classical psychiatry that, as with all metaphysical categories, largely excludes time. Accordingly, psychoses were understood as already existing units. Lacan's comments, in contrast, allow a good insight into their emergence and development.

At this point, he had arrived at a very precise moment in his clinical and theoretical career. His doctorate constituted the official completion of his medical and psychiatric training as well as a first significant stage 'on his way' towards psychoanalysis. He had already begun his own analysis

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with Löwenstein. However, the possibility that the treatment with his patient Aimée contributed equally to his training as an analyst must also be considered. Her real name became known - only much later - when her son, Didier Anzieu, began to speak publicly about it. He himself started an analysis with Lacan at the end of the forties and subsequently became a well-known analyst himself. He was annoyed with Lacan, who concealed the work with his mother from him; he read the report at a later stage when he got hold of a copy of the dissertation in a library. With this he discovered that an aspect of his history, largely unknown to him, had already been written about and recorded in a book, which was to become a classic in the literature of psychoses. About his analysis with Lacan, he remarked many years later that Lacan had understood little about either the early relationship between mother and child or the symbolic meaning of the mother. Anzieu worked through this again in a second analysis.3

Lacan named Marguerite Anzieu after the main character in one of her own novels: Aimée (loved, beloved) works well as a metaphor and indicates the position that this patient had taken on for Lacan. It is also a kind of appreciation of her qualities as a writer - these largely consist of inventing metaphors - and of her as a person, whom he portrays as lovable - something she may have been waiting for all her life.

This metaphor, which has something liberating about it, is the result of a long preparation. It was introduced by an act of violence, which distinguishes this psychosis as such and represents its climax. It took the place of something that could not be said and that equally could have fallen on deaf ears. A metaphor can only arise at the position of a third and be recognised there. It prefers to use a certain stage-management and affects all parties to it, retroactively. The aforementioned naming has, therefore, contributed somewhat to the symbolic working-through of Marguerite's problem. Lacan for his part could not have known at this point in time that this constellation would contribute in a certain way to the transmission of psychoanalysis and to the analyst in the making. Subsequent to this work Lacan started to work


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as an analyst and became, about twenty years later, the analyst of Aimée's
son, who would himself become well known as an analyst and play a not
insignificant role in the history of the transmission of psychoanalysis.

I would like to begin the account of this clinical case with a
comment on Lacan's own introduction to it. First of all he describes the act
that brought Aimée to the police station and later to the hospital of Saint-
Anne:

On the 10th of April 193..., at about 8 o'clock in the evening.
Ms. Z., one of the most popular actresses with the Parisian
audience, arrived at the theatre where she was to perform
that evening. On the threshold of the stage entrance, a
female, unknown to her, approached her and asked the
question: 'Are you really Ms. Z?'. This person was well
dressed, she was wearing a coat with collar and fur-trimmed
sleeves, gloves and a handbag; nothing in the tone of her
question aroused any suspicion in the actress. Being used to
the homage of the audience, who desperately wanted to get
close to their idol, she answered affirmatively, keen to end
this encounter and tried to rush past. On foot of this, the
actress said, the look on this woman's face changed, she
quickly took a knife from her bag and lifted the blade
towards her, with a look filled with hatred. In order to
defend herself, Ms. Z took hold of the blade with her whole
hand, whereby two tendons of one of her fingers were
severed. By then other people at the scene had overpowered
the author of the aggression.4

This passage à l'acte, which Lacan called 'an assassination attempt', was
immediately understood as the act of a madwoman. She was questioned
by a police-inspector; the first person, by the way, to whom she would
give an explanation:

For years the actress was trying to instigate a scandal against her. She was leading her up the garden path and threatening her. She had found an accomplice in a person named P.B., an important literary figure and member of the Académie Française. He was exposing her private life in numerous passages in his books. For this reason Ms. A (our Aimée) had had the intention for some time of talking things through with the actress. She attacked her because she wanted to run away. If she had not been restrained, she would have attacked her a second time.

