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We're All **Mad** HERE

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Introduction

David Ferraro, Noriaki Sato, Jonathan Redmond

The editors of *PsychoanalysisLacan* is delighted to present the latest edition of the journal, this being volume 6. Many of the papers in this volume have arisen from a conference held by the Lacan Circle of Australia in November 2022, on the theme of “We’re all mad here”. The guest of honour and keynote speaker was Jorge Assef, whose two papers from the conference on the theme of the Pass and its logic, as these relate to his own analysis and praxis, are central to this volume.

It remains an open question as to when an analysis is complete. Lacan’s introduction of the Pass into analytic discourse responds to this question: the Pass aims to formalise both the conditions underlying the end of analysis and the passage from the analysand to the formation of the analyst. Analysands electing to undergo the Pass testify to the School about the how their analysis ended, how this ending was constitutive of their analytic formation and the possibility of generating new knowledge to analytic discourse based on the singular experience of analysis. And while there has recently been debate in the WAP concerning the status of the Pass in the School there can be little doubt that the Pass is one of Lacan’s enduring and significant contribution to analytic discourse and remains a significant feature of the WAP and the work of the School. It is with great pleasure then, that we announce Assef’s contribution to this difficult topic. He shares, with precision, sensitivity and magnanimity, those fragments of his analysis which, in all their singularity, can nonethe-

less speak to a broader audience, concerning the Pass. We cannot understate the value of such a contribution. This theme is augmented in the present volume by thoughtful contributions on the same theme by Russell Grigg, Jonathan Redmond, and Daniel Roy.

The remaining papers address the theme of madness in its various aspects and from perspectives that are both global and local (from Australia). Among them, readers will find detailed engagement via Lacanian psychoanalysis with literary figures (such as Joyce), philosophical thinkers (such as Badiou, and Kierkegaard), a fictional assemblage, and other papers addressing, with clarity and urgency, the clinical problems facing analysts today.

This volume has been several months in the making, and we editors wish to thank all who submitted their works for consideration, even if those particular works were not, ultimately, included for publication. Many others are deserving of recognition and gratitude. These include Eugénie Austin and Ellen Smith, who played the key roles in organising the 2022 conference which is the inspiration for the volume; translators Russell Grigg and Mia Lalanne for their work in deftly bringing the words of Eric Laurent and Daniel Roy to an Anglophone audience; Dominique Hecq for her generous reflections on submissions that have greatly assisted in the editorial process, and finally, thanks to Hanieh Moradi, for her excellent work on the presentation of the current volume of *PsychoanalysisLacan*.

**The Pass and
the Ends of Analysis**

The Madness of Each One

Jorge Assef

Abstract

In 1978 Jacques Lacan wrote "...everyone is mad, that is, delusional".¹ Returning to that aphorism precisely in the era of depathologisation is an invitation to dive into what we know as "Lacan's last teaching" and at the same time reaffirm the subversive character of psychoanalysis.

On the one hand, psychoanalysis, like Alice's Cheshire Cat, does not burden the notion of madness with a disability prejudice or a negative value.² On the other hand, unlike that Cat, psychoanalysis is not enough to recognize that we are all mad, but it is interested in exploring and locating in pragmatic terms the madness of each one of us, in order to draw consequences from there. Thus, what Lacan stated at the end of the 1960's "do not expect anything more subversive than the very fact of not pretending to give you the solution", has a new version at the end of the 1970s.³ This new version, presented through the clinic of the knots and its continuist perspective, teaches us that although an analysis can solve some aspects of patients' suffering by bringing about changes in their lives, there are also those aspects that are resis-

tant to change. This new version of the clinic produces unique responses to well know questions: how far to take the experience of an analysis?; What function will interpretation have?; What does the analyst do with that which does not change and is this about the failure of psychoanalysis or is it about its maximum potential? We shall see...

I. A compass for the last teaching

I will return to what I stated yesterday at the beginning of my intervention. In 1978 Jacques Lacan wrote "...everyone is mad, that is, delusional."⁴ Thirty years later Jacques-Alain Miller begins his Seminar talking about "the times we are living in", that is, the actuality of our times, what we call "the subjectivity of the times"; he begins and ends the seminar dedicating several classes to a brief Lacan's text to highlight a sentence we found there: "everyone is mad, that is, delusional".

Miller states "I considered the phrase...everyone is mad, that is, delusional" as a sort of condensation of Lacan's last teaching⁵, he also says that this phrase

1 Lacan, J., ¡Lacan por Vincennes! (1978). Revista Lacaniana de psicoanálisis #11, p.11. Grama, B. As. 2011.

2 "Oh, you can't help that," said the Cat: "We're all mad here. I'm mad. You're mad". Alice's Adventures in Wonderland <http://www.open-bks.com/alice-71-72.html>.

3 Lacan, J., El Seminario, libro XVII: El reverso del psicoanálisis (1969-70). p.74. Paidós, Bs. As., 1992.

4 Lacan, J., ¡Lacan por Vincennes! (1978). Revista Lacaniana de psicoanálisis #11, p.11. Grama, B. As. 2011.

5 Miller, J.-A., Todo el mundo es Loco, p.308.

is a "compass". I know that you have at your disposal in English the text of Lacan we talked about published under the title "There are Four Discourses", and you also have the last two classes of Miller's seminar "Everyone is mad", all this material is in the journal *Culture/Clinic. Applied Lacanian Psychoanalysis 1*, which is part of the bibliography for this meeting, so I think you will be able to follow me easily in this first part that I want to develop.

Well, I was commenting that at the beginning of his seminar Miller starts talking about the subjective conditions of our time and I suppose that this is a topic known to you - the question of the fall of the Big Other, and its semblances: authority, law, religion, ideals, etc., all these figures are finally declinations of what we know in psychoanalysis as the Father, and its symbolic function, that which we call the Name-of-the-Father. The interesting thing is that Miller begins the seminar talking precisely about this question of the epoch, saying that in the face of the changes of the epoch, psychoanalysts must place themselves in the eye of the typhoon, He states:

when you try to unleash a typhoon, you have to be located in the eye. Very calm, very serene. Something that is difficult when one is constantly pushed in all directions...What is called the position of the analyst implies being in the eye.

Miller wants to take up what Lacan said about the analyst; that an analyst should be at the level of his time, that is to say, be sensitive to his own time, understand it, let himself be touched by his own time, but without being fascinated, because our main function is to know how to interpret and in order to interpret we cannot be fascinated by anything. That is to say, just as we could not interpret a patient if we are fascinated by him, neither can we analyze our time if we are fascinated by its phenomena. But fascination, like transference, can be positive or negative.

Miller locates negative fascination, precisely in this first class of his seminar, and says that it is amusing to see some psychoanalyst's nostalgia for the past shouting, "Where are you Name-of-the-Father? I am looking for you!" This is not the position of the Lacanian Orientation. Thanks to Jacques-Alain Miller we were able to recognize some time ago that we are in an era where it is becoming more and more evident that the Other does not exist. Consequently,

we need to practice from the position that the Other does not exist: we cannot go against that.

In this seminar, Miller puts this position into action. He begins by placing this question as a starting point, and from there he will demonstrate, as the chapters progress, that Lacan, throughout his teaching, made the same movement as the epoch. His first teaching, the classical one, consisted of a theoretical structure that is based on a consistent big Other, therefore the Name-of-the-Father was at the center. Lacan in his last teaching focuses on the lack in the Other, in the non-existence of the Other, and therefore reformulates the notion of the Name-of-the-Father - we say that he pluralizes it - because it is no longer about a figure that has to operate from the place of the father. Rather, the subject finds something that operates for him like the Name-of-the-Father - and this can be multiple and contingent.

In Lacan's classical teaching, the Name-of-the-Father was the organiser that defined the diagnosis and decided the direction of the treatment. However, as Lacan advances in his exploration, he relativizes the importance of this operator, until he reaches Joyce and proposes a clinic in which what is central is not the presence or absence of the Name-of-the-Father but the modes of subjective functioning. How a subject like Joyce manages to function in the world by using a substitute for an absent Name-of-the-Father. In this way Lacan's teaching is updated even before his own time, leaving us tools to think a clinic that is at the height of our present time. It is this question that we are interested in working with you, the way in which this phrase "everyone is mad" is a compass to orient us in Lacan's last teaching and therefore a compass to think our current clinical practice today. For this, we need to differentiate this phrase "everyone is mad" from the field of psychosis.

In the case of psychosis Miller says there is the real of mental illness; however the phrase we are referring to refers to a delusional belief. In the context in which Lacan says the phrase "everyone is mad", madness means delusional belief, not psychosis. Incidentally, in the middle of the seminar Miller travels to Canada, and upon his return he comments on an experience about a treatment center for psychotic patients.

Miller relates that experience explaining that the type of practice that takes place in that center feeds the delirium of the psychotic subject and he explains

that the Lacanian Orientation operates exactly the other way around:

when we evoke delirium in psychosis, it is more with the idea of extinguishing it and not of nourishing it...we start from the idea that there is an original experience in these cases, an experience of perplexity in front of a sign...this rare experience that in general can be located, that must be isolated, becomes a signifier with the addition of another signifier that will be the real signifier of delirium...It seems to me that from this clinical point of view, when delirium is understood at this level, we can be satisfied with the definition Lacan gave...delirium is a screen...That is why we try...to accommodate the delirium but never to nourish it.⁶

Miller's experience in that Canadian clinic locates the fundamental issue: the phrase "everyone is mad" does not mean that everyone is psychotic. Psychosis as such has a real, which I could call here "fragility in its knotting". And this has very important practical implications. We have to know that if we take the treatment of a psychotic subject too far we can destabilize him; that is, if we shake his certitudes we can cause damage and if we act out erotomanic impulses in the transference we can ruin the treatment, etc. So, the sentence "everyone is mad" has to be understood in its context, which includes the second part of the sentence: "everyone is mad, that is, delusional" this "that is, delusional" is the key to the matter. I will not elaborate much on the question of delusion, I have seen in the program several papers that will surely refer to it, especially Russell Grigg's "A general Theory of delusion". I am sure that Russell will teach us a lot on the subject.

The important thing is to point out that the phrase "that is, delusional" must be understood with precision. You know that in Lacan's classical teaching, delirium is a construction that the psychotic person carries out, a substitution of the meaning that has been foreclosed; this delusional construction saves the psychotic subject from sinking into perplexity, from being absorbed by the hole of the real, delirium allows him to work in the world, perhaps in a strange way, but it allows him to make links with others.

However, in Lacan's seminar, the moment of Joyce and subjective knotting goes beyond the presence or absence of the signifier of the Name of the Father central to the classical period.

At this point in his teaching what is clear for Lacan is that subjectivity is constructed around a hole that exists in all beings that we speak of, this hole is named in different ways: "Communication does not exist", "the woman does not exist", "there is no sexual relation", etc. The real for Lacan at this point in his teaching is this "non-existence"; it is an ultimate limit for language, an impossibility of meaning, of saying, of naming. It is on the bottom of this hole that the subject has to construct an imaginary-symbolic apparatus that conveys the jouissance of the body, that creates systems of circulation of jouissance.

For example, in the case of neurosis we have the fundamental fantasy that functions to link the three registers: the symbolic, imaginary and real and respond to a question that never has an exact answer: "What am I for the Other?" and, "What does the other want from me?" In the absence of a clear answer, the subject responds with his fundamental fantasy. The subject who constructs his life around a fundamental fantasy of rejection, for example, "I am a problem for the Other", lives a life based on a construction that has been determined by different contingencies of his history, by the interpretations that he himself made of those contingencies, of the remains of his family novel, of the marks that remained from different experiences of jouissance. All of this finally fixes a way of jouissance through that fundamental phantasy. The truth is that this construction is no less mad than any delirium. I say mad and not psychotic. I mean that it is a delirious construction in the sense that the fundamental fantasy does not have a biological location in the brain, it is not in the DNA, it is not produced by a chemical phenomenon, but it is a symbolic construction that fills a void, determining a life as if it were an absolute truth, a destiny. We saw examples of it yesterday when we talked about the end of analysis.⁷

The treatment of neurosis leads the subject to discover the contingency of his subjective constructions and the crossing of the fundamental fantasy when the end of the analysis is approaching. It is about that moment in which the analysand subjectifies that what he had based his relationship with the

⁶ Miller, J.-A., *Todo el mundo es Loco*, p.307-308.

⁷ See "The pass and the end of analysis" in this volume of *Psychoanalysis Lacan*.

world on was not an invariable destiny, it was not an absolute truth, but a construction of his own, unconsciously fixed and sustained in a circuit of repetition that allowed him to extract a satisfaction, even if it was in suffering.

As you can see, by referring to the fundamental fantasy we are moving from the field of psychosis to the field of neurosis. When the subject can encounter his own delirium and see how it had been constructed, and understand its contingent and fictional character, it is only then that the neurotic subject can go beyond that which had locked him up in a madness fabricated by himself, it is only then that the subject can do something different with his own madness.

All this process implies a process: first there is a construction process of what we call the "transferential unconscious" so that at the end the subject can go through this construction and experience something of what we call the "real unconscious". It is precisely these questions that I want to talk about now, because if the phrase "everyone is mad, that is, delusional" is the compass of Lacan's last teaching, then the whole clinical practice that emerges from this teaching comes into play - the way of thinking the analytical session changes, the type of interpretation changes, the idea of the end of analysis also changes. I worked on these issues a few years ago in Toronto. I am going to take up again in my presentation today some of the ideas that I started to investigate at that time:

1. I develop the theoretical question that guides the clinical practice of the last teaching; that is, the difference between two categories of the unconscious in Lacan: the transferential unconscious and the real unconscious;
2. I discuss how the real unconscious leads Lacan to search for a new perspective to move beyond classical psychoanalytical interpretation;
3. Finally, I elaborate the importance of time in any analytical experience from a viewpoint that Jacques-Alain-Miller called "the three moments of an analysis."

II. The Lacanian unconscious is a construction in transference.

a. The transferential unconscious

Lacan starts "The mistaking of the subject supposed to know" (19-67) by asking himself "What is the unconscious?" Five pages later, he answers that:

all that is of the unconscious only plays on the effects of language. It is something that is said, without the subject representing himself nor saying himself in it, nor knowing what he says. Then Lacan adds: The order of indetermination constituted by the relation of the subject to a knowledge passing beyond him / results, one can say, from our practice, which implies it, insofar as it is interpretive.⁸

So, Lacan explains that the unconscious unfolds in the field of language, but that it exists because it is constructed thanks to our interpretative practice. We call this version of the unconscious the transferential unconscious, not only because an analyst is needed for it to be constituted – as it is the analyst who does the interpreting – but also the Other, that who structures language. That is the Other who is a guarantor of what is said, because, eventually, that's where what is said refers us to. That's why Miller says that the transferential unconscious and the Name-of-the-Father go hand in hand.⁹ As we can see, transference and interpretation articulate with each other to found the transferential unconscious, which will be the territory where analysis takes place.

Now, although Lacan starts the text above with the question "What is the unconscious?", Miller states that what truly guides Lacan in his work is the question "What is the real?". There's nothing more natural than that question to a psychoanalyst; Miller states "What is real in the end, in the dimension of words, in everything that analysis carries: stories, anecdotes, lamentations, reproaches, approximations, vows, lies, regrets, sighs, words... what is there in all that, in the end, what is real?"¹⁰ Well, until Seminar VI the real was the symbolic: It is the symbolic because what Lacan called the real at that time was excluded from analysis and, therefore, what he isolated as the real in the cure, in the subject, is the symbolic nucleus.¹¹ It is in Seminar 7 that the real begins to take shape far from the symbolic and the imaginary.

8 Lacan, J., *Otros Escritos*, p.354. Paidós, Buenos Aires, 2013.

9 Miller, J.-A., *El ultimísimo Lacan*, p.102. Paidós. Bs. As. 2012.

10 Miller, J.-A., *El Ser y el Uno*, Class of 01/19//11. Unpublished

11 Miller, J.-A., *El Ser y el Uno*, class of 01/19//11. Unpublished

In his seminar *The Being and the One*, Miller develops how, thanks to Hegel, Lacan was able to arrive at a structured real, that of his early teaching, that of the structured unconscious as a language, but – Miller says “that makes no Lacanian sense, unless it is understood that the unconscious is real. Then Lacan kept the real unconscious to himself – Miller adds – and only put it in writing in his last text...his “Preface to the English Language Edition of Seminar XI”. Let’s see what Lacan says.

b. The Real Unconscious

When *l’esp du laps*...the space of a lapsus no longer carries any meaning (or interpretation), then only is one sure that one is in the unconscious. One knows. But one has only to be aware of the fact to find oneself outside it. There is no friendship there, in that space, that supports this unconscious. All I can do is tell the truth. No, that isn’t so – I have missed it. There is no truth that, in passing through awareness, does not lie. But one runs after it all the same.¹²

This is then the real unconscious which, as Miller states, ...makes a hole in Lacan’s teaching¹³ because it is against the notion of language, but it responds to a clinical evidence, and that’s the one we learn in analyses that last until their conclusion; the evidence is that there is a limit to language, and access to it can only be gained after going through the transferential unconscious. So, our first conclusion is that both constructions – the transferential and the real unconscious – need interpretation, transference, and time in order for them to occur. I will now specify some fundamental questions about interpretation and time in analysis.

c. Lacanian interpretation.

In the text I mentioned above, “The Mistaking of the Subject Supposed to Know”, after Lacan labels psychoanalytic practice as interpretive, he adds a criticism to the way in which psychoanalysts sometimes use interpretation. He says:

interpretation gives every satisfaction...Above all to the psychoanalyst who deploys in it the beatific moralism...Which is to say the one who covers himself up by only acting in any case for the good...Thus the stones where his patient

stumbles are no more than the cobbles of his good intentions.

With these remarks, Lacan warns us that the psychoanalytic interpretation – at least in Lacanian psychoanalysis – has nothing to do with analysts who know about the unconscious of their patients before the unconscious is constructed in transference. That’s why Miller says, in his conference “So Shhh!,” that many times analytic theories of interpretation only bear witness to the narcissism of analysts. When analysts think they know and interpret from that place, what they do is explain, and they usually do it thinking that it will “help” their patients, because they believe they know what their patients should know, and as they believe they know before their patients, they tell them, they inform them, they explain. That’s why Lacan states “the stones where his patient stumbles are no more than the cobbles of his good intentions.”

Lacanian interpretation does not concern itself with the good of patients. It is not an explanation, an unveiling, an indication; nor does it look for the meaning or the repressed story. What Lacanian interpretation seeks is, on the one hand, to allow the subject to elucidate his or her relationship with *jouissance* and, on the other, to move that relationship. In that respect, Lacan states the following in *Talking to Brick Walls* (19-71):

There is not a single analytic interpretation which does not exist to give to some proposition that is encountered its relation to a *jouissance*, to what does psychoanalysis mean? That it is speech that assures the dimension of truth to this relation of *jouissance*. And again it remains no less assured that it cannot in any way say it completely. It can only, as I put it, half-say this relation, and forge a semblance of it.¹⁴

These words explain how the analytic interpretation touches something of the construction insofar as it forges a representation around the relationship of the subject with *jouissance*, but such invention is the second part of interpretation, which the patient is in charge of. Certainly, it would not be possible without the analyst’s action in the first part. Let me add an

12 Lacan, J., *Otros Escritos*, p.599. Paidós. Bs. As. 2012

13 Miller, J.-A., *El ultimísimo Lacan*, p.95. Paidós. Bs. As. 2012.

14 Lacan, J., *Hablo a las Paredes*, p.72

aside here to make it clear that —from a psychoanalytic standpoint—, construction and interpretation are different. Interpretation aims at a definite point, breaks the S1-S2 relationship, opens a door to meaninglessness, etc., while construction brings together, articulates S1-S2, producing a simulation of meaning just where we need the structure to understand the logic of the case. Now, there are different versions about what interpretation is throughout Lacan's work. I will take those in his late teaching, beginning with Seminar XVII, which is not strictly part of his late teaching, but which provides an indication of it.

In Seminar XVII, Lacan presented the structure of interpretation as knowledge – that is, knowledge as truth – and, as such, it can only be half-said. So, he proposed two sides of the half-said: the riddle and the quotation:

A riddle picked out, as far as possible, in the texture of the psychoanalyst's discourse, and that you, the interpreter, can in no way complete by yourself...A quotation, on the other hand, sometimes taken in the same text, a particular statement. This can be taken as a confession, if only you connect it up to the whole context. But here in this case you are appealing to whoever is its author.¹⁵

Lacan also notes the structure of the half-said in another figure, the oracle, and in 1973 he states “the oracle that it neither reveals nor hides...it makes a sign”¹⁶. In this regard, Miller says:

The oracle, as a way of saying, consists, above all, in giving no explanations. Explaining is unfolding and the oracle is something folded...That constitutes the oracular: a new emergence producing an unprecedented effect of truth, an unprecedented effect of meaning...for that very reason unailing, since the place of its verification is empty.¹⁷

From L'etourdit onwards, the half-said is displaced by the notion of equivocation. Lacan explains that:

the unconscious, by being “structured like a language”, namely, *lalangue* that it inhabits, is subjected to the equivocation by which each is distinguished. One tongue among others is nothing more than the integral of the equivocations that its history has allowed to persist in it.¹⁸

When Lacan finally abandons the idea of the truth, he also abandons the hope that the “effects of truth” emerging from language will liberate from the symptom. Instead, he devotes his full attention to the “effects of equivocation” emerging from *lalangue* (that which exists language). That's why in his book *The Reverse of Biopolitics*, Eric Laurent states: Lacan no longer speaks of the effects of truth that liberate from the symptom, but of the effects of equivocation that operate¹⁹. This is the reason why in *L'etourdit* Lacan proposes thinking about interpretation by way of equivocation, and he says: Nothing operates therefore except from signifying equivocation.²⁰ As Miller explains, this perspective proposes an interpretation that:

is not made up of the contents, the statements, but that it is a method of saying characterized...by its ludic essence, and that it implies redirecting language – which is a regulation – to the possible games in language. In fact, its model is the funny witty remark, the witz, that witz which, according to Lacan, allows us to go through the door beyond which there's nothing else to find.²¹

But there's one more turn, in Seminar XXIII, precisely when Lacan was speaking about interpretation by way of equivocation. He added a new element and said: There must be something in the signifier that resonates. So, Lacan goes from “reason” to “resonance”, from what one thinks to what one feels in the body. That is, the body is added, and so the quotation goes on as follows: But for this speech to resonate, for it to be consonant with, to use another word of the *sinthome*...the body must be sensitive to

15 Lacan, J., “El reverso del Psicoanálisis”. *El Seminario. Libro 17*, pp. 36-38. Paidós, Bs. As.

16 Lacan, J., “Introducción a la edición alemana de un primer volumen de *Los Escritos*”, *Otros Escritos*, p.584.

17 Miller, J.-A., *Un esfuerzo de poesía*, p.23. Paidós, Bs. As., 2016.

18 Lacan, J., “El atolondradicho”, *Otros Escritos*, p.514.

19 Laurent, E., *El reverso de la biopolítica*, p.220. Grama, Bs. As., 2016.

20 Lacan, J., “El atolondradicho”, *Otros Escritos*

21 Miller, J.-A., *Un esfuerzo de poesía*, p.24. Paidós, Bs As 2016

it.²² Let's recap then. Interpretation will take different forms throughout Lacan's work: the riddle, the quotation, the oracle, the equivocation. How can we think about each in clinical practice?

In 1967, Eric Laurent consulted Lacan. In the book *Do you know Lacan?* Laurent recounts that meeting. He starts as follows:

In the preliminary interviews, I presented Lacan with all that farrago, asking him, above all, not to take me into analysis because I was too lost, too young, and too privileged compared to others who could not ask for analysis. Lacan concluded those interviews assuring me that my age and the fact that I was lost were perfect to start an analysis, and that as far as privilege was concerned, I had no idea what I was saying. He added a phrase whose harmonics still resonate, and whose multiple meanings have gradually been cleared. Today, I will transcribe it as follows: "You always end up becoming a character in the novel that is your own life. For that, analysis is not necessary. What it does is comparable to the relationship between a story and a novel. The contraction of the time allowed by the story produces stylistic effects. Psychoanalysis will allow you to discover stylistic effects that may be interesting to you."²³

We could say that here we find traces of each of the forms interpretation takes throughout Lacan's late teaching. Firstly, we find a trace of interpretation by way of equivocation. The same reasons that the analysand assumes as contraindications for his treatment are transformed by Lacan as favorable conditions to take him into analysis (Lacan took his desire to the letter, as Éric had not cancelled the appointment despite what he was saying). Hence "Lacan concluded those interviews assuring me that my age was perfect to start an analysis". Secondly, the quotation actually appears when Lacan resorts to the signifier "too privileged", but Lacan redoubles the bet by adding an enigmatic formula to the analysand's words, warning him that he has "no idea" what he is saying. Finally, the interpretation takes an oracular tone when Lacan tells him at the end, "psychoanalysis

will allow you to discover stylistic effects that may be interesting to you." But we said that this version of Lacanian interpretation expressly includes one more element: the body. I will take two examples of this matter. We find the first one in the same article where Laurent recounts his analysis:

Lacan cuts the session and walks with me to the door. His look is incredibly, theatrically bad; his mouth is open but he doesn't say a word. I told myself that I was going to be eaten raw, although I didn't have the slightest idea why. Once I was outside...I walked into a bakery without realizing it and asked for a certain kind of cake, making a welcome slip of the tongue that held me see the chain of causes that had led me to feeling like eating... cake...The following day, when I was thanking him for that psychoanalysis lesson about the ways of "making oneself be eaten." I confided to Lacan that I would like to do the same with my own patients. "Oh!"; he said as he slowly walked to the door with me, "you need a lot of experience for that".²⁴

The second example is the one that can be found in the movie *An Appointment with Lacan*, (I'm not sure whether it was shown in Australia). It's a documentary filmed by Gérard Miller where some of Lacan's patients are interviewed and where they remember their analyses. Susan Hommel, now a psychoanalyst in Paris, and one of Lacan's patients then, says:

One day, in a session, I was talking about a dream I had...I wake up at 5 o'clock every morning...At 5 o'clock the Gestapo came to get the Jews in their homes. Lacan leaped up from his chair and came to me. He gently stroked my cheek. I understood "geste a peau".

This second example is also useful to explain didactically what we mean by "interpretation by way of equivocation".

Let's remember what we mentioned earlier: Lacan explains in *L'étourdit* that, since the unconscious is "structured as a language", it is also sensitive to the effects of this, which Lacan calls "lalange"

22 Lacan, J., *El Seminario, Libro 23. El sinthome...*, p.17-18

23 Laurent, E., "Cuatro observaciones acerca de la inquietud científica..." en *Conoce usted a Lacan?*, p.37. Paidós, Barcelona, 1995.

24 Laurent, E., "Cuatro observaciones acerca de la inquietud científica..." en *Conoce usted a Lacan?*, p.41. Paidós, Barcelona, 1995.

(in French, “lalangue” all together, with no space in between, precisely to make it clear that it is the use of the language, but without its grammatical rules). Lacan says, “One tongue among others is nothing more than the integral of the equivocations that its history has allowed to persist in it²⁵. This means that there are imprecise resonances inhabiting our own correct way of speaking, that is, in what we have learned as the “right way of saying things properly” according to semantic, linguistic and grammatical rules and provisions: we encounter lalangue in the sounds we have heard, those leftovers of sense, alternate meanings that the words we know have been gaining at different times, the confusion caused by words that sound the same to the ear but that mean differently, and so on.

So, on the one hand we have the language that follows the rules of grammar and on the other we have lalangue, which is this universe of meanings and sounds that go through language and that inhabits us since the moment we are born. This, that even if it is not in our conscious level of awareness when we talk, it is always present underneath the language. These resonances are, precisely, the foundations of the art of comedy and which Freud’s book “*Jokes and their relation to the unconscious*” clearly shows. However, in the field of language, what we always have is the signifying articulation, S1-S2. This means that one signifier (S1) has meaning in association with another signifier (S2). It is the articulation of two signifiers what makes sense out of something. This is the articulation of signifiers that is being produced, what the subject learns through his or her life experiences, his or her surrounding culture and historical period. Once this articulation S1-S2 is produced, this meaning becomes unconscious and thereby automatic. It works without the subject knowing it is operating. That’s how Susan Hommel experienced the night. For her, the night was the hour of the Gestapo, and Gestapo was a reference to the horror of Nazism. When the night came, she was not aware that she was entering deep into the horror. That’s why she couldn’t sleep peacefully.

However, if the analyst’s intervention had been an explanation to the patient; if, for example, Lacan had said: “You cannot sleep peacefully because for you the night is connected to your childhood and the suffering in the horrors of Nazism” he would have only strengthened this S1-S2 bond, it would have

given it even more consistency. The Lacanian analytical interpretation, by contrast, aims at breaking this articulation. The articulation a subject has produced in his or her own use of the language and which has been engraved, affixed in him or her. Analytical interpretation seeks to separate S1 from S2 so that the subject can realize that the meaning of things is not something fixed, universal or eternal.

Analyst’s use different techniques to free a subject from a meaning that has been torturing his or her life and which they thought was the only possible one: we cut the sessions, we use the enigma, a quotation. At the end of his teachings, Lacan says that one of the best options to accomplish this is by way of equivocation. Susana Homel’s example shows formidably this interpretation by way of a homophonic equivocation. And which is the effect? Susana states “that surprise(gesture), it did not diminish the pain but it did transform it. Forty years later, when I tell you about that gesture, I can still feel it on my cheek.” Susane did not forget the horror of Nazism. It is not that, magically, the word Gestapo did not mean Nazi police any longer or that it changed its historical meaning. It means that now, after this unforgettable intervention of Lacan, every time Susane hears or pronounces the word Gestapo she does not only remember the Nazi police, but what comes to her mind also is that gesture of Lacan on her skin. In this way, the S1-S2 articulation: Gestapo-Nazi became weaker, because this S1 (Gestapo) now refers also to another S2 (caress), therefore, it does not have the same effect of meaning. That was Lacan’s purpose when developing his theory of interpretation by way of equivocation in *L’eturdit*.

To make use of lalangue, where there are no grammar rules. To use this place that can become a playground for sounds, where words can be forced, dismantled, or combined with no logic so they can produce effects, they can break the meaning produced by the rules of the language.

In his last Seminar, Miller will say that *L’Eturdit* is Lacan’s latest great text, and that it is about a theory of interpretation. In fact, later, Lacan will suggest other formulas for interpretation, such as the Chinese poetry or the jaculation, but these formulas still keep the logic of the interpretation by way of equivocation. For example, in *Seminar*

25 Lacan, J., “El atolondradicho”, *Otros Escritos*, p.514.

XXIV (April 19, 1977) Lacan gives the example of the Chinese poetic writing and says:

you will see that these forcings by which a psychoanalyst can make something else ring out, something other than sense, for sense, is what resonates with the help of the signifier; but what resonates, does not go very far, it is rather flabby. Sense deadens things, but with the help of what one can call poetic writing, you can get the dimension of what one could call analytic interpretation...Metaphor, and metonymy, have an import for interpretation only insofar as they are capable of functioning as something else. And this other thing that they function as, is indeed that by which sound and sense are closely united. It is in as much as a correct interpretation extinguishes a symptom, that the truth is specified as being poetic. It is not from the angle of articulated logic...and the first thing would be to extinguish the notion of the Beautiful. We have nothing beautiful to say. A different resonance is at stake, one founded on the witticism. A witticism is not beautiful, it depends only on an equivocation.²⁶

We see that the notion of equivocation is back again. The final purpose is to lead the subject to the limit of meaning which allows them to encounter the shortfall of language in order to capture the real. What would that be?

The encounter with the real unconscious for a fleeting moment. Let's remember how Lacan described this in his text "When l'esp du laps...the space of a lapsus no longer carries any meaning (or interpretation), then only is one sure that one is in the unconscious." That is, when we stretch the limit of the S1-S2 articulation and show its contingency, the randomness of its value, the subject can finally capture something of the real: that there is no sexual relationship, and because of that, everyone needs to invent their own way of bonding with the other.

Eric Laurent, by the way, in his conference during the Congress of the World Association of Psychoanalysis in Barcelona, 2018, states that Lacan places in *Seminar XXII* the effectiveness of interpre-

tation by way of the jaculation. Laurent says: what in *Seminar XXII* is called jaculation, this that indicates a real effect of meaning, becomes the "new signifier" in *Seminar XXIV*.²⁷ And Miller referring to this explains "When we call a new signifier as new, we are, in fact, referring to a signifier that may have a different use...a signifier that might be new, not just because it could have an extra signifier, but because instead of being polluted by the dream, this new signifier would trigger an awakening."²⁸ As you can see, here we have the topic of "awakening", but I will go back to it later.

Before that, I would like to say that this itinerary we are following today is a tour through Lacan's work, and what I'm trying to show is not a way of surpassing but of integrating his works. It does not mean that we leave the transferential unconscious behind and we now change it by the Real Unconscious, or that interpretations by way of equivocation leave aside the quote, the enigma or the session cuts that Lacan teaches in *The direction of the treatment* (1958). These perspectives include different, conceptual and clinical tools and the previous ones are not excluded.

Another issue that is important to place is the question of time. The fact that an analysis is not only made of the analysand's discourse plus the analyst's interventions: it is made of time. Lacan is warning Eric Laurent about something related to this in the example I mentioned before, Eric tells Lacan that he would like to make interventions as the ones Lacan did. Lacan answers: "You need a lot of experience for that". Lacan is referring to time, not in terms of age, but in terms of time of formation (that is, you may be 80 years old and have a poor formation, it is not about the age of the practitioner, but about the quality of the time they have invested in their formation).

Now, the effect of an interpretation also takes time. That's why I would like to remember what Lacan said in *Seminar XIII The object of psychoanalysis* (1965), when he brings back the topic of the Zen master (*Seminar I*), he says:

...everyone knows that a Zen exercise has something to do, even though people do not know very well what that means, with the subjective realization of a void. And we are not forcing things in admitting that anyone, the average contemplative, will see this figure,

26 Revista Lacaniana, N° 25, p.19

27 Laurent, E.: conferencia inédita "Disrupción del goce en las locuras bajo transferencia". Barcelona, abril, 2018.

28 Miller, J.-A., El últimísimo Lacan, citado por Laurent en su conferencia inédita "Disrupción del goce en las locuras bajo transferencia".

will say to himself that there is something like a sort of high point which should have some relationship with the mental void that it is a matter of obtaining and that this singular high point will be obtained in an abruptness, succeeding a wait which is sometimes realized by a word, a sentence, a jaculation (utterance), even a rudeness, a kick in the backside. It is quite certain that these kinds of pantalooneries or clowning have no sense except with respect to a long subjective preparation.²⁹

I stress the fact that Lacan says “a long preparation”. What he means is that if we tell a patient “geste a peau”, for example, we are not going to change their life suddenly, but that we need to work in analysis for a while before an interpretation has an effect. In *Radiophonie*, Lacan says “for the being, it takes time to make itself be.” And this is a central indication in psychoanalysis. That’s why I chose the question of time as the third point of my lecture.

III. An analysis is the construction time

Choses de finesse en psychanalyse was a seminar that Jacques-Alain Miller started teaching in 2008. It was published in Spanish as *Sutilezas analíticas* (*Analytic subtleties*). In this seminar, Miller states that a pure analysis, that is, one carried out until its end, might be divided into three moments or periods. Each of these is characterized by a set of conditions that provide it with a distinct functioning. That’s why they are three modes of analysis: beginning analysis, ongoing analysis, and ending analysis.

Earlier on, in his seminar *Donc*, Miller had considered the question of the three moments in an analysis. Here, he held that there was no *matheme* for the intermediate period, since a formalization of the level of accuracy available for the other two periods had not been developed yet (Miller, 2011). However, in *Analytic subtleties* the author tries to specify certain co-ordinates of that intermediate period more accurately, and the result of such attempt is his suggestion that the key moment for the direction of the treatment is precisely this intermediate period of an analysis.

The first period of an analysis, when analysis begins, is full of events. There are discoveries, disclosures, crossings. That which was implicit becomes

explicit but in turn undergoes a radical transformation: it is formalized. Its logical consequences produce the first therapeutic reliefs. Therefore, transference is usually in its more positive aspect. Miller says “beginning analysis is the best part; it is the analyst’s pleasure, the analysand’s pleasure; Americans call it “the honeymoon.” Ah, how wonderful it would be if we could only begin analysis! It would be fantastic!”³⁰ As there are subjective disclosures in this first moment, it can be easily recognized that the opposition between the “conscious” and the “unconscious” is in the foreground. But Miller explains that this is not the same in an ongoing analysis, that is, the one which goes beyond the first interviews. An ongoing analysis reaches the intermediate period, and at that moment the main opposition is not so much “conscious / unconscious”, but rather that of the unconscious as knowledge and as *jouissance*.

This means that at the beginning of analysis everything that the subject says on the “conscious” plane starts to take shape and reveal an “unconscious” logic. This construction allows the subject to find knowledge in the formalization of their discourse, in the serial arrangement of memories, in the localization of certain S1’s that configure the formula of their choices, etc. This produces a feeling of well-being that the subject credits as a gain. But as the analysis advances, the patient’s discourse decreases and is organized around that which insists. It insists despite the conquered knowledge, and that which insists is *jouissance*. That’s why Miller says, when he refers to the intermediate period of an analysis, that “the main opposition is rather that of the unconscious as knowledge and as *jouissance*.”³¹ At this point, then, we have reached another moment in analysis, different from the first. We are in the second period, the one we call intermediate.

Unlike the first, the intermediate period has slow therapeutic effects. Disclosures become scarcer, they even stop, and repetition appears instead. Miller explains that it is no longer the repetition of traceable elements, those which produce a disclosure when arranged in a series. On the contrary, as Miller states, it is “repetition in stagnation. Certainly, an ongoing analysis calls for crossing the stagnation, bearing it, that is, exploring the limits; it is, if you will, what I used to call the experience of the real according to

29 Lacan, J., Citado por Eric Laurent en su conferencia inédita “Disrupción del goce en las locuras bajo transferencia”. Barcelona, abril, 2018.

30 Miller, J.-A., *Sutilezas analíticas*, p.115. Paidós. 2011.

31 Idem.

the modality of inertia.”³² Miller notes that in ongoing analysis, of course, there are disclosures, but what is actually expected – both the analysand and the analyst expect it – is something of the order of untying libido. As we can see, we are no longer in the realm of a gain (of knowledge) with the surplus jouissance which is entailed by that and which is experienced as a feeling of well-being. Instead, we are in the realm of a loss of jouissance. Specifically, the intermediate period of an analysis is about promoting the withdrawal of libido from those elements that were isolated and formalized in the moment of disclosures of a beginning analysis. Because of this, Miller states that, in an ongoing analysis, “the concerning issue is not so much that of a time to understand, but that of a time to disinvest...we focus on the withdrawal of libido...We are only satisfied by disclosures that lead us, as such, to that place.”³³

Therefore, if the predominant question of the first period of analysis (i.e. the beginning) - What does that mean? - in the case of an ongoing analysis, that question is replaced with a new one. The analyst intervenes to facilitate the process that gives rise to a new question: What does that satisfy? How does it provide satisfaction?³⁴ So, if Miller spoke of “the honeymoon” when referring to the first period of analysis, the second period is about something else:

Struggling with analysis as it goes on is another thing. I told myself in my reflections: “I can bear it, but the thing is knowing how” ...without a doubt with the burden of the reproaches it may result in: “You are not doing anything to get me out of that place” ...Sometimes that’s the reason why someone wants to change analysts: they get tired of the truth obtained; they go to someone else thinking the truth will be changed.³⁵

This is the reason why we said earlier that the intermediate period of analysis is a key moment, because that’s when analysands reproach analysts for their malaise. Sometimes they claim to have a feeling of stagnation: they stress their “perfect attendance” throughout the years, they try to impose their

feeling of urgency, and that’s how negative transference is triggered. If analysts act on the urgency demanded by analysands, they end up letting themselves be fooled by the therapeutic preoccupation instead of leading the analytic experience toward its radical point: the end.

Now, it is important for me to stress that the analysand is also responsible for crossing the rough time of the intermediate period of an analysis. Some testimonies of the pass are clear in this regard. I will use two examples; the first is the testimony of Jérôme Lecaux:

At the end of the treatment, I wanted to change analysts and I discovered that I couldn’t. It was a symptomatic loyalty that reproduced the loyalty to my mother. I couldn’t break up, whatever I said, whatever I did. The elucidation of the fundamental fantasy “being the Other’s pillar; he cannot do without me” allowed me to leave. But then I thought “Why leave? My work goes on and the analysis is not an obstacle.” Leaving would have been to continue believing that words can do it all...So, staying allowed me to break up. Having experienced the emptying of the object, becoming aware of the lack of signifier in the Other allowed me to set the chiasma of the pass in motion.³⁶

Another example can be found in *Analytic subtleties*. Miller invites an Analyst of the School, Bernard Seynhaeve, to talk about the third moment of an analysis: the end. Seynhaeve, situates his analysis as a process between two interpretations. The first interpretation is at the very beginning of the analysis:

As I was leaving my analyst’s office, he looked me straight in the eyes...and asked me: “What’s that, the scar on your cheek?” I answered: “Oh! It’s nothing, a skin cyst that was removed.” He spoke slowly as he told me: “You should have talked to me about that.” From the moment the analyst looked me straight in the eyes,

32 Miller, J.-A., *Sutilizas analíticas*, p.113. Paidós. 2011.

33 Miller, J.-A., *Sutilizas analíticas*, p.113-114. Paidós. 2011.

34 Miller, J.-A., *Sutilizas analíticas*, p.111. Paidós. 2011.

35 Miller, J.-A., *Sutilizas analíticas*, p.116. Paidós. 2011.

36 Lecaux, J. (2016). “La Cruz y la barrera” en *Revista Lacaniana de psicoanálisis* N21, p.69.

the trace of the drive of the object-gaze would begin to unfold. This trace would be closed twenty-three years later in the same way.³⁷

Later on, Seynhaeve locates the second interpretation and says:

Interpretation number two arrived after a long analytic convolution, as the analyst cut the session and, when we were about to separate, sitting on his chair, peacefully held me a while longer and, looking me straight in the eyes, he told me: “You love your fundamental fantasies too much.” This sentence caused a subjective earthquake without me understanding anything. The analyst had touched a jouissance that I myself ignored.³⁸

In this second example, we can clearly see how the object-gaze condenses all the subject’s jouissance, but we can notice that time was necessary. It took 23 years of “analytic convolution”. The analyst’s simple intervention when he said, “You love your fundamental fantasies too much”, made it possible for the subject to untie that jouissance. That’s what the analyst waited for throughout the intermediate period of the analysis. So, we could say that the second period of an analysis is essentially about a period of libidinal disinvestment. It isn’t the simplest one. It takes time, but it is the necessary condition for the end to be possible. It is only by going through this intermediate period of analysis, sustained by both the analysand’s and the analyst’s desire, that it will be possible to create the conditions for a pure analysis to occur.

