ANTIGONE AND THE REAL:
TWO REFLECTIONS ON THE NOTION OF COHERENCE
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INTRODUCTION

Nearly a century after Sophocles' *Antigone* was first performed in Athens in 411 BC, Aristotle laid down, in his *Poetics*, a number of features which defined tragedy as the didactic genre *par excellence*. Although it would be pointless to speculate on the motives behind Aristotle's specific purport, it is safe to assume that the political successes which Sophocles achieved through the popularity of *Antigone* played a role in shaping his norms. In this - and in more issues to which I will return - Aristotle distanced himself from Plato. The latter's thought might have been speculative; however, each of his fantasies was designed either to prove a point or to fulfill a role, in accordance with the norms of what we know as the Symbolic. On the other hand, Aristotle's line of argument calls for retroactivity when logic fails and all justification for the tragic events and their meaning dissolves, rendering powerless even the most noble of heroes. What Aristotle shows are the effects of the Real, for only the Real allows one to reconstruct the *peripeteia* in which the roles of the hero and its fate become reversed, in which all fruition of the hero's and spectator's assumptions come to naught.

The first issue which I will contend in this paper is that, through the impact of the Real, Aristotle becomes the inaugurator of the modality of the *après coup* in its first systematic expression - therewith outlining the premises of what we know today as theory - and that the operating mechanism supporting Aristotle's retroactive reading is that of identification.

Because of his *act* of retroactivity, and because of this act only, Aristotle is able to illustrate the notions of verisimilitude and inevitability through kinship relationships. As Lacan notes, Aristotle's rule of thumb concerning the purpose of tragedy is based on the ability to elicit catharsis: δι ἐλέου καὶ φόβου περαίνουσα τὴν τῶν τοιούτων παθήματων κάθαρσιν, to arouse pity and fear in order to purify from similar passions.[1] This means a treatment of emotion by emotion with the aim of discharging it.

The problem, however, with the notion of catharsis is that, in focusing on the affect as its object, the cathartic moment obscures the fact that all affect is

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effect: effect of language and the narrative which it develops; affect of the audience, of the actors, even of the playwright. As Aristotle well knew, family issues are familiar enough (in the sense of proximity) to entice those concerned with it to assume the roles it involves. Not for nothing does Aristotle dwell so explicitly in the particular instances at which family becomes tragedy:

> When [. . .] the tragic event occurs within the sphere of natural affections - when, for in-
> stance, a brother kills or is on the point of killing his brother, or a son his father, or a mother
> her son, or a son his mother, or something equally drastic is done - that is the kind of event
> a poet must try for.[2]

"Natural affections" or afflictions of fate? If we read Aristotle's exemplifications in the light of the necessity of producing the catharsis, then his notion of inevitability is not so much related to "what must happen of necessity" as it is to "what cannot be avoided" - a precise reference to the nature of family membership. The confusion which later surrounds the notion of tragedy and fuses the tragic with bad fortune - a confusion which survives very much intact today - has a much more solid basis in the lack of choice than it does in the necessity of a particular event. Much more - and much more obviously - than logical necessity, the lack of choice furnishes the spectator or actor with something with which he or she will feel compelled to identify himself or herself. Nobody, after all, chose his or her parents. To mistake this lack of choice for a logical inevitability is to turn tragedy into a comedy. The central point here is: the fact that those participating in tragedy in any capacity suffer points at the emergence of the Real. The cathartic purification is an attempt to cope with the wounds of the Real by means of a process of *imaginarization*.