The actress did not press charges. Arrested, - later transferred to Saint-Lazare, - Ms. A remained in prison for two months. On the ... of June 193 ... she was admitted to the asylum of the hospital of Saint-Anne based on the forensic report of a Dr. Truelle, who diagnosed in Ms. A a systematised, interpretative paranoid delusion with megalomaniac tendencies and an underlying erotic structure. We have observed her for approximately a year and a half.5

Firstly, I would like to formulate some questions, which may contribute towards giving an orientation to what I will say later.

Only when we learn a little more about the moment of the attack and its relationship to the development of the psychosis, will it be possible to clarify the necessity from which it emerged and its possible meaning. Are we dealing with the beginning of a psychosis, with one of its acute phases, with a 'fruitful moment' (moment fécond) of a pre-existing psychosis or with an attempt at recovery, that is, a type of dissolution of the problem of psychosis?

Beyond this the question arises, whether we really are dealing with an actual psychotic act or whether it is more a question of a 'secondary

5 ibid, p. 153. (our translation).
phenomenon', which is not necessarily based on a psychosis and which can equally surface in a neurotic once his subjective limits are exceeded. Such an act can have a structuring as well as a de-structuring effect. A lot depends on how it will be viewed retrospectively, on what can be articulated and worked through. When limits are obviously crossed, as is the case here, it also poses a major challenge to the therapist.

The analyst has - without any doubt - his place in the treatment of psychosis. It would have been dramatic for Aimée if she had been admitted to a traditional psychiatric unit, of which there are still a lot today, and had been fobbed off with some neuroleptica without anyone asking her about the meaning of her act. Furthermore, an acute psychotic episode such as this one requires special attention in order for a permanent disimprovement to be avoided.

An act goes beyond that which can be said or named at a certain moment. This also seems to apply to Aimée: her act took place at a point of her discourse when her relationship with the symbolic had fundamentally failed. Lacan elaborated on this many years later in his seminar on transference, saying that an act stands in direct relation to repression and will be all the more radical the more it approaches the originally repressed, meaning the imbeddedness in language and law and, in virtue of this, the function of the 'giving of the name'. If the latter goes unprovided, or is ignored, or has remained unclear for whatever reason, the act can have a subversive effect, but it can equally be an attempted restoration of what up till then could not be inscribed in the symbolic. However, while both aspects belong essentially to the psychosis, the psychiatric literature only deals with the aspect of deficit.

II

Let us return to Lacan's description of the 'assassination attempt'. It is recorded very precisely in terms of time and place: it took place on this day, at this exact time and in a specific place. The recipient was chosen

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carefully: Ms. Z the well-known actress. Her famous name stands in stark contrast with that of the assassin who is described as the 'stranger'. The act happened 'at the threshold' of the theatre, its staging therefore takes place at the edge of a real stage from which it received its effectiveness, its justification and its legitimacy, so to speak.

The central point of this scene, where it 'reaches down into the unknown',7 lies in the question to the actress: 'Are you Ms. Z?' ('Êtes-vous bien Mme Z?'). The mention of the name proper served to identify the victim to whom this almost sublime act was addressed with the expectation that she might just nod her head to confirm this name. It was not enough to speak it; it required a type of ratification, just as it is a precondition for any law before it comes into force. It is, therefore, also an appeal by the assassin to an affirmative answer8 of a signifier, an assent that is anything but arbitrary. With the answer: 'yes, that is me' the situation changed quickly. We learn that the face of the stranger changed rapidly. This corresponded neither to the falling of a mask as if she had previously sought to hide something, nor to a loss of face, rather it was more a revealing of a different face - another side of herself that could only come to fruition once the name was spoken. The latter brought about a splitting of the subject, similar to the neurotic, whereby Marguerite became an Other.

This incision which started the scene moving and gave it support at the same time, found in the knife something like a symbol; yet it was real enough for Marguerite to use it, to hit the actress with it, to scar her and, therefore, leave a mark on her body. The latter was changed so to speak into a writing space, the material of which had to be tested before she was able to try to undertake a real inscription. Maybe it would have been enough for her to just touch the skin with the tip of the blade, to slightly slit or cut it in order to leave a trace, a notch, maybe an insignificant incision but not one wholly without any significance either! It appears to have been her intention to leave something behind and the legacy seems

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to have been her question. The incident didn't occur without passion: the look of 'the stranger' was filled with the fire of hatred. A passionate act often has a bad and sometimes even a fatal ending. The actress who, without knowing it, was exposed to great danger, got away with a 'bloodied nose' or, more correctly with almost losing a finger. It could so easily have ended a lot worse for her.