Finally, once the intermediate period of analysis has been crossed, the end arrives. Transference and interpretation are disarticulated; they fall because there is no more meaning to deconstruct. So, the pass would be the road which goes from the transferential unconscious to the real unconscious. We talked about this topic of the pass yesterday, and we located the relationship between the title of this conference - “We’re all mad here” - with the end of analysis, and the formation of the psychoanalyst; now I will just return to the topic of the pass to

highlight what Miller explains about the pass and its difference with the “pass bis”. Miller says:

This moment which Lacan called “pass” is the way out of the transferential unconscious. It’s a moment when the relationship with the psychoanalyst, the companion analyst, is transformed...It’s about a liquidation...That’s the moment when the function of the *l’esp du laps* is most clearly inscribed, the function in which the lapsus, a formation of the unconscious, no longer has any scope of meaning or interpretation. We can then speak of the way out of the transferential unconscious.³⁹

In other words, it is when the subject deconstructs his madness (his fantasies, his identifications, the chains of causes and consequences that he attributed to his life) only then, at the moment when the subject encounters the void, only then does the analysis end. So, in his seminar *Le tout dernier Lacan* (*The very last Lacan*), Miller resorts to the expression “the reverse of the pass” to explain that:

Lacan imagined proposing a new way, which consisted in establishing a relationship between the real unconscious and the analytic cause. He outlines it in a way that is always oriented as the pass bis. This goes in the opposite direction, as it goes from the real unconscious to the transferential unconscious. The pass bis is a transference with the analysis and, therefore, is the reverse of the pass.⁴⁰

So, once the subject encounters his own void, what happens? He goes back to creating a story about himself, but the difference is that he is no longer a prisoner of that story; he does not believe it as an absolute truth and he does not suffer from it as a destiny. He can tell it to others because he has separated himself from it and has taken enough distance so that it does not affect him or his clinical practice. It is not possible to live in a void - it is necessary to build a new madness, the madness of each one of us, written in our own handwriting, with the ink of the most singular thing that each one of us has. It is a

37 Seynhaeve, B., *Sutilizas analíticas*, p.199. Paidós. 2011.

38 Seynhaeve, B., *Sutilizas analíticas*, p.202. Paidós. 2011.

39 Miller, J.-A., *El ultimísimo Lacan*, p.97. Paidós. Bs. As. 2012.

40 Miller, J.-A., *El ultimísimo Lacan*, p.98. Paidós. Bs. As. 2012.

lucid madness because it recognizes that it is built on a void, and because it makes of that void the power of something quite similar to freedom.

The Pass and the End of Analysis

Jorge Assef

What is the relation between the title of the Lacan Circle of Australia's International Conference - "We're all mad here" - and the theme of this first intervention: "The Pass and the end of Analysis"? In 1978 Lacan wrote a short text, in which he says: "...everyone is mad, that is, delusional".¹ Thirty years later, Jacques-Alain Miller published his Seminar of the Lacanian Orientation. As you may know, Miller held a Seminar in Paris every year until 2011. In 2007, Miller gives the title "Everyone is mad" for one of the classes he gave during seminars given in Spanish. Tomorrow I will talk a lot about what this statement means. But today I want to take up again a specific paragraph of Miller's taken from that seminar. He states:

This sentence - "everyone is mad" - provokes without fail a shake-up of the certainties held by the one who presents himself as a therapist, as technicians of the therapy of psychosis - because this sentence - is placed in the slope: do not forget that it is about you.²

What does the title of the International Conference - "We're all mad here" - have to do with the theme of this first intervention "The Pass and the end of Analysis"? We psychoanalysts do not

think that we are above our patients, that we are from another planet, that we are a model of "good mental health", etc. We are all made of the same material as our patients. Thus, "Everyone is mad" means that psychoanalysts are also included. And that is why analytic training is not only a theoretical training, it is not enough just to receive patients, or to supervise the clinical cases we attend. The fundamental base of psychoanalytic training is personal analysis. But we have known that personal analysis is the fundamental base of our training since Freud. What is the novelty introduced by Lacan? This novelty is called Pass and it is a device invented by Lacan in 1967. The Pass consists of the procedure by means of which an analyst in training verifies that he has finished his analysis. If after going through this device the analyst is nominated "Analyst of the School" (AS) it is because he has verified the end of his analysis, and therefore he can make his own experience useful by transmitting to the School questions about the end of analysis.

That is why Miller in this same seminar, Everyone is mad, says: "psychoanalysts cannot be prepared by teaching, they can only be prepared by experience". To teach, there must be *matheme*, a lay formula, that responds to the: "(...) for all x (...)", However, in analytic experience the knowledge is yet to come and will always be valid only for one. The pass, precisely,

1 Lacan, J., *¿Lacan por Vincennes!* (1978), Revista Lacaniana de psicoanálisis #11, p.11. Grama, B. As. 2011.

2 Miller, J.-A., *Todo el mundo es Loco*, p.311.

tries to miraculously transform the knowledge of only one, which comes from his experience in analysis, into teaching material for everyone.³ But this also implies that the analyst has sufficient distance from his own madness, and that distance prevents him from bringing it into play in the treatments he conducts with his patients.

Therefore, we can say that everyone is mad, but that analysts work on their own madness in their own analysis in order to be able to leave their own madness outside the consulting room or at least be aware when something of their own madness interferes with their capacity to hear the analysand.

This is, the title of this conference that summons us all here in Melbourne - "We're all mad here" - is a possible way to think about the training of the Lacanian psychoanalyst and the central place that the question of the end of the analysis has for our training. It is for this reason that I chose these two topics for today's discussion: the end of analysis and the pass. These are two matters that concerns me in particular, especially since I received this invitation to come to Australia when I was already working as an AS. I finished my analysis, that lasted 22 years, in April 2021. I went through the pass device a few months later and I was nominated AS in August 2021. This means that I am in the middle of my AS function, which is extended for a period of 3 years. So, I am going to develop some points linked to the end of the analysis, although I will be brief. I am not aware of how much is known about the Pass in Australia, I don't know how familiar you are with the clinic of the end of analysis, that's why I thought it would be more interesting to keep my intervention brief and then open a conversation among all.

1. Two theorizations on the end of analysis

In order to locate what Lacan taught about the end of analysis, we have to recognize two different moments concerning the end of analysis.

First theorization on the end of analysis

This first theorization finds its most elaborated formulation in *Seminar XIV The Logic of Fundamental Fantasy* and *Seminar XIV The Psychoanalytic Act*. We can also find references to this topic around the time when he wrote: "Proposition of 9th October 1967", the text in which Lacan presents the device of the

pass to his School. This text not only revolutionizes theory but also psychoanalytic training, and even the politics of psychoanalytic institutions as they were known. This first theorization of the end of analysis is a journey that goes from the preliminary interviews to the beginning of the analysis. This is where the S1 that has marked the subject's life and that makes his fundamental identifications begin to unfold. The journey that the subject makes is to deconstruct these identifications, empty them of meaning and let them fall. On this path, the construction of the fundamental fantasy takes place; the object a is isolated, producing knowledge concerning the subject's specific modality of jouissance, and then finally, the fundamental fantasy is crossed. That is to say, at the end of this path, the fundamental identifications of the subject and the relation that the subject has to the object a have been deconstructed (we will see examples).

Second theorization on the end of analysis

The second theorization on the end of analysis is found in the period that we usually call: "the very last teaching" of Lacan, occurring at the end of his life. You can find the fundamental ideas on the end of analysis corresponding to that time in the writing: "Commentary to the English edition of Seminar XI". These concepts are written in a very condensed and concentrated fashion. This very short article contains a whole universe within. This is, it is so rich that it must be carefully unraveled to understand its full scope. Miller dedicated almost 4 entire seminars to it: *Donc, The place and the bond, Analytical subtleties, The very last Lacan*. The second theorization includes the first one: however, it goes beyond the crossing of the fundamental fantasy. The reason for this is that it considers the dimension of the *sinthome*, a concept that Lacan developed in 1975: 8 years after *The proposition*. This evening, I will mainly speak about the first theorization of the end of analysis, because as I said before, the second theorization has a complexity for which we would need much more time, so I will only make a small reference to it.

2. The idea of trajectory in the first theorization of the end of analysis

We said before that the first theorization on the end of analysis implies the idea of a trajectory, a journey beginning from what we usually call

³ Miller, J.-A., *Todo el mundo es Loco*, p.337.

"Preliminary interviews". During this time, there will be signs indicating that the subject is already inside the analytic device that moves to the traversal or crossing of the fundamental fantasy that marks the exit. The following Miller's reference can illustrate what we mean by the entry into analysis:

Preliminary interviews have multiple functions: diagnosis, location of the signifier of the transference and of the signifier of the call, and first displacement of the request from the demand to the desire and, if we can say, first division of the subject. That is to say, of what Freud calls free association, it means that the subject authorizes his word to go before him.⁴

I want to emphasize this phrase: "...that the subject authorizes his word to go before him". This is very important because it implies in the first place having a direct experience of what we call subjective division. That is, I say one thing, but when what it is said and it's out of my mouth what I can hear is something else: I am surprised; I am frightened; I laugh; I defend myself; I rush to clarify; I blush; I am inhibited; I get excited...

This experience of my subjective division provokes the installation of the subject supposed to know, which is not the analyst, but the unconscious itself. That is to say that if the subject who consults for the first time can develop a relationship with his unconscious - if he can allow himself to be disturbed by the unconscious, allows himself to listen to it, to believe it, to follow it, then we can say that this subject is already in analysis. From that moment on, the analytical work consists in locating and isolating the key words of the subject's discourse - what we call "master signifiers" or "S1". In this regard, Eric Laurent states that an analysis tries to isolate the S1 of a subject from the very beginning, those familiar signifiers that, in their contingency, contribute to the formation and stabilization of the modes of satisfaction that constitute the fundamental fantasy.⁵ I emphasize this reference from Laurent because whenever we speak of the fundamental fantasy we refer not only to the signifiers of the subject, but also to the modes of jouissance.

The fundamental fantasy is the basic "formula" underlying the relationship between the subject and the object. The fundamental fantasy is constituted in part, by the master signifiers, S1, that mark the life of a subject and that are inscribed with a predominant mode of drive jouissance. In the fundamental fantasy we find a fixation to certain mode of jouissance. This formula is put into play in every relationship that the subject establishes with other, with the world, and of course, it is also put into play in the relationship with the analyst. At the end of the analysis, after an S1 has been isolated and the identifications of the subject have been loosened, the analyst accesses the formula of his fundamental fantasy. This knowledge produces an understanding of the logic that had organized his life without him being able to realize it. Importantly, is it only possible to go beyond the fundamental fantasy, to free himself from this fixation a little bit more, after its formulation.

Testimony on the pass

Since I have been invited to share my work with you at a time when I am performing my function as AS of the World Association of Psychoanalysis, I will take my own case as an example - I will take parts of my second Testimony, held in October, one year ago in the American Federation of Psychoanalysis.

While I was still a university student I attended a seminar at the School of Lacanian Orientation in Argentina, that seminar was called "*Logics of Love Life*". At the end of that same year, and because of the breakup with my first partner, I decided to start an analysis. I called the analyst in charge of that seminar because I assumed that she knew about the entanglements of love, which was the area of life in which I suffered the most. My first period of analysis lasted eleven years consisting of two weekly sessions dedicated to the treatment of a hysteria solidly organized around an insatiable demand for love deployed in a circuit that went from idealization to voracity and in which I always ended up confirming a *cursed destiny*: "The other leaves me". I clearly recognized the enjoyment of that position thanks to a comical situation that happened to me during a vacation in Spain.

I met someone I had really liked one morning on the beach, I had agreed to have dinner with him that evening before he returned to a close town where he

4 Laurent, E., "El pase y los restos de la identificación". Letras N° 6, p.36. Madrid, 2013.

5 Laurent, E., "El pase y los restos de la identificación". Letras N° 6, p.36. Madrid, 2013.

was staying. I arrived at the restaurant 5 minutes late and as I didn't see him sitting at a table, I rushed off to the train station. Since the train to the town where he was staying had already left and I had no contact information for him, I was convinced that I had lost the "love of my life" because of my 5-minute lateness. That night I returned to the hotel totally devastated. The next day, I went to the same beach and he was there. He had stayed at a hotel in the area to look for me because the waiters at the restaurant had told him that at the moment he was in the bathroom, a young man with an Argentine accent entered the restaurant, quickly looked at the tables, asked where the train station was and ran out. This scene, which looks like the sequence of a comedy, shows how absurd love dramas are when the subject lives prisoner of his neurosis, locked in his own fundamental fantasy of "the other is abandoning me". It took me 12 years to cross, to move from that position: the decisive moment found me in Paris, a phone call at the wrong time triggered the anguish and I decided to consult my supervisor.

Those sessions cleared up a key issue; I was relating that my father died when I was 15 years old, that my mother informed me between sobs saying the phrase: "Dad left us", then I added: What I remember the most is the image of my mother sitting alone in the hospital corridor crying. After this, the analyst said: "Identified to maternal pain". That intervention was the one that definitively broke the fantasy of abandonment; however, there was still the side of the demand that had to do with the idealization of love and the demand.

At the end of a session, I felt an uncontrollable impulse to go and look at a work of art that I always found very attractive, *The Kiss* (Figure 1) by Constantin Brancusi. I sat in front of that work at the Pompidou Museum for several hours. Back in my analyst's office, when I recounted the fact, I could understand that it was an acting-out; it was about the insistence with which I wanted to believe that "sexual relationship" was possible. Although everything in the analysis led me to think that it was not possible to become one with the other, something in me resisted to consent to that and I instead, insisted on the idea of "the other half".

I discovered the most interesting aspect of the matter several years later, when I understood that

what I insisted on was not a romantic idea, but the devouring drive *jouissance* that was also visible in that work of art. It was in my second period of analysis, already back in Buenos Aires, when a nightmare staged the drive grammar that organized my case around the oral object and gave me access first to the signifier that named the formal envelope of the symptom: "Garrapata" / "Hanger-on" (like a parasitic bug, very similar to a leech, that attaches itself to



others to feed).⁶ That nightmare gave me access to the formula of the fundamental fantasy: "Hung on to the other".

The following nightmare shows the most lethal face of this hysteria: My partner was hugging me, hanging on to a side of my body with one hand and exerting a pressure that caused me an unbearable pain; suddenly, he brought his face close to my face and his blue eyes turned black. I woke up screaming: "He wants to eat my liver". "He wants to eat me". I finally understood that the fundamental fantasy was not "the other one leaves me" but "in order for him not to leave me I have to hang on to the other one with all my strength." From that moment on, I began to subjectivize that the love dramas I had suffered throughout my life were not a curse of destiny but the

6 The signifier "Garrapata" - literally "tick" in English - echoes at the same time "garra" (claw), "tener garra" (to have nerve), "agarrarse" or "aferrarse" (to hung on to), and "pata" (duck), as mentioned in the first testimony, towards "pathos" (N. de la T.).

effect of a jouissance: that is, my “love dramas” were a symptom supported by a fundamental fantasy of a devouring embrace that drowned desire and ruined every love relationship I tried to establish. Only then I was able to fully understand that afternoon at the Pompidou Centre staring at Brancusi’s “The Kiss”. Years later I was able to understand that behind that image that I found “so tender” was hidden the deadliest part of me. Finally, my greatest discovery was that the main obstacle to love was myself, the insistence with which, in the rage of my hysteria, I tried to find the “logic of love life” that would guarantee me to become one with my partner; and the way in which in each attempt something in me was satisfied, ruining the encounter. When I discovered the way in which my demand to be loved conditioned my analytic practice I began to take an interest in the pass. When I encountered the signifier “Hanger-on” I was better able to discern how this modality of jouissance interfered in my clinical practice, hindering the handling of transference. It took a little more time (a year) to conclude the analysis, until I presented myself to the pass device, but I will tell you that part of the story another day. In order to have a better understanding of what I just said I will read again Eric Laurent’s reference:

...in an analysis it will be necessary to isolate the familiar signifiers which, in their contingency, contribute to the formation and stabilization of the modes of satisfaction that constitute the fundamental fantasy...

This clarifies the example from my own case that I just mentioned. It happens that once an S1 is isolated, separated from S2, it can no longer return to the initial identificatory logic, the one that inertially leads the subject always to the same place. This effect on the signifying chain intervenes in the subject’s mode of jouissance, because by touching the identifications with a certain S1 we move the way of jouissance that was knotted there. However, it is not enough to move the subject’s modes of jouissance; it takes time for the subject to give up this jouissance, or to find another way of doing something with this way of jouissance. And, this step is carried out thanks to the analyst’s double function.

On the one hand, we know that the analyst is the addressee of the subject’s demand for knowledge, but on the other hand the analyst is located in the

transference as an object. And this means that in the transference, the subject’s fundamental phantasy is at stake and present in action. Here I could resort to another example, the transference of Graciela Brodsky. There is a testimony of Graciela called “*Partenaires*” that is published in *Revista Lacaniana* N° 13. It is interesting to observe how the end of analysis is a journey that goes from the first interviews to the end, and that it is precisely at the end when some things that were already there from the beginning are understood. This testimony also helps us to understand the place that the analyst plays in the transference at the end of the analysis. Graciela was the only child of a Jewish family. Her mother suffered from hypoacusis, a kind of deafness that made her unable to hear the child. These two conditions place two central issues of the case: the fundamental S1 of the case: “The only one” and the predominant pulsional object: the voice. I will now read you some fragments of the testimony:

Every time the signifier - the only one - was touched, the anguish would come... So when...I had the first interview...I repeated three times to the analyst “I am an only child” - just in case he was not listening well. The third time the analyst replied: “You already told me three times”.

Graciela explains that this intervention of the analyst allowed her to understand the value that this place had for her, but also, that it made it possible to knot the transference, since it demonstrated to the subject that the analyst was not deaf like the mother and allowed the subject to find a partner that suited her better: the one who listens. In her testimony, Graciela even says that the analyst “allowed me to believe, for years, I was “the only one” without disturbing that S1 to which I was attached”. In her case, a random event acted as the prelude to the crossing of the fundamental fantasy. This happened at the end of the analysis, when the S1 of her case had already been disturbed, and the subject was very advanced in her treatment. At the end of a psychoanalytic congress, Graciela saw her analyst dancing with other colleagues. She then says at that party:

...the agalma of being “the only one” was shaken when I found myself, one among others”...And she adds: “...If the party had the power to trigger anguish, it was because

there was something was released that had been sinthomatically knotted in the transference previously.

Consequently, the fiction of the fundamental fantasy exploded and the jouissance value of this S1 was lost. This last example shows how the transference knotting at the beginning of the analysis is unleashed at the end of the journey. Of course, these conditions that we have been raising take years of analysis. That is why Lacan says in his text "*Radiophony*": "It takes time to become the being". This time is a double time:

- 1) Time to work on the isolation and weakening of the S1, present in the identifications of the subject, and;
- 2) Time for the libidinal withdrawal, which includes the extraction of the object a, and the fall of the analyst.

This does not mean that one is done first and then the other - it is not a chronological question, rather, it is a logical process that involves all the dimensions of the subject. In my intervention tomorrow I will return to the subject of the times in the analysis.

3. Brief remarks on the second theorization of the end of the analysis.

From Lacan's last teaching onwards, the idea of trajectory, a journey that goes from the preliminary interviews to the crossing of the fundamental fantasy is not enough to explain the end of the analysis. It becomes evident to Lacan that not everything is resolved with the mere crossing of the fundamental fantasy because there are still symptomatic remains which will never be abolished, they will never reach a zero point. Therefore, the end of analysis is thought as a logical moment, as an act of the analysand who feels that there is nothing more to say, because otherwise, he would only be endlessly spinning around in circles. That is why there is a necessity of doing something new with those remains. In Lacan's words:

When an analysand considers that he is satisfied, well, one lets him go...Everyone knows that analysis has good effects that only last for a while, that does not prevent it from being

a resource and that it is better than doing nothing...the pass, when there is a pass, is a story that one tells (Lacan, *Scilicet* 6/7).

Indeed, in his last teaching Lacan does not believe that at the end of the analysis one finds a total, invariant, fixed truth, but rather a singular version of one's own truth, that of each one. The pass is a device by means of which the subject transmits this version of his truth to another. Lacan says in "*Preface to the English edition of the writings*" that "the mirage of truth, from which one can only expect a lie (what we politely call resistance), has no other end than the satisfaction that marks the end of the analysis." And when he refers to the pass again he adds:

That is why the pass is a way of testing the hystorisation of analysis, where I have to be very careful about not to impose this pass on everyone, because there is not everyone at this point ...I left it only to those who would take the risk of testifying the lying truth as good as possible.⁷

Another question that is important to emphasize in this second theorization of the end of analysis is the encounter with the limit of the transference unconscious as distinct from the real unconscious - but I will speak about this important distinction tomorrow.

Finally, at the end of analysis there is the issue of the sinthome. The sinthome is that subjective aspect, that is not crossed in an analysis: it does not change, but it is with which the subject has to do something with, to make use of it, to try to find a know-how. What is important to note is that beyond these new perspectives on the end of analysis, Lacan continued to maintain the necessity of the device of the pass for the training of the psychoanalyst, which brings me to point number 4.

4. Political consequences

I don't know if you are aware that almost at the end of his teaching in 1981, Lacan traveled to Latin America for the first time. It was a great event. Spanish speaking analysts from all over Latin America went to Caracas, Venezuela, to listen to Lacan in person for the first time. Lacan called them: "My readers". I think this name "readers" makes the distinction between

⁷ Lacan, J., *Otros Escritos*, p.599-601.

those who read the texts of psychoanalysis, i.e. who theoretically study Lacan's teaching, and those who are trained as analysts, i.e. who not only read the texts but are also analysands. The closing of this event known as "*Caracas Seminar*", included the dissertation of notable analysts of the world, and in this framework Jacques-Alain Miller gave a lecture entitled "Clause of closing of the psychoanalytic experience", where he recalled that while for Freud the analysis ended in a structural impasse, the irreducible limit of castration, Lacan showed that one could go further since the end of Lacanian analysis "supposes the transformation of the analysand into the analyst, the shift from one position to another".⁸ Miller pointed out the importance for analytic training of leading the analysis to its conclusive point, and he did so in a territory where many studied Lacan's texts but had not yet realized the psychoanalytic training that emerges from Lacan's teaching places the end of the analysis at the center of the training. And that is why the pass is fundamental.

Now, what must be emphasized is that the pass has had a subversive effect on the history of psychoanalysis. Let us recall that Lacan founded his School in 1964: from then on he felt free to articulate analytic training to the principles of a renewed practice of Freud's work. Thus, 3 years later, after the seminar "*The logic of fantasy*", Lacan published "*The proposition*" which places the crossing of the fundamental fantasy as the sign of the end of analysis. This is the moment where he introduces the device of the pass to his School.

This proposal changes the history of psychoanalysis, to the point that even within the Lacanian School itself, a little crisis starts, because the pass is opposed to the importance of what other psychoanalytical institutions generally called "careers". The pass proposal implies that it does not matter how many years someone spends reading psychoanalytic theory, or receiving patients, or working in an institution; rather, what matters is the formative effects produced by an analysis. Of course, having consistently studied psychoanalysis has a value in the training - it has a lot of value - but it is in the analytic experience itself where the core of the training is determined and carried to its conclusion. The International Association of Psychoanalysis, established during Freud's life, proposed another form of training program. It quantifies the years of analysis (adding up

so many hours); the hours of supervision; the theoretical training program... everything had to add up, and sooner or later when an analyst in training added up all those hours, then he/she was declared a psychoanalyst. Then, if that person makes merit, continues studying with responsibility and has patience, they may become a didactic analyst, approximately at the age of fifty-five. From then on, they will be assured of professional recognition and prestige.

As you can see, it is a programmed route, demarcated from the beginning, where chronological time is key, where the steps to be followed are precise, where age is decisive. The pass proposal sweeps away all this structure. The pass it is not oriented by the idea of the sum of hours and it does not matter how many hours someone went to the analyst; what matters is that someone can demonstrate that this analysis had effects - that it changed his position, that it freed him from his ghosts. What matters is to demonstrate that the analysis allowed him enough knowledge of his own subjectivity to prevent it from interfering in the clinical work with his own patients. In this way, we couldn't care less about this concept of career, it does not matter the number of years, it does not matter the institutional merits, what matters is that this analyst in training demonstrates his end of analysis.

Here lies the core of analytic training, in the analytic experience itself, and its conclusion. An immediate consequence of this approach is to understand the difference between "Lacan's readers", those who study or research on psychoanalysis in theory, and those who are trained as analysands. There are many people who quote Lacan theoretically, use him as a reference for their own theoretical postulations, but this is a use made of Lacan's work without taking into consideration that this work is tied to a training structure, which goes through the experience of an analysis, without analysis itself, reading Lacan is an intellectual task that remains "halfway". This is what Lacan wanted to make clear when he proposed the Pass for his School, and what Miller wanted to emphasize when he traveled to Caracas with Lacan.

Who is responsible for getting the analysis to the end?

Reaching the end of the analysis is not easy: it implies a long time, a path that is sometimes hard. Tomorrow I will develop this question in more detail.

⁸ Miller, J-A., *Seminarios de Caracas y Bogotá*, p.229.

I will talk about the three times of analysis: the beginning, the intermediate and the end. The intermediate time is the most complicated and difficult of the three, because it is the time in which the subject already knows almost everything about his case but remains tied to a mode of jouissance that is not easy to concede or change. There are usually moments of impasse, detentions, negative transference with the analyst, attempts to flee, to suspend, to leave the analysis, etc. Whether the analysis reaches the end depends a lot on how the subject manages to go through those moments of impasse in which the subject feels that it is impossible to move forward. By the way, in the writing "*Radiophony*" Lacan says "only by pushing the impossible to its last limits does impotence acquire the power to turn the patient into the agent."⁹ That is to say, to turn the analysand into the analyst. We could put it this way: when the impasses in the analysis are moments characterized by impotence, the way out is through "pushing the impossible to its last limits".

Now, the question would be: who is the one who pushes? Is it the analyst or the analysand? Miller states, "it is therefore a matter of interest not only to the analyst; it is of interest above all to the analysand". It is certainly so, but there is also the analyst's disposition." I will refer to a different testimony to use it as an example of this topic; it is not the testimony of an AS, but an interview that Judith Miller had with Rosine Lefort in 2007.

Rosine, whom we all know for her work with infantile psychosis and autism, says that she consulted Lacan for the first time in 1950, and tells of that experience of analysis:

In the family universe, I had a position of waste...a hyper-super-egoic, hyper-repressive family, which required me to be very intelligent. In my childhood, I was very neurotic: fugues, sleepwalking, phobias...The psychosomatic...was useful to me from the age of seventeen to twenty-seven. The moment the doctor told me that I was no longer ill, I lost all support and started an analysis.

Rosine recounts her first interview with Lacan:

The first thing I told him was that I was the irremediable waste...Lacan did not fight against

me, but against that place of waste...The analysis sessions were terrible; I could not miss the session but at the same time it was a horror to go to the session. I could not look at him, even though he asked me to, he would hold my hands and gently say "look at me", so I was wearing black glasses.

Rosine recounts the operations by which Lacan pushed the impossible in her case, especially when the moment of impasse arrived:

After the first three months, Lacan told me that everything had gone very well...there was - then - the great psychosomatic blow ...where I almost died...I think I had reached a state where it was necessary for all the horror of my childhood past to be there, present in act in the transference. Then, the phobias, the nightmares, the sleepwalking, etc. returned...I wrote to Lacan that I could not continue the analysis. Three hours later he sent me a letter asking me to come back. He continued to receive me for about a year without my paying him...Little by little the silence installed itself...Although he warned me one day that he would block the exit door...if I did not talk - which he did... Another day when I had escaped, he caught up with me when I was almost inside the subway. Lacan fought against my weakness and my horror, I never let up, but if he had not fought, I would not have come back.

Rosine estimates that that time of impasse lasted about 8 months:

Every day, twenty minutes...in silence; he kept his pressure and I touched what I never really articulated...the other side of all the words of my parents who had silenced me and of the nannies who insulted me...Later I understood that Lacan tried everything to free me from that.

In his attempts Lacan proposes to Rosine to take her with him to see hospitalized patients, this operation awakened her curiosity for psychosis. Rosine states:

⁹ Lacan, J., "Radiofonía", *Otros Escritos*, p.469.

I was terrified by that hole around which I could not put any word; that same hole, I found it in those patients, and I began to be interested in those children...it was he - Lacan - who had wanted and insisted that I talk to children...from that horrible place that I had known. Thus the place of rest, of waste, was the tool and the germ of my work as an analyst. To say that I got rid of it completely in life is another matter. But after all, I was there to return to the efficiency of what made me suffer, to do something else with it.¹⁰

These moments of impasse of an analysis constitute the privileged framework in which this "pushing the impossible" unfold. And in this framework, the key is the desire, the desire of the analysand of course, but it is also fundamental the way in which each analyst represents the desire of the analyst and lends himself to be the object of the transference - as Miller warns - without ideas of grandiosity.¹¹

Finally, Rossine teaches us that a psychoanalyst is born as the effect of a training that contains an impossible - a real - on condition that he has taken it, thanks to their own analysis, beyond impotence; making it an impossible that authorizes, that allows flexibility, that warns against the danger of prejudices and dogmatism, and that, precisely for this reason, favors the disposition to invent unique solutions. It is thanks to analysis itself that each practitioner of psychoanalysis finds in his training the style with which he will carry out his position as a psychoanalyst. There is a text by Miller called - "How does one become a psychoanalyst at the beginning of the 21st century" - where he discusses the question of analytic training today, I would like to share with you two points from this text to conclude.

First, Miller says that a person does not become an analyst by analyzing patients, much less by worrying about the therapeutic effects, on the contrary: there

is no other way than his own analysis, and the elaboration of the relationship to his own unconscious. So the quality of an analyst is only obtained by bringing the analytical experience to its conclusion as a psychoanalyst. And yet, once the analysis itself is finished, Miller says:

You will only last as analysts on condition that you remain...psychoanalyzing your own relation to the subject supposed to know, because your unconscious is not reduced to zero...The unconscious is always there, with the duty imposed on you to continue deciphering it, reading it. Secondly, he clarifies:

being an analyst is nothing but someone who would constantly work to become...“Being” invites to identification and...if one had to define a criterion of being an analyst...then I would say that it is intolerance to identification, whether in panic or in enthusiasm, in routine or in surprise. A psychoanalyst does not want others who are similar but only others who are different...We - the World Association of Psychoanalysis - want analysts who are analysands, perpetual analysands...who are all the more precious for being unusual and singular. Because the analytic path...is that of singularity, singularity taken to paradigm.¹²

I thought that these words were a good way to conclude today's intervention as they are linked to what I tried to pass on to you today. This is the importance of the end of analysis and the pass in Lacanian-oriented psychoanalysis. This would allow each of us to find our own way of being a psychoanalyst.

Translation: Agustina de Francisco

10 Publicado en Revista Lacaniana de Psicoanálisis #14, p.129-136. EOL, Junio 2013.

11 Miller, J.-A., Efectos terapéuticos rápidos, pg 105, Paidós, Bs. As. 2005.

12 El Caldero de la Escuela Nueva Serie N° 15 (2011).

Read Jacques-Alain Miller
**How do Analyses end Paradoxes
of the Pass**

Lacan Circle of Australia on 15/10/2022
Conversation on "Another Lacan"

Daniel Roy

My starting points are both a comment about the title of the book and a surprise when reading the very beginning of "*Liminaire*". Jacques-Alain Miller makes the comment (p.7 French edition) that "the pass was Lacan's most controversial invention for his students" at the same time as he himself addresses the question of "the practice of the pass" (such as the ECF "carried on with the experience" following Lacan's death) as being "aligned with an original definition of the psychoanalyst". Thus, Miller introduces a very robust dialectical engine to help us read the "effects of the pass" in our School: on the one hand, the signifier of the pass introduces controversy within the analytic group, on the other hand "the practice of the pass" opens up a new definition of the psychoanalyst.

We will see that this "original definition of the psychoanalyst" brings to bear the difference between Freud and Lacan with respect to their conception of the "structural outcome of analysis". Miller demonstrates that this is not a difference of opinion, but the fact that Lacan takes seriously the structural dimension of Freud's conception in order to show the articulation of its logical framework. Taking into account Freud, he does not let go of the supposition to know what he considers an "impasse" for which he seeks its outcome, which is precisely the position of the passer in the pass 1, "moments of the pass".

Comments on the title of Jacques-Alain Miller's text.

1) It is a title that takes on the grammatical form of

a question. We expect a question mark that isn't there. It would therefore mean that it is in the affirmative. In a way this is true, but it also states a paradox in that it is like a question that includes its own answer. The sentence states that "analyses do end", which would suppose that indeed an answer exists. The answer is in the enunciation of the "how", and "in what way".

2) It is therefore an answer which does not depend on a question, nor does it depend on a previous question; I would say that it emerges in the course of the cure as a "response from the real", a real which in the text is signaled as "unpredictable", and which will eventually be called "moment of the pass". But "how analyses end" also appears as a "response from the real" in the analytic community. It creates a hole in the social fabric that is constituted by the analytic community, and I do believe that the impact of Miller's text is to show that it is precisely the community's embracing of such a dimension that makes it a School, and not just a professional group. What dimension are we talking about? The one that takes into account that the pass constitutes a response collected from the real, one that is not of the order of an *Aufhebung*, of a "realization" in the order of the subjective for this subject, insofar as he would have been able to answer the question "How did you finish your analysis?"

As a question, the sentence "How do analyses end?" has come into existence in the analytic commu-

nity since 1937 with Freud's text "*Die endliche und die unendliche Analysis*" [Analysis Terminable and Interminable]. In "*Liminaire*", Miller's reading of Freud's text has particularly enlightened me.

Let's go back to it (p.10-11). At the end there is an irreducible obstacle, a resistance that is the "original rock", the rock of castration that manifests in two ways. Indeed, Freud offers us two answers. On the one hand, there is the analysis that ends to everyone's satisfaction. An analysis from which the protagonists will be able to say that it is "finished" from a practical point of view- an end as "an empirical phenomenon that comes into being when the analysand leaves the analyst, to the satisfaction of one and the other" – a situation that we all know, but which is rarely mentioned in our circles. On the other hand, "what is structural in the end" for Freud, namely analysis insofar as it cannot be considered in the dimension of the "finite", that is to say, as a process which comes to an end, which has a conclusion. Why? Because according to Freud, experience shows that analyses come up against an insurmountable [*indépassable*] obstacle, an obstacle that constitutes an impasse, "the rock of castration", an obstacle that nevertheless manifests in two different ways, on the side of woman and on the side of man. From this structural point of view, analysis presents itself as *unendliche*, as unable to find an end other than in the acceptance of an insurmountable [*indépassable*] element: It is "For the woman, penis envy, for the male the refusal of femininity, his rebellion against a passive or feminine position towards another man". Therefore it is "penis envy" on the side of woman, and "refusal of femininity on the side of man".

Here then, is the Freudian paradox: analyses that come to an end teach us nothing about the "how". And if we form a structural idea about what happens at this point, then an analysis appears as something that "can never be declared finished." In assuming that Freud has given us knowledge important for analysis on this point, Lacan will then take the next step by transforming the points of this impasse into reference points for its outcome, that is to say, for "the pass". These points are as follows: at the end of treatment, one finds an obstacle that separates the sexes (the Lacanian translation is: there is no sexual relationship). This obstacle nevertheless displays a common feature, but in two different ways or voices (*voix/voies*) (there is no signifier for woman).

It is on this point that Miller offers a remarkable formulation of this Freudian moment and of the

next step taken up by Lacan. This is what he writes: "The difference between the sexes introduced by Freud here turns out to be in fact a separation of the sexes." This remarkable "substitution" of the term "separation" for the Freudian phrase "difference between the sexes" opens up new possibilities from the point of view of structure as well as practice. Indeed, the term "separation" shatters the one of "difference between the sexes" both from the point of view of separation between the sexes ("no dialogue between the sexes") and separation insofar as it does not register in the same place for either ("there is no sexual relationship"). From this perspective, we can formulate the Freudian impasse in terms that make it resonate differently:

- For a woman, she is separated from the organ as instrument, that is to say insofar as it passes through the signifier, she struggles with this point of privation and can't reconcile herself to it...
- For the male, the separation is located in relation to the fact that there is no one who can say what it is to be a man, who can say what the use of the phallus as signifier is, other than to say that it is lost; and he can't reconcile himself to it...

I focused on this passage in "*Liminaire*" because it helped me understand the leap made by Miller in his Caracas text. Indeed, he takes up again in this text, what he calls "the closing clause" of analysis according to Freud, namely the irreducibility of the castration complex (p.32). By applying what we have learned from this remarkable formula in "*Liminaire*", namely that we can replace "castration complex" with "separation", we understand better what leads him to say that Lacan does not "erase the genital" on the Freudian question of the irreducibility of the castration complex, but indicates "that the question of the end of analysis is not situated at the level of the sexual relation that doesn't exist" (p.33). It is a question of separation from the existence of the sexual relationship, insofar as each according to their choice, has their own way and -- I venture to say here in relation to the text -- has their own way of jouissance. Here, the question is at what point the subject's desire is fixed in the fantasy (p.38) and this point is the object, the object of the drive.

The end of analysis therefore finds resolution at the level of the object, this "object which shuts off

[*obture*] the relation that doesn't exist thereby giving it the consistency of the fantasy" (p.33) It seems to me that we should understand here the structural function of the object as the surplus jouissance that contrasts with the acceptance of the non-existence of the sexual relation and which, instead, can be called the "obturator object" [*objet obturateur*] because of the place it occupies in the fantasy.

Hence we note a displacement, indicated in the text (p.33), at the point of impact of the separation, introduced by the sexual question when it encounters its impasse. It is therefore a displacement to the object itself in such a way as to operate as a "separating object". This is the sentence: "Therefore, the end of analysis, insofar as it supposes the advent of an absence, depends on the crossing of the fantasy and the separation of the object" [Miller, *The Symptom* 10, Ralph Chipman translation].

At the end of the text "*Pour la passe*" [For the pass] (p.44), Miller, wondering about what is being transmitted in the pass, offers this response: "what is not lost", namely the signifiers of the "*Witz* of the pass", which is the medium through which these signifiers circulate and which highlights the "paradox of the pass", "insofar as it is fundamentally placed at the level of the object".

This development then makes it possible to grasp the novelty of the sentence: "The device of the pass recovers at the level of the signifier the moment of the pass, the essential of which is played out at the level of the object" (p.45). This "essential" that we

have located today in the term "separation" – separation, in the *Witz*, of jouissance when it comes into speech, the moment when the real function of the object is observed.

The ECF has followed on from Lacan who, with his transference to Freud, taking seriously Freud's question, and taking into account the presence of Freud's desire in his work, extricated the pass. Miller summarizes this with a remark in his text, that has practical, theoretical and political significance: "The pass is an integral part of the practice of psychoanalysis" insofar as, "according to Lacan, an analysis is equivalent to a demonstration", namely "a logical process requiring a conclusion" (p. 284-85: *Sur le mutualisme*) [On mutualism]

The consequence for the practice of psychoanalysis is that the dimension of the pass is not present on the horizon of the treatment, at some ideal point where the answer will be found at the end point. But it is instead always already there, insofar as each analysand, she or he, comes up against two reals: that the sexual does not achieve any coming together of bodies and of jouissances, and that the presence of women brings to the social and to subjectivity a principle of limitlessness that triggers anxiety. Miller puts at the heart of his text and his presentation "the absence of the signifier woman". It is "the lost signifier" (p.34) of the analytic experience, and we are far from over teasing out all its consequences.