The second issue which I will develop has to do with Sophocles' *Antigone*. Aristotle is un-comfortable with this play. Although Antigone possesses the qualities which characterize a tragic hero, it is not very clear precisely how the catharsis functions in her case. Neither is it clear that the *peripeteia* occurs without Antigone's active "participation." Indeed, Antigone's relationship with her fate is unique: she actually shapes it. This is not to say that she enjoys the privilege of a coherent fate! On the contrary, the logical gaps and blind spots introduced by the Real pervade throughout the most intensely dramatic moments of the tragedy and, true to tradition, they pertain to the struc-ture of her family - but, very much in contrast with the cathartic reversal in other plays, it is Antigone herself who remains steadfastly incoherent in the motivation behind her actions. In her last lyric exchanges with the Chorus[3] Antigone laments once again her fate. This time, her lamentations in-clude an astonishing explanation of her reasons to bury Polynices:

> [. . .] for never, if I had been the mother of children, or if my husband had been mouldering
> in death, would I have taken on this task in defiance of the citizens. To what law do l defer in
> saying this? My husband being dead, I could have another, and child by another man if I

had lost a child; but, as my mother and father are hidden in the house of Hades, no brother could ever be born again. Such was the law by which I singled you out for honour[. . .][4]

At first sight, it would appear that Antigone's real purpose is to express her absolute devotion to Polynices, whom she has, in a sense, preferred to a husband or child, in that she has forfeited the chance of marriage.[5] But this is incompatible with the second last sentence of the passage, in which she indicates that she might not have buried *even her brother* if her parents had happened to be alive. As I see it, through Antigone the Real has the last word, and the meaning of her motives is the support of the lack of choice which constitutes the structure of her family. And this is only one link in the string of the unstrung in *Antigone*. Equally startling, even scandalous in its context, is the reaction of the Chorus upon learning of her death sentence:

Ἔρως ἀνικάτε μάχαν[6]

Love invincible in battle. The Chorus experiences *beauty*. The effect of the aesthetic experience is the temporary suspension of the Chorus' capability for critical judgment. It can only sing about its love for Antigone, about the way this love can lead to the transgression of every limit, because Antigone has become the expression of *desire rent visible* (ἱμερός ἐνάργης). The Greek language possesses a term which appears several times throughout the tragedy and signifies the utter confusion to which I pointed above: that term is ἄτη. As Lacan points out, the expression is at once untranslatable and irreplaceable in the articulation of the tragedy: untranslatable because all its renderings - doom, lethal rashness, willed curse, rotting, blindness - far from conveying the concept in question, function as allusions to its original signification; irreplaceable because it alone makes it possible to comprehend Antigone's position beyond the blindness to which her brilliance gives rise. My contention is that Antigone stands for the effects of the Real, the appearance of the *objet a*. As such, not only does she contextualize the incoherence of the characters in the play; she also points out, through the ἄτη, the stage at which even Aristotle's theoretical thought cannot but falter.

This paper is not an attempt to elaborate a new translation of ἄτη; rather, I shall be analyzing the term through some of the peculiar effects it induces in the symbolic apprehension of the personages within the play as well as of those

who write about it. In order to illustrate the issue, I shall employ some of the discourse formulae which Lacan develops in his XVII seminar, *L'envers de la psychanalyse*.

In *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*[7] Freud explains the processes of group formation through a double bond: a horizontal bond linking the members of the group on the basis of a vertical bond between each member and the leader of that group. Freud studied the bond between the members in terms of the mechanisms resulting from their identification with each other vis-à-vis their relation with the leader. Whereas the leader appears to be radically individualized - insofar as he imposes his aura and his ideas under the pretense of originality, and insofar as he is seen as the example to be followed or shunned - the individuals the group following him consists of become an undifferentiated mass; they acquire the attributes of a *crowd*; they accept/reject/enact the Master's commands/prohibitions. Another source of critical importance in Lacan's formulation of the discourse model are the writings of Roman Jakobson, in particular those concerning his communication theory.[8]

Jakobson distinguishes six functions which represent different instances in the process of communication: the "sender" of a message, its "receiver," the nature of the "contact" between them, the "code" through which the contents of the message are expressed, the "context" within which the communication takes place, and finally the "message" itself. Jakobson intends these functions to enable one to outline a more or less stable chart of the communication process as well as the points at which it might falter.

