

PSYCHOANALYTICAL NOTEBOOKS

**A REVIEW OF THE LONDON SOCIETY OF THE NEW LACANIAN SCHOOL
No 19, LONDON, JULY 2009**

Ordinary Psychosis

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Editorial

'Ordinary Psychosis' was "A Powerful Attractor Of Meaning", Jacques-Alain Miller says in his talk included in this issue. 'Ordinary Psychosis' has indeed become a very productive signifier. Discussing this clinical invention in the English speaking world is so pertinent to its culture, it amounts to a real oversight that the original 'Convention D'Antibes' is not yet available in English.

The clinical questions, of whether 'Ordinary Psychosis' sits on the dividing line between psychosis and neurosis - whether these two discrete structures are becoming less defined, more changeable, less dependable ways of approaching the clinic, whether a fluid clinic without a clear division of the structural binary is in danger of blunting the precision that Lacanian psychoanalysis stands for, and, indeed, whether this is a development in our 'culture', in the analysands and thus a response to an evolved world, or an occurrence born out of a better understanding of what has always been the case - these questions, and others are all answered, and then newly opened up again, in the elaborations of the 24 texts in this issue.

The Paris-English-Seminar of July 2008 was a great success. The programme, exhilarating, intense, dense and gruelling all at the same time, spread over six days from morning into late at night, with a hundred people attending from many parts of the world. The intention was to invite an anglophone public, traditionally more familiar with a 'cultural' reading of Lacan, to the centre of the clinical Lacan, to discuss this very culture that affects us and affects our bodies and produces the symptoms we suffer and delight in.

The real phenomenon underlying the work of the Paris-English-Seminar and all its precedents is however, the wealth of 'scientific evidence' that Lacanian analysts are producing one by one, be it in French, Spanish or even in English, which this special issue of the Psychoanalytical Notebooks hopes to bring to the anglophone world.

ORDINARY INTERPRETATION

Éric Laurent

First of all, I'd like to thank the organisers of this bizarre seminar that you have created in Paris – Marie-Hélène Brousse, Jean-Pierre Klotz and Thomas Svolos. They have managed to maintain this pleasant atmosphere, one of the characteristics of this grouping, along with the peculiar audience that you have formed.

According to the programme, I am supposed to draw some conclusions from the seminar. However, I think that the very form of the seminar absolutely forbids us drawing any conclusions. This seems to me to be a contradiction in terms, we can only add to the broadening out of some perspectives, due to the meaning of this signifier 'ordinary psychosis' that we have developed throughout this week. Most of you will have been convinced that there is an interest in broadening out the uses of the word 'psychosis' which this research programme that we call 'ordinary psychosis' is allowing for.

So I do not want to draw any conclusions but rather to think aloud with you on the consequences that appear once we admit this broadening out of the uses of psychosis and especially on the point of interpretation. Because, as Jacques-Alain said, it is one thing to orient ourselves on the neurosis/psychosis binary clinic, and quite another to think within the perspective of 'generalised' psychosis. By staying within the framework of the Name-of-the-Father, interpretation was done in his name. If we pass 'beyond the Oedipus', how does the question of interpretation order itself?

The first way of understanding interpretation in the name of the Father is that, in this framework, you can have Oedipal significations, conflicts and so forth. The main thing is, there is a limit. You can count on the phallic value of jouissance to interpret the most obscure objectal values of jouissance, which always escape signifiers.

CONCLUSION

But within the field of psychosis and its extensions, how do you interpret if you do not have the Name-of-the-Father to count on to stabilise significations?

In the Lacanian orientation, interpretation is situated within the tension created between two dimensions of its use. On one hand, it is the analyst's freest activity.¹ On the other hand, it has strict rules.² These two aspects of the relationship of interpretation and norms may come together in a proposition that would have it that interpretation is without standards, but not without principles. This principle runs: there is no metalanguage.

It is not that there is one level that would be an object language – the material – and the level of interpretation that would be a distinct level and would be applied to the segment of 'material'. All kinds of forms of this application could be envisaged. It could be a long segment of 'material' and a short interpretation, or else an interpretation as extensive as the 'material'. Whichever, in a conception of this type, the two levels are neatly distinguished. This conception of interpretation applied to an object language is the most widespread in the psychoanalytic orientations.