Translation Mia Lalanne

“The subject of the pass: on taking a leap into the open air of history”

Lacan Circle of Australia
Forum: “Another Lacan” by Jacques-Alain Miller
with Daniel Roy 15/10/2022

Jonathan Redmond

Introduction

Miller’s “Another Lacan” (1980) provides a compass for navigating Lacan’s teaching concerning themes related to the direction of the treatment, the status of the symptom at the end of analysis, the formation of the analyst and the relation of the analyst to the school. For Miller “the pass is and remains one of Lacan’s major advances. It confirms and sums up the fundamentals of his teaching.” The pass is directed to the status of the symptom at the end of analysis which necessarily emphasises the object *a* rather than the signifier - although as we shall see reference to the signifier remains essential. Miller’s paper is useful in presenting “two Lacan’s” – the first and highly successful version which can be orientated around the aphorism the “unconscious is structured like a language;” the second speaks to the pass and questions concerning the “separation from the object petit *a*” and the analysts formation. Both versions of Lacan are essential to study informing the overall architecture of the symptom; however, Miller, at the time of writing the paper, is bemused that the first version of Lacan had “triumphed” at the expense of the second Lacan. In one sense the paper is a correction to this tendency – he states that to emphasise the logic of the signifier and formations of the unconscious at the expense of the object petit *a* and the logic of fantasy *disorients* analytic discourse. Hence *Another Lacan* orients us to the moment of the pass

which concerns the separation of the object *a* and the subject’s altered relation to their symptom – the passage to the pass formalises the end of analysis and how the formation of the analyst.

My comments today are focused on issues arising from the separation of the object *a* which concerns my title. I was recently listening to a podcast on the current civil uprising on streets across Iran and the commentator stated, paraphrasing Walter Benjamin, that while the current revolutionary potential of this protest was unknown it was clear that at this moment civilians were taking a “leap in the open air of history”. I found this poetic turn of phrase poignant and have tried to put it to use in relation to the pass and more particularly how the separation of object *a* concerns subjective history, destiny and the possibility of a new or different relation to the Other, the object and the signifier. To develop this thread, I will first articulate some key points from Miller’s “Another Lacan” to situation my discussion.

The pass

The pass is a solution to the end of analysis and this this solution is orientated around separation from the object *a*. Miller states that Lacan’s pass is a major contribution to analytic discourse – in terms of the formation of the analyst what is at stake is “the transformation of analysand into analyst, a reversal from one position to the other...The question thus

concerns not only the analyst, but also, and foremost, the analysand” (1980). The pass is fundamental to the analyst’s sense of their own formation because there is a transformation of the symptom. In Miller’s text, “Schizophrenic irony” (2002) he ends the paper by stating “before the psychotic, before the delirious one, do not forget that you too, that you were delirious as an analysand, that you too spoke of what does not exist.” In sense the pass provides a framework for considering the direction of treatment in relation to the separation of the object a and the consequences this has for each subject’s caught up in their symptom delirium that is rooted in the object a . Miller provides the following summary concerning key features of the pass:

for Lacan the end of analysis is played out at the level of the fantasy, specifically on the level of the object petit a . The pass is Lacan’s name for the disjunction of the subject and object brought about by the analytic experience, for the fracturing or breaking of the fantasy. The fundamental structure of the fantasy is not the same as the structure of the formations of the unconscious. Relying on the latter, the analytic discourse reveals the former-and therefore consists of the correlated pairs $S1 \rightarrow S2$ and $\$ \rightarrow a$ (1980).

Here we have an implicit reference to the architecture of the symptom – the symptom is formed by both signifiers linked to the symbolic (i.e. $S1 \rightarrow S2$) and to the object ($\$ \rightarrow a$). Moreover, the symptom as a formation of the unconscious comes to be articulated via signifiers spoken in the “blah, blah” of analysis; however, it is through this process that the fantasy can be constructed. Miller gives another perspective on this twofold distinction with reference to desire and the object. Here he states:

the subject of desire is a drifter, but it is tethered to a fixed point, to a stake about which it drifts in a circle... We have here a dimension of the analytic experience the phenomenology of which is surely different from that of metonymy. There one lets oneself go with the drifting subject, here we emphasize its being tied (1980).

The analysand’s symptom formation is tied to the object – Lacan’s theory of the desiring subject and the symptom as formation of the unconscious have

a reference point tied to the object a . The passage to a separation of the object a through a staging of the symptom in the analytic setting constitutes the analytic drama of the cure.

The pass and the sexual non-relation

We can reconstruct the passage to the pass and the drama of the end of analysis via the status of the sexual relation. The first key point worth emphasising is that Lacan’s develops the pass with reference to Freud’s comments on the different forms of impasse encountered by men and women in analysis. For Freud, analysis ends in a structural impasse of the castration complex – for men this is the fear of castration and for women it is penis envy. In Freudian theory, the “resolution” of the Oedipus complex assumes castration and as such remains a structural loss and impasse in analysis in terms of an attempt to reclaim a lost drive satisfaction via the substitutive satisfaction of symptom. Miller asks whether the pass is beyond the castration complex? In answering this he takes a detour into the theory of sexualisation – as Lacan develops from Freud – with a focus on the sexual non-relation. Miller states that “the castration complex lies underneath the absence of the sexual relation and more specifically the absence of signifiers to articulate the meaning to be a man or a woman” (1980). He states that the “question of the end of analysis cannot be posed in terms of the sexual relation which does not exist” and that “the pass has to be posed in relation to the sexual non-relation” (1980). I take this to mean that the end of analysis can’t be considered in terms of any reference to either a normative relation between the sexes or an assumption of a social ideal concerning the meaning of what it is to be a man or a woman; rather, directing the pass to the sexual non-relation orients analysis to the object a and the real. Miller summarises this in the following way:

Two sexes are strangers to one another, exiled from each other. But the symmetry implied by this statement is slightly misleading. In fact, the missing sexual knowledge concerns only the female. If nothing is known of the other sex, it is primarily because the unconscious knows nothing of woman. Whence the form: The Other sex meaning the sex which is Other, and absolutely so. Indeed, there is a signifier for the male and that is all we’ve got. This is

what Freud recognized: just one symbol for the libido, and this symbol is masculine; the signifier for the female is lost. Lacan is thus entirely Freudian in stating that woman as a category does not exist (1980).

For Miller, Lacan’s thesis concerning the sexual non-relation and in particular the affirmation that women as a category that does not exist constitutes a passage to the creation of the pass. Miller states “the question of the end of analysis thereby finds a solution in a way that was previously inconceivable. The solution appears on the side of the object” (1980).

The sexual non-relation and separation from the object *a*

Lacan develops the solution to the end of analysis via the pass which fundamentally is orientated to the separation of the object. However, we might say that the passage towards separation from the object *a* is orientated towards the real that is veiled by the semblant, a veil affirming the existence of the sexual relation. Miller clarifies this by stating that “the object is that which stops up the relation that does not exist, thereby giving it the consistency of the fantasy. In as much as the end of analysis supposes the advent of an absence, it depends on breaking through the fantasy and on the separation of the object” (1980). Thus, the subject’s passage to separation of the object *a* occurs via an encounter with the real; this encounter entails that the semblants supporting the existence of the sexual relation qua fantasy are shaken and fall.

Throughout “Another Lacan” Miller comes back to the proposition that the solution to the pass lies on the side of the object. This solution asks us to question the status of the symptom both at the end of analysis and in the formation of the analyst. As I have been suggesting throughout, the object *a* is the reference supporting the symptom. To this end, it is the symptom that is supported by fantasy. In the paper “Interpretation in reverse” Miller states that “we must abandon the symptom as reference and use the fantasy instead, to think the symptom from the fantasy” (2007). I find this statement most useful for several reasons. It highlights how the symbolic architecture of symptom, the signifiers at play in the formation of the unconscious are supported by the fantasy and the object *a*. Moreover, it highlights how the object functions as an obturator

“mediating” the hole of the real in the symbolic. In this sense, the object *a* as fantasmatic obturator, has a specific function in relation to the real – that is as a stop up, a block of an opening, or a close of a breach. Miller states that the object *a* is not the real but has a unique “topological locus” inso-much as we encounter the object *a*, a semblant of being as we move from the symbolic toward the real. Miller’s comments on the object *a* in his paper “Schizophrenic irony” (2002) helps me to understand the function of the object *a* in relation to the real and the fantasy. To surmise, he states that “the object *a* finds its place in the fantasy, the fantasy holds the place of the real for the subject.”

Taking this venture concerning the object *a* further I would like to make some additional points from Miller’s paper “Schizophrenic irony”. This paper has implications for the pass due its commentary on the function of object *a* in relation to the subject’s symptomatic delirium. He states that “the secret of the universal clinic of delirium is that the reference is always empty” (2002). Here the notion of reference has a link to the philosophy of language and logic developed throughout the 20th century. However, Lacan’s “linguistic turn” is not philosophical or semantic but a turn to the object *a* as empty reference. That is, the subject’s signifiers find signifying reference in the object *a*. Miller states that:

what comes from Lacan is the introduction of a reference of a new type which is born of the articulation itself, that is, of the linking of signifiers to one another. This is not a reference that would already be there and that one could represent, or about which one could say "there is not." This reference of a new type, born of the articulation of signifier to signifier, is what Lacan called "the object *a*" (2002).

At the end of and analysis Lacan’s invitation of the pass is for analysts to bear witness to the consequences born out from separation of the object *a* – this separation functions as a *constitutive loss* inso-much as the subject’s symptom or destiny is altered and deformed yet the object *a* necessarily remains in place.

Separation of the object *a*, constitutive loss and the formation of the analyst

Recent comments on the pass in September at an NLS conversation in Lausanne highlight the topic

of constitutive loss concerning the end of analysis. We might say that the breaking of fantasy has an effect on the obturator object - the subject experiences a new response from the real breaking the mediating filter of fantasy that had hitherto functioned to support symptomatic repetition and articulation of destiny. The pass is built on the encounter between signifier and the real – the paradoxes of this are worth briefly mentioning and returns me to the title of my paper, where the subject of the pass can “leap into the open air of history”. The pass as a dimension of encounter is paradoxical in the sense that the real - which as Roy states “is not made of words and signifiers” (2022) - is the locus of encounter for the subject producing a new kind of object and word.

Here my final comments on constitutive loss and the pass are oriented to Roy’s response to Clément “who asks the question of whether at the end of the analysis one passes from the hole to the void and wonders if there is a link between the void and the Witz of the pass” (2022). Roy’s response is in reference to Miller’s text “Four the pass” where he quotes “The device of the pass recovers at the level of the signifier the moment of the pass, the essence of which is the object”. Roy discusses the essential component of “separation” in the separation from the object a . He states “separation, in the witz, of jouissance when it passes to the saying, is the moment when the real function of the object becomes apparent”. This passage of separation from the object to “the saying” is constitutive of a response from the real. Roy goes on to state:

in the moments of the pass, there is indeed something that is lost and, at the same time, that is not lost: there is something of the hole from which the unexpected signifier emerges, the good word that arrives at that moment. There is loss, of course, but also this moment of crystallization, of flash, of witz. There is something that falls, something that is hollowed

out, and from this emptiness emerges a new element that perforates all that (2022).

The “good word” as a response from the real is constitutive of a new kind of object and signifier replacing the fallen object. Here we should be reminded of Lacan’s comments on Joyce regarding the epiphany and that Joyce, via this writing, took analysis to its furthest point (without entering into analysis). Roy takes this point up further stating:

There are multiple “signifying epiphanies” in a cure, but there is a particularity of this type of phenomenon that articulates in the witz an emptiness and an emergence. This dimension is present in Jacques-Alain Miller’s text on the object: the object is indeed not made of signifiers, but at the same time the object only becomes a separator at the moment when it passes to the saying (2022).

These signifying epiphanies are testaments to moments in the cure where a constitutive loss of the object occurs - both in the new sense of an emptiness and emergence - where the subject of the pass leaps into the *open air of history* via a response from the real; that is to say, the destiny of the subject, the subject hitherto caught up in the symptomatic repetition across a singular network of signifiers link to the object a is fundamentally altered. The pass as an *experience* of constitutive loss is an essential feature of the cure and indexes the transformation of the analysand in analyst. Testimony of the pass provides *a transmission of knowledge to the school* concerning *how analyses end* by isolating the passage to the pass, the effects of subjective deformation and the separation of object a and, the issue of symptomatic remainder. As such, I believe that the pass - despite current debates regarding its status in the school - remains an essential compass in the formation of the analyst and in the work of the school.

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**We're all
Mad here**

Lacan as a reader of Kierkegaard: Repetition's encounter with the Real

Maro Bellou

Lacan warns us: “Do not think that, for as long as I live, you can consider any of my formulas definitive. I still have a few tricks up my sleeve.”¹ One could say that the logic of this statement extends throughout Lacan’s teachings: the concepts he uses never have just the one meaning, but their significance or non-significance varies, depending on context. Where his ideas are concerned, it is not possible to ascribe to them what he termed a “point de capiton”, since Lacan incessantly moves the posts or even overturns his very conceptions. In this paper, we will be dealing with repetition, one of the fundamental concepts of psychoanalysis, a concept to which Lacan always came back, looking at both its good and its reverse side. Specifically, we will examine it from the point of view of a fundamental transition, the transition from the symbolic to the real. We will see how repetition in Lacan intersects with the thinking of Kierkegaard, who – and this is no accident – is present at all stages of Lacan’s teachings. Kierkegaard, who, according to Lacan, was “the most acute of the questioners of the soul”² before Freud, was beset by a problem: “whether repetition is possible, and what it means, whether a thing wins or

loses by being repeated”³. He says that he is “almost paralyzed” in the face of this question; in order to answer it, he resorts to an experiment: he decides to leave for Berlin, which he had visited earlier, to walk in his own steps in order to relive the identical moment of the past and thus find happiness again. Kierkegaard’s project appears here as a philosophy of action, precisely because he responds with an action (the transition to Berlin) that involves himself to the theoretical problem that concerns him so intensely. This is why repetition will not be a theoretical essay but rather the author’s recording of an experimental travelogue.

The self-reflection on his private condition had always been the leavening of Kierkegaard’s philosophical thought. This philosophy clashes with Hegel. In Hegel’s philosophy, the subject is never in the spotlight; priority is given to the System. Conversely, Kierkegaard stubbornly refuses to see himself as a transitory moment in the course of history, whose truth must always be found in a subsequent moment. Faced with the objectivity of the Hegelian Idea, he claims primacy for a subjective being who includes his or her own truth.

1 Jacques Lacan. Conférence sur la psychanalyse et la formation du psychiatre à Sainte-Anne le 10 novembre 1967. <http://www.histoiredelafolie.fr/psychiatrie-neurologie/jacques-lacan-conference-sur-le-psychanalyse-et-la-formation-du-psychiatre-a-sainte-anne-le-10-novembre-1967>

2 S XI, p. 60/59.

3 Søren Kierkegaard, *Repetition and Philosophical Crumbs*, translated by M. G. Piety, New York, Oxford University Press, 2009, p.3.

In Hegel's mind, truth is external to the subject and is based on the Idea. In order to comprehend it, the subject has no option but to follow the historical expressions of the Idea. This is the work of the objective thinker. In Kierkegaard, truth is internal to the subject. Its comprehension is, therefore, the work of the subjective thinker. Kierkegaard's motto is: "Be subjective and then you will find yourselves inside the truth". In Kierkegaard's thinking, philosophy only becomes whole in the singularity of a personal experience. It follows that, for Kierkegaard, the Hegelian System is the sinking of the subject in the object's sleep. Kierkegaard attempts to Wake the subject up, tear it away from the lethargic objective being that may be compared to the existence of a somnambulist and bring it into contact with its interiority and truth, the genuine truth of its singular existence. In truth, Kierkegaard is the first post-modern philosopher: to each their own truth.

The confrontation between the externality of the objective system and the internality of the subjective existence becomes tangible in Kierkegaard's relationship with Regina. This peculiar relationship is at the root of Kierkegaard's entire philosophical project. No thought has ever been more motivated by such a personal affair as that of Kierkegaard and his questioning of who Regina truly is and of the true meaning of his relationship with her. Here is a reminder of some facts: Kierkegaard meets young Regina in May 1837 and they get engaged in September 1840. He, however, almost immediately realizes his mistake. He thus adopts a behavior that is so extreme that it forces Regine to call off their engagement. He loves her so much that he tries to save her from himself. The pretext for the breakup is his melancholy, the legacy of his father, which would have weighed down on his relationship with Regina, making it unlivable. However, as can be seen from Kierkegaard's correspondence, the true motive of the separation is his realization of a personal existential mission: he is made to be a writer and not a husband.

As far as Kierkegaard is concerned, writer and husband are incompatible, as the status of husband entails his submission to the typical obligations of a social institution. These obligations would only cancel his need to turn away from the externality

of the objective institution to the internality of subjective existence. Repetition, as a whole, is one of Kierkegaard's existential answers to the "externality" that Regina embodies. Saying "no" to Regina is the result of his decision to completely break away from Hegelian externality and to once more be the subject he has always been: "I am back to my old self. This 'self', which another would not pick up off the street, is mine again. The schism in my being has been removed. I am whole again. The anxieties of sympathy, which my pride nourished and supported, no longer force splits and separations."⁴ The objective being of a husband is now confronted with the subjective doing of a writer.

Let us go back to Kierkegaard's Berlin travels. The experiment turns out to be a fiasco. For example, it was impossible for Kierkegaard to feel the same spiritual uplift by re-listening to his favorite drama at the opera. The enjoyment he had felt in every respect belongs to the past and there is no possibility of returning to it. He even mentions that, unfortunately, the trip did not reward him for his trouble, because, in reality, he did not need to move from his seat to become convinced that there is no repetition at all. He had verified that "the only thing that repeated itself was that no repetition was possible" and he "became aware of this by having it repeated in every possible way"⁵. Simply, he observes, "one can sit peacefully in one's living-room, when everything is vanity and passes away; then one travels more briskly than if one travelled by train, despite the fact that one is sitting still"⁶. In the end, the anticipation of repetition was overshadowed by a memory.

How exactly does Kierkegaard's work intersect with Lacan's thought? In *Seminar II*, Lacan construes Kierkegaard's repetition as an attempt to answer the question "how and why everything which pertains to an advance essential to the human being must take the path of a tenacious repetition"⁷. This question posed by Kierkegaard intersects with the query of psychoanalysis; Lacan expressly refers to it as "the track of our problem". It is a question that is reformulated as follows: why is man a being of repetition? In this early stage of Lacan's teachings, "it has all to do with the intrusion of the symbolic register". Man is a being of repetition because he reproduces the

4 S. Kierkegaard, *idem*, p. 74.

5 *Idem*, p. 38.

6 *Idem*, p. 42.

7 *S II*, p. 88/110.

discourse of the Other: the word of the Other that I reproduce is "the discourse of the circuit in which I am integrated. I am one of the links"⁸ in the Other's chain.

Lacan uses the father's discourse as an example of an Other; this example is not random, if we take into account Kierkegaard's life and, especially the relationship to his father. In Kierkegaard's mind, his father's legacy was his sin. Well might we ask: what was his father's sin? When Kierkegaard's father, Michael, was young, it so happened that, once when he was looking after some sheep, worn down from loneliness, cold, and hunger, he cursed God for failing to come to his aid. Kierkegaard's father was a deeply religious person, and, from that moment, he never stopped fearing godly retribution and believing that, as he himself was not punished during his lifetime, the sin would be passed on to his children. Specifically, he was convinced that none of his children would live longer than Jesus, i.e., 33 years. Although five of the family's children died before their father, his prediction did not come true for the two who lived beyond that fatidic limit.

Kierkegaard was one of those two children and was the seventh and last child from his father's second marriage. The very existence of this marriage constitutes another sin of the father. Michael's first wife died two years after they wed, leaving him childless. Shortly after, he married a young woman who worked as a servant in the house he shared with his first wife. Their first child was born eight months after the first wife's death, proof of Michael's adultery. Indeed, Kierkegaard suspected that his mother was raped by his father while she was still a virgin. Her pregnancy served to speed up the wedding. Much later, in *Seminar XXI*, Lacan will refer to the relationship of Kierkegaard's parents, making the following comment: "The relations lived by Kierkegaard in question are those of a knot never avowed, which is that of a faulty [even sinful] father (père à la faute). It is not a matter of his own experience, but of that of he who in relation to him is found to occupy the place of the father. At the same time, this place of the father is found to be problematic..."⁹.

Let us go back to the discourse of the father mentioned by Lacan in *Seminar II* as an example

of the reproduction of the Other's discourse: "I am condemned to reproduce them [the mistakes of my father] because I am obliged to pick up again the discourse he bequeathed to me, not simply because I am his son, but because one can't stop the chain of discourse, and it is precisely my duty to transmit it in its aberrant form to someone else"¹⁰. That is to say, it is a kind of automaton. I do not reproduce the discourse just because I am a son, as this reproduction is not the result of a biological reality. The reproduction, instead, goes beyond biological order, precisely because it is due to my being a part of the unbreakable chain of discourse, of which I am but a single link.

Consequently, in *Seminar II*, Lacan thinks of repetition only in relation to the power the symbolic exerts over the subject and attempts to explain it as the result of the subject's membership of a language system. Repetition is to be construed as "a circular process of the exchange of speech"¹¹. Repetition does not fall under the purview of the biological balancing and harmonization mechanisms; therefore, repetition arises from beyond the pleasure principle as a characteristic of the peculiar form of the being called the "parlêtre".

In *Seminar II* Lacan, following Freud, describes two different structures of human experience. Following Kierkegaard's example, he terms the first one "archaic". This is the structure of reminiscence, in which man recognizes the world and its objects because he has already encountered them. He calls the second structure "the conquest" and finds it to be founded on repetition. This distinction is highlighted in Kierkegaard's repetition: "repetition is a decisive expression for what 'recollection' was for the Greeks. Just as they taught that all knowledge is recollection, thus will modern philosophy teach that life itself is a repetition."¹²

What, therefore, is the role of repetition? This role becomes clear if we follow the Freudian argument of the lost object. The pleasure principle is what pushes the subject to unceasingly seek that first experience of satisfaction that they remember having received from the object. Each new object, however, only partially grants the pleasure received

8 S II, p. 89/112.

9 Lacan J., *Seminaire XXI*, R.S.I., lesson 18/2/1975. Translated by Jack W. Stone.

10 S II, p. 89/112.

11 S II, p. 98/123.

12 S. Kierkegaard, *Idem*, p. 3.

from the primordial object. It is this partial pleasure that pushes the subject to forever repeat their search for the lost object of this original pleasure, which they however will never experience again. Freud insists that what we find, driven by nostalgia for the lost object, is never what we were looking for. It is the rediscovery itself that highlights the impossibility of repetition because what we find will never be, nor could be, the same object. The lost object is lost forever.

Along the same lines, in *Seminar IV*, Lacan attempts an explicit philosophical transcription of the distinction between reminiscence and repetition: if Platonic reminiscence is the rediscovery of pre-formed knowledge, repetition is the impossible to assuage¹³. Therefore, the difference between reminiscence and repetition consists in the fact that the reminiscence refers to objects that are already and always present there in their objective wholeness, whereas repetition refers to objects that are constituted through the work of the subject itself, i.e., by means of the incessantly repeated search for the lost pleasure object. It follows that, while reminiscence recalls an already structured pre-existing world, repetition is the very procedure of the constitution of that world. Repetition is precisely what constitutes the "world of objects" for the subject.¹⁴ This idea is fully in line with Kierkegaard's thought: "This is the reason there is a world. The world consists of repetition. Repetition is actuality and the earnestness of existence."¹⁵

Lacan remarks that the object first appears in Freud in this form. Thus, Freudian rediscovery is defined as a loss synonymous with the impossibility of repetition. This is exactly where Lacan locates, in *Seminar XVII*, the "kinship" between Kierkegaard and Freud. For both there is no return of the same: any attempt at substitution ultimately leads to failure. Lacan's answer to the question that troubled Kierkegaard (whether repetition is possible, and what it means, whether a thing wins or loses by being repeated) is given explicitly: "what is repeated cannot be anything other, in relation to what it repeats, than a loss."¹⁶ But what does loss consist of? It is always, Lacan explains, a loss of *jouissance*.

Kierkegaard provides us with an eloquent example regarding the loss of *jouissance* during the

repetition to which Lacan refers. Indeed, he teaches us that the loss of *jouissance* may also refer to a work of art. Specifically, the example consists in the play that Kierkegaard attends in Berlin, where he is astonished to observe that the pleasure he expected has been lost forever: "I held out for half an hour and then finally left, thinking that repetition was impossible. This made a deep impression on me. [...] I had believed, however, that the pleasure this theatre had provided me was of an enduring sort. One had to have learned to be humbled and yet aided by existence before one could appreciate this kind of humour, and this seemed to me to suggest that such appreciation would be permanent. Could existence be even more disappointing than a bankrupt! [...] The comical is the least one can ask; is not even that capable of repetition?"¹⁷ This is where an aesthetic theory for the texture of the work of art arises: the work of art is not repeated, the feelings one experiences whenever one encounters it are different. This is because the work of art itself is different each time, even for the same observer.

After Kierkegaard, we also encounter the idea of the impossibility of repetition in literature: in 1925, Fitzgerald will use it as the foundation of one of his most important, if not the most important, novels, *The Great Gatsby*. The novel's hero is obsessed with the desire to consummate his lost love with Daisy and bring the past back to life, as if no time at all had gone by. By indulging in this absolute certainty, however, he stubbornly refuses to accept the impossibility of repetition, the impossibility of reliving a pleasure lost in the past. It is this very stubborn refusal that will engineer his end. At this point, let us quote a remarkable passage, in which the narrator and Gatsby's friend tells him the following with regard to his past love story with Daisy: "I wouldn't ask too much of her," I ventured. "You can't repeat the past." "Can't repeat the past?" he cried incredulously. "Why of course you can!" He looked around him wildly, as if the past were lurking here on the shadow of his house, just out of reach of his hand. "I'm going to fix everything just the way it was before," he said, nodding determinedly. "She'll see." He talked a lot about the past, and I gathered that he wanted to recover something, some idea

13 S. IV, p. 7-8/15-16.

14 S. II, p. 125.

15 S. Kierkegaard, *idem*, p. 4.

16 S. XVII, p. 46/51.

17 S. Kierkegaard, *idem*, p. 36-37.

of himself perhaps, that had gone into loving Daisy."¹⁸ We could, therefore, claim that *The Great Gatsby* is the dramatization of the impossibility to repeat a pleasure that has been lost to time.

The topic of the impossibility of repetition is also present as one of the central patterns of another piece of literary work which could be characterized as a modern version of the feminine *Gatsby*. Specifically, it is the novel with the title *Simple passion* of Annie Ernaux who was recently awarded with the Nobel prize in literature. The story is about the intense passion the person narrator has for a man with whom she had a sexual affair. The woman is deeply marked by her encounter with him, an event which divides her life between a before and an after. Her most profound desire is to repeat the history of this encounter: "During my spells of insomnia, I would take myself back to Venice, where I had spent a week's holiday just before meeting A. I tried to recall my timetable and the places I had visited; [...] I would enumerate the things that were there, one after the other, attempting to chronicle the contents of a place where I had stayed before my story with A. had started, as if an exhaustive inventory would enable me to relive the events [...] Throughout this period, all my thoughts and all my actions involved the repetition of history. I wanted to turn the present back into the past, opening on to happiness". Here also it is quite obvious that repetition is related with the impossible: namely, the impossibility of turning the present back to the past which is lost forever. Let us remark that what is impossible here is not the revival of the past in the present but a kind of projection of the present in the past in a way that the former is fully assimilated to the latter. This is a remarkable reversal.

Let us return to Lacan and to a significant reversal that takes place in *Seminar XVII*. The extremely interesting thing here is that, in Lacan's text, *jouissance* is explicitly related to repetition: "What necessitates repetition is *jouissance*."¹⁹ While, until recently, in Lacan's teachings repetition had been something required by signifying articulation, the entire *Seminar XVII* aims to prove that we can only think of repetition against the horizon of *jouissance*. It is now *jouissance* that reigns supreme and not the signifier.

Repetition no longer arises as the insistence of the signifier that returns from the discourse of the Other, but as the obsessive return of the reminiscence of a lost *jouissance*. Lacan himself mentions that "Repetition is the precise denotation of a trait [...] with the little stick, with the element of writing, the element of a trait insofar as it is the commemoration of an irruption of *jouissance*."²⁰ It follows that repetition is the commemoration and, at the same time, the failure to retrieve the part of *jouissance* that was lost during its "transcription" into the chain of signifiers. Lacan's discovery in *Seminar XVII* may be summarized as follows: it is impossible to symbolically retrieve *jouissance* as a whole. Something always gets lost, and it is this very loss that creates the need for repetition.

In his text with the title *La psychanalyse mise à nu par son célibataire*,²¹ Jacques Alain Miller points out the significant difference between Lacan's first teaching and the late Lacan in *Seminar XVII*: in his early teaching Lacan thinks of the signifying chain as being oriented towards truth, while in his late teaching he thinks of the signifying chain as being oriented towards *jouissance*. Knowledge, therefore, is no longer a means to the truth but a means of *jouissance*. This shift presupposes a sort of slippage from the signifier to the mark: while the signifier is pure signification, the mark is both signification and a reminder of *jouissance*. The signifier itself is no longer a true meaning but bears the mark of a primordial *jouissance*. It internalizes *jouissance* and attempts to endlessly annihilate it. We must insist on this reversal from the signifier oriented towards truth and the signifier oriented towards *jouissance*: in this way the symbolic loses its primary character. What is of primary importance now is *jouissance* to the degree that it is concentrated in the mark. Consequently, according to Miller, while in his early teaching Lacan thinks of repetition as starting from the symbolic, in his late teaching Lacan thinks of the symbolic as starting from repetition that emerges from the fixation of the signifier to *jouissance* (with the mediation of the mark-trait *unaire*).

We may say that the reversal that takes place in *Seminar XVII* also brings about a sudden change in the way in which the question of the subject is raised:

18 Francis Scott Fitzgerald. *The Great Gatsby*, Oxford University Press, 2008, p. 88.

19 S. XVII, p. 45/51.

20 S. XVII, p. 77/89.

21 Jacques-Alain Miller. *La psychanalyse mise à nu par son célibataire*. Bulletin de NLS, Nouvelle École lacanienne, 2007, pp.77-94.

the question no longer refers to the subject's relationship with the symbolic in which it is immersed, but to the subject's relationship with what fails to enter the symbolic. This is what Lacan calls "plus-de-jouir" (surplus jouissance). This shift has consequences for the way in which one conceives repetition: while, initially, repetition is but the expression of my dependence on the symbolic, in a second phase repetition shows the way in which I relate to what insists on remaining outside of the symbolic field, i.e., the real. The way I relate to the real is marked by the impossibility of repetition: I cannot say it, but I can never stop repeating it, and failing to repeat it.

In *Écrits* and, specifically, in "On My Antecedents", Lacan reveals, with a reference to himself, the Lacanian project in *Seminar XVII*: it is a "reversed reprisal of the Freudian project"²². My earlier remarks help formulate a hypothesis with regard to the nature of this project: instead of starting from the pleasure principle, i.e., from the symbolic to reach to the "beyond" of this beginning, we choose as our starting point the masochistic jouissance which opens to the death drive. The Lacanian reversal consists precisely in the fact that we, henceforward, must think of the pleasure principle as starting from jouissance and not vice versa. This reversal can actually be found in Freud's text *Beyond the pleasure principle*, in which he corrects his earlier theory and mentions that "masochism could be primary."²³ Lacan highlights this Freudian remark when, in *Écrits*, he refers to masochism as a "primary process." The example of the masochist, to which Lacan refers repeatedly in this *Seminar XVII*, crystallizes "the mark's affinity with jouissance of the body itself."²⁴ The masochist is someone who knows very well how to draw pleasure from pain, deviating from the sphere of influence of the pleasure principle. One is not simply occupied by the big Other; this occupation is rather inscribed in an obvious way on his flesh. This mark on the masochist's skin is precisely the clinical imprint of "the commemoration of an irruption of jouissance".

We must understand that, henceforth, repetition is no longer an expression of the pleasure principle,

but relates to the search for jouissance. In fact, it is jouissance that places repetition in a field beyond the pleasure principle and therefore in the outer limits of the symbolic order. Lastly, jouissance, because it removes repetition from the "network of signifiers", brings to light its bond with luck (tuché) as opposed to the automaton.

We know that, in *Seminar XI*, Lacan borrows from Aristotle the term tuché, which, however, he translates as the "the encounter with the real."²⁵ The real, Lacan notes, is "beyond the automaton, the return, the coming-back, the insistence of the signs, by which we see ourselves governed by the pleasure principle. The real is what always lies behind the automaton." It should be noted that what is said here about the real is absolutely true of repetition. One only has to replace the word real with the word repetition in the previous quotation to see that the logic of the Lacanian text as a whole is based on this very possibility of mutually replacing these two terms.

What is it, however, that, according to Lacan, allows us and even leads us to think of repetition as the real and the real as repetition? It is the category of the impossible. Repetition does not indicate a present that is tailor-made to the measurements of the past, but a present that is tailor-made to its own measurements: this is what Lacan means when, in *Seminar XI*, he affirms that "repetition demands the new."²⁶ We can observe that this Lacanian claim masterfully sums up what Kierkegaard calls the "dialectic of repetition."²⁷ According to such a dialectic, repetition is never the reproduction of a pre-existing record: what is repeated has been, otherwise it could not be repeated; but the fact that it has been, makes repetition something new. We are here very close to the Lacanian "economy of the real", which, as stated in *Seminar XI*, "admits something new, which is precisely the impossible."²⁸ In other words, repetition opens up to the real because it introduces us to the impossible.

In this paradoxical field that is defined by the concept of the impossible, Kierkegaard's repetition intersects, "comme par hasard", with the Lacanian real. What is repeated, therefore, meets the real,

22 Ec. p. 53/68.

23 Freud, p. 83.

24 S. XVII, p. 49/55.

25 S. XI, p. 53/53.

26 Idem, p. 61/59.

27 Kierkegaard, idem, p. 19.

28 S. XI, p. 167/152.

which is, however, never on time and incessantly calls for a record that is failing. We know that in *Seminar XX* the impossible is defined as that which “never ceases not being written.”²⁹ This is a record which, despite the fact that it impinges on the impossibility of its being made real, is repeated again and again, encore et encore. Although the real is not named, in light of this last observation it would be impossible to avoid the temptation to claim that the title of *Seminar XX*, *Encore*, is the “name” of the real.

Concluding remarks

We see, therefore, that the concept of repetition in Lacan is transubstantiated as his thought evolves. In his early teachings, repetition arises from the laws of the symbolic order. Later, in *Seminar XI*, Lacan introduces a fission of repetition between the automaton and tuché, that is, between the symbolic and the real.

In the symbolic order, we may speak of reproduction, but not of repetition: “reproduce” always means converting something into a signifier. This conversion is impossible in the case of repetition; hence repetition is not identical to reproduction.

Repetition expresses the fact that it is impossible for what is repeated to enter the order of the signifier. The signifier is reproduced, while the real is repeated. This distinction lays the ground for the reversal that takes place in *Seminar XVII*: repetition now breaks away from the signifier and refers to the “return of jouissance”. In the USA in 1975 Lacan states that the only definition of the real is that it is the impossible. As he says, “When something finds itself characterized as impossible, it is only there that is the real.”³⁰ Therefore repetition, insofar as it is impossible, is the very ground of the real.

29 S. XX, p. 87.

30 Conferences in North American Universities: December 2, 1975 at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, published in *Scilicet*, 1975, n° 6-7, pp. 53-63. Translated by Jack W. Stone.

A clinic of links and limits

LCA Conference November 26, 2022.

Kate Briggs

On the radio earlier this year I heard Shane Howard, the lead singer of Goanna band describe waking up in Central Australia some years ago to realize what it is to be on someone else's land. He also commented that the phrase 'living on borrowed time' in a central desert language translated as: 'standing the wrong way'.¹ 'Living the wrong way' or standing in the wrong way is associated with being out of place. A few months earlier I heard that some indigenous elders were starting to illustrate the void in paintings to the consternation of others who considered this too dangerous for white fellas to see. That something – a void- can be marked (like the empty set in the series of counting) and then covered indicates its function in knowledge. Freud had noted the asemantic void at the navel of the dream. We can see the networks of signifiers presented in a dream rather like the marks on a painting serving to surround and cover this real. When as a void it emerges through the fabric of social links, casting a shadow of the object over the ego as Freud wrote in his paper on melancholy,² the subject unmoored from a signifier or representation that might represent them in the light of satisfaction, may experience

an extimacy with regard to being and life, feeling outside, excluded from the everyday life of others.

These aspects of time are an effect of the subject's link with the object and how that link is clothed. Whether one feels grounded standing (or living) the 'right way' or feels dissociated from community in life depends on the proximity of the object and its form. The subject where represented by a signifier that moves in dialectic with others, with other signifiers, can form those marking links around the object that may otherwise threaten to emerge as the asemantic void, a vortex consuming the sense of possibility in life. In this paper I would like to address how these marking links may emerge from the work in analysis. (We hear it in testimonies of the pass, such as those by Anne Lysy and Florencia Shanahan.³) Here I want to address three moments – regarding life, the body, place and what knots them together. First some general comments about the idea of madness.

When we say someone is mad, it is a way of indicating they are in some way outside the social link, not just momentarily but in some more sustained way. Anthropologists cite this explaining when hearing

1 Shane Howard brings Goanna back for national tour, ABC Radio National Breakfast, Tuesday 15/3/2022.

https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/breakfast/shane-howard-brings-goanna-back-together-for-national-tour/13796550?utm_campaign=abc_radionational&utm_content=mail&utm_medium=content_shared&utm_source=abc_radionational

2 Freud, S. Mourning and Melancholia, *Standard Edition* 14, p.249.

3 Anne Lysy, What words. What body, *The Lacanian Review* 9, 2020, pp.75-80, p. 78; Florencia F.C. Shanahan, *Dejar Que Pase*, *The Lacanian Review* 9, pp.95-104, p.103.

voices is culturally normative and when it is not, for example. So what does it say to suggest 'we are all mad here'? That there is a point of *jouissance* and aspects of the impossible unique to each of us, moments the substance of which cannot be shared, contained or covered by a social link. If the substance of these moments cannot be shared, they may nonetheless be contained, social links are connections that help to contain. Wilfred Bion's recognition of this in work with the small groups of returned soldiers in wartime England led Lacan to later advocate the formation of cartels.⁴ So what is a social link?

The title 'a clinic of links and limits' highlights that one depends on the other, a link requires a limit to be able to function or continue to function. Where the limits blow out, the link is liable to collapse. In the clinic of the latter Lacan, we are interested in how the Borromean knot of a subject is woven and may be re woven after a break, which can happen in different structures. The question is how what is unraveled might be returned, restructured, stitched together again, tied back in. The Borromean knot was referred to in chapter 8 of *Seminar XX*, which Miller designates as the beginning of Lacan's later work, is introduced in *The Third* in 1974 and used again in Seminar 23, *The Sinthome*, the following year in December 1975. Here it is designated a link – the Borromean link (Figure 1).⁵

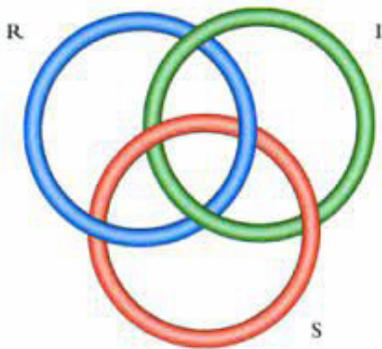


Figure 1, The Borromean link

In two sessions of his seminar from 2008 published under the title 'Everyone is Mad', (in the only volume

of *Culture/Clinic*, 'We are all mad here'), Jacques-Alain Miller spells out that this statement of Lacan's that "Everyone is mad, that is, delusional" was not a reference to the clinic of psychosis.⁶ It is rather a mark of Lacan's later work where the symbolic is no longer given precedence, with the equivalence of the three registers of the symbolic, imaginary and real in the clinic of knotting. This equivalence is illustrated in the diagram above. In *The Third*, for example, Lacan says, "Perhaps, analysis will introduce us to the world as it really is: imaginary. This can only be done by reducing the so-called function of representation, by putting it where it is: namely, in the body".⁷ We are in Kleinian territory with this statement. The idea of paranoia as a primary relation to the Other⁸ is also a Kleinian idea; Lacan pushes it further with an equation of paranoia and personality, a point we shall return to.

In this later clinic, psychosis is no longer seen as an exception and "the category of the 'not-all' provides an alternative to the concept of foreclosure".⁹ Indeed as *jouissance* can never be completely named by a signifier, (not even a Name of the Father as Freud had imagined), the Other is barred and foreclosure is in this way generalized in both neurosis and psychosis. This 'non-deficit approach' to psychosis is a correction, a shift in thinking from the structuralist bent of the 1950's and while Lacan's later work might normalize the delusion of each one, insofar as the ego is on the side of paranoia and personality, this desegregation whereby neurosis is no longer the standard by which others are excluded, does not mean there is a continuity between neurosis and psychosis as there is in the Kleinian field where psychotic anxieties are seen to pervade each of us in a paranoid schizoid phase of development. That we are all paranoid insofar as we have personalities does not mean we all have psychotic structures.¹⁰ Rather the clinical or structural distinction remains, the stigma (hopefully) is lifted, and the question of what allows for stabilization expanded.

The term clinic here refers to the differentiation that there are different types of symptoms and that sometimes symptoms precisely need to be built. This

4 Laurent, E., The real and the group, *Psychoanalytical Notebooks* 33, *The Real and the Social Bond*, 2019, pp. 61-84.

5 Lacan, J., *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book XXIII, The Sinthome*, Cambridge, UK & Malden MA, USA: Polity, 2016, p. 36.

