

## **The Real and the Cut**

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Approached from a distance, the first thing that people tend to notice about Lacanian psychoanalysis is the cut. It is the first thing that people talk about when they don't know very much about it. It mesmerises and intrigues, it produces some frisson, some excitement. It scandalises, too. It is an innovation in psychoanalytic practice to be sure, and definitively Lacanian. It causes a commotion.

Lacan began experimenting with variable length sessions early in his work, and this contributed to the distinctiveness of his contribution to Psychoanalysis, and precipitated him, in a certain way, into what we now can call 'Lacan's Teaching' and even 'the first Lacan' – his seminars that we call *Seminar I* to *Seminar X*. He had found his experiments productive, and he includes a reference to this in the famous paper that we often call the "Rome Discourse," delivered at the Rome Congress held at the institute of Psychology at the University of Rome on 26 and 27 September 1953. Frisson was already noticeable around him, and the paper opens with a reference to the "serious disagreements" that "led to a secession with the French group." "The team that succeeded in imposing its statutes and program on the new institute was then heard to proclaim that it would prevent the person who, along with others, had tried to introduce a different conception of analysis from speaking in Rome, and it employed every means in its power to do so." (The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis, *Écrits*, 197) And this person? Yes, of course. Who else, but Lacan. The attempt to exclude him in 1953 did not work but precipitated 'Lacan's teaching.' After ten years of this teaching a second manoeuvre to cut off his speech was attempted, and this time the organisational forces were successful in 'excommunicating' Lacan, as he put it. This in turn precipitated what we call "the second Lacan", which begins with *Seminar XI*, the first seminar to be translated into English in 1977 (by the Hogarth Press, London). The variable length sessions became the marker which 'explained' the attempts to cut Lacan out of psychoanalysis. Each cut produced a revolutionary response, the energy produced was used to create something new – a new way of practising and formulating psychoanalysis.

In July 1953, a few months before he gave his Rome Discourse, Lacan spoke on "The Symbolic, Imaginary, and the Real" and gave "the first thematic presentation of the famous

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triad that undergirded all of Lacan's work for the next three decades and that went on to become its essential object..." (Miller's Foreword, *On the Names-of-the-Father*, vi). This talk was given immediately before he wrote "The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis." He cut up the field with three little words that have allowed psychoanalysis to leap forward into a new era of clarity and productivity. Signifiers can make a cut. You can read the two short texts that bracket the 'first Lacan' in the little book recently published by Polity, *On the Names-of-the-Father* (Lacan 2013).

But let's return to the session and the cut. Towards the end of "Function and Field ..." (*Écrits* 2006), Lacan reports that he found that he "was able to bring to light in a certain male subject fantasies of anal pregnancy, as well as a dream of its resolution by Caesarean section, in a time frame in which I would normally still have been listening to his speculations on Dostoyevsky's artistry" (*Écrits*, 259). In these very few lines, Lacan manages to evoke the interminable talk of the obsessional, lost in his diatribe on literature, and to expose an aspect of his practice of variable length sessions, without really using very many words. But by cutting that analysand's speech and closing the session he was able to make a real cut for the analysand, which precipitated the reportable result and brought the analysand back to the unconscious dimension of his own speech.

A few years later, in "The Direction of the Treatment and the Principles of its Power" (a paper given at the Royaumont Colloquium held in July 1958), Lacan will say that "As an interpreter of what is presented to me in words or deeds, I choose my own oracle and articulate it as I please, sole master of my ship after God; and while, of course, I am far from able to weigh the whole effect of my words, I am well aware of the fact and strive to attend to it. In other words, *I am always free in the timing and frequency, as well as in the choice of my interventions, so much so that it seems that the rule has been entirely designed so as not to interfere in any way with my activity as an executor* – to which corresponds the aspect of "materials," which is how my action here takes up what it produces" (p. 491, emphasis added). The lesson is that so long as the policy is set in the direction of Freud's discovery of the unconscious, and within the limits laid down by the transference of the analysand, the analyst is free to invent whatever she thinks will work to cross the gap in speech between the statement, and the utterance.

