

Preface

Véronique Voruz
Bogdan Wolf

An introduction to the *later* Lacan needs to address a few preliminary questions. Why isolate a given phase in Lacan's teaching? Why not simply speak of a more or less gradual evolution over thirty years of seminars and writing? And if there is a distinction to be made, a distinction that cuts through Lacan's teaching, how do we determine the coordinates of this break? Finally, what characterizes Lacan's later work, making it stand out even against his own corpus of earlier writing? The texts assembled in this volume will substantiate the identification of a later Lacan as they work through Lacan's rearticulation of the classic concepts of psychoanalysis and his enunciation of new ones to name the impasses and paradoxes produced by his earlier engagement with both psychoanalytic theory and praxis.

It is a constant feature of the analytic clinic that it rapidly encounters the limits of its theoretical framework: a case of the real catching up. Thus, Lacan's persistent reworking of psychoanalysis—in which his approach resembles that of Freud—has as much or more to do with the practical need to address impasses encountered in the consulting room as it does with theoretical difficulties. And indeed, throughout his teaching Lacan tirelessly introduces new concepts to overcome both the obstacles encountered by Freud and the ones produced by his own framework. Each new cycle of thought enables psychoanalytic practice to retain and renew its clinical efficacy; it is a thought that cannot rest. For instance, Freud grew so accustomed to the rapidity with which his own advances encountered their limits in practice that in the end he named the clinical manifestation of this phenomenon

“negative therapeutic reaction.” Freud, and Lacan in his wake, eventually had to acknowledge the impossibility of fully ‘draining’ the unconscious with the signifier. This recognition produces what can be called a ‘push-to-the-real’ in their work—or an orientation on what, in the unconscious, insists beyond truth. And it is the deep imprint of the real that characterizes, above all, the later teaching.

In this preface we will situate the later teaching in Lacan’s work in a preliminary manner, before moving on to introduce the volume itself. We will then conclude by delineating the clinical areas that currently draw most on the later Lacan.

The seminar of Jacques Lacan can be divided into three periods, each lasting for approximately a decade. Roughly speaking, and as developed by Jacques-Alain Miller in his ongoing Paris seminar, each of these periods is characterized by the prevalence of one of the three registers of the analytic experience that Lacan named imaginary, symbolic, and real,¹ and in that order. Clearly, though, it is not because Lacan treats one register of psychological life as somehow predominant over the other two at a given time that all three orders are not elaborated contemporaneously, and with as much attention. For example, the third phase, oriented on the real, also sees a rehabilitation of the imaginary, a register that had previously been regarded as an obstacle to the movement implicit in the ‘symbolic’ concepts of ‘truth’, desire, and transference.

The first phase of Lacan’s teaching is concerned with the mirror stage, narcissism, identification—and so the formation of the ego. In this phase, Lacan engages in a passionate debate with IPA analysts, seminal psychiatrists, and contemporary philosophers (Kris, Hartmann, Lagache, Jaspers, Ey, Kraepelin, Balint, Winnicott, Bernfeld, Klein, Deutsch, Horney, Macalpine, Anna Freud, etc.). In the course of this often heated debate, Lacan reformulates the clinical questions posed by the ego in terms of the rivalry between symmetrical others, the obstacles posed by the three imaginary passions of love, hatred, and ignorance, the reversibility of ego libido on the imaginary axis, and the intrusion of the imaginary axis in the analytic transference.² Lacan’s work on the imaginary is informed by the observation of various characteristics of animal behavior: for example, that members of a same species recognize one another through a shared physical feature: certain mating rituals. For speaking beings, however, the signifier disrupts the ‘natural’ that parades as real. And the alliance of ego and other is both disrupted and propped up by the symbolic.

At this stage, Lacan sought to instrumentalize the symbolic axis to displace the imaginary as *resistance*. This focus on the imaginary culminated in Lacan's work on anxiety in his tenth seminar,³ in which the many Freudian definitions of angst are taken up by Lacan, who reaches the following 'resolution' of the Freudian problematic: the affect of anxiety alerts the subject to his or her imaginary fragility. In this seminar Lacan also argues that this affect is caused by the proximity of the object. And it is his recognition of the centrality of the object—as irruption of the real—that leads Lacan to formalize the object of anxiety as object *a*, a central concept in Seminar XI, in which the second phase of Lacan's teaching is truly initiated.