6 Miller, J-A., We are all mad here, *Culture/Clinic*, pp.17-42. P. 39.

7 Lacan, J., The Third, *The Lacanian Review* 7, 2019, pp. 83-108. P. 89.

8 Miller, J-A., Paranoia, Primary relation to the Other, *The Lacanian Review* No 10, 2020, p. 89.

9 Brousse, M.-H., Ordinary psychosis, *The Lacanian Review* 7, 2019, pp.113-118. P. 115.

10 Marret-Maleval, S., We're all mad, but not necessarily paranoids, *TLR* 10, pp.35-39. P. 39.

was the Kleinian know how or savior faire we witness in her case of working with the autistic boy she called Dick or again in Bion's work. I don't subscribe to the content and manner of Kleinian interpretation (where everything is returned or reduced to the idea of attacks on the maternal body) but it seems to me what occurs there is a linking of the living body, sense and symbolic albeit by imposing a discourse of the analyst's own making. Where a metaphorical substitution has not taken place to allow some grounding for the subject, Kleinians speak in terms that introduce an imaginisation of the object and introducing signifiers to mark the subject's place. The problem is that this occurs too much on the side of a fixation of meaning.

In the 1950's Bion addresses what he calls a psychotic part of the personality, evident in particularly intense "Attacks on Linking", the title of a paper from 1957. Following Klein's account of the infant's splitting of its object by the mechanism of projective identification where "parts of the personality are split off and projected into external objects",¹¹ Bion describes what he imagines are "phantasised attacks on the breast as prototype of all attacks on objects that serve as a link and projective identification as the mechanism employed by the psyche to dispose of the ego fragments produced by its destructiveness".¹² He notes that the mechanism of projective identification is something each child needs to have the opportunity to develop and that it can become persecuting where the Other cannot receive or contain it.¹³ He explains that he uses the term 'link' because he wants to discuss "the patient's relationship with a function rather than with the object that subsumes a function". His "concern is not only with the breast, or penis, or verbal thought, but with their function of providing the link between two objects".¹⁴ Now at this point

we could follow Lacan's reading of Freud's paper on *Negation* as a way of critiquing the Kleinian frame as Lacan did throughout the fifties. But let's consider that Lacan's later work shifts to a clinic of semblants which means, says Gueguen, "that human beings can never totally separate the imaginary and symbolic registers, the object itself being a semblant, that is, an imaginary part of the body, symbolically elevated in the fantasy to an equivalent of the real".¹⁵ This is I think also an apt description of Kleinian work. I won't go over Lacanian critiques of the Kleinian frame here – they are well set out by Laurent in a paper from 1999, except to say that Bion's papers are a challenging and strange read trying to sort through his language and his account of the interpretations he makes can be rather shocking both in content and in its apparently confrontational approach. Being a Kleinian he doesn't waste a minute to tell the patient they are thinking of their parents having sex, and in one instance this produces a convulsion in a patient's body. It is exactly what you *would not do* to someone where there aren't signifiers to manage or cover the hole with which the patient is confronted, there where the name of the father doesn't work or where the impossibility of inscribing a sexual relationship in the sense of the sexual non rapport is exposed.¹⁶

Bion notes he is not concerned with typical resistance to interpretations but seeking to isolate what is particular to what he calls "destructive attacks on verbal thought itself".¹⁷ He also notes the examples he gives are taken from the advanced stages of two analyses and that "observations of the patient's disposition to attack the link is simplified because the analyst has to establish a link with a patient and does this by verbal communication and his equipment of psychoanalytical experience".¹⁸ This reference to his 'psychoanalytical equipment' is similar to Lacan's

11 Bion, W., *Attacks on Linking*, *Melanie Klein Today*. Developments in theory and practice. Volume 1. Edited by Elizabeth Bott Spillius. London: Routledge, 1988, pp.87-101. P. 87.

12 Ibid.

13 Ibid., p.98.

14 Ibid., p.95.

15 Guéguen, P-G., Who is Mad and who is not? On differential diagnosis in psychoanalysis. *Culture/Clinic* 1, 2013, pp. 66-85. P. 72.

16 "The nomination of the primal scene is precisely what Lacan seeks to avoid when he says that Melanie Klein installs the Oedipus. He is aiming therewith to make us forget the necessity of naming the primal scene from the beginning and of confronting the psychotic child with an enjoyment which he has no means of symbolising, thus making him suffer all the more." Laurent, E. Rethinking Kleinian Interpretation: What difference does it make, *The Klein-Lacan Dialogues*, Edited by Bernard Burgoune & Mary Sullivan. New York: Other Press, 1999, pp.187-212. P. 190.

17 Bion, *Attacks on linking*, p. 88.

18 Ibid.

reference to his 'little machine' of the Borromean knot.¹⁹ Lacan indeed comments that "the imaginary, the symbolic, and the real are made to help those in this mob who follow me make their way in analysis".²⁰

Reading Bion's paper, along with Lacan's *The Third* and *Seminar X*, provides a way of thinking through the function of links and limits and the role interpretation can play in touching the fixation of jouissance that cause suffering. Here I will take some points from the latter before referring to the *reconstitution of the link* set out in the last chapter of *Seminar XXIII*. This addresses how jouissance and 'bits of the real' (which I think is what Bion's work identifies) may be pacified as the signifiers that point to them are identified, isolated and encouraged to exist, while imaginary traces of the subject other – social bonds are woven in and over as the metaphor of weaving conveys. This is to say the imaginary has an important role, as becomes evident in Lacan's later work, where the Borromean knot throws light on, helps us see, the "unique structure of the singular invention for knotting oneself to life".²¹ This is also to say there is no natural relation between life and subjectivity in the speaking being. "There could even be as" as Paloma Blanco Díaz noted "a certain antagonism between these two terms, requiring some sentiment, an imaginary to link them together, to join them".²² This function of linking is a facet of highlight in the Borromean clinic where it touches directly on the question of how to knot oneself to life.

Defining a symptom: there is *Nothing more real than life*

If we look at the diagram of the Borromean knot in planar form from *The Third* (Figure 2), we see life and the symptom both designated in the field of the real. "How did I come to write the word life at the level of the circle of the real?" Lacan asks. It is, he says, "because, apart from this vague expression that consists in speaking of enjoying" life [*jouir de la vie*], "we clearly know nothing about" it.²³

The unconscious and the drive set psychoanalysis apart from other practices and theories of knowledge;

the subject and the object a , to which the unconscious and the drive be reduced, are associated with 'fragmentation' and 'breakdown' as "they go against any accord"²⁴ The subject identified as a knowing subject cannot be united with either the unconscious or the drive and this want of being with regard to knowledge may be articulated as a complaint about

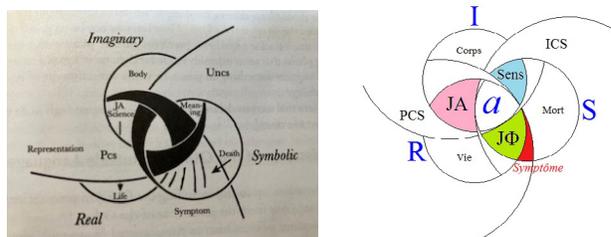


Figure 2

knowing how to be a person or as a complaint about life itself, the phenomena of living. The impossibility of life, where there is a struggle to hold a place in existence, takes many forms.

A patient complains that no one, not her parents, and particularly not her mother had taught her 'how to be a person'. This might sound like a call to a missing S1, a call to a trait taken as a signifier from the speech of the Other that might represent her in the place of the ego ideal, a place where she could see herself seen as worthy of love. As she returns to particular scenes regarding her position as a child in relation to her parents, the jouissance marking the idea of the parental couple left her too full - left her, at least momentarily, without a lack to orient access to her own desire. The sense of being excluded is not, however, a sense of being outside life. It is rather a form of defense faced with this jouissance – "to be there only in the form of an absence"²⁵ particularly when trying to make sense of the nonexistence of sexual rapport.

The enigma that joins the subject's life to the couple that produced her can be marked as a trauma through the effects of speech. Where "there is life but not yet a subject", and that existence is *not* inscribed in the Other, there can be a hole, that of the desire

19 Lacan, J., The Lacanian Phenomena, *The Lacanian Review* 9, p.35.

20 Lacan, J., The Third, *The Lacanian Review* 7, 2019, pp. 83-108. p. 87.

21 Blanco Díaz, P., Editorial, Discontinuity-Continuity. From the Oedipal Clinic to the Borromean Clinic, *Papers* 7, No. 3, 2018, p.2.

22 Ibid.

23 Lacan, J., The Third, *The Lacanian Review* 7, p. 106.

24 Miller, J.-A., We are all mad here, *Culture/Clinic*, p.21

25 Miller, J.-A., We are all mad here, *Culture/Clinic*, p.23.

to live.²⁶ This is what the ‘trauma of birth’ denotes in a way. The struggle can also be tied by an inaugural knot regarding how the subject’s existence *is* inscribed in the Other – illustrated by Sophie Gayard for example in her account of the effect of the words said by her father in response to her cry as an infant: ‘I wanted to throw you out the window’ reverberating in to be thrown, to hate, to be silent. Registering the homophonic repetition of these words in French (*je tais,...*) and the jouissance they carry, lets her enter analysis.²⁷ In analysis through the repetitions carried in speech as it is addressed to another, fixations of jouissance may be recognised and distilled in the letters of each subject’s *lalangue*.

Miller pinpoints the disturbance occurring “at the inmost juncture of the subject’s sense of life” from the aspect of three externalities: social, bodily and subjective.²⁸ Ordinary psychosis is characterized by difficulties with the social link, where social disconnection is marked in a particular way or where the strangeness of the body is more pronounced than in hysteria. He comments that differential diagnosis here is a matter of tone: it is a ‘clinic of tonality’ where one registers a tone that “exceeds the possibilities of hysteria” which is “constrained by the limits of neurosis,” it’s limited by the minus phi, the function of phallic signification in determining a lack, a subtraction of jouissance. He says that “in spite of the rebellion and disarray, hysteria is always constrained, whereas”...“you feel the infinite in the gap present in the relation” of the subject of psychosis to his or her body.²⁹ Moreover, he adds that “the inmost disturbance is a gap where the body is un-wedged, where the subject needs some tricks to re-appropriate his own body, where the subject is led to invent” a bond “to tie his body to itself.”³⁰ For example, an analysand uses a series of tattoos to remind her that she is worthy of love – the marking is there to both protect the body ego and to produce it as a protective shield for the subject. So when people testify to a void they

experience in themselves we can consider whether it is a hysterical void on the side of the barred subject in neurosis or a hole on the side of psychosis.³¹ Where the sense of a void, emptiness or vagueness that might also be found in neurosis takes on a non-dialectisable quality, a ‘special fixity’, and where a structure of neurosis isn’t identified, it may, as Miller sets out, be a dissimulated, veiled or ordinary psychosis. In addition to the subjective externality evident in the fixity of a non-dialectical quality of the void, one may notice the fixity of an identification with the object as waste. This identification is not symbolic but real as “it is without metaphor”. The subject may transform himself into a reject, neglecting himself to the utmost point.”³² Miller calls this “a real identification because the subject goes in the direction of realizing the weight in his own person”.³³ Taking the weight of the object as one’s own body identified in the real as waste dissociates it from the body as a surface of the ego and from the imaginary clothing of the object.

In *Seminar XX*, Lacan notes that “it is only on the basis of the clothing of the self-image that envelops the object cause of desire that the object relation [*rapport objectal*] is most often sustained – this is the very articulation of analysis.”³⁴ (In this passage the words for object relation were *rapport objectal* rather than the usual *relation d’objet*.) These distinctions were at work in *Seminar X* where the object *a* is first formally defined, its presentation manifest as anxiety. With the death of a loved one a hole in the real opens and sets in motion a process of signification as memories are activated and reinscribed in the course of mourning. Freud had described how each memory associated with the person or lost object or ideal is re-inscribed in this process, this work of remembering all the ties and traits associated with the object as lost. In *Seminar X* Lacan describes mourning as “a labour carried out to maintain and sustain all those painstaking links with the aim of restoring the bond with the true object relation, the masked object, the

26 Soler, C., *The era of traumatism*. Rome: Biblink editori, 2005, p. 85. Lacan, J., *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book X, Anxiety*, Cambridge, UK & Malden MA, USA: Polity, 2015, p.327.

27 Gayard, S. *The Lacanian Review* 10. P.96

28 Lacan, *Écrits*, p. 466, cited by Miller, Ordinary psychosis revisited, *Psychoanalytical Notebooks* 19, p. 162.

29 Miller, J.-A., *ibid.* p. 157.

30 *Ibid.* p. 156.

31 *Ibid.* p.148.

32 *Ibid.*

33 *Ibid.*

34 Lacan, J., *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book XX, Encore*, New York & London: Norton & Co, 1998, p. 92.

object *a* – for which thereafter a substitute” can be found.³⁵ He is emphasizing that the aim in mourning is to maintain “the bonds whereby desire is suspended, not from the object *a*, but from *i(a)*”, the imaginary clothing of the object, in the form of the specular body image which as we know is initially authenticated by the Other in the mirror stage. Freud describes how the libido invested in the lost object eventually through this work of mourning returns to the ego allowing for reinvestment in another or in other aspects of life. In melancholia, however, the subject, says Lacan:

has to have it out with the object...[and as the *object a* is]...usually masked beneath the *i(a)* of narcissism and misrecognized in its essence, [this] means that the melancholic necessarily passes through, as it were, his own image. Initially he attacks this image so as to reach, within it, the *object a* that transcends him, whose control escapes him – and whose collapse will drag him into the suicide-rush³⁶

a passage to the act that bypasses the social link and yet occurs within a signifying frame.

The experience of an assault can also produce a hole in the imaginary – where life can't be imagined and a future is at least partially or for the time being foreclosed. The *trauma*, “as Lacan describes it, is that event which makes a hole in the speaking body when they encounter sexuality.”³⁷ Assaults attack the social link and as Marie- Hélène Brousse has pointed out, all assault is sexual. It is aimed in a hatred intended to abolish the subject at that moment and this can change the subject thereafter. Being the subject of such an attack makes it hard to hold a place, as that place of holding a body, has been directly attacked. In a serious assault (though we should note that all assaults are serious) that moment of pure hatred destroys something of and for the subject. It opens a hole in the imaginary, creating a trauma, a break which the subject doesn't want to go back to with the knowledge of what has happened - it is something he or she can't face, which appears as a blank in his or her history. Actually recognizing that something severe happened there that knocked them from the

place that they had held is a starting point from which more of their history may be constructed and brought to words. To recognise the trauma that was there, to recognise what it is, and for that ground to be restored, is a starting point.

Lacan's commentary on Joyce's account of being assaulted and its effect on the imaginary body are worth noting here. Joyce describes divesting himself of his body, detaching from it - ‘just as peel is detached’ - after he was beaten up by some of his friends. Lacan notes in Joyce's commentary that he experienced a feeling of disgust for his own body. He

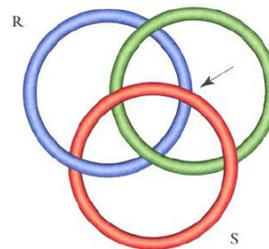


Figure 4, The botched link

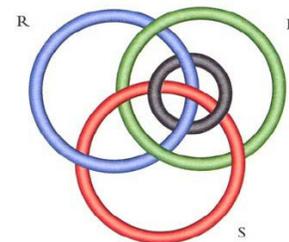


Figure 5, The rectifying Ego

then goes on to say that “the form that this dropping of the relationship with the body takes for Joyce” is indicative of the state of his ego as unsupported, for the “idea of the self, the self as a body carries weight. This is what is called the Ego.”³⁸ In either of these instances of assault or melancholia an inescapable encounter with the real, unmediated by the veil of the semblant leaves the subject exposed and rather than the idea of analysis as “a controlled decline of the imaginary”,³⁹ it is a matter of reestablishing the ego and the imaginary clothing of the object, *i(a)*, of building imaginary links, and this function of the semblant between sense and the real. Lacan takes Joyce as an example of constituting a symptom from the practice of writing that functioned to support the ego. Let's have a look at this.

In the diagram on page 130 of the *Seminar XXIII* (Figure 4) Lacan supposes the 3rd ring passes over the capital R ring instead of underneath (indicated by the arrow) allowing the Capital I of the Imaginary to just:

35 Lacan, J., *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book X, Anxiety*, Cambridge, UK & Malden MA, USA: Polity, 2015, p. 335.

36 Ibid.

37 Brousse, M.-H., *Psychoanalytical Notebooks 37/38*, 2021, p. 48.

38 Lacan, J., *Seminar XXIII, The Sinthome*, p.129.

39 Grigg, R. Remembering and forgetting, *Lacanian Compass* 3, Issue 2, 2016.

clear off. It slides away, in just the same way as what Joyce feels after his hiding. It slides, and the imaginary relationship has no locus... Look at the link...Nothing could be more commonly imagined than this mistake, this fault, this lapsus. Why shouldn't it happen that a knot should fail to be Borromean, that it should be botched? [In other words it is an ordinary occurrence...] You can see exactly what happens here, where I'm incarnating the Ego as rectifying the wanting relationship, namely what, in the case of Joyce, does not tie the imaginary in a Borromean fashion to the link between the real and the unconscious. Through this artifice of writing, I would say that the Borromean knot is restored.⁴⁰ (Figure 5)...The knot on this occasion is a link... (Figure 6) [and that by which]...the real is introduced as such.⁴¹

So from the continuity where the registers are not differentiated as such, something is isolated by this function of knotting.

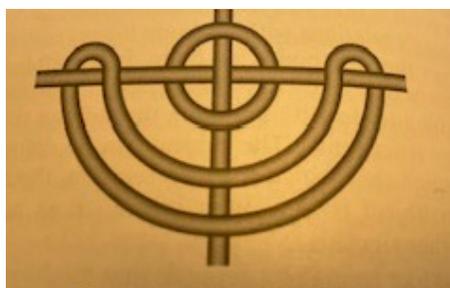


Figure 6, Reconstitution of the link

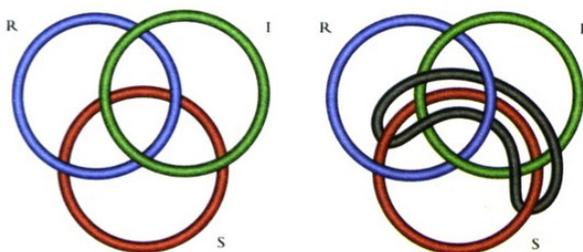


Figure 7, The three separate rings (left); the rings linked by the fourth link, the sinthom (right)

In chapter 3 of *The Sinthome* Lacan referred to continuity as the specificity of the knot in paranoia, that is to say the registers aren't differentiated (Figure 7). As Sophie Marett-Maleval spells out, he "underlines the closure of the ring, independent, self-contained, as the prevalent ego in paranoia, where the subject is not divided. He calls this knot 'personality', which is not the subject of the unconscious. The clover knot (Figure 8) hardly supports the subject; the subject becomes personality, fixed in personality."⁴²

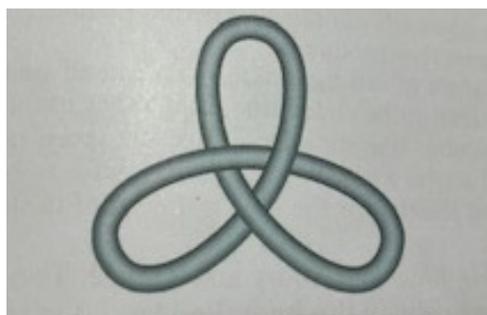


Figure 8, The trefoil knot (circular form)

This can be the 'as if' personality we often meet or hear about in the clinic and elsewhere, where the function of the S1 fails, and "for the subject of the unconscious to be operational it has to exist to the knotting, put into play by the fourth ring".⁴³ The specificity of this fourth ring - knotting sense to jouissance and S1 to a (S1-a) - is that it is formed within the Borromean knot and is inherent to the knotting of the three registers (Figure 7, diagram on right). It is the sinthome, which can be written as S1 over a, S1/a.⁴⁴ This is not a personality but that which supports the subject of the unconscious, and "the unconscious is what is excluded by personality, by paranoia." It is a matter of reintroducing something by way of a pragmatic approach that also involves a craftsmanship with language. Lacan addresses this by way of the letter and the sinthome.

The object a as a semblant of being

In the schema from chapter VIII of *Seminar XX, Encore* (Figure 9) the points of the triangle have letters representing the symbolic, imaginary and real just

40 Lacan, J. *Seminar 23*, p. 131

41 Ibid. p.132.

42 Sophie Marret-Maleval, "We're all mad, but not necessarily paranoiacs", *The Lacanian Review* 10, p. 38-39.

43 Ibid.

44 Ibid. p.37.

as in the Borromean knot.⁴⁵ On the vector going from the symbolic to the real the object a is inscribed as a semblance. Miller comments that here Lacan “downgrades object a from the register of the real.”⁴⁶ For in *Seminar XX* Lacan notes that “the symbolic, directing itself toward the real, shows us the true nature of

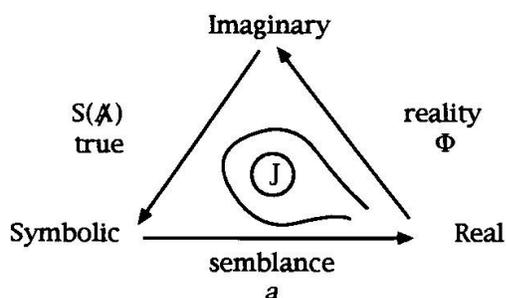


Figure 9

object a . If I qualified it earlier as a semblance of being, it is because it seems to give us the basis (support) of being.”⁴⁷ The following year he similarly notes how the point of the Borromean knot “is to be found at its heart, its centre. It’s also what undoes it, insofar as it results from a centralized, true wedging of the symbolic, imaginary, and the real.”⁴⁸ This “point of central wedging defines the object a .”⁴⁹

We’ve seen that the three circles of the Borromean knot are linked by weaving or plaiting what is indeed a braid - this passing over and under is what makes them hold together. The object a “belongs to each of the three registers while being contiguous to the three other jouissance - each of these jouissance supposes the object a .”⁵⁰ The object a is caught hold of from the wedging of the knot, it is a consequence of the three dimensional knotting, rather than being what holds the knot together (Figure 10).

Guyonnet gives us the case of young girl who presented to a CPCT with disorganized speech. The questions of the therapist allow for some clarification of time and place and the isolation of a hallucinatory phenomena of the voice to be differentiated and

grasped by the subject. Guyonnet notes this can occur “whether he tells us about it or not – if and only if a differentiation, and thus, a knotting between these categories of the real, the symbolic and the imaginary is effectuated.”⁵¹

In general, I suggest that through analysis, knotting occurs:

- i. by way of the subject’s speech under transference where, from bits of sentences repeated perhaps hundreds of times, guided in a warp and weft weaving, allowing for;
- ii. an ordering and / or differentiation of registers, by way of the;
- iii. isolation of signifiers and wedging of the object a : a condensation in the sinthome as $S1/a$.

The letter can condense a signifying articulation to the jouissance that suspends it outside the signifying chain of the Other. In doing so it can create a knotting that holds the S, I, and R whereby the symptom or sinthome functions as a forth ring and the subject is more peaceful as evidenced in the social

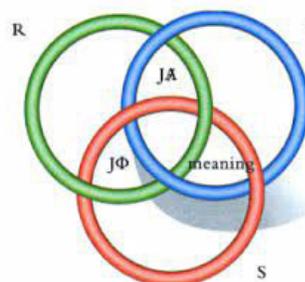


Figure 10, The three central fields of the RSI diagram

link. A limit to jouissance is found there in the singularity of each one, allowing surplus jouissance to settle into a bit more satisfaction, into some satisfaction in life, where the other may be seen as capable of love.

Miller refers to the Borromean knot as giving us the key “to what rapport is. It is the Knot itself, the knotting, as distinct from its elements, which is a rapport.”⁵²

45 Lacan, *Seminar XX*, p. 90.

46 Miller, J.-A., Pure psychoanalysis, Applied psychoanalysis, *Lacanian Ink* 20, 2002, p.23.

47 Lacan, J., *Seminar XX*, p. 95.

48 Lacan, J., ‘The Lacanian Phenomena’, *The Lacanian Review* 9, p.31.

49 Lacan, J., The Third, *The Lacanian Review* 7, 2019, pp. 83-108. P. 105.

50 Guyonnet, D., On the use of verbal hallucination. *The Lacanian Review* 7, 2019, pp.123-130. P. 127.

51 Ibid. p. 128.

52 Miller, J.-A., Pure psychoanalysis, Applied psychoanalysis, *Lacanian Ink* 20, 2002, p.24.

Defining a symptom refers to the direction of the treatment, which is to help find a name to localize *jouissance*. To punctuate the sense of difficulty of life by localizing and finding a name for the symptom is to find a new quilting point by knotting these aspects together. While Freud saw conflict as an essential aspect of the symptom defined as a compromise formation between opposing forces, Miller considers that in later work Lacan sought another definition of the symptom:

to learn to think of the symptom without conflict...It is a clinic of knotting and not of opposition, a clinic of arrangements which permits satisfaction of and leads to *jouissance*. There is difficulty, but there is no conflict. The structure of the knots by itself does not allow the dimension of conflict to emerge...[in] this clinic what is at stake is not the resolution of the conflict as in Freud, but rather to obtain a new arrangement...for the subject.⁵³

From the pluralization of the *Names-of-the-Father* at the end of *Seminar X* through to Lacan's later work we see the transformation of the S1 into a swarm (*essaim*) and the Name-of-the-Father enter the broader category of the *sinthome*. Distinct from

the Name-of-the-Father and the delusional metaphor, the *sinthome* allows a substitution for the absence of the sexual non-rapport, a substitution in the libidinal economy which "gives the *sinthome* its incurable character: it cannot be negativised. It is also generalized because there is no speaking being that does not enjoy in a singular manner. The *sinthome* halts the drift of meaning and anchors it in non-meaning."⁵⁴

So on the one hand it is important to register, as Daniel Roy has noted, that the:

rejected object is an absolutely precious object when it is isolated in analysis because, in detaching itself from the drive in anxiety, it becomes the object cause of desire...Desires are here what constitute "the fate of the drives", [...and] as Lacan says in one of his very last seminars, on the 18th of March 1980.... desires "dispel" the drives, they defuse them as the sources of a curse, of an unhappy fate, which the subject had been complaining about until then, and they thus dry up the ferocious greed of the superego.⁵⁵

And this work happens, I think we can say, by way of a love of *lalangue*.⁵⁶

53 Miller notes that when the opposition between pleasure and reality is understood as an opposition between pleasure and external reality, it "led to the conception of analysis as education or pedagogy" (Miller, *Seminar of Barcelona, Psychoanalytical Notebooks 1*, 1998, pp. 11-65. P. 53) and hence Lacan's concern to take pedagogy out of psychoanalysis (pp.53-54).

54 Blanco Díaz, Op. Cit. p.5.

55 Roy, D., *Discontent and anxiety in the Clinic and in Civilisation*, 2023.

56 Berouka, S., *The sense of life, Psychoanalytical Notebooks 37/38*, 2021, pp.177-183. P.183.

Why does Jacques Lacan Highlight James Joyce's Expression "The letter! The litter!"?

Santanu Biswas

Joyce's Disruption of Literary Convention

Prior to its first appearance in print, "The letter! The litter!" was an absolutely unthinkable expression in the domain of literature. When it did appear, in 1939, as part of James Joyce's novel *Finnegans Wake*, it at once constituted a radical departure from established literary convention, a jarring distortion of what the readers of canonical literature were used to finding in a literary work, and a shocking parody, or a savage mockery, of the diction employed in literary classics until then. Let me illustrate this with the help of three brief examples.

In chapter 14 of Honoré de Balzac's 1841 novel *Ursula*, the old Doctor Minoret is about to die. As his relations and associates despicably fight among themselves over inheritance, the dying old man gives a key to his favourite godchild Ursula and asks her to fetch from his study a sealed letter addressed to her concerning her marriage to Savinien. As Ursula waits to ensure that *La Bougival* has properly applied the poultice to her dying godfather, the old man cries out impatiently: "*The letter! the letter!*" He instructs her to obey him at once, adding that he *must* see her with the letter in her hand. So intense is his desperation that *La Bougival* thinks that any delay in bringing the letter might result in his death. Unknown to them but known to the readers, even before Ursula had kissed the dying man's forehead and left the room, the post master, who had overheard a part of the conversation, had stolen the letter. When Ursula hurriedly returns

only a moment after her departure in response to a cry from *La Bougival*, the old man eagerly looks at her empty hands, rises in his bed, tries to speak, and dies with a horrible gasp.

Again, in chapter 13 of Gustave Flaubert's 1856 novel *Madame Bovary*, Emma is devastated by Rodolphe's letter in which the latter had politely declared his decision to terminate their love affair. She immediately thinks of killing herself by jumping out of the window but stops as she hears Charles calling her. That night Emma faints when she sees Rodolphe's carriage driving out of town, and falls seriously ill thereafter. Later, when the doctor who had come to see Emma speaks to Bovary and Charles about the sensitivity of Emma's nervous system, and was about to refer to a newspaper article in support of his claim, Emma, who was asleep in the same room, suddenly awakens and cries out, "The letter! the letter!" And yet again, in Marcel Proust's 1920 novel *The Guermantes Way*, Robert, greatly tormented by the silence of his estranged mistress who had parted from him following a quarrel between them, speculates, among other things, that perhaps she would be glad to make it up, that she was waiting for a word from him, and that others could be taking advantage of their estrangement due to which it would soon be too late to get her back. The frenzy of grief created by his mistress's sustained silence makes him wonder whether she might not be in hiding at *doncières*, or

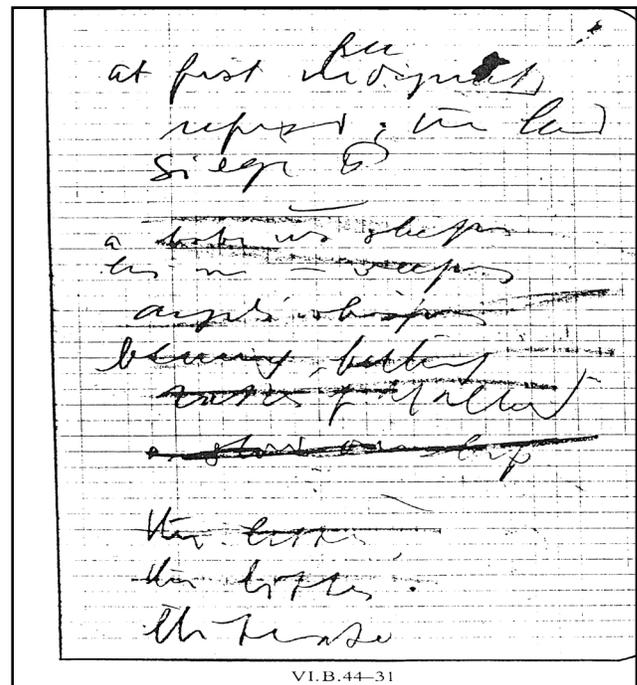
have sailed for the indies. The force of her terribly cruel silence, which was impenetrable and imprisoning, magnifies his anxiety, jealousy and remorse. It shows him not one but a thousand absent love, and he feels tortured thinking that she hates him and will continue to hate him for ever. At times, however, in a sudden moment of relaxation, Robert imagines that this period of silence is about to come to an end in terms of the arrival of the long-awaited letter from her that is on its way. Imagining its arrival, he starts at every sound and murmurs: "the letter! the letter!"

In other words, in a state of heightened emotional sensitivity, literary constructs in European fiction are shown to exclaim: "The letter! the letter!", where the repetitive and exclamatory nature of the expression is expected to convey the speaker's extreme urgency to the other characters and the reader, as well as to heighten the latter's anxiety. Joyce could not have been unaware of any of these masterpieces of French literature. To exclaim "The letter! the litter!" instead, is tantamount to a shocking literary sacrilege unheard of before Joyce. In fact, even though distorting languages and disrupting conventions came naturally to him, this particular instance of distortion of language and of literary convention through it is so acutely radical in nature that it hadn't occurred even to Joyce in course of the first 15 years of his work on *Finnegans Wake*. Going by volume VI.B.44, page 31, of his notebook, the expression "The letter! The litter!" first crossed Joyce's mind as late as in 1937, merely two years before the publication of the novel. (Joyce: 1977-79, 295) At the bottom of the page, Joyce writes, "the letter the litter the texte," implying in a shorthand form that the "texte," which is the French word for written work or writing, will emerge from the "litter" into which the "letter" has been converted. In a word, the extremely remarkable form of departure from established literary convention is sufficient to make Joyce's expression "The letter! the litter!" worthy of a closer look.

Meaning of "The letter! The litter!" in *Finnegans Wake*

The relation between writing and rubbish is an old one in Joyce. For instance, in his short story "The Encounter" written in 1905, when Father Butler says, "What is this rubbish?", he was referring to a collection of stories called *The Halfpenny Marvel* found in Leo Dillon's possession. By the term "rubbish" he meant the "wretched stuff" that the boys of the college should

not be reading. Here "rubbish" stands for only one kind of writing, namely, a kind of juvenile writing based on



sensationalism that was meant for school boys. (Joyce: 1914/1996, 20) Taking the relation further ahead in his novels, Joyce describes all the junk of everyday life in minute detail so as to preserve them vividly. In *Ulysses*, the characters talk, gossip, debate, think, recall, read, walk, eat, drink, sleep, defecate, urinate, etc., and all these particulars are described with an intense acuteness. In this sense, Joyce preserves the detritus and ephemera of life and glorifies rubbish. No wonder then that, Stephen Dedalus compares the rubbish-strewn heavy sands of Sandymount Strand to the "language tide [...] wind have silted here." (Joyce: 1922/1960, 50) Thus, the rubbish-heap seems to be Joyce's desired site for the erection of his letter or fiction. In his last novel, Joyce took the connection between writing and rubbish far deeper by converting literary writing itself into a form of litter.

In some of his letters written at the time of the composition of *Finnegans Wake*, Joyce often describes the early drafts of the novel as a disordered rubbish-heap. In one such letter, written on 18 February 1931 to Harriet Shaw Weaver, to which Joyce had attached a few chapters of the *Work in Progress*, he writes: "I enclose some rubbish found in a sack, that lay in the house that Joyce leaves." (Joyce: 1957/1966, 301)

So, what does the expression "The letter! The litter!" mean in *Finnegans Wake*? Joyce uses the expression "litter" and coinages based on it 25 times across *Finnegans Wake*, almost always with reference to writing, usually literary writing. Of these, the 22 relatively less pertinent instances from our point of view are the following, in their chronological order of appearance: "clittering up" (5.3); "Countlessness of livestories have netherfallen by this plage, flick as flowflakes, litters from aloft" (17.27-29); "the hour of the twattering of bards in the twitterlitter" (37.17); "litterish fragments lurk dormant in the paunch" (66.25-26); "a cloudletlitter" (73.29); "lines of litters slittering up and louds of latters slettering down" (114.17-18); "ayes and neins to a litter" (202.2); "illitterettes" (284.15); "Concoct an equoangular trillitter" (286.21-22); "jetsam litterage of convolvuli" (292.16); "glitteraglatteraglutt" (349.12); "skittered his litters" (370.6); "Honour thy farmer and my litters" (413.16-17); "The Reverest Adam Foundlitter" (420.35); "laying out his litterery bed" (422.35); "artis litterarumque patrona" (495.34-35); "an absquelitteris puttagonnianne" (512.17-18); "a litterydistributer in Saint Patrick's Lavatory" (530.10-11); "outcast mastiff littered in blood currish" (534.34); and "litteringture of kidlings" (570.18-19). Leaving these aside, let us concentrate on the 3 relatively more sustained, direct and pertinent instances in which the relation between the letter and litter is described.

The first one of these is the following: "But by writing thithaways end to end and turning, turning and end to end hithaways writing and with lines of litters slittering up and louds of ladders slettering down." (114.16-18) The first two clauses in the sentence move in opposite directions: "by writing thithaways end to end and turning" and "turning and end to end hithaways writing," indicating a crossed writing or a crossed letter. This very idea of a crossed-out writing is ratified by the up and down movement in last part of the sentence: "lines of litters slittering up and louds of ladders slettering down."

The idea of crossed writing here is in fact in continuation with the same idea expressed a few lines earlier. At 114.2-5, Joyce writes, "One cannot help noticing that rather more than half of the lines run

north-south [...] while the others go west-east." As John Gordon notes, a part of Joyce's reference is to the type of letters that are written horizontally and over which the receiver writes the reply vertically before mailing it back. Moreover, a crossed letter has a checkerboard pattern, which is indicated by the expression "a pretty checker" in a passage at 114.7-11 wherein the movement and stumbling of words are described. (Gordon: 2020, 225).

Three pages earlier, at 111.7, Joyce uses the expression "zogzag," meaning "zigzag," to point to a writing that moves back and forth. Gordon states that "zogzag" moreover refers to a brand of extremely thin cigarette paper named "Zig-Zag" found in Joyce's time. Due to the thinness of the paper, if it is written on, the ink would seep and cross over to the reverse side and thus enact yet another kind of crossed writing. (Ibid, 217) "Crossing" or the "cross" also refers to Christ, as does the letter "Chi" designated by the symbol "X" in the Greek alphabet, as "Chi" or "X" is the first letter in the Greek word for Christ. But the letter "X" is also indicative of a crossing out. As if to overdetermine the crossing out effect of the "X" from yet another perspective in the novel, while some of the letters are signed "X.X.X.X." (458.1-3), or "Ex. Ex. Ex. Ex." (424.12-3), by Shaun, on top of all the references to letters being signed by "X"s, such as, "your Jermyn cousin signs hers with exes" (625.2), the last 1468 words in *Finnegans Wake*, as Gordon points out, do not have the letter "X" in them. (Gordon: 2020, 218) Thus, the effect of crossing out the signature or the name of the writer of the letter is produced by *performing* the crossing out. The effect is overdetermined by the fact that the "X" that crosses everything is itself crossed or effaced.¹

The lines also contain a reference to the crossing out movement seen in the game of snake and ladder, but in the reverse order, so as to doubly reinforce the very idea of crossing. The participants rise up owing to the ladder or fall down thanks to the snake in that game. Reversed by Joyce, this becomes, "lines of litters slittering up," or litters slithering up, like a snake, while "louds of ladders slettering down," or letters sliding down the ladder. Thus, by reversing the conventional rules of the game, Joyce proposes

1 Notably, the sentence "lines of litters slittering up and louds of ladders slettering down" is somewhat similar to the sentence, "larrons o'toolers clittering up and tombles a'buckets clottering down." (5.3-4) Gordon rightly informs us that this is a reference to the assault of Laurence O'Toole and Thomas à Becket in front of the main altar of Canterbury Cathedral. While O'Toole managed to survive, Becket did not. (Gordon: 2020, 8) The rise of one person and the fall of another designate yet another form of crossing. It moreover reminds us of the crucifixion, on the cross, and the resurrection of Christ.

that the litter rises as the letter falls. In a word, the first excerpt is about crossing a letter to convert it into litter.

A brief version of the second description is: "the heroticisms, catastrophes and eccentricities transmitted by the ancient legacy of the past; type by tope, letter from litter, word at ward, with sendence of sundance." (614.35 to 615.2) A more complete version of it is the following:

Our wholemole millwheeling vicociclotometer, [...] preprovided with a [...] exprogressive process, (for the farmer, his son and their homely codes, known as eggburst, eggblend, eggburial and hatch-as-hatch can) receives through a portal vein the dialytically separated elements of precedent decomposition for the verypetpurpose of subsequent recombination so that the heroticisms, catastrophes and eccentricities transmitted by the ancient legacy of the past; type by tope, letter from litter, word at ward, with sendence of sundance... [...] as sure as herself pits hen to paper and there's scribings scrawled on eggs. (614.27-615.10)

According to this passage, the letter is recycled litter. Here "millwheeling vicociclotometer" denotes the transmission of the past through Vico's cycles, planetary revolutions and political revolutions. Here, letter from litter is not only about cycles but more pertinently about recycling, or literary writing as a kind of recycling of what has been already written, or, in Joyce's parlance a "precedent decomposition," meaning, an earlier composition, which is "preprovided," is taken up for use in a "subsequent recombination." Thus, literary recycling is the theme of the sentence "preprovided with a [...] exprogressive process, [...] receives [...] the dialytically separated elements of precedent decomposition for the verypetpurpose of subsequent recombination." Such literary recycling is carried out "type by tope," meaning 'type for type' and 'trope for trope', "word at ward," meaning 'word for word', and "sendence of sundance," meaning 'sentence for sentence', and 'semblance of substance' or resemblance to the original. Among the literary themes chosen for recycling, Joyce identifies "heroticisms," meaning heroism and eroticism, "catastrophes" and "eccentricities" that have been "transmitted by the ancient legacy of the past." A broader implication of the passage is that

Finnegans Wake is born when all the elements of history are collected, then broken down, as in "dialytically separated [all the] elements," that is to say, that which is received in the form of the letter is fragmented or degraded into a kind of litter, and finally all these distorted and decomposed elements are recombined or reconstructed to give rise to a new literary writing, a new letter.