This staging ought not to be mistaken for either the perverse scenario or the neurotic's scene of phantasm, even though it shows a certain similarity to both. Freud even maintains that all three 'coincide with one another even down to their details'. The course of events in the scene as described, can be divided into three phases or moments in time. The first consists of an announcement, which almost becomes a proclamation of Ms. Z's name, which she, in the second phase, confirms. She claims it in much the same way as one accepts blame and signs oneself responsible for it. The name proper, however, requires something underlying it, a real substructure, the material of which is seized in a third moment and subjected to a test: the inscription does not content itself with touching the surface of the body but goes under the skin and penetrates so to speak the internal body. The knife becomes in this way an outstanding writing implement, providing a connection between the name, the skin and the body.

These three points show solidarity with each other and all are of equal importance. The scene could not have taken place or taken the course that it did, however, without the affirmation by the victim: it is, therefore, central to the scene and represents its pivot. A 'yes' from Ms. Z would have sufficed for her to have signed her own death-sentence and the murderous act at the same time. This 'yes' has, therefore, the meaning of a signature, like an act of writing, which the 'stranger' just had to carry out and to inscribe onto the hand of the actress. This is how Ms. Z became the cornerstone of this staging, the starting point and reference point of this act, while the 'stranger' can be seen as its agent and executor.

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She is rightly called the 'unknown person' because she remains unnamed until the moment in which she commits the act. It is as if she wants to participate in the name of the other and to devour it. This required a number of preparatory steps, however. The perpetrator made her entrance onto the world stage by trying to penetrate the body and, in virtue of this, the life of her victim. This one was chosen through the mechanism of projection, which reversed the respective positions and changed the pursued into the pursuer. As a consequence of this she became an other and was supposed to help the 'unknown woman' to get into this position herself. We are, therefore, dealing with a real act of birth which, following its inscription on the skin, found admission to the register of police and justice to be copied there, before she was given a place in the medical and psychiatric discourse and a place in the history of psychoanalysis as well. What an extraordinary fate! It is as if Marguerite had to come into this world for a second time and repeat her birth in such a way that the naming, which accompanied it, was anything but assured.

III

What do we know about Marguerite, Lacan's Aimée? At the time of her admission to Sainte-Anne she was thirty-eight years old. She came from the rural region of Corrèze (the Dordogne, according to Lacan) and had two older sisters and three younger brothers. She occupied the middle place in the line of siblings, between the boys and the girls. At eighteen she started to work in the postal service (with the railway according to Lacan) where, apart from one disruption of ten months due to her mental state, she worked very reliably up to the day of the attack. At twenty-five she married a colleague, René Anzieu, the future father of Didier, who worked in Melun, close to Paris. She also worked there for some time until she applied for a transfer to Paris. Until the day of the attack she had been living there for six years on her own. She regularly visited her son, who was reared by his father and his Aunt Elise, Marguerite's sister.
Why had she applied for a transfer to Paris? Let us go back a little in time: six-and-a-half years prior to her admission to Sainte-Anne she had already spent six months in a psychiatric unit suffering from severe paranoid delusions. The doctor's letter of referral read:

Permanent mental disturbances for about a year; people, whom she meets in the street, insult her in a most disgraceful way and accuse her of extraordinary vices, even when they do not know her; people from her neighbourhood are reporting the absolute worst about her and the whole town of Melun is well informed about her behaviour, which people declare as going down-hill; she therefore wanted to leave the town, even without money, to go anywhere ...

The psychiatric report in the hospital gave the following diagnosis: 'Residual feeble-mindedness, delusional ideas of persecution, jealousy, illusions, interpretations, grandiose statements, morbid hallucinations, effusiveness, intermittent incoherence'. It was also noted that the patient had wanted to flee to the U.S.A.