Combining Freud's notions on the heterogeneity of the leader-crowd and individual-flock dyads with the functions of Jakobson's communication model, Lacan formulates a generic signifying pair, $S_1 \rightarrow S_2$. In contrast to Jakobson's model, Lacan's formulation preserves intact the social disjunctions Freud describes in *Group Psychology*; conversely, the signifying pair assigns a specific role to language within that social structure. On the other hand, the bond between S_1 and S_2, although discursive, does not necessarily require any particular linguistic utterance to operate: it precedes all such utterances. Like language itself, this discursive structure pre-exists the subject's entrance in it. In Lacan's model then, the notion of discourse is by no means limited to speech or writing - the discourse structures are, in fact, in place before any concrete words are spoken.[9] Nevertheless, discourse and language are intertwined, and variations in the fundamental relations subsisting in language are correlated to variations in the social bond; they define particular basic discourse types.

Lacan, however, also finds grounds to refute the supposed stability and univocality of Jakobson's scheme of functions. Freud's works on the joke and the lapsus show that merely linguistic or psychological models do not suffice adequately to characterize the role of the Symbolic in

humans. For instance, Freud's demonstration that the lapsus can sometimes be a more successful instance of communication than "normal" speech leads Lacan to question the apparently self-evident relationship between "sender" and "message." Indeed, in the lapsus, but also in many other instances of communication, it is not at all obvious that the sender's intention is univocal. On the contrary, it is necessary to speak of a number of intentions which operate next, besides, throughout, and even against the allegedly intended message. Does the sender really possess such a message? Does he intend to apply a code to render that message conveyable? And is that message - and no other - the one that the sender really intended to convey in the first place? Is the sender in possession of the code, or is he in fact possessed by it? And, as sender, is he not rather the receiver of the message sent by the code? Is he truly able to decode the message quickly, efficiently and flawlessly? If not, does he not elect not to know anything about these shortcomings? And where is the interference located: in the channel, in the sender, or already in the code itself? Similar questions arise on the side of the receiver. In the first place, the code also speaks to him; the receiver is thus the code's object. Also the receiver is hindered by the interference produced by the many "para" messages which simultaneously demand his attention. To compound matters even further, the receiver is also exposed to the ubiquitous, often unpleasant messages about himself that the code sends. Neither is the receiver's intention to decode the sender's message unambiguous or pure. The incarnated code is not an abstraction; it is acquired throughout the development of a strictly personal subjective history. In turn, this modifies the way any ulterior message is to be decoded, as well as the way any question to the code is to be posed.
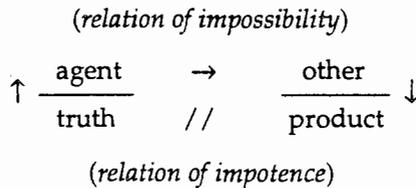
A model intended to map the phenomena of discourse must be able to account for - rather than resolve or eliminate - the nuances mentioned above. Lacan's use of Jakobson's model involves both an acceptance and a radical modification of the latter. He replaces Jakobson's static roles by four functions which are independent of, and precede, the participation of any given individual in a discourse.[10]

The *truth* drives the *agent* of a discourse to address himself to an *other* in order to obtain a more or less anticipated *product*. In representing these four functions along a synchronic scheme, Lacan renders each one of them as defining a logical *place* or topos:

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            agent           other

            truth           product
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The "sender" of Jakobson's model subsists here only as an *apparent* agent, driven by an unconscious truth. This agent does not have direct access to the unconscious; on the contrary, it is the unconscious' pawn. The contents of the unconscious can only be constructed fragmentarily, and only through the *Other*. On the other hand, the "receiver" is divided between the other who is spoken to and the effect taking place in his unconscious. The signifier divides thus both speaker and addressee; the word, therefore, necessarily follows a path which is doubly articulated through the unconscious. In Lacan's synchronic representation this results in a *double disjunction* between the places, which has far reaching consequences for each discourse type. He portrays this double disjunction by the arrow (→) which represents the *impossibility* characterizing the relationship between agent and other, and by the double bar (//) representing the *impotence* of any attempt to link the truth with the product:

(relation of impossibility)

$$\uparrow \; \frac{agent}{truth} \quad \xrightarrow{} \quad // \quad \frac{other}{product} \; \downarrow$$

(relation of impotence)

The disjunction between the truth and the product marks the border of the discourse with the Real. I shall further characterize the variations in the nature of these disjunctions when describing each specific discourse type.

