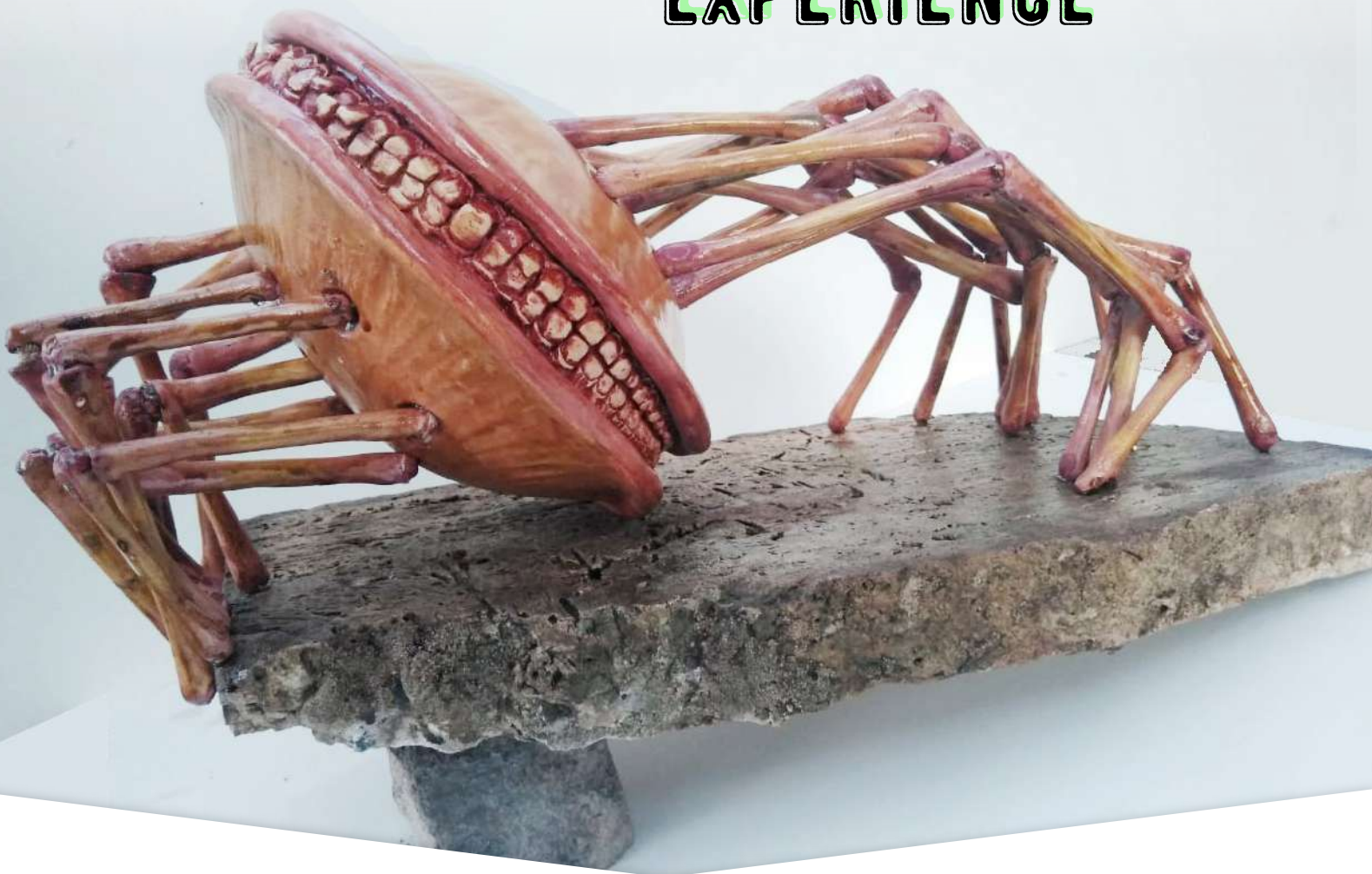


# NEW IMAGINARY IN THE ANALYTIC EXPERIENCE



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## ***JORGE ASSEF***

The LC EXPRESS delivers the Lacanian Compass in a new format. Its aim is to deliver relevant texts in a dynamic timeframe for use in the clinic and in advance of study days and conference meetings. The LC EXPRESS publishes works of theory and clinical practice and emphasizes both longstanding concepts of the Lacanian tradition as well as new cutting edge formulations.