From her discourse at that time one can highlight in particular the following elliptic sentence: 'Don't think that I envy women (envier) who don't become a talking point, the princesses, who have not come across cowardice in trousers and who do not know the meaning of an insult (affront)'. Here we are dealing with an extraordinary sequence of negations that allow for several interpretations and that show the richness and extent of her discursive possibilities and abilities. She tells us almost straight out what made her delusions come to life, namely her envie, her envy as well as her lust for women and towards a particular type of women of the upper class, that is, princesses. These became a talking point or were well known and in any event distinguished by their name. She envied them, therefore, in order to take something from them, perhaps their name - their intimacy or their name, which she wanted to use for herself in order to get a new skin and by means of this to take part
in their name as well as their femininity. This must have been for
Marguerite, who suffered from a 'masculinity complex', a desire of a very
special kind.

One of these splendid and famous women was Ms. Z, who was
known all over Paris. Aimée had devoted all her attention to her for some
time. She surely was only a link in a chain, one name on the long list of
persecutors. There is no doubt that Ms. Z. had become a talking point. At
the time when Marguerite moved to Paris to work there, the daily papers
were reporting on a sensational court case, which the actress initiated
against her employer, the Comédie Française. Lacan contented himself with
mentioning the case briefly and without any further detail. A very rich
source of information is provided by the monograph, which Jean Allouch
dedicated to this illustrious case.10 We learn from this that there were
actually two different court cases, which this belligerent woman had
initiated. She did not seem to have shied away from any effort to fight for
her freedom. She started one of them to get out of her service contract
with Comédie Française, to which she was bound for at least twenty years.
The other legal dispute is even more significant in relation to our subject:
Ms. Z., who was divorced, was fighting to be allowed to keep her married
name, 'Huguette Duflos', under which she had become famous. The
judges arrived at a decision worthy of Solomon, holding that in future she
could call herself 'Huguette Ex-Duflos'.

With regard to these two legal cases it must be emphasised that
they were not directed at individual people but at venerable institutions
and at a symbolic agency, and not in order to attack them as such but to
win the right, despite the existing contract, to founded a theatre group in her
own name and in particular to be allowed to read and write the latter
differently to the legal ruling.

Marguerite must have been very impressed by this woman;
therefore, she wanted to purloin from her that which she envied. At the
same time she felt towards her a different type of envie, a passionate
desire, which was probably so immense that she wanted her all to herself.

She took possession of a knife, an instrument which can actually be called phallic, which situated her in the male position, probably in order to be able to make some physical contact with her, to touch her, hurt her or possibly kill her since she was not in a position to possess her in any other way, that is, sexually. In this she wanted to achieve the result that the actress would become the other for her, even if this meant death. A particular meaning could be attached to the knife in this constellation, since the phallus itself had not been raised to a symbolic agency.

This sexual component is evident from the time of her first admission to a psychiatric hospital. Apart from the sentence quoted earlier, one can cite the following from her case notes from that time: 'There are some very bad, odd things about me, which are true, true, true but the plain is exposed to the wind (la plaine est de vent). There are also statements from washerwomen from brothels (commères des maisons closes) and several public institutions'. This is an obvious allusion to obscenities, which are spoken by female pimps. One could also play with the word commère (comme mère), meaning a washerwoman who is 'like a mother', but who certainly does not correspond to her symbolic function as a mother. We are dealing here with people of a lower social class, in contrast to the princesses who were mentioned before and to the women who have a well-known name or are fighting for one. In brothels, however, women only use their first name, not even their own at that, and due to their position, are excluded from affiliation and all context of tradition. As representatives of a sexuality that takes place outside of the name, they, nonetheless, serve an important and, therefore, 'tolerated' function, which consists of them contributing their part to the protection and maintenance of the social order, in so far as this is based on the family unit. This latter, which Freud impresses on us as the place where the myth is produced, could indeed be destroyed by sexuality realised without any inhibitions.

