

UNTITLED: THE ART OF THE CONSTITUTIVE

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Abstract

This paper explores the process of the constitutive through collaborative writing, engaging psychoanalytic, philosophical, and aesthetic frameworks. We examine the interplay of elements that shape relational formations and propose a model of the constitutive as a tension-filled yet coherent process. The text itself embodies a continuous negotiation of meaning, agency, and affect, serving as both product and testament to the act of constitution.

Keywords

constitution, artwriting, relational aesthetics, Lacan, matrixial borderspace

Sin título: El arte de lo constitutivo

Resumen

Este artículo explora el proceso de lo constitutivo mediante la escritura colaborativa, integrando marcos psicoanalíticos, filosóficos y estéticos. Examinamos la interacción de elementos que conforman formaciones relacionales y proponemos un modelo de lo constitutivo como un proceso tenso y a la vez coherente. El texto encarna una negociación continua de significado, agencia y afecto, sirviendo como producto y testimonio del acto de constitución.

Palabras clave

constitución, escritura de arte, estética relacional, Lacan, espacio liminal-matrixial

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We aim to constitute something where there was nothing. There is nothing because there aren't any words before these words (this is the beginning of a document), but also because we aim to constitute something in between two (already) constituted bodies, that is, in a space where nothing has been constituted, a place outside of something constituted. This document is a testament to that de-emptying of space. In how many senses, through how many layers, from what different levels will we be able to do such thing? What form will it take and will it hint to a method?

Not so much outside anymore, but inside, since we have started writing together. Our text now infiltrates the constituted other like an unknown territory, a tautological world of mirrors, a perfect ouroboros. The breach that was suggested with the opening of this text, is filling up fast. In the empty space that was anticipated, we touch upon a grotesque being, a muted horror vacui, its every hole stuffed with stopgap words in locked communication. We are to retract within its plenitude, if we seek ways to come together. For ways are trapped, in horizons with no borders.

There will be a document, by means of legitimation, in the end. Or as a pretext, to begin with. But in order to give way, to make room to share an already constituted space anew and between us, we cannot be involved as we are, as ourselves, or even each other. "We" will withdraw so to reach a place of a crossing, real or imagined.

This would involve voluntarily relinquishing part of our autonomous being one, or two, together and with others. We already do this, and it also happens without us, but the point of this experiment would be to make these processes visible, and, hopefully, tangible, for us and for some others.

There is no outside to the body (i.e. the ontic). If there are constituted bodies, they are all inside the body.¹ A body that is everchanging as its internal bodies move and interrelate. Such constitution of the bigger body is a mere effect of smaller constitutions. Thus, we cannot but work minutely, in a smaller scale, where elements cannot be subdivided into smaller bodies. Elements: the smaller parts of a body that remain socially relevant. By withdrawing internally, we are isolating such elements.

Absolute emptiness is materially impossible. An element or two should float around, like residual gas molecules in a vacuum chamber. A vacuum, nonetheless, is an unstable space that cannot last too long, as it attempts to implode and bring everything into collapse. It calls for the constitution of new bodies so as to bring stability by occupying space. The politics of elements: to constitute something, anything, to release tension.

What are those elements in the crossing between the two that may start constituting a body? Here's a tentative list: music, empathy, excessiveness.

How can there be change if the body is perfect? A motion conceived at the microlevel alone describes an im-mobility in-towards a perpetual entropy, something of a self-sustained sinking, like the ouroboros previously evoked, eating its tail. We brought up the age-old image of a constitutive being-in-loop in a somewhat loose association with Lacan's later thinking on subjectivity, in order to bring the question of agency (back) into the equation, without having to name Lacan. But Lacan it is. Or rather, Lacan, it is not. Or in any case, not entirely. We will get to it.

1 "Proposition 16. The idea of any mode in which the human body is affected by external bodies must involve the nature of the human body and the nature of the external body together" (Spinoza, 2018, p. 61).