# PRÉCIS

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With the title *New Imaginary* in the analytic experience, Jorge Assef presents us part of his research on the Lacanian notion of imaginary. He chooses the trait of the animal figures in the analytic experience, since “they are specific imaginary representations that the subjects brings to analysis”, as he pointed out. He differentiates the moments in analysis when the figures of animals are used, indicating that is not the same use in the beginning -as Little Hans phobia- than at the end, like many testimonies of the pass revealed. He brings the notion of the new imaginary that Lacan introduce in Seminar 23, not anymore an imaginary that consist only linked to the symbolic, but a way to approach to the Real.

Jorge stated the hypothesis that the emergence of animal figures in the key moments of analysis has to do with the insufficiency of the symbolic to capture the real, or the limit of language to name the most singular. “The figures of animals may appear as the new imaginary, an imaginary that bridges the Symbolic and the Real”. With many examples of testimonies of the Pass, Assef highlight the idea of the invention of a new signifier at the end of analysis, -introduced by Lacan in his Seminar 24- as a signifier that has no meaning and appears as animal figures catching the singularity of the real inventing a singular solution for each one.

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# NEW IMAGINARY IN THE ANALYTIC EXPERIENCE

by Jorge Assef<sup>1</sup>

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Good morning, first of all I would like to thank the Lacanian Compass for this invitation, soon I will be able to thank you in person, because in February we will meet in NY for the next Clinical Study Days.

Thanks to Cyrus St Amand Poliakof for helping me with the translation of Lacan's quotes.

What I would like to transmit to you today is a research that is not yet finished, and that has a lot to do with the topic you have been working on for some time, I am referring to the Lacanian notion of imaginary.

My research began some time ago in a space of the ICdeBA "Clinical Institute of Buenos Aires", I was part of a collective work with other colleagues in a space of research in psychoanalysis, each one of us chose a research topic and I chose the topic of how animal figures come into the analytical experience, and I was especially interested in the animal figures that generally appear at the end of the analysis, and that we can find in many AS testimonies.

The issue of animal figures in the analytic experience led me to the question of the imaginary, because they are clearly very concrete and specific imaginary representations that subjects bring to analysis. So, today I will take up again some questions of that research, I will tell you the central points, and I will try to be brief so that later we can talk about them together.

## 1. Antecedents:

I will begin by recounting four antecedents that led me to the subject of the animal imaginary that comes

into the analytic experience:

1) 20 years ago: supervising the case of a patient who as a child her family called her "Snake" as an insult, the supervisor suggests to equivoque that signifier and wonders aloud "let's see... what would be the snake's jouissance besides the poison?". That was the first time I realized that there was a relationship between the behavior of some animals and the diverse representations of jouissance.

2) 10 years ago I found a paper by Graciela Musachi called "Elogio de la zoología"<sup>2</sup> (In tribute of Zoology). There Musachi established the relationship that exists between the logic of classifications, the figures of animals in the psychoanalytic tradition, and the use made of these figures in the clinic through transference, I read: "...in logic the category genus expresses the relationship between concepts according to their extension, thus, the genus is a universal category and the species a -particular- part of the genus. For example, within the genus "animal" there is the species "psychoanalytic animals": the elephant that Lacan brought into the Seminar, the lion that does not know the number, Little Hans' horse, Pavlov's dog, the mother crocodile, the sardine (in a can), the giant praying mantis, etc. (...) Zoology is, therefore, a classification "whose relation with logic we would be wrong to minimize", Lacan warns".