But don't we also use Marguerite's alias Aimée, a first name? Certainly for reasons of discretion, - but does it not also highlight the insecurity, hers as well as ours, vis-à-vis her inscription? This may have
been a reason for her wanting to make a name for herself as a writer, which Lacan in his own way acknowledged. The greatest significance in the context discussed here has to be assigned to her only son, Didier Anzieu, who survived all the threats that his mother in her delusions saw him subjected to. Due to what he made of his name and what he wrote under his name he has, for his part, contributed to the transmission of the symbolic function of the *name of the father*, with which his mother struggled so much. He delivered some reflections and biographical details in his book *Une peau pour les pensées*, published in 1986 around the same time as E. Roudinesco’s second volume of her *Histoire de la psychanalyse en France* which included similar and related details.\(^1\) The history of the names, which I am considering in such detail, proves to be the central moment in the dissolution of this psychosis.

I would like to quote a last sentence, recorded during her last stay in hospital: 'There are those who are building sheds in order to be able to regard me more easily as a milch-cow'. This sentence only becomes intelligible in the context of her first delusional episode. Indeed, the case history shows that the onset of her psychosis is connected to her first pregnancy and the circumstances accompanying it. At this particular time she was twenty-eight years old and had been married for more than four years. This would be relatively late for the onset of schizophrenia. Lacan summed up his information about this phase in the following:

She felt threatened by her work-colleagues, had the impression that these were talking about her, criticising her actions, commenting upon her behaviour and predicting unhappiness. On the street passers-by were whispering something to each other, which was directed at her and were showing hostility. In the newspapers she recognised allusions, which were directed towards her. Even prior to this she showed signs of morbid jealousy towards her husband. The accusations were getting more detailed to

definitely delusional. She was to have said to herself often: 'Why are they doing this to me? They want the death of my child. If this child fails to live, they will have to take responsibility.'

She became exceedingly depressed and appeared low. Tormented by nightmares in her sleep, she dreamt of death-screams and the affective states of the dreams merged with the persecutions of the day. People in her surroundings noted several of her reactions and actions with great concern. She allegedly cut two tyres of a friend's bicycle with a knife. She got up one night to throw a vessel filled with water at her husband's head; another time it was an iron she threw at him.

It appears that it is not sexuality itself which represents a threat to her but much more so that which results from it, its visible side so to speak, which is obvious to others. Everyone was, therefore, well informed, her colleagues made their remarks; yes, even the newspaper reported it. The threat focused on the unborn life and it seemed to have moved little by little into the centre of her delusions.

In the neurotic, the thought of the death of a child, subsequent to conception and especially after the birth, corresponds to an unconscious death wish and a more or less great feeling of guilt connected to it. In this case, however, the death of the child was experienced as a real threat to the life of the child and, for the patient, went hand in hand with a great worry about the symbolic survival of her child as well as her own mother. The latter also suffered from delusions at this time, which intensified during the course of her daughter's pregnancy. The condition of both women deteriorated the closer it came to the date of delivery and with it the moment when they would be confronted with the giving and recording of the name. It is as if the register of the symbolic were detaching itself and becoming independent in order to approach the subject in the position of the stranger, who in turn is in a position to comment on her actions and behaviour as well as her thoughts. This leads
to the well-known feeling of alienation in the psychotic, and which lends the threats that she is complaining about an even greater weight.

IV

Nomination, meaning the transmission of the name-of-the-father, corresponds in Lacan's terminology to an overlapping of the different registers, that is, the real, the symbolic and the imaginary. This overlapping would, therefore, be a necessary condition for inscription to be enabled to take place. If the symbolic is isolated the subject falls under the thumb of a tyrannical super-ego, which shows itself through an exaggerated feeling of guilt and which demands an inappropriate sacrifice. The super-ego also plays a role in self-punishment, to which Lacan attaches great significance in this case. About forty years later he will make the connection between the demand of the super-ego and the imperative of enjoyment. It may be true that this is directed at the subject, but it makes her position impossible at the same time. In Marguerite's case the super-ego appears to have manifested itself as the relentless demand to sacrifice the closest and most dear, meaning the unborn life with all that it represents.

More than the fresh blood which the moloch demands in order to devour it, the super-ego may demand for itself precisely the bearer-function of the name, - that which is new and with it a new time that begins with the child, and which it represents. It, therefore, demands a special role in the genesis of some psychosis. This is why Marguerite was able to maintain rightly: 'They want the death of my child ... they will be responsible for it'.