The cycle of life concerns rebirth following death. While "Fin" and "Wake" are related to the end and death respectively, "negan" sounds like "again." "Finnegans" as "Finn, again!" (628.14) therefore stands for 'finish and again'. In this sense, the title is indicative of a re-beginning following the end, or of a rebirth following death and the *Wake*. This very idea is also captured by the expression "Finnlatter" in ALP's letter, as well as by the "postscript" to that letter which, by definition, is akin to a resumption after the end. In fact, this letter itself is resurrected by the hen from the dung-heap where it was dumped. That apart, in the Irish-American ballad of unknown authorship named "Finnegan's *Wake*" that was published in 1864 in New York, the alcoholic protagonist Tim Finnegan who fell from a ladder, broke his skull and is considered dead, returns to life once when the mourners at his *Wake* accidentally spill whiskey over his corpse. Not only that, while *Wake* represents death and the end, litter represents birth and new life. Moreover, following an initial reference to ALP's letter in the novel, the narrator answers his or her own question, "What was it?" with the expression "A.....! ?..... O!" (94.21-22), meaning that the letter spans from Alpha to Omega, that is, it covers everything from the beginning to the end, from birth to death. Furthermore, Clive Hart notes in his 1962 *Structure and Motif in Finnegans Wake* that litter and letter stand for leader and latter, or the first and the last, or Genesis and Revelation respectively. (Hart: 1962, 200) Above all, since the first sentence of *Finnegans Wake* continues from and completes the last sentence of the novel, the beginning and the end of the novel are conflated, their distinction erased, and the beginning is effectively converted into a re-beginning.

In the context of the narrative of *Finnegans Wake*, the last clause in the passage, "as sure as herself pits hen to paper and there's scribings" is about Anna Livia Plurabelle or ALP resuming or re-beginning a letter in which she was narrating the doings of her husband, Humphrey Chimpden Earwicke or HCE, who represents everyman insofar as HCE also stands for "Here Comes Everybody" (32.18-19). This letter,

which is a kind of recycling "the ancient legacy" of her husband's "past" in writing, will eventually become a kind of litter to be dug out by a hen—a letter that is supposed to be *Finnegans Wake* itself. One of the earliest literal indications that ALP's letter represents the novel itself is that, while the letter begins with the word "Reverend" (615.12), the novel begins with the homonymous word "riverrun." (3.1)

The multiple references to egg in the passage have several connotations. Egg is related to the hen, or here the pen, that is responsible for the birth of new life, as well as for the birth of the new novel called *Finnegans Wake*. A hen or a pen is responsible for laying or uncovering it. Not only that, the relation between one of the protagonists of the novel, HCE, and egg is an overdetermined one in the novel. In *Finnegans Wake*, egg is an item in HCE's breakfast: "there'll be iggs for brekkers come to mournhim." (12.14) HCE's egg-breakfast finds special mention in the fourth book, which is also about Easter. In fact, HCE lives largely on eggs, boiled, cooked or poached: "brooled and cocked and potched." (184.17) Thus, eggs form HCE's bodily material. That apart, HCE resembles an egg insofar as he always seems to be enclosed within a shell. Furthermore, HCE, variously referred to as "cwympty dwympty" (314.16), "Humpsea dumpsea" (317.24), and "humbly dumbly" (628.11), is Humpty Dumpty who resemble eggs. And above all, while the initials HCE also stands for "Haroun Childeric Eggeberth" (4.32), they are often scrambled in the novel, in the form of ECH, for instance.

So, how is egg related to the letter as recycled litter? Well, first of all, HCE's body is recycled eggs, and he is transcribed by ALP through her letter about him that will become litter. Secondly, insofar as the letter is presented in its totality almost immediately after the line, "herself pits hen to paper and there's scribings scrawled on eggs," one draft of the letter must have been inscribed on an eggshell, and the final version of the letter recycled out of it, before they are thrown away as waste. Since the letter is moreover scratched out of the pile of rubbish by a "hen," the letter has an integral connection with eggs. And finally, the cosmic egg, often golden, that finds mention in creation myths all over the world— such as, Greece, Egypt, Persia, India, Japan, and so on— is supposed to contain everything that the universe shall gradually become. The first verse of the 19th section of chapter 3 of the *Chandogya Upanishad*,

an ancient Hindu philosophical text, for instance, states: "This universe was at first non-existent, being without names and forms. Slowly it manifested itself, as a shoot comes out of a seed. Next it developed into an egg and remained for a whole year like that. It then split in two, one half becoming silver and the other half becoming gold." (*Chandogya Upanishad*: 2017, 3.19.1) The book then goes on to mention that heaven emerged from the gold half and the earth from the silver half. In other words, the universe is gradually created as a writing, as a novel, as letters, by littering the primal egg. And insofar as this egg already contains in a nascent form everything that shall one day come into being, the creation of the universe itself is a kind of recycling of material already in existence.

The third and arguably the most important depiction of the relation between letter and litter may be found in the following sentences: "And so it all ended. Artha kama dharma moksa. Ask Kavya for the kay. And so everybody heard their plaint and all listened to their plause. The letter! The litter! And the soother the bitther!" (93.22-24)

In other words, it all ended with the four purposes or objectives of human life, called the four "*purushārthas*" in the Vedas and other sacred Hindu texts. These are, "Dharma" or righteousness as a moral value; "Artha" or prosperity as an economic value; "Kama" or sensual pleasure as a psychological value; and "Moksha" or the soul's liberation as a spiritual value. While according to some scholars, these four, in this particular order, ought to be the four goals of every human being, according to others, the first three goals are prescribed for ordinary human beings and the last goal for spiritually-oriented ones who are capable of extraordinary degrees of renunciation and detachment. In either case, the order of the goals is important, for, while moksha is the ultimate goal, prosperity and pleasure, the former more important than the latter, ought to be sought in a righteous manner. By turning the sacred letter into the literary litter, Joyce changes the order of the four goals, and notably, places prosperity and sensual pleasure before righteousness, implying thereby that pleasure and prosperity need not necessarily be attained in a righteous manner.

"Kavya" means poetry in Sanskrit. The Vedas and other sacred texts of Hinduism where these four goals are mentioned are all written in verse, usually in the form of hymns. Therefore, "Ask Kavya for the kay" means— look up these verses for the "key" to life, as

the word "key" is at times pronounced like "kay" by the Irish. "Kay" also denotes the letter "K" with which the word "Kavya" is spelt. It is moreover the initial for "Kate," ALP's incarnation, who has the "passkey" (8.8) and the "Key" (421.4), before ALP herself has "The keys" (628.15).

And so everybody heard their "plaint," meaning lamentation or complaint, and everybody listened to their "plause," variously meaning "applause" in English, "flattery" from "plausy" or "plás" in Anglo-Irish, and "play" from the French "plauser." It is not by chance that the acronym for "everybody heard their [com]plaint" is EHC, a variation of HCE, while the acronym for "all listened to their plause" is ALP.

"The letter! The litter!" stands for the letters of the alphabet, such as ALP, which are also the first three letters of the word "alphabet," as well as the epistles that she and others in the novel composed. The Irish word "litir" that sounds somewhat like the English word "litter" means the "letter" in both these senses of the word. That apart, as Roland McHugh points out in his 1980 book *Annotations to Finnegans Wake*, "The letter! The litter!" is reminiscent of the Greek expression "Thalatta! Thalatta!" meaning "The Sea! The Sea!" (McHugh: 1980, 93) which is what the river flows into and loses itself in at the end of its journey. In Joyce's novel, Anna Livia Plurabelle represents the river, the river Liffey in particular, and through it the "riverrun" of *Finnegans Wake* in its totality.

Most pertinently, Anna Livia Plurabelle's letter, one that is described as "Her untitled mamafesta," (104.4) and references to which recur throughout novel, can be and has been seen as a microcosm of the entire novel inscribed at its centre, like a self-reflexive embedding. The letter which is torn, stained by tea— in Joyce's words "tache of tch" (111.20)— and found in a rubbish heap is therefore literally a piece of trash. This letter describing the crucial story of HCE, the two young women, and the three soldiers is referred or alluded to in bits and pieces throughout the novel— the novel is well and truly littered by fragments of this letter— and it is divulged in its entirety for the first and only time towards the very end of the novel, to be precise between pages 615 and 619 in the 628-page work. It is a letter in which ALP defends her husband, Humphrey Chimpden Earwicker, though it may or may not exonerate him. This letter is written for her by Shem and its delivery attempted by Shaun. Shem the penman and Shaun the postman, the two sons of ALP and HCE, thus represent the two forms of the "letter," alphabets or

writing and epistle, as well as the integral relation between them. No wonder, Shaun describes Shem as "my shemblable! My freer!" (489.28) This very letter at the heart of the novel, one that is scratched out of a dung or rubbish heap— that is to say "litter" in both senses of the term— by Biddy the Hen, is, above all, *Finnegans Wake* itself! Therefore, ALP's crucial letter brings out how *Finnegans Wake* is the moment of the letter turning into litter in the field of literature.

Thus, the key lies in the letter, whether sacred or mundane, and especially in the letter's inextricable link with litter. "And the soother the bitter!" The sooner this is realised the better it is. Even though this realisation, which is "sooth" or true, will soothe her and bite her at the same time, for it is at once sweeter and bitter. The turn of the letter into litter at the novel's centre is thus its fundamental motif or its chief theme. The effect of this turn may be seen in the language of the novel from one end to the other. "The letter! The litter!" is therefore not a random play on words in a novel replete with wordplay. Rather, the expression is constitutive of, and therefore has a foundational place in, the narrative of *Finnegans Wake*.

Significance of "The letter! The litter!" in Joyce

Having examined the meaning of the expression "The letter! The litter!" in *Finnegans Wake*, let us now turn to its significance in Joyce's writing. What have the Joyce scholars had to say about the importance of this expression in Joyce? Looking at it from a purely literary point of view, did they consider it special and worthy of being singled out and highlighted, as Jacques Lacan had done while examining it from a predominantly psychoanalytic point of view? Well, what is remarkable about the literary commentary on Joyce's expression is that it is quite sparse, even though the handful of Joyce scholars who have commented on the expression considered it central to *Finnegans Wake*, if not to literature, history, or the course of life itself.

William York Tindall explains the significance of the expression "The letter! The litter!" in his 1959 *A Reader's Guide to James Joyce* by bringing out how the three most important strands of the plot of *Finnegans Wake* are in fact woven around the motif of the letter and the litter. He rightly states that the most important strand of the plot of the novel concerns Tim Finnegan's death in terms of his fall from the ladder, and his rise again, or Finnagain, at his *Wake*. Equating the ladder with "latter," he writes, "From latter comes

'litter' and from the litter the letter." (Tindall: 1959, 257) Referring to the character of the Dublin grocer "Adam Findlater," Tindall further states that "Findlater involves Finnleader, Finnlater (or Finnagain), as well as ladder, litter, and letter." (Ibid., 285)

Moving on to the second most important strand of the novel's plot, ALP's letter, which contains a microcosmic version of the whole of *Finnegans Wake*, Tindall correctly points out that all the members of the Earwicker family, who are also the protagonists of the novel, are inextricably linked to this letter: It is uttered by ALP, uttered for HCE, written by Shem, and its delivery to HCE unsuccessfully attempted by Shaun. This letter, its contents, its loss and rediscovery, and the repeated unsuccessful attempt to deliver it not only constitutes an important strand of the novel's plot but is the basis of the bulk of its narrative. More pertinently, this letter is also a litter. Tindall clarifies that this letter found by the hen in a dump is the "Essence of dump," as well as a "chaosmos" bearing in a condensed form "all the muddled affairs of Earwicker's family, from alpha to omega, in a page." (Ibid, 257)

Another extremely important strand of the novel's plot is Kate's conducted tour of "the magazine" transformed into "the museum." The conducted tour sheds light on the battle of Waterloo in terms of the battle between the members of the Earwicker family, especially the one between the mother and the father. A large number of other battles are then referred to in order to widen the perception of the family conflict. At the end of these battles, a bird, representing ALP, picks up the pieces so as to recreate with them. Through this process of conflict and renewal, Joyce intended to depict "all history from 1132 A. D. to 566 and then from 566 A. D. to 1132." (Ibid., 266)² In this context, Tindall points out that "the museum is a dump"; that ALP picks up the litter

at the end of the battles; and that "From the litter of battle comes the hen's letter." (Ibid., 266) Although not pointed out by Tindall, though it must have been present on Joyce mind, "Waterloo" could easily be a euphemism for a toilet.

Elaborating on some of these points, Tindall states in his 1969 *Readers Guide to Finnegans Wake* that the hen's act of digging out the letter from a pile of dung is Joyce's way of foregrounding the truth about literature that it is the essence of trash: "From the litter comes the letter as from the dump come letters. Literature, including the *Wake*, is the essence of dump [...]." (Tindall: 1969, 39) He argues that, in terms of what is littered on it and buried in or dug out of it, *Finnegans Wake*, like the earth itself, is a dump of letters as well as a letter written out of dumped letters (Ibid, 45), and for this very reason, "*Finnegans Wake* leads naturally to museum, dump, and letter." (Ibid, 90)

After noting that the hen digs out the letter in order to "renew life and art," (Ibid, 90) and that the letter "K," which is the beginning of the name of Kate, the older self of ALP, is the 11th letter of the alphabet and as such suggestive of a "renewal," (Ibid, 91) Tindall points to the following crucial pattern of the novel, as indeed of life itself: "Dump, litter, letter, letters, and *Wake* are depositories and vestiges of our living and dying — and part of their rhythm." (Ibid, 90–91) Following on from this, Tindall thinks that "The letter promises renewal of litter by letters," because "the word of the beginning is the word of the end, and all, first or last, proceeds from the word." (Ibid, 306) Therefore, Tindall concludes that "a major concern of the [...] book — is time, process, the fall and rise of man, conflict and its litter, and the creation from litter of children, cities, and books." (Ibid, 29)

To Tindall's list may be added the two fresh observations that John Gordon made in his 1986

2 The number 1132, which occurs throughout *Finnegans Wake* has various meanings in the novel. First, 11 denotes the beginning of a new cycle of numbers. Second, citing the words of ALP in the novel, Hart points out that *Finnegans Wake* begins at 11:32 am: "The whole book, says Anna in her Letter, begins at the magical hour of 11.32 a.m.: 'Femelles will bespreadaminant as from twentyeight to twelve' (617.23)." (Hart: 1962, 71) Hart moreover thinks that Book II of the novel ends 12 hours after the start of the novel, at 11:32 pm. (Ibid, 17) However, John Bishop's argument throughout his book, *Joyce's Book of the Dark: Finnegans Wake*, is that the novel begins at 11.32 pm and spans a single dark night. (Bishop: 1986, 3–385) Third, St Laurence O'Toole, the patron saint of Dublin, was born in 1132 A.D. Fourth, in the *Annals of the Four Masters*, the death of Finn MacCool is dated to 283 A.D. Now 283 multiplied by 4 is 1132. Fifth, Chapter 11 verse 32 of Romans, which is a highly pertinent verse in the context of the novel, states: "For God has consigned all men to disobedience that he may show his mercy to all." And sixth, after getting Ireland's abbey of Kildare burned and the abbess raped in 1132, Diarmait Mac Murchada became king of the province of Leinster and appointed Malachy the Archbishop of Armagh in Ireland, with instructions to impose the Roman liturgy on the independent Church of Ireland. 566 is half of 1132. With reference to 566 A.D., Joyce mentions that on Baalfiress night following the deluge, a crone, or ALP, came with a wicker basket and collected a bunch of shoes and other litter. He further mentions with reference to the same year that Issy, a brass-haired damsel, grieved because her doll had been ravished by an ogre. (13.36–14.10)

book *Finnegans Wake: A Plot Summary*. First of all, HCE's relationship with his wife, in terms of the letter that she wrote for him, and in terms of their children, "brings forth those two Shakespearean antidotes to mortality, literature (the letter) and children (the litter)." (Gordon: 1986, 143) And second, of the many seven-stage sequences throughout the novel, one sequence at the end of Part I of the novel concludes by following "flood, rainbow, forgiveness, re-beginning," with "the chattering of the washer-women." (Ibid, 152) Here Gordon's reference is to the two washerwomen situated on the two sides of the Liffey – which represents ALP – who, while washing clothes, gossip about matters like, ALP's letter written in response to the allegations levelled against her husband HCE, believing that ALP had indicated in it that she was tired of her husband; ALP's sexual encounters in her youth; her revenge on her husband's enemies; and HCE's guilt published in the newspaper. According to Gordon, the chatter, ALP's letter, the newspaper, and above all, the act of washing soiled clothes bring out, "the redemptive power of litter-ature." (Ibid, 152) In a somewhat similar vein, Kimberly J. Devlin equates "ALP's multiple possible letters" to "her litter of multiple children (her "superflowvius heirs" [FW 526.25-26])," as well as to "her multiple gifts, catalogued by the washerwomen in 1.8." (Devlin: 2016, 215)

In her 1980 book *Alchemy and Finnegans Wake*, Barbara DiBernard argues that "*Finnegans Wake* is a rubbish heap yet a work of art [...]" (DiBernard: 1980, 26), or, a litter and yet a letter. She is aware that "The *Wake* manifests the idea that the origins of art lie in the dump of this world in many ways," and that this idea is cemented in the novel by the correlation between the following two facts: "The hen digs up the letter from a dung-heap in *Finnegans Wake*, and the alphabet comes from a similar heap [...]" (Ibid, 14) She knows, as Joyce himself sates in the novel, that "he dumptied the wholeborrow of rubbages on to soil here." (17.4-5) The central thesis of her book, nevertheless, is that "*Finnegans Wake* also represents the very antithesis of a garbage dump, an ordered work of art." (Ibid, 13) Pointing to how Joyce, like an alchemist, produced literature by converting litter into letter, she sums up her position thus: "Litter, the letter, letters, and literature move through continuous cycles of transformation. [...] The garbage heap of *Finnegans Wake*, then, is transformed into art, just as the alchemists transformed the vilest substance into the highest

goal, the Philosopher's Stone. Or, to be more exact, *Finnegans Wake* is both rubbish and gold." (Ibid, 16) In other words, the literature produced by Joyce is marked by an irrevocable duality. It is at once precious and trash, neither of the two statuses being strong enough to neutralise the other.

Explaining the relation between the letter and litter in his 1997 *The Role of Thunder in Finnegans Wake* from a completely different perspective, Eric McLuhan states that, insofar as the letter is employed to produce manuscripts that are subsequently reduced to trash or litter, and insofar as the published letter is derived from this very trash, the acts of writing and publication necessarily involve turning the letter to litter and the litter to the letter in a new form. He adds that literature, created in this manner out of the littering of letters and the lettering of litter, is then "dump[ed] onto the market as goods." (McLuhan: 1997, 123)

Arguably, the most astute literary commentary on Joyce's expression "The letter! The litter!" has come from Vincent Cheng. Cheng explains the relation between the letter and the litter in a number of overlapping ways in his 1979 book *Shakespeare and Joyce*. To begin with, he explains the connection between the letter and the litter, or between literature and excreta, by stating that a defecator, a father, a poet, and God are all equivalent, "because they each create, or produce, something." (Cheng: 1979/1984, 17) He describes both Joyce and his predecessor, Shakespeare, as "fellow creator-defecator-poet." (Ibid., 17) From this point of view, both letter and litter are creations of the defecator-poet.

Commenting upon the effect of the assonance between the letter and the litter on literary creations, Cheng writes that insofar as the Latin word for "letter", "*litterae*", which stands for letters of the alphabet, epistolary letters, and belles-lettres, corresponds with the word "litter" that stands for shit and birth, poetic creations in general "are at once bilabial speech, biological offspring, and biodegradable waste. Each implies the others [...]" (Ibid, 17)

Cheng moreover explains "The letter! The litter!" in terms of the rise and fall of literature and of literary reputation. He states that, just as literature or letters has its rise and falls, "its litters (as in births and risings) slittering up and its latters (later in life, and falling ladders) slettering down," so can literary reputation rise and fall. (Ibid, 109)

Turning to the hen's act of digging out the letter from the litter, Cheng states that this crucial act

symbolically represents littering the letter in a number of ways, such as: that *Finnegans Wake* is "a creatio ex shitpile," a "letter from litter" (Ibid, 17); that attempts are made to dig out the truth (letter) from the midden heap of possibilities (litter) (Ibid, 29); that the digging and mis-readings involved in scholarship and historical investigation never end (Ibid, 27); that some scratching scholar-hen will one day rescue *Finnegans Wake* from the midden pile and truly appreciate it (Ibid, 17); that it represents Joyce's own question as to whether he should "dig [...] into the graveyard of past literature and history for his style and his subject matter" (Ibid, 29); and that all new scholarly works on *Finnegans Wake* (letter) are retellings of the old works, or new plagiarised versions (litter) of Shakespeare and Joyce. (Ibid, 106)

Expanding on the last point, Cheng then argues that "The letter! The litter!" denotes that literature as such is forgery, or a recycling of earlier literature, or plagiarism. Like the letter from the litter heap, or, in a word, like "literature," "the new cycle is the same as the old [...]," including "the *Wake* and all of Joyce's works" that are no more than "reworkings of other people's odysseys and dramas." (Ibid, 106) Cheng shows us how, according to *Finnegans Wake*, Shem, Joyce, authors who recycle Shakespeare, and Shakespeare himself are all guilty of this offence: "Every dimmed letter in it is a copy." (424.32)

Thus, Cheng points to Shaun's direct accusation against Shem that the latter was "a forger and a plagiarist" because he had plagiarised ALP's letter from him: "Shaun here claims the letter as his own. [...] Shaun finally makes a clear and direct charge that Shem stole the letter from him." (Ibid, 168) In other words, ALP's crucial letter that contains *Finnegans Wake* and is supposed to have been penned by Shem, is, according to Shaun, stolen from him by Shem.

More significantly, Cheng points out that, in a passage in Book I, chapter 5 of the novel, Joyce "equate[s] his works (the letter is the *Wake* as well as all literature) with Shakespeare's." (Ibid, 98) In other words, *Finnegans Wake* as well as all literature written after Shakespeare are forged from the works of the latter. Shaun ratifies in this passage that, "Shem-Joyce's tales are forged" from the plays of Shakespeare. (Ibid, 98) Moreover, in the same passage, Shaun mentions some of the "Shakespearean forgers and imitators," such as, Theobald (117.19); and, after analysing the "Shakespearean manuscripts," (123.01) he concludes that his act resembles grave-digging

of the past, only to uncover stale and second-hand chestnuts (121.32), for behind Shakespeare's manuscript lay *The Odyssey* of Homer (123.16). (Ibid, 98)

Cheng rightly states that Shaun describes Joyce's *Ulysses*, referred to as "theodicy" (419.30) or *The Odyssey*, as perfectly awful trash: "Puffedly offal tosh!" (419.32), and that he moreover accuses Shem-Joyce of "plagiarism and forgery": "Thaw! The last word in stolentelling! And what's more right-down lowbrown schisthematic robbemint! (424.36-37)." (Ibid, 100) Shaun's accusations against Shem-Joyce are moreover couched "amid references to Shakespearean claimants and forgers," (Ibid, 100) like "[Lewis] Theobald, Bacon, Delia Bacon, [...] James Macpherson." (Ibid, 242) Cheng thinks that Shaun consistently intertwines Shem-Joyce's forgery and Shakespeare's forgery because they are similar. On the latter, Cheng further states: "Shakespeare has also often been accused of fakery, either by plagiarizing other authors (according to Greene) or by not actually authoring the plays, which were supposedly written instead by Francis Bacon or others." (Ibid., 101) According to Cheng, Joyce thinks that even Shakespeare, the author of the original letter, is accused of borrowing: "Joyce is saying that the letter, symbol for the *Wake* and for all literature, was originally written (or begun) by Shakespeare, who was himself accused of "borrowing" from others." (Ibid., 263)

Finally, Cheng thinks that "[a]ll literature and history are Viconian cycles," and therefore, even though there is a seeming "renewal" in the form of "a new dawn" that brings "a new HCE, a new lifetree, a new Shakespeare-father-creator," none of that is really new, for "the new cycle is really the same as the old: the old HCE is reincarnated as the new HCE, and all new works of scholarship and literature are only retellings, recombinations, and reworkings of the same forged letter [...]" (Ibid, 243) In support of his argument, Cheng cites Jennifer Schiffer Levine's 1979 article, "Originality and Repetition in *Finnegans Wake* and *Ulysses*," in which Levine thus argues that, like all literary works, *Finnegans Wake* too is characterised by theft, recycling and repetition, which makes the letter smell like dung:

[W]e may see writing as pious transcription or as deception and theft: total originality, given the shared nature of language, is impossible What looks like change is only, perhaps, recycling, and we are bound to a wheel of repetition Total

newness, total originality, is impossible, and so the writer's guilt becomes that of the thief and the conman. No wonder then that the letter smells like dung: it is recycled language (Ibid., 262)

Lacan's Reading of "The letter! The litter!"

Of all the *littérateurs* and literary works commented on by Lacan, James Joyce and *Finnegans Wake* engaged him for the longest period of time, enabling him to produce his most elaborate psychoanalytic discourse in relation to a work of literature. Lacan mentions Joyce or his works in passing in the following eight texts: The 1956 essay, "The Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter'"; the 1971 essay, "Lituraterre"; the 1972–1973 Seminar "On Feminine Sexuality"; the 1973 interview, "Television"; the 1975 lecture, "Geneva Lecture on the Symptom"; the 1975 "Yale University: Kanzer Seminar"; the 1975 "Yale University: Interview with Students"; and the 1977 lecture at Brussels, "Remarks on Hysteria." However, Lacan's more sustained discussions on Joyce and his writings figure in Sessions 1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 10 of his 1975–1976 Seminar on "*The Sinthome*", and in three separate lectures, namely, the June 1975 lectures at the fifth International Joyce Symposium in Paris, entitled "Joyce the Symptom" and "Joyce the Symptom II" respectively, and the 1976 lecture at Nice, "On James Joyce as Symptom." In his commentary on Joyce spanning more than two decades, the one expression by the Irish author that Lacan had singled out for special attention is "The letter! The litter!" As we have already seen, there is nothing arbitrary, excessive or erroneous about paying special attention to this expression, for it not only constitutes the bedrock of *Finnegans Wake* but holds a very special place in Joycean aesthetics and indeed in European literature itself. In the concluding section of the essay, let us try to understand how Lacan read this expression in Joyce's writing from a psychoanalyst's point of view.

Lacan's first comment on Joyce is in terms of this very expression. It figures in "The Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter'" in *Écrits*. Lacan had not made this comment in his 1954–1955 Seminar on "The Ego in Freud's Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis", where he spoke on Poe's story for the first time, but added it a little later, as a passing mention, while writing the essay in 1956:

"A letter, a litter"³: in Joyce's circle, they played on the homophony of the two words in English." (Lacan: 1956/2006, 18) Here, Lacan's description of the relation between a letter and a litter in Joyce is entirely restricted to the phonetic similarity between the two words, to the play on words that this similarity enabled Joyce to engage in, and to the playing with sounds of words in general that Joyce's lead encouraged among his followers. He makes no attempt to engage with the meanings of the words. The expression "Joyce's circle" refers to the group of writers and scholars, including Samuel Beckett, Stuart Gilbert, William Carlos Williams and several others, who produced the 1929 volume on Joyce's *Work in Progress*, entitled *Our Exagmination Round His Factification for Incamination of Work in Progress*, as Lacan mentions in a footnote. (Ibid, 47, fn. 11) The essays in the volume extensively discuss Joyce's wordplay, often with the help of a play on words, as the very title of the volume testifies. From this volume, Lacan must have particularly had in mind the "letter" of protest dated February 9, 1929, addressed to Joyce by the America-based Russian reader, Vladimir Dixon, who described his own letter as "a litter." (Beckett, et al: 1929/1961, 89) By doing so, Dixon, Joyce's reader, had played on this very homophony eight years before Joyce himself. The detail that it was not Joyce alone but a circle of people, "they", who played on this homophony implies that at first there was the one, named Joyce, and then there were many, a "circle." The playing was thus not the effort of a single swallow but an indication of the arrival of summer, as Lacan would go on to say about his own teaching in 1970, following the publication of the first two books on it by Anthony Wilden and Anika Lemaire. In any case, this is a limited commentary on Joyce's expression compared to what Lacan shall go on to state on it later, in the 1970s.

Lacan's second reference to Joyce, made 15 years later in "Lituraterre", too, begins in terms of this very expression of Joyce, albeit with a difference. In order to explain the title "Lituraterre", meaning writing erasure on land, Lacan evokes the misspelling of the Latin word "*littera*" as "*litera*" mentioned by Ernout & Meillet in their French *Etymological Dictionary of Latin*, and then relates the misspelling

3 In English in the original.

to: "the equivocation with which Joyce [...] slides from a *letter*⁴ to a *litter*,⁵ from a *letter* (I am translating) to a piece of rubbish [*à une ordure*]." (Lacan: 1971/2013, 327) The word *littera* denotes letter, writing, grammar, and literature. Lacan correlates the misspelling of *littera* as *litera* to the "equivoque" by which Joyce slips from a letter to a litter. While *littera* stands for the letter, the meaningless word "*litera*" is a kind of rubbish or litter. As a form of manipulation of language, "equivocation" could well be described as a kind of play on words, though it is a kind of word-play that is far more complex than mere homophony. Lacan uses the word "equivocation" here because he thinks that "letter" and "litter" denote the two forms of the letter itself: "The letter!", or the letter as meaning and semblance; and "The litter!", or the letter as trash or excreta. In the broader context of "Lituraterre", however, letter and litter represent two types of writing: the literal, or a writing with the help of letters that has a meaning, and the littoral, or a writing with the help of litter that marks the boundary between meaning and jouissance. In course of playing with the assonance of letter and litter, Joyce slipped from one type to the other. His slippage represents literature's crucial turn from the letter to litter, and through it, from the literal to the littoral. Lacan would go on to shed vital light on Joyce's slippage from a letter to a litter in "Lituraterre" and other subsequent works. Let us examine some of that.

Lacan briefly wonders in "Lituraterre" whether Joyce's writing as "litter" could have a relation to Saint Thomas Aquinas's writing as "chaff": "In making litter of the letter, is it Saint Thomas he is thinking of again, as the work bears witness to from beginning to end?" (Lacan: 1971/2013, 327) While Joyce's aesthetic theory is majorly and avowedly Thomistic in nature, Aquinas himself described his *Summa Theologica* as "*sicut palea*," or chaff, while explaining why he stopped writing the book after having spent eight years on it, referring to his mystical experience of December 1273 which impelled him to terminate his work on the book: "All the things I have written are like chaff (*sicut palea*) to me, compared with what I have seen and what has been revealed to me." (Quoted in Nobus: 2013, 328) However, since chaff and litter are not identical matters, and since the composition and publication of *Finnegans Wake* are vastly different from the writing

and abortion of *Summa Theologica*, Lacan is not sure whether Aquinas had indeed informed Joyce's slippage, which is why his remark on Joyce qua Aquinas is in the interrogative mode.

Lacan then states in the same essay that Joyce at once contained and spilled the literature of litter. He contends that Joyce's work introduced the literary dustbin that consigned polluted literature to it, which made him Saint Joyce in Lacan's eyes because, unlike Aquinas, who considered the saint's business to be *caritas*, or charity, Lacan considered the saint's business to be *trashitas*, or to act as trash, which is why he remarked in *Television*: "A saint's business, to put it clearly, is not *caritas*. Rather, he acts as trash [*déchet*]; his business being *trashitas* [*il décharite*]." (Lacan: 1974/1990, 15) And at the same time, Joyce allowed a spillover and recirculation of the contents of the dustbin, which made him a heretic. Such re-circulation of litter was in fact enabled not only by the publication of Joyce's later literary works, especially *Finnegans Wake*, as Lacan indicates, but also by the posthumous publication— or, better still, "*poubellification*", or publication as trash, as Lacan says in his 1968–69 Seminar on "From an Other to the other" and elsewhere— of Joyce's private correspondence with Nora called "the dirty letters" that was not meant for publication.

Since "litter" denotes both rubbish and excreta in Joyce, it invokes both the dustbin and the sewerage respectively as functions to keep them contained and controlled, thereby opening up the possibility of leakages from them as well. Joyce is the placeholder of the sewerage in literature. He inaugurated and embodied that place before others joined him. As the holder of this place, Joyce both contained excreta and leaked it out, which ought to be understood precisely in terms of the anal drive in psychoanalysis. The anal drive urges the subject to control and contain its excreta until a proper place to be relieved is found, which is due to its toilet training in terms of a series of demands of the big Other, usually the mother, as the trainer. Since the anal drive is thus a matter of compliance or non-compliance with the Other's demand, the subject at times wants to frustrate rather than fulfill it, which it does by expressing its own anal desire, usually by relieving itself at what the Other would consider a wrong place. Leakage or relieving oneself at a wrong

4 In English in the original.

5 In English in the original.

place is thus a form of assertion of one's own desire that is also a subversion of the demand of the Other. In his 1960–1961 Seminar on "Transference", Lacan explains that children generally comply with but occasionally revolt against the demand of the Other so as to express their own desire through deliberate defecation or urination at the wrong place.

Joyce made litter of the letter by describing the anal drive of his characters, such as of Bloom in *Ulysses*. At the end of the "Calypso" chapter in *Ulysses*, Bloom takes a dump in the outhouse and then checks the back of his trousers to make sure they are clean, that there is no stain caused by any leakage. Throughout "Sirens", Bloom feels the need to defecate but holds back the urge. He keeps reminding himself that he really must do Sandow's Exercises. The chapter closes with Bloom letting out a noisy fart, but concealing it under the noise of a passing tram. Apart from the word "farting" itself, derivatives of the word "fart"—such as "farther," "fartoomany-ness," "farth," "fartas," "pienofarte," "Grandfarthring," "farthing," "breakfarts," "farthingales," "farternoiser," "farthest," "farth," "fartykkt" and "Afartodays"—occur throughout *Finnegans Wake*. Therefore, in the final analysis, Joyce was paradoxically protecting and damaging literature by containing and leaking out polluted literature at once.

An important aspect of Joyce's slippage from the letter to litter is that its magnitude kept on increasing as he progressed from one work to the next. Offering an explanation for this in Session 7 of the Seminar on "The *Sinthome*", Lacan says that Joyce's torturing of speech sounds more and more in his writings that ended in breaking or dissolving language itself in his last work, *Finnegans Wake*, where phonatory identity is almost lost and gone, is really his response to a certain relation to speech that the place of his lacking father was increasingly imposing on him. Lacan wonders whether by decomposing speech in this manner Joyce was able to free himself from speech or whether, paradoxically, he had exposed himself to a greater invasion of speech by thereby empowering its polyphony:

In his efforts dating back to his first critical essays, then in *A Portrait of the Artist*, and ultimately in *Ulysses* and ending in *Finnegans Wake*, in what is in some sense the continuous progress that his art constituted, it is hard not to see how a certain relationship with speech is increas-

ingly imposed upon him – namely, this speech that comes to be written while being broken apart, pulled to pieces – to the point that he ends up dissolving language itself [...]. He ends up imposing on language itself a sort of fracturing, a sort of decomposition, which makes it so that there is no longer any phonatory identity.

There is undoubtedly a reflection here at the level of writing. It is through the intermediary of writing that speech is decomposed by imposing itself as such. This occurs through a warping, and it is ambiguous as to whether this warping lets him free himself from the parasite of speech I was speaking about earlier, or whether it leaves him on the contrary open to invasion from the essentially phonemic properties of speech, from the polyphony of speech. (Lacan: 2005/2016a, 79)

One of Lacan's most original observations on Joyce's slippage from the letter to litter in terms of the writing of *Finnegans Wake* is that it provided Joyce jouissance. Lacan repeatedly states that we do not know what *Finnegans Wake* means, in so far as it is an unreadable and unanalysable work, but we can clearly sense as readers that Joyce enjoyed writing every word in it. Lacan believes that this enjoyment was Joyce's whole purpose of writing *Finnegans Wake*; that Joyce is, as his name suggests, joy, enjoyment, "joissance." This would explain why Lacan considers jouissance to be situated beyond meaning, where the ridge between the two is marked by the letter functioning as an edge that Lacan calls the littoral in "Lituraterre."

Lacan mentions another detail while making this very point in "Joyce the Symptom": "[...] this *jouissance*, is the sole thing in his text on which we can get a purchase. There lies the symptom. The symptom – in so far as nothing ties it to what makes for *lalangua* [*lalangua*] itself." (Lacan: 1982/2016b, 146) In other words, that Joyce enjoyed writing *Finnegans Wake* is the only thing that we can understand as readers of the novel. Lacan relates this to Joyce's unanalysable symptom. Going a step further, Lacan adds that this very jouissance of Joyce is what enables the readers to go through this otherwise unreadable novel without understanding anything of it at all: "Read a few pages of *Finnegans Wake* without striving to understand it. It's quite readable [...] because one can sense the presence of the jouissance of he that wrote it." (Ibid,

144) The novel is Joyce's symptom because we are unable to understand anything of it other than fact that Joyce enjoyed writing it. We are unable to understand anything more than that because, the language of the novel that is generated by littering the letter represents Joyce's *lalangue*.

Mentioned for the first time in his lecture on *The Knowledge of the Psychoanalyst* dated November 4, 1971, the term *lalangue*, or "thelanguage" as a single word, is a coinage by Lacan that contains an allusion to Pierre André Lalande, author of a dictionary of critical and philosophical terms in French, and stands for the nonsensical articulation or absurd babble indicative of an elementary phenomenon that often characterises the language of the psychotic subject. Although *lalangue* is not a structure like language, it is nonetheless capable of producing the polysemic, homophonic and equivocal effects of the latter. It is a kind of phonation that predates language, meaningful speech and subjectivity itself. While language captures the unconscious's meaning effect, *lalangue* captures its jouissance effect. Joyce's meaningless littering in *Finnegans Wake* thus constitutes a unique instance of the creation of literature with the help of *lalangue*. *Finnegans Wake* is a symptom according to Lacan because no meaning connects to the *lalangue* in terms of which it is composed. In this context, the letter stands for language and meaning, while litter stands for *lalangue* and jouissance.

Lacan moreover implies that, Joyce's slippage is indicative of a deliberate attempt on his part to irreparably deform the English language and English literature to the point of converting it into litter so as to avenge the English for invading and colonising his country, oppressing his countrymen, and annulling his own language, Gaelic. The composition and, more importantly, the publication of *Finnegans Wake* that mark Joyce's slippage, enabled him to do so. Lacan states in "Joyce the Symptom": "he [Joyce] did use one particular tongue among others, one that is not his own – for his own is precisely a tongue that had been wiped off the map, to wit, Gaelic, of which he had a smattering, enough to get by, but hardly much more – not his own, then, but the tongue of the invaders, the oppressors." (Ibid, 146) However, Joyce himself claimed, "I have put the [English] language to sleep" (Ellmann: 1959/1982, 546), whose

meaning is best understood in terms of what he had said to Max Eastman later: "When morning comes of course everything will be clear again.... I'll give them back their English language. I'm not destroying it for good." (Eastman: 1931, 101) At a broader level, not mentioned by Joyce or Lacan, by littering 52 languages in all, major and minor, Joyce was trying to write a literature of litter on an unthinkable scale,⁶ as well as trying to write the last word in literature with the help of a work that would destroy all existing notions of literature itself. His aim was thus to disrupt or redefine almost all languages and all literature.

Above all, Lacan's most important observation on Joyce's slippage is that the sinful act of writing *Finnegans Wake* made it possible for Joyce to construct his *sinthome*, even though he is converted into a *synthomme* or a synthetic, as in artificially constructed, man in the process. Lacan thinks that Joyce's slippage in terms of the writing of *Finnegans Wake* must be primarily understood as the result of an attempt on his part to make a name for himself, with the help of the academics, so as to compensate for the absence of a stable Name-of-the-Father caused by paternal lack— an attempt which ultimately led to the creation of his *sinthome*. Lacan specifies in Session 8 of his Seminar on "The *Sinthome*" that Joyce had constructed an unanalysable *sinthome* for himself through his act of writing *Finnegans Wake* in particular. In this, Lacan was radically different from Jung. Whereas Jung, who had analysed Joyce's daughter Lucia, was extremely keen to also psychoanalyse Joyce, Lacan thinks Joyce would have gained nothing from a psychoanalysis, for he had already managed to achieve, all by himself, the best one could expect from psychoanalysis at its end. (Lacan: 1971/2013, 327)⁷ Unlike the end of analysis in the neuroses that is marked by an extreme sense of emptiness and destitution in the loci of the subject and the big Other, and thus by the realisation that life is a waste, a scrap in the real, the end of analysis in Joyce's case is related to his construction of and identification with a *sinthome* as a supplementary fourth ring so as to hold together and thus prevent the disintegration of his R.S.I., a three-ring Borromean knot. In a word, Joyce managed to create a *sinthome* for himself and stabilise his R.S.I. with its help by turning the letter into litter through his writing.

