

Artistic Research Mapped:

A hybrid text that maps the movement of artistic research with Lacan's Logical Square, and considers the positioning of the author as subject within such research

A preliminary note on the writing of the text

The present text is written non-academically, while containing references as footnotes. The context is a recent reading of some of the content of a typically difficult seminar of Jacques Lacan, recalled from memory. The purpose of the footnotes is to academically substantiate the recollections. Due, therefore, to theory being displaced from the body of the text, it can, if the reader prefers, be ignored. Where the relationship between the footnotes and the text's body is most displaced is where the former intervenes in the section of the latter that is written as a conversation. However, the reference from the seminar to Lacan's logical square does require academic rigour, even though the present text's project is to not only adapt the square to a consideration of artistic research in relation to Lacan's use of and – importantly to emphasize – simultaneous subversion of logic, but to try to situate an author-artist as himself a subject of, if not *the* subject, within the research. While some secondary texts on Lacan's logical square have been referenced, the key source is Lacan's summary of the square for his own purposes in his seminar, rather than any more specific critique of how the logical square can be read logically, and internally questions its self-same reading.¹

While it should not be difficult for the reader to work out who the referenced author-artist is – especially after reading the forthcoming Intervention 5 – the text's directing mute presence does preserve the author-artist's status as a question, where this and another third-person character are useful means of personalising reflective-critical commentary. Within the text, it is inferred that the author-artist has applied a similar strategy through inclusion of his declared fictional character, Momrey, who also declares of himself his fictionality. These two, however, are very close, since how can one write of oneself as if

¹ Urban (2015), *Lacan and Meaning*, provides one such critique.

another without considerable self-revelation? (The latter is phrased as a question rather than an exclamation because the strategy is to try to simultaneously reveal and disguise through displacement.) At one point the fictional character corrects the author-artist when the latter suggests that he assumes three voices in the text – himself, the fictional character Momrey, and the artwork – to which Momrey responds that he and the author-artist are ‘conjoined’ as one, in effect, with only the artwork as separate; even though a lot of the debate concerns whether, and if so in what terms, the artwork can achieve separation. (The argument falls on the side of this not being possible when it is at the stage of research, but can separate in its conclusion at the expense of being a conundrum.) Formally, the text’s voices are distinguished by fonts, the author-artist’s voice being formal, Momrey’s formatted as if manually typed as a speech-based transcript, while the footnotes are according to convention formatted separately and the mute presence melds the text in all its aspects.

A theoretical scenario

Lacan’s Seminar XIX, *...or Worse* (1971-72), has topped my reading for the past few weeks. Among the more contrapuntal of Lacan’s theoretical writing, but then again, the seminar may be considered written through by Lacan’s own unconscious process in this respect,² his lexicon and grammar infinitely more interesting than secondary texts of which the purpose of writing would be to provide explanation. In a curious manner, however, in such terms language as both *written through* by the writer as its subject and due to this more insidious element, one’s preference is often to veer on the side of an *autonomy* of language rather than it’s bearing the presence of an unconsciously

² Reinhard (2017, p.XXV), in the context of a question of Badiou concerning Lacan’s own exploration of the ‘signifier’ in language, refers to ‘...the endless phonetic and semantic ambiguities and slippages that characterise the unconscious’.

determined subject.³ Would I be able to shed my *x* as a ‘class’⁴, with an exception to the rule at top-left corner of the logical square,⁵ to join the *not all of whom are x* that are subject to the function that holds my class *x* together in the lower-right corner?⁶ I doubt it, and the concept is bizarre anyway. (Figure 1)

³ The term *subject* is taken to mean *human* subject, whereas Tomšič (2017, p.17, citing Lacan) refers to the ‘subject’ of the language of each of mathematics, science, and the unconscious as if it is a reflexive domain within and unique to individual fields; the ‘subject of the unconscious’, in effect, ‘detached from its psychological bearers’.

⁴ The ‘class’ (Lacan, 2018, p.166) referred to here might be considered *universal*, as it concerns all of man submitted to the phallic function – although this need not exclude women, objects, or object-elements – with one important exception, known in Lacanian theory as the capitalised *Other*, that is not submitted to the phallic function.

⁵ This is Lacan’s adaptation of Aristotle’s original logical square. According to Urban (2022, p.87), this can also be termed the ‘square of opposition’ (ibid, p.87), where each corner contains a *categorical proposition*, which are letter abbreviations concerning the Universal or Particular Affirmative and Negative statements. Lacan adapted the square to his own purpose of challenging the logic of the straightforward masculine and feminine vertical sides of the square; what Urban (2015, p.87) describes as the ‘traditional binary logic of the sexes’. Tomšič (2017, p.21), writing in the context of Lacan’s use of mathematics, argues that Lacan’s approach to experimentation is such as to demonstrate ‘...a real of language irreducible to meaning and communication, as well as a mode of thought that contradicts the sound reason of Aristotelian logic’.

⁶ Lacan invented the *matheme*, one of which appears at each of the corners of the logical square, as a combination variously of logical symbols, numbers and language to replace written language. Badiou (2017, p.71) explains *matheme* as ‘...something that holds the place of the variable, without for that simply manifesting the void, and embodies a certain truthfulness’.

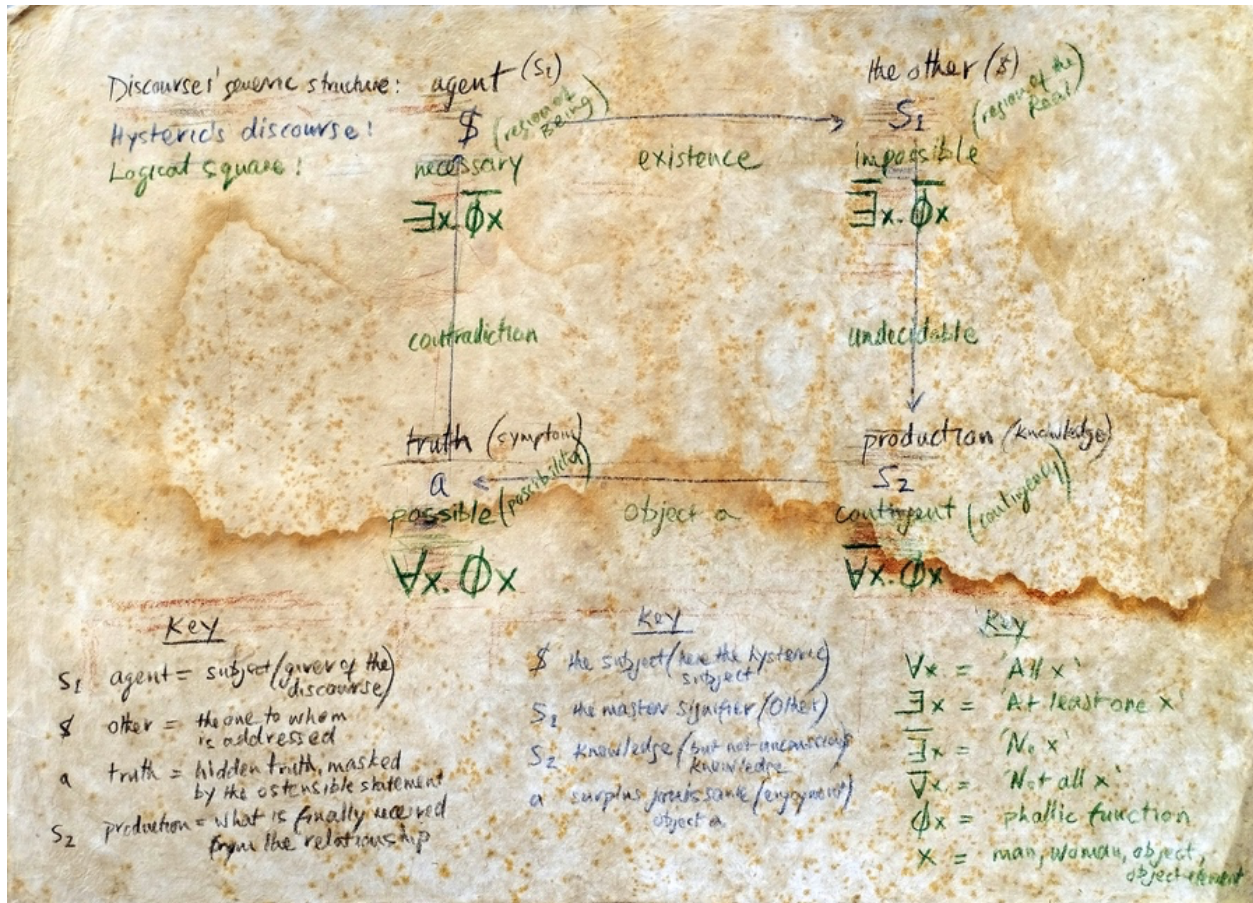


Figure 1: A diagram showing Lacan's logical square, colour-coded green, mapped with Lacan's generic structure of his Four Discourses, colour-coded black, and Lacan's Hysteric's Discourse colour-coded blue. Dermatograph pencils on corroded handmade paper, 76 x 52cm, 2023

Intervention 2 (at the time of coming in)⁷

He'd doubt it, as a hidebound⁸ male, where his gender conforms to an overarching generational concept and the father would still have mostly been considered head of the family. That's not to say that he doesn't now have possibilities. He has me, for example, if he were able to acknowledge me as an *other* within himself instead of sheepishly relegating me to the 3rd-

⁷ Interventions are made by each of the author-artist and Momrey as and when either of them feels that additional comment is necessary, and are numbered chronologically, hence the present example is a such occurrence.