Then Musachi states that when it comes to humans, the question changes, because the attribute that defines this or that specimen belongs to this or that class begins to get complicated from the fact that we are dealing with beings of languages, so Musachi explains: ...Psychoanalytic zoology must be guided,

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2 *La Clínica de lo Singular frente a la epidemia de las clasificaciones" p.43 a 46. Grama.*

Lacan orients, by the transference since the demand to the Other implied in the symptom subverts all classification. From here, the author points out, we can deduce the essence of the Lacanian Orientation clinic, and then an important idea appears for what I am thinking, and it is when Musachi links the question of animal figures in psychoanalysis with singularity: ... for Lacan, it is the key to the clinic: an ideal of simple reduction, of localization -through transference- of the trait that is at stake for each one of us. Only in this case, it is possible to speak of singularity, that is, to speak the language of one and not of the other, (...) If in psychoanalytic zoology there is "the man of the wolves", "the man of the rats", and so many others, it is because the analyst has known how to read that trait that places him as a good understanding of the beast that lurks from the cave of the symptom".

**3)** 5 years ago, listening a Pass Plenary Session in a Congress, I realized the frequency with which references linked to animals appear in AS's Testimonies. And at that moment, I particularly stopped at Gustavo Stiglitz's testimony entitled "Aquí hay gato encerrado..."<sup>3</sup>, where Gustavo talks about an allergic rhinitis linked to the presence of cats, Gustavo relates that it was a night: when ...I woke up with a black cat walking over me.

First thought: I'm not going to sleep, I'm going to sneeze. But immediately the signifier "Schwartz cutter" appeared, which in Yiddish, the language of family secrets, meant "Black cat", my father's nickname. A common name, with the value of a proper name. As an effect of that finding I slept all night. Not a sneeze. (...).

Now there was something that could act as a bridge and at the same time mark the distance between the body and the signifier of the father's name. The cat -imaginary figure - connected the S1 "Schwartz Cutter" with the affected part of the body. And here Gustavo adds what interests me most: The edges of meaning seem to be a good habitat for certain animals - this is what happens with zoophobias - which is an indication that the drive is at play.

**4)** Miller states in his Seminar "Le tout dernier Lacan" that Lacan in his last seminar "The moment of conclusion" is particularly marked by the promotion of

the imaginary, he says: ...jouissance, contingency and the body are conjugated in a promotion of the imaginary. It reminds me of the call that Lacan launches at the end of his seminar "L'insu que sait de l'une bévue", when he says that he awaits, that he waits for, a new signifier (...) The ultimate answer that the seminar "The Moment of Concluding" brings is that this new signifier is not a signifier, but rather an image<sup>4</sup>.

This quote led me directly to Seminar 23, the chapter in which Lacan raises the notion of "A new imaginary", and so I thought that perhaps the figures of animals that appear in the endings of analysis could be manifestations of what Lacan calls "a new imaginary"<sup>5</sup>.

Well, these four antecedents opened the topic I decided to investigate and that I would like to share with you today, even though I have not reached totally conclusive points.

First of all, what I have observed is that the use made of animal figures in the analytic experience is different according to the moment of analysis and according to the way in which these figures appear in the subject's discourse. For example, it is not the same if an animal is the condition of a phobic symptom such as the horses in Juanito, or if an animal is the representation of a traumatic or decisive moment in the history of the subject such as the monkey in Luis F. Carrijo's testimony (Brazilian colleague who locates the traumatic scene when a monkey catches him by surprise and bites him), or the rat in the testimony of Hélène Guilbaud, or in the testimony of Carlos Rossi the traumatic scene includes a cockroach.

But there is also a third way, This is the way I am most interested in, it is when the image of an animal reveals itself in some way in the final time of the analysis, surprising the analysand himself.

My hypothesis (following the line of some of the antecedents I stated at the beginning) is that if we frequently hear that animal figures emerge at the end of the analysis, this has to do with the imaginary power of the body and the ethology of animals, which attract the attention of the subject from early childhood, when we do not yet have the most developed symbolic tools of

<sup>3</sup> Stiglitz, G.: "Aquí hay gato encerrado. Sobre el efecto psicósomático". *Jornadas de la EOL el 4 de Dic. De 2010.*

<sup>4</sup> Miller, J-A.: *El último Lacan*, p.246. Paidós, Bs. As. 2013

<sup>5</sup> Lacan, J.: *Seminario 23*, p.120.

language but nevertheless we live surrounded by fauna through pets, teddies, stories, cartoons, etc.