6 For the details, see Sandulescu 2012, 6–8.

7 For further details, see my essay "A Literary Introduction to 'Lituraterre.'" (Biswas: 2012, 176–177)

That brings us to the crucial question, what exactly was Joyce's method of converting the letter into litter? Lacan answered it from several perspectives of which let us focus on the three most important ones. Lacan's first response to the question, in his Seminar "On Feminine Sexuality, the Limits of Love and Knowledge", is that, Joyce converted the letter into litter in *Finnegans Wake* by making his signifiers stuff the signified. This means, Joyce's signifiers are like slips of the tongue that can be read in an infinite number of ways. Notably, Joyce had not only read Freud's *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, a book that he owned, but also declared in *Ulysses*, somewhat like Freud, that "errors [...] are the portals of discovery." (Joyce: 1922/1960, 190) Lacan adds that, since the signifiers thereby tend to produce an enigmatic meaning, they are difficult to read, difficult to read in any one way, difficult not to read away, and difficult to decide to read:

What happens in Joyce's work? The signifier stuffs (*vient truffer*) the signified. It is because the signifiers fit together, combine, and concertina – read *Finnegans Wake* – that something is produced by way of meaning (*comme signifié*) that may seem enigmatic, but is clearly what is closest to what we analysts, thanks to analytic discourse, have to read – slips of the tongue (*lapsus*). It is as slips that they signify something, in other words, that they can be read in an infinite number of different ways. But it is precisely for that reason that they are difficult to read, are read away, or not read at all. (Lacan: 1975/1999, 37)

Illustrating one of the many ways in which the signified is stuffed by the signifier, Lacan states in "Joyce the Symptom" that in *Finnegans Wake* there is a very peculiar kind of a pun in which three or four words flash in a single word, such as the word "*pourspère*," which is fascinating even though meaning tends to get lost in the absence of an anchoring point. (Lacan: 1982/2016b, 144) *Pourspère* is a coinage of Lacan that sounds like a cluster of words in French

that mean "to spoil/rot in hoping/waiting" (*pourrir espérer*), "for father" (*pour père*), "prosper" (*prospère*), "imitator" (*pasticheur*), "pastiche" (*pasticher*), and "rottenness" (*pourriture*). Owing to an excess of meaning, the meaning of such words is always hard to determine and therefore they are always difficult to read satisfactorily.⁸

In this context Lacan further clarifies that this very peculiar kind of punning brings out Joyce's "cancellation of subscription to the unconscious." (Ibid, 146, emphasis in original) The expression has at least three meanings. First, Joyce did not prescribe any one meaning in the unconscious. Second, Joyce's writing neither endorses the view that the unconscious is structured like a language— for he delinks language from the unconscious and meaning— nor subscribes to an unconscious structured like English, as Lacan points out in this essay: "I've said that the unconscious is structured like a language. It's odd that I'm also able to speak in terms of a *cancellation of subscription to the unconscious* for someone who plays strictly on language, though he did use one particular tongue among others, one that is not his own [...]" (Ibid, 146) And third, Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* is that kind of a symptom which does not tell the readers anything at all, as it does not allow anything in it to hook on to something in the unconscious of its readers: "It is the symptom inasmuch as it stands no chance what soever of hooking anything of your unconscious." (Ibid, 145) Therefore, as Lacan states in the same essay, Joyce the symptom is Joyce's singular symptom, for it does not concern anyone else and is completely unanalysable, due to which, literature itself is forever altered by it: "Joyce lifts the symptom to the power of language, without for all that any of it being analysable. This is what strikes you, and literally renders you [...] *speechless*. [...] That is what makes for the substance of what Joyce brings us, whereby, in a certain way, literature after him can no longer be what it was before." (Ibid, 146)

Lacan's second response to the question figures in "Joyce the Symptom", where he explains with the help of an example as to how Joyce was able to convert the letter into litter by making use of the pecu-

8 Hart makes a similar though not identical point when he states that, "The essential value of the pun or portmanteau-word in *Finnegans Wake* lies [...] in its capacity to compress much meaning into little space. [...] A good example is the word 'paltipsypote' (337.24) from the 'Scene in the Public', which neatly integrates 'pal', 'tipsy' and 'pote' into the idea of 'participating' in a round of Guinness." (Hart: 1962, 32-33) Even though both Hart and Lacan talk about packing a lot into a single word or coinage, the examples that they gave indicate that whereas Hart was thinking of coinages that resulted from the simple combination of a number of complete regular words, Lacan was thinking of coinages that resulted from the complex overlap of different speech sounds, or fragments of speech sounds, evoking different expressions.

liarity of English orthography that tends to support translinguistic homophony in a special way:

Now, were it not for this very special kind of spelling [letter-litter] that is specific to the English language, a good three quarters of the effects of *Finnegans Wake* would be lost. The most extreme case, I can tell you, and I owe this to Jacques Aubert, is – *Who ails tongue coddeau, aspace of dumbillsilly?* Had I come across this piece of writing on my own, would I have perceived or not – *Où est ton cadeau, espèce d'imbécile?* Where's your present, you imbecile? What is unprecedented in this is that the homophony, translinguistic homophony on this occasion, is sustained only by letters that conform to English-language spelling. (Ibid, 145)

Another example, pointed out by Hart, is that "Sevastopol", the name of the Crimean city implied in the "Butt and Taff" episode though not explicitly mentioned therein, also denotes "see a vast pool" and through it "the horrors of the Flood," the "apple" as the cause of the "original Fall", as well as "the name of Siva, the destroyer-god [in Hinduism]." (Hart: 1962, 33) In other words, Joyce littered the letter on the way to composing *Finnegans Wake* essentially in terms of a prodigious exploitation of the accidents of history, such as, of the translingual homophony that the orthography and phonetics of the English language could accommodate.

In the form of his third response, which may be found in the "Additional Session" to Session 4 of the Seminar on "The *Sinthome*", Lacan mentions how from *Ulysses* onward Joyce turned the letter into litter by subtly breaking up the sentences so as to give language another, usually unconventional, use:

Joyce writes English with these peculiar refinements that mean that he disarticulates the 8sion. Don't imagine that this only begins with *Finnegans Wake*. Long before, notably in *Ulysses*, he had a way of chopping up sentences [*les phrases*] that already inclined that way. It is truly a process that is exerted in the direction of finding another use for the language in which

he writes, in any case, a use that is far from ordinary. This is part and parcel of his *savoir-faire*. (Lacan: 2005/2016a, 59)

Lacan's expression "*les phrases*" stands for both "sentences" and "phrases," and his remark is valid for both these levels of Joyce's language. At the level of the phrase, for instance, Joyce distorts the expression "tongue-tied" into "Tung-Toyd" (123.20) so as to allude to "Jung-Freud" as two doctors whose "tongues toyed" with their patients and with each other, as well as to point to the "split" between them with reference to the context of "Schizophrenesis" (123.18-19), or "schizophrenia", in which the expression is used. All of the instances are highly unusual uses of the original expression.⁹ While at the level of the sentence, for instance, we find the following broken sentences in the penultimate line of the novel: "Lps. The keys to. Given! A way." (628.15) Here "Lps" is "lips", "The keys" also stands for "the kiss", and the set of fragmented sentences together mean, "The kiss given away [by ALP's lips]." Gordon rightly states, "ALP's letter always ends with kisses; this is the last one." (Gordon: 2020, 119) Moreover, as Tindall explains, "The keys to" refers to "the keys of me heart" (626.30-31); "The keys to. Given!" also means "the keys to heaven"; and "Given. A way" stands for both "the given away" and "the given or whatever is", the latter reaffirming ALP's earlier remark, "What will be is. Is is." (620.32) (Tindall: 1969, 328) Such "chopping up" of sentences makes unconventional uses of language possible by introducing a charged impulse for reintegration or recombination at different levels among the fragments, and creating thereby the possibility of textual intertwinings and the production of multiple novel meanings.

Lacan considers *Finnegans Wake* unreadable, unanalysable, completely meaningless, and the destroyer of the English language and literature. For these very reasons, however, he thinks that the novel paradoxically exemplifies a kind of perfection of language. He says in the Seminar "On Feminine Sexuality, the Limits of Love and Knowledge" that language attains such perfection when it is enabled to litter writing properly: "You must sit down and read a little work by writers, not of your era [...] but you

9 Joyce's previous observation that Jung and Freud are "different," which he had expressed in a letter to Weaver dated June 24, 1921, by stating that "Doctor Jung (the Swiss Tweedledum who is not to be confused with the Viennese Tweedledee, Dr. Freud)," (Joyce: 1957/1966,166) culminates here in his allusion to the "split" between them. Moreover, since Jung had diagnosed Joyce's daughter Lucia as schizophrenic, much to Joyce's dismay, he seems to be making the suggestion here: physicians, heal thy selves.

could read Joyce, for example. You will see therein how language is perfected when it knows how to play with writing." (Lacan: 1975/1999, 36) Here, "perfection" stands for perfection in converting the letter into litter and perfection in creating a new letter out of that litter, without ever departing from the fundamental rules of language and writing. Language is perfected in the process of such play with writing in terms of speech sounds because, it is thus enabled to expand and incorporate what was missing in it until then. Therefore, Joyce represents that moment in history when literature and the English language were perfected in terms of the conversion of littering into writing with an extraordinary subtlety and finesse.

Finally, Joyce's expression "The letter! The litter!" in particular and his works in general were of special importance to Lacan because they empowered him to express his own views on literature and psychoanalytic readings of literature more emphatically. To begin with, Joyce's act of littering the letter helped Lacan ratify his own definition of literature as a form of "leftovers" ("*des restes*"). Lacan writes in "Lituraterre" that, insofar as literature "is a matter of collocating in written form [*l'écrit*] what would first be chant, spoken myth, dramatic procession," it "involves cooking up leftovers." (Lacan: 1971/2013, 328) In other words, insofar as literature is marked by a transition from the oral to the written, from the whole to its fragments, and from the great many to the few surviving, that is, from the letter to the litter, it is, properly speaking, a matter of satisfying oneself with the crumbs left behind.

Joyce's writing subscribes to a part of this definition insofar as it is a collation of fragments. Joyce wrote partly by putting together fragments of conversations, writings, languages, literary works and scraps and pieces of miscellaneous other things, always picked up and recycled in a disjointed or distorted form, very much like a rag picker stitching together his collection to form a dress. Hart writes: "Joyce has been variously praised and reviled for filling his later books with literary rubbish—catch-phrases, clichés, journalese, popular songs, and the worst kind of gush from girls' weeklies. It is undeniable that he found considerable delight in such trash, and a delight that was not always critical." (Hart: 1962, 31) As a matter of fact, Joyce's very method of collecting material for *Finnegans Wake* was a deliberately non-systematic

one. Dirk Van Hulle captured this creative haphazardness of Joyce's method with the remark: "a note from a newspaper can end up next to a note from, say, the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, without any distinction. This obliteration of the original context creates opportunities for new associations." (Van Hulle: 2008, 89) In this, Joyce's collection functioned like the unconscious in which all kinds of scraps of writings can easily coexist without any conflict or contradiction. Van Hulle rightly adds that Joyce "decomposed" external material while composing *Finnegans Wake*. (Ibid) Correspondingly, Shem's house in *Finnegans Wake* is littered with a bizarre catalogue of things that contribute to his art. His house is described as "persianly literated with burst loveletters, tell-tale stories, stickyback snaps, doubtful eggshells, bouchers, flints, borers, puffers, amygdaloid almonds, rindless raisins, alphybettyformed verbage, vivlical viasses, ompiter dictas, visus umbique, ahems and ahahs [...]"; the list goes on. (183.10-14) Since no one was better aware of his method of writing than Joyce himself, his demonstration of the letter turning to litter and emerging as a new letter through his writing was his way of avowing this very truth about literature, namely, that it is a collation of scraps of leftovers.

This is the reason that Lacan, who himself viewed literature as a form of leftovers, did not feel the need to look beyond Joyce's equivocation on the letter and the litter to emphasise the weight of the word "*literature*" itself, as he states in "Joyce the Symptom": "And to underscore the weightiness of the word literature, I shall utter the equivoque that Joyce often plays on—*letter, litter*.¹⁰ The letter is litter." (Lacan: 1982/2016b, 145) In short, Lacan thinks that literature itself, which has always been a kind of leftovers, must be viewed in relation to the littering of the letter following the publication of the later works of Joyce.

Lacan's engagement with Joyce moreover helped him realise a matter of great significance for the interdisciplinary domain of "Literature/Art and Psychoanalysis." He says in his "Yale University: Interview with Students" on November 24, 1975: "Explaining art through the unconscious seems to me to be highly suspect, though this is what analysts do. Explaining art through the symptom seems more serious to me." (Lacan: 2022b, 67) Explaining art through the unconscious is "highly suspect" because, the unconscious being a somewhat general concept

10 In English in the original.

that can moreover be conceived entirely theoretically, an approach through it to art neither demands precision in interpretation nor requires the interpreter to have grasped psychoanalysis well enough, and tends to slip into the university discourse far too easily. Explaining art through the symptom, by contrast, is a "serious" exercise because it compels the reader to be precise, it requires the reader to have a fairly good command over clinical psychoanalysis, including the ability to make a distinction between the symptom and the *sinthome* in practise, and it tends to bring the work closer to the psychoanalyst's discourse.

While Lacan must have had Freud's works on art and literature on his mind when he spoke of how "analysts" usually approach these fields, since in his "Yale University: Kanzer Seminar", delivered earlier on the same day, he had explicitly stated with reference to Freud's psychoanalytic works on literature and art, and especially to the latter's essay on Jensen's *Gradiva* that "Freud tried [...] to see in art a kind of testimony of the unconscious" (Lacan: 2022a, 51), the plural form, "analysts," used by Lacan indicates that he may well have been thinking of the works of Freudians like Ernest Jones, Marie Bonaparte, Otto Rank and others on literature in addition to those of Freud. However, since Lacan himself explained "The Purloined Letter" in 1955, *Hamlet* in 1958–1959, *Antigone* in 1960, and Paul Claudel's *Coûfontaine Trilogy* in 1960–1961 through the unconscious,, the need to approach literature and art through the symptom rather than through the unconscious must have been a new realisation of his, one that had dawned on him only after he had practised both types of reading of art sufficiently. The fact that Lacan was able to state this only a few months after explaining Joyce's art through the symptom in two papers on "Joyce the Symptom", and only a few days after the first session of his public seminar on Joyce's

sinthome in Paris, unmistakably indicates that this realisation was facilitated by his engagement with the works of Joyce. More pertinently, since the letter has turned to litter, the literal has turned to the littoral, literary language has turned to *lalangue*, meaning has been replaced by *jouissance*, and literature that has turned to "litteringture" (570.18) is tending to turn to *liture*, all predominantly thanks to Joyce, psychoanalytic literary criticism ought to correspondingly change from being unconscious-centric to becoming symptom or *sinthome* centric in order to match the advancement made in the field of literature. It is a change in this interdisciplinary area that Joyce had rendered obligatory, and a change that no one before Lacan was equipped to identify or introduce.

To conclude, Lacan chose to highlight the expression "The letter! The litter!" in *Finnegans Wake* because, as an extraordinarily discerning reader of Joyce, he was able, unlike many Joyce scholars, to fathom the absolute centrality and unsurpassable value of this expression not only in Joyce's philosophy of composition in general, and in the text of *Finnegans Wake* as evidence of the former, but in the progression of European literature itself. Lacan's engagement with the works of Joyce at once enabled him to offer a fresh direction to the psychoanalytic readers of literature and art; to make momentous contributions to the field of psychoanalysis by offering a deep insight into a large number of crucial concepts of psychoanalysis, such as, semblance, littoral, lacking Name-of-the-Father, psychoses, symptom, *sinthome*, *jouissance*, *lalangue*, and so on; and to make a singularly path-breaking contribution to the field of Joyce studies by shedding valuable light on the cause, the effect and the very process of littering the letter from a remarkably original perspective.

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Some further questions prior to any possible treatment of the psychoses

David Ferraro

In the 1970s, it was possible for Deleuze to claim that ‘everything new that’s come into psychoanalysis, from Melanie Klein to Lacan, has come from psychosis’.¹ I’m not so sure that this is true today. We could approach psychosis through a periodisation of Lacan, passing from imaginary, to symbolic, to real and ultimately to the Borromean know. Periodisation, however, is to Lacan’s teaching as scaffolding is to a building. It helps to reach some difficult places, but is not to be mistaken for the edifice itself. I note this as after 70 years of Lacanianism, the trend in some places is to emphasise a series of terms organised under the signifier of the ‘late’ Lacan, which sets up, as a foil, various other Lacans. For example, there is the Lacan for whom psychosis is an outcome of the foreclosure of the Name-of-the-Father, or the Lacan for whom psychosis is the outcome of a failure to adequately separate from the object *a*. Later, Lacan introduced the *sinthome*, which could be taken as an acknowledgement that ‘cure’ at the level of *jouissance* is not only not possible in psychoanalysis, it is also not necessary.

What has been added to these conceptions? In many parts of the Lacanian world, especially in the years of this century, it is the affirmation that the Oedipal drama, which Lacan eventually designated

as Freud’s dream, is a merely contingent familial and psychical arrangement, and one perhaps lapsing into extinction. The various teachings on ordinary psychosis are not especially rigorous or consistent when viewed *en masse*, but they do generally seek to refute the deficit model of psychosis, decentering neurosis. The psychotic is no longer a failed neurotic, rather, neurotic structuration is a particular knotting, with a contingent, if sometimes widespread *sinthome*. If the Name-of-the-Father was the organising principle determining a subject’s structural position, anchoring and stabilising the symbolic order, this was pluralised by Lacan himself and, according to some readings, displaced by the master signifier.² This latter can be isolated as part of the psychoanalytic procedure to be nominated as a signifier all alone, and moreover, this ‘all alone’ is not merely contingent upon the atomisation and fragmentation of neoliberal capitalism, but rather typifies the fundamental sociological and ontological dimensions of the contemporary subject.

Everyone is delusional, all structure is relative. There is a transferential unconscious as well as a real unconscious, but these do not stand in dialectical relation to each other, because the framework of the

1 Deleuze, 1995, p. 15.

2 Miller, 2011, *passim*.

'late' Lacan does not permit dialectical relations.³ Transferential questions are therefore diminished, even derided, as are questions of meaning, and of interpretation.⁴ These interpretations of Lacan's teaching most definitely have a textual basis, but they are no less interpretations for all that. Some arise from a scriptural reading of Lacan, as if he was not continually trying out different notions and then abandoning them, or using provocative phrases for effect. Some are extrapolations based on isolated remarks that appear in relatively minor texts, and almost all of these interpretations systematically excise that portion of Lacan's later teaching that deal with themes of poetics, the importance of kinship groups, and the fact that analysis is not merely monological. The distance between 'interpretation' and motivated mutilation in reading these late teachings is sometimes very slight.

The pivot in Lacan's teaching toward an alleged generalised foreclosure is usually paired, in contemporary psychoanalytic publications, with the same generalisation at the level of society and familial structure. Analysts who in case discussions conduct themselves with the utmost circumspection here permit themselves the wildest generalisations about entire societies and epochs. The age of the father is behind us.⁵ Society itself is mad, in some sense, or, rather as in Thatcherism, it doesn't exist, except as semblants and routines.⁶ The Other is reducible to the subject's puppet, and to think otherwise is tantamount to psychosis.⁷ The Name of the Father, far from being the logical outcome of a structural triangulation, is instead reduced to the person of the father qua patriarch.⁸ Since the patriarchy has been abolished, at least formally, his Name disappears also. The family is the site wherein the societal

meets the psychical, and the family has allegedly changed in ways that supposedly logically preclude a triadic or tetradic structure. Parents are 'all alone', as are their children.⁹ Family constellations have altered since the time of Freud. Even Catholic countries permit divorce, and besides, there are single parents, and same-sex couples and parents. Without blushing, our contemporary colleagues can ask questions of these families such as 'who is the father, who is the mother? Neither of them? Or both of them?'¹⁰ Allegedly, lineage itself no longer exists.¹¹ And not only does Lacan's teaching move away from the logic of the signifier, the symbolic order itself is now a suspect, even defunct notion. Lacan subordinates its significance and demonstrates its inconsistencies: on this basis, the interpreters of the 'late' Lacan have practically abolished the symbolic altogether, except as a pacifying illusion. The arguments behind these claims are usually brief and rather sketchy, along the lines of something-something science, something-something capitalism,¹² but the overall effect is that a certain reading of Lacan is paired with a certain interpretation of contemporary society, each pointing in the same direction: each is alone, and each is mad, that is, delusional.

If you had asked me a few years ago, I would have more or less agreed with many of the foregoing claims. I do wish to suggest not that they're entirely wrong, but there is a great deal that they ignore, despite having ossified into an institutional dogma and a university discourse. I'm not sure whether any contemporary Lacanians bother to read *Seminar III* these days, but if they did, they'd find some fun moments, such as when Lacan says of psychoanalytic publication that 'It seems that the ultimate point of the discourse is to give a sign to its readers

3 It is a minor theme of Miller's final seminar, from 2011 (above), that the late teaching of Lacan is non-dialectical. Lacan himself referred to dialectics as late as *Seminar XXIV*, so strictly speaking it is Miller rather than Lacan who is non-dialectical.

4 Miller, 2017. In this text, and elsewhere, Miller repeats the idea that the real unconscious precedes the establishment of a transferential unconscious (p. 35) and stands radically outside of it.

5 Miller, 2013, cited in Lacan Web Télévision, 2022.

6 Miller, (2012a), p. 18.

7 Miller, (2020), p. 173.

8 On this point, Miller is often to be found contradicting himself. In Miller (2006), the father is indeed emptied out and reduced to a merely logical function, distinct from any man; elsewhere (e.g. Miller, 2014), the father is not a pure signifier, as the mother must link the signifier with 'the body of a man' (p. 12).

9 Brousse, (2021), p. 26. Brousse goes so far as to claim that not only paternity, but also motherhood has been abolished by the present social order, by mechanisms that remain unspecified in the text.

10 Brousse, (2021), p. 28. In fact, such questions betray the questioner's commitment to the supposedly abolished familial form, in the same vein that asking of gay couples who plays the man/woman is an expression of the crudest heteronormativity.

11 Brousse, (2021), p. 27.

12 A case in point can be found in Miller, 2012b.

and to prove that the signatory is, if I can put it like this, a non-nobody, that he is capable of writing what everyone else writes.¹³ In other words, having relegated transference to an inferior status in the theory, it nevertheless returns as performativity in the discourse. Those who reject filiation nonetheless practice affiliation, and none of us need believe the notion that analysts, perhaps the most genealogical of all professions, forever inscribing the markings of their ancestry on every publication, don't believe in lineage. This is comedy.

Jacques-Alain Miller in particular ends up in a strange theoretical position. His discussions, so influential in the Lacanian world, hinge on two foundations: a reading of the late Lacan which takes primacy over every other possible Lacan, and a series of essentially sociological claims about the changing status of subjectivity in the contemporary world. Miller's knowledge of Lacan's teaching is expert and his reading complex, and whilst it merits critique, that is a task for another paper. Things are rather simpler, however, when it comes to dealing with the sweeping sociological generalisations of Miller and followers. Miller¹⁴, on the one hand, claims that the Name-of-the-Father was operative in the past (presumably in the 1950s, when Lacan formulated it), but is no longer. He never quite specifies what is responsible for this shift other than unevidenced and vague assertions about capitalism and science producing a 'disorder in the real'. At one point, he mentions 'bioengineering' as something that will lead to 'eugenics', but he goes no further¹⁵. Insofar as these vagaries constitute a position, it is an extremely curious one given that the Name-of-the-Father was formulated by Lacan in a France that was not short of either science or capitalism, just a few years after World War Two and the Holocaust, during a period of significant anti-French colonial struggle, and at a time when eugenics was rife throughout mainstream psychiatry. Nothing is easier than pointing to a phenomenon, and claiming that capitalism is the cause of it. Since capitalism is so massively pervasive, one will always be at least partially correct, despite having explained nothing. Freud had his wild anthropology; Miller provides the sociological equivalent. Even if it is possible, as a hypothesis, that the pivot that occurred within developed capi-

talism from a Keynesian welfarist framework to a neoliberal paradigm produced subjective effects, it remains to be demonstrated what exactly that would change in terms of the Name-of-the-Father. It isn't as if patriarchy is incompatible with advanced capitalism and science, as demonstrated in many parts of the world outside of Western Europe and the US. Psychoanalysis has its limitations, and to properly theorise social change, Miller and his followers are in the same boat as the rest of the analytic world, namely, needing recourse to a discourse outside of analysis alone. Ultimately, Miller's conclusions are not a rigorous theorisation of the contemporary real, but rather an imaginisation of this real, and one that can provide limited guidance as far as the psychoanalytic implications of contemporary social and familial structures are concerned. I suggest some different points of departure.

First, let's touch briefly on the topic of diagnosis. All diagnosis is essentially a generalisation, and even if Lacan's structural diagnostic model is the very best of these, it still works against discerning the singularity of each subject. Perhaps Lacanian diagnosis is even more problematic than the merely stupid taxonomies, like the DSM, because its very complexity permits more phenomena to be read into each structure. We should, in my opinion, exercise reservations about the clinical utility of diagnosis, but these does not mean that analysts are obliged to accept as the only alternative a series of bland generalities about delusion or madness that amount to a conceptual porridge, brooking no distinctions. Given that diagnosis is arguably most relevant as a trans-ferential guide for analysts, and since these aspects of praxis are suspect in a clinic of a supposedly real unconscious, one that bears little resemblance to the Freudian unconscious, one can be dismayed, but not surprised that rigorous nosology falls by the wayside. Hypothetically, it is even possible that wild and unrigorous theory and imprecise diagnosis is the basis for misreading clinical data such as to conclude that 'everyone is delusional'.

Next, let's talk about Lacan's structural theory of psychosis, and what it does and doesn't affirm. One point that Lacan repeatedly makes clear is that the presence of a symbolic father bears no necessary relation whatsoever to a biological father, and

13 Lacan, (1993), p. 207-208.

14 Miller, (2012b).

15 Miller, 2012b.

still less to a father qua patriarchal authority. He furnishes us with numerous clinical and anthropological examples to this effect, such that it is curious that anybody could conflate the structural triangulation of Lacan's teaching - the fact of a lack in the Other being positively signified - with a contingent set of social arrangements peculiar to parts of Europe in the past.¹⁶ More subtly, one could even argue that whilst Lacan's teaching in *Seminar III* can be easily overlaid onto Freud's Oedipus, it need not be, and even if it is, it permits such fluidity, such multiplicity of different structural positions, that even under pre-Freudian patriarchy, no outcome is assured. It is worth noting that the abolition of a centralised authority figure is not the same as the abolition of authority as such, and one might recall Foucault's observation that the more liberal a system, the more rules it paradoxically must entail, even if these now emanate diffusely.¹⁷

Second, if I am correct in asserting that Lacan's classical teaching on psychosis is less about a certain type of nuclear family, and more about a structural logic, it follows that we can make a distinction between the form aspects of the structure and its content. Consequently, a pair of same-sex parents might constitute a change in 'tradition' at the level of content, and whilst this may itself be of immense significance for a given subject, it does not of necessity imply any difference whatsoever at the level of formal structure. I believe that we have to keep this in mind as some of the works of Lacanian exegesis are psychotically literal in their reading of the Name-of-the-Father, with this latter requiring a flesh-and-blood man who splits his female partner into a divided woman and mother. These conditions are only haphazardly met under any circumstances, and if you equate them literally with Lacan's structural theory, it is little wonder that you're quickly obliged to abandon the structural theory. Miller's deployment of the 'late' Lacan in surveying the present epoch indeed follows Lacan in asserting that the symbolic order depends upon 'tradition', but, whilst we are on the topic of the psychotically literal,

he omits the greater portion of Lacan in which 'tradition' is not some precise temporal continuity, but rather, that which is capable of being registered in the field of the Other.¹⁸ Same-sex marriage and IVF pregnancies are not 'traditional' temporally speaking but are widely admissible if one approaches the symbolic order as a storehouse of laws and signifiers (i.e. if one approaches it symbolically).

With this in the background, I'd like to turn to *Seminar III* and what is published as chapter 14, 'The signifier, as such, signifies nothing'.¹⁹ Lacan claims that psychosis is a structure, and that a structure is comprised of a set, an ensemble of elements, but that a 'set' is not to be understood as a 'totality'. This is important for what follows. Lacan introduces the idea of the 'pure signifier', that is, the signifier that signifies nothing. At this point, for Lacan, these signifiers are the ones used by physics, but not only physics, and it is precisely by virtue of the meaninglessness of these signifier that they are 'indestructible'. Lacan does not reference Frege,²⁰ but he makes the very Fregean move of declaring that 'no empirical theory' can account for whole numbers. The origin of number is not a thing that we can easily grasp, Lacan says, but the addition of each 'one', of each whole number, far from being only an exercise in arithmetic, of adding-one, in fact constitutes a paradigmatic shift. He says that 'One can clearly distinguish on the banks of the Orinoco between a tribe that has learned to signify the number four and not beyond, and one for which the number five opens up surprising possibilities, consistent moreover with the entire signifying system into which the tribe is inserted'.²¹

If we were to bring in the concept of zero here, we would have all the rudimentary elements of Miller's famous paper 'Suture',²² but with the extra dimension that each additive operation is also a formal restructuring. Paranoid psychosis, for example, is grounded in a logic of the two, a fundamentally imaginary relation of ego to ego, with all of the polarising reactivity that this implies. The addition of a third, or even a fourth, if we wish to insert the *sinthome* here, does not

16 There are many examples of symbolic paternity to be found in Lacan (1993), and practically none of them concern the nuclear family, or the family such as it exists under 20th century capitalism.

17 Foucault, (2008), p. 150.

18 Miller (2012b) refers to 'tradition' only in the temporal, rather than structural sense of the term.

19 Lacan, (1993), p. 183.

20 Frege, (2007).

21 Lacan, (1993), p. 185.

22 Miller (1965), in Hallward and Eden (2012). This Millerian reference is obviously much earlier than the others cited here, from a period when Miller favoured a different political outlook to his self-professed liberal 'cynicism'.

abolish the ego, imaginary dimension, but, at the risk of Hegelianising Lacan, sublates it (i.e. both negates and preserves it) via restructuration. Note that even if we don't accept Lacan's specific anthropological examples, there are plenty of others which demonstrate that this restructuration requires neither a man nor a patriarchy to solve the problem of the subject being caught in the dyadic relation, or the crocodile's jaws as Lacan puts it in *Seminar XVII*.²³ The Oedipal drama may well be historically accidental but this does not mean the same for triangulation *per se*. Very simply, the paternal metaphor is the name of that which the subject uses as defence vis-a-vis that which is otherwise unbearable with respect to the Other. (A real father, by contrast, could be conceived of as that portion of the mother's jouissance which is oriented to an object other than the child-subject). None of this is to valorise neurosis, for that matter, since one could identify those cases of autistic or schizophrenic subjects whose 'solution' is found in the imaginary dyad, as Lacan himself observes in *Seminar III* in cases of the 'as-if' subjects imitating a specular double.²⁴ In paranoia, as elsewhere, one divides into two. The delusion constructs a particularised relation to the Other for the subject, registering the latter in the field of the former, but also at the same time delimits and defends against this Other. There are neurotic versions of this, such as phobias, and fetishes.

The slogan that 'everyone is mad' or delusional, if it is not merely a rhetorical provocation, stands as a repudiation of structure and paradigmatic shifts. If the delusion in question is identification with the ego, with all the narcissism implied by this, then this slogan merely recapitulates Lacan's Schema L from the 1950s²⁵ in which the ego is clearly distinct from the subject. It is equivalent to asserting that there is an imaginary register, which is to say that it stays at the level of the insights of 70 years ago. Even here, we're dealing with a very limited generalisation since the egos of different subjects differ structurally, one from another. The schizophrenic sometimes struggles to have an ego at all, and to the extent that it finds consistency, one solution is via that of the imaginary double mentioned previously. Neurotic subjects may require, in analytic treatment, to be distanced from

their egos, disidentified with them, but in any case, these egos have their own points of torsion, of dystonicity. It is the paranoiacs who occasionally are the models of a perfect consistency, and who, in their hyper-normality, brittle as it is, take their place as the exception. As for delusions, the fully-fledged ones always possess a kernel of truth, though this is a metaphorical truth that is taken by the subject as literal.

If this is Lacan's position on the paternal function, it remains unclear why there should be, among contemporary psychoanalysts, such insistence on all subjects being delusional in a world bereft of fathers and symbolic authority. Part of the confusion may arise from a conflation between the figure of father and master, the paternal metaphor and master signifier. In fact, there are at least two masters in Lacan, one from Aristotle and the other from Hegel.²⁶ The master qua father in Aristotle could be thought of as a patriarch, whereas the master qua father in Hegel is a failed patriarch, and this diminution of the patriarchy, far from producing general foreclosure, is precisely that which provides the minimal space necessary for a neurosis. In an Aristotelian patriarchy, Dora gets exchanged, the Ratman's father pays off his debts, and the young female homosexual gets thrown, rather than jumps from the Viennese bridge. The relative decline in paternal authority permits the space required for neurotic desire, but does not, of itself, eliminate the triadic or tetradic structure. The structure works with socioeconomic contingencies, and even produces its own contingencies, but psychoanalysts can do better than to conflate the logical form with particular empirical iterations of it. If, by asserting that everyone is delusional, we are referring to the mirages furnished by the imaginary and the ego, then we are speaking correctly, but trivially. If we insist upon the kernel of weirdness that exists in each of us that is not amenable to interpretation, that sits at the edge of meaning and non-meaning, then to be sure, this kernel exists, but to conflate this with madness proper, with delusion, is to repudiate logic and structure, and to reduce psychotic nosology to the level of mere rhetorical flourish.

We may need a replacement for the name of the Name-of-the-Father. A woman could very well

23 'The mother's desire is not something bearable just like that, that you are indifferent to. It will always wreak havoc. A huge crocodile in whose jaws you are - that's the mother.' In Lacan, (2007), p. 112.

24 Lacan, (1993), p. 192.

25 Lacan, (1993), p. 14.

26 This is clearest in Lacan (1992), in the sections discussing Aristotle and Hegel.

metaphorise the Other, and examples are common in which this happens. When Lacanian analysts conflate the patriarchy with the paternal metaphor, it is almost always at the level of the father of the Law, and indeed, a father who attempts today to lay down the law is setting himself up to produce psychotic children. But, the Law is only one aspect of the triadic relation, and others include the function of metaphorisation, separation from the Other, triangulation, identification, nomination of the mother's lack, desire and limits. None of this requires an authoritarian patriarch, and even when it is a matter of a father who is both biologically and symbolically paternal, his function may depend upon his being subject to the Law rather than the arbitrary author of it.²⁷ Also, the pluralisation of the Name of the Father does not only have to mean that the metaphorisation via a third can involve non-paternal names, but that this function itself is fragmented, or distributed across multiple sites and elements.

Some might object that all this neglects the 'late' Lacan, that there is no Other of the Other, and perhaps not even an Other. A bit depends on one's interpretation here. I believe that the maxim concerning the Other's non-existence concerns the Other as absolute guarantor, or total consistency. I don't hear it as a maxim supporting Thatcherite cynicism. As for the late teaching of Lacan, we should look again at the seminar on Joyce. If you want to see people dialoguing all alone, enraptured by their own autoerotic jouissance, you'll find it in responses to the signifiers 'Lacan' and 'Joyce'. Take a look at what Lacan says about the Irish author. He does not give us a diagnosis. The late Lacan, contrary to the tendentious claims of some commentators, does not abjure the Other, the Name of the Father, or dialectics. He indicates the importance of Joyce's father, albeit, in negative fashion, noting that he is a *soulographe*, a drunk, and a fanatic. His ability to mark a place of lack and desire in the Other is limited. 'He is a radically failing father'.²⁸ What is it that holds Joyce together? His sinthome, we might wish to say, is his writing, the inscription of his ego - not to say name - by way of mythologising Dublin. But what materially supports

this? Lacan is very clear here. Nora Barnacle is Joyce's support, his 'inside-out glove'.²⁹ You can drive out the Other with a pitchfork, but it has a habit of returning.

One could say that the logic of the signifier to be found in 1950s Lacan can be contrasted with that of *lalangue*, to be found from *Seminar XIX* onward. The difference here is non-trivial, but one could also observe that, just as the logic of sexualisation is supplementary - one sex does not extinguish or supplant the other - so too are these different Lacanian frameworks. One could go further and suggest that not only are they not antagonistic but that they are different aspects of the same thing, albeit, each irreducible to the other. The existence of poetry, or at least, the best of it, is a testament to the coexistence of a logic of signification coinciding with the affectively-laden productions of *lalangue*. Lacan himself draws attention to this in his later seminars where he dwells on his study of Classical Chinese poetry, for instance.³⁰

There are analysts, including, embarrassingly, some Lacanians, who see same-sex couples walking down the street and imagine that the symbolic order is collapsing. The same analysts claimed that homosexuality was a perversion, long after their IPA colleagues abandoned this position, even though perversion could arguably be one of many structural positions that leads precisely back to the paternal metaphor and the symbolic order.³¹ In any case, one should look at this symbolic order. One has to have been deformed by a particularly European training not to have noticed that, around 500 years ago, widespread colonisation of the New World occurred. Colonialism is never just about material plunder but also entails the destruction of symbols, languages, history. It is the destruction of an entire symbolic order (though not the abolition of the symbolic as such). The effects of this are profound, and reverberate centuries after the event, but nonetheless, but these effects do not include generalised delusion. Psychoanalysts in the imperial core of capitalism, seeing the foundations of their own symbolic orders slowly decay, would do well to study the solutions to be found in the colonial world. A theme of some post-colonial writers is that of the destruction of 'empty

27 This is a theme of Recalcati (2019).

28 Lacan, (2016), p. 77.

29 Lacan, (2016), p. 68.

30 Lacan, (1976-1977).

31 For instance, see Miller (1996), in which homosexuality is repeatedly, and uncritically equated with structural perversion.

space' under colonialism,³² which does not refer only to the theft of 'empty' lands and resources, but also the loss of 'empty space' within cultural and symbolic practices as these become subordinated to bio-political disciplinary regimes. Psychoanalysis could serve as a praxis capable of re-opening some space, but only on the strict pre-condition that analysts critically interrogate their own relations to non-analytic discourses, as well as the material and symbolic conditions of their societies beyond the level of wild generalisation. 'Docility' is not enough. In some sense, a psychoanalytic praxis that is blind and deaf to colonialism, that seeks to forge institutional ties without questioning the crucible in which these are formed, will inevitably replicate the very norms that analysts imagine themselves resistant to. Empirically, this is manifested as the reduction of psychoanalytic exegesis to university discourse, namely, discipline by

discipleship. Nobody is coerced - this is not a master discourse after all - but the relevant publications do not dare to transmit any opinion dissenting from teacher-masters whose formation was half a century ago, and whose theory says less about the state of the world than it does about their own bigotry and social position.

Finally, just to be clear, I am reminded of the anecdote of the Catholic priests who sent their acolytes to Lacan's seminars, hoping, mistakenly, that some teaching on the Name-of-the-Father would bolster their faith in the Law. My aim here is not to bolster faith in anything, still less in a social order based in patriarchy. Fathers are contingent rather than necessary, but the logic of triangulation is not, and it is this logic that makes fatherlessness resemble a paranoid fantasy. Fathers are indeed a symbolic fiction; fatherlessness an imaginary one.

32 For instance, see Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1987), p. 37.

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Lacan and Badiou: Letter and Trait

Jane Kent

This paper begins to explore Lacan's statement "everyone is mad, that is, delusional" and how universalism installs a foreclosure. (Lacan, 2008c, p. 3)¹ It explores how Lacan's letter subverts universalism, that is, it examines how the trait relates to Badiou's philosophy, and how Lacan's letter with a speaking being's real unconscious, contrary to Badiou's trait, *constitutes*, in reference to Bertrand Russell's famous paradox, the set of all sets that are not members of themselves.²

1 An Overview

Although the Kantian aesthetic and logical formalism does not require the body, it summons causality with bodily experience. (Lacan, 2002b, p. XI, 4-5) Such formalism is constituted through the signifier. Thus, Western philosophy has never succeeded in justifying "the function of cause." (Lacan, 2014, p. 214-5) Its logic excludes the signified which is causality related to the body as "cause in the real." (Lacan, 1974, p. 39) Logic, based only on the signifier, *forbids* a speaking being from putting "every relationship and every intuitive support *upon* what may arise from [such a] signified."³ Although "in general,

we are not guided by [formal logic] because we are very intuitive," the matter of only being constituted through a signifier means that "man does not include himself" in the set of all sets or in the class of classes. (Lacan, 2002b, pp. IX, 7, 8)⁴

Contrary to the Kantian aesthetic, psychoanalysis demonstrates that the body "validly articulates" a sensible relationship with the sensorium and it designates subjective organization. When desire enters the primary processes, "desiring beings" become enslaved. Desire keeps the cause in the real as a substrate, "as a lost object at the different levels of bodily experience where its cut occurs." (Lacan, 2014, p. 215) When the cut occurs, an objectified phallus articulates libido and the imaginary of the body is separated from the operation of the signifier.⁵ The phallus comes to the same place in the symbolic function, for example, as the breast when the oral drive is caught as a substrate.

Psychoanalysis is not interested in phenomenology which encompasses the totality of the body. Rather, its focus is on the speaking being's bodily engagement with the signifier and causality with the body in the real.

1 This paper is a variation of a chapter from a book I am writing, *Lacan and Badiou: Colour and Woman*.

2 For a background to the paradox see <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/russell-paradox/>

3 My italics.

4 For some arguments as to whether class resolves Russell's paradox see <https://math.stackexchange.com/questions/116425/the-class-of-all-classes-not-containing-themselves>

5 For example, with this separation the gaze, the scopic drive, is placed outside the body.

It is that *in* the body there is always, by virtue of this engagement in the signifying dialectic something that is separated off, something sacrificed, something inert, and this something is the pound of flesh. (Lacan, 2014, p. 219)⁶

It is a debt “settled in the flesh” related to the object *a*, which is a remainder that survives “the encounter with the pure signifier.” (Lacan, 2014, p. 220) The trait allows mankind, along with philosophy, to “stick” a name on the real - Plato’s idea is an imaginary nomination. The phallus, however, as a hole in the real “metaphorized from phallic enjoyment,” allows mankind “to be the phallus.” (Lacan, 2014, p. 184) It is “the signifier which does not have a signified.” (Lacan, 1998, p. 75) Despite all such holes, “the real doesn’t lack anything.” (Lacan, 2014, p. 185) However, there *is* a hole in the symbolic that starts from the real. (Lacan, 2002m, pp. VII, 106, II, 28, I, 19) It exists because “the signifier, in so far as it can be used to signify itself, has to be posed as different to itself,” but it cannot differentiate from itself. It “cannot signify itself.” (Lacan, 2002b, p. XVII, 9) Nevertheless, within ontology, sameness supposes the difference. All the traits in a social group can be differentiated as differentiated from the signifier. This is like a group of ceramic pots. Each is made around a void, which is nothing but the void in each set. The void in each pot can be substituted between the pots or described as the same as the void in the next pot. (Lacan, 2014, p. 185-7) When this occurs with speaking beings, the void becomes errant in a series because it can’t differentiate from itself.