⁸ *Hidebound* refers both to stiff animal hide and human character traits such as of narrow attitude, conservative, and miserly (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/hidebound>)

person.⁹ However, if he were to look askance, to his left – mine and the reader’s right corner (as shown in Figure 1), if we imagine that he’s actually in the square¹⁰ looking out at us from it – this would be to the kernel of the question, ***impossible***,¹¹ a void of meaninglessness, although as likely positive as negative, where great works and their progenitors – of whatever gender – may oscillate equably while others of us not so lucky thrash around in its vortex.

Would I, could I, hold either lower-left or lower-right positions? I doubt it, as the concept of *hysteric* – conflating the Hysteric’s Discourse¹² with the logical square – also places me at top-left corner through another circuitous movement, anticlockwise and therefore opposite to the movement of the logical square, according to Lacan’s Hysteric’s Discourse. We might all of us be considered hysterics.¹³ From such a position of the hysteric as agent,¹⁴ *man* – though not excluding woman, objects, and object-elements – would certainly be there, according to the account determined by the logical square,

⁹ This is an important distinction, however, because the other as a 3rd-party can, in the analytical discourse, be as much as the ineffable Real, of the three psychic registers, Imaginary, Symbolic, Real (Lacan, 2018, p.134). However, the author wants to convey the closeness of whoever at this moment is speaking, as a part of him as a subject.

¹⁰ This is a reference to Lacan’s logical square, colour-coded green in Figure 1. All forthcoming terms that are highlighted in bold, either italicised or normal, also follow the format of the referenced copied square.

¹¹ According to Chatopadhyay (2022, p.120), this is Lacan’s inclusion of impossible with ‘...Aristotle’s...modal categories of necessity, possibility and contingency...through a logic of double negation: “what doesn’t stop not being written”, which is in other terms the register of the Real. Tomšič (2017, p.240 states that ‘...the impossible neither is nor is not. It becomes but can never be’. This is the modality – or proposition – that enables the logical relationships between the others to be challenged.

¹² The Four Discourses – see Figure 1 for the generic template, colour-coded black – are four suggested ways in which people, and/or institutions or their human representatives, relate to one another and also concerns knowledge, and enjoyment at the psychic level (*jouissance*) in socio/cultural interaction. These are the discourses of Master, University, Analyst, and Hysteric, which first appear in Lacan’s Seminar XVII (1969) (Bailly, 2009, p.153). The Hysteric’s discourse is colour-coded blue in the diagram, Figure 1.

¹³ Leupin (2004, p.83, citing Lacan) states: ‘Hysteric and scientific discourses have almost identical structure; and Bailly (2009, p.160) states in particular of the hysteric’s discourse: ‘Lacan made it clear that this type of discourse in non-hysterical people, is precisely what leads to true learning’.

¹⁴ According to Bailly (2009, p.155): ‘The “agent”...is...the “giver” of the discourse.... The agent also need not be a real person but something represented by a person, or an institution as embodied in a person or people’.

through lack of realisation that we'd have a choice; phallic castration writ large for us in its very denial, with the suspicion that there's an exception.¹⁵ (With the realisation that one does, as male, *have* a choice, some or total extrication from this position might be possible, while for woman, objects, and object-elements, the situation is infinitely more flexible, indeed feasible, not to be there.) It's that, the *exception* to this rule; that there's one who's not castrated or assumed not to be so, that's the driving force, or it might be better to say *writing* force, and with that of course the oscillation of the read, and more tenuously the spoken.

Intervention 1

I curve in at **undecidable**. Perfect for him; acceptable for me. Except that he treats me, I'd hesitantly, almost, be inclined to say, like a son while expecting me to be his mother. NO CAN DO; I'm prepared to be neither! How is the unconscious? It's what never stops not being written,¹⁶ and is paradoxically all the more there within language because of it. I skirt **impossible**...¹⁷

¹⁵ The *exception* to symbolic phallic castration, adapted from Freud's original theory of the Oedipus Complex, is the big *Other*, sometimes referred to in Lacan's texts as the 'paternal metaphor' or the 'master signifier'. While the Other is an important Lacanian concept – "Man's desire is the desire of the Other" (Lacan, 1998, p.235) – according to Tomšič (2017, p.25), 'Lacan incessantly repeated that the big Other does not exist'.

¹⁶ Lacan (1999, p.59) refers to what in the present author's text is suggested as the unconscious as **impossible**, the Real, as opposed to **necessary**, when he states of *necessary* that it's '...that which doesn't stop... being written', and of **impossible** that it is "What doesn't stop not being written".

¹⁷ This is Lacan's own addition to the logical square that enables him to argue against there being such a thing as a sexual relation, although it also concerns language, insofar as language is a matter of the Symbolic register, in that, according to Lacan (2018, p.152) '...an impossibility in the symbolic formula that we are enabled to draw from it demonstrates what is real therein'. However, this is veering on the side of language as, itself, a formulaic medium, hence the example of its abstraction by Lacan in and as mathemes. Tomšič (2017, p.19) states: '...the language of the real is the dialectical and speculative language of formalisation...'

Intervention 7 (at the time...)

Lacan (2018, p.182) writes of *impossible*, top-right corner of the square, as ‘...the non-existence of what might negate the phallic function’. This is the position of the ineffable Real of Lacan’s three psychic structuring registers, Imaginary, Symbolic, Real.¹⁸ In effect, there is no big *Other* exception to the rule of symbolic castration, emasculation of the male by the precondition of a primal father, conveyed by Freud in his *Totem and Taboo* (first published in 1913), which figuratively accounts for the incest taboo that’s crucial to any successful negotiation of the Oedipus complex.¹⁹ Insofar as one is prepared to go along with the oedipal story, it has seeped into language in the Western cultural context. The Real affects a massive NO to the idea of the Other and effectively places a void at the story’s heart, which is incongruously, paradoxically, itself sustaining. As an artist – perhaps not so for others – one seems even to reach towards the Real as though incessantly trying to work it out, despite the impossibility, which is paradoxically where one gains the sustenance.

He looks down on me from the point of *necessary*,²⁰ to where he considers me to be. I respond by flirting with the void. Never completely consumed by its impossibility, rather like my studio, which is a void space to the left side of the front-door of my flat, given a short narrow corridor before entry to a single square-metre that permits standing upright or sitting down against an 8’ x 4’ vista; hardboard of

¹⁸ Badiou (2018, p.150), more precisely states of Lacan, of the Real that cannot be known: ‘He has to exempt the real from knowing without ending up with a theory of the ineffable or the unknowable’. Then Badiou (ibid, p.152) states: “The real is the remainder of the disjunction between the knowable and the unknowable”.

¹⁹ Lacan (2006, p.230) refers to the father in this context as the ‘*name of the father*’, and that ‘...the symbolic function, since the dawn of historical time, has identified his person with the figure of the law’.

²⁰ The left vertical side of the square is masculine, *universal*, in the formula, where *necessary* is the conveyance to all man, universally, of the phallic function. According to Lacan (2018, p.38): ‘Necessity... only begins with the speaking being...’, and to ‘...this art of producing a necessity of discourse’. (Importantly, the categories man and woman in relation to the logical square can also mean, in respect of each, in certain circumstances the opposite sex, and objects and object-elements.)

British-only dimensions, pre-Brexit, anterior future. He also looks back to move forward. More precisely, he looks down from **necessary** with expectations of me in my fleshy position behind him on the curve. What we get is **contingent**;²¹ it's a kind of *meanwhile* state temporally earlier than him, that he wills – but unsuccessfully – forward and, in the mean-time I flirt with what he dreads: the void; the full-on impact of **impossible** that he can see to the left of him, and seeks instead a kind of halfway-house in the form of me. (To the left of him from his position in the square as if looking out from it, with me looking in. he and I return our gaze, so reciprocally what's on the right for me is on the left for him.) I'm neither family member, lover, nor loved, but a composite from which he deigns to feel able – mistakenly – to select. He's gender-specific, whereas I'm not. Why do I need to be this, that, or the other, for myself? How can I be gendered for him anyway, when my position, while he's unable to make up his mind, is **contingent**? Unable, not through prevarication, but through the very impossibility that oscillates like the weight of an unwelcome truth from top-right towards and across the diagonal of his and my dynamic; between top-left and lower-right of the square, respectively...