Therefore I conjecture that in the key moments of the analysis, when the subject encounters the insufficiency of the symbolic to capture the real, or the limit of language to name the most singular, the figures of animals may appear as that new imaginary of which Lacan speaks in Seminar 23, an imaginary that bridges the Symbolic and the Real.

## 2. A new imaginary

In chapter VIII of Seminar 23 "Of meaning, sex, and the Real" Lacan tries to introduce the difference between meaning and the Real, and in this context he raises a very interesting idea: *One has to break oneself up, if I may say so, with a new imaginary that establishes sens*, let's see:

1- Lacan begins the class trying to explain why he finds Joyce's work stimulating, he finally says that it is a work that is not written to make a bond.

2- Then Lacan explains the reason for his passage from linguistics to semiotics: *Upon this, a certain Charles Sanders Peirce built his own brand of logic, which due to the emphasis that he lays upon relation leads him to construct a ternary logic. This is precisely the same path that I have been following, with the slight difference that I call the things at issue by their name—symbolic, imaginary, real, in the correct order* (p.119).

This is central, because you will remember that a year before Lacan dictated the seminar that he called "R, S, I", that is to say, he gives that order to the 3 registers: R-S-I. But in the quotation we now take, he proposes a new ordering: S-I-R, and clarifies that this is the "correct order".

I understand that in this new order the imaginary works as a fundamental element, so Miller in his seminar "El Partenaire-Sinthoma" says: "...Lacan makes the imaginary the mediation of the symbolic to appropriate the real" <sup>6</sup>.

6 Miller, J-A.: *El Partenaire Sintoma*, p.15.

3- In this chapter Lacan is very clear about the insufficiency of the Symbolic to catch the Real by itself, I quote: *Of course, the ideal of the matheme is that everything should correspond. It is precisely in this respect that the matheme wades in on the real. Indeed, this correspondence is not the final term of the real contrary to what people imagine, without knowing why. As I said earlier, we can only reach odds and ends of the real. This real, the real at issue in what is called my thought, is always as odd or an end, a core. It is certainly a core around which thought embellishes, but the mark as such of this real is that it doesn't tie on to anything. This at least is how I conceive of the real.* (p.121).

4- After this paragraph comes the part that convokes us: *One has to break oneself up, if I may say so, with a new imaginary that establishes sens. This is what I'm trying to establish with my language, which has the advantage of wagering on psychoanalysis in as much as I try to insinuate it as discourse, that is to say, as semblance at its most "vraisemblable", its most plausible.* (p. 120).

5- And precisely, after situating these questions, Lacan brings a film as a reference, something that is not very common in his classes: *...I've seen a film. It (...) was Japanese. (...) I was taken aback because it's female eroticism. (...) female eroticism seems to be carried to its extreme point here, and this extreme is the fantasy, no more no less, of killing the man. But even that does not suffice. Having killed him, she goes further still. (...) We know that it's a fantasy ...*(p. 124).

Lacan refers to the film *Empire of the Senses* by Nagisa Oshima, 1975, the story is about the passion of a woman, Abe Sada, to possess her master, Kichi, through sexual submission, it happens in 1936 in the middle of the China-Japan conflict. The moment Lacan highlights is when Abe at the height of sexual climax strangles Kichi, and when she realizes he is dead, she cuts off his genitals, ties them to a red silk scarf and wanders through the streets of Tokyo among the military and war flags with his master's penis in her hand.

Well, what does Lacan mean by this New Imaginary?



To my understanding, in the first place, what Lacan announces is a new moment in his teaching, we go from the time in which the imaginary was downgraded because in order to consist it had to be linked to the symbolic, to conceiving the imaginary as a way of approaching to the real, which even reevaluates the role of the fundamental fantasy as a kind of "movie" that the subject makes, in which the imaginary is the key.