With the concept of object *a*—a logical supplement figuring a real caught in the symbolic order—at his disposal, Lacan sets out to articulate various ways in which this real can be circumscribed. Thus, from Seminar XI onward, Lacan works consistently on the parameters of subjective positioning in the Other, or symbolic order. The symbolic coordinates of the subject, already combined with his or her imaginary constructs, are now also articulated with this residual real. With this focus on structure and positioning, Lacan comes up with the very useful logical operations of alienation and separation, which he correlates to the concepts of symptom and fantasy.⁴ Lacan's efforts to absorb, treat, or at least account for the residual real caught in the symbolic culminates with his invention of the four discourses, each proposing different articulations of the social bond according to what occupies the position of agent: S_1 (master signifier), S_2 (knowledge), *a* (surplus-enjoyment), or $\$$ (barred subject). Arguably, Lacan's attempts to subsume the real in discourse come to an end with Seminar XX, which just about begins with the following words: "With the passage of time, I learned that I could say a little bit more about it. And then I realised that what constituted my course was a sort of 'I don't want to know anything about it.'"⁵

So the period we refer to as the later Lacan starts with Seminar XX. Following on from Lacan's recognition of the irreducibility of the real, the later teaching is characterized by a concern with the real as immovable; insistent, but also intimately bound up with language in its entirety. In this phase, *jouissance* characterizes human existence.⁶ Not only does *jouissance* deregulate and upset the pleasure principle of symbolic balance and proportion, it also becomes specific and integral to speech, now conceived as a carrier of *jouissance*. The symbolic function of speech does not reduce *jouissance* but produces it. Speech no longer thwarts the

external threat of the real or pacifies its influx but deploys it by revolving around the object, by enveloping it symbolically into the symptom. Gradually, it becomes clear that this is where Lacan is taking us—toward the opacity of *jouissance* ciphered by the signifier in the symptom.

Situating the coordinates of this epistemic break with more precision, Seminar XX initiates the last stage of Lacan's lifelong formalization of psychoanalytic theory: from then on, the unconscious is seen as an apparatus of *jouissance*, and meaning—as a treatment of *jouissance*—is seen as a means of enjoyment. Or, as Lacan puts it in Seminar XX, on the one hand “reality is approached with apparatuses of *jouissance* . . . we focus, of course, on the fact that there's no other apparatus than language”;⁷ and on the other, “the unconscious is the fact that being, by speaking, enjoys.”⁸ Seminar XX is thus host to an uncompromising staging of *jouissance* as the key concept of psychoanalysis, and it is in this sense that the phase described here as the “later Lacan” is inaugurated.

Although Seminar XX is but a transition seminar to this last phase, from that point on language is primarily, and unequivocally, envisaged in a dual and rather pragmatic manner: language is a means of treating *jouissance* *and* a means of enjoyment. And in this seminar Lacan begins to draw out the clinical consequences of these propositions. In this pragmatic perspective, the unconscious no longer appears as a repository of repressed truths but as an enjoying apparatus whose main purpose is to preserve the subject's elective mode of *jouissance*. This, of course, makes the business of analysis more complicated as the analyst has to proceed against the grain of the subject's enjoyment. As such, it is clear that only a strong transference bond to the analyst will secure the patient's willingness to separate him- or herself from the enjoyment procured by the unconscious.

This recasting of the unconscious as the “accomplice of *jouissance*,” as Miller once put it, evidently presents a momentous challenge to psychoanalysis as invented by Freud. From this point on, Lacan downplays the Oedipus complex, seen as a mythical—and so imaginized—version of unconscious organization. And it is with the des-imaginization of the Oedipus that the deciphering of the unconscious becomes less central in the analytic treatment. The relation to meaning and truth is less valued, and for the Lacan of the later period the analytic treatment is oriented on a reduction of the symptom. The *symptom* has to be emptied of the *jouissance* procured through its articulation with the fantasy so that the subject can make use of his *sinthome* to love, work, and desire.

Though deciphering is less central to the treatment, the analysis is still structured and driven by the statements of the analysand, as it is in these statements that something of the position of enunciation can be read. But from Seminar XX, Lacan seeks to find other ways of intervening in subjective organization than those associated with classic psychoanalytic interpretation. Classic methods of interpretation, by introducing more signifying material in the treatment, in fact encourage meaning-making by bringing yet more water to the mill of the unconscious. By contrast, the cut isolates *jouissance* in speech and prevents the proliferation of meaning that makes analysis interminable.

The status of the real is the strongest marker of the break that distinguishes the later Lacan. In the first period, the real is more or less akin to reality, a backdrop to the symbolic-imaginary dialectic. From Seminar VII, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, the real begins to occupy a central position: passing from the background to the beyond of the symbolic, it comes to the fore for the first time in Lacan's teaching. The real, in its most radical, ungraspable, unthinkable dimension becomes *das Ding*, the most intimate, yet excluded, partner of the speaking being, referred to by Lacan for the first time in Seminar VII as the extimate. In the later teaching, starting with Seminar XX, the real becomes the real of the body, indexed on the absence of sexual relation. And in the course of the analytic treatment the subject approaches—insofar as it is possible—this real in speech.