Intervention 3 (at the time...)

Momrey had probably meant to use the word *procrastination* here, as opposed to *prevarication*, where he'd have been suggesting that it was not through any kind

²¹ Contingent concerns the right side of the square, which is feminine, on the basis, according to Lacan (2018, p.89, '...because woman is *pas-toute* – not all'; not all on the basis that she is not universalised by submission to the phallic function, cannot be considered a class, and is therefore *particular* as opposed to *universal* (masculine side). However, under certain circumstances men can also be 'not all'. Lacan (1999, p.76) states: 'There are men who... get the idea or sense that there must be a jouissance that is beyond. Those are the ones we call mystics'.

of delay on my part that his gender could not be decided. However, the implication that the author-artist might have been evading such a question rather suits Momrey's view – to write it in different terms – that his lack of specification of gender fills the space of the diagonal dynamic between them, like the metaphor of a weighted form that gets in the way of the making of a decision. This, in a sense, suggests *body* – as well as stubbornness – of the character who is but a fiction within the text.

Respectful? Yes, I know my duty to him, but the curve of my trajectory, due to my **contingent** position, structured by him rather than by any design of my own, *falls me*, as it were, askance of **impossible**, although brushing against its void, to end me at **contradiction**.²² I don't intend to contradict; far from it; I flirt with his need because I know he likes that, but the patent fact is that the relationship doesn't, cannot, work. It's one-sided: I peter out at most at **contradiction**, the other end of **undecidable**, if a horizontal trajectory is drawn that I might cross. He reaches across such a trajectory, as is his perpetual wont, because that's his only position, hidebound male that he is, from which to rescue me, but he

²² Adapting but vaguely from an explanation from Urban (2015, p.117), the significance of **contradiction** between **necessary** and **possible**, left-side of the square, would seem not only the contradiction between there being one exception to submission the phallic function, the Other, on the left-side, and then below it the affirmation that all men are so submitted without exception, but how it is ultimately the 'not-all' of woman, as not submitted to the phallic function, that subverts any smooth logical reading of the square. Lacan's (2018, pp.185-6) own proposed movement through the square in the context of his argument of there being no such thing as a sexual relationship, veers across it from the right-side, between **contingent**, from the not-all of woman, to end at **contradiction**. Urban (2015, p.90) refers to a loophole of 'equivocation which roots itself at the formal level of any articulated system of logic' that enabled Lacan to complicate any straightforward negation of true by false, and visa-versa, by introducing 'one standing as the obstacle to the other'. This occurs along the top line of the square as '*there exists*' and '*there does not exist*', and along the lower line, '*all x*' submitted to the phallic function and '*not all woman*'. The interventions of **contradiction**, left-side, and **undecidable**, right-side are, in a sense, terms for the equivocal, if not illogical, readings of the square. Tomšič (2017, p.13) states of 'the subject of science' that it '...manifests... in the gaps and struggles, deadlocks and errors that accompany the formation of a scientific theory' – which may be considered manifestations of the Real.

can only ever find me. The only place it is ever possible with a modicum of success to look is at **contingent**; the kind of things I look for – no, welcome – in their eventuality, in my studio: or what I bring to the studio from their event elsewhere. He models me – I won't say to his own ends because he's confused as to what they are – but askance to him to his left – to my right on the square – is **impossible**, which tells him that whatever he tries, it will not be *it*. Piecemeal, that's me! I flirt with what holds him back by brushing with the void – as if the gaping hole²³ swells spherical – on my way to **contradiction**, and that's as much, the very most, that he can obtain of me. Lopsided? Yes, until I declare that my need of him is for him to make up his mind. That he cannot, concerns the impossible ratio between him from his position of assuming guidance, that something will somehow sooner or later *tell* him, and across to his left representing, in and of itself, that there is NOT. Meanwhile, lower-left at **possible**, anything is in theory possible. I represent, in and of myself, such theory.

Woman would be there through a choice that, arguably, could be brought more easily to consciousness. Either way, whichever genders occupied the top-left corner would be looking to their left towards **impossible**, on the diagram the top-right corner of the square, the domain of the Real after the event, as it were, with the inevitability of offering critical evaluation; because that's what one exerts on the finished artwork: it's hard to enjoy, and harder still to *fear*; hard to allow feelings to respond to a phenomenon that deserves them when the rational tends by far to be one's dominant force. We've moved, therefore, from the impossible Real, the inscrutable elusive entity that's the culmination of the artistic

²³ According to Lacan (2018, p.113), there is 'a gaping hole in the fact of saying'. Language can therefore never be totally transparent in its communication of meaning because of the element of oneself as unconscious subject within its midst, and that amidst what can be deduced of the subject via analytic method is a deeper layer still that cannot be accessed under any circumstances, which is the Real.

process. We somehow do extricate ourselves from such a process – if we haven’t skirted around it, ducked out – and retreat, as it were, by moving forward to the top-left corner, **necessary**, the necessary place of language compelled and propelled by an assumed Other that’s the exception.²⁴ From that safe haven – did we but know that it’s not, necessarily – we look back from whence we came, at this thing that’s no longer ours. The hysteric, that’s all of us who occupy the position of agent in that top-left corner (Hysteric’s Discourse colour-coded blue in Figure 1), not least the artist, apply critique forlornly to an entity that by nature evades explanation. This is the finished artwork as Real.²⁵ Personally, I’d prefer not to be there. I’d stop short of the top-right corner, feeding off what I’d learned already from the days when I *did* flirt with the Real – I use the unlikely tense because there’s no real way of avoiding the Real – from the position of the hysteric. While the hysteric as he, or through a different psychic propulsion she – now we have *they* – plies their questions clockwise to the Other as if the phenomenon were in what should be the position that the Other creates, the subject submitted to symbolic castration,²⁶ the *x* (or subject), of *at least one x that is not submitted to the phallic function* (symbolic castration) of the logical square, top-left corner, moves anti-clockwise towards **possible**, lower-left.

²⁴ This will be what Badiou (2018, p.55, citing Lacan) states as “the One is”, and ‘...must be questioned in terms of its being...’ Badiou explains that Lacan was less interested in the question of Being than another use of One as repetition, as “there’s some One”.

²⁵ In looking back from top-left corner of the square, as if from the position of the Symbolic register, where one attempts through language to create reasoned discourse, towards the top-right corner, the domain of the Real, one not only tales in the extent of subversion of reason, but still, nonetheless- strives to reason. Tomšič (2017, p.20) states of the Real: ‘...deadlocks, inhibitions, failures, breakdowns and paradoxes of discourse become the privileged mode of encounter of the real in the symbolic’.

²⁶ Bailly (2009, pp.219-20) describes castration as ‘...the symbolic loss of an imaginary object, the Phallus, where castration is ‘...the acceptance that one is less than perfect, limited, not all-powerful and able to control or satisfy the world’. However, the phallus is assumed to be in the possession of the big *Other*. Lacan (2006, p.583) refers to the phallus as ‘the signifier of the Other’s desire’. That the Other does not have the phallus either, may be considered the constitutional *lack* at the core of one’s being. The phallus, or the Other, is the *master signifier* of language insofar as it is a semiotic system. According to Lacan (ibid, p.582), the ‘phallus’ function’ concerns that: ‘These relations revolve around a being and a having which, since they refer to a signifier, the phallus, have contradictory effect: they give the subject reality in this signifier, on the one hand, but render unreal the relations to be signified, on the other’.

The lower-left corner, **possible**, of the logical square, the *object a*²⁷ of the Hysteric's Discourse, occupying the position of truth on the generic template for each of Lacan's four key discourses, is where I personally see artistic research coming in.²⁸ This is where I'd bring in the fictional character Momrey, or I should more precisely say, where he'd *come* in, since neither *mum* nor *memory*, the one impacting on the other, are much in my compass of control: the older I become the more I tend to dwell; cogent recollection as a mode of operation, some recollection of which concerns my mother's untimely death. **Possible**, lower-left corner, is the position of possibility, which I'd be inclined to equate with the pre-linguistic Imaginary register, of Lacan's three psychic structuring registers Imaginary, Symbolic, Real.²⁹ It's not entirely true – let's say it's half true – that Momrey transpires from the pre-linguistic. He's modelled from an *other*: from the vantage-point of language, the domain of the Symbolic, he's constructed from an idea of an *other* as the conjoined other of the *self & other* basis of self-identity, the beginnings of its formation of which is in the Imaginary.³⁰ I'd bring him in, anyway, or he'd bring himself in as muse, in a sense to *amuse*. He'd come in, or he'd be brought in, on the back of whatever I've as acquired knowledge of starting-points for artistic work. (I like that; Momrey as riding the research-based artistic process!) There's contradiction between **necessary** and

²⁷ *Object a*, with its earlier origin in Lacanian theory as the significant *other* of identity formation in the Imaginary register, is a surrogate object of the originary desire, the ultimate sources of one's desire, thereafter unknown to one except as suggested by occasional or frequent psychical sense of it. According to Bailly (2009, p.129) '...real-world objects which have *something of the properties* of part objects are often the "receptacles" for the *objet petit a*'. Grigg (1997/2007, n.p.n) refers to the object *a* as '...a semblant that fills the void left by the loss of the primary object. ...an object of enjoyment that is both seductive and deceptive'.