It must be recognized that Lacan had been making this move since the previous seminar, when he says in the class 11/02/75 of RSI: ...the term imaginary does not mean pure imagination, since also, if we can make the imaginary exist, it is that it is another real.

What I am trying to emphasize is the great leap on the topic that takes place in Seminars 23, because Lacan announces "a new imaginary", the word "new" is the one I emphasize precisely because of what Miller explains in his seminar "Le tout Dernier Lacan", I quote: The seminar "**The Moment of Concluding**" is particularly marked by the promotion of the imaginary through the manipulations of the topological figures that Lacan multiplies. There is a certain tropism towards the imaginary, which represents for Lacan a sort of return to his origins, since he started from the imaginary at the beginning of his teaching. He returns to it, although under a different form, much more elaborated (...)

Jouissance, contingency and the body come together in a promotion of the imaginary. It reminds me of the call that Lacan launches at the end of his seminar "L'insu que sait de l'une bévue", when he says that he awaits, that he waits, for a new signifier. (...) The ultimate answer that the seminar "The Moment of Concluding" brings is that this new signifier is not a signifier, but rather an image<sup>7</sup>.

One more question about Seminar 23, I want to locate the verb Lacan uses: "*One has to break oneself up (...) with a new imaginary*". This refers me to the fact that we are dealing with an event, which is contingent, which does not happen always or in the same way, therefore the subject has no alternative but "to break oneself up (...) with...", the effect is surprise.

Perhaps it can be better clarified now that we will

7 Miller, J-A.: *El ultimísimo Lacan*, p.246. Paidós, Bs. As. 2013

move on to the last part of my presentation with the example of the animal images in the pass testimonies.

### 3. Animal images in the final moments of the analytic experience

Let us return to the "animal planet of psychoanalysis" from my hypothesis, I will say it again: As the analysis progresses there are key moments in which the analysand encounters the insufficiency of language, at the end of the analysis when the analysand seeks the best way out of the experience those moments are concentrated and the feeling intensifies that the symbolic is not enough to capture the real, that language is not enough to name the most singular of the subject, according to several pass testimonies it can be found that frequently in those moments animal figures appear, revealing that the "new imaginary" could function as that fundamental resource that allows the subject to "reach odds and ends", only a fragment, of the real.

Let us look at an example from **Irene Kuperwajs** testimony, she says: *During the analysis several dreams showed that relationship between the unconscious and the drive. Several dreams showed how the unconscious served the program of jouissance.* Then Irene locates a fundamental operation of the end of the analysis in one of her dreams: "...I was able to locate the extraction of the oral object: "A hippopotamus introduces its big mouth in my purse... It dies and expels a yellow vomit. I say: 'It's popcorn'". But the analyst adds: "The choking candy!"<sup>8</sup> in reference to the symptom of the subject who has suffered from choking since she was a child.

Another example can be found in the testimony of **Fabian Fajnwaks**<sup>9</sup>, where Fabian states:

*Once decided to conclude the analysis, having understood that I could no longer go beyond the point I had reached, I dream that "I find myself walking along an avenue near my house, and I meet an enormous undefined animal mass, half bear or dragon, the animal lying in the middle of the avenue, sleeping with one eye open and watching me pass by. Surprised by such a surreal encounter, I pass by it and without fear or anxiety, I*

8 Kuperwajs, I.: "Huellas", Revista Lacaniana #28, EOL, 2020.

9 [https://2.bp.blogspot.com/-vSLujkzorUc/XD-Heeolb-DI/AAAAAAAAAXd0/AClOpj\\_QVpAJEB1kCfwn0b0-57y1b08uACEwYBhgL/s1600/23a.jpg](https://2.bp.blogspot.com/-vSLujkzorUc/XD-Heeolb-DI/AAAAAAAAAXd0/AClOpj_QVpAJEB1kCfwn0b0-57y1b08uACEwYBhgL/s1600/23a.jpg)

continue on my way. I wake up and the first association that comes to me is "this animal is *Das Ding*, the Thing, my Thing, lying there, as a modality of the drive object". Then will come the Idea that it is really about the extraction of the fundamental fantasy object, and an enormous satisfaction, like a relief produced by this dream that I take as a confirmation that it is indeed the end of this analysis. As we know, and as I will reread a few days later, Lacan speaks of the satisfaction of the end of analysis, which is like an "it is what it is" that has been reached, that which has been achieved in the process.