We have an example of this in the last book published by Heinz Kohut, *How Does Psychoanalysis Cure?*³ In the sixth chapter, Kohut contrasts the Kleinian conception of psychoanalysis, especially in its Argentinean variant, with his own theory of the *self*. He wanted to contrast two ways of wording an interpretation, either in Kleinian language, or in the language of self-psychology. This chapter responds to Robert Wallerstein's attempt to found the eclecticism of the IPA – what he called the different languages of interpretation – at the 1987 Montreal IPA Congress, by considering them as metaphors of one same clinical referent.

¹ Lacan, J., 'The Direction of the Treatment and the Principles of Its Power', in *Écrits*, Norton & Norton, New York, 2006, p. 491.

² *Ibid.*, p. 497.

³ Kohut, H., *How Does Psychoanalysis Cure?*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1984.

The main task of a president of the IPA is always the same: it is to propose a common hope to communities of practitioners who speak about psychoanalysis in utterly distinct ways. Wallerstein spoke about 'common ground', Kernberg thought of the unity in terms of counter transference, Widlöcher in terms of empathy, and Eizirik, who has just ended his presidency, did it with neuroscience. The task of the president of such a fragmented body is always to propose a dream of unity.

This term 'metaphor' to describe a practice of interpretation stems from the appropriation of the Lacan's work by East Coast psychoanalysis in the seventies. The vehicle for psychoanalysis was the *Psychoanalytic Quarterly* journal. It is a fairly simplistic epistemological model which starts out from a guaranteed but still accessible reference point: the common ground of clinical theory. Metaphor means that there is a signifier, which gets translated into different languages, all of which refer back to the same point.

This is what Horacio Etchegoyen would respond to in 1991, considering this position to be a dangerous one.⁴ For him, a true interpretation is not a metaphor that refers back to a clinical theory. For him, a true interpretation refers to a real. In his words, it has to account for the psychical reality which is at that moment in the analysand's unconscious.

It is a proposition of the kind: 'Sentence *P* is true if and only if *P* is true.' Etchegoyen holds that the interpretation is true if and only if it describes exactly what exists in the subject's head at the moment the interpretation is made. This is the whole problem of a theory of truth that affirms the correspondence between the unconscious ego and reality. It amounts to constructing an agency as the locus of what establishes equivalence between drive and signifier without any leftover. Saying that there is a locus where someone has something in their head amounts to being opposed to the statement that the drive is acephalic. This conception of a psychic reality as a locus where one could draw up an inventory of

⁴ Etchegoyen, H., 'Psychoanalysis During the Last Decade: Clinical and Theoretical Aspects' in *Psychoanalytic Inquiry*, Vol. 11, Issue 1, 1991, pp. 88-106.

what it contains implies a topology separating inside from outside by way of a strict limit. It is at odds with the Lacanian topology of the subject and the Other governed by *extimacy*.

In the sixth chapter of his book, Kohut recounted the following sequence which he had come to hear about in supervision from an analyst whom he presents as a South American of Kleinian orientation: 'this analyst 'informs her patient at the end of a session that she will have to cancel an hour in the near future. The following day the patient was silent and withdrawn, without answering the analyst's invitation to speak. The analyst then promptly said that the announcement she had made the previous session has changed her from a good breast to a bad breast, and added that since then the patient was consumed with intense anger, she had wanted to destroy that bad breast by biting it, which has brought about an oral inhibition in her speech.'

Kohut thinks that it might have been better to cast things in the terms of self-psychology, or even ego-psychology. In ego-psychology one does not go straight to the object but via the Oedipal conflict. One therefore says to the patient: 'You felt yesterday's announcement in the same way as when your mother used to close her bedroom door in order to sleep with your father.' Here is the Oedipal conflict: the patient is mad with rage to see that her mum is interested in something other than her.