Lacan laughs about this - that Russell’s famous paradox had to mobilize “the whole of time and space,” “just to sustain the distinction between individuals.” It was necessary because individuals had to be compared with the real where there is no individuation, as I cited above, the real does not lack anything. Lacan refers to a Chinese expression for “all:” “each man one + one + one + ... all, without exception” or “all men, each taken for himself and added to the others.” Yet, there is no guarantee of a woman’s universal essence. Contrary to the masculine universal limit, with her, there is no exception. “The *without exception* far from giving a consistency to some *all* naturally gives even less of it to what is defined as *not all*.” (Lacan,

2008b, pp. 67, 68) Nothing (the trait in a series) is lacking in not-all knowledge because the object for her is not linked to the object cause of desire as it is with man. The phallic object is second for a woman. (Lacan, 2014, pp. 185, 189, 184, 183)

Badiou disagrees with this in *The Immanence of Truths*. He places women - and men - *only* with the minimum. In Lacan’s terminology, Badiou’s minimum, μ , is the trait.⁷ Badiou wants the feminine to be the same as masculine mankind for the sake of “humanity,” universalism. His theory is philosophy’s realized imaginary in the symbolic (R.I.S.). (Badiou, 2022, pp. 538, 541) (Lacan, 2002m, p. I, 11) Lacan disagrees with philosophy’s R.I.S. with set theory mainly because the signifier (trait) signifies in the sets where man does not include himself. The trait can only “be *posed* as different to itself.” (Lacan, 2002b, p. XVII, 9)⁸ It is lacking - that is why man isn’t included. Moreover, since Russell’s paradox, what is excluded in the intersection of the non-relation between two terms relates axiomatically in set theory to “the logic of a class.” What is excluded is considered to be lacking. “It is an error.” However, the class and the set are different. “When the class is emptied, there is no longer any class, but when the set is emptied, there is still [the] element of the empty set.” (Lacan, 2008b, p. 67) The phallus is excluded from class because the definition of class guarantees “its universal status insofar as [formal logic] constitutes ... possible inexistence with this class.” (Lacan, 2002b, pp. XVII, 5-7, XII, 6, 5, 6)

The signifier is not “*posed* as different from itself” when there is no difference in class between one classification or another. It is “not possible, it is nothing maybe” in a series. It is important nevertheless, that “the rights of the nothing” are preserved so that the real can create the possible. (Lacan, 2002b, p. XII, 7)

This is the stupefying error of the whole abstract deduction of the transcendental – far from being able to say that anything real is possible, it is only starting from the not possible that the real can take its place. (Lacan, 2002b, p. XII, 7)

2 Badiou: Belonging and Inclusion

The symbolic presumes that being is in words such as “individual” or “substance.” However, such

⁶ My italics.

⁷ The ‘*u*’ in *The Immanence of Truths* aligns with the Greek letter ‘ μ ’ in *Logics of Worlds* which designates the minimum. (Badiou, 2009a, p. 588)

⁸ My italics.

Being is but “a spoken fact” - “it subsists qua existence with the respect to the act of speaking.” (Lacan, 1998, pp. 118, 119) As such an individual subsists as a “particularity [because] there is no equivalence between words and objects. With words and objects, you cannot have an exception.” (Izcovich, 2022, p. 3)⁹ Philosophy’s logical formalism does not recognize that there is *no* equivalence. For psychoanalysis, equivalence *only* subsists with “what is said.” (Lacan, 1998, p. 118) Likewise, the *value* of the image with human vision involves a “bi-univocal concordance” between the symbolic and imaginary. (Lacan, 2002b, p. II, 2)

In *Theory of the Subject*, Badiou doesn’t refer to the opposition with such bi-univocal concordance. Rather, he defines an “impossible” bi-univocal correspondence between “two types of multiplicity.” One is with belonging and the other with inclusion. He states from his mathematics=ontological perspective that the correspondence with “a set of all sets is inconsistent” and impossible because “the virtuality of the parts [sub-sets] overflows the initial multiplicity.” (Badiou, 2009b, pp. 219, 216-7, 219)

The first multiplicity necessarily exceeds the second. Suppose that you have ... the set of all sets, at once you have to reject it as absolute, for being lesser than the set of its parts.” (Badiou, 2009b, p. 217)

For him, elementary multiplicity induces “an overtaking of itself.” It only “stands in [the] *virtuality* of its being, by its parts, more numerous than itself.”¹⁰ Likewise, one can conclude that it is impossible for the elementary multiplicity of a human animal to nominate all its sub-sets - its parts remain indistinguishable because according to set theory they are “more numerous than itself.” (Badiou, 2009b, p. 218) The upshot is that the being of a human animal is rejected as lesser than the set of parts. However, for psychoanalysis, the speaking being subsists as a particularity, that is, “what is said about all can also be applied to the particular.” (Lacan, 2002m, p. III, 45) Badiou upholds the collective, which overtakes what he defines as a politically

ineffectual individual.¹¹ He states that “the resource of the collectives necessarily surpasses [the elementary] multiplicity in which individuals are resolved.” His focus is on collectives that are oppressed by other more powerful sub-sets in society. He concludes that “the universe is closed, total” and “statist,” and that for proletarian politics “this lack of civil status is precisely its political status. It indicates as non-State, as non-whole.” (Badiou, 2009b, pp. 218, 219)

Do not look ... to the ‘micro-revolutions’ of the desiring individual, they stay in their place. No individual has the power to exceed the era and its constraints except by the mediation of the parts, and let’s say it, of parties. (Badiou, 2009b, p. 219-20)

However, what is imperative for this is the fixed status of the first count. If the initial set remains fixed the elements belong to the sub-set, that is, the first set has successfully bestowed the virtuality of being, an immanent nomination, onto the sub-set. Alongside this bestowal there is exclusion. As Chiesa states, the initial set is “excluded by the law, that ‘the One is not.’” (Chiesa, 2006, p. 150-1) “It is, therefore, the subject, as one might have expected, who introduces privation and this by the act of enunciating.” (Lacan, 2002b, p. XVII, 9) However, both the bestowal and the exclusion suit philosophy’s generic multiplicity and the masculine universal.

[The trait is] the One, the big 1 which dominates all thinking from Plato to Kant, the One which for Kant, *qua* synthetic function, is the very model of what in every *a priori* category, brings with it, he says, the function of a norm, to be understood as a universal rule. (Lacan, 2002b, p. X, 3)

Although Badiou requires immanent virtuality, that inclusion overtakes belonging, in *The Immanence of Truths* he seeks to bypass constructible infinity - he uses the classifications of class as the attributes of infinity and proposes mathematics can bypass the dominance of the singleton, $\{\emptyset\}$.¹² This is conve-

9 Pagination is from private notes.

10 My italics.

11 He refutes the “isomorphism that is [often] presupposed ... between that which is of value to the individual and that which is of value to the collectivities.” (Badiou, 2009b, p. 218)

12 He uses immanence and maintains via classes that there is a strong resemblance to being with well-foundedness (set theory’s first axiom) along with the other fundamental property, extensionality (axiom seven). (Badiou, 2018a, p. 376)

nient for philosophy because the set rather than class indexes the exclusion of the being of a human animal, and that the void cannot differentiate from itself. As I cited above, “when class is emptied there is no longer any class, but when the set is emptied there is still the element of the empty set.”

In *Being and Event*, philosophy had to ward off the void's errancy. (Badiou, 2005, p. 93) He explains that what he presented there was “an ontology, that [was] of pure multiplicity, or multiplicity without – one.” He goes further in *The Immanence of Truths* – he mathematizes how class, as attributes of infinity, forecloses the initial set with a specific kind of “thinkable infinity.” He had no choice because, as Spinoza discovered, either the errancy of the void breaks the signifying set or the infinite attributes are God Himself. Thus, although classes cannot be shown to exist inside a universe, he asserts his infinity is not completely dependent on the singleton. And, given constructible multiplicities cannot exist, he builds, via the theories of several mathematicians', his different mathematization of infinity. He describes his theory of ultra filters as “the single most important concept of [his] whole theory of infinite multiplicities.” The Principled Ultra Filter contains the singleton but the Non-Principled Ultra Filter (N.P.U.F.) excludes it to some degree. The intersection with the N.P.U.F. is ruled by *classes of elements*, not the single element that is a “dominating” singleton. He states that “infinity ... is more intense and immanent [if it is freed] from the power of the One.” (Badiou, 2022, pp. 589, 294, 297) His focus is where the singleton returns as an absolutely, ontologically minimal element. It is minimal with a maximal ontological outcome. It is the return of the One, but it does not dominate by being gigantic rather it is omnipresent in every sub-set and intersection. It is a minimal, immanent domination by the One rather than transcendental domination.

Pointedly, such domination still requires the minimal element of the singleton, even if it is absolutely, ontologically immanent. For example, when he aligns the N.P.U.F. politically with collectivity, a community of equals, a commune, he is asserting that every element in the commune has the same power which is contrary to submitting to the transcendental domination of the singleton: the elements are equal to itself, the set, not the State. (Badiou, 2018a, p. 359-61) Purportedly his mathematics can then, with

the immanent domination of the One, think equality differently. It is “the One, that is the One of a one, i.e., a singleton.” He states that this is like “what Marx meant when he declared ... that all the communist principles come down to a single one: the abolition of private property.” (Badiou, 2022, p. 299)

He asserts, as he did in *Being and Event*, that the singleton is implied in the State's jurisdiction over the particular individual. (Badiou, 2022, p. 297) However, his universalism is drawn from “truths [which] are simultaneously both particular and universal.” He states that it is fine that these truths “have these two properties, which appear to be opposed unless they are equally absolute,” because his N.P.U.F. can thus produce generic sets. (Badiou, 2018a, p. 392)¹³

3 Lacan: Belonging and Inclusion

Although he declares Lacan is his mentor, Badiou's theories are diametrically opposed to Lacan's because his mathematico-logical formalism with the immanence of truths is constituted through the signifier, the trait as a minimum. In the early 1960s Lacan asserts that man, along with philosophy, *believes* that he perceives only via knowledge which is the idea of things parcelled “into a universe of discourse.” Freud's transference unconscious embodies a different *belief* as well as the root of knowledge, the cause in the real. Whilst the transference unconscious emerges with the first count, it is already “constituted ... with things of the real,” that is, it is constituted at the “radical level of the emergence of enunciating” after the preconscious enters the real through its border with the symbolic. (Lacan, 2002b, p. VII, 8) (Lacan, 1974, p. 62) Thus, when the trait emerges with the transference unconscious it retains the “unicity” of the object *a* in the real. And, when all other ramifications are effaced, we have a sign with the trait. (Lacan, 2002b, p. VII, 5)

[At] a moment [when] something is read with language when there is still no writing, [there] is [a] reversal of this relationship [, that is, the real to the trait]. [There is a] relationship of reading to the sign, where writing can subsequently be born in so far as it can serve phonemicization. (Lacan, 2002b, p. VII, 5)

Lacan makes the bi-univocal concordance between the imaginary and the symbolic function

¹³ In short, the Absolute is $0=1$. (Badiou, 2022, p. 592)

to isolate the trait as an object. When read as a sign it indexes “the primary kernel [in the real] as a signifier, ... the speaking heart of the subject.” “It speaks” from the real unconscious and profoundly and *retroactively* alters the transferential unconscious. In other words, when the transferential unconscious is structured like a language, the language is from the real unconscious. It is not structured *by* the “articulated language of common discourse” which takes place “everywhere.”

Thus, despite Badiou’s imperative that the elementary multiplicity of the initial set remains fixed, the causal signified retained in the real unconscious can easily intervene as the errant void because “it is at home” with “an already existing discourse.” Moreover, it cannot be reorganized by the preconscious. (Lacan, 2002b, pp. VII, 6, 7-8, 8, 7-8) As early as 1954, Lacan states something like this. “The real – as that which is excised from the primordial symbolization – is already there. We might even say it talks all by itself.” The void in the real unconscious “expects nothing” from the transferential unconscious, and it does not wait with the drives or accept any fixity. It is errant because it “resists symbolization.” It “erratically” makes “itself recognized.” (Lacan, 2006b, p. 324) Whilst the real unconscious cannot be reorganized it can subsequently “refuse what comes to it from the preconscious [because it can] choose [precisely] ... what it needs for its own purposes.” (Lacan, 2002b, pp. VII, 8, 9) This is because it is outside symbolization. Thus, the initial set is not overtaken by sub-sets more numerous than itself, and it can never be fixed, precisely because it is *not* structured *by* language. The causal signified does not require discursive denumerable structure. It consists with real numbers.

Lacan’s theory is contrary to set theory which is basically undone by Russell’s work.¹⁴ For example, set theory declares the initial set is designated *by* a letter, but Lacan states that it is structured *like* a letter. A letter from the real unconscious does not designate the transferential unconscious - it *constitutes* it as the initial set. The transferential unconscious is “recognized ‘retroactively’” via annoyingly errant drives that repeat. However, when it is acknowledged its errancy is successfully terminated. (Lacan, 2018, p. 131) Either way, whether it is repetitively errant or terminated with acknowledgment, the letter is recognized as what *constitutes* the initial set and thusly the set of

subsets. The acknowledgment of this *constitution* thereby includes the speaking being in the set of all sets because if the letter constitutes the set, the letter *functions* like the set, which is like the letter. (Lacan, 1998, pp. 47-8)¹⁵

4 Lacan and Badiou

This is antithetical to Badiou who thinks he can illude Russell’s paradox with class and immanence. In *Anti-Philosophy: Plato and Lacan*, written some twenty-six years before *The Immanence of Truths*, he declares that the void, or better said, the singleton which “stands in virtuality” or immanence for the void in each of the sets, requires “the radical transcendence of the big Other.” (Badiou, 2008, p. 235) He states that this is necessary because there are two paradoxes involved with “the initial image” of the One in Plato’s concept of participation. The first paradox involves the fragmentation of the One by sensible multiplicities.

[It is] fragmented not only in the *sensible* manifold it is presumed to link together, but also in itself, and is thereby dialectically subtracted from the unity of its One. (Badiou, 2008, p. 235)¹⁶

According to him, sensible multiplicities fragment the trait’s unifying function, whereas, for Lacan, this occurs because “we are very intuitive” and “the mirage” of the One fragments us. (Lacan, 2002b, p. IX, 7) Badiou partially cites Lacan. “There are as many Ones as you like – they are characterized by the fact that none of them resemble any of the others in any way.” (Lacan, 1998, p. 47) The intuitive relates to the void in each ceramic pot – it cannot differentiate itself from the void in the other pots. However, something ruptures the resemblance for speaking beings. For example, the rupturing connects with a “collective calculus” where everyone is “trapped in their private hell.” It is with the three prisoners wearing black or white disks. They “can only calculate because one element is missing: the phallus.” (Laurent, 1995, p. 23) To be precise, the rupture happens when the phallus is elided. The aleph or cause in the real thus allows the prisoners to calculate via a singular symptom.

The prisoners must break from “their private hell” within the “collective calculus” of a group or a commune

14 Also see the following. (Lacan, 2008b, p. 91-3)

15 See footnotes related to “if-then.” (Lacan, 1998, pp. 48, 59)

16 My italics.

because when the particular and the universal are in locked step “everyone is mad, that is, delusional.” (Lacan, 2008c, p. 3) Badiou’s collective subject, most obviously his political subject, is generic madness, a delusion that “begins with [signifier] knowledge.”¹⁷ However, the causal signified erratically breaks from this knowledge when *any one of the particular* breaks from the delusions of the masculine universal, the “not 0=1.” The masculine “slips away,” it “slid.” It veers to a real number – slides from the particular with the universal - and thus not-all logic can emerge because there is no contradiction. (Lacan, 2018, pp. 157, 149, 181, 157)

Although in *Anti-Philosophy: Plato and Lacan*, it appears that Badiou agrees with Lacan’s assessment of the resemblance of “many Ones” because he thinks the unity of Plato’s One is fragmented by the sensible, he doesn’t agree. For example, he doesn’t place Lacan’s assessment specifically with two things. Firstly, he doesn’t place the resemblance with his political object: the human protagonists that become a collective subject in his political work of truth. His political activists in *Logics of Worlds* or those in the communes in *The Immanence of Truths* are all tied to the trait like “many Ones,” even if the trait is absolutely, ontologically immanent. They are all tied to the One because they are speaking beings. Nevertheless, nothing, including mathematics in relation to speech, “transcends the effects of the repressed.” (Lacan, 2015, p. 337)

Secondly, the rupturing of the phallus also comes into play for his human protagonists. The trait has a unifying function - as the singleton it has a numerical “signifying function.” (Lacan, 1998, p. 28-9) The unifying signification occurs when “all the sets that are of the single element [highlight] their equivalence [as] One.” Badiou relies on this resemblance of the many Ones. (Lacan, 2018, pp. 124, 125, 144) The trait’s succession supposedly fixes elementary multiplicity. However, as with the prisoners, the phallus for a speaking being is “elided” when it indexes the missing element, that is when the void is

errant. (Lacan, 2002m, p. VII, 103) It is problematic for Badiou’s collective subject because it keeps undoing the trait’s function – fragmenting the unity of the One.

In other words, spoken common discourse, which reveals that it “start[s] from the not possible,” is a problem for Russell’s paradox and set theory. (Lacan, 2002b, p. XII, 7) Neither reflects on “what a 1 is” for a speaking being, that there is a difference between the signifier and the sign. The errancy of the void not only involves the rupture of the phallus but also it impacts the trait because what is sought by the speaking being in “the circuit” of the errant return is a “signifying unicity [that] has marked the subject.” (Lacan, 2002b, pp. IV, 11, XII, 4, 5)

Badiou’s first paradox of Plato’s One merges with his second - he doesn’t connect Lacan’s assessment of the many Ones with Lacan’s criticism of Plato’s “reminiscence” and “participation.”¹⁸ He decides that Lacan’s refutation shows that the imaginary “leads thought along an infinite regress” such that the symbolic as the Other must “name” participation.¹⁹ Thus, Plato’s Oneness pays “the price ... in thought for introducing ... the symbolic... where the multiple [the virtual void in sub-sets] is presented to us.” If philosophy’s truth is to “remain intact [then] the big Other is required.” (Badiou, 2008, pp. 232, 235) Truth with participation is thus consolidated via the trait between both counts.²⁰ As such, there is confusion between two types of Oneness in *Anti-Philosophy: Plato and Lacan*. The confusion points to the distinction between Lacan’s letter and Badiou’s trait. (Badiou, 2008, p. 236) Lacan defines *Yad’lun* as “the One [that is] real.” It “cannot be said to be 1.” It is not the One of Badiou’s human protagonists neither is it the finitude of each “one of them” because each of them is “not *one*. [They] are, alas!, uncountable.” (Lacan, 2008b, p. 92) It is the “1 that is missing at the level of 0.” It is the aleph zero that “produces [Lacan’s] subject.” (Lacan, 2018, pp. 121, 114, 115) (Lacan, 2008b, p. 85) Badiou’s subject, however, relates to the symbolic Oneness in Plato’s “ontological underpinning” with participation. The symbolic is required

17 The generic madness is equivalent to “the effect of signification.” “It ... begins with knowledge. When to one signifier all by itself you add the articulation of a second one, whereby the “all by itself” becomes one.” (Miller, 2013, p. 39) My italics.

18 See Lacan’s text. (Lacan, 1988a, p. 292)

19 As Plato said, the Good far exceeded *ousia*, the One is beyond being which is “itself incompatible with Being.” (Badiou, 2008, p. 236)

20 He asserts that Lacan “was heading down” a road where desire is coupled with truth, that truth requires the Other. Consequently, participation involves “signifiers that articulate” desire in the first count, and he presumes, the object that causes desire in the second. (Badiou, 2008, p. 235) This is not the road Lacan “was heading down.” In fact, as I stated above, such fixity/foreclosure leads to the generic madness of the masculine universal.

to “regulate” over “the fact that none of the Ones “resemble any of the others.” This is antithetical to Lacan’s theory. For Lacan, such Ones are the “trait [which] has nothing to do with *Yad l’un*. ... the unary trait is what repetition as such is marked by.” (Lacan, 2018, p. 146) Badiou proposes that his mathematized event can “support” the trait.

In Lacan’s terms, there is definitely some Oneness (*il y a de l’Un*), but it does not follow from this that the One is. The One’s non-being separates it from itself and links it to the Other in a constitutive torsion that only the event can support. (Badiou, 2008, p. 236)

He defines the trait as “the underlying multiple whose value of existence is minimal.” It “inexists in a world.” He cites as an example, a group of Indigenous people who “have no electoral existence. [They are] nil (or indexed to the minimum).” (Badiou, 2009a, pp. 322, 323)

[They are] undoubtedly (ontologically) ‘of the world’ ... not absolutely in the world according to the strict logic of appearing. [As] the inexistence of an object [they are] suspended between (ontological) being and a certain form of (logical) non-being. (Badiou, 2009a, p. 324)

This minimum, the trait is significant for his theory because it functions with the event as “the tipping over of a nil intensity of existence into a maximal intensity,” which is “the signature” of “an event.” (Badiou, 2009a, p. 343) His theory around the minimum continues with *The Immanence of Truths*. For example, the generic positions “woman” and “man” are “two external halves” with the minimum, μ , as “the cause of their common desire.” He expounds upon his love truth procedure - it has a double function: “an object in which desire finds its cause, and that of a point in which the Two can be counted.” The minimum is read in two ways. Firstly, it doesn’t construct a “scene of the Two.” Secondly, it does not share the object. He states that both display sexual non-rapport. The event with love establishes a difference between an indeterminacy with one that lacks

“its relationship” and indeterminacy with one that works in “excess over its non-relationship.” Thus, post the event, love continues “limping as long as it can” for the sake of “humanity,” that is, for universalism. He concludes that his event with love is an “immanent construction of an indeterminate disjunction.” The minimal One cannot stop the errancy of the speaking being’s void, and his event does not solve the non-sexual relation with maximal intensity. (Badiou, 2022, pp. 534, 538, 539, 540, 541)

Lacan asserts that set theory attempts to make up for the absence of a sexual rapport. (Lacan, 1998, pp. 47, 48) Mathematico-logical formalism is constituted through the signifier in a metalanguage. (Lacan, 1998, p. 119) (Cutrofello, 2002, p. 142) However, as I cited above, within speech, which is in common discourse, nothing “transcends the effects of the repressed.” (Lacan, 2015, p. 336-7) The letters in mathematics don’t “govern.” They “disperse.” (Lacan, 1998 p. 128) For example, in speech, if you “subtract the One, ... the entire edifice of numbers ... come[s] undone.” (Lacan, 2018, p. 150) Contrary to Badiou’s minimum, Lacan’s *Yad l’un* evokes, via the sensible, which Badiou defines as the “sensible manifold,” the letter with the real. (Badiou, 2008, p. 235) In *Anti-Philosophy: Plato and Lacan*, Badiou doesn’t analyze how different his and Plato’s One is from *Yad l’un*, that Lacan’s theory cannot retain the One as the Other.²¹ According to Lacan, set theory “appropriate[s] the One in a way *other than the intuitive*” - it grants itself “the right to designate the resulting assemblage by a letter.”²² This amounts to us “merely reading letters” in mathematical writing. (Lacan, 1998, pp. 47, 48)

Generic multiplicity necessitates that the initial set is fixed because otherwise the One is ruined. (Badiou, 2005, p. 93) However, the writing of the event via set theory mathematics=ontology doesn’t stop the errant void from cutting the fixity. This is because, for a speaking being, the preconscious as a record in any relation to perception, “is already in the real” unconscious - something *was* already there “to be read with language.” The phallus with its elision to the signified as cause keeps making the trait susceptible to the void’s repetitive errancy. The errancy does not question perception. It questions the Other: “whether as such what the subject receives from *outside* is a

21 All he states is that Lacan knew “this One that is not, this One that is the Other as such, has its origins in the work of Plato.” (Badiou, 2008, p. 236)

22 My italics.

reliable sign,” and whether it is possible “to *know* when one can trust the Other.”²³ If the transferential unconscious is structured *like* a set rather than *by* a set, the speaking being’s identification to the signified in the real is constituted in a moment of certitude via the undecidability between the One identified as Other and the other. This is because the One makes a clear distinction between the Other and the other. (Lacan, 2002b, pp. VII, 5, 11, III, 8)

Badiou’s event props up an ancient Platonic impasse, which occurs when the non-being of One makes One separate from itself and link to the Other. (Badiou, 2008, p. 236) Lacan sees an “access to being” in the impasse of the no-sexual relation. This is because when the initial set is understood to be structured *like* a language the function of the One is read like a compass that points to what “make[s] up for the absence of the sole part of the real that cannot manage to be formed from being.” The function of the One can then be read as what has tried to make up for the “one element [that] is missing.”²⁴ Most importantly the letter marks out the place of the signifier” as where it was “first manifested.” (Lacan, 2018, p. 16) (Lacan, 1998, pp. 49, 48)²⁵ The impasse with One provides access to being because it points to the real where there is a sexual rapport beyond the non-sexual relation. One cannot be taken as the Other because *Yad’lun* “separates 1 from 2.” “Then each of the 2 remains 1.” (Lacan, 2018, pp. 16, 171, 135) If there is One and the Other, which equals two, then *a*

leads to identification via a ternary articulation.²⁶ It is “from the standpoint of *a*” that we can proceed to a different knowledge and a different infinity. However, the *a* as *semblance* “supports” discourse and is “correlative” as a universal proposition with truth. (Lacan, 2002i, p. II, 5) It must fall before non-initiatory knowledge presents know-how with Lacan’s infinity.

Badiou’s infinity is with multiplicity and immanence - Lacan’s is with the aleph zero, “the real [that is called] number.” The fact that set theory grounds One and makes number lean on it as “a class of equivalence” is enough “to highlight what it calls the *non-denumerable*.” It is “impossible to denumerate.” Cantor created his Diagonal Method with real numbers because constructible theories about infinity did not work. The method shows that with a real number, “irrespective of how you might have ordered it ... there will be yet another way of denumerating it.” The real number cannot be inscribed but it “is defined by its correspondence with the sequence of integers,” that is, in his graph, it is on the diagonal at the point between 0 and 1.²⁷ This is how “the real attached to the One consists.” If the “one element [that] is absolutely equivalent ... to an empty set” is “not subsumed into ... aggregative inclusion,” then “at one point it is counted.” What is produced with “non-initiatory knowledge” via the analyst’s discourse “at the level of the jouissance of speaking ... is *S1*.” The subject that is produced is “a real number.” (Lacan, 2018, pp. 152, 32, 124, 181, 124, 144, 152)

23 My italics.

24 For example, being in love despairs to make up for it – unless it is in “the place of non-existence” and “missing” the mark. (Lacan, 1998, pp. 144, 145)

25 This reduces “the function of being in love.” (Lacan, 1998, p. 49)

26 “There are two plus *a*. This two plus *a*, from the standpoint of *a*, can be reduced not to the two others, but to One plus *a*. ... It is insofar as, starting from little *a*, the two others are taken as One plus *a*.” (Lacan, 1998, p. 49)

27 The diagonal on Cantor’s graph is between the decimal places of a real number and real numbers between 0 and 1 with ordered whole numbers. (Badiou, 2022, p. 597-9)

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The Place of Men in The City of Women

Eric Laurent

I chose this title with the screenplay in mind of the film that Federico Fellini did not make. Having made *Juliette of the Spirits* which is about his wife's madness and the disarray of their relationship, he goes through a curious period, a special kind of despondency. Between *Juliette* and *Satyricon*, which is a curious return to ancient Rome and the dead, he becomes interested in making a movie based on *The Divine Comedy*, a journey into the beyond that, like Dante's, is marked by a female presence, a beyond over which the Virgin and her infant Jesus rule and in which the father is particularly absent. The encounter in the beyond with the mystery of the City of Women occurs following a plane crash that is experienced in a mortal dream as a soft landing in the square of a strange village that is dominated by an enormous Gothic cathedral like the one in Cologne. This is where Mastorna lands, in the City of Women... or in the city of the last judgement. That the beyond is ruled by *women* is not Dante's idea alone; it is taken up again in Philippe Sollers novel, *Women*, the first paragraph of which ends with this remark: "The world belongs to women. In other words, to death. But everyone lies about it."¹ In his travels Mastorna first encounters the young Jesus, an encounter with the divine child

that takes the form of a cabaret song. "An odalisque performs a belly dance that gradually turns into increasingly powerful, increasingly horrible convulsions. And then the odalisque gives birth to a baby."²

On the other hand, the encounter with the Virgin is quite different from Dante's version. In Dante, the character of the Virgin is theologically quite complex: "Mother virgin, daughter of your son... fixed aim of the eternal plan."³ Fellini does something completely different with the *mise en scène*: "On the stage, a magnificent woman approaches wearing a mink coat, brocade dress and diamonds: a profane Virgin."⁴ In this city, which he enters in this way, Fellini describes the chaos of the dead that has nothing peaceful, nothing restful about it, and that is even more chaotic than the world of the living.

Love in the time of algorithms

Both this vision and that of the Antiquity that he describes in *Satyricon* are descriptions of the world Fellini was living in in the '70s: the disarray [*désordre*] in love relations. The disarray in love relations and the disarray in *jouissance* appear at levels at which the clinical and the political levels meet, which is why it is not sufficient to speak about it from a purely

1 *Women*, trans. B. Bray (NY: Columbia, 1990)

2 FELLINI F., Dino Buzzati et Brunello Rondi, *Le Voyage de G. Mastorna*, Points, p. 180.

3 DANTE, *La Divine Comédie*, Paradis, Chant XXXIII, traduction Jacqueline Risset, Flammarion, 1990, p. 307

4 FELLINI F., Dino Buzzati et Brunello Rondi, *Le Voyage de G. Mastorna*, Points, p. 100.

sociological approach. We sense it in the worry that the sociologists of *jouissance* have when they attempt to address the phenomena in this field. I would call this worry “the anxiety of sociologists”. An article in the December [2018] issue of *The Atlantic*, “Why Are Young People Having So Little Sex?”, with the subtitle, “Despite the easing of taboos and the rise of hookup apps, Americans are in the midst of a sex recession”, illustrates the point.⁵ The article interviews sociologists and psychologists, specialists in the study of sexual practices, who observe that a tendency towards sexual fatigue appears to be emerging. Despite, or because of, the creation of dating apps such as Tinder, Bumble, Match, OkCupid, etc., the separation between the sexes is increasing and everyone would rather stay at home and masturbate to their favourite porn. Towards the end of the article, the author expresses her concern over the significant demographic decline that will ensue and the harmful consequences for the United States. One of the strengths of this article is that it brings up to date, in this era of apps and social networks, what Lacan observed regarding the relations between the sexes in the ‘60s, before smartphones and apps, at a time when there was only television and erotic shows or spectacles:

Invasive sexomania is nothing but a publicity phenomenon.... The fact that sex is on the agenda, on display everywhere and treated like some washing powder on a televised merry-go-round holds no promise of a benefit of any kind. I am not saying that this is bad. It is insufficient for the treatment of anxieties and particular problems. It is fashionable, it belongs to that dodge of liberalisation that we have been given by so-called permissive societies, as if it were a good granted us from on high.⁶

One finds the same phenomenon with apps.

A second symptom of this concern bears on the significance to attach to the consequences of the MeToo movement on the relation between the sexes a year and a half after it emerged as a global phenomenon. Shouldn't this movement of civilisation towards addressing [*maîtrise*] sexual violence

be compared with the at times violent regression to rightful attitudes of boastful machismo? A connected point is the correlation between the liberation movement for women to speak and the rise of populist leaders who are always advocating a desire to curb women and the rights of homosexuals, whether under the pretext of religion or of a return to traditional ways. This is true of all populist leaders such as Putin, Erdogan, Xi Jinping, Duterte, and, in Europe, Viktor Orban in Hungary and Kaczynski in Poland. In the USA, the duo of the buffoon Trump and the ultra-serious Vice-President Mike Pence aim at nothing less than to repeal the right to an abortion. A law passed recently in Alabama is a move in the direction of restrictions never seen before. It all stresses the value of the “traditional” family and the threat of disarray in love relations. In every one of these symptoms one can detect progression and regression, actions and reactions that are a clear indication of a disarray that cannot be easily organised in the form of some fictional progress embodied in history as knowledge relating to the things of sex and *jouissance*. The politics of sexualisation is not to be thought of as organised in a progressive manner, but as a struggle [*conquête*] for equal rights.

The rock of castration or the flight of sexual meaning

The anxiety of governors, of a master signifier, in the face of the disorders in love relations is very Lacanian. If there is something that is specific to this orientation in psychoanalysis, it is the following, formulated by Lacan: “The real, for the speaking being, is that one is lost in the sexual relation”.⁷ What, for Freud, was extremely solid, to the point of calling it the rock of castration, for Lacan becomes a point that is ungraspable, a loss, something that can never be encountered. The fact that the subject is lost in the sexual relation can be compared with one of Lacan's best known aphorisms, “Woman does not exist”.⁸ What exists, what has a logical existence, are women, one by one. For Freud, what was solid in the analytic experience was the male libido, phallic *jouissance*, whereas on the side of women the ungraspable, the “What does a woman want?”, remained a question for him. We know this formulation, which he used

5 JULIAN K., « Why are young people having so little sex ? », *The Atlantic*, December 2018 issue, available in the Internet.

6 LACAN J., « Entretien avec Emilio Granzotto pour le journal *Panorama*, avril 1974 » *La Cause du désir*, n°88, 2014, p. 165-173.

7 LACAN J., « Le jouir de l'être parlant s'articule », *La Cause du désir*, n°101, 2019, p. 12.

8 LACAN J., *Le Séminaire*, livre XVIII, *D'un Discours qui ne serait pas du semblant*, texte établi par J.-A. Miller, Paris, Seuil, 2006, p. 74.

with Marie Bonaparte in the 1930s, “What does a woman want? It has always been a mystery to me.”⁹ Phallic jouissance obviously has a solid aspect. Pornography evolved in seeking to industrialise the relation between a scenario and phallic jouissance. Heaps of algorithms calculate the perfect hashtag that will maximise the clicks on a heading.

On the side of women, effectively, no one really knows how they enjoy, how to systematise it. The projects for pornography for women have all failed. A difficulty in defining the possibility, as Lacan says, of a female perversion of the thing has not been clinically established. On the contrary, Lacan undertook to transform what Freud established with his concept of the phallus by not only writing this phallus as articulated to $-\phi$, to castration, but also by writing that there is a point, a Φ , that does not correspond to castration and which is on both the masculine and the feminine side. There is something in jouissance that does not suffer the humiliation [*passer par les fourches caudines*] of castration, that remains and enables another jouissance to emerge alongside what is masculine jouissance properly so-called, a form of jouissance that refuses to be negativized and which is precisely on both the feminine and the masculine sides. Women, one by one, because they are unencumbered by this organ, have the capacity to incarnate this jouissance beyond the phallus. As Jacques-Alain Miller put it humorously, “Women don’t have the anxiety of the owner of property”¹⁰, they are therefore more at ease with embodying this beyond, this surplus pleasure that cannot pass without castration. How have women come to embody the locus of supplementary jouissance in different civilisations? Which, even in our time of globalisation, still varies from civilisation to civilisation. This morning, you heard what Mohammed Ennaji had to say about the relation between a woman’s body and Islam, testifying to the elaboration on the ways in which a woman is the symptom of a very particular discourse and civilisation.¹¹ Fetishization of merchandise governs our global civilisation, in which an adapted form of capitalism is everywhere, whether it be the Chinese,

North-American or European version, even if they are different versions. This fetishism may be universal; smartphones are objects of desire the world over. But in different versions, the elaboration of the woman symptom varies according to the regime, a real point of jouissance as an echo of global capitalism.

The woman symptom and the politics of forms of jouissance

This jouissance beyond [the phallus] is not only embodied in the position of women, but it is also distributed within what may be called “communities of jouissance”, in which each one explicitly explores the relationship between phallic jouissance and jouissance beyond. LGBT communities construct an autonomous discourse-space for themselves, one in which the exploration of the disarray of forms of jouissance that invade bodies and exile them, creates a social link between their members. The social link is no longer located at the level of a common ideal, but at that of a common exploration of that which, in non-negatable jouissance, cannot be inscribed or reduced.

Equal rights between men and women, whatever their sexual orientation, or disorientation, and the collapse of the male chauvinist system have given rise to new terrors and have brought into the light of day re-awakened male castration anxieties. The figure of the chauvinistic man of jouissance, à la Trump, is a sort of caricature of limitless jouissance, a mimicking of the no-limits feminine jouissance, like that of the drug addict who through unlimited drug use, wants to avoid a phallic coming down.

What is at stake in the relation between phallic jouissance and jouissance beyond the phallus is figuring out how it is that however equal their rights, a woman always remains radically other for a man. It is here that she can be [his] symptom rather than [his] infernal, deadly superego. Jouissance in the city of women, in which the men have their place, according to Lacan, is not at all hedonistic. It separates into what is the jouissance beyond the phallic limit, the one that is beyond castration, and the unlimited that becomes

9 LACAN J., *Le Séminaire*, Livre VII, Paris, Le Seuil, 1986, p. 18. [See E. Jones, *Sigmund Freud: Life and Work*, vol. 2, p. 468 (London: The Hogarth Press, 1974): “The great question that has never been answered and which I have not yet been able to answer, despite my thirty years of research into the feminine soul, is ‘What does a woman want?’” – *translator*.]

10 Jacques Alain Miller, des semblants dans la relation entre les sexes, *La Cause freudienne* n° 36.

11 É. Laurent is referring to the historian, sociologist and economist, Mohammed Ennaji, guest at the *Semaine Lacan* in Nantes, where he spoke about his book, *Le Corps enchaîné. Comment l’Islam contrôle la femme* [*The Body in Chains : How Islam Controls Women*] (Non Lieu, 2019).

civilised through its inscription in the feminine side of sexuation. There is no coding for that, whatever form of the One is countenanced.

The decline of ideologies, of grand narratives, or of what constituted the common good in the form of a shared Ideal, has disclosed a competition between multiple forms of jouissance that are unable to be resolved into a unity. Nevertheless, the absence of a common grand narrative, which defines our epoch, has another consequence. All narratives are replaced by a single exigency, the exigency of science. The rule of being “evidence-based” in all things now extends its powers beyond the strict domain of science. Everything is quantified, in the false sciences that management typifies perfectly. In universally quantifying, humanism itself, which is the very notion of the universal, appears to depend strictly on the universalisation of science. On this question I refer to Jacques-Alain Miller’s 1985 *Course* of which an extract has been recently published in the journal *Mental*. He transcribes a presentation at the association SOS Racisme. He exposes the paradox whereby the humanism of our time, the universal of man, is no longer sustained by a body of values or culture, but by a single support, the subject of science.

It is a fact that universal humanism is not sustainable.... [Anyone] who has no other support than the discourse of science – the right to knowledge and contribution to knowledge. Universal humanism is a logical absurdity that amounts to wishing that the Other be the same.... Now, the Other has a unique propensity to manifest itself as not the same.... This disorients progressivism, based as it is on the progress of the discourse of science as universal to arrive at standardisation.¹²

This is the great hope of a Victor Hugo to save humanity from misery through science. Jacques-Alain Miller describes a double movement in science:

To be sure, science is profoundly disaggregative.... The technological consequences of science are disaggregative because the

discourse of science employs a very pure form of the subject, a universalised mode of the subject. The discourse of science is made for and by each and every one of us who thinks, “I am thinking, therefore I am”.¹³

It suffices to articulate the *I*, this being, with “I am thinking, therefore I am” for everything else, beliefs and the rest, to be cancelled out. It is sufficient to be that [this *I*] to be able to access knowledge qua universal knowledge. This way lies liberation, disaggregation, but [also] the cancelling out of particularities, [and] therefore uniformization.

This is why Lacan’s declaration was surprising when in the same years of the 1970s he said, “Our future as common markets will be balanced by an increasingly hard-line extension of the process of segregation.”¹⁴ On the one hand, we have the expansion of the common market, which is a space – an example even – of calculating, of counting, in Europe where the market is a common market, the great market which has its common currency that facilitates calculation, the expansion of a common calculation. The expansion of procedures to the point of being completely globalised. But on the other hand, calculating also accentuates whatever is going to resist inclusion. Globalisation produces the revolt of those whom it has cast aside. For sure, they are the economic outcasts, such as in France the gilets jaunes who have produced a rethink on this point. There are myriad others. Those who resist the universal as such, without any particularity. In Europe this may be nations such as Ireland, Catalonia, Scotland, which are nations within complex States, and in which the movements of revolt or struggles for independence are not necessarily tied to economic hardship. It can sometimes be the opposite, they may be very rich; Catalonia wants to get its money back by ridding itself of Andalusia.

This is also the European history of colonisation, which has come back like a boomerang to divide the various peoples emerging from colonisation and who find themselves at the very heart of these same common markets. In the Americas, North and South, the indigenous peoples from Terra del Fuego to Alaska, from the Mapuche to the Inuit, demand recognition for

12 Jacques-Alain Miller, “Les causes obscures du racism”, *Mental, Revue internationale de psychanalyse*, no. 38, November 2018, p. 143.

13 “Les causes obscures”, 145.