Then Fabian goes a little further: As we know, the animal is very apt to incarnate a name of *jouissance* for the subject. I found that this half-bear, half-dragon animal could well name mine. Beyond the "animal that came in the avenue" as an incarnation of the Thing/pulsional object, "the Bear" was a nickname given to me, and "playing the bear" was a strategy that could designate my relation with the truth: "the defeated dragon" (pictorial theme: *St. George and the Dragon*) lying in that avenue, gave the analysis a caption point. The scopic object (an open eye) and the anal dimension of this animal lying like a dejection contribute to verify the certainty that something I had been talking about for years was written there.

Well, with Fabian's example we can advance a little more on the subject. Here the animal presents itself precipitating the exit of the analysis through a nomination effect.

By the way, I found the right reference in an old Miller's seminar, "La naturaleza de los semblantes", where Miller notices that just at the moment in which Lacan examines the function and value of the proper name he introduces for the first time in a writing the concept of *jouissance* (Los Escritos p. 799) at this point Lacan wonders, says Miller, I quote: ...How to designate the being of the subject not as a dead subject but by what is still alive in him? He speaks, then, of a "being that emerges as missing in the sea of proper names. - then Miller later adds - the missing name to be discovered (...) is the name of *jouissance*, the name of my being as a being of *jouissance*, - then Miller clarifies - in the diagnosis, a subject is not designated, but is classified in a more or less well worked clinical structure, and one speaks then of an obsessive, a hysteric, a phobic. However, the

proper names in the clinic include the *jouissance* of a subject, his object *a*. When we refer to the Man of the Rats, or when we speak of the Man of the Wolves, we give them proper names that have nothing to do with the Name of the Father.

Thus Miller comes to the subject of animals and says that in the names of these Freudian cases, I quote: it is not by chance that (...) in these names there is an animal, because these are (...) what escapes the lack of being...<sup>10</sup>

Well, let us reflect a little more on Miller's approach. We could think that like animals, since they were not marked by language and therefore in them the lack of being is not at stake, being would be reduced in a convincing way to the mode of *jouissance* of each species, which is deduced from its ethology or its imaginary: the zebra's stripes, the wasp's sting, the hyena's laugh, the penguin's walk, the turkey's plumage, the lynx's run, the lion's roar, the kohala's embrace, the spider's web, etc....

From this perspective, the figures of animals could become representations apt for some analysts to find in them a tool for the nomination of that which makes up the most singular part of themselves and which, of course, would never be fully captured by language. After all, as Lacan states in a class of Seminar 22: ...to focus on nomination (...) it is to focus on the relation with the real. Nomination is different from communication precisely because in nomination, the chatter is knotted with the real<sup>11</sup>.

To this quotation from Lacan we can add what Eric Laurent states in "The Reverse of Biopolitics": In his teaching, Lacan shows on several occasions the genesis of the 1 from the missing element in a series of elements taken from reality. The number is proposed as different from that which constitutes reality. Names, in Lacan's final perspective, are conceived in the same way. And they are supported, not by a reference, but by a name itself, that is to say, a body *jouissance* in its singularity.<sup>12</sup>

Following this perspective I think as an example the testimony of Debora Rabinovich, starting from the image of a Rhinoceros that appears in the penultimate dream she has in analysis.

10 Miller, J-A.: "La naturaleza de los semblantes" p.36. Paidós, Bs. As. 2002

11 revista *Ornicar?* #5 pp.16-28 Citado por Eric Laurent en *El revreso de la Biopolítica*, p. 70.

