Athens Institute for Education and Research
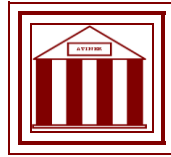## ATINER

ATINER's Conference Paper Series
LIT2014-1178

Dancing in Circles:
The Truth, the Lie, and Displacement of Lacan and Derrida

Larry Griffin
Professor
American University of Ras Al Khaimah
United Arab Emirates

An Introduction to
ATINER's Conference Paper Series

ATINER started to publish this conference papers series in 2012. It includes only the papers submitted for publication after they were presented at one of the conferences organized by our Institute every year. The papers published in the series have not been refereed and are published as they were submitted by the author. The series serves two purposes. First, we want to disseminate the information as fast as possible. Second, by doing so, the authors can receive comments useful to revise their papers before they are considered for publication in one of ATINER's books, following our standard procedures of a blind review.

Dr. Gregory T. Papanikos
President
Athens Institute for Education and Research

This paper should be cited as follows:

Dancing in Circles:
The Truth, the Lie, and Displacement of Lacan and Derrida

Larry Griffin
Professor
American University of Ras Al Khaimah
United Arab Emirates

Abstract

Structuralism has implications beyond the content of this essay, where the writer's reading of several poems, stories, (purportedly non-fiction) holy books, and recent American literary criticism inform its considerations. Morse Peckham suggests that most all Western literary expression, since its beginnings in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, remains permutations of Romanticism. This essay explores structuralism in terms of the various sections of itself with particular attention to various works of American literature: the word, the dream, the riddle, the letter, and especially Edgar Allan Poe's "The Purloined Letter" and the explorations of Poe's story in criticism in Jacques Lacan's Seminar and Jacques Derrida's follow up essay on that--all with special attention in presentation to Ralph Waldo Emerson's circularity, the very essay itself in its structure and therefore in its meaning a circle, what brings one, when one sets out on romantic quest right back to where they started. Limiting one's self as a reader to only the structure of the word and the structures of words into literature overwhelms human experience and requires readers, speakers, listeners, and writers to focus more closely on what they explore and how they explore it; the reading of any piece of literature, but especially Romantic literature, requires the reader to know the place they departed from, realize the course along the way, and to arrive back where they started (home?) with meaningful understanding of what they learned along the way.

If God (Allah) is the creator of the word, just as he is the creator of all, then that all includes literature, and all speaking and writing, including this essay. That is, if language is not duplicitous, both a one and zero, two digits, for two remains the number of duplicity, while one is the number of unity; here John T. Erwin's comments on Poe's other doubling stories reminds readers that words may be used for both good and evil. If a reader is confronted with the known, one, for example, of two and with the unknown, say zero, only a place holder, the reader is in the presence of suspect duplicity, both the truth and its inverse, untruth or the lie—for language accommodates both. If the secret of this duplicity, the zero, the unknown, remains a secret among the two, then how can the discerning reader determine what finally is the truth.

Keywords: dance, circles, dream

Introduction

> I thought that if I could put it all down, that would be one way.
> And next the thought came to me that to leave it all out would
> be another, and truer, way.
> --John Ashbery, *Three Poems* (2)

Structuralism has implications beyond the content of this essay. If given the either/or of Ashbery's beginning of *Three Poems* (1972*)*, the writer of this essay chooses to leave it all out, then he could stop right here. On the other hand, it is impossible for this writer to put it all down too. He chooses to explore structuralism in terms of the various sections of this essay: the dream, the riddle, Lacan's Seminar, Derrida's essay, and this essay, itself. He could have extended this essay to include modern works of fiction that are purposely structured toward circularity, such as Jorge Luis Borges' *Labyrinths* (particularly "The Garden of the Forking Paths"). John Barth's "Lost in the Funhouse", or any of his metafiction could also be included, but one must draw the frame somewhere. At the very basis of all this--that is to write, the structure behind it all of this is, of course, the word. John begins his Gospel with "In the beginning was the Word. . ." (KJV, John 1.1). But what does the *word* mean? By itself, it means nothing--this, in fact, accounts in part for the circularity of dictionary definitions. Michel Delville (1998) agrees with Jacques Lacan and Ferdinand de Saussure that it is only in their relationships or in their contiguity to other words that words mean anything (56-67). To see only the structure is perhaps to view the world as Giambattista Piranesi (1720-1778) did. The overwhelming nature of all structure itself may in part account for Dupin's wearing of the green spectacles while visiting the Minister in Edgar Allan Poe's "The Purloined Letter" (1848).