In a recent text by Bernard Burgoyne, where he refines Lacan's work into seven "research programmes," (see "The Changing Forms of a Research Programme" in *The Lacan Tradition*), he draws attention to a brief exchange at the end of *Seminar I*. It is during a question

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and answer session dated 7 July 1954, and I shall paraphrase here as follows: Psychoanalysis is a dialectic, an art of conferring, and the art of conferring is to teach the analysand to give his own speech its true meaning (cf. *Seminar 1*, 278). The ‘true meaning’ of speech is something that needs exploring. I find this a pithy phrase to summarise the overall policy of psychoanalytical work.

First of all, we can understand ‘the true meaning of speech’ as ‘the unconscious meaning’ that lies behind what you said. It is the ‘you said this, but you really meant that’ that can be characterised in a classical interpretation. You said it wasn’t your mother, but that means that it really is your mother. You are talking about the political battles between Russia and the USA, but you are using the same phrases as the ones you used to describe the fight between two other superpowers, your mother and father.

A second way to understand the ‘true meaning of speech’ could be to refer to the fact that speech itself is what matters. It is not what you speak about that makes you suffer, but the speech itself. Or, if you say something knowingly, consciously, but in a way that suggests it’s only words the analyst can act to give weight to the words. I had this experience recently. I had said that “I am saying that I can come for analysis, but I don’t know how I will actually manage it, so I’m making a promise, I give you my word, and I’ll have to make sure that it is worth something.” Yes, the session ended there.

The third way to understand the ‘true meaning of speech’ is to recognise that sometimes speech is just there as a mode of enjoyment. Blah blah. Enjoying the sound of my own voice. Complaining about the other in the same old way, venting my contempt, my hate, my envy and so on. Letting a little bit of *jouissance* go around the circuit. The true meaning of speech in this case is beyond meaning, but nevertheless means that you are in the realm of *jouissance* and not that of desire. This dimension has been given a special import by Jacques-Alain Miller in relation to the cut. Interpretation and scansion, he says, have to do with meaning, whereas the cut returns the analysand to the opacity of her *jouissance*: “The question is not to know whether the session is long or short, silent or chatty. Either the session is a semantic unity, in which  $S_2$  comes to punctuate the elaboration – delusions in the service of the Name-of-the-Father – (many sessions are like that), or the analytic session is an a-semantic unity bringing the subject back to the opacity of his *jouissance*. This supposes that it be cut before it closes on itself.” (*PN* No. 2, 1999, 15).

The example that Jean-Luc Monnier gives in his paper “The Act of the Cut” is an example where the analyst interrupts the analysand not only mid-sentence but in this case mid-word in order to bring out an equivocation. In a way, this is an example of all three ideas. It

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brings out the meaning behind the meaning, it emphasises that what the analysand said is ‘what actually matters’, and it also points towards the opaque *jouissance* in speech, i.e. you are squeezing a bit of enjoyment out of this even when you think you are speaking about that. This cut coincides with the analyst’s act; he has to bring his own body into play to bring the session to a close. Something real has taken place. There is a cut in the real.

All this has a bearing on the end of an analysis, where the analysand recognises where she habitually displaces her *jouissance* so that she is finally able to refuse to follow it there, and instead make use of it on another level, that of the symbolic, of law, and thereby of desire. “What is in fact at stake is that castration is a displacement of *jouissance*, that *jouissance* has to be refused on a certain plane in order to be attained at the level of the law. Let us say that it has to be refused in the real in order to be attained under the aegis of the symbolic. ... In other words, the legalisation of *jouissance* is paid for by symptomisation.” (Miller, “Violent Children” *TLR* No. 4, 2018, 36.)