The scheme of the four places - the truth, the agent, the other and the product - forms the basis of Lacan's discourse model. Each of the places can be occupied by one of four *terms*, resulting each time in a different discourse type.

The first element to consider for the occupation of the four places is the signifier. As he further elaborates on Freud's observations concerning the falsity of the pretense of any original signification, Lacan establishes that, by themselves, the signifiers are made of *non-sense*: they only signify within diacritical oppositions. For a signifier S_1 to have a meaning, it must stand in opposition to the "signifying crowd" S_2, the rest of the set of signifiers - which must consist of at least *two* signifiers other than S_1. The elision of a signifier from the set S_2 becomes at once the Master's point of address, the divided subject ; it is divided in both its relations to the signifier whose place it

occupies, and to the master signifier it follows and denies.

The basic dyad S_1 - S_2 is the prototype for any further possible pair of signifying combinations. The divided subject is represented for the elided signifier - the place which the subject occupies - by the master signifier to which it responds: $\$ \rightarrow S_1 \rightarrow S_2$.

Eventually, the divided subject is confronted with the fact that the master signifier does not succeed in entirely restoring the primal subjectivity - that is, the impossible, mythical stage in which the subject was not yet separated from the signifier it replaces - and its corresponding *jouissance*: the words, Lacan says, do not suffice.[11] In different terms: conceived as the Big Other, the Symbolic order is incomplete, as it bears the trace of the traumatic Real marked by the loss of the primal - or phallic - signifier. Lacan notates this deficiency in the Symbolic as $\cancel{A}$.[12]

The counterpart of the failure in the Symbolic is the *rest* of the unattainable, mythical undivided subject: the plus-de-jouir or *objet petit a*, which emerges as the result/refuse of any given signifying process: $\$ \rightarrow S_1 \rightarrow S_2 \rightarrow a$.

The four elements thus defined are the *terms* of the discourse. The *objet a* slips away from all attempts by the divided subject fully to integrate it in the Symbolic order so as to regain the lost - but never experienced, never possessed - mythical primordial unity. At the same time, the *objet a* emerges as the result of those attempts, so that an incessant discursive chain results:

$$\$ \rightarrow S_1 \rightarrow S_2 \rightarrow a \rightarrow \$ \rightarrow S_1 \rightarrow S_2 \rightarrow a \rightarrow \$ \rightarrow S_1 \rightarrow S_2 \rightarrow a \ \ldots$$

Since their logical sequence is invariable, only four different groups of four elements can be formed:

$$\$ \rightarrow S_1 \rightarrow S_2 \rightarrow a$$

$$S_1 \rightarrow S_2 \rightarrow a \rightarrow \$$$

$$S_2 \rightarrow a \rightarrow \$ \rightarrow S_1$$

$$a \rightarrow \$ \rightarrow S_1 \rightarrow S_2$$

Lacan obtains four discourse types by rotating the chain of four terms in their constant order, on the four places. The resulting discourse types are the *master, hysteric, university* and *analytic* discourses. For this paper, the master and analytic discourses are the most important.