14 Jacques Lacan, “Proposition of 9 October 1967 on the Psychoanalyst of the School”, trans R. Grigg, p. 12. Available here: lacancircle.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Proposition_of_9_October.pdf

their culture and for rights that cannot be absorbed into the common market. The social utopias of the 19th century, building on the Industrial Revolution, dreamed of absorbing all these particularities into a uniform “process of production”. The demand for distinctive ways of enjoyment is not the same for mass phenomena as for a protest at the subjective level, but from the viewpoint of the logic of jouissance, the particular and the universal come together.

These revolts regarding jouissance do not cease demonstrating that the various forms of scientific knowledge, which claim to treat every kind of addictions, from the most sublimated (the distinctive features of their culture) to the most toxic (distinct substances), fail to merge into the universal.

The subject of psychoanalysis, inherited from the universal subject of science, is a subject that has separated itself from the inherited wisdom of tradition. As a reaction, this subject of which psychoanalysis speaks, which is also the subject of the civilisation of science, attempts to recreate, by way of New Age superstitions, a sort of neo-tradition, as in the Burning Man festivals in California in which contemporaneity proposes to make a spectacle out of the treatment of every type of jouissance in a kind of parade of technological pride. Yet, it seems that the types of jouissance remain distinct, even in the sects that want to bring them together or juxtapose them in a synthesising Other. The different types of jouissance fail to recognise one another and remain separate from one another. There is no end to the questions regarding the unequal distribution of jouissance and how it is not calculable like the distribution of economic inequality. “When the Other gets a little too close, new fantasies tend towards the surfeit of jouissance in the Other.”¹⁵

On the one hand, there is, beyond the narcissism of minor differences, a hatred of the Other enjoyment when he gets too close. But it is not a distance measured in metres. The subject who gets too close to the Other enjoyment finds it in himself, separated from himself as subject. This is what makes for the insoluble character of the question of the subject's relation to his jouissance. “If the problem has the appearance of being insoluble, it's because the Other is Other within me. The root of racism is the hatred of one's own jouissance.... If the Other is in a position of

extimacy within me, it's also my own hatred.”¹⁶

This logic of a non-negativizable jouissance, tied to the part object, beyond the phallic question, made it possible for Lacan to introduce a twist to Freud's *Massenpsychologie* [*Group Psychology*], linked to the father. Lacan formulates the social bond on the basis of this impossible rejection of an initial jouissance.

Malicious [*mauvaise*] jouissance, in operation in racist discourse, is a misrecognition of this logic. The founding crime, for Lacan, is not the murder of the father, but the will to murder him who embodies the jouissance I reject. We can say that in this respect Lacan is closer to Bataille than to Freud. For Bataille, the primordial murder that founds society is not the murder of the father, but the murder of a woman. Consequently, in Bataille's dreams there were secret communities dreaming of acting on it. We have seen that there are such communities, as was shown by the murder of Sharon Tate in the 1970s; an idea that can easily occur to a number of people when they lose the plot.

Beyond the phallus, the partner-symptom

Where do we locate the trans question in the opposition between phallic jouissance and the Other beyond, its Other? Is this a jouissance that is supplementary to the two sides of man / woman sexualisation? Is this a third form of sexualisation? It's a question we can ask with reference to a work of fiction, a TV series by the ex-brothers Wachowski, who encountered success with their [movie] *Matrix*. No one foresaw that the making of *Matrix* would result in the transitioning of the two brothers, who together undertook male-to-female transition at one and the same time to become the Wachowski sisters. They subsequently produced and directed a remarkable TV series that gives *Matrix* a new form. Gérard Wacjman gives a very clear account of this in his recent book on the series: “A striking example, semi paradigmatic, is *Sense8*, the fine series by Lana and Lilly Wachowski and Joseph Michael Straczynski. Eight people who are spread over the four corners of the globe, with no relationship between them a priori, all find themselves, through a mysterious connection, linked to one another, each to all and all to each, at each and every moment sharing all they know and all their capabilities to the point where they instantly, magically find themselves

15 J.-A. Miller, “Les causes obscures du racisme”, 149.

16 “Les causes obscures du racisme”, 149.

together exactly where they must, when they must, whether it occurs through need, desire or love.”¹⁷

The matrix becomes a supplementary organ that binds the eight people to one another and supposedly enables a transparency to and a perfect equivalence [*adéquation*] with the symptom-as-partner – an absence of limits, a real bond far exceeding telepathy, since it is not a matter of signifiers but of jouissance. This supplementary organ is the basis of the trans hope. The recent testimonies that are available about these experiences of transitioning, which now form a literary genre of their own, bear the trace of the uniqueness of this experience. The basic idea is not at all that of passing from man to woman or from woman to man; it is a continuous, endless process. More than attaining a given identity, it is an identity insofar as it remains unattainable. Lacan notes in his *Seminar... or Worse*, 8 December 1971, that what defines the trans position is to take the organ for the signifier [phallus] and thus to reach the organ.¹⁸ The work of a trans person is to bring into existence the organ necessary for making jouissance an object of discourse.

Beyond the phallus and semblants

This organ that wants to be invented by trans jouissance is an opening onto the diverse modalities of the way in which this beyond-the-phallus is embodied, is made real in the different communities of jouissance across civilisations. The paths taken by these diverse modalities go from the problematic of the phallus to its generalisation in what Lacan called semblants. The semblant as a category declassifies, generalises, subverts the Freudian phallus. There where Freud discerned one libido only and made the phallus its matching organ, Lacan in the 1970s, on the contrary, turned phallic jouissance into an obstacle. J.-L. Gault quoted the following remarks: “The phallus is the conscientious objection made by one of the two sexed beings to the service to be rendered to the other.”¹⁹ Lacan will frequently play upon this harmony [*harmonique*], to the point of stating that what a man

is most inconvenienced [*embarrassé*] by is a woman’s body since he cannot enjoy [*jouit*] it. There is another jouissance that contrasts with this autoeroticism of the organ, one that is linked to language, and thus to semblants. It is not complementary to phallic jouissance, but supplementary to it. This jouissance of the body, beyond the phallus, is paradoxically the one that is articulated with language the most, via semblants. In Lacan’s first teaching, the Freudian phallus is situated as “the signifier that gives a name to the libido”. What was important for Lacan at that time was to extract psychoanalysts from the naturalism that they were bogged down in, the idea that libido was a sort of vital energy. To say, “That’s how you write it, it is a particular logic”, was the initial point. It had an effect to say, “The phallus is a signifier... [I]t is the signifier that is destined to designate meaning effects as a whole”.²⁰ The signified effects, that is, of sexual meaning. It is important to state that the sexual sense is logical, that it is distributed by means of an operator, which is the phallus, and that one can thereby extract oneself from the mirages of a vital economy that is already there. But whereas he was saying this about the phallus, from *Seminar XVII, D’un discours qui ne serait pas du semblant* [*Of a discourse that is not a semblant*], Lacan makes the semblant “the signifier itself insofar as it is captured in a discourse”.²¹ Discourse becomes an apparatus of semblants.²² This makes it possible for him to turn the semblant into a sort of generalisation more powerful than the question of the phallus, more powerful since semblants are able to regulate both phallic jouissance and its beyond.

In his text, J.-L. Gault notes the use Lacan makes of this category to put on its feet the observations of Roland Barthes, who was enchanted by Japanese rituals present in all aspects of social life and who had just published *Empire of Signs*.²³ In mentioning this book, Lacan distances himself from Barthes’ enthusiasm [*euphorie*]: “The inebriated feeling that in all his manners the Japanese subject envelops nothing. The empire of signs, he entitles his essay, meaning:

17 G. Wacjman, *Les séries, le monde, la crise, les femmes*, Verdier, 2018, p. 29.

18 See... or Worse, 8.

19 *Seminar XX*, p. 7.

20 *Écrits*, 579 in the English edition

21 LACAN J., *Le Séminaire, livre XVIII, D’un Discours qui ne serait pas du semblant*, *op. cit.*

22 *Ibid*, 9 juin 1971.

23 *Empire of Signs*, trans. R. Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983).

empire of semblances.”²⁴ The remark that is often left out, but not by J.-L. Gault, is that the Japanese subject is not so enthusiastic about it: “I am told that the Japanese man think it’s bad.”²⁵ Lacan says “Japanese man” not “Japanese woman” – it’s here that one undoubtedly finds the gap and the particularity of Japanese eroticism to which the 1976 film by Nagisa Oshima, called *In the Realm of the Senses* in English (*Ai no corrida: corrida of love*), bears witness. The man dies at the end and she cuts off his cock. If Oshima takes eroticism to the limit, nevertheless, erotic prints and manga clearly demonstrate the Japanese taste for bondage and SM practices in general, and that’s without evoking as testimony the work of Mishima on the side of homosexuality. On the one hand, the realm of semblants; on the other, the realm of bonds. One comes away with the idea that the Japanese woman is forever escaping from the Japanese man and remains unreachable despite the bonds with which he would like to fasten her.

Beyond the phallus, the partner-symptom

One basic consequence of the distinction at the level of the couple between the two jouissances, beyond phallic libido, means that, as J.-A. Miller remarks, the relation that cannot be established, which cannot be written, occurs at the level of jouissance: “At the level of the unconscious relation to jouissance, there is sexuation; and at the level of sexuation, that makes two. Two modes of jouissance.”²⁶ And this is where the need for the theory of the symptom as the partner of jouissance comes in. *L’Os d’une cure*, is a timely publication for situating the proper mode of un-limitation of jouissance on the feminine side and the consequences that follow. “Unable to base itself on a symbolic [*signifiant*] relation, the couple base themselves on a relation at the level of jouissance.”²⁷ But jouissance is always articulated with the body in a specific way, one that makes it possible to distinguish between jouissance of the body and jouissance outside the body. This outside-the-body

jouissance has a specific topology in each of the sexes: “Jouissance is produced in the body of the One by means of the body of the Other.”²⁸

In Lacan’s conception, this jouissance is always autoerotic and alloerotic, since it includes the other. The system of production on the man’s *and* the woman’s side is not the same. On the man’s side, autoerotic phallic jouissance is produced outside the body, with the exception of the phallus on the man’s body. On the other side, the distinct localisation of feminine jouissance is represented in the function of the not-all. The locus of jouissance is not a point of exception; it is produced in the body of the woman, except that this body does not form a unity, does not form a whole. This is the delocalisation of feminine jouissance which manifests itself in multiple ways. It is manifest that in jouissance, the woman’s body is itself “othered”, as J.-A. Miller says. Lacan expresses this by saying that woman is “Other to herself.”²⁹

There is not only the dissymmetry in the production of jouissance in the body as distinct from that of the organ, there are [also] the different roles played by the demand for love, the words of love, or indeed the love letter. These registers need to be differentiated: “The demand for love that plays, in feminine sexuality, a role without equivalent on the masculine side – this demand for love has something absolute about it.”³⁰

When Lacan says in *Encore*, “What makes up for the sexual relationship is, quite precisely, love”,³¹ as being what women accentuate and to which they have privileged access, it is nevertheless not a recipe for attaining happiness. “The demand for love, in its potentially infinite character, returns to the feminine speaking being [*parlêtre*] in a devastating [*ravage*] form.... This devastation is the other side of love.... This devastation is the return of the demand for love, in the same way as a symptom is.”³² This differentiates it from the symptom on the masculine side, which is clinical, localised, elementary, countable and classifiable. As a consequence, “in the relations between a couple, the woman is driven to fetishize herself, to

24 “Lituraterre”, trans. D. Nobus, *Continental Philosophy Review* (2013) 46: 334.

25 P. 334. Translation modified

26 MILLER J.-A., « Les causes obscures du racisme », *op.cit.*, p. 150

27 MILLER J.-A., *L’Os d’une cure*, Navarin Éditeur, Paris, 2018, p. 71.

28 *L’Os d’une cure*, p. 74.

29 “Guiding Remarks for a Convention on Female Sexuality”, *Écrits*, 616.

30 *L’Os d’une cure*, 79.

31 *Encore*, 45.

32 *L’Os*, 83.

symptomatize herself and also to veil herself, mask herself and accentuate her semblants.”³³ And on that, Western and Eastern countries have chosen, in the East, the use of the veil and in the West, on the contrary, the use of unveiling, but with the accentuation of every kind of fetishism. These are two ways that end up at the same place, the accentuation of semblants. As a consequence, women find it difficult to express it; they do not know quite what to say about this jouissance. And as a result, a man knows much more about his own jouissance than a woman does about hers. This is what is called male perversion.

In the City of women, men find themselves in the place of having to decipher the enigma that confronts women and men who love the jouissance of women in their radical otherness as well as their semblants, beyond the phallus. It is not a matter of “thinking that one is a man or a woman, but of taking account of the fact that there are women for the boy, [and of the fact that] there are men for the girl.”³⁴ This is all that it means to traverse phallic identifications, and it is what renders a world liveable.

Translation by Russell Grigg

33 *L'Os*, 87.

34 LACAN J., *Le Séminaire*, Livre XVIII, *D'un discours qui ne serait pas du semblant*, op. cit., p. 34.

Madness and literature

We are all mad here

Claire Baxter

Introduction

If we are, it is because, somewhere, teetering on the brink of what is mad and what is not, there is to be found a strange substance called meaning. If you follow that which is completely sane for long enough, you will, eventually, reach the point of insanity: if you follow what is insane for as long as you can hold on to it, a kind of logic will emerge and you will find sanity strong enough to spread out your rug, to set your basket upon, and hang your hat off. You may depart in either direction, from whatever your starting point may be. Be warned, however, either way, it is an arduous journey, and you're likely to feel a little mad-angry along the way.

These two pieces, *Father-in-law's tongue* and *Mum?* take their starting points at different locations along the tension between madness and meaning. The protagonist in each piece encounters a crisis of orientation in the world they find themselves navigating. Each piece arises from sources which are, arguably, sane.

Piece: Father-in-law's tongue

Source: Doing Psychoanalysis in Tehran by Gohar Homayounpour (2012, The MIT Press) and Chinatown (1974) directed by Roman Polanski

Background and Inspiration

The inspiration for this piece came from reading 'Doing Psychoanalysis in Tehran' by Gohar

Homayounpour (2012, The MIT Press). She claims that in the Persian epic poem, the *Shahnameh*, (or 'King of Kings') Persian kings have a habit of killing their sons. She contrasts this with the Oedipus myth where the son kills the father. She posits that Persian culture might more readily accept castration than the Greek tradition.

This made me think of my own experience with the Iranian family I stayed with one time in Istanbul. Their fear of having the 'eye put on them' seemed much less of a joke than they pretended it to be. It was as if the threat of castration could come from anyone who might be envious of them. That envy might be expressed in the words of a neighbor, or it might be expressed in the glance of a complete stranger. To an ignorant Westerner, having to protect herself from a mystical threat in everyday encounters with the outside world in order to alleviate the anxiety of their host family, it all seemed just a little absurd.

Aside from seeking to avoid 'the eye' at any cost, the family spent a great deal of time telling hilarious, side-splitting jokes. I never understood the jokes, although I spent a long time trying to analyze them. It was only later, after having spent more time with Iranian people, that I began to crack the code of Iranian humor. I became familiar with Iranian humor, but only in translation.

I could never seem to integrate Iranian humor into my communications in quite the right way, and so

I decided to write a joke of it, structuring the narrative around a compilation of Iranian sayings and idioms.

Iranian sayings that I came to appreciate as the basis for shared mirth and laughter included things like, 'it might be a joke for you, but it's a memory for me,' and, 'the coin finally dropped in his/her/their telephone booth.' The joke about Karam suggests that Iranian humor holds something of an appreciation of the need for the subject to look towards the Other to establish an identity. I also added into the mix an interpretation of some of the mader idioms I've encountered in the English language, such as 'having enough room to swing a cat', 'being too big for your boots', and 'curiosity killed the cat.' I wanted to play on combining expressions like 'mother-tongue' and 'mother-in-law', the latter of which occupies a terrifying role in contemporary Australian jokes, noting as well, the curious lack of the mother-in-law's male counterpart as a figure to be feared and revered in Australian culture.

The piece was also inspired by Roman Polanski's 'Chinatown' (1974) which explores the symbolism of 'having one's eye put out' within the context of the Oedipus myth. It made me wonder about the possible link between 'putting out one's eyes', a recurring motif in Greek mythology, and the fear of 'having the eye put on oneself' that I encountered during my stay with my Iranian host family.

But above all else, it should be mad-funny, and if just one reader laughs, then even though I cannot see the laugh, I will be a happy writer.

Father-in-law's tongue

I met my wife's family in Turkey. For the first time, Sepita's mother, Sara, and her father, Noor, traveled beyond their home country, Iran. They brought with them their two younger daughters, and the desire that their son who had fled to Denmark a decade ago, might join us: in Turkey, he could see his family without surrendering two years of his life to the Iranian army. Alas, he could not make it, and there was only Noor and me.

And me? Well, I'm a New York Jew of Russian descent. I grew up anxious and without a father, and I studied law for long enough to know I'm not into first principles. I became a professional Sociologist, chasing tenured professorships - always short - across the globe until I met Sepita in Australia, and married. We lived happily with a ginger tabby cat in a Brisbane terrace house, right up until we boarded the plane

that took us away from all that was signified.

We landed in Istanbul for ten days in a two bedroom flat with Septia's family from Iran.

Sara made tea and then retired to shower and change, and the rest of us squeezed into the lounge room, the windows closed against the cats of Istanbul.

My wife's family laughed almost as much as they talked, and the corners of their eyes crinkled.

I listened to my wife's voice, all the more beautiful in Persian.

Sepita, I could see, was pulled out of the reunion each time she turned towards me and translated her family to me. I really wished she wouldn't; I felt like her attention was divided between two different subjects.

I sat there, politely, drinking Persian tea, trying not to worry about the dental hygiene of my extended family as my in-laws placed whole, white sugar cubes between their front teeth and drank their tea, turning the sugar cubes into brown, melting lumps.

I drank my tea without, and looked politely at the floor, and I sweated in the Turkish heat.

Sara emerged, refreshed. She looked different without the hijab. Her hair was auburn, almost ginger, and it fell in soft, gentle, waves about her face.

She gave me a flirtatious look, and I blushed, and hurriedly returned to my tea.

She walked right up to where I sat on the couch - I was eye level with her crotch now - and I gulped at my tea and looked at the floor, and she pulled her trousers up to reveal her ankles.

The tea went down the wrong way, and I spluttered and coughed.

There was laughter all around.

The room started spinning.

Sepita's hand on my knee brought me gently back from mortification into the world of the living room.

'Mum says that your slippers are the same size as hers, but that your feet look so much bigger. She wonders if there is something wrong with her eyes.' Sepita said, her voice light and happy.

I saw that Sara was indeed wearing my slippers.

I saw with relief that she shuffled away from us and squeezed into her place beside her husband, and we all sat there in the living room full of foreign laughter and warmth.

When I was able to look up from the carpet, I sought somewhere neutral to rest my eyes. I saw that there was a cat outside on the narrow window-sill,

agitated and arched up against the glass.

'Poor thing, maybe it has been displaced,' I murmured.

Everyone looked at me, and Sepita spoke, translating me to her family.

Noor sprang off the couch, knocking his walking stick to the floor, and pushed open the window. The cat let out a yowl of self-preservation and swiped back. There was a battle. Noor, leaning precariously out of the window, had just enough room to fling the cat. The cat disappeared through the air.

Noor closed the window, and wiped his hands in disgust against his trousers.

Somewhere in the street below, hopefully a cat still lived.

The jet lag hit me soon after that, and I slept without regard for Turkish time. I dreamed. I was in a room I did not recognize, with an anxious cat I did not know. The walls of the room were orange. There was a hideous creature with three legs and a huge Cyclops-eye coming towards us.

I tried the door handle, but the door was locked.

'Use the key!' urged the cat.

I looked around for a key.

The creature was getting closer, and I could see the reflection of myself in its huge eye. Its teeth were brown and rotting.

'Where is the key?' I shouted.

'You have the key!' screamed the cat, 'Hurry!'

I realized I was gripping the key in my hand.

The creature descended on us.

Light pierced my eyes.

I woke disoriented, my heart pounding. The sun was pouring through the window and I had overheated. I managed to coordinate myself into the lounge room and onto the sofa beside Sepita. Noor was talking, everyone was listening, and of course, there was tea on the coffee table.

I think Sara poured me tea, or it might have been Sepita. Sara was still shuffling around in my slippers, and my wife, apparently, had taken to wearing my shirts.

Noor must be telling a story from the way everyone was listening to him, raptured. His voice went on and on, his audience hanging onto every word, and then it crescendoed into the final act.

Laughter.

Sepita collapsed beside me, and I'd never seen her laugh so much. She doubled over, fighting for breath. Just when she appeared to have recovered

herself, she was rendered helpless by a fresh tribulation of humor which wracked her whole, slender body.

I was both curious and concerned.

Sepita looked at me, but my countenance only seemed to add to the malady. Her affliction was contagious, and soon the whole Iranian family was helpless with laughter, but my wife was the worst of them.

It became clear that, although she was unresponsive, she wasn't dying. I picked up my saucer and teacup with one hand, and with my other, I drank my tea.

The cat was back on the window-sill. It had clearly survived the fall. It raised its forepaw and began to groom itself.

'It's a Iranian joke,' said Sepita finally. I waited patiently for the last of the giggles to leave her system. 'You won't find this funny: you've got to be Iranian.' I gave my wife an exasperated look, 'Try me,' I said. 'It's a joke about Lurs: not even most Iranians would understand it.'

'Darling. There's only so long a man can endure his ignorance of the jokes happening around him!'

Sepita wiped her eyes.

'So there was this man called Karam and he was a Lur and he lived in a village. He'd lived in this little house in this little village his whole life. He was a beekeeper, wait...'

Sepita turned and asked her mother for clarification. Sara replied, and apparently Karam's occupation warranted serious discourse.

I put down the saucer and waited patiently for my joke. I was determined to get it.

'So Karam was a beekeeper, and anyway - actually, I'm not sure that matters.'

'Wait,' I said exasperated, 'you and your Mum just had a five minute discussion about the occupation of the protagonist, and it doesn't matter?'

Sepita grinned and shook her head. 'Karam is Mum's Uncle -'

'Wait, is this a joke or a story?'

'Both,' was the answer.

I picked up my cup and saucer again.

'Karam is Mum's Uncle, and he is a beekeeper and he lives in a village, but the rest of it is made up... or maybe someone in the family just put Karam into this joke, which is even funnier...'

I examined the saucer and waited.

'Karam and his family got a new house in a new village. One day Karam went out for a walk. He walked to the old village to visit his friends, and then

he walked back to the new village where he lived. But he couldn't find his house...'

I nodded, following.

'He looked and he looked, but he couldn't find it. Finally he knocked on the door of a house which he thought might be his. A neighbor answered.

Karam said 'Is this my house?'

The neighbor said 'No, Karam, this is not your house.'

The neighbor pointed down the street and he said 'This house is Karam's house', and then he -'

'But my wife was freshly afflicted by laughter.

I waited.

'...the neighbor said 'This house is Karam's house,'

I nodded, willing her to get on with it.

'...and he took Karam by the arm and he said 'And this is Karam.'

'Sepita pushed her fist up against her nose to hold in the laughter, but her body was wracked with it again.

I waited for Sepita to continue.

She didn't. '

And that's it, that's the joke.'

'...right.

' Outside, the cat flicked its ears and looked away.

'You see, it's a joke about Lurs... they are kind of old-fashioned, and they can't really cope with the modern world.'

'I see,' I said, not seeing at all, 'This is a joke I cannot easily analyze.

'I felt a despondency settle over the living room.

The family was assembling- or trying to - for an excursion to the Hagia Sophia. Sepita was dressed in big, roomy clothing, a scarf draped across her head. I was worried she might disappear altogether into the folds of tradition.

We couldn't quite seem to move out of the apartment. For some reason we were all arriving into the tiny living room, patting down our pockets or rummaging through our bags, and realizing we'd forgotten something - a wallet, a key, a phone, a scarf - and stumbling back over each other to our bedrooms to retrieve the thing we lacked.

Finally, we shuffled like a slow moving eddy out the front door, onto the tiny landing, and down the echoing stairwell, out into the city where the West came up against the East.

The Hagia Sophia was huge and ancient and full

of modern tourists in long clothing. The tour guide spoke English, but with a thick Irish accent. It was exhausting. At an opportune moment, Sara retired from the mosque to a cafe, complaining of sore feet and fatigue. She urged us to continue with our tourism while she waited. I watched in amazement the volley of invitation and refusal that ensued. Noor and Sepita and her two sisters appeared to be offering to stay with Sara, while Sara was adamant that we must not divert our sightseeing on her behalf. The united front between Noor and his daughters, and between sister and sister, took an alarming turn when, in a confusion of shifting alliances, they turned against each other. From their gestures and animated tones, I gathered that each was arguing that the others should continue on tour while the speaker - and those in the speaker's alliance if they had one at that point - should claim the exclusive right to stay with the mother in repose. At the point when Noor's extravagant sweeping gestures extended to me, I timidly spoke up.

'Um, Sepita? What's going on?'

Sepita looked at me in surprise, and it was as if she realized she'd forgotten something.

'Tarof', she said, finally, 'I never told you about the Iranian Tarof.'

She readjusted her scarf which had slipped from her head.

Noor glanced at me and muttered something which was clearly intended to evade translation.

I looked at Sepita quizzically.

She shrugged her shoulders and said simply, 'This is Tarof.'

I was suddenly distracted by an intense itch. When I turned my hand over in examination, I discovered a nasty rash. It stretched across my palm from the crevice between the start of my thumb and first finger, to just before the base of my baby finger.

Sepita noticed me looking at myself, and demanded to look too.

Her entire family demanded to look, and I became a specimen of Iranian dermatological speculation.

'We must go to a doctor,' said Sepita firmly.

Noor pushed in and peered at me, and he shook his head gravely and spoke in solemn tones.

'What did he say!' I demanded to know.

'He said that somebody put the eye on you.'

'Put the eye on me?!' I exclaimed.

Sepita nodded seriously, 'Father says that he saw a man yesterday gazing at you with jealousy on his face because you have a beautiful wife. That jealous

man put the eye on you.'

I snatched my palm back with its crawling skin, and shoved it into my pocket.

The GP said in concerned tones that she had never before seen a corruption like mine, and she referred me to a dermatologist who referred me to another dermatologist. I felt like I was on tour of the private medical suites of Istanbul. I was on tour without a translator: Sepita could not speak Turkish.

'Ah,' said the second dermatologist, who looked to be of a great age.

I held my breath.

'I have seen this before,' he said in English.

I nearly wept because this man could understand me.

'This rash is caused by nickel.'

'Nickel?' I asked.

The doctor looked up from my hand, which he was holding in his. He regarded me over the rim of his glasses, as if contemplating my retardation.

'Perhaps you have been holding a key in your hand,' he said slowly.

Nickel? A key? In my hand?

I was about to shake my head, and then I remembered.

'Only in my dream,' I said.

He shrugged, 'Yes, sometimes it happens that way too.'

I stood in the bathroom and Sepita applied the prescribed dermatological ointment to my rash, but it seemed that I'd become public property. Despite my protestations, I was pulled into the living room by the very hand that was wounded for a public dressing.

'The doctor said it was from holding nickel keys in my hand,' I explained. 'He said nothing about the eye,' I added, giving Noor an angry look.

Sepita, holding my hand in hers and applying the gauze and tape, translated me to her family once again.

Noor stepped up to me, talking, and grinning.

'What,' I said to Sepita, 'did he say this time?'

Sepita carefully applied the last of the tape around my hand, and gave me my hand back.

She crumpled up the plastic packaging of the sterile dressing, and looked around for a bin.

'He said he'd never seen a man look so terrified at the mention of the eye before,' she called back over her shoulder as she headed for the kitchen.

I felt my face turn red, and my vision retreated from Noor's grinning face to some tiny spot within me.

'It's a joke for you,' I muttered, 'but it's a memory for me.'

Noor let out a burst of laughter, louder and more bell-like than any laughter I'd ever heard. I felt the thud of his arm crash about my shoulders, and I felt the warmth of his body, shaking uncontrollably against mine. He shook and he shook, and he collapsed, weeping into my arms.

'Ah, son,' he said finally, when he could speak, 'that's a good one.'

'You speak English?' I demanded of the scoundrel in my arms.

Noor surrendered the responsibility of keeping himself upright to me all over again, and when he climbed up my arms to speak again, it was all Persian to me.

I looked at Sepita, who had returned to the living room, helplessly.

She shrugged and pulled a face. She looked as surprised as I was. 'He said that your coin finally dropped in the telephone booth.'

Outside on the roof, the cat looked in with curiosity.

Title: Mum?

Source: Chapter 12 From Image to Signifier In Pleasure and Reality in Formations of the Unconscious Book V by Jacques Lacan (1957-1958)

Mum?

Jacques was suddenly awake. Some painful pressure had occurred either in his head, or on it. The sensation had wrenched him from his sleep, but now it was gone. As he drew breath, he realized that there was a substance covering his face, as if a tent had fallen down upon him. Before he could ponder, however, how he came to be camping, the pressure against his head returned. He went to shout out, only the substance, all around his face, invaded his mouth as soon as he opened it. His panic and confusion crescendoed, and he tried to swim upwards towards the surface. His arms, however, were tied down. Terror seized him. He felt some horror squeezing and pushing against him. There was something animal about the pressure. He was gripped by the sudden, mad thought that he was inside the stomach of an animal. He felt the contraction of the beast against him - the beast's stomach.

He was being digested!

He passed out of consciousness.

Jacques came to when searing pain ripped through his lungs. He screamed and screamed and screamed. As his terror subsided, he noticed how cold he was. The pressure against his body had gone, and in its absence; searing, icy cold. It was like he'd fallen into nothingness, except he wasn't falling: it was worse, like being in the grip of something cold, and hard. He went on screaming. He had the sensation of being whisked through air. When he tried to open his eyes, the light was painfully bright, and nothing would come into focus. Pressure against his body again, and then, suddenly, something warm, familiar against his face. Something found its way inside his mouth, and, in the most natural way, he began to suck. Euphoria flooded his system.

The terror gone, he found warmth, pressing in around him, and filling him. Jacques discovered with pleasure, his mouth, and, not long after, his stomach. As he noted the feelings in his body - nay, as he came to know his body from the feelings - he followed his awareness up from his stomach, upwards, to his mouth, which was warm and sucking. He understood then, that by some sequence of bizarre events, he was sucking at a woman's breast. In a flash he understood the impossible: he was an infant, and he'd just been born.

He passed out again.

When he came to for the second time, everything he was able to perceive about his situation filled him with terror and panic. Before he could make sense of anything, however, he was overcome by sudden fatigue, and he fell asleep. When Jacques woke - he had no idea how much time had passed - he was seized by a desire to feed. He screamed until the nipple was pushed into his mouth, and he fell to the task of feeding.

How was any of this possible? He was a fully developed adult in his sixties, about to give a series of lectures to the Ecole pratique des Hautes Etudes, and he was the owner of a French Bulldog called Justine. How could he also be an infant suckling at the breast of a woman?

Jacques didn't have long to explore his thoughts: his consciousness was alternatively frozen by terror, then plugged up and stupified by milk, and then overcome by fatigue. The single greatest pleasure came from the first defecation: it was an absolute relief to have his awareness taken beyond his stomach, which was either too full, or terrifyingly not full enough. His awareness swept in as the involuntary contractions

of his lower digestive tract betrayed the whereabouts of his body, and incredibly, its limits as the system performed its first evacuation. His awareness spread beyond his digestive tract: he could feel sensations and textures against his skin too. It took him some time to discover his arms and his legs, and when he did, they were entirely unpredictable. This was a body over which he had no control.

The instinctual drives that dominated his newborn body - eating, defecating and sleeping - were impossible to ignore and all-consuming. Mum was the entire world. There was her breast, her arms and hands, her body. In time, he discovered her voice: a comforting stratosphere through which the boundaries of the world extended beyond what this infant's body could sense through touch, and beyond the depths and distances that the infant's unfocused eyes could probe. It took some time to adjust to the mess that the perceptual system made of light, but, sound, rich as it was with the words of Mum, was instant. The only frustration was the nonsense syllables that were spoken in his presence, on account of him being a baby. That Jacques had the ability to think was obvious - well, to him anyway - but the body that encased his brain - *was it even his brain?* - was hell-bent on survival, and he was a powerless passenger. The thoughts were his, the body was not, and experience was something that they wrestled with between them.

He began, hour by hour, day by day, to distinguish between his own terror and that of the infant whose body and brain he was trapped within. The infant was 'Melanie' judging by the frequency with which this word was crooned in his - or in *their* - presence, and Melanie was born to a family that was not French, but rather, Austrian, judging from the Viennese German spoken by the blurry images above him.

Melanie lived in a state of abject terror.

'Oh Melanie! Will you stop!' he thought with exasperation, as his thoughts were wrenched, once again into Melanie's fear and hunger. 'It's just the sensation of hunger! You're not dying!'

Melanie's hunger, however, once it started, would only ever grow into an imperious demand for satisfaction that grew against a background fear of starvation and abandonment. Melanie's desperate, unrelenting terror was exhausting.

Jacques was overcome with anger. 'She'll feed you! You'll not starve!' he shouted in his thoughts, 'Spare a thought for me, you selfish brat: my whole

life's been destroyed and I can't even think about it!

Melanie fell dead silent. She stopped moving. Mum noticed, and she cried and snatched Melanie up, and Melanie was reassured by her presence and her ministrations, and she stirred back to life.

Jacques was reeling: Melanie had felt his anger like an attack!

'Melanie?' he whispered gently in his thoughts, 'Little Melanie? I'm sorry!'

Melanie let out a low, mournful cry and refused the breast.

'Oh, Melanie, it's okay, we're only a little bit sad!' Jacques urged.

Jacques felt the despair rolling over him; the exact despair that he was trying to prevent. He felt relief when Melanie, utterly exhausted from the fight to stay alive, lapsed them both into sleep.

How to escape from this body? His - Melanie's - body was useless, weak and unresponsive. It was also female. He'd tried to control the movement of their limbs, but to little avail: he needed Melanie to kick and wriggle around and develop neural connections: even then, he didn't know how much he'd have control over their movement. As it was, Melanie was still struggling to focus her eyes on an object placed directly in front of his face. Even after she could walk and talk, she'd be a toddler - how long would that take? Two years?

He imagined the incredulous adults staring down at him -

Him? Or was it her? Their could be only one sex: them.

He imagined the incredulous adults at their great heights staring down at them as they told their story -

Damn it, he was a him, and she was a she. There would be no "they"!

Melanie, who was apparently fascinated by the patterns and colors that played out in their perception of the empty air in front of their face, coughed and spluttered.

The impossibility of his story would surely be given credibility by the obvious intelligence that he'd be able to demonstrate in his articulation of words - it would not take him long to learn German - but what would they do; give him an associate professorship and a driver's license? Probably they'd give him a pediatric nurse, or worse, a psychologist.

His colleagues, his patients, the clinic, dear Justine ... what had happened to them all?... What had they made of his sudden absence? Had he died suddenly? Maybe, by some glitch in the system of life

and death and the allocation of consciousness, he'd been flung into the brain of the body who was coming into life just as he - or his body - was dying -

Oh stop it! It's not a joke!

...Or maybe nobody had died at all; maybe something had happened to cause a direct swap of consciousness.

Absurd!

Jacques felt a surge of anger at the thought of Melanie's mind inhabiting his body, making a disaster of his life, and damaging his reputation.

Melanie let out a thin wail.

Jacques was plunged into grief for the life he had lost.

Melanie kicked their arms and legs desperately. Jacques felt Melanie's distress beside his own.

Stop thinking like this!

But thinking is the only thing we have left!

He was overcome with rage. He felt the sudden urge to smash or break something.

Melanie stopped sucking and fell silent.

The withdrawal of Melanie's drive burst into Jacques' consciousness.

'Oh Melanie! I'm sorry!'

Mum's gentle hand found Melanie's forehead and began stroking it. She murmured tones of encouragement.

'Oh Melanie! Please don't worry, little Melanie. Don't worry about my words, just keep sucking.'

He kept thinking encouraging thoughts, and Mum kept stroking their head, and Melanie was soothed and returned to feeding. Jacques felt as if Mum's hand were his own stroking Melanie's little head. It was comforting to comfort Melanie. Strangely enough, he mused in the aftermath of his own panic and grief, the thought being seen - him: a grown man with a reputation - acting under the directive of Melanie's infantile mind worried him more than the thought of being trapped in an infant's life.

'It's a pity all this didn't happen earlier: then I might have written to the great man himself' Jacques would have smiled to himself if there was any connection at all between his thoughts and the mouth of the body he was in.

'I wonder what Freud would have made of a letter from a baby?'

'That it was written by a psychotic?'

Melanie spluttered at Mum's breast.

Mum! Mum's face hovered above as she changed Melanie's nappy. Jacques tried so hard to see her

through Melanie's blurry vision. She finished the nappy change and her face came close: long, brown hair framed a face with brown eyes and black eyebrows and a mouth. The details were frustratingly absent. He could tell that her blurry face was smiling and he was overcome with a rush of contentment. So was Melanie: when Mum's face hovered close to their own, Melanie felt calm.

Jacques longed for the time when their body would grow into something more like the human form he was used to - some bipedal action would be great. He found himself dreaming about walking and talking, and starting an early learning program. With his intelligence, they would excel. They'd run rings around the other students!

He was overcome by shame: a sixty three year old man gaining satisfaction at the thought of beating babies at the German alphabet.

He needed to get out of this life, and back into his own.

When Mum's beautiful face came close to theirs, Jacques tried to signal to Mum: he did his best to show her who he really was.

Mum smiled at him.

'My darling,' she crooned in her Viennese accent.

She kissed him gently on the forehead, and placed them back in the cot. Jacques was filled with black rage: he hated Mum then. The rage transported him out of their body into some dark place within himself.

When he came back into himself, Melanie was screaming. They opened their eyes and he perceived Mum's anxious face above them.

It was only some time later that Jacques realized that he'd been able to perceive Mum's face for the first time in some detail. She had a small scar in her left eyebrow, and three moles in a line above her top lip, in the place that a mustache would be, if she were a man.

One day morning, as they lay kicking on the changing table, he felt the morning sun upon his head and on his torso. It would have been nice if only it didn't hurt his eyes. Mum raised their body, and when she took away the warm nappy, the air on their freshly wiped bottom caused Melanie to pause. Mum swept a new nappy under their bottom, and the new nappy was on and the cold air was gone before Melanie could cry.

'My beautiful Melanie,' Mum said in her lyrical voice, laying them back down in the cot, 'Mother is sad; you grow so quickly!'

Every day we are getting older.

Jacques imagined their future. When they were twenty, he'd be eighty-three... He wouldn't fit! He'd be too old for their body! Would he still have the same mental capacity at eighty-three that he did now? What caused a mind to falter? What caused executive function - attention, working memory and processing speed - to slow down and fail?

Melanie stirred and began to cry.

Was it simply that the brain decayed like all physical and biological structures? In which case, the limiting structure of his conscious acumen would be the new brain itself, not his spirit. He felt a wave of relief wash over him.

Melanie settled back down, making sucking motions with his little mouth.

Jacques, however, disturbed by the thought of his own mortality being out of sync with the life force of the body he was in, couldn't quite settle.

He suddenly wondered if Melanie's brain could be developing a second mind.

Melanie became irritable. She waved their arms, she screwed up their eyes and began to cry. Jacques found himself listening so hard that it hurt. He was listening for another person. How could Melanie *not* be developing a mind? Her little body was all the time, growing and sensing the world, perceiving it. How could she not be beginning to interpret it? Were there two minds within this body already?

Two unconsciousnesses residing in the one body! And one in German, too!

He felt panic.

Melanie kicked and screamed.

They were Melanie's demands that were driving this machine, not his. He was a back-seat driver. The division between himself and Melanie was not an easy one.

My existence jeopardizes Melanie's. It would be better if I didn't exist.

Jacques became consumed with self-hatred. The apparent impossibility of suicide when one is trapped within the body of an infant became the false foundation upon which Jacques indulged his most narcissistic fantasies of self-annihilation. He forgot all about Melanie and Mum.

The coldness on his chest shocked him. He became aware of a strange new presence hovering over him, causing the coldness on their chest. The hands that probed him were big, coarse, rough. The cold air that swept in with the unveiling of their body

was nothing compared with the icy coldness of a single spot on his chest.

- *The words, German of course, and male!*

The stethoscope: his father - Melanie's father - was a doctor.

'Father, I am freezing!'

Father, can you hear me, through your stethoscope?

But Father wasn't looking for him: father was seeking the girl-child.

'Little Melanie?' Jacques called out desperately, searching for the girl his father wanted.

But Melanie's drives had become so small, and she had retreated to some part of their body so far away that it was hard for Jacques to find her. It dawned on Jacques that Melanie could not tell the difference between hatred that took Jacques as its object and hatred that took herself as its object: he was killing Melanie with his thoughts.

Jacques was dragged from his post self-annihilation insights, and something deep within him directed all of his desire towards keeping the child

he was within alive. He sought, and when he found her, he saw himself taking himself into his arms and holding them.

Melanie began feeding happily.

But how could she be feeding, because Mum was not holding them?

Mum was standing next to Dad, hovering over Melanie's still little body, touching her, but not feeding her: Mum's torso was too far away from them for them to be feeding.

How was it that Melanie was feeding when there was no breast?

She was hallucinating the breast that was not there.

Then, Jacques committed himself to the imaginary life.

Postscript

If madness comes our way, be it from within or from without, we really only have one obligation, and that is to make meaning out of it. The rest is surely a joke.