²⁸ Cassin (2017, p.55) states: 'There is truth only insofar as there is a function of the real in knowledge'. In the Hysteric's Discourse a surplus of knowledge produced at production, lower-right position on the Discourses' generic template, which is knowledge in the Real, sometimes referred to as surplus jouissance, gets moved to the lower-left position, truth.

²⁹ Badiou (2018, p.157-8) refers to the influence of Kierkegaard on Lacan concerning: 'Knowledge of reality is... a knowledge of possibilities, not of the real', and then: 'Reality as a correlate of knowing is... in Lacan, namely, the imaginary nature of reality, as opposed to the real'. This supports an idea that the lower-left corner of the logical square, **possible**, where all *x* is submitted to the phallic function, is most likely the domain of the pre-linguistic Imaginary and its continued contributions in adult life.

³⁰ The idea of *other* as part of a *self & other* dualistic relationship in one's early identity formation is developed by Lacan (2006, pp.75-81) as the 'mirror stage'.

possible, in that man's symbolic phallic castration means that not all *is* possible, but one may apply to the lower-left corner the question that, heading for the lower-right, we do still have choices. One can, as man, in exceptional circumstances be asexual, and woman is of course physiologically exempt from castration, although can symbolically, as it were, duck into the process. Man as universal, more or less; woman as more or less particular, is part of Lacan's hypothesis presented via the logical square. It's difficult territory: I wouldn't want to make too much of the argument, albeit that gender is a question of my own that I split, in myself, between a hidebound male and a character who, by dint of being fictional, can exert any degree of fluidity. If I attempt to diagram the mapping of the Hysteric's Discourse with the logical square, I impose a sense of circularity to the interaction of anticlockwise and clockwise circuits, respectively. The hermeneutic circle³¹ should also be considered; the idea developed historically and culturally that oneself as one's own subject is automatically placed in one's text. If the hidebound male stays mostly mute, in this respect, Momrey does more apparently speak through the text, part, to part, to part..., to edge towards an idea of the whole that is, after all, my prerogative as artist, toying with questions of language, to piece together. Momrey enters from the lower-left, amidst the context/s, to the right and what may be considered the text; that which is up to the author-artist to elicit: Momrey's job stops there.³² (Figure 2)

³¹ According to Urban 2015, p.14), the hermeneutic circle is an ancient concept that was further developed in the 19th century that seeks to account for the element of subjectivity that permeates one's assumptions of the independent existence of objects, where '...it is the object itself that must now be conceived as conforming to our thinking', or in other terms the consideration of '...relation between the whole and the part' as the cycle of thinking (Urban, p.87), and thus the development of hermeneutical phenomenology, or the phenomenological study of texts.

³² This idea of the hermeneutic circle may not even be right, and is in any case not central to the discussion. What the idea does give is the possibility of reading oneself amidst a linguistically couched argument, with its adaptation to arguments that waver between linguistic and image-based, or image-projective. The ambiguity of this is useful in visualising the Momrey character as a *something*, a permeation, literally, of a surface that is otherwise structured in more specific terms; Momrey, coming in, further maps with two of Lacan's mathemes already mapped.

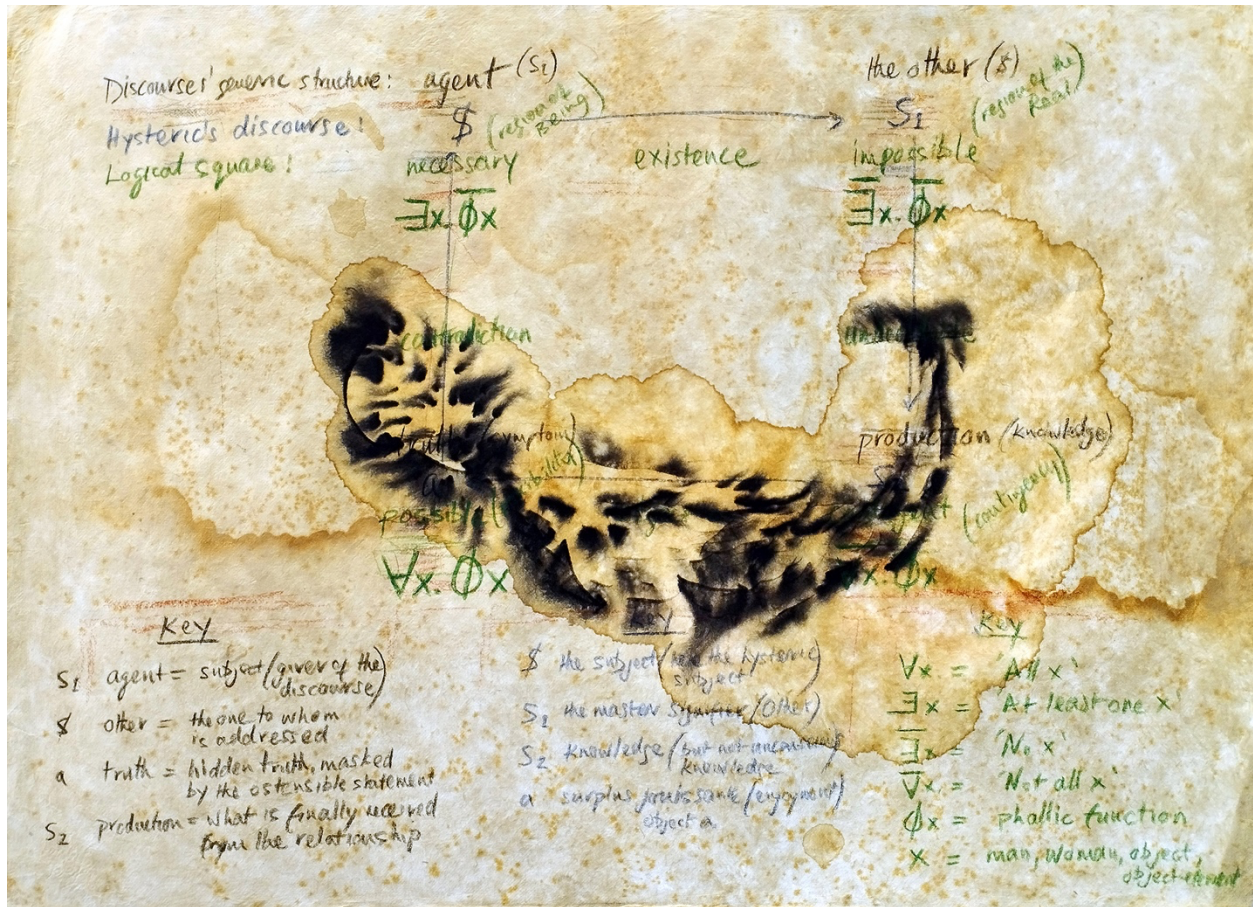


Figure 2: The diagram, second state, showing Lacan's logical square, colour-coded green, mapped with Lacan's generic structure of his Four Discourses, colour-coded black, Lacan's Hysteric's Discourse colour-coded blue, and the coming into the square from the mid-left. Dermatograph pencils, coffee stain and ink stains on corroded handmade paper, 76 x 52cm, 2023

Intervention 5 (at the time...)

What is interesting with the diagram in its second state, Figure 2, above, concerns the contingent reaction of the black ink introduced to the surface before prior stains with coffee had morphed with one another and completely dried. The ink has not only bled into the coffee, but the latter has pulled the initial marks of the ink outwards, preserving the inner edges' sharpness. Where the ink stains come in at **contradiction**, middle-left of the square, and should have spread outwards in the region of **object a**, lower horizontal side, they have suggested forms within the larger containing form that may suggest something like a whale, facing to the left, with its tail flipping at the region, middle-right side, termed **undecidable**.

Momrey comes in at ***possible***, embodying and conveying object *a*, surrogate object-cause of desire,³³ which may be encountered unconsciously as a source not necessarily in merely one object, that is gathered, flirted with, disposed of, as a constituent of beginning- through to developmental-research. This *is* an important question: What *does* one come in with? When does one come in, and when does one's consciousness of coming in begin? Where Momrey comes into his own, however, where one really requires to be, is in the domain of ***contingent***, lower-right of the square. This is where Momrey fleshes out, as it were, and oscillates with *not-all* *x*; woman, man in certain circumstances, objects and elements of objects not submitted to the phallic function. This is the region of *knowledge* in the Hysteric's Discourse.