In the 1972 seminars, in search for a deeper, more unconscious, ontologically diffracting, prismatic constitutive agency than its monolithic articulation in the *nom du père* (name of the father), Lacan introduces what he calls the *parlêtre* (translated to English indistinctly as the speaking being, *l'être parlant*). In a play on the words in the French language, *par l'être* reveals a prepositionally objective being (*l'être*), conditioned by the preposition *par*, meaning via or through. With *parlêtre*, Lacan thus indicates the slope this conditioned being describes from any lingering considerations of a sovereign subjectivity in utilitarian times. The speaking being, says Lacan (November 21, 1972, p. 5), with its prodigal respect for the means, for the tool value of language, has obscured the question of the use-value of use itself, or what it is good for.

In an attempt to better understand *parlêtre*, the gap that lurks between the contour of a being, its substance and its constituting elements, or more exactly, its complex roots in sexual difference and relational asymmetry, Lacan (p. 10) brings up the paradox of Zeno, illustrating the constitutive relation of the limitless intersection of limits in the limited distance between elements as points, which are always smaller than a point, and larger than another point. Neither one can ever join the other, but they do finally meet in this infinite impossibility of coming together.

After thus locating the substance of *parlêtre* as stemming from a reciprocal other, of which nothing is known, on which no discourse can be made, and which subsequently invalidates all discourse, what is left to *parlêtre*, says Lacan (p. 3), not without apologizing for putting it to his audience so bluntly, is one organic, which is to say phallic, *jouissance*. This *jouissance*, as the usufruct of another body, is, as Lacan deftly points out, a right.

But woman (symbolically), says Lacan (p. 9), in relation to phallic *jouissance*, is "not whole" (*pas toute*). He thereby introduces a nuance to the single, phallic signifier for sex difference, and the inherited Freudian conception according to which woman does not hold any symbolic significance. This asymmetry allows him to explore the finite space he calls compactness (*compacité*) that spans the distance between our previously evoked points, from the *other side*, the inside or the side of the other, as not a total, homogeneous infinite space, but a liminal space of asymmetrical diffraction (p. 12).

In this non totalizing, differential conception of a compact, constitutional asymmetry, a joint agency emerges, which is also at work in a subjectivity after the death of the subject, for instance, or in relations without relation, between non cognizant subjects—in any case, between subjects that are not entirely a one, nor an entirely other subject (or also object), not exclusively human too, but, and importantly so, also still human. It finds a complete expression in Bracha Ettinger's (2006) elaboration of transubjectivity that she develops in the theory of the matrixial borderspace (a plural symbolic space, from the Latin word "matrix", womb).

In the matrixial borderspace of shareability, as Ettinger also terms it, there is no primacy of the affect of (phallic) castration anxiety. There is castration anxiety (the phallic is there) but before and beside it, in the matrixial borderspace, there are other, also primary affects, such as compassion, trust, awe, an affect the author calls *fascinace*, and others. Ettinger is controversial in that she posits that these affects are carried in matrixial relation (also for instance, in art), and cannot, for example, be taught.

We are to carry, then, these elements that may turn into (trans)subjects, bodies, constituents. Take music. At this so very basic level, music could be a mere compass of a rhythm.

It might not sound; it might just be the most basic rhythm that appears (or that we could interpret) in the distance between the formative molecules or the organelles of cells. To carry this would mean to be faithful to such given rhythm and develop music from it. As pointed out, however, this development occurs in relation to other elements or subjectivities. The outcome music is that of a continual interplay and integration of surrounding elements ((trans) subjects, bodies, constituents), localized and given stability by a primordial rhythm that cannot be diluted or else such carrying of the constitution of the subject would fail.

So, a constituted subject is in essence a localized and relational absolute that is ever-changing in its movement of integration, while at the same time it is ecstatic, stable or immobile in its core. The structure of (its) constitution would be that of contradiction, a tension between two opposing elements struggling to become. And yet, this might not be the constitutive itself, as for a constituted subject—constitution itself—to be recognized and deemed a subject of intersubjectivity, it would need to appear or present itself as solid, devoid of tension, or, at the very least, having its tension seemingly released.