As we have seen, in “The Direction of the Treatment” (1958), Lacan emphasises that in her tactics, the practitioner is completely free, given the constraints of the transference of any given analysand, and under the policy laid down by Freud, to work with the subject of the unconscious. In order to underline the point that a cut is not necessarily anything to do with the ending of a session and can come in many forms, let’s look at some examples from Margaret Little’s practice. Lacan comments on this in *Seminar X*. Obviously Margaret Little isn’t offering this up as an example of the cut, but what she does can certainly be understood in this way. The three examples also show us how the idea of counter-transference can come more or less in the place where the object is situated in relation to the barred Other. The examples come from her case of “R.” After seven years of analysis, which were “characterised by failure” on the analyst’s part “to make the transference real to her”, and during which time “many transference interpretations were given” but which were “all entirely meaningless to her”, the patient turned up in an acute state of distress following the death of a friend that had been little mentioned throughout the treatment thus far. “For five weeks this state of acute distress continued unchanged” in spite of many attempts on the analyst’s part to interpret for her patient. “None of this reached her, she was to all intents and purposes out of contact. Her family bore the brunt of it. My interpretations ... fell on deaf ears, nothing reached her” (247). Finally, Little intervened: “Her life was in evident danger, either from the risk of suicide or from exhaustion; somehow I had to break through. At last I told her how painful her distress was, not only to herself and to her family, but to me. I said that no one could bear be near her in that state without being deeply affected; I felt sorrow with her, and for her, in her loss.” This, we

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can say ‘cut’ through. “The effect of this was instantaneous, and very great. Within the hour she became calmer and cried... her reparative impulses came into action in a wholly new way.” The intervention can be considered, from our point of view, as a cut. From the analytical world Little was addressing, the act of this particular cut would fall under the term ‘counter-transference.’ This is interesting. It offers a moment where something real happens, where the excess of the real manifests in the body of the analyst and produces an effect which the analyst cannot cipher into a theoretical framework. It is left, therefore, as ‘counter transference’ rather than taken up and used in a way that can be spoken about in the theoretical terms of the practice.

The effect of this intervention made Margaret Little recall an earlier intervention along similar lines. “When I had sat listening for the hundredth time to an unending account of a quarrel with her mother about money, and also for the hundredth time had struggled to keep awake; it was boring, and as usual no interpretation would reach her, whether it was concerned with the content of her talk, the mechanisms, transference, her unconscious wishes, etc. This time I told her that I was sure that the content of her talk was not the important thing, that it was defensive and added that I was having difficulty in staying awake as these repetitions were boring. There was a shocked and horrified silence, an outburst of aggrieved anger, and then she said she was glad I had told her.” The patient then interpreted for herself what was going on for her, and Little adds “... if I had given this interpretation I am sure that it would only have met with the same response as all the other transference interpretations” (248), i.e. no effect at all.

She goes on: “The second time I had been having some redecorating done, she prided herself on knowing just how this should have been done, and had often given me advice in a very patronizing way, which I had interpreted ... This time I had had advice all day long from one patient after another, it was the end of the day and I was tired and, instead of giving an interpretation, without thinking I said crossly ‘I really don’t care what you think about it.’ Once again, the shocked silence was followed by fury and a really sincere apology, [and admission that...] she was, in fact, overbearing and a busybody” (248).

These three examples might give the impression that a cut is a little bit violent, and indeed the point is, really, that something in the real has been affected, but it is also clear with Little’s case that the interventions took place within the scope of this patient’s transference. And perhaps it is worth remembering that, although psychoanalysis takes place between two people, talking, in a room, the stakes are high, and each one must pay with something of the real, which implies the body. The analysand pays with his or her suffering, and the analyst pays

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‘with the core of being,’ as well as his person and his words (“Direction of the Treatment” 490-1).