Intervention 4 (at the time...)

What does Momrey hit with, when he comes in? He hits with symptom, the semblance, the object *a*. In some respects, he hits with himself, inasmuch as he is a construct of an author-artist's desire.³⁴ Momrey harbours the object *a*. Would it be an essence of a body, a body-part, and intelligence within the looks? In any case, it is an offshoot of the clockwise movement. The author-artist has wanted knowledge, and what he culminates with, in the clockwise movement towards truth on the generic template of the Four Discourses, is a surplus enjoyment obtained from the quest for knowledge.³⁵ Since it is a cycle that repeats, ad infinitum, unless,

³³ Bailly (2009, pp.128-9, citing Lacan) explains the object *a* as first emerging in Lacan's theory concerning early identity formation, where 'small others' '...become the objects onto which all kinds of ideas and fantasies may be affixed', while later in Lacan's theory the object *a* becomes 'the "imaginary cause of desire", rather than the desire found or apprehended, and as such is a characteristic or quality within certain objects chosen unconsciously and for psychic reasons.

³⁴ Lacan (2018, p.160) states of that the object *a* in the Analyst's Discourse, should be held by the analyst as the agent, which is '...the position of semblance', and then that '...the function of the object *a* is displacement. In the Hysteric's Discourse the object *a* is displaced onto Momrey in the self-same position where he comes in, so it will be he who holds the semblance, and therefore *is* the displacement of the author-artist's desire.

³⁵ According to Bailly (2009, p.160) in the Hysteric's Discourse the driver is the hysteric's object *a*, which is the object-cause of desire, lower-left corner, Figure 1, which is also the generic position of truth and, of the logical square, ***possible***. Bailly (ibid, p.160) continues that the hysteric addresses her questions to the master signifier, top-right corner of the discourses generic template, who fulfils the hysteric's quest for knowledge. However, this is never quite enough because of the connection of the object *a* with the master

for one reason or another, the routine ends, Momrey comes in and comes *back* in with/as such surplus. He clashes with **possible** with what he brings in, a genderless situation, a thousand particles, maybe more; or at least the idea of potentiality associated with the newness of a fresh start. One knows that the latter is not of that stature, but the spirit is there in the spirit of Momrey. Momrey moves to knowledge. This is dynamic, because it is where author-artist and Momrey oscillate on the diagonal trajectory of **necessary** and **contingent**. The author-artist is so compelled by the knowledge, and not all of it is predictable. The most special of the knowledge is **contingent**; what crops up and follows through that is not predictable. Momrey, looking up towards **necessary**, wants the absolute of the author-artist's hunger for these, while the author-artist's hunger for them, looking down to **contingent**, is insatiable; he strikes them off. These are the developmental stage of his research; the demand for the ideal solution meets with the need for more and more....

While the generic template shows the lower-right corner to be production, here, as hysterics, we place *knowledge*. Imagine that the artwork *has* been scrutinized, its elusive basis debunked as if it were a body and dismembered: here we have the remainder as bits and pieces of knowledge.³⁶ There's a clash here; the research, largely driven by

signifier, via the hysteric's, resulting in a remainder, sometimes referred to as surplus *jouissance*, that occupies the lower-left corner of the discourses generic template, and therefore, inasmuch as it can be mapped, **possible**, of the logical square. In effect, there is a diagonal dynamic, therefore, between lower-left corner and top-right corner. Since the object *a* is but a manifestation of the Real, and the top-right corner of the logical square is **impossible**, the very domain of the Real, such a dynamic may be considered a trajectory back and forth, of the Real. Whether the object *a* in the hysteric's context may also be termed *jouissance*, or a form termed *surplus-jouissance*, Badiou (2018, p.110) associates *jouissance* with the Real. In the context of consideration of Marx in relation to Lacan, Badiou (ibid, p.112) states that Lacan not only attributed the invention of the psychic symptom to Marx, but the idea of 'surplus-enjoyment'; an excess offshoot of production – in the hysteric's case knowledge – and a *value* associated with a psychic level of enjoyment. Inasmuch as the hysteric's purpose is to obtain knowledge, it is the non-practical surplus of it, positioned lower-left on the hysteric's template, that is and becomes the driver of the hysteric's quest for knowledge.

³⁶ Tomšič (2017, p.30) cites Lacan: "Let us say that in principle it is not worth speaking of anything else than the real...", and infers the propensity of the Symbolic, which is the domain of language and

object/s *a*, oscillates with the already known and is realized – not all but in all likelihood some of it – through contingent circumstances. It's what comes in: one moves to the lower-right corner of the logical square but there's a scenario already constructed and waiting; woman – to follow Lacan's reason for developing the logical square – as particular Other, as opposed to/in dynamic relationship with universal Other at the top-left corner of the square.³⁷ Of *not-all* *x* there's contingency; *of*, rather than *in*. This is at present the domain of Momrey coming into his own as a fluid phenomenon. Momrey is sought by the hidebound male, top-left corner, as an ideal *other*, both desired and to be had simultaneously. In real life this is just not possible. As a motive of creativity, to flirt with surrogate objects of desire as if they were desire itself, and to delight in contingent factors that have a habit of presenting themselves to variously key into and knock progressively forward one's creative concerns, is more than possible; in the logical square a move from the domain of **possible**, where everything is in theory possible, to the domain of the *actually* possible; **contingent**. Momrey swells in his oscillation between **contingent** and **necessary** in this diagonal dynamic. There are gaps in language: the latter is beset with gaps. As I type, I'm all too aware that what I cannot say is being said anyway, in its very absence. What the logical square in its anticlockwise movement is coming towards is the subversion of meaningful dialogue by the Real; in fact, by the unconscious itself, that inserts itself into the gaps in one's communication as non-sense.³⁸ Not nonsense, as

communication, to be able to infiltrate the Real to an extent. Tomšič (ibid, p.30) refers to '...the symbolic in the real or... the symbolic on the background of the affirmation of its absolute autonomy'.

³⁷ Following Aristotle's *universal* and *particular* basis of his four categorial propositions, the top-left corner of the logical square harbours the universal Other, the exception that is not submitted to the phallic function, but, according to Lacan (2018, p.92), this is '...a requirement that seems to be emitted at the level of the feminine, which is specified as being a *pas-toute*, a *not-all*, lower-right corner, where the Other is harboured as *particular*.

³⁸ Non-sense is perhaps to bold a term, when there is term coined by Lacan, *ab-sense*, which brings the idea of questioning sense closer to the real. According to Badiou (2017, p.49), '...the real may be defined as *sense* qua *ab-sense*. The real as *ab-sense*, hence absence of sense, which obviously implies that there is such a thing as sense'. Badiou (ibid, p.50) explains that when this term is used by Lacan, he coins a portmanteau word, *ab-sex-sense*, in support of his theory of lack of sexual relationship.

such, let's say, so much as *artifice*.³⁹ This is terrific; the concluding artwork as a work of artifice that resides in the domain of the logical square, of the region where the hysteric forces the Other, the master signifier, to reside, which is where meaningful communication is subverted! If there's a hole at the heart of communication, then this is where Momrey hovers, neither confined to the lower-right corner of the logical square, at ***contingent***, nor ever wishing to participate in the top-left, the domain of ***necessary***, because it's necessary in most circumstances for man to be castrated – until man, case by case, learns that this is a delusion, both in terms of his own emasculated condition and in terms of there being an Other who/that is the exception to this rule. To learn of such a thing, however, requires much more experiential deconstruction than to merely be told. In terms of the process of artistic research, I'd be inclined to stop between ***contingent*** and ***impossible***, at ***undecidable***.

There's enough here; there's the *swelling* of Momrey that's caught up by the outer edge of the domain ***impossible***, the Real, ~~a section etched put~~ of the diagonal between ***contingent*** and ***necessary***....

Intervention 6 (at the time...)

It is interesting here that in the process of referring to the Real as a hole bearing the unconscious itself, what Lacan terms 'a gaping hole in the fact of saying'⁴⁰, the word-processing programme has pre-empted wrongly what would have been wanted, and has imposed some *non-sensical* language alternative – the section now scored through. This may be considered a precise example of the cooperation of an ultimately mathematically formulated algorithmic system with the psychical

³⁹ Lacan (ibid, p.50) states: 'The real Other of the Other, that is, the impossible, is the idea that we form of artifice, inasmuch as it is a form of making which eludes our grasp, that is, which far exceeds the jouissance we can derive from it....'