In the terms that self-psychology employs in the case of narcissistic personalities, or what we would call ordinary psychoses, things ought to have been worded in terms of interpretation focused on the self, by speaking about self-esteem. In Kohut's theory, the self-esteem of the narcissistic analysand cannot tolerate conflict because, strictly speaking, he has not developed an Oedipal conflict. Therefore it should be worded as: 'Your self love was undermined by yesterday's announcement, in the same way as when your cold and withdrawn mother suddenly turned off the friendly cook who allowed you to help in the kitchen and praised your work'.

The analyst who relates the Kleinian interpretation, the one focusing on the object, notes that after the interpretation the patient calmed down.

She started speaking more freely and realised realised her jaw muscles had been taut since the previous session. Kohut gives the following commentary: regardless of the positive effect of the interpretation, the gap between the message, which was right, and the theory, which was defective, needs to be noted.

For him the essential message was: 'You're profoundly disturbed by the fact that one of your sessions has been cancelled. I acknowledge this, you're perfectly right to be.' Kohut's theory – its fundamental message – is empathy; welcoming the other. Psychoanalysis cures with the mother's smile. It is this fundamental *yes* that Kohut considers to be the essential element of the psychoanalytic operation.

Etchegoyen strikes back at Kohut's propositions. He keeps Kohut's contrast between the theory and the wording, but he turns it on its head. The theory was right, the theory of good and bad breast, but the analyst's wording was not correct, for several reasons. The first rule of interpretation according to him is to stick strictly to the patient's words. Therefore the cancelled session should not be mentioned because it had not been mentioned by the patient. She should have simply put some words on the silence: 'Something's disturbing you and you're unable to express it.' And then, 'if she had said she was keeping quiet because since the previous session her jaw muscles had been taut, and if she had added a few biting words about the analyst, then there would have been a verification.' The fact that the jaw was mentioned shows that the oral object is present in psychic reality. The proof is the proof given by subjects calming down. Only then could one say: 'You felt the previous day's announcement as though the breast had been withdrawn, and you reacted to this with fear and with a wish to bite it by pressing your teeth together and by means of words which also bite.'

Etchegoyen goes on: 'Had the analysand said that while she was silent she had been thinking about an unpleasant incident that had taken place the night before with her five-year old daughter; that the latter had wanted to stay in her parents' room instead of going to sleep on her own; and finally that the patient had become annoyed, and taken her to bed by force, and had added that she was already nervous because on leaving her session

she had argued with a taxi driver who did not want to give her change, I would not have hesitated to say that through her anger with her daughter, she informing me about her own reaction to yesterday's announcement that I would have to cancel a session. First she got angry with the taxi driver because he would not give her something and then through her daughter she expressed her own infantile reaction: she felt that I was her mother violently ejecting her from her bedroom in order to sleep with her father'. Lastly: 'If the analysand had told me a dream reproducing that traumatic infantile situation in which her mother dismissed the good-natured cook', I would have said: 'indeed, it was like your mother...'

But Etchegoyen adds: 'I would never have had the nerve to say "your cold, distant mother" because an interpretation must focus on the subject, and never on the people around the subject. Over this my discrepancy with Kohut is most definite.' This type of disagreement evokes the quarrels that the psychoanalytic movement is shot through with. Should one see the parents of a child or not, should one see people from the subject's entourage? It seems hard to put forward universal propositions, positive or negative, on what ought to be done. There will always be cases that raise objections to these prescriptions. Here we can see the advantage of the indication Lacan gives us when he says that interpretation must bear only on the object and the mode of jouissance. This may entail bringing people from the subject's entourage into play.

Let's get back to Etchegoyen. According to him the problem is not one of discussing the profundity or efficacy of these interpretations but of knowing whether or not one thinks they really refer to something, to a state of mind, that is formulated in the patient's psychical reality. When he formulates an interpretation: 'the analytic work establishes conditions of truth in the psychic reality [...] At that moment, the interpretation ceases to be a figure of speech and takes on a precise, isomorphic meaning with what is happening in the mind of the recipient.' Everything is laid out in this last little sentence. Firstly, 'the truth tables are brought into a reality.' Then, in using the terms 'isomorphic' and 'conditions of truth', Etchegoyen safeguards a denotative theory of truth. This conception therefore enables Horacio Etchegoyen to go even as far as a sort of logical positivism of interpretation. Indeed, at one point, interpretation has an

isolable signification and aims at a guaranteed correspondence. Lacan would say in a wider epistemological framework that the analyst 'adds his logic' to the unconscious discourse of the analysand.