Before moving on let’s just look at one more example of the ‘counter transference’ that Lacan speaks about in *Seminar X*, this one from Lucia Tower (1955). After describing her endurance, “week after week and month after month” of vituperative rage from her patient during which the analyst ‘would get irritated’ but manage to remain calm, Dr Tower describes the following reaction on her part and its effect: “One beautiful spring day I walked out of my office, twenty minutes before this patient’s hour, with my appointment book lying open on my desk. I had a delicious luncheon, alone, which I enjoyed more than usual, and strolled back to the office, in time for my next appointment, only to be informed that my patient had been there and had left extremely angry. It was obvious that I had forgotten her appointment, unconsciously and purposely, and it suddenly came over me that I was absolutely fed up with her abuse to the point of nonendurance. At this point, I began to be angry at my patient, and between this time and the next time she came in, I was in a substantial rage against her... I fantasised (which of course was a hope) that my patient would terminate her treatment with me. At her next appointment, she glared at me and said, in an accusatory manner, “Where were you yesterday?” I said only, “I’m sorry, I forgot.” She started to attack ... for five or ten minutes and abruptly she stopped. There was a dead silence and all of a sudden she started to laugh, saying, “Well, you know, Dr Tower, really I can’t say that I blame you” (238). It was a cut!

One of the first things I noticed when I turned to write about the cut, was the lack of written texts to turn to for reference. There was no entry in the *Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis* (Evans, 1996). There were no chapter headings in the practical manuals. There was no special issue devoted to it in the *Psychoanalytical Notebooks*, no section dedicated to it in *Hurly Burly* or *The Lacanian Review*, and I couldn’t find much mention of it in other indexes. Only one text clearly designating it had been translated into English (“The Act of the Cut”, by Jean-Luc Monnier, in *PN* No. 5, but see also the section in issue No. 10, *The Analytic Session*, 101-146).

I started to pull copies of *Scilicet* off the shelf one by one. These books, produced for each Congress of the World Association of Psychoanalysis since 2006 (and referring back to the journal that Lacan produced back in 1968),<sup>1</sup> have been a valuable source for getting a first hook into a subject. They are full of short articles, arranged alphabetically, on all kinds of vital subjects and questions, with headings like Discourse, Symptom and Sinthome, Imaginary, or Capital, Work, Money. But I had no luck until, working backwards, I reached the issue

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published in 2008. This had been the first *Scilicet* I bought, a few years before I had any idea about what the book was or how it was actually produced. It had been sitting on my shelf waiting for me to catch up. This was the moment. To my relief, I found an entry on pages 73-77 entitled “Coupure.” Cross-referencing the article to the list of contents at the back of the book, I discovered that the author was Catherine Bonningue, a practicing analyst with the ECF from Paris. Her article, in French (this issue of *Scilicet* was not translated into English, a practice that only began a few years later, with *A Real for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, the 2012 meeting in Paris) is unusual in that it includes a two-page bibliography, or more precisely, a list of further reading from Lacan (13 references to lessons of specific dates, some unpublished; some *écrits*; some published seminars) and Jacques-Alain Miller (16 references to published and unpublished work, but mostly unpublished, and only one of those in English).

Although I am now able to read French (thanks to a realising how little was coming through from French let alone Spanish), I realised that I was going to need some help to understand the text and its import. So, at a recent meeting of the newly formed group in the United States of America (*Lacanian Compass*), I took the chance to ask around and form a new cartel. Success. I quickly found three other people, who wanted to study *The Cut*. A Plus One followed shortly after, and we immediately set to work circulating and translating Catherine’s article, sharing references, and discussing the signifier as it touched on our own personal trajectories.

As our cartel began we paused to wonder about the etymology of the word in various languages represented in our cartel: French, English, Spanish and Flemish. We spoke about *coupure*, cut, *corte*: the English etymology talks a lot about small knives. The French refers to a bodily wound. The Spanish etymology takes us to ‘court’ which led me to think of a coup. A coup, of course, has implications to the body of those who incarnate the governing politics of a country. It also implicates every-body in so far as there will be a feeling produced in the body at the news of the coup. Something real is at stake with a cut.

