

Desire Paths: Where Truth Breaks

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After a snowfall, the city briefly reveals its hidden geometry. The grid appears: sidewalks cleared, crossings prescribed. Yet across the white surface, other lines emerge—oblique, repeated. Urbanists call them “desire paths”: traces left where walkers deviate from the planned route.

These lines are not drawn in advance. They appear where the official design proves insufficient. They attest—silently—that the imposed grid does not coincide with the movement of desire.

It is precisely at this point of failure that something becomes legible.

Desire paths are not pure authenticity breaking free of constraint. They are constructed over time, progressively inscribed through repetition. They are fictions that produce effects of truth. Psychoanalysis “makes true.”¹ What appears as deviation may, once articulated, be deposited as knowledge. “What, in its nascent moment, presents itself as truth, becomes knowledge by being registered and deposited.”²

Truth is not what follows the path, but what deviates from it. It emerges only at the point where the path fails—where something does not coincide.

The analytic act operates at these points. Slips, detours, interruptions: these are not accidents, but the very places where truth appears. A cut isolates a signifier that has counted. At such points, a tremor of *jouissance* may be felt—where something of the real presses against the signifying order, leaving a mark without meaning. Jacques – Alain Miller situates here “an irreducible real that surmounts the true.”³

Variety names this: not The truth unveiled once and for all, but a series of variable traces. Each revelation cuts and rewrites what came before; each scansion modifies what precedes it. Analytic work does not restore a path—it produces a discontinuous series, fractal traces of a singularity.

One does not follow the path; one reads its break.

¹ Lacan, J., *The Seminar, Book XVIII: On a Discourse that Might Not Be a Semblance*, ed. J.-A. Miller, trans. B. Fink, Cambridge: Polity, 2025, p. 5.

² Miller, J.-A., “Truth is Coupled with Meaning,” *The Lacanian Review*, 2, 2016, p. 11.

³ Miller, J.-A., “The Space of a Hallucination,” *The Lacanian Review*, 6, 2018, p. 95.