The disagreement bears on the fact that, with a theory that there is equivalence between interpretation and what 'really' happens in one's head, when the drive is aimed at, one comes across the very aporias that Lacan exposed in 'The Direction of the Treatment...'. Interpretation is not an isomorphism, it 'hints'. What has to be hinted at is determined by the direction of the treatment. Interpretation is creationist, it determines what the analysand has to be made to hear. In the case of the fresh brains man, he should have been made to hear 'that he steals nothing'⁵.

Back in 'The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis'⁶, Lacan situated interpretation far away from a metalanguage. It is a dimension of speech in which speech and language are knotted together in a special way. Based on the foregrounding of 'the instance of the letter', and to the detriment of the function of speech, Lacan reformulates his fundamental thesis in the form: 'desire is its interpretation'. This formulation is opposed to the definition of an unconscious desire that defines the level of an object language, and is opposed too to the interpretation of that unconscious desire as the language that would decipher it by overhanging it. Saying that 'desire is its interpretation' amounts to making the two levels coincide. Unconscious desire can no longer be separated from the level of interpretation. It also amounts to saying that the deployed interpretation is supported by a desire, on occasion by the psychoanalyst's desire to interpret.

Another way of reformulating the principle of interpretation is to say that interpretation is a punctuation. This is a fact that Jacques-Alain Miller has brought out forcefully. The punctuation is placed at the very level of the unconscious structured like a language. Punctuation makes for

⁵ Lacan, J., 'The Direction of the Treatment...' *Op. Cit.*, p. 502.

⁶ Lacan, J., 'The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis' in *Écrits*, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 197-268.

interpretation because it is situated at the same level as unconscious discourse. The unconscious is a language with punctuations. Back when he was the media darling with his *The Name of the Rose*, someone asked Umberto Eco: 'Who are you in the novel?' He replied: 'I'm the semi-colon'. Giving oneself the place of the one who punctuates, giving oneself the place of punctuation itself, is a very Lacanian response. It is an interpretation-punctuation formulated in a gulf.

Jacques-Alain Miller formulates this in a striking fashion by saying that the analyst is the editor of the analysand's text. It is a further reformulation of Lacan's thesis that appears in *Seminar XI*: 'The analyst is part of the concept of the unconscious'⁷. It is structured in the same way. There is no unconscious without its punctuation, without its editor, without the one who makes it appear. The unconscious is not a thing that is already there. It appears in the course of the very practice of the psychoanalysis that allows for the emergence of this unconscious, inseparable from its level called interpretative. That is why the structure of the subject is that of a Moebius strip and not that of a distinction between two levels that could be articulated by the principle of a one-to-one mapping.

This structure, 'There is No Metalanguage', is crucial in the question of the locus of the Other. The Other is a locus with very strange properties. In 'The Direction of the Treatment' Lacan says: 'In order to decipher the diachrony of unconscious repetitions, interpretation must introduce into the synchrony of signifiers that come together there something that suddenly makes translation possible – this is precisely what is allowed by the function of the Other in the possession of the code, it being in relation to that Other that the missing element appears.'⁸

The locus of the Other is a magical place. It is always possible for a new element to emerge even though it is not there. It is a locus where this is inscribed in such a fashion that, based on the synchrony of signifying

⁷ Cf. Lacan, J.; 'Presence of the Analyst' in *The Seminar Book XI, The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, Penguin, 1977, pp. 123-135.