Consider a work of art. We take a work as finished and complete—that is, ready to interact within the artworld—whenever we observe a certain rest in its appearance. There might be a war occurring in the inside, but we do not take it seriously if not wrapped, to paraphrase John Keats (2017), in conscious calmness. This is even more patent in the world-system of states. A state is not deemed worthy of respect and consideration—that is, not a constituted subject—if it doesn't show to the world as if a stable unity, capable of holding an accord with other states.

To achieve constitution—to work out solidity or permanence through relating elements—thus seems to be a certain benchmark for participation and agency within a developmental series. A power that cannot be granted by an outer source by means of institution, but a material congruity (of solidity and permanence) that either works in the relational framework or fades away due to lack of development.

We have seen Lacan's illustration of the problem of rights in the concept of the *parlêtre*. As the usufruct of another body, phallic jouissance is informed by death drive. It shows up as symptom in dynamics of domination and privilege, with their equivalent levels of subjection and slavery. When tracing the definition of the symptom back to Freud, Lacan (November 9, 1974, p. 14) traces it back to Marx first, who before Freud signaled the symptom as something of the symbolic that does not work in the real.² In this respect, Lacan points to the difference between coming together and forming a syndicate.

Drawing on the observation that a strike is also celebrated as a feast—and after all, asks Lacan, why should it not be?—Lacan asserts that the symptom, through the symbolic, can be operated in the real. In the mentioned seminars *Encore* (1972) and *RSI* (1974), Lacan addresses the symptom from the point of view of a practitioner who questions his practice, probes the limits of his practice as it is conditioned within systems of symbolic subjection and finds no way out of *parlêtre*.

2 Žižek (2019, pp. 79–81) remains closer to a therapeutic integration of the symptom in a phallic system of meaning, in phallic jouissance. He understands Lacan's later development of the *sinthome* as a "symptom of symptom," so to speak, and frames it in Lacan's earlier development of the *parlêtre*. The *sinthome* then serves a stabilizing function to the symptom, in the same logic of phallic jouissance. In the concept of the *sinthome*, it is our understanding that Lacan points to another signifier, which opens up another symbolic, and another jouissance, not subjected to castration anxiety, but reattuned in what Ettinger has named the matrixial borderspace and that we will discuss further on. From an art perspective, we are interested in this other jouissance, not as a function of the phallic, but in its differentiating sense-making affects.

In Ettinger's supplementary matrixial model, music invites a coming together. It is carried and it also carries. The matrixial *transsubject* is a (partial) subject inasmuch as it carries another partial subject or also object, not inasmuch as it is recognized for doing so. In Ettinger, the matrixial model enables music—or any artwork—from the perspective of its work, its joint and transformative agency of *carriance*.

Indeed, music is carried through others. If we are to be true with ourselves, we are bound to do everything in relation to others, such is our constitution. We are constituted by the activities we do with, through, and among others. This very document is such an activity and attests to that fact. We are to ask, then, what is it that is constituted through the writing-together of a document that aims at exploring the very process it produces: the process of constitution.

For starters, the document is being written due to a lack. A lack of knowing what the constitutive is; a lack of a writing (on constitution) between two writers. These are the drivers of this writing. One could also assert, with Barthes (1975, p. 33), that every document is written due to a lack because any document writes what we cannot say, but this does not mean that “the unsaid” is comprehended as a lack. Ours is based on and reflective of the lack. Conscious of the inherent incompleteness of the task of the constitutive (the constitution of any task), we are bound to yield an incomplete document that might pacify, explain or put into perspective such lack, such desire.