Clearly, this last shift, which plays down the function of meaning in the analytic treatment, entails a thorough rearticulation of the key concepts of psychoanalysis, as well as a new clinical orientation. In fact, the originality of the later Lacan is such that the texts of the final decade are still being worked through today in the Lacanian Schools, providing the foundations for current developments in psychoanalytic theory and practice, and producing effects of transmission that this volume begins to map.

The present collection aims to guide English-speaking readers through the developments of analytic theory and practice generated by Lacan in his later teaching. The body of work referred to here as the later Lacan is problematic in at least one initial respect for an English-speaking audience: of the later seminars, only Seminar XX exists in official translation. A further obstacle presented by Lacan's later teaching resides in the inherent complexity of his thought, a difficulty that some find compounded by the idiosyncrasy of his style. Although these difficulties are

familiar to readers of Lacan, in the later work, Lacan—influenced by his work on Joyce and driven by his interest in *lalangue*, or language as *jouissance*—gave himself a free linguistic rein. The result is that some of the later texts and seminars (a case in point being “L’Étourdit,” *Autres Écrits*, Paris: Seuil, 2001) are real word-fests that are near-ungraspable without the context provided by a community working in a rigorous orientation. Finally, whereas in previous seminars, readers could refer to the classic texts of psychoanalysis considered by Lacan to direct their understanding, the later teaching is very much Lacan’s singular elaboration. Mathematics freely mingles with literature and topology; word-plays, neologisms, and knots bounce off one another, to the point that, arguably, without the dedicated work of exegesis and transmission centered around Miller’s own seminar,⁹ some of Lacan’s texts would probably remain too obscure for most, despite the beautiful logic and simplicity often harbored by Lacan’s baroquely crafted languages.

For these three reasons—the unavailability of Lacan’s own later seminars in English and the shortage of commentaries on this period, the inherent difficulty of the concepts being developed and of the texts themselves, and the move away from classic psychoanalytic references and terminology—we decided to reproduce in a single volume, and with revised translations, a selection of texts initially published over a period of seven years in the *Psychoanalytical Notebooks of the London Society of the New Lacanian School*. Throughout, we have sought to balance theoretical elaborations with clinical material, whether this material is derived from an author’s own clinical experience or from classic cases within the psychoanalytic literature. The result is a collection of absolutely fundamental texts written by a mixture of established and new Lacanian practitioners, all of whom belong either to the last school founded by Lacan before his death, the *Ecole de la cause freudienne* in Paris, or to other schools of the *World Association of Psychoanalysis*, founded by Jacques-Alain Miller in 1992.

Contributors to this volume include a number of Parisian analysts who are also involved in transmission and clinical formation at the Department of Psychoanalysis of Paris VIII University and its Clinical Section. The Director of this Department is Jacques-Alain Miller, and Marie-Hélène Brousse, Jean-Louis Gault, Pierre-Gilles Guéguen, Eric Laurent, Esthela Solano-Suárez, and Herbert Wachsberger all take part—and have done so for many years—in the formation of clinical practitioners in France, and also abroad through seminars and

conferences. Alexandre Stevens is the founder of the Courtil Clinic in Belgium and coordinator of the Brussels Clinical Section. And the remaining four contributors, Richard Klein, Gabriela van den Hoven, and ourselves, are active members of the London group.

These texts are organized according to the key themes of Lacan's later work, starting with the concept of the letter—or what in language is real, for it always returns to the same place—and the limits this concept introduces for a classic understanding of interpretation (Part I). We then chose to include a number of texts mapping Lacan's shift from the Freudian symptom, as a message to be deciphered, to the *sinthome*—or the subject's elective and singular mode of inscription in language (Part II). These two concepts, the letter and the *sinthome*, punctuate Lacan's gradual reformulation of the psychoanalytic clinic of psychosis (Part III). Further, the Lacanian concepts devoted to circumscribing the manifestations of the drive in language have also been affected by this new version of the unconscious, and so we have dedicated a section to *jouissance*, the object, and anxiety (Part IV). Lastly, the consequences of these elaborations are drawn out, in a return to the fundamental questions of psychoanalysis, in relation to *sexuation*: love, sexuality—reinstated as traumatic for all—and the question of sexual and gendered identity (Part V).