12 Laurent, E.: *El Reverso de la Biopolítica*, p92-93.

In the testimony "My lie, my fixation" published in *Revisita Lacanian* #23, Debora develops in detail her interpretation of that dream, the use she made of it, and the way in which it determined the exit of the analysis:

*I want to situate now the image of that animal, taking Lacan, as a new signifier because it is totally disconnected from any associative chain due to the use I gave it.*

*Rhinoceros, a signifier that in spite of coming from a dream, the treatment we gave it, was not the one given to the formations of the unconscious. We did not try in the least to interpret it.*

*From then on, I used it.*

Debora explains that when she woke up from the dream she immediately read it breaking down the word "Rhinoceros" in three parts, each one of them had to do with crucial points of her analysis: The traumatic scene (a scene in which Debora replies to her mother "I don't know") the symptom (shame) a solution (laughter).

I don't know if this will be well understood because there is a question of languages, because the work Debora does with her dream is in Spanish and French, but I will say it anyway:

Debora breaks down the word Rhinoceros into three elements:

Ri (laughter in French)

Noce ("no se" in Spanish, that's "I don't know" in English)

Ceros (zéro honte is zero shame in French).

I quote Debora: *Lacan, in his seminar 24, wonders where the analysis is aiming at. He states that what he expects is the invention of a new signifier. He specifies that this signifier as the real does not have any kind of meaning.*

*J-A Miller deals with this in his course "Le tout dernier Lacan". He explains that it is not a signifier in particular, but a new mode of existence of the signifier. He clarifies that it is because it does not speak that it implies a primacy of writing over the word.*

Well, as we advance in the reading, we find that for Débora that new signifier that a subject could invent at the end of the analysis, according to Lacan, can be

understood as the *sinthome*, and then she says: ***I believe that the rhinoceros fulfills this function. It became for me something not to interpret, but to use (...) The image of the rhinoceros became a letter, a new signifier and a sinthome.***

I decided to finish my exposition with Debora's testimony, because I think it transmits very well the function of nomination that the imaginary could have in the final moments of the analysis, and in many testimonies of AS it is presented as images of animals, at the moment of leaving the analysis, when the analysand is looking for that own name, singular, unique, a name that can catch the singularity of the real of his own case.

Well, at the end of her testimony Debora Rabinovich, remembers a P-G Gueguen's work about dreams at the end of analysis, there P-G says that dreams at the end of analysis do not indicate a repressed content as dreams during analysis do, instead dreams at the end of analysis indicate a *jouissance* point, an element of autonomination. I quote Pierre-Gilles: *To name is not to interpret, but to manipulate the sinthome that was left open to equivocation (...) through an imaginary manipulation, the echo of a primordial trauma*<sup>13</sup>. Debora adds to Gueguen's words: *I take then the rhinoceros as a way of naming that appeals to the equivocal, echoing precisely the primordial trauma*<sup>14</sup>.

Finally, what Deborah's testimony teaches us, as well as many testimonies of other AS, can be resumed with this quote from Miller that I will read as a conclusion of my exposition: *I consider that in the Italian Note Lacan proposes a structural binary when he says that in the case of knowledge in the real we can speak of discovery, but the knowledge at stake in psychoanalysis is not about discovering but about inventing. Let us see the scope of this statement: discovery means that there is previously (that is why Lacan says "there is knowledge in the real"), and this "there is" founds the discovery; on the other hand, the "there is no sexual relation" gives its foundation to what is invented*<sup>15</sup>.

What I wanted to manifest with this work today, together with you, using as an example the figure of the animals that appear in several testimonies of AS. What I tried to transmit is that the "newimaginary" of which Lacan

<sup>13</sup> Guéguen, P-G: "Portrait de l'inconscient", en *Question d'École, L'Hebdo Blog* n°57, 2015.

<sup>14</sup> Rabinovich, D.: "Mi mentira, mi fijación", *Revista Lacaniana* n°23, p.89.



speaks in Seminar 23, is that bridge between the Symbolic and the Real, a bridge that in an analysis helps us to invent a singular solution for each one of us.

Jorge Assef

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