⁴⁰ Lacan (2018, p.113)

register of the Real, in the context of speaking about the self-same phenomenon that operates outside of meaning and sense.⁴¹

Artistic research, short of the complete cycle of art's production, may be considered to cross the border with the Real while not becoming embroiled. If one *does* cross the boundary, there's a reason for the top-right corner's subversion of meaning that concerns mathematics, specifically an element of artifice, the starting-point of set theory with the fabricated 0 that has to be taken as a form of 1 in its very emptiness, to generate 1.⁴² 1, with origin in 0 as the generator of the empty set, 1, 1, 1, etc., does not exist. The Other, the exception to the phallic function at the top-left corner of the logical square, is in fact driven by *lack*: it too, does not exist, yet is established in place by language, the very mechanism that enables the extrication of the child from the mother in the move from the pre-linguistic Imaginary to the adult Symbolic, the latter of which is founded on the facility of linguistic communication. Within that, the Other as the *father* in the Symbolic utters the necessary edict against incest by removing, symbolically, the mechanism that might enable incest – helped by one's actual- or surrogate father, though unknown by him. In

⁴¹ According to Tomšič (2022, p.206), 'In modernity, mathematics becomes the impossible language of the real... because it resists the human subject on whose existence it nevertheless depends'.

⁴² Clegg (2003, pp.184-5) refers to the 'empty set' of set theory as 'Nothing', and that: '(...anything to the power of 0 is 1) The power set of the empty set as... 1 element – the empty set itself'. Lacan's reference to the empty set – or the 'power set' – is to confirm via mathematics that there is One that is, as it were, all alone, that at the same time does not exist and that can psychically be termed *lack*, the latter of which is not only at the centre of the Other, but becomes the One of this lack that replaces the Other as a concept. Lacan (2018, p.141) states: '...a number to the power of 0 is always 1, for the very simple reason that a number to the power of -1 is its inverse.... ...the sequence of integers is supported by nothing other than the reiteration of the One, the One that has come out of the empty set.... ...which is the reiteration of the lack'. There are therefore two Ones, the One all alone, and the One as *integer* that repeats, ad infinitum. (Lacan, 2018, p.124, refers to '...the One – that *there is* – of the set as distinct from the One of the element'.) Badiou (2018, p.54-6, citing Lacan) distinguishes between these two notions of One, 'the One... associated with the universal mastery of the masculine', or "the One is", and a One that operates through repetition as "there's some One", where the latter '...doesn't require thinking the One in terms of its being but simply noting that there may be some One in a realm of operations... "to turn into psychoanalysis"'. When Lacan (2018, p.117) refers to the One as '...what is most elusive in the utterable', this may concern the One at the level of its operations as repetition of object/s *a*, the latter in their propensity as Real. According to Tomšič (2017, p.15), 'Repetition of the real, which sabotages the apparently automatic functioning of reality, takes place *within* the semblance' – the semblance of which is also the object *a*.

the top-right corner, *impossible*, the domain of the Real, Lacan has placed a *matheme* – *matheme* as Lacan’s own invention that variously combines logical symbols, numbers and language – that reads linguistically: *there is not one that is not submitted to the phallic function*. The statement very conclusively negates the idea, opposite, at the top-left corner, that there’s an exception that’s not submitted to the phallic function. (This should in this respect alone, I’m proposing, be the domain of the conclusive artwork.) The Real, therefore, in whatever terms one feels one might have hit against it, serves to negate the whole assumed meaningful nature of communication by posing something that’s not even Other. The hysteric of the Hysteric’s Discourse, however, forces the Other, the master signifier, into the top-right corner – that’s also the domain of the Real of the logical square – to try to impose knowledge on it, to try to force it towards meaning, yet the Real does not, because cannot, reciprocate....

Intervention 10 (at the time...)

What the author-artist is here referencing is the *conflation* of two contrary propositions and movements. While in the Hysteric’s Discourse, which the author-artist is suggesting is closest to his own discourse, the Other is forced into the position of addressee, top-right corner, in the hope that the hysteric/author-artist can elicit knowledge from it, this is also the position of the ineffable Real, termed *impossible*, of the logical square. Whatever *is* elicited as knowledge, moved to the lower-right corner, bears traces of the Real that are only articulated in the lower-left corner as object/s *a*. As a conflation – of which there are four, relating to each of the four corners of the logical square mapped with the Hysteric’s Discourse, plus how the diagonal axes interact – this may be considered a kind of dynamic stasis, oscillating, or permeating, rather than really going anywhere.

The artwork exists appropriately, as sheer artifice, and is resonant because of it, as a manifestation of the *non*-sense of the unconscious. (Figure 3)

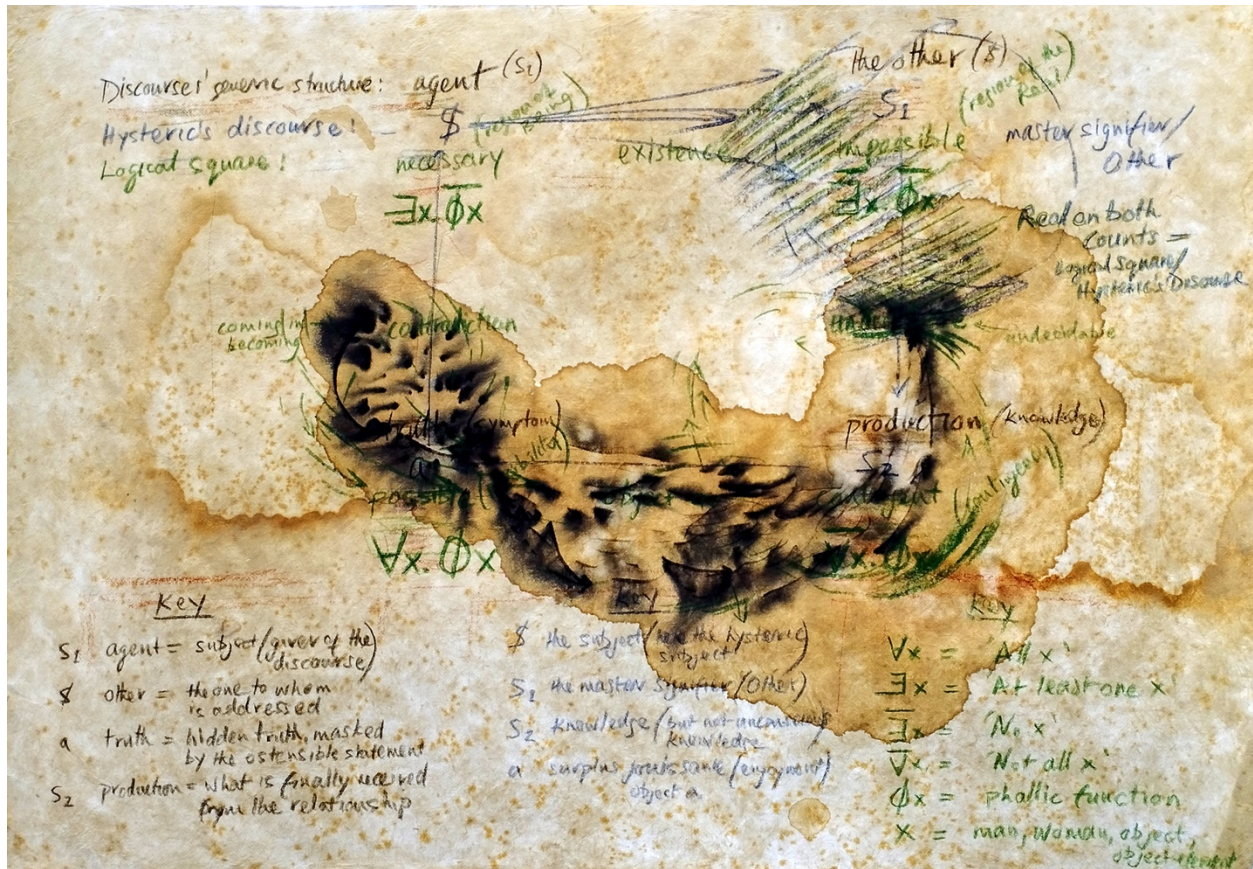


Figure 3: The diagram, third state, showing Lacan's logical square, colour-coded green, mapped with Lacan's generic structure of his Four Discourses, colour-coded black, Lacan's Hysteric's Discourse colour-coded blue, and the coming into the square from the mid-left. Dermatograph pencils, coffee stain and ink stains on corroded handmade paper, 76 x 52cm, 2023

Conversation

'You're invariably up there to the left, aren't you, transfixed by your stereotypes; author, artist, self-critic, aided and abetted by others like you; you and your class. I'm infinitely more mobile, by comparison, contingently right-handed, so to speak, though never quite settled in one place.'

'That's true, I suppose. I'm the addressor, across there ahead of me, to the addressee as all comers, but I'm only really interested in the artwork.⁴³ I elicit from it—'

⁴³ The artwork in this sense concerns what takes its position at **impossible**, top-right corner of the square, or the Real, the other side of, or adjacent to, the author at **necessary**.

‘Or at least you strive to elicit! And such striving, the infernal obligation you’re under, as if a marionette orchestrated by someone well outside of you that nonetheless reverberates through your strings.’