The reception of Lacan's work in the English-speaking world often takes place outside the clinical environment that informed his thought. We hope that this volume will attest to the pertinence of Lacan's later teaching for the treatment of contemporary symptoms. These symptoms have 'scientific' names such as post-traumatic stress disorder, eating disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and so on. This proliferation of 'disorders' provides convenient name-tags under which the contemporary subject lodges his singular discontent, but they come at a price: the 'closing' of the very unconscious psychoanalysis seeks to keep open.

Lacan's work in the last period of his teaching is extremely important clinically. The foremost consequence of the later Lacan, in terms of analytic practice, is that it casts a new light on the differential clinic, in particular the neurosis/psychosis diagnosis. It is with the last phase of Lacan's teaching that the differential clinic, indexed on the Name-of-the-Father (repressed in neurosis, foreclosed in psychosis) begins to orient itself on the ground common to both structures. With a clinic indexed on

jouissance rather than on the signifier, different structures become different ways of treating jouissance, and of enjoying language. The analytic treatment must therefore take its bearings from the subject's position of jouissance rather than on repressed meaning.

A clinical orientation on jouissance as it is ciphered in the subject's discourse foregrounds singularity and so dignity. Subjects are not to be cured; they are neither deficient nor helpless victims of their family circumstances. We recall that Freud saw sexuality as the root cause of neurosis; but for Lacan it is the absence of sexual relation that differentiates the human subject from animals. Humans cannot behave instinctively; they need a symptom, or a construct, an invention of their own, to be inscribed in the social bond. Unlike cognitive-behavioral therapies, for the later Lacan the symptom is thus neither to be removed nor to be cured, for the symptom is a real invention of the subject that anchors him or her in language.

Psychoanalysis may not seek to remove the symptom, and so not be a 'therapy' in the usual sense, yet it has profoundly therapeutic effects. So in what way does psychoanalysis improve the life of a given subject? Following the later Lacan, the analyst takes his or her bearings from the fantasy rather than the meaning of the symptoms complained about by the analysand, and the therapeutic benefits proceed from a radical decrease in suffering, obtained not through an eradication of the symptom but through a reduction of the symptom to the *sinthome*. This reduction entails an isolation of—and separation from—the fantasy. This analytic strategy, driven by what Lacan was the first to recognize as the 'desire of the analyst', denotes an uncompromising belief in the possibility that the dignity of the subject can return in the separation from the fantasy. It is the fantasy that gives consistency to the Other, and a consistent Other commands alienation. Dignity, then, for the neurotic subject, is asserted in a process of separation from one's own investment in one's position of alienation.

Lacan's later teaching also foregrounds the dignity of the psychotic subject. For where an oedipal clinic as good as excluded psychosis from the realm of psychoanalysis (Freud thought that analysis was not suitable for psychotic subjects), Lacan's work in the last period of his teaching shows that, on the contrary, psychotic subjects have much to expect from the analytic treatment once it is understood that psychosis is not an irredeemable deficiency but rather another form of subjective organization. Of course the analytic process is different according to the structure of

the patient. First, transference to a subject supposed to know does not exist in psychosis, where the Other does not exist as such and the subject is stuck in the position of object. There can be transference in psychosis, but it will take the form of an imaginary identification, erotomania, persecution, and so on, and these transferential modalities require cautious handling. Second, interpretation cannot be used in the same way as with a neurotic subject. The analyst may seem too ‘knowing’ and produce a paranoid effect: “the analyst knows everything about me.” Third, while the neurotic subject needs to be disalienated *from* the signifier, the psychotic subject must find ways to treat his *jouissance with* the signifier. In short, the differential direction of the treatment is as follows: from the symbolic to the real of the symptom in neurosis, and from the real to the symbolic in psychosis. The later Lacan therefore provides an orientation for the analytic *treatment* of psychosis by means of the signifier, and with the support of the analyst.

Another fundamental advance of the later Lacan concerns the feminine clinic, which Lacan takes beyond the phallus and the *Penisneid* identified by Freud as a stumbling block in the clinic of women. In Seminar XXIII, Lacan proposes the concept of *ravage* as a counterpoint to that of *sinthome*: “if a woman is a *sinthome* for any man, it is absolutely clear that there is a need to find another name for what a man is for a woman, since the *sinthome* is precisely characterised by non-equivalence. We can say that a man is for a woman anything you like, namely an affliction worse than a *sinthome* . . . it is *ravage* itself.”¹⁰ The concepts of *ravage* and feminine *jouissance* pave the way for the elaboration of a true clinic of femininity, and the work of Marie-Hélène Brousse, here and elsewhere, is groundbreaking in this respect.

