



An Easy Handle on the Real

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The Real, like Lacan says in the Kanzer Seminar[1] about the real dream, is ineffable. But, nonetheless, we try to say something about it. Regarding dreams, Lacan noted that it is in the material of the narration itself that we are able to do something with the real. What is this something? I would argue that it is not interpretation, or at least not in any usual sense. Interpretation is an act oriented to Truth. And, with Truth, as a witness swears in an American court of law, it is “the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.” Interpretation is aimed at saying it all. But, as Lacan will note at the end of his teaching, the most truthful form of the truth is the lie.

So, what is it we do with the real? I argue that one clue to this can be found in *Seminar XXIII*. In the antepenultimate session, Lacan states, “I’ve been much preoccupied with Joyce of late, and I’m going to tell you why Joyce is so stimulating. Joyce is stimulating because he suggests, though it’s merely a suggestion, an easy way of presenting him. In view of which, and here indeed lies his worth and his weight, everybody has been hitting the wall with this [...] there must be a Joyce that is easy to handle.”[2] And, indeed, two sessions later, he gives us this “easy handle” on Joyce: cutting through all Joyce’s literary production, the long Ellman biography, and all the secondary literature, Lacan finds the easy handle on Joyce in the episode where he is beat up by his classmates as a child.[3] This seems different from an interpretation, and the choice of the word “handle” is significant, because it speaks to a way to manipulate Joyce, like the rings of string Lacan famously manipulated, or a way to “use” this episode, an important word now in our work on dreams.

We experience this in analysis and can hear about this in the testimonies of the Analysts of the School – these moments where something is said that is “useful,” that provides all of a sudden “an easy handle” for the analysand, a handle on the real, on something ineffable. Indeed, in *Seminar XXIV*, Lacan stated, “Anyway, if there’s one thing certain, . . . it’s that the real implies the exclusion of any meaning. It’s only insofar as the real is emptied of any meaning that we can apprehend it a little, which obviously leaves me to not even giving it the status of the One. But it is quite necessary to catch hold somewhere. . .”[4] I like this phrase “catch hold.” In the analytic experience, one can “catch hold” of the real. Like “easy handle,” this implies a way to approach the real and to use the analytic experience.

[1] Cf Lacan, Jacques, “Yale University, Kanzer Seminar” [November 24, 1975], published in French in *Scilicet* No. 6/7, 1975, pp. 7-31.

[2] Lacan, Jacques, *The Sinthome, The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XXIII*, Polity, Cambridge, 2016, p. 101.

[3] Cf *ibid.*, p. 128.

[4] Lacan, Jacques, « L’insu que sait de l’une-bévue s’aile à mourre », lesson of March 8, 1977, unpublished.

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