She sensed the threat as well as the necessity of the sacrifice of her still unborn child, for which she saw herself as the executor. However, since this thought was unbearable she escaped, in order to protect herself, into the delusion, which gave her permission to say: it is not I who wants the death of my child, but they, the others who want it. The super-ego remains, therefore, intact as a part of the ego, while the psychotic-gain
appears to consist of the fact that the symbolic can be experienced and constructed as a dimension independent of the ego. This independence from the ego can also be understood as one of the demands made by the body and society. This is why it is all the more important for the psychotic to return, retrospectively - and sometimes only many years later - to the conditions of his delusions, in order to find a place for it in the symbolic, that is, in his discourse and his history.

With these various acts, which Marguerite carried out during her first pregnancy and which prepared the way for the 'final act' (l'acte final), she fought an injustice she had suffered and tried to restore especially the dimension of the other which had been detrimentally affected. In order to achieve this she had to find access, which was restricted to a minimum, in terms of time and space. It was sufficient for her to touch the skin of the other woman, who in her eyes possessed all the attributes of femininity, with the tip of the blade in order to leave a trace behind and maybe also her name, to lend it its missing consistency through it being published and spread in the newspapers and later through it being inscribed in a legal register.

Her act, which was a manifest transgression, was to articulate, weigh-up and entangle the three different dimensions, RSI, in a new way in order to re-establish a law that had been walked all over and had been smothered by the tyranny of the super-ego. The delusion and the act that accompanied it are, therefore, significant stages in a process of healing and restoration. Being faced with the impossibility of calling upon a phallic agency, the patient took a knife even in this early phase of her psychosis which, as already mentioned, may well stand for a type of phallus substitute; she cut the tyres of a colleague's bicycle - maybe she did not give herself permission to attack him physically. She did not shy away, however, from throwing dangerous objects at her husband's head. Could this mean - contrary to Freud's theory - that the first persecutors were of the male gender? It can be assumed that the only reason they found themselves in this position was due to the symbolic function that Marguerite bestowed on them in terms of family or profession.
Nevertheless, her delusions did not prevent her from preparing carefully for the birth of her child - quite the contrary. We learn, however, that in March 1922 she delivered a stillborn baby, who had the umbilical cord tied around its neck and who suffocated during the birth. In all the material accessible to us there is no information as to whether the child was given a name or which name was possibly planned. What happened was that a child, carried to full term and apparently healthy, died during the birth due to a misfortune. These dramatic events exacerbated the mother's paranoid delusion; she accused one woman in particular, who had been quite close to her for some time. This woman lived in a distant town and had rung shortly after the birth to inquire about the birth and the well-being of mother and child. Marguerite found this particularly strange and suspicious.

Due to these diverse circumstances not only were Marguerite's paranoid delusions confirmed but so too was her oppressive feeling of guilt. As she had not been able to formulate any of this, she had no choice but to act it out. In her pregnancy Marguerite was confronted with everything that affected her own birth, about which very little was said to her. It is, therefore, important to point out her place in the line of siblings and the exceptional character of the transmission of the name in this family constellation. She was born on July fourth, 1892, a year and a half after the tragic death of her eldest sister, who was also called Marguerite: at the age of five (on December twentieth, 1890) she burnt to death at an open fire, probably in the presence of her mother. At the time her sisters, Elise and Marie, were three and two respectively. Their mother became pregnant again immediately after the accident, which can be easily calculated from the dates available. She delivered a stillborn child on the August twelfth, 1891; we have no information on the child's gender or name. We do know, however, how important it is that a stillborn child is named and buried so that it can find a place in the symbolic and in the family-tradition. Only then can the work of grieving take place and the child's place can be preserved as an empty one. As these conditions were not fulfilled for Marguerite, she saw herself subjected to a compulsion to
repeat. She certainly assumed correctly that there was a great danger to the life of the first-born or its replacement.