In Britain we have experienced a kind of cut made in the body of our society dividing us into two: Leavers or Remainers: mutually exclusive, and with no third option. The result of the referendum, 23 July 2016 was felt in the body by subjects across the country and continues to make itself felt by polarising the population and reducing the possibilities for reasoned public speech, and rational debate. The dual relation, which Lacan described early in his teaching, tends towards rivalry and aggression (see, e.g., *Seminar I*, “Mirror Stage”, and “Aggression in Psychoanalysis”). In the run up to the referendum one of our MPs was shot and stabbed to

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death.<sup>2</sup> We experienced “dishonesty on an industrial scale”<sup>3</sup> by people who were running the campaigns and seeking power, and a huge increase in irrational, emotional vitriolic exchanges on social media amongst friends, family and colleagues which continues unabated. The Labour Party has been revealed to be fuelling rather than starving anti-Semitic feeling; we now know that both Russia and wealthy businessmen were spending vast amounts of money in an effort to manipulate voters via social media shenanigans, since the referendum result was announced we have heard about the rising number of hate crimes, and we are currently experiencing a huge increase in knife crime in the capital. When I turned to google just now to find a reference source for all these movements, I found yet more news of another young man stabbed just a few hours ago as he went for breakfast in a nearby MacDonald’s.<sup>4</sup> A cut unbinds an energy, the drive, the death drive. There is a choice, then, between jouissance and desire.

Of course, the referendum is not a straightforward cause of the problems we now face in the UK. We had already begun to see the ongoing collapse of paternalism and the master signifiers that underpinned it, (see e.g. Miller’s presentation to the 9<sup>th</sup> WAP Congress, *Scilicet* 2014), and we know that Dominic Cummings (campaign director for Vote Leave) had conducted many ‘focus groups’ around the country before the referendum took place and discovered that ‘Take Back Control’ would be the most powerful signifier to use in the Leave Campaign that he was running. “Take back control” could easily name the feeling that he found in the focus groups, but what is the cause? Both Leave.Eu and the Leave Campaign name the cause as ‘immigration.’ But the facts don’t add up. It could better be said that it is a consequence of the collapse of the signifiers that supported paternalism, and the weakening of the point of the phallic identification for many as a consequence. The referendum has produced a new master signifier, Brexit, which cleaves the country more or less in two, whilst simultaneously giving us all the same signifier to relate to. It has reflatd a series of phallic identifications that most people thought were well and truly in the past (I’m thinking especially of Jacob Rees-Mogg, but Nigel Farage and David Davis and countless others are bringing their own unique twist to an old trope). But there is also a chasm which is opening up in parliament where it is now necessary to rewrite more laws than will be humanly possible to properly debate, and these will affect more relationships both at home and abroad than it is possible to count. There will be a ‘gigantic delegation of power to the executive’ of the Government which will be free to transform the UK on the inside as much as on the outside as a consequence of the referendum vote.



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Every year, twice a year, I had been surprised and delighted to find that we all manage, more or less, to alter our watches and clocks in accordance with a decision made centrally in our society, which has ramifications for our relationships across the world. The enormous effort to get everyone to use the same calendar and the same clock is ritually rubbed out by our willing submission to this ritual. We make it look simple. In a highly organised act we make it look as if it were a kind of natural phenomenon. We create a semblant of ourselves as part of nature, even though we know, at some level, that the measurement of time is an entirely symbolic and human act. In the same way, when we participate in an election or a referendum, we fall into a kind of ritual that is mundane, routine, and extraordinary at the same time. We walk into the local school, or in our case the local Salvation Army Hall, we nod hello to the familiar faces who always seem to do duty on days like these, we give our name to someone who sort of knows where we live, we take our paper, put our simple x in the box, fold the paper, push it through the uneven slot of the battered black box, then go on our way to work. But because we all do it at the same time, we are involved in a creating a sort of magical machine that is capable of pacifying our relationships and our identification as British. The process of the vote is a way of writing something in the social order via the movement of our bodies, as pens. And like a piece of writing, it can create a feeling of well-being, calm achieved through a mass identification with all the others who are also calmly performing the same act, we are acknowledging our submission to our customs, to those who currently incarnate the leaders, and this implies that we will live by the consequences of our acts and our decisions. We make the machine work. We produce the semblant. But we also write something in the real. The effect of the writing is felt in the body. The fact that this referendum was carelessly conceived and nonchalantly managed has implications for each one of us in our participation (see Shipman 2016). Did you know, for example, that the Prime Minister, David Cameron, forbade, by diktat, his Foreign Office staff from making any preparations for a leave result in the referendum? They were forbidden from emptying the contents of a single *Bic* biro in the service of planning for the possibility of withdrawing this country from the myriad relationships that the last 40 years have been quietly weaving and knitting together.<sup>5</sup> What casual incompetence. The stupid little tune that he sang as he went back into No. 10 Downing Street after announcing to the press that he was resigning from office has still not been adequately named: “Doo dooooo do doooo. Right.”<sup>6</sup> Some wag remarked that “he went out on a bad note.”

