

TIME-LAG¹

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I am going to present a clinical sequence concerning the beginning of analysis for a young woman who was first received in a consultation centre for students, which she came to following the advice of friends worried about her repeated suicide attempts. She presented herself as having lost her way, no longer knowing how to support her angst, her rushes of anxiety, her spasms and her fainting, not knowing where to live any more, suffering too much from the solitude of her studio and getting in her mother's way when staying in her too small apartment.

She didn't know what studies to pursue. In fact she had followed the same studies as her partner and had reoriented herself after their break-up had become final. A rather brilliant student, she had just changed her orientation after having obtained a diploma sanctioning the first two years of university study. This time she chose Law, but this search for an encounter with the law revealed itself to be disappointing, her studies did not interest her.

This anxiety-ridden state of having lost her way had come about after a break-up. Her lover no longer wanted her, and after she had tried everything to get him back she had to finally admit that it was without hope. So she decided that she no longer loved him; she even doubted that she had ever loved him, but since the end of this relationship, which had started in adolescence, she felt empty, without personality, without interest.

On one point however, she displayed a trait of originality: she lied, about everything, all the time. It even seemed to her that our interviews could not open onto an analysis, for, as she said, she was lying to me too.

Everything in her was false, she said, she was only imitation, without consistency and was obliged to invent stories to interest others. She invented them to such an extent that she had got lost in them. The fear of contradicting herself led her to have difficulty in distinguishing the true from the false. She was thus a mytho-maniac, but it was, she said, because her life was totally uninteresting and her opinions too. She had been able to sustain the illusion the whole time she had been with her partner.

Although lost, this young woman was particularly ready for anything. In her first few interviews she would make lists of instances of her bad behaviour, which she grouped under the rubric 'lies'.

There was everything she had tried to get her partner back. This went from intrigue to laying siege — she had slept in front of his door, on the landing outside his apartment — and included scenes and cries that went as far as her suicide attempts. 'Pure lies, it is not with just a few tablets that...', she said.

She had, most seriously, succeeded in making her boyfriend believe that she was pregnant and thus obtained the resumption of sexual relations, this time without precautions, and had really become pregnant. This affair ended with an abortion, lived through very painfully, and a new separation, this time without return.

Gwen was thus a liar and in her opinion this was an obstacle to her progress. She organised her demand around a fruitless search for authenticity and complained of being caught up in a tissue of inventions and lies, a spider's web which she had spun herself and in which she was imprisoned no longer knowing, she said, how to untangle the true from the false.

Her friends were taking their distance from her. Nobody trusted her anymore.

She began sessions with a voluntary rectification of what she had said in the previous session. 'I have lied again.'

In fact, what she was demonstrating, beyond her lies, was a succession of instances of 'acting-out': the voluntary pregnancy without any intention of taking it to its final term, the attempts at suicide which were repeated even after the acceptance of separation, and other deceptive but also strange acts which she classed under the heading, 'I want to make myself interesting'.

In this respect, she had once gone to the police station to report that she had been attacked and beaten by several men in masks, backing up this complaint by showing bruises which she had inflicted on herself by hurling herself against the walls and throwing herself to the ground. She withdrew her complaint a few days later when the police started questioning her neighbours.

Gwen presented an 'I am lying' as an obstacle to the transference. 'I lie everywhere and here too so you can't know anything'.

I responded to her excuses for having lied by saying 'yes, that's very good' or 'yes, that's it all right' which left her rather perplexed but through which, however, she came to understand that I was inviting her to go beyond her acts of contrition towards the truth that the lies signified.

In the way of deception in which the subject is venturing, the analyst is in a position to formulate this *you are telling the truth*, and my interpretation has meaning only in this dimension.²

Jacques-Alain Miller, in Madrid on the 30th of January 1994, in closing the eleventh *journée* of the Freudian Field in Spain,³ said that the 'I am lying' is to be taken 'as being the formula which best indicates the position of the subject to us, the one which implies the concept of repression itself.'

'To speak is to lie. The subject lies. Consequently, the truest thing he can say is "I am lying" and thus merits the response, "you are telling the truth". The fundamental deception resides in speech. Speech is the *proton pseudos*.' Indeed, speech says that which is not and in so saying makes the fact exist.

Gwen's 'I am lying' will begin to be taken up in the transference. That is to say, in searching for the cause of her actions and first of all their addressee, her 'I am lying' will start to refer itself to an unconscious knowledge.

She designates this addressee in the form of a denegation: 'It is not because my father abandoned me that things aren't working out for me. I have long since forgotten him.'

An only child of parents who separated when she was thirteen years old, she will say that she had a very strong relation with her father and (...) shared his pleasures.

Not only did her father leave home to form a new couple, he also moved extremely far away, to the other side of the world. 'He left me', she still says seven years later. 'One doesn't leave one's daughter like that'.

Since he left, she has seen him for a few days every two years when he visits France. They are deceptive encounters. 'He is not interested in me, only in my study grades'.

"He only thinks of himself. He has had a child with his new wife. He is irresponsible. I don't want to speak about him anymore. He has been erased from the map. I was terribly sad, then I forgot him".