The Dream

> And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, "I have dreamed a dream,
> and there is none that can interpret it; and I have heard
> say of thee, that thou canst understand a dream to interpret it."
> (KJV, Genesis 41.15)

In Pharaoh's dream, seven skinny cows swallow seven fat cows, and then seven thin ears of corn devour seven full ears of corn. Joseph interprets this to mean seven years of plenty will be followed by seven years of famine in Egypt. The dream itself uses the symbols of the cows and the ears of corn to stand for the number of years of plenty and the number of years of famine. The dream, a dream of prophecy, uses the symbology of the cows and the corn to substitute for the years of plenty and famine. The dream refers to the reality it predicts in terms of its own symbols, cows and corn. Norman MacKenzie (1965) suggests that this characteristic of dreams to use symbolism is the subjective means by

which we organize our objective experience.[1] From his experience the Pharaoh takes the two symbols of the cows and the corn. Connections to agriculture remain apparent. In his subconscious, the Pharaoh fuses his concerns as a ruler of his country with the symbols of agriculture. Prosperity, particularly agricultural prosperity, symbolized by fat cows and fat corn, and agricultural ruin, skinny cows and thin corn, reflect how the Pharaoh stores his memories, and his dreams demonstrate as much.

Joseph answers the question in the epigraph of this section, but he denies that he is the interpreter. God speaks through him.[2] Dream analyst Joseph shifts the responsibility and the credit for his actions to God. In a world before Sigmund Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900; [*Die Traumdeutung*]), no basic formulation of dreams is available to Joseph. MacKenzie summarizes Freud's four basic processes of the creation of the dream text as condensation, displacement, means of representation, and secondary revision (168). In condensation, the dreamer uses language to compress the images of his dreams into a dream text for his interpreter. The dreamer also uses symbols to hide whatever the meaning of the dream is both from himself and from his interpreter.[3] The dreamer then uses the images in both abstract and concrete ways as a means of representing his dream. At last, secondary revision occurs when the dreamer awakes and gives structure to his dream so that in fact he may remember it.

The Pharaoh's hiding of the meaning of the dream from himself by the use of symbols shares characteristics with the processes of condensation and displacement. In the first process, condensation, the dreamer must transfer, substitute, or displace the images of the dream with language itself. Of the second process, displacement, other objects displace painful feelings; MacKenzie explains: "Painful or otherwise disagreeable feelings were displaced from the true to a substitute object, thus escaping the watchful eye of the 'censor'" (168).[4] The fourth process, secondary revision, also involves substitution. One version of the dream, the rough draft, is displaced by the final dream text. With all this substitution and displacement of language displacing

---

[1]MacKenzie writes: Symbolism is the subjective means whereby we organize our objective experience of life, fusing our inner emotional reactions with our perceptions of our environment. Without it, reality would be nothing more than a collection of inanimate objects and meaningless phenomena. Symbolic imagery thus appears to be one of the ways in which we store our memories, and the form in which they emerge in our dreams." (21)

[2]Joseph says: "'It is not in me: God shall give the Pharaoh an answer of peace'" (KJV, Genesis 41.16).

[3]As Wilhelm Stekel (1943), another Freudian, points out: The dreamer has recourse to the mechanics of displacement and objectification in order to hide his idea from himself and from the interpreter. He introduces into his dream a series of persons who are substitutes for the person who would give away the internal drama; the supers form a crowd which conceal the principal figure. (220)

[4]MacKenzie provides this example: "The example of the child who dreamed of breaking the wax figure is a case in which its hostile attitude to its father was safely displaced on to the apparently harmless waxwork" (168). Similarly, MacKenzie also cites a boy's dream of wanting to cut off his teddy bear's head as one in which the boy has substituted his teddy bear for his father (164).

images, of symbols displacing what the dreamer wants to avoid, and of one version displacing the other, the whole meaning of the dream comes into question. Of this MacKenzie reminds readers: "[W]e cannot directly know a dream, but we can only recollect it" (170).