⁸ Lacan, J.; 'The Direction of the Treatment...', *Op. Cit.*, pp 495-6.

elements, it is always possible to make another one emerge which, from that point on, will make the translation of the sequence possible. Freud spoke about the magic writing pad, the little children's slates where a text is erased and yet remains inscribed, to note the relations between consciousness and the unconscious. Lacan has furnished the Other with a more complex topology. Indeed, it is a magical place because it has the structure of a Moebius strip. Starting on the opposite side it is always possible for another signifier to emerge and for it to render the chain translatable. Situating interpretation as translation is both very Freudian – in Letter 52 to Fliess, Freud speaks of discreet elements that undergo translation from epoch to epoch – and very radical. It is a subversion of interpretation as a supplementary language. From thereon the subject can recognise what used to be alien to him as being part of him. It is a sort of translation of the subject into the text that is concerned, and not a translation of a message from one language into another. Moreover, Lacan was particularly interested in the elements that mark the place of the subject of enunciation in the text, at a time when the linguistics of enunciation was drawing attention to this question. For example, he was interested in those words scattered in a language that do not mean anything but which signal enunciation. Some grammarians consider that between '*Je crains qu'il ne vienne*' and '*Je crains qu'il vienne*' there is no difference at the level of meaning.⁹ Lacan, on the contrary, considers with the grammarians Damourette and Pichon that the expletive '*ne*', which can be done away with, which can always be added to a verbal group expressing a wish or necessity, is the translation of the subject structured as being able to be added, or not, to a message. The subject is a locus as magical as the locus of the Other. It can be added to a sentence without changing its meaning and, nevertheless, changing it entirely. This structure is that of Russell's set.

Jacques-Alain Miller chose to highlight this structure by affirming the thesis: 'The unconscious interprets', and not the analyst. The unconscious interprets, and especially so in psychosis, since psychosis

⁹ Cf. Lacan, J., *Le Séminaire, livre VI, Le désir et son interprétation*, 'lesson of 10 December 1958' (unpublished), & 'Remarks on Daniel Lagache's Presentation' in *Écrits, Op. Cit.*, pp. 555-6.

more than neurosis highlights the structure of the locus of the Other. The locus of the Other presents itself first of all with this property of a Russellian set, namely that a supplementary element can always be added to the set of this locus where inclusion and exclusion are knotted in such a particular way. In Lacan's teaching, the Other is first of all furnished with the paternal metaphor which qualifies what belongs to the register of neurosis. The paternal metaphor, the Name-of-the-Father, then comes to guarantee the consistence of signification in the Other. The father is first of all the one who introduces the limit, the one who supports the place of 'It's like that because that's how it is'. If one approaches the structure of the Other from the point of view of neurosis, one does not see how much interpretation is made in the Name-of-the-Father. The Name-of-the-Father allows for there to be a limit point with S_1 being complemented by S_2 and for things to be arranged in such a way that speech is brought to a halt thanks to this function. There is a silence included in the language which means that the unconscious text is able to find a breathing space that allows the subject, as president Schreber put it, 'not to think about anything', to be able to breathe. This means being able to act without being permanently bothered by 'thought', by invasive hallucinatory formulations.

It was not by chance that in these reflections on psychoanalysis the question posed by Wittgenstein to Freud bore on the stopping point. It was not by chance that Wittgenstein, who was psychotic, who absolutely did not believe in the father, undertook his entire oeuvre to find out where to stop. Next, Lacan structured the question of interpretation ever more on the basis of psychosis, especially from the moment he pluralised the Names-of-the-Father. What Jacques-Alain Miller has called the second metaphor in Lacan consists in jouissance being taken charge of by the Other. It is language itself that significantises jouissance by transforming it into odds and ends of jouissance, such as the object *a*, an element of jouissance which nevertheless behaves like a letter. It can link into a chain, it can enter a series, it can be substitutable, and it can be in the place of cause.

Thus our question becomes: how can one come to a halt if it is in language itself that the significantisation of jouissance is taken charge of?

What Interpretation Is Involved?

If one speaks of interpretation in psychosis, it is indeed the case that the psychotic subject always precedes us. He interprets in an original way. He believes in his interpretation. He is ready to impose it on the world. He passes through the experience of imposed words [*paroles imposées*] which are the interpretations that impose themselves upon him. To interpret psychosis is to recognise the 'out in the open' unconscious¹⁰ as an interpretative device, as a piece of permanent work where the unconscious translates itself over and over. Therefore, in order not to be carried along in the delusional movement, it is a matter of focusing the subject back onto the elementary phenomena, the isolated master signifiers (S_1) that impose themselves on the psychotic subject. He vouches for a flesh to which phenomena of jouissance occur, and for the incessant work of this production, whether this jouissance comes from his own body in the schizophrenic, or whether this jouissance is the bad jouissance of the Other, which is the paranoiac's supposition. This incessant work has points of homeostasis – stopping points and points of suspension. Even in the most florid interpretative psychoses, in what Lacan called the stabilisation of the delusional metaphor there is a moment when the subject finds moments of calm, moments of appeasement, after the moments of interpretative work, the moments of exhausting productive work.