‘You think I’m ignorant of that! It’s that I don’t *know*. Often, I feel that the only truth is the conundrum of the work itself,⁴⁴ as well as one’s motivation towards and through it, and, importantly, what one gets out of the process. This in a sense elevates process beyond the artwork. As conundrum, the irony is that the enterprise gives me nothing, of course.’

‘Process that’s in a sense the obligation to try and do! It’s as if between you and the region of your addressee there’s the empty set; the 0 artificially in place, bearing the value of 1 to the right and -1 to the left, to generate *number* – something like that. Interesting, the hysterical mapping though; it kind of clips you and elevates the other!’⁴⁵

‘Zero as One; One as meaningless existence; hovering static as if by some internal upward thrust – to visualise the situation—’

‘And humanise it! Shouldn’t it just be left as an abstraction?’

‘I don’t know but that’s not to say I wouldn’t *love* to know!’⁴⁶ Anyway, where are *you*?’

⁴⁴ Badiou (2018, p.147) infers that the unconscious itself is the Real, when he states: ‘The unconscious, as we see, is only a metaphorical term to denote the knowledge that only sustains itself by presenting itself as impossible’. Insofar as the Real *permeates*, as it were, if the artwork is a demonstration of the Real, it is fitting that it is also considered to permeate.

⁴⁵ In the Hysteric’s Discourse, the barred subject – according to Leupin (2004, p.70)’...divided between conscious knowledge and unconscious desire’ – is placed on the left of the generic template in the position agent as director of the discourse, while the master signifier (the Other) – who Leupin (ibid, 69) defines as that which links one to their ‘unconscious being’ – takes the position of other, the one who is addressed. On the logical square, agent is in the position of **necessary** (of Being), and other is in the position of **impossible** (the Real).

⁴⁶ According to Badiou (2018, p.134), in Lacan’s theory it’s ‘love of knowledge’ rather than ‘desire for knowledge’.

'At the present moment, geographically, I'm immediately below you, to which in theory you might also aspire, if not for the anxiety you suffer of there being something, maybe even a some-one, that you imagine holds the key to what you term the conundrum, which after all imposes severe limits on what's possible – it's a kind of contradiction in terms, the possible. But possibility does of course exist, in bits and pieces. I'm the flotsam and jetsam of your activity, the breakaways, keying into your need to regenerate. But this is also being a bit facetious of a situation that does have an import; that of beginning, whatever's the next-new, when it will already have been at the end of a cycle.'

'I wonder how you seem to know so much?'

'It's what you've asked of yourself, no more nor less, in terms of deflection of what might be *self-enquiry* towards the enigma of the artwork. It's just that your addressing of that is obscured by your pragmatism, the critical dimension of your activity, which you couch in terms of intellectual enquiry. You'll perhaps see more clearly up ahead, as you move clockwise and I move contrary-wise, where at some point we'll confer.'

'Are you saying that there are three of us; you, me, and the artwork?'

'No, there are you and I conjoined, with me as hardly an entity, and the artwork.⁴⁷ The voice you hear, with such apparent command

⁴⁷ As much as one sees that what approaches an artwork in the present text are the diagrams, and insofar as these have an indirect link with mathematics – if only through an adaptation of Lacan's reading of his mathemes – Badiou's (2018, p.99-100) refers to a slave boy written into Plato's *Meno* to make the point that in order to show that a non-educated person was able to comprehend mathematics he had to be shown a problem that involved a geometrical diagram; that it's '...in the space of the consciousness/reality dyad... that it will make sense [*faire sens*] to anybody...' In the present case, the Momrey character hovers between being a physical entity and a means of bringing some reality to a conceptual argument, that of the author-

that worries you, is but your own knowledge displaced as an echo that's not subject to the puppeteer who orchestrates you from your otherwise stiff position. You have me free of the puppeteer, and because of that I embody elements of your desire; not that you desire so much as have free-roaming bits and pieces – back to the enigma – that gel with you now and again, or even often, that are your drivers. As I say, I'm in the region of the possible, and am driven from there by salient objects into which you key, for one unconscious reason or another – although at the end of the day there's an aggregate. Indeed, I even got here by such means; by your desire. But let's leave the question of desire at that.⁴⁸ To inquire further would be too regressive. Look at what you call me, anyway: *mum* and *memory* should indicate enough.'

'Well, yes, put like that; it's embarrassing, albeit for the fact that we're all of us driven, one way or another; the entire class of us!'

'Ha, I appreciate the fact, in that case, that you don't include me! I'm coming home, as it were, as I now move to exactly why you can't, at least easily, include me. You like the metaphor of swelling out. Below and diagonal to you, is from whence I swell. I'm at my most embracing of the enterprise through my contingency,⁴⁹ in the latter's ad hoc occurrences and in its momentum through time, and there's nobody pulling strings to perform the contingent; just you, from time to time, if and as you notice them. I'm a free

artist's position in his practice as subject, when the argument borrows from one of Lacan's mathematical formalizations.

⁴⁸ Lacan (1999, p.19) refers to the influence of the mother – suggesting that this is a familiar assertion of psychoanalytic theory – in terms of '...the infernal business of her desire and everything that follows from it' – which may indicate the basic source of one's originary desire.

⁴⁹ Tomšič (2012, p.132, citing Malabou), refers to two *types* of contingency; '..."occurential contingency", which is the most common and spontaneous understanding of contingency...' and '..."gradual contingency"', where 'Thought adapts to the world without noticing the changes taking place behind its back, thereby overlooking contingency as such'. The latter idea may suggest that the effects of contingency are generative in ways to which one can only react after whatever has been the contingent event.

agent, not part of any class, no matter how much I may confer with similar spirits around about. In a passive sense, I desire you to take me like no other; in your hidebound sense you require to take me merely to strike me off your bucket-list, as it were, and so we cajole in our diagonal dynamic. The contingent is an incredible phenomenon, in how it morphs with objects. Recall your noticing by chance the wart on the back of your hand at the moment you were illustrating Lacan's object *a* as a charged point projecting from the observed object – not just any old object for this to happen, of course – to the gaze, oscillating midway with, to an extent therefore *as*, the image. You looked down towards your materials, and there, momentarily blocking what you required, the wart seemed to flutter from its position on your hand to lock in exactly at the point you'd determined on your drawing. This is me. The otherness of what you imagine is my flesh enables you to find some gratification on your own, charged by a considerable degree of thinking and theory.'

'Ha, yes, you've hit on something there! How does one work with this embroiling of the intellectual with the intuitive; the latter, that is, as runs very deep? I remember perfectly the incident you describe, although the problem is, as is the nature of the contingent and the object-elements that it sometimes highlights, that it continues interminable, *flitting*, as you incongruously refer to the wart, from one thing, event, time and place to another. I'm not a *wart* painter, and neither do I cling to any sort of style. The kind of object materiality to which you're referring interacts seamlessly with one's psychic and sentient life, and imbues movement and flux with one's brute corporeal being – and somehow anyway, for me, one's hand as a motif has the potential to mimic immaterial speed.'⁵⁰

⁵⁰ Lacan (2018, p.160) states that '...the object *a* will just slip through your paws in two shakes of a lamb's tail'; that "It is somewhere else from one instant to the next"; and that where the object *a* is situated is '...beyond meaning, beyond the meaning that also means that I can obtain no other effect than anxiety'. If it is acknowledged internally that anxiety is the emotional *affect* as well as effect of the incessant repetition of the real, via object/s *a*, then, as Lacan (ibid, p.160) continues, 'It is in this respect that we are concerned for this real to be anchored'.

'It's a constellation, you see;⁵¹ contingent incidents replete with their objects, within contingent spans, swelled out by the sense you have of me, as an infinitely more variable phenomenon than you, yourself, can ever be!'

'Okay, so I'm coming to meet you half way, in that sense, through knowledge.'

'Yes, but there's a conflation of motives ahead of you. You hunger to know what you're doing, to obtain meaning, yet precisely from both the region, and the object or event at any one time, of the enigma that propels you. The enigma in that sense states to you that what you assume as an external guiding influence, that's paradoxically also internal to what you do, either doesn't exist or exists in its very lack, and it does not, either, function as telling you this. You can only gain an indication of this inevitability from your reading, so you're gradually learning not to expect meaning from an activity that's redolent with words and images that hold only half the promise, but without their own conceptualisation except when you can impose on them, from without, from such reading.'

'And you?'