The *master discourse* is the first type Lacan describes.[13] The signifier S_1, which represents the divided subject, occupies the place of the agent: the Master pretends to coincide with a unique, privileged signifier, which activates the knowledge contained in the signifying chain, S_2:

$$\text{agent} \qquad \text{other}$$
$$S_1 \qquad\qquad S_2$$

The master signifier at the place of the agent labels the other as lacking, as incomplete. The most important characteristic of the master discourse is the reduction of the other to a thing: his response to the question of *who* the subject is, is a description of *what* the subject is. By the same token, the only alternative left to the Master - if he is to maintain his position - is to deny his subjectivity as his driving, initial predicament. In so doing he consolidates his castration in the place of the repressed truth of his discourse:

$$(\textit{impossibility})$$
$$\text{agent} \quad \rightarrow \quad \text{other}$$
$$\uparrow \; \frac{S_1}{\$} \qquad\qquad S_2 \qquad \downarrow$$
$$\text{truth}$$

The dilemma with which the Master contends arises because the *jouissance* remains inaccessible to him. He wishes to attain it through the other; but the latter holds the key to the Master's subjectivity, the suppression of which defined the master position in the first place. That means that the other is the locus of the Master's *jouissance*, which emerges at the place of the product when the knowledge contained by S_2 is exhausted:

$$(\textit{impossibility})$$
$$\text{agent} \qquad \rightarrow \qquad \text{other}$$
$$\uparrow \; \frac{S_1}{\$} \qquad\qquad \frac{S_2}{a} \; \downarrow$$
$$\text{truth} \quad // \quad \text{product}$$
$$(\textit{impotence})$$

To reach the *objet a*, the Master would have to place his subjectivity in the place of the agent; but that would necessitate the acceptance of his castration - which would, in turn, bring about the end of the master discourse.

The hysteric discourse emerges as an answer to that of the Master. The split subject in the place of the agent installs the master signifier in the place of the other and questions it about the *jouissance* - the truth of the divided subject - which is beyond the Master's reach:

<div align="center">

(impossibility)

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$$\uparrow \frac{\$}{a} \rightarrow S_1$$

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truth

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But the Master, as shown above, cannot answer that demand without undermining his position. Upon the Master's failure to provide a final answer, the hysteric subject unmasks him and declares him bankrupt. The knowledge which is the result of this operation - the incomplete knowledge with which the Master pretended to coincide - appears in the place of the product.

The structure of the university discourse is the reverse of the hysteric:

<div align="center">

hysteric discourse   university discourse

</div>

$$\uparrow \frac{\$}{a} \quad \rightarrow \quad \frac{S_1}{S_2} \downarrow \qquad // \qquad \uparrow \frac{S_2}{S_1} \quad \rightarrow \quad \frac{a}{\$} \downarrow$$

In the university discourse, the knowledge (Freud's "crowd"), occupying the place of the agent, commands its own growth to continue by endlessly displacing the impersonalized *objet a*. The objectivity of scientific discourse corresponds to the exclusion of the subject from the signifying relation and the knowledge functions without its repressed inaugural point - the intervention of the Master positing basic axioms. The opposite of the master discourse is the analytic discourse, to which I shall return later.

Before returning to the ἄτη and the limits it stands for in *Antigone*, there are some instrumental notions to obtain through a summary lecture of the discourse types in terms of the registers of the Imaginary, Symbolic and Real.

The two most obvious places of the discourse scheme are the agent and the other: they come closest to the notion of communication as developed by Jakobson. Obvious places means: they could be thought of *without* taking the unconscious into account. This takes me directly to a first conclusion, namely: the relationship between the agent and the other ("impossibility") belongs to the order of the Imaginary. In attempting to reach the other directly, the agent must first identify himself with the Other. On the other hand, we see that once the unconscious comes into the picture, any relation between the truth and the product is interrupted by a double bar. One can thus eliminate any possibility of successful communication between agent and other.

The disjunction between the truth and the product ("impotence") belongs to the Real, which is the register that has no access to the signifier.