In the stabilisation of the metaphor, the signifier and the signified (in the first formulation of the metaphor), jouissance and the Other (in the second formulation of this metaphor) find a way to hold together, the object *a* finding a place. It is in lending an ear to psychosis itself that we find the elements that now make for the stake of Lacan's second clinic. It is a matter of seeking out how signifier and jouissance can hold together in the non-standard variants that the different psychoses present. During the *Conversation d'Arcachon*, Jacques-Alain Miller remarked that 'the metaphor as structure can seize and put into function classical elements [...] but it can also seize non-standard elements, the rare and purely individual elements. The Name-of-the-Father is a standard in our civilisation. But the

¹⁰ Lacan, J.; *The Seminar, Book III, The Psychoses*, Routledge, London 1993, p. 59.

metaphor can very well articulate elements that only belong to one subject.¹¹ We can find these elements, for example, in Joyce who wants to become the re-founder of a language, the artificer of the production of a language. One can find in these singular elements the most varied elements: for the subject it is a kind of factory through which a highly non-typical, very particular element is put into the function of the Name-of-the-Father. We can push it to the point where a noun that elsewhere is a common noun is put, for the subject, in the position of a proper name. As Lacan says in 'Subversion of the Subject...', a proper name is an extraordinary signifier where the signifier and the signified balance out and become stabilised.¹² The proper name is a successful delusional metaphor since the proper name has extraordinary properties in language: it does not translate itself any more. In this sense, the operation of the proper name is of the order of a successful metaphor. It holds in place; it conjoins in such a way that translation can come to a halt. You do not translate any further. That's it, it's named it. It is likewise the structure of the elementary phenomenon.

In psychosis we have to accomplish a double movement. On the one hand, we accompany the taking charge of jouissance by language, the interpretative work, the production in the locus of the Other of the psychotic's work. This does not happen without us, we who are the bearers of the analytic discourse. The analytic discourse conveys with it the locus of the Other. It installs it and gives it its function. Through the installation of the locus of the Other we authorise the place that can enable translation. The work of translation continues but, at the same time, we must know that what we are seeking to obtain is a stabilisation, a homeostasis, a punctuation. A contrast has been drawn that is too strict, even caricatural, between the idea that you make the neurotic speak and you make the psychotic shut up. It is a caricatural contrast because it is not about making anyone shut up. It is about stabilising, it is about aiming at the possibility of a cut being introduced, the possibility of language no longer being compacted, holophrased, the possibility of there not being

¹¹ IRMA, *La Conversation d'Arcachon, Cas rares : Les inclassables de la clinique*, Agalma/Seuil, 2005, p. 281.

¹² Lacan, J.; 'The Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire', in *Écrits*, Op. Cit., p. 694.

simply a series of signifiers $S_1, S_2, S_n...$ without the commas. It is about obtaining the possibility of commas. Therefore, we make these commas in the session. We target the sinthome. 'A practice that targets the sinthome in the subject does not interpret like the unconscious. To interpret like the unconscious is to remain in the service of the pleasure principle.'¹³

Targeting the sinthome amounts to underlining, coming back to the signifiers, isolating them, separating them from the chain, giving them their place, operating their disengagement with regard to the signifying chain. Let's imagine a fictitious dialogue with President Schreber. We would say to him: 'You said bellowing, bellowing miracle? Tell me more about that. What is this bellowing miracle?' You target the signifier 'bellowing', you wrest it from the series and you ask him to focus on the bellowing miracle. It is not about reviving the $S_1 \rightarrow S_2$ chain, but rather about focusing on the body-event that the 'bellowing miracle' represents. The subject is invited to say in his own particular way how he defends himself against the miracle by way of a particular invention. President Schreber would then have spoken to us about his use of the piano. We therefore focus the interpretation on the ordered pair (S_1, a).