With all the distortion inherent in the creation of the dream text itself, how can one ever know what a dream means? Leopold Caligor and Rollo May (1968) propose "that the structure of the dream itself carries a great deal of the meaning of a dream" (13). Structural interpretation of a dream comes in terms of spatial relationships (14).

The dream text, distinguished from the dream itself as it goes through Freud's four aspects of revision, then in its entirety provides a displacement of something else again. Dreams are made up of symbols. Humberto Nagera (1969) emphasizes this substitutive or displacing quality of the symbol itself. First of all, "a symbol in very general terms is something standing as a X substitute for something else" (93).

Psychoanalysts explore dream texts in the relationships of the symbols within the dreams. The symbols mean only in relationships to other symbols in the dream. Dreams employ two levels of symbolic expression. The first is that the dreamer, who is the creator of the dream text, transfers the images into language itself. Thus, language displaces the images that make up the dream. Freud would have that also in the process of creating the dream text, the dreamer through condensation, displacement, and revision, displaces or substitutes by the use of symbolism. Because all this tampering with the dream text before it comes to the psychoanalyst, the psychoanalyst must review the symbolic content in its structural relationships. Dreams are made of symbols, and dream texts, which include symbols as substitutes for the images in the dream, become expressed symbolically in the symbol system of language itself. The Pharaoh's dream of cows and corn comes in images. When he tells Joseph of the dream, the Pharaoh condenses, displaces, and revises to give the dream symbolic content on two levels, the symbolic level of the dream and the symbolic level of language. Through all this displacement, Joseph provides through a realization of the structure of the dream a meaning for it.

That the Pharaoh's dream exists as a dream of prophecy further complicates matters. Erich Fromm (1951) suggests: "A dream, in order to be fully understood, must be understood in terms of the reaction to a significant event which happened before the dream occurred" (156-157). Readers may not know the situation in the Pharaoh's life that initiated such dreams, except merely a ruler's concern for his country, but a dream involving leadership should be dreamed by that country's leader. Regardless of how Joseph arrives at his interpretation of the dream, as an analyst, he does interpret it. For his interpretation, the Pharaoh makes Joseph second in power only to himself, and Pharaoh gives Joseph a ring, clothing, and a gold chain (KJV, Genesis 41.42).

The Riddle

> "'What creature goes on four feet in the morning, on two
> at noonday, on three in the evening?'"
> --Sophocles, *Oedipus Rex*

A riddle, like a dream, involves displacement of one thing for another. The elaborate metaphor that the Sphinx uses for her riddle involves this speaking of one thing in terms of another. All metaphor making works this way. In straight metaphor, however, an implicit retelling usually exists about what is being compared. The Sphinx does not say: "Man is a creature who goes on four feet in the morning, on two at noonday, on three in the evening." In creating her metaphor, the Sphinx, at least to the extent that a riddle uses metaphor, provides Oedipus with only the vehicle and not the tenor of the riddle. A riddle is a metaphor that in its vehicle denies while at the same time it asks for its tenor.[1]

All figures of speech or tropes involve comparisons where the communicator presents one thing is said in terms of another. One can write that A is like B or that A is B, or to include irony, one may write A intends B, perhaps its opposite. Metaphor, simile, and irony involve the substituting or displacing of one thing for another; however, in any of the cases of the tropes, among their relationships meaning arise more than from what the individual words mean. For example, take "smile." What does "smile" mean? Given only the one word, it is difficult to interpret. However, if one takes an entire simile something else happens: "Her smile was like a ripple on a slop bucket." "Smile" now gains greater significance, and that significance comes from its relationship to "ripple." One may read same thing in metaphor or irony. The real meanings of the words exist in their relationships with and contiguity to each other. Great literature aspires to the highly metaphorical, what often causes inexperienced readers' complaints about reading such works. Inexperienced readers often find engagement with poetry or irony too painful, especially, because they assume that meaning remains only inherent in words and not in the relationships of words. MacKenzie stresses: "It is not just the plain meaning of the words on the page that matters; those words are appealing or effective because of the associations they evoke in the reader, and the writer