The Symbolic is the register of the subject.[14] To analyze the symbolic component of the discourse type I will focus on the terms of the signifying function rather than on the places of the discourse. This is in accordance with Lacan's definition of the subject: a subject is represented by a signifier for another signifier, $\$ \rightarrow S_1 \rightarrow S_2$. Contrary to the case of the Imaginary and the Real, this Symbolic triad is located at different places for each discourse type. In the master discourse, the two terms of the signifying chain, S_1 and S_2, occupy the upper half of the diagram. The split subject in the place of the truth must remain repressed if the master discourse is to be maintained. In the analytic discourse S_2 and S_1 are separated by the barrier of the Real ($//$). The emergence of the split subject is related exclusively to the revelation of the phallic signifier S_1 by virtue of the fact that *objet a* is in the place of the agent. The restrictions of the Symbolic order S_2 are suspended in the place of the truth.

DISCUSSION

One of Lacan's most extensive accounts of the Real is to be found in the fifth chapter of his seminar of 1963-1964.[15] He centers his presentation on two terms, τύχη and αυτόματον, as used by Aristotle in the second book of *Physics*. Lacan renders τύχη as the "encounter with the real" that lies beyond the αυτόματον, "the return, the coming back, the insistence of the signs, by which we see ourselves governed by the pleasure principle."[16] The actual characterization Lacan gives of the Real is quite often in negative terms, i.e. "the little we know about the real shows its antinomy to all verisimilitude."[17] The definition which best suits the effect of the Real upon the psyche is the advent of a *trauma* - a rupture in the fabric of the Symbolic as well as the origin of all imaginary identifications. And - I would add - trauma is the term that most precisely renders Aristotle's attitude when it comes to the ill-logic of tragedy.

The subject cannot cross the border of the Symbolic and into the Real with impunity. Neither is it possible for the subject to speak of an "experience" of a Real which is not susceptible of representation. However, the subject does experience the approach of the inner border of the Symbolic with the Real as anxiety and as perplexity - that is, as a clouding in the processes of signification. From the perspective of the subject, the Real itself appears as death. And death is precisely where Antigone's passion takes her.

Antigone's death is not the conventional death to which all humans are subject. As Lacan abundantly shows and exemplifies, the text of the Chorus is significant and insistent about it - Antigone goes ἐκτὸς ἄτας - beyond the ἄτη. I will focus on a single moment in the play - the only one that Lacan brings over from the seminar into *Kant avec Sade* - to analyze the status of the ἄτη from the perspective of Lacan's discourse model.

Although Freud does not explicitly address Aristotle's notion of the cathartic process, he nevertheless homes into the catharsis and he describes it almost casually in terms of an intrapsychic process, and not a sociological phenomenon:

> [. . .] A single idea of general value dawned on me. I have found, in my own case too, [the phenomenon of] being in love with my mother and jealous of my father, and I now consider it a universal event in early childhood, even if not so early as in children who have been made hysterical.[. . .] If this is so, we can understand the gripping power of *Oedipus Rex*, in spite of all the objection that reason raises against the presupposition of fate; and we can understand why the later "drama of fate" was bound to fail so miserably. Our feelings rise against any arbitrary individual compulsion;[. . .] but the Greek legend seizes upon a compulsion which everyone recognizes because he senses its existence within himself. Everyone in the audience was once a budding Oedipus in fantasy and each recoils in horror from the dream fulfillment here transplanted into reality, with the full quantity of repression which separates his infantile state from his present one.[19]

From here, it takes only one step to unravel the fact that the catharsis, as Aristotle presents it, will never be effective if it is based on a simple drama of fate. On the contrary, what matters is that each individual composing the audi-

ence be gripped by the memory of the primal incestuous wishes. The impossibility to confront this prevented Aristotle from distinguishing the familiarity necessary for the catharsis to take place from the family situation in which it must take place. In other terms: Aristotle became a subject to his own theory.

In a parallel which foreshadows Goethe's wish that the verses describing the incestuous nature of Antigone's relationships with Polynices and Oedipus would one day prove to be extrapolated, the ἄτη overcomes the Chorus, makes it blind to the nature of Antigone's announced end - it is not a pleasant end, to be sure - and causes it to fall in love. "The term [ἄτη] is repeated twenty times, which in such a short text resounds like forty, though even then this does not prevent one from not reading it," says Lacan.[19] This applies first of all to the Chorus.