The taking charge of jouissance by language meets with a particular use with the subject who cannot content himself with common solutions, who cannot rely on public language and standard procedures to stabilise significations. The effort can take on various forms, as in 'The Case of Armand' presented by Maria J. Lopez,¹⁴ in which, she tells us, there is no clear delusion, but in which all his activity is delusional. He does not have hallucinations, but he is in search of a very particular sound seeking out all kinds of musical instruments. For him, language is accompanied by vibrations, the sound of the Other, which presents itself to him through his musical instruments. In the end, he finds his fundamental language with Gaelic, the original language that King Arthur is supposed to have spoken.

¹³ Miller, J.-A.; 'Interpretation in Reverse' in *The Later Lacan: An Introduction*, ed. V. Voruz and B. Wolf, Suny Press, New York, 2007, p. 6. [Republished in *The Bulletin of the NLS* Issue 4, 2008.]

¹⁴ Lopez, M., 'The Case of Armand', in this volume.

We meet another kind of effort in the case presented by Tom Svolos,¹⁵ in which the stabilisation of the patient's psychotic anxiety is achieved through a megalomaniac identification with Abraham Lincoln. 'You can live when you are tormented, it's possible, you can still be a great man.' It is a way of fixing the subject, of countering his dispersion in language. It is a matter of using the property of the cut, of introducing him to the silence of the letter: 'We don't need to go any further, we've made it.'

This can also be the case with a psychotic child who has three elements: a tumbler, some water and hitting himself. You take one element in the series, the tumbler. You pick it up, bring it over near the water, fill it up, empty it, and then watch it being filled and emptied out over and over, and afterwards you bring in a second tumbler, and a third one and put them into each other. Starting with isolated signifiers, you construct a series. The method is the same: you extract an element that is part of the chain of the child's jouissance. It could be his distraught look in front of the window. In this case, you pass something between the window and him, you try to extract the gaze, to bring the gaze into function.

The punctuation consists in obtaining something like an appeasement. The most implausible and the most inventive constructions made by psychotic subjects hold up through equilibriums where the body is involved. This is what you try to obtain in various ways.

In the interpretation of psychosis we do not let ourselves be led by a mad speech in the name of the fact that 'delusion is a road to recovery'. You do not leave a subject in his delusion until he is exhausted, whether it be that of a maniac or of a paranoiac. We know that naming, giving a name, can consist in striking the other. The 'thou art that' is a form of naming. Lacan emphasised a great deal how much the 'thou art', the *tu es* is at the same time a killing, a *tuer*. This homophony refers to the signifier as murder of the thing through the name that designates it, whether it is present or absent, alive or dead. The hetero-aggressive or auto-aggressive

¹⁵ Svolos, T., 'A-Topos Rex', in this volume.

passage à l'acte is also a way of giving a name. We make use of the signifying elements that the subject gives us. It is a matter of what he says, but also of the signifying elements of his conduct, his *acting out*. These are a host of elements that allow us to be guided in the dialogue with the subject on what speaking means. We aim at the effect of silence, of pause, of stabilisation on the horizon. This is what it means that on some occasions with psychotic subjects the session is a moment of pause, of silence, of not thinking about anything.

One colleague described a mode of limit session with a psychotic subject who does not say anything to him in the session. He sits down and does not say anything. After a while the analyst walks him to the door in a very ceremonial fashion. And the subject says: 'Well, that was a good session today'. This is an example of an extreme kind, it is a passage on the limits. This subject is taken up in an important production of work, but during the session there is a moment when he does not think about anything, a moment when he does not say anything, and for him this is what introduces the function of pause. It is his moment in the day for not thinking about anything, alongside a master signifier. This very strange device gives us the idea that Lacanian interpretation has to aim at silence and has to include silence. When Jacques-Alain Miller's article on interpretation was published in a collection in Argentina, he entitled the collection *Entonces sssh !*¹⁶. This is also what the following sentence tells us: 'The silence that follows a Mozart symphony belongs to Mozart'. The silence has to belong to the interpretation. An interpretation has to include its silence or its enigma. Interpretative equivocation does not mean that it is a question of an interpretation where nothing is understood, an interpretation open to all kinds of meaning, as Lacan said. Equivocation does not mean that all meanings are possible. Equivocation means that the play on meaning is sufficient for there to be some silence, for the signifier to be able to be decomposed, to be broken, for there to be neither an endless concatenation nor a frozen signification.