---

[1] Another example, an Anglo-Saxon riddle, might be useful: My head is forged by a hammer, wounded with pointed tools, rubbed by file. Often I gape at what is fixed opposite me, when, girded with rings, I must needs thrust stoutly against the hard bolt; pierced from behind I must shove forward that which guards the joy of my lord's mind at midnight. At times I drag my nose, the guardian of the treasure, backwards, when my lord desires to keep the stores of those whom at his will be commanded to be driven out of life by murderous power (Anonymous). Without reading the title, the answer to this riddle may not readily spring to mind. A reader may know a great deal about the vehicle of the metaphor, but nothing about the tenor, the answer. If one knew the answer, the riddle would be simple. One can only know the answer in terms of the riddle. One can only know the relationship between the riddle and the answer. Once one knows that, once one realizes how the metaphor is constructed, both its tenor and vehicle, then one knows the answer to the riddle.

of genius is one whose mastery of symbolism enables him to engage the emotions of his public" (21).

All literary engagement requires the solving of riddles' displacements of things with others. Literature presents symbols in this displacement; tropes themselves remain continual processes of displacement. When Oedipus realizes the relationship between the tenor and the vehicle of the Sphinx's riddle, the Sphinx disappears, and Oedipus, like Joseph, is rewarded; his reward, the Kingdom of Thebes. Readers of literature who unravel the tropes by recognizing the process find their rewards in their own aesthetic response. The inexperienced reader who refuses to play the game, denies him or herself such rewards, perhaps why the inexperienced reader does not want to read literature.

The Purloined Letter, "The Purloined Letter", and the Seminar

> Whether it sees itself as an instrument of healing, of formation,
> or of exploration in depth, psychoanalysis has only a single
> intermediary: the patient's word. That this is self-evident is
> no excuse for our neglecting it. And every word calls for a reply.
> --Jacques Lacan (1968), 87.

Words make up sentences and sentences make up the purloined letter; however, the words of the letter in Poe's story remain less important than the position of the letter itself, its relationship to the world. Poe positions the letter itself as a displacement device. Poe creates "The Purloined Letter" in English words and sentences. Charles Baudelaire translates it into "Volatilité de la letter" (back into English displacing English words with French words as "Volatility of the Letter." Jacques Lacan, who reads Freud in German, reads Baudelaire's French translation. Lacan writes his essay "Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter'" in French. Jeffrey Mehlman translates that essay by displacing French words with English words. All these processes in themselves involve displacement, what remains only part of the puzzle. As Mehlman, who translates Lacan's essay (1972) points out in his introduction, special problems exist with a Lacanian text: "We have thus occasionally been obliged to chart a course through Lacan's labyrinth rather than reproduce that labyrinth whole." Thus, Lacan's method of presentation, his style, even as it is ascertained through Mehlman's translation, remains quite complex.

At the beginning of his essay, Lacan writes that he draws truth from Freud's thought under study: "[I]t is the symbolic order which is constitutive for the subject--by demonstrating in a story the decisive orientation the subject receives from the itinerary of a signifier" (40). Lacan then writes; "It is the truth, let us note, that makes the very existence of fiction possible" (40):

> If the letter is missing from its place, it is absent: For the signifier
> is a unit in its very uniqueness being by nature the symbol only of

an absence. Which is why we cannot say of the purloined letter,
like other objects, it must be or not be in a particular place but that
unlike them it will be or not be where it is, wherever it goes. (54)

Lacan also adds: "For it can literally be said that something is missing
from its place only of what can change it: the symbolic" (55). For him "The
Purloined Letter" is the story of a displaced letter, the purloined letter.
Addressing himself to the beginning of Poe's tale, Lacan writes:

Here then, simple and odd, as we are told on the very first
page, reduced to its simplest expression, is the singularity of
the letter, which the title indicates, is the true subject of the
tale: since it can be diverted, it must have a course which is
is proper to it: the tract by which its incidence as signifier
is affirmed. For we have learned to conceive of the signifier as
sustaining itself only in displacement comparable to that found
in electric news strips or in the rotating memories of our
machines-that-think-like-men, this because of the alternating
operation which is its principle, requiring it to leave its place,
even though it returns by a singular path. [1] (50)

The "course which is proper to it" remains crucial to the letter, Lacan's
Freudian analysis of it, and indeed, Lacan's own essay. The etymology of the
word *purloined* concerns Lacan. Baudelaire, according to Lacan, translates the
title as "la lettre volée" or "the stolen letter" (59). The letter is not a stolen
letter, but "one whose course has been prolonged (etymologically, the word of
the title), or, to revert to the language of the post office a letter in sufferance"
(59).