To grasp the signification of Antigone's ἄτη beyond a mere translation it is necessary to study the effects of the ἄτη on discourses within and beyond the play. The Chorus refers explicitly and markedly to the ἄτη looming over the Labdacydes and the manner in which Antigone incurs it. And yet, paradoxically, the moment when Creon spells out Antigone's destiny is the moment at which the Chorus becomes blind to that revelation - it falls in love. I suggest that only the structure of the analytic discourse can adequately account for the logical interval between Antigone's position and that of the Chorus and Creon. Antigone's position is, after all, the pivot of the play's development, but only on the basis of its denial. Tiresias' voice reaches out to Creon from beyond the second death. It traverses the obscurement of the ἄτη and reveals the object which is Creon's truth:

$$\text{analytic} \quad \rightarrow \quad \text{discourse}$$

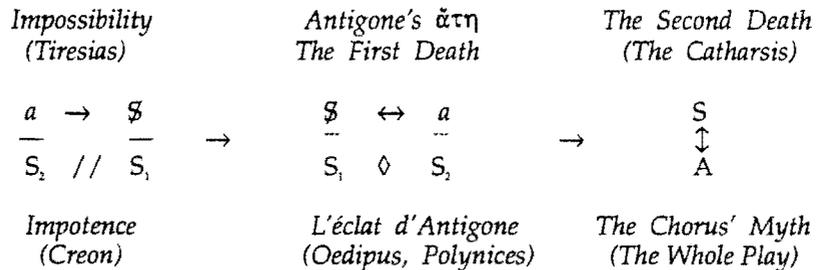$$\uparrow \frac{a}{S_2} \quad // \quad \frac{\$}{S_1} \downarrow$$
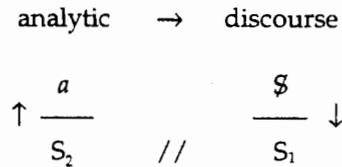
The privileged positions of the *objet a* and the split subject are based on a symbolic disjunction, $S_2 // S_1$, which indicates that there is a fundamental gap between the knowledge and the master signifier allowing only one of them to bear relevance - not both. When Antigone crosses the limits of the ἄτη, she overcomes that limitation, appearing to the Chorus to achieve a completeness, the sum of knowledge and signifier, $S_2 + S_1 = A$, the Other unbarred. This is, I believe, the basis of Antigone's *éclat*.

In bridging the border of the Real, Antigone exits the structures of discourse and enters death - the second death, which cancels her subjectivity. The Chorus is stricken with blindness

because it sings Antigone's doom while perceiving her as something more which it cannot see: the *objet a*. Antigone's death is the death of fullness: $a \rightarrow \mathcal{S}$ becomes $\mathcal{S} + a = S$, unbarred. A brilliance indeed - without gaps. In an anamorphosis pivoted on desire, the discourse finally dissolves into death:

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Impossibility *(Tiresias)*		*Antigone's* ἄτη *The First Death*		*The Second Death* *(The Catharsis)*
$\dfrac{a \;\rightarrow\; \mathcal{S}}{S_2 \;//\; S_1}$	$\rightarrow$	$\dfrac{\mathcal{S} \;\leftrightarrow\; a}{S_1 \;\lozenge\; S_2}$	$\rightarrow$	$\begin{array}{c} S \\ \updownarrow \\ A \end{array}$
Impotence *(Creon)*		*L'éclat d'Antigone* *(Oedipus, Polynices)*		*The Chorus' Myth* *(The Whole Play)*

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In the end, the story of Antigone becomes the final phase in the fulfillment of the curse of the Labdacydes. The vehicle through which that curse develops is the inflexibility of her will - a will which literally transports her beyond the realm of the human. Once she attains her ἄτη - which is the end-term of her desire, Antigone is free.