So the later Lacan provides us with the necessary tools to approach the contemporary psychoanalytic clinics of psychosis and *ravage*. But what of his teaching is applied most innovatively to cases of psychosis and the feminine clinic can also be of use for *every* subject in analysis: for if Lacan’s orientation on *jouissance* makes analysis impossible, it is also what makes it terminable.

This volume seeks to broaden the knowledge of the later Lacan in the English-speaking world, where the later teaching is often assimilated with, and reduced to, Lacan’s work on James Joyce and the *sinthome*. The texts collected in this volume make it clear that Lacan’s work on Joyce is inscribed in a much broader reformulation of analytic theory

and practice, and that contemporary psychoanalysis as a whole bears the mark of Lacan's later teaching.

The wealth of this orientation is apparent in clinical developments in 'Lacanian countries' (France, Spain, Italy, Argentina, etc.) where, beyond very interesting developments on the treatment of psychosis and the feminine clinic, there is also groundbreaking work on the "rapid therapeutic effects in psychoanalysis."¹¹ These rapid therapeutic effects are achieved using the psychoanalytic tools of transference and interpretation (in its redefined modalities); they do not assimilate psychoanalysis to the short therapies practiced under other auspices. On the contrary, short treatments in the Lacanian orientation bring to bear the insights derived from analytic technique and from long analyses on the treatment of subjects requiring punctual support. Structures in the Lacanian orientation are now in place—and more are being created—to receive people who have encountered a sudden trauma (as in the case of the Madrid clinic opened for the victims of the bombings of 11 March 2003) or who are facing a particularly tricky conjuncture requiring that they be accompanied for a 'cycle' of their life [as in the case of the *Centre psychanalytique de consultations et traitement* (CPCT) in Paris, which receives people for free for a duration of four months, renewable once].

Concurrently with these innovations, which incarnate analytic responses to today's symptoms, the psychoanalytic community is also busy defusing a number of threats to its continued existence. Indeed, contemporary modes of governmentality, fixated on the management of risk, fueled by the exigencies of managerialism, and operating within the sometimes surreal parameters of the evaluation-culture, foster the 'closing of the unconscious' through ready-made, pseudoscientific signifiers to name the discontents that are rife in our civilization.

Psychoanalysis, obviously at odds with the aims of governmentality, has recently been under attack in a number of countries. In France, for instance, the proponents of cognitive-behavioral therapies, newcomers in the field of mental health in that country, are actively seeking to marginalize psychoanalysis, which they argue is not 'evaluable' and so not scientific. In the afterword to this volume, Jacques-Alain Miller points to the violence of cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), contrasting it with the respect with which psychoanalysis approaches the subject. Psychoanalysis refutes the universalization of the discourse of science exactly because the latter forecloses singularity, and thus the dignity of

the subject. It stands against the dehumanization proposed by CBT, whose pernicious appeal lies in that it feeds fantasies of normalization.

These developments attest to the indissociability of the clinical and the political in psychoanalysis. But they also of course attest to the interpretative power of the psychoanalytic—and particularly the later Lacanian—framework, both in clinical practice and beyond it.

Notes

1. These concepts were introduced in the conference considered to have marked the beginning of Lacan's public teaching, "Le symbolique, l'imaginaire et le réel" (1953), in J. Lacan, *Des noms-du-père* (Paris: Seuil, 2005).
2. See *Reading Seminar I & II: Lacan's Return to Freud*, ed. R. Feldstein, B. Fink, and M. Jaanus (Albany: SUNY Press, 1996).
3. J. Lacan, *Le Séminaire livre X: L'angoisse* (Paris: Seuil 2004).
4. See *Reading Seminar XI: Lacan's Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, ed. R. Feldstein, B. Fink, and M. Jaanus (Albany: SUNY Press, 1995).
5. J. Lacan, Seminar XX, *Encore: On Feminine Sexuality 1972–1973*, trans. B. Fink (New York & London: Norton, 1998), p. 9.
6. See "Preface to the English-language edition" in *Seminar XI* (London and New York: Penguin, 1977), written in 1976 and in which Lacan refers to the unconscious as real: "the unconscious, I would say, is real," p. vii.
7. Seminar XX, op. cit., p. 55.
8. Ibid., pp. 118–119.
9. *L'orientation lacanienne* is J.-A. Miller's weekly seminar in Paris and is open to the public.
10. J. Lacan, *Le Séminaire XXIII: Le Sinthome* (Paris: Seuil 2005), p. 101.
11. *Effets thérapeutiques rapides en psychanalyse: La conversation de Barcelone* (Paris: Navarin, 2005).