This is why when a psychotic subject comes to see us we lend an ear to the psychosis in order to learn from him the non-standard elements that

¹⁶ Miller, J.-A., 'La interpretación al revés' in *Entonces Sssh!* Eolia, Barcelona/Buenos Aires, 1996.

he is making function as stopping points. When listening to him, we ask ourselves what constitutes a quilting point for him. We have to learn from the psychotic subject how he succeeds in not thinking about anything, how he succeeds in introducing silence, and we have to be able to know how we can help him to introduce the cut and how to handle it. To cut into the signifying flow is to manage to make it hold together, to obtain the 'that's it'. Thus, for us it amounts to moving closer to the structure of the signifier all on its own. 'The unary signifier, which as such is nonsensical, means that the elementary phenomenon is primordial. The reverse of interpretation consists in circumscribing the signifier as the elementary phenomenon of the subject, and as it was before it was articulated in the formation of the unconscious that gives it the sense of delusion.'¹⁷

The trait has to be found via which one gets closer to separation, the point of separation has to be targeted. How can one help the subject to be able to separate? This can be, for example, by choosing silence, by authorising him to choose silence. As we have seen, this can be the use of oneself, by taking a very directive position, for example when the subject is perplexed or on the verge of depersonalisation. Then it is necessary to emphasise, to settle the possible meaning of a word or an expression. In each case we have to invent what has to lead to interpretation as a separation from the Other.

Already in *Entonces sssh!*, interpretation, as a cut that produces perplexity, is distinguished from punctuation, which is on the side of the Name-of-the-Father. 'The question is not to know whether the session is long or short, silent or wordy. Either the session is a semantic unity, in which S₂ comes to punctuate the elaboration – delusion in the Name-of-the-Father (as many sessions are) – or the analytic session is an asemanic unit returning the subject to the opacity of his jouissance. This implies that it be cut before it can loop back upon itself.'¹⁸

¹⁷ Miller, J.-A., 'Interpretation in Reverse' *Op. Cit.*, p. 7.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

Beyond a strict distribution between punctuation-neurosis and cut-psychosis, let's say that the interpretation-cut is an interpretation compatible with Lacan's second clinic which allows it to encompass the first one. The discourse of the analyst is this operation of cutting the unconscious. It aims to produce it.

The place of the analyst is thus defined as being part of the concept of the unconscious. In his interrogation of the analytic act, Lacan remarks that the true originality of the analytic method is not to have produced a new classification but to ascertain that the analyst is already there in the history of the subject. 'When the analyst wonders about a case, when he writes up an anamnesis, when he prepares it, when he starts tackling it and once he goes into it with analysis... he, the analyst, was already there at any such point of the history of the subject... There is something that was already there.'¹⁹ This means that the marks by which the subject took hold of common language to transcribe his ever-particular, even singular experiences, were already there for the subject in the Other. These marks have always been there, inscribed in a series of phenomena that range from elementary phenomenon to erogenous fixation, trauma, and the quasi-neologistic use of everyday words. You always find this particular trace of a use that has never been thought of by anybody before. Through the analytic discourse, it becomes possible to work these elements in. Interpretation, from this perspective, is making use of those elements that were already there and to help oneself to the particularities of what is always a fault in the Other and its failure to take charge of the field of jouissance as such. These failures will be our point of departure and our horizon. To paraphrase Beckett, they will enable us to fail better.

Transcribed by Victoria Woollard. Text and footnotes established by Adrian Price with reference to the French translation in Quarto Issue 94/95.

¹⁹ Lacan, J., *Le séminaire XV, L'acte psychanalytique*, (lesson of 27 March 1968), unpublished.