CONCLUSION: A QUESTION OF STYLE

Lacan opens his *Écrits* with a reference to style. The very first sentence of the *Ouverture de ce recueil* reads "style is man himself" - Buffon's definition of style.[20] In conformity with the thesis that the subject receives his message from the Other in an inverted form, and stressing the importance of the imaginary register for the ego, Lacan rephrases Buffon as "style is the man to whom one speaks." Judith Miller once inferred that "the substitution of 'himself' by 'to whom one speaks' indicates that identity is divided between what style represents and the one before whom it is represented."[21] This reveals directly the relationship between style and the *objet a*.

The relevance of the response of the *objet a* to the question of style leads us to posit that nowhere can this be more evident than in the psychoanalytic discourse: the *objet a* occupies there the place of the agent. And, I would add, in few instances is the role of the *objet a* shown as clearly as in *Antigone*.

Within the analytic discourse, style can never be a personal matter (S_1

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$\rightarrow$ S$_2$). Moreover, S$_2$ // S$_1$ means that the knowledge S$_2$ does not have access to expression - which could only take place through S$_1$. Coherently with Lacan's theory, the subversion of his teaching is limited to the field of language. Its most provocative aspect lies in posing the most fundamental questions without offering a synthetic view which would neutralize the analytic discourse.[23] Conversely, whatever S$_1$ expresses, it will not be a knowledge.

Between the knowledge of the analyst - or, for that matter, that of the analysand - and the phallic signifier there is the barrier of the Real (//). Antigone shows what the crossing of that barrier can be, other than a mirage. In a highly unusual combination, a formal instrument yields light on language at its poetic level.

1   Jacques Lacan, *Séminaire. Livre VII: l'éthique de la psychanalyse* (Paris: Seuil, 1986) 290.

2   Aristotle, *Poetics*, trans. J. Hutton (New York: Norton) 1453b.

3   Sophocles, *Antigone*, ed. and trans. Andrew Brown (Warminster, Wiltshire: Aris & Phillips, 1987) 891-931.

4   *Antigone*: 905-914.

5   See C. M. Bowra, *Sophoclean Tragedy* (Oxford UP: 1944) 95.

6   Lacan, *Le Séminaire. Livre VII*, 311; *Antigone*, 781.

7   Sigmund Freud, *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, in the *Standard Edition of the Complete Writings of Sigmund Freud*, ed. James Stratchey (New York: Norton, 1950) vol. XI: 1-94.

8   Roman Jakobson, "Linguistics and Poetics," in *Style and Language*, ed. T.A. Sebeok (Cambridge: MIT, 1960) 350-368.

9   Lacan, *Le Séminaire. Livre XVII: l'envers de la psychanalyse* (Paris: Seuil, 1991) 11.

10 For an exhaustive development of the questions surrounding Jakobson's model, see Julien Quackelbeen, *Zeven Avonden met Jacques Lacan* (Ghent, Belgium: Academia P, 1991) 76-98 and 107-153.

11 Lacan, *Télévision* (Paris: Seuil, 1974) 1.

12 Lacan, *Télévision* 9.

13 Lacan, *Le Séminaire. Livre XVII*, 31-41.

14 Jacques-Alain Miller, *Cinco Conferencias caraqueñas sobre Lacan*, coll. analítica (Venezuela: Anteneo de Caracas, 1979) 18.

15 See Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* (Seminar XI), trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Norton, 1977).

16 Lacan, *Four Fundamentals*, 53.

17 Lacan, *Four Fundamentals*, ix.

18 See *The Complete Letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fliess 1887-1904*, ed. and trans. J.M. Masson (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1985) 272.

19 Lacan, *Le Séminaire. Livre VII*, 305.

20 Lacan, *Écrits* (Paris: Seuil, 1966) I: 15-17.

21 Judith Miller, "Style is the Man Himself," in *Lacan and the Subject of Language*, Ellie Ragland-Sullivan and Mark Bracher, eds. (New York: Routledge, 1991) 144-151.

22 Lacan, *Le Séminaire. Livre XVII*, 79-80.