More specifically, this text is also the result of a negotiation of concepts, opinions, positionings, hopes, frustrations, feelings in general. There is an unseen margin or subtext that is a complex of multiple crossings and submissions: (dis)agreements, contradictions, giving each other compliments and encouragement, digressions, misunderstandings. For instance, there is disagreement as to the resting quality of the work of art and a posterior agreement on the meaning of “rest”. The negotiated position that found its way out into the text is not a middle point or an entirely agreed position.

The process of constitution is that of a certain composition and is not the result of a reasonable and logical dialectic. In that sense, aesthetics—a certain material congruity or solidification—seems to have the upper hand in the process. All other approaches are subsumed to aesthetics: the politics of the aesthetics of the process of constitution, the ethics of the aesthetics of constitution, the epistemology of aesthetics, the metaphysics of aesthetics, the science of aesthetics... Conscious that this might be problematic in light of a critique of the aesthetic as a regime (Rancière, 2012), we are here referring to aesthetics as a broader concept that deals with practical and theoretical matters of the sensible.

Most people would likely agree with the idea that writing is primarily a solitary and silent, or even a hidden, unseen activity. Admittedly, it is not usually done in concert, in front of an audience, in a band. Our coming out in writing together draws attention to a performative aspect to writing, like a writing in concert at a distance, over time. Performing this writing is less theatrical than it is intimate, challenging and shifting the solitary (as it is illustrated in Albert Camus' (2015) short story “Jonas, ou l'Artiste au Travail”) while allowing it, desiring it, if also dreading it, inviting it in its irreducible difference into a shared body that carries this text as its constitution.

As said, all writing, although solitary, is also already a writing together, with the writings of others, with readers, real or imaginary, and various known and unknown constituents that weave our text together, and apart. The choice to bring an explicit performative element (two writers writing a text together) into our constitution emphasizes the differences that are carried in the embodied experience of writing, also outside of writing, in and from our environments.

These differences are indeed felt rather than known, let alone argued. They surface a tension, fragilizing the selves already involved in the process. Writing then facilitates a distancing that can be acceptant of these fragilized states, long enough for them to be suspended and grow magnetic roots in midair, thereby drawing themselves into the text. From there can be a start of a relation that is not a match, doesn't have to be a match, and yet is meaningful for it.

If our writing stems from a lack, then maybe we should ask ourselves, what is this lack if not the word (or phallic signifier) that's blocking it? When it is named, our lack is not a lack. And still, we write. We may well draw a line, but words slip off the tongue. Blocks of text shine through. Screens lit up to the touch. Embodied or sensual affective experience, also that of language, informs logic and reason, when it doesn't subsume it. Therein lies a shift from drive to attraction. Informed logic and reason can thus become reflective practices, rather than the tools of a demonstration (or match). This coincides with a reading of Aristotle (2014, p. 28) that inserts the *Rhetoric* and the *Poetics* into the *Organon* (the set of works dedicated to logic and reason).

The intimate lack among the people involved in a text, plus the constitution of a text that is surfacing and at the same time blocking certain affects and irrational impulses, speaks to the fact that what is being produced and constituted is not even close to the idea of what the participants might anticipate. Such constitution is a separate and different beast of its own.

Acknowledging this works as a reality principle whenever there is a negotiation of elements or arguments that are asking to be introduced. A reality principle that could make the collaborators let go of any drive to impose themselves. Collaborators are weakened and "leaned" in this context. In other words, collaborators collaborate from a position of weakness if they are to constitute something—they are leaned towards the constitution of something.

Particular to this text is the self-reflective character of the topic it aims to constitute. Yet this reflective character (logic and reasoning) is not operating at a fundamental level, as aesthetics does. What are the affects, passions and activities of the act of the constitutive? For starters, a feeling of coherence (not a perfect match) that stabilizes its elements in a form that otherwise would not be possible or at least be less optimal. Any constitution is the most stable coherence—even if incomplete or unsatisfactory—of elements available at a time being.

When we say intimate, we are talking about our magnetized matter, drawn into the text and further infused and diffused in and from our multiple environments. When there is proximity in distance, and distance in proximity, there is relation. This relation, when sensitized and fragilized, begins to work its realization, forming and also informing our constitution.

