Let us not forget psychoanalysis. The forgetting of psychoanalysis could not be one forgetting among others and cannot fail to produce symptoms.

Derrida, "Let Us Not Forget"¹

First, then, we must comprehend what sort of things are objects of memory; for mistakes are frequent on this point.

Aristotle, "Of Memory and Recollection"²

I have carefully avoided any contact with philosophy.

Freud, "An Autobiographical Study" (20:59)

The thread of memory can guide us through the labyrinth of Lacan’s categories, the imaginary, symbolic and real—but not without difficulties, which we may as well confront in order to clarify a few technical details along the way: above all the twist that leads from the "Rome Discourse" to Seminar XI, from the Other to the object, along the path of the transference.³

The Silence of the Gestalt

A first approach to memory might be sought in the imaginary: setting out from the image or sensory impression, one might be led to conceive of
memory as the faculty that recollects an image or perception after it has passed away. Following this line of thought, both perception and memory (phenomena of "consciousness"?) would belong to the imaginary, the former taking in an image or impression in the immediacy of the present, the latter recalling it after the fact, the difference between the two residing in a temporal factor. A link is thereby established not only between the image and time but also between the body and the mind, the sensory apparatus and the mental faculties.

There are good historical precedents for such an analysis. As Aristotle says in his treatise on memory, "only those living beings who are conscious of time can be said to remember" (449b28–30). Which living beings, one might ask, are "conscious of time"? Are we to place memory somewhere along a hierarchy of living beings, a natural order in which time might also be located? "Time" here refers particularly to past time, for Aristotle points out that one does not, properly speaking, "remember" the present or the future. In this way a series of distinctions is quickly established between the three ecstases of time, each with its respective faculty (of body or mind?): "sensation refers to what is present, expectation to what is future, and memory to what is past" (449b27–28, emphasis added). Through memory, then, the past and present would be connected in that a sensation, once it has passed away, can be recalled in the mind. As for the future: "It is impossible," Aristotle remarks, "to remember the future, which is an object of conjecture or expectation" (449b10–11). The science of memory would thus be confined to the past and the present (like our discipline of history, that reconstruction in the present of what once was). And yet Aristotle adds parenthetically: "(there might even be a science of expectation as some say there is of divination)" (449b12, emphasis added). A curious remark for the philosopher dedicated to "science" (especially biology), Aristotle's observation recalls Lacan's statement in the "Rome Discourse" that psychoanalysis is part of a "movement that is now establishing a new order of the sciences" (E, 72), the principal feature of which is the distinction it makes between "exact sciences," natural sciences modeled on the experiment and bound to clock-time, and what Lacan calls "conjectural sciences," which confront "the intersubjective time that structures human action" (E, 73–75; see also SXI, 43). As an action or praxis which bears on human time, then, psychoanalytic memory cannot ignore the dimension of the future:

The point is that for Freud it is not a question of biological memory, nor of its intuitionist mystification . . . but a question of recollection, that is, of history, balancing the scales, in which conjectures about the past are balanced against promises of the future (E, 48).

Thus, although memory, strictly speaking, joins the present and the past, the question of the future cannot be left aside, since memory entails a reflection