

History, Myth, Fiction

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In *The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis*, Lacan categorically asserts that what is at stake in psychoanalytic anamnesis is not reality but truth. He calls this recollection history. The psychoanalyst then teaches the subject to recognise their history as their unconscious. He asserts that “we help him complete the current historicization of the facts that have already determined a certain number of the historical “turning points” in his existence.”¹

In this sense, psychoanalysis is the subject's assumption of their history. In her argument, Patricia Bosquin-Caroz reminds us that the unconscious is the censored chapter in the subject's history. However, the truth can be found because it is written elsewhere.²

According to Jacques-Alain Miller, analysis is about delivering the truth of what has been. “It is nonetheless the case that in practice, we are constantly confronted with that-which-cannot-be-said, and that Lacan’s earlier teaching also took its bearings from the central question of the unsayable”³, he adds. Freud used myth to deal with the unsayable. Since ancient times, myth has been used to cover up the real, to conceal it as well as to give it meaning, to create a fiction in order to circumvent it.

“In short”, explains Lacan, “half-saying is the internal law of every species of enunciation of the truth, and what incarnates it best is myth.”⁴ Myth is just one of the forms that fiction can take. It takes the place of truth, which can only be half-spoken. It is, as Lacan states in *Television*, nothing more than “the attempt to give an epic form to what is operative through the structure.”⁵

In the report of the seminar *...or worse*, he illustrates with the following terms, the path that must be taken to move from myth to structure: “In psychoanalysis it is a matter of raising powerlessness (the same that makes the fantasy hear reason) to logical impossibility (the same that incarnates the real).”⁶ It is about moving from the imaginary to the real of structure, from prohibition to the impossible, from Freud’s dream to beyond the father. In other words, the Oedipus myth is merely an imaginary formation that attempts to attribute meaning to a structural fact. The Oedipus myth is only a veil of the real, an attempt to imaginize the real. What is the real that it conceals? According to Lacan, it is the fact that “the father [...] is from the origins, castrated.”⁷

¹ Lacan J., “The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis”, *Écrits*, trans. B. Fink, New York/London: Norton, 2006, p.217.

² *Ibid.*, p.215.

³ Miller, J. -A., “Truth is Coupled with Meaning” *Sex All Over The Place, The Lacanian Review*, Issue 2, 2016, p.10.

⁴ Lacan, J., The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XVII (1969-1970), *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*, ed, J.-A. Miller, trans. R. Grigg, New York/London: Norton, p.110.

⁵ Lacan J., *Television: A Challenge to the Psychoanalytic Establishment*, ed. J Copjec, trans. J Mehlman, D. Hollier, R. Krauss, A. Michelson, New York/London: Norton, 1990, p.30.

⁶ Lacan J., The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XIX (1971-1972), *...ou pire*, ed. J.-A. Miller, trans. A.R. Price, Cambridge: Polity, 2018, p.219.

⁷ Lacan, J., The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XVII (1969-1970), *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*, *op.cit.*, p.101.

The symbolic order, whose pivot is the Name-of-the-Father, is therefore a register of fiction. “*Truth* is coupled with *meaning*, and the two of them make a trio with *fiction*”⁸, Miller tells us. In Lacan's last teaching, Truth that speaks loses its omnipotence; it becomes variable, multiple, deceitful.

In *L'insu que sait de l'Une-bévue s'aile à mourre* Lacan also talks about the variety of the sinthome, he states: “The real, as it appears, the real tells the truth, but it does not speak, and one must speak in order to say anything. The symbolic, supported by the signifier, tells only lies when it speaks; and it speaks a lot.”⁹ Materially, it is impossible to tell the truth. Words fail¹⁰, he says.

Truth is then only a semblance regarding the real. In this sense, it has the structure of fiction. Miller argues that: “The lying truth is knowledge as elucubration, it is fiction whose structure is that of truth.”¹¹ Yet fiction is one of the major issues of the psychoanalytic experience. Fiction, even if it is powerless to resolve the opacity of the real, even if its destiny is to be undone, even if psychoanalysis is not the triumph of fiction¹², is nonetheless indispensable. Psychoanalysis begins by constructing a fiction. The analysis itself is a hystory and has the structure of fiction¹³, Miller points out.

Simply by speaking, S₁ is linked to S₂. Simply by speaking, speech is organised. In fact, what the subject recounts in an analysis is how they managed to produce meaning by chance. The subject interprets what happened to them. They add an S₂ to the random S₁ they encountered in their life. “Happence takes on meaning”¹⁴, says Miller.

Giving meaning to contingencies is always deceitful. “There is no truth that, in passing through awareness, does not lie,”¹⁵ notes Lacan. With this sentence, he questions, according to Miller, “the meaning of the analytical operation itself, insofar as it consists precisely in paying attention to the emergence of truths, those that come to light in what we call the formations of the unconscious.”¹⁶ From this perspective, free association is a lying truth. But it is just as indispensable to the analytical operation, which consists in embedding the emergence of truth, which are emergence of the unconscious, “in an articulation and turning it into discourse, through free association.”¹⁷

⁸ Miller J.-A., “Truth is Coupled with Meaning”, *op.cit.*, p.15.

⁹ Lacan, J., Séminaire XXIV (1976-1977), *L'insu que sait de l'Une-bévue s'aile à mourre*, lesson of 15th February, 1977, unpublished.

¹⁰ Lacan, J., Television: A Challenge to the Psychoanalytic Establishment, *op.cit.*, p.3.

¹¹ Miller, J.-A., « La passe du prêtre », *La Cause freudienne*, n°74, p.123.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Miller J.-A., “Psychoanalysis has the Structure of Fiction”, *Get Real, The Lacanian Review*, Issue 7, 2019. p.148.

¹⁴ Miller J.-A., “We are Haphazardly Driven from Pillar to Post” *Hurly Burly*, Issue 5, p.32. (Translation of lesson of the 10th December 2008 - *Choses de finesse en psychanalyse* (2008-2009), *L'orientation lacanienne*).

¹⁵ Lacan J., “Preface to the English-Language Edition” *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XI, The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, ed. J.-A. Miller, trans. A. Sheridan, New York/London: Norton, 1981, p.viii.

¹⁶ Miller, J.-A., « La passe du prêtre », *op.cit.*, p.119.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

And even if the unconscious is an elucubration of knowledge about the real, it is necessary for undertaking analysis. Without the unconscious, the analytical experience would be impossible. Patricia Bosquin-Caroz puts it very pertinently when she refers in her argument to “the ethical dimension of the relationship that subjects have with truth and with speech, which is the very condition of their *analysability*”.¹⁸ Lacan has a variant conception of truth, unconscious and ambiguous; it is not an absolute truth, rigorously logical and expressible. It is thus inseparable from the effects of language, that is to say, it includes the unconscious. “The only truth is the truth of what the said desire for its lack hides, so as to make light of what he does find”¹⁹, he says.

When we move from the idealism of truth to the materialism of *jouissance*, who would be the analyst? Miller gives us an answer: “An analyst would be someone who knows how to measure the gap between truth and the real, and who, in doing so, knows how to establish the analytical experience, that is, the hysteresis of discourse.”²⁰

¹⁸ Bosquin-Caroz, P., *Varity. Variations of Truth in Psychoanalysis*. Presentation of the NLS Congress Theme 2026, p.8. Available at: <https://www.amp-nls.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/ARGUMENT-NLS-CONGRESS-2026-PBC.pdf>

¹⁹ Lacan, J., The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XVII (1969-1970), *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*, *op.cit.*, p.61.

²⁰ Miller, J.-A, « La passe du parlêtre », *op.cit.*, p.123.