Dupin visits the Minister's office to obtain the letter. He analyzes the
situation. He knows where the letter lies because of the simple and odd nature
of the Prefect's searching of the Minister's apartments. Lacan writes:

Just so the purloined letter, like an immense female body,
stretches out across the Minister's office when Dupin enters.
But just so does he already expect to find it, and has only
with his eyes veiled by green lenses, to undress that huge
body." (66)

Dupin analyzes the situation, and then he solves the riddle of the
misplaced letter. He knows where it is-- "Look! between the cheeks of the
fireplace, there's the object already in reach of the hand the ravisher has but to
extend" (66-67)--and he knows where it should be--in the possession of the
Queen. When he returns the letter to the Prefect, it makes its course:

---

[1]Lacan's (Mehlman's) use of the colon is indicative of displacement of one independent clause
by another in the style of the sentence.

Do we not in fact feel concerned with good reason when for
Dupin what is perhaps at stake is his withdrawal from the
symbolic circuit of the letter--we who become the emissaries
of all the purloined letters which at least for time remain in
sufferance with use in the transference. And is it not the
responsibility their transference entails which we neutralize
by equating it with the signifier most destructive of all
signification, namely: money. [1] (68)

Dupin solves the case of the purloined letter. As symbolic analyst, detective, solves the riddle. Dupin's reward for solving this mystery is 50,000 francs. But what about Lacan? Jeffrey Mehlman in his introductory note to the essay writes:

One has the feeling that, on the contrary, in the confrontation between analysis and literature, the former's role for Lacan is not to solve but to open up a new kind of textual problem. The Poe text then is in many ways a pretext, an exemplary occasion for Lacan to complicate the question of [Freud's] *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. (39)

Lacan practices psychoanalysis, so he answers the riddle, solves the problem, unravels the mystery of Poe's "The Purloined Letter" for readers. As Jeffrey Mehlman reminds us, this is not Lacan's aim; he is "not to solve but to open up a new kind of textual problem." Lacan uses Edgar Allan Poe's "The Purloined Letter" to discuss the dream principle put forth in Sigmund Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*.

Solving the problem of "The Purloined Letter" by replacing or displacing it with the textual problem, Lacan is a detective, interpreter, symbolic analyst, riddle solver, or psychoanalyst. Publication of "Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter'" becomes Lacan's reward for displacing *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* with "The Purloined Letter."

The Mailman/Factor of the Double

I was wondering myself if I know where I am going. So I
would answer you by saying, first, that I am trying, precisely,
to put myself at a point so that I do not know any longer where
I am going.
--Jacques Derrida

---

[1] Stylistically, Lacan writes interrogatives without question marks.

Jacques Derrida entitles his answer to Jacques Lacan's "Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter'" as "The Purveyor of the Truth". The translators add the following footnote:

> The term "purveyor" has been chosen to render the French term "facteur." "Facteur" has retained the meaning of the Latin term "factor" ('maker'). It can thus designate the person who "makes" the mail arrive by delivering it, i.e. the mailman but also refers to each term of a mathematical operation or product. In a way, Derrida is here playing with both senses: he takes Lacan up on the question of whether or not a letter can always arrive at a destination and he also examines all the "elements" or "terms" involved in the unfolding of the story. Whenever there is a similar difficulty in translation, we have attempted to explain it in a footnote or in the text itself through the use of parentheses. (8)

The translators thus re-emphasize the added dimension of translation difficulties. The note also suggests that what Derrida writes he writes in relation to--indeed, in terms of--Jacques Lacan's "Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter.'"

Derrida writes not only in terms of Lacan, but also Freud and Marie Bonaparte, whom he proves by textual reference that Lacan must have known too (68). Derrida further draws a relationship between dreams and metaphors. Quoting Dominique Bouhours, who is quoted by Étienne Bonnot de Condillac, Derrida writes: "'Metaphors are transparent veils that permit us to see what they cover, or the costumes beneath which we recognize the person masked"' (34). Derrida utilizes Freud's example of Hans Christian Anderson's "The Emperor's New Clothes": "Andersen's text has the text as its theme" (36). The text of the story parallels the text of dream psychoanalysis: "Psychoanalysis finds--all that it finds--in the text that it deciphers" (39). Derrida points out that what Lacan does in the seminar is to apply the landscape of psychoanalysis to literature (45). Derrida suggests that Lacan is displacing the analysis of literature with psychoanalysis: "Literary writing occupies an illustrative position, which means making a general law legible through example, making clear the meaning of a law or truth, manifesting them in a signal or exemplary way" (45). The letter in Poe's story functions the same way. Of the letter in the story Derrida notes: "Its place has an essential relationship with its sense which must be such that the letter is constantly directed back to its place" (58).