A Chevalier of truth, it is through a new acting-out that our liar will interrupt these preliminary interviews for some time: a new attempt at suicide — some tablets, 'not really so bad' she will say — she was taken to hospital and after twenty-four hours the doctor of the hospital ward asked her which person could take care of her when she left, she gave the telephone number of her father. He responded by sending a plane ticket.

She had felt the absence of her passionately loved father as an act of treachery. The boyfriend from school who would become her lover gave her an imaginary support for a while. The separation with him returned her to her distress. These episodes of acting-out appeared to have been the enactment of her demand for her father's love. She simulated a pregnancy when her father had just had a child. Her fainting, her voluntary falling down stairs was without doubt the enactment of what she subsequently affirmed. Her father had let her drop. 'It's always said that he left my mother, but he left me as well.'

The lies responded to what the little girl had taken for an act of treachery, a promise that wasn't kept which disqualified the Other of speech.

It would be close to her father, on the other side of the world, that the truth would be able to come to light, she thought.

She saw me again after several months. She had taken a long holiday in which she had taken care of her younger brother and been a little bored accompanying young surfers under the quite approving gaze of her father.

Above all she had been observing her step-mother, thoroughly sizing up the object of her father. 'She's young, quite childish, very dependent on him, a bit of a drop-out. He is content with little.'

Then she had followed an American in his thirties, who she had met on the island, to the United States, a relationship encouraged by her father 'who was not unhappy', she said, 'to get rid of me'. 'There was far too much symmetry' (between these couples).

This time, on her return, she could articulate a demand for analysis.

Indeed, she no longer denounced being abandoned by her father, but took the time to unravel the modalities of her love for him, then of her pre-adolescent feelings of sensuality in scenes of tenderness. "I could say that in my childhood I suffered sexual abuse at the hands of my father, but I know that it isn't true. He was just perhaps a little too tender". Gwen knows that the seduction by her father is fantasmatic. She has known since she stayed on the island. There is no trouble between them. "I could go out with any boy I wanted, he just wouldn't care".

Her slightly mytho-maniacal lies have disappeared. They indicated, beyond her subjective division and through her insistence on wanting to attract attention, her attempt to be the phallus.

However, she still wanted to be an enigma to men. "You have to be mysterious enough to seduce, the problem is that I overdo it".

The faithless character of truth was unveiled for the young woman when she travelled close to her father: the truth of the interest her father had in young women who are a little stupid, the truth that the paternal imposture might stem from his impotence to speak the truth about *jouissance*.

Let us note that in what she told of her trip to visit her father, her attention was above all aimed at his wife, the other woman who could be the bearer of a knowledge about femininity.

This young woman had thus objected to an analysis from the first through a logical impasse, presenting herself as the paradoxical figure of Epimenides the Cretan, a paradox which is without doubt of the most ancient stock since it is attributed to Ebulide, of the School of Megare, from the sixth century BC and was taken up in a treaty by Aristotle, then by the stoics, before being highly appreciated by the scholastics who classed it among the 'insolubilia' of which they were so fond. The logicians of the twentieth century have not neglected them either, Russell, Carnap, Koyré, Tarski and Kripke.

These solutions can be classed, I believe, in the following broad categories:

1. Mediaeval *cassatio*, which one already finds in Aristotle's *Metaphysics*: which states that 'I am lying' in fact says nothing. This is the position held by Koyré (the phrase 'I am lying' is nonsense) and of Kripke (it is impossible to attribute a value of truth to this type of assertion).
2. Metalanguage (Tarski), but it is already a notion of this type that William of Ockham, Albert of Saxony and Pierre d'Ailly refer to or the types (Russell and Carnap).

Saint Thomas Aquinas wrote: "The liar speaks the truth in saying that he speaks falsely. Thus, he speaks the truth".

With regard to the liar's paradox (having certainly been interested by what Koyré had had to say about it), Lacan opposes himself to the logic of type and level: 'there is no such thing as a metalanguage'. It is in distinguishing the subject of the statement from the subject of the enunciation that the emitter of 'I lie' can receive his message in an inverted form from the Other: 'you are speaking the truth'.⁴

"If we situate the subject in relation to this 'I am lying', we can say that the subject is an impasse in logic", says Jacques-Alain Miller, and, "we can refer to impasses of desire... defence is a part of desire itself".

The object little *a* is a logical consistency and, as Jacques-Alain Miller adds, *surplus-jouissance* is always true.

Gwen speaks the truth. She stages it in her acting out. Her departure after a few months of hesitating interviews will come to effect a temporal cut.

She goes to verify something on the other side of the world, responding to a 'you are telling the truth' with an act. Like the other Saint Thomas she wants to touch the truth. She thus perceives that this Truth is her own, not those of others. This has an effect of 'subjective rectification' which permits her to enter into analysis.

Through this approach she undertakes a journey toward an other truth, to circumscribe the truth of her *jouissance* rather than to derive enjoyment from the denounced truth. Truth thus is to be constructed, in act this time and not in acting...

Translated by Philip Dravers

1. *Décalage horaire* more literally translates as 'jet-lag', but such a translation would overlook the temporal dimension which is of interest to us here [TN].
2. J. Lacan, *Seminar XI: The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, trans. A. Sheridan, Pelican, London, 1977, p. 140.
3. J.-A. Miller, *La Cause Freudienne* No 29, Seuil, Paris, 1994.
4. J. Lacan, *Seminar XI, op. cit.*

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