'Me? I don't go there! I advise you from a safe distance, as it were, veering off at any decidability about this. It's at the point of the undecidable that you and I interact and at which I part

⁵¹ The idea of light as what is viewable as a *constellation*, and the visual sense with understanding, links with how Lacan (1997, pp.67-119) theorises the object *a* in his section on vision and the gaze in his Seminar XI, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*. Firstly, Lacan (ibid, p.96) considers the psychic dimension of the gaze more in terms of a 'screen' that may be considered a play of light that obfuscates the clarity of the image within one's gaze, and of this dimension: 'that which is gaze is always a play of light and opacity.... ...the point of gaze always participates in the ambiguity of the jewel'. Lacan (ibid, p.94) refers to this 'point' as 'the point of irradiation, the play of light, fire, the sources from which reflections pour forth'.

ways. There is *some* interaction – I can't say that I don't brush against the enigma – but I largely avoid that whole inscrutable domain that you so need to challenge, even as you're inevitably, infernally, thwarted by it, and cross over that diagonal dynamic between you in your *hidebound*, assuming there's some sort of force in your vicinity that you'd like, yourself, to be – nay, love yourself to be! – but cannot access, and me in all my playfulness of possibility. The enigma permeates, and contingency swells, and where they cross over there's a hole of irreconcilability: it's where you think that it's enough to procrastinate in research and go for your encounter with the Real.⁵² It's never a smooth movement, this leaving go of me and going for broke, and while you're left in tatters after every attempt, the concluded work, concluded as much as anything because of let go, is up there for and as itself. It's not as if the work as a manifestation of the Real, in all its artifice, even answers for itself: that's for you to construct, not even extract, from your position as your class. And so, the cycle begins again. I merely lie in wait at the region of all that in theory is once again possible.' (Figure 4)

⁵² Lacan (1998, p.112) refers to something other to the '*trompe-l'oeil*' of a painting's appearance, and that 'This other thing is the *petit-a*, around which there resolves a combat of which *trompe-l'oeil* is the soul'. Then Lacan (ibid, p.112) states: '...it is always a question of the *objet a*, or rather a question of reducing it.... to an *a* with which... it is the painter as creator who sets up a dialogue'.



Figure 4: The diagram, fourth state, showing Lacan's logical square, colour-coded green, mapped with Lacan's generic structure of his Four Discourses, colour-coded black, Lacan's Hysteric's Discourse colour-coded blue, and the coming into the square from the mid-left. Dermatograph pencils, coffee stain, ink stains and crayon on corroded handmade paper, 76 x 52cm, 2023

Intervention 8

Figure 4 as finished, presents itself as a false alarm. The bothersome aspects are where at this stage the top-right area is not flat – when the Real, insofar as what is there approaches a representation, should give as little away at all. Then the white, which is crayon, gives too much form to the lower-right corner, the region of contingency. I suppose it may be argued that what is there is in itself contingent because it is behaving differently from intended, but in any case, the awkward questions have been enough to merit trying again. This is with a certain proviso that the more a diagram pictorializes, the more likely it is to obscure its capacity to convey information. While courting the danger of a need to theorize, I would

suggest that the diagram pushes towards an initial inscrutability where one at first realizes *diagram* before or unless it projects a capacity to communicate. Can there even be such a thing as a non-communicative diagram? (Figure 5)



Figure 4: The diagram, fifth state, showing Lacan's logical square, reworked to re-emphasize mapped aspects of Lacan's Hysteric's Discourse, with additional hand-written explanation. Dermatograph pencils, coffee stain, ink stains and crayon on corroded handmade paper, 76 x 52cm, 2023

Intervention 9

What's not being factored in is that the diagram supports and is in turn drawn out of the present text. It's an illustration that certainly wouldn't make much sense if seen divorced of this relationship, whether on first reaction or after reading its content. Unless the impossibility suggested by the top-right corner does ultimately contradict all attempts to make sense of a situation. In Lacan's logical square the top-right corner is, as stated, **impossible**, shed as an impossibility

across anything that's expected to make sense. What's interesting, perhaps, that can just be noticed on the diagram, is that primarily my contribution as part of the author-artist as his own subject, representing the research aspect of his practice, brushes with the Real, as though I catch it, or more precisely it catches me, and the inexplicable becomes part of the operation; not quite the consequence at this stage, but at least part of the operation. Of course, continue the cycle around and the conclusions or possibilities drawn from the questions asked by the top-left corner, of the top-right corner, become part again of the starting possibilities, so the Real is, paradoxically, in its having been brushed, a bit generative. Where my contribution goes, if it stops midway between lower-right and top-right as **undecidable**, is across to **contradiction**, midway on the horizontal axis, which intervenes precisely between the existential questions asked at the top-left corner and their reconstitution, lower-left corner, as starting possibilities. Coming in again with possibilities as object/s a; this is where even as semblance, the Real may be a bit operative.

Closing Comment

As early as in the text's Foreword, it is inferred that there is considerable imbalance between the experimental character of the writing and its academic intent. The text has, in effect, three plus one voices; the author-artist, the fictional character Momrey, the footnotes, and a mute presence that is apparent in the Foreword, the fifth, fourth and sixth interventions, and the present Closing Comment. (This is not forgetting that in Momrey's view, the author-artist and he are conjoined, and the artwork is a second voice, but while he may be privy to how the author-artist considers his artwork as artifice, he is not able to see the entire scenario, of which he is a fictional part, as a language-based artefactual product.) If the text is successful, such voices will have been melded together by the

above-termed *mute presence*, as near as possible the text itself, which is interesting in comparison to the diagram of the logical square that is re-presented in unique terms in four states. Lacan's Hysteric's Discourse is, as previously referenced, the discourse of most people, or representatives such as institutions and organisations. The author-artist is therefore no less positioned in the Hysteric's Discourse that is mapped with the logical square. The character Momrey is attributed different awareness to that of the author-artist's characterisation, while conveyed as the latter's own strategy. In terms of how each of these entities precisely inhabits the logical square, Momrey argues for his position as artistic research while the author-artist occupies the most directional position of the Hysteric's Discourse, as agent. From this position the author-artist simultaneously looks on from **necessary**, the position most likely to represent the Symbolic, of Lacan's three psychic structural registers, armed sufficiently with language to attempt to unravel the enigma of the finished work in its position in and as the Real. The movement of Momrey counter-clockwise and the author-artist's enquiry clockwise results in an oscillation in the middle of the square, held in a kind of dynamic stasis by two opposite diagonal trajectories. Ultimately, the top-right corner of the logical square rules, its negation of relationship permeating both movements, even while Momrey claims that he, representing artistic research, avoids such controversy. Momrey's embroilment is to some extent inevitable, however, on any next-new beginning of the cycle, since he enters the cycle in the region the author-artist's surplus *jouissance*, which is what remains unaccounted for by the author-artist's knowledge-based scrutiny of any finished artwork. Momrey mainly represents contingency, which is what the author-artist feeds off, due both to its ad hoc basis and its less noticeable shadowing of one through time.

Of the diagonals of the square, that of top-left/lower-right of the logical square is strongly suggested by Lacan in his Seminar XIX as a dynamic that is charged by its very lack of connection, due to each enterprise having different motives. (This concerns the lack of sexual relationship, which Lacan himself is arguing by means of the logical square.) Of the mapped Hysteric's Discourse – with the author-artist substituting for the hysteric – a possible link between lower-left and top-right is suggested from how the region of the Real finds elements of itself in the surplus *jouissance*, or a, which is the

region where the research basis of the artistic cycle re-begins at **possible**, personified by the character Momrey. While on one occasion Momrey associates himself with bits and pieces of the Real, the hysteric's cycle ends in the same region, with a surplus, what may be considered a psychic level of enjoyment unabsorbed by and as knowledge in the lower-right corner.

While the footnotes are their own voice in the text, the latter's basis as creative writing has been challenged every time there has been reference to an academic source. While it may be argued that the author-artist has in this respect still very much been subject to the master-signifier, the big Other speaking through language as the subject-supposed-to-know,⁵³ this is diminished by the textual voice termed mute presence. Despite the folding out from the text's directing mute presence into two textual characters and a pictorial diagram, it is ultimately only this presence that is subject to the master-signifier, the latter speaking in unconscious ways through and as the self-same text. Otherwise, the text both considers and *is* an argument that works creatively with Lacan's logical square, supplemented by his Four Discourses matheme. The text displays some comprehension of the nature of the problem of *artist*, no matter what their practice, as their work's own internal subject, and how they are hidebound – to repeat a term applied by Momrey to the text's referenced author-artist – by this assumed status of knowledge.

A second motivation that, in a sense, eclipses the first, has been the adaptation of the two formalizations of Lacan in terms of a uniquely realised pictorial diagram that itself moves towards the proposed position of finished artwork in the Real, top-right corner of the logical square. The argument that has developed as the text and has led to the formulation of the diagram through four states, has at the same time been the critical scrutiny that the text argues is the artist's position taken towards the work once it has been completed. While Momrey, representing artistic research, considers that his work is done by the time he reaches **undecidable**, middle-right-side of the logical square, it may

⁵³ In Lacan's (1998, p.235) theory, the 'subject supposed to know' and the big Other are close in meaning. In the analytical situation, the analyst is the one who the analysand assumes is able to steer the way to the secret of their desire. For as long as this assumption is in place, where 'Man's desire is the desire of the Other'.

be considered that the argument of the text and the diagram that it has generated pushes the diagram somewhat further on from being a mere stage-post in a research-based process.

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