Lacan limits himself only to the text of "The Purloined Letter." Derrida extends the frame to include other Dupin stories, especially "The Murders in the Rue Morgue." In "Murders in the Rue Morgue," Derrida underlines the doubling relationship between the narrator and Dupin (108). Similarly, the Minister in "The Purloined Letter" is a double--he has a brother who is only a mathematician, and not a mathematician and a poet (109). For Derrida the story begins in a library, and it must have grafted to it the other two Dupin stories.

Of the beginning of "The Purloined Letter," Derrida suggests the importance of the whole question of writing and the story itself:

> On this border, negligible for the interpreter interested in the center
> of the painting and the interior of representation, it was already
> possible to read that the whole thing was a matter of writing, and
> of writing off its course, in a writing-space unboundedly open to
> a grafting onto other writings, the third of a series in which the
> coincidence between the first two is noticeable, breaks suddenly
> upon into the text with the first word "au troisieme, No. 33, Rue
> Danot, Faubourg St. Germain" in French in the original. (102)

Derrida further insists on the crucial role of the letter: "The title is the title of the text, it names the text, it names itself and thus includes itself while pretending to name an object described in the text (110). The letter itself then exists as a double within this framework. Is it only a question of where to draw the frame of reference? Poe has other doubling stories, too.

John T. Irwin (1975) lists Poe's other double stories: "William Wilson"; "Murders in the Rue Morgue"; "Berenice"; "Morella"; "Ligeia"; and, "The Fall of the House of Usher" (11). Irwin discusses doubling and incest in William Faulkner's novels, which parallels Freud's displacement.[1] The meaning of Faulkner's novels is "in that imaginative space that the novels create in between themselves in their interaction" (157). Just as words have no meaning by themselves, Faulkner's novels have no meaning except in their relationships and contiguity to each other. Irwin writes the following of Freud, dreams, and literature:

> [I]t is not just that his psychoanalytic writings frequently involve
> the analysis of the literary text, as in the essay on the uncanny, but
> that the whole psychoanalytic enterprise is one of linguistic analysis-
> what is analyzed is language, and what is discovered is that the
> unconscious is structured like a language. Indeed, what else could
> such a process discover?" (3)

---

[1] Irwin states that in *The Sound and the Fury*, for example, Quentin places his knife at Caddie's throat because she is his double, his sister (46). Brother sister incest substitutes for child/parent incest. Irwin indicates that Darl and Dewey Dell in *As I Lay Dying* have "an incestuous attachment between brother and sister, an attachment that represents for Darl a displacement of his love for his mother Addie" (53). Irwin insists that the general theme of Faulkner's acceptance of the feminine by facing the fear of it (i.e. castration) is how he establishes his identity. For Irwin, to understand Quentin fully, one must read both *The Sound and the Fury* and *Absalom! Absalom!* Faulkner's meaning is not inherent in either text alone:

> This structure as I have tried to present it in all its complexity, exists in no single Faulkner
> novel nor in the sum total of those novels; it exists, rather in that imaginative space that the
> novels create in between themselves by their interaction (157).

Irwin extends this doubling process to Faulkner himself:

> It is tempting to see in Quentin a surrogate of Faulkner, a double who is fated to tell the same
> story throughout his life just as Faulkner seemed fated to retell in different ways the same
> story again and again and, insofar as narration is action, to reenact that story as well." (158).

The Secret, or Ending with the Beginning

> We dance round in a ring and suppose,
> But the Secret sits in the middle and knows.
> --Robert Frost, "The Secret Sits" (245)

This writer returns to the dream. His attempts come full circle in the course of this essay—he returns to the place where he starts. The unconscious remains no dream. A dream exists not as a dream text. A dream text is no interpretation of a dream, etc. Furthermore, a letter is no story, a story is not a critical essay, etc. The relationship between each of these is their similarity of structure. Just as words have any if little meaning in and by themselves, so this writer insists that each of the sections of his essay have most of their meaning in their relationships and contiguity to each other. Language's difficulty remains that humans must use metalanguage to discuss language. If Jacques Lacan's critical essay is explored in the metacriticism of Jacques Derrida, then what has this writer written here is meta-metacriticism.