Our magnetic matter, affectively charged, floats and oscillates in surplus desire, forming the very subject-matter of our thing, which is the work of art. Writing a constitution from a place of intimacy is an act of co-creation, a form of *artwriting*³. In artwriting, the writing can take any shape: a walk in the forest, a smile, or an evolutive drawing of the phases of the moon on a bedroom wall.

Our writing is a transformative, nuclear operation. Ettinger (2020, p. 380) speaks of *kernels*, which are the liminal points we brought up earlier with Lacan, framed in Ettinger as transitional moments, inscribed in the matrixial borderspace in non-linear and non-totalizing ways, allowing

3 The term artwriting was first popularized by figures like David Carrier in the 1980's, exploring how writing on art (especially criticism and theory) could be seen as an artistic and intellectual practice in its own right (Carrier, 1987). Ettinger (2006) reworks this concept in her system of matrixial sense-making, in which artwriting is informed by the process of artworking, or as Grassé calls it—stigmery—as we will develop further in the text.

for partial transsubjects to co-emerge in joint difference. A similar thing is observed in *stigmergy* (from *stigma*, sign, and *ergon*, work), a term invented by biologist Pierre-Paul Grassé (1982) who studied the self-organizing behavior of so-called social insects, like termites. Stigmergy describes a system of traces left by an agent's actions in its environment, that are picked up by itself and other agents, inciting their subsequent action. Termites work individually and randomly, even destructively, before a critical mass is reached by one or more individual's production. Then they start to work coherently around it, towards a common goal.

The 20th century upheaval of the idea of *Gesamtkunstwerk* (total work of art) attempted to reconcile industrial demands with functional design, craft and métiers. If the work of art is total, there is no room for differential compacity, no real or in Ettinger's term *metramorphic* transcription, no stigmergic agency, to speak with Grassé. Without nuclear access to our thing, art is repressed (or allowed) as symptom and partakes in ideology.

As seen in a statement of ideological critique written in calligraphic letters by designer couple Can & Asli Altay (2017) on the walls of *The Way Beyond Art*, an exhibition in the Van Abbe Museum, the Netherlands, in 2022: "An artist who doesn't speak English, is not a real artist". This statement challenges the possibility of an art outside of language, which is always a kind of language, as we have illustrated with Lacan's *parlêtre*. If in our constitution we do not actively engage in ideological critique, we certainly concern ourselves with practices of language and the validity of their means of justification.

In a sense, the text you have in your hands, then, is not the final product we are aiming at, but a means by which to achieve this nuclear constitution or artwriting. And yet, the achieved constitution by means of writing includes the writing—or, more generally, the language—that accompanies it. Stripped from its language, such constitution would be like an artifact without its user's manual: it might function but you cannot access it adequately; for it to keep on working, it would need its map of constitution. What you are looking at is the constitution map of a nuclear constitution.

Having said this, we can go back to the affects that constitute this constitution. We mentioned a feeling of coherence and stability. We can also suggest a feeling of relationality (a compound of distance and proximity), a feeling of difference or separability (inasmuch as we are not speaking of the constitution of ourselves or a singular I, and yet it is a separate singularity even if it does not have or seek a nominal status), a feeling of reliability or warmth (inasmuch as it occupies and thus tensions the surrounding space of the subjects involved). Would this list suffice to describe the state of the constitutive? Is there a deeper and unique affect to this? To put it bluntly, is there a feeling of a nuclear constitution?

The feeling of our nuclear constitution could be described as a considerable sense of power, the binding force of galaxies, accessible to each according to their own sense of attraction, inviting us to carefully frame the workings and the qualities of such power within and without the aforementioned affects to our constitution. This power doesn't stem from any particular position with its matching form of domination within or without our constitution. The core of our operation is not hidden in any particular spot outside or inside our text. Rather, it has capillary tendencies.