Lacan delivers only very imprecise information about these complicated events and the line of siblings of his patient. Her statements, which he took at face value, corresponded largely to the attempt at the reconstruction of her pre- and early history. It was impossible to come to terms with something she was not told and that was never spoken about even later. She could only transform this into an act. It appears that for her parents any kind of grief-work, meaning symbolisation, was impossible. In order to avoid any discontinuity, they tried to conceive another child without delay. This was born in the beginning of July 1892 and with its birth had to take on the task of closing the gap, a gaping wound so to speak: as the new Marguerite she was supposed to take the place of the dead child, preferably imperceptibly and without a transition. Both grandmothers had carried the same first name; but it was much more significant and consequential that she herself was robbed of the status of the new-born and with it, right from the start, of a part of her life because she was to function as a replacement for the Marguerite who died so tragically.

There are different versions concerning this accident. According to Lacan, the eldest daughter was killed while her mother was already pregnant with the other Marguerite, his patient. Didier Anzieu, for his part, maintains that it happened to the youngest of the three daughters. The two versions originate in all probability from the same source, the same person, who provided - at two different points in time, far apart from one another - first her doctor and psychiatrist and then her son with different information about the terrible incident and its circumstances. To give more than one version had the advantage that something could be opened up, which had not been grieved about or symbolised in any way. Furthermore, she wanted to protect her mother, who was presumably present at the accident and whose responsibility was at stake. One version mentioned Elise's presence, the second eldest. Did Marguerite want to take revenge on her, the one who had invaded her family and taken her
place with her husband and son? It is more likely that she wanted to save the symbolic function of the mother, which she saw as exposed to great danger.

Since the death of the other Marguerite the mother had not succeeded well in finding her symbolic function again which, we may assume, the successive pregnancies aimed at restoring. The delusions, which had started with the accident and which afterwards worsened, reaching another acute phase during her daughter's pregnancy, indicate the narrow margins that were set for her in dealings with the metaphor. This can also be seen in the peculiarity of naming in this family constellation. What role did her husband actually play? Both parents were so concerned about continuity at any cost that their greatest aim was to replace the lost object as quickly as possible. But since every loss had to be undone, no replacement in the sense of a metaphor could develop from it - which would have made it possible to place one signifier (first name) instead of another.

It is, therefore, legitimate to speak in this case about a failure of the metaphor of the father, which Marguerite tried to restore with the 'attack'. Though inscribed in the family history, she found herself in the place of a dead person. Her act took the place of what could not occur on the symbolic level. It can, therefore, be seen as an act of birth, which was to create an embedding in life, which had not taken place before. The stage management initiated by her corresponded to the attempt to write a new version of the primal scene. This had occurred as a scene of an accident that resulted in the death of the eldest sister, corresponding, therefore, to a death scene. Marguerite, Lacan's Aimée, may have survived it, but as someone who had died well before her birth.

Lacan was right - not so much in relation to the historical truth but rather more in terms of subjective reading and necessity - when he maintains that the accident happened while his patient's mother was already pregnant. As if directed by her and without knowing it, he created a close connection between the scene of the accident and the primal scene, which had merged in Marguerite's unconscious imagination.
The fact that she was able to act some of this out in the 'attack', the 'final act', tells of extraordinary persistence, an almost heroic courage and also of great talent. This correspondence between accident scene and primal scene resulted in the fact that the newborn, following a stillbirth, was given the already stipulated and predetermined place of a dead child. This very close connection was so severely embedded because an identity of name rendered a symbolisation of the inscription as hardly possible. The act was the only way out; it was to open something up, to make a different reading possible of that, which had been long established.

How could Marguerite have been alive and lively, fresh and cheerful, having taken the place of the dead child and in virtue of this having herself already died? Inevitably, she had to think that her mother's love, as far as she was able to take some of it in, was love for the dead Marguerite, not for the one who was alive. Since she was not able to replace the lost object for the mother or return it to her, her feeling of guilt was immense. Accordingly, she hardly had any right to her own life, which she had to give to or sacrifice for her mother, in place of the one which had been so brutally taken from her.

Marguerite became mad because at the place that was ascribed to her in this family constellation, a metaphor could not emerge. What applied to her was not necessarily the case for the other children in the line of siblings. In so far as Lacan read her name differently to the way it was written, he contributed significantly to Aimée being able to find a way very different from the psychiatric 'careers' of many psychotics. Furthermore, Lacan maintains that ever afterwards he did not work in any other way but with Aimée.

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