This writer began his essay with the dream and ended it with Irwin's comments. "In the beginning was the Word" works well and good in a God-controlled universe, only in a universe where there is meaning inherent in words, or at least a God behind the words. But if there are only relationships, then how can there finally be anything else? How can one make something out of nothing? "And the earth was without form and void," this writer reports from the second verse of Genesis. Genesis itself means "beginning" or "birth." The beginning for a Creator like God (Allah), or at least as man devises his Creator has its origins in the void. When Moses asks the burning bush what name to tell the children of Israel when they question who has commissioned him, God answers: "'I AM THAT I AM'" (KJV, Exodus 3.15). On either side of the "THAT" is "I AM," circular structure itself.

God (Allah), creator of the wor(l)d, like all, creates language, thus literature, and all speaking and writing, including this essay. If language must not remain duplicitous, both a one and zero, two digits, for two remains the number of duplicity, while one is the number of unity, then John T. Erwin's comments on Poe's other doubling stories reminds readers that words may be used for both good and for evil. If a reader confronts the known, one, for example, of two and with the unknown, zero, only a place holder, the reader, may suspect duplicity, the truth and its inverse, untruth or the lie. If the secret of this duplicity, the zero ("Why is there something, why not nothing?"[1]), the unknown, remains a secret among the two, then how can the discerning reader determine what finally is the truth?

Frost's lines this writer uses as his epigraph above? The Secret, if it does exist, remains only a placeholder, like the Arabic (Indian?) concept of the zero. If the Secret is just a placeholder, a zero, a void, then all any reader of God's language can do is to continue to explore the relationships that surround it--"We dance round in a ring and suppose." To avoid the void, one dances. "'Play gypsies!'"[2]

---

[1]Tillich, 163.
[2]Jones and Schmidt, *The Fantasticks.*

References

Anonymous. 1976. Key. In *Anglo-Saxon Poetry.* Gordon, R.K., Ed and Trans. Dent, London, England, 47.

Ashbery, J. 1972. *Three Poems*. Viking, New York, NY.

Caligor, L. and May, R. 1968. *Dreams and Symbols: Man's Unconscious Language*. Basic, New York, NY.

Delville, M. 1998. *The American Prose Poem: Poetic Form and the Boundaries of Genre*. UP of Florida, Gainesville, FL.

Derrida, Jacques. 1975. The purveyor of the truth. Domingo, W. Trans. *Yale French Studies*, 52, (1975), 31-113.

Fromm, E. 1951. *The Forgotten Language: An Introduction to the Understanding of Dreams*. Rhinehart, New York, NY.

Frost, R. 1963. The secret sits. In *Selected Poems of Robert Frost.* Rhinehart, San Francisco. CA, 245.

Irwin, J. T. 1975. *Doubling and Incest/Repetition and Revenge*. Johns Hopkins UP, Baltimore, MD.

Jones, T. and Schmidt, H. 1964. *The Fantasticks*. Avon, New York, NY.

Lacan, J. 1968. *The Language of the Self: The Function of Language in Psychoanalysis*. Johns Hopkins UP, Baltimore, MD.

Lacan, J. 1972. Seminar on "The Purloined Letter." Mehlman, J., Trans. *Yale French Studies*, 48, (1972), 39-72.

MacKenzie, N. 1965. *Dreams and Dreaming*. Vanguard, New York, NY.

Nagera, H. 1969. *Basic Psychoanalytic Concepts on the Theory of Dreams*. Basic, New York, NY.

Poe, E. A. 1848; 1950. The purloined letter. In *Selected Prose, Poetry, and Eureka.* Auden, W.H., Ed. Rhinehart, New York, NY, 95-115.

Stekel, W. 1943. *The Interpretation of Dreams: New Developments and Techniques*. Liveright, New York, NY.

Tillich, P. 1940. *The Shaking of The Foundations.* Charles Scribners' Sons, New York, NY.