Karen Barad (2007, pp. 78–82) in her theory of agential realism has described this entanglement in terms of material porosity, whereby the boundaries that shape the observer and the observed are dynamically engaged in a joint becoming, which cannot be localized or separated. We can thus relate our core's capillary tendencies to the phenomenon of quantum tunneling. Barad illustrates, in this context, a phenomenon in quantum mechanics whereby particles

perform what is commonly known as a quantum leap (112-5). This entails that the particles worm themselves through the material barriers of their constitution, which, according to classical mechanics, are impossible to cross, thereby affecting nuclear processes like, among others, that of fusion, causing stars to grow.

Our sense of a nuclear constitution is proportional to our art engagement in the vast interplay of resonances in and between our constitution's inner- and outermost regions, affecting our bodies throughout, in rippling multiplicities. Its information is mirrored back to us by our intuition, our subtler, deeper sense of sense, attracting it in corresponding leaps.

If we want to share our constitution in the proposed format of a user's manual, we need to expand our notions of writing or language even further, to include the archaic *sign* as a constellation in its simplest form (linking our above-mentioned points), until they connect to inform our thing.

In line with Hegel (2003, paras. 411, 451, 457), the sign would be this medium through which subjectivity expresses itself, and yet, once out there, it comes back to the subject to further inform and transform its intuition in its path towards truth (Derrida, 1982, p. 81). Of course, truth is not something the contemporary mindset would say the sign is aiming at; instead we could say, more neutrally, that the sign is always aiming to develop and transform matter. The sign is this part of matter that helps tunnel beings outside themselves, connect with other beings, and further develop/transform the starting matter. From this broader perspective—pathways among beings and not only among human beings—the sign and signification go beyond language as we know it and could be represented as mere signals (sounds, chemical reactions, etc.) between beings.

The constitution we are describing could be this set of pathways that allows for the transformation and development of the beings involved. Inasmuch as we render it as independent of ourselves, then it seems to amount to a being on its own. However, this would put us in a regressive argument in which, with the appearance of this new being, other communicating pathways would be built and would call, in further analysis, for the constitution of another being, and so on and so forth to infinity. So, what is being constituted is not really a new being, but a set of moving pathways through which the constituted subjects or beings develop in their constitutions.

This set of pathways—which we could say this text attests to—is particular to the specific relation it is bridging. In this sense, it has a double status: it has an extreme specificity, and yet, at the same time, it speaks to the universal quality of how all beings are being constituted. If at first we were faced with the appearance of another being while we thought about bridging a relationship between two persons who are writing, these subjects are now turned back to themselves through this self-conscious movement. What we are left with is this “manual” that registers every movement that is both particular and universal to a relationship among beings. This is what Hegel would call a singularity.

In *Encore*, Lacan (November 21, 1972, p. 5) states that the jouissance of the other, of the body of the other that symbolizes it, is not the sign of love. Lacan adds that he does not find this statement conclusive, that he would not write *amen* or *the end* under it, but that it is nevertheless the only answer. This leaves jouissance as a question, all the more that the answer jouissance could give would not be necessary, given that the answer, or sign, is already given in love, in the desire for union with the other, which forms, as we have seen in Lacan's illustration of the paradox of Zeno, a compacity. When Hegel's singularity consists in its own resolution, its perfect self-equation, so to speak, Lacan's compacity as the sign of love cannot not be resolved. Precisely because, as a sign, it does not speak to us.

In order to interrogate what can be known of the body, that is to say, of the real, in its relation to the symbolic and the imaginary, Lacan (December 10, 1974, p. 2) tries to find a common measure for these distinct categories, produced by a speaker as a series, tied together in a Borromean knot, through which the three loops intersect in one sensical point, which, much like a zero point, does not have a spatial dimension, but nevertheless has an object, which Lacan called *objet a*. This object, borrowing an axiom of the mathematician Guiseppe Peano, functions like an $N+1$, the successor of nothing, and the common measure that binds the sequence together as number. Take out the $N+1$, and the series falls flat. The elements of the sequence are liberated as unaffected singles, and there is no dimension, no number, no sign.

With the concept of the *sinthome*, in a play on an archaic French spelling of the word for symptom (*symptôme* in modern French), Lacan (1975) illustrates the difference between writing seen as a symptom, striving for the subject's identification or normalization into and by the symbolic paradigm of its domination, and *sinthome*, in which the writing transforms systems of meaning from a place of excess *jouissance*, transpiring in and through the work of art, unveiling sense-making paradigms which, in relation to the normative, do not collapse into it nor absorb it. To a writing as symptom, our constitution addresses the intersubjective relation between writers. In *sinthome*, the writing continues in transubjective relation, in a matrixial *jouissance*, thereby informing the sign of its constitution.

This is a writing that aims to constitute something within a relation. While it does so, it leaves multidirectional traces for others to adhere to such constitution. The constitution that is formed, then, is exceeded by its potency and is no longer the sought constitution. Within a written constitution of this sort, nothing specific can be stabilized, as it goes beyond any will of the subjects involved. Dependent of other subjects, this is a text in seek of other writers but not of another writing. Certain aspects of this type of writing have been defined by this nuclear constitution. There cannot be a stigmergic sensemaking process if there is no continuation of an initial constitution—how else could there be any adherence?

What is interesting about this process is that there is no need to point out the initial aspects that have been determined. Whatever adheres to this constitution, adheres because it is speaking to these aspects—else, it would flake away. This might seem like an attempt to avoid rearranging and reducing the text to a set of initial aspects or rules, but it actually coheres with the very nature of the text. The systematicity of this text is such because it acknowledges that the timing and order of appearance of the different aspects are meaningful. If they are to be rearranged, that would be a continuation of the text—something that would not depend on the authors.

Lacan (December 19, 1973, p. 5) opens the December *séance* of the *Encore* seminar with the poem "À une raison" ("To Reason") by Arthur Rimbaud (1873, p. 14), in which two verses conclude with the exclamation: "Un nouvel amour!" ("A new love!"). Lacan notes that, in this poem, love is presented as a sign, a marker of a change in one's reason or orientation. This answers to his earlier position that *jouissance* is not a sign of love—whether this concerns the Other, or the body that symbolizes it. With Rimbaud, however, love emerges as a sign, one that signals transformation.

The sign of love, by injecting meaning into an otherwise tautological and senseless, "stupid" sign of sign, challenges the collective identity it is meant to represent and, in doing so, brings a new being into existence (December 19, 1973, p. 22). This *corporeal* sign, as Ettinger's (2020, p. 87) calls it, is engaged in the "not whole" (*pas tout*), and marks a crossing from a phallic *jouissance* to a *jouissance* of the other, a *jouissance* from the other side of the other.

As Rimbaud's poem shows, the sign of love implies a twofold reading and asks for a double departure. The old law of the quid pro quo—whereby in order to receive, we must give, but then also we give, in order to receive—finds itself epitomized in Lacan's symptom (*symptôme*). In his 1975 seminars on art, Lacan exposes the symptom's equivocal call, stemming from a lack that cannot really be a real lack, since it is always already substituted in the symbolic and played out in the real. Reading itself then turns into a lack that is not a lack, consuming the body that nevertheless sustains it, but forever eludes it. Our departure then, is not a real departure, and we are likely to miss our destination, when we imagine we have arrived.

If writers are not all the same, they all write their difference. Each true to their own art. This entails a new reading, a new perception or a departure of the departure, so to speak, and the beginning of artwriting. Ettinger describes it as a passage from wit(h)nessing to witnessing and back.

"*Arrivée de toujours, qui t'en iras partout*" ("Arrival from forever, you who'll depart everywhere"), Rimbaud (1873, p. 14) ends his poem. Our constitution may be more a means of transportation than a destination to be reached in a lifetime. Unless the means of transportation is the destination. **post(s)**

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