We all sort of know that what goes on at the level of the state affects what goes on at the level of the mind of each subject, but the situation we face now requires us to speak well

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about it. Why does it matter whether the state is based on democracy, tolerance and free speech, and what does that mean in the UK today? How shall we know if we tip into an authoritarian repressive regime, and what difference will that make not only to our psychoanalytical practice, but to our daily relations with those around us? How do these things operate at the level of the subject, and of the ego? What, exactly, was cut by the referendum, cut by the ‘great withdrawal bill’, cut by ‘the final agreement’ that the Government (or perhaps Parliament) does or doesn’t manage to come to with the EU.

Back in 1921, when Freud published *Massenpsychologie*, he had been given a book by the then Bishop of London. *When It Was Dark*, written by the prolific (and pseudonymous) Guy Thorne (Cyril Arthur Edward Ranger Gull). It was a best seller at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and is still available as a new book on Amazon today: it sold half a million copies when it was first released. In the last pages of chapter 5 of *Massenpsychologie*, Freud describes it like this: “The novel, which is supposed to relate to the present day, tells how a conspiracy of enemies of the person of Christ and of the Christian faith succeed in arranging for a sepulchre to be discovered in Jerusalem. In this sepulchre is an inscription [which proves that the] resurrection of Christ and his divine nature are [...] disproved, and the result of this archaeological discovery is a convulsion in European civilisation and an extraordinary increase in all crimes and acts of violence, which only ceases when the forgers’ plot has been revealed.” He continues: “The phenomenon which accompanies the dissolution [is] ruthless and hostile impulses towards other people” (*SE* Vol 18, 98). The Brexit referendum produced a spike in hate crimes notably against Polish people, and the actual killing of a Member of Parliament whose platform was to show a form of love for refugees. More recently, 18 months after the referendum and one year from the proposed day of leaving the EU, the newspapers are reporting surprising rises in the number of knife crimes in the capital. Is it connected in some way to the change in the bonds that have been holding these hostile impulses in check so far? How can we speak about that today?

In the early paragraphs of chapter 9, “The Herd Instinct,” Freud must acknowledge “that people tend to be too weak to come to anything by themselves and are absolutely obliged to wait till they are reinforced through being repeated in a similar way in the other members of the group... The influence of suggestion becomes a greater riddle for us when we admit that it is not exercised only by the leader, but by every individual upon every other individual; and we must reproach ourselves with having unfairly emphasized the relation to the leader with

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having kept the other factor of mutual suggestion too much in the background” (*SE* Vol. 18, 117-8).

Last October (2017) the image of sporadic violence that erupted around the controversial referendum in Spain was repeated on a kind of loop. You could watch the same scene over and over again, and even different scenes seemed to be the same scene with people in police uniforms, i.e. policemen and women, intervening with force on the bodies of ordinary people, members of the public. Barcelona-based psychoanalyst, Anna Aromi, wrote a short intervention which was circulated amongst colleagues in the EuroFederation of Psychoanalysis by email. This was part of the preparations for a meeting to be held in Turin in November 2017 under the heading “Decided Desires for Democracy.” The part of Anna Aromi’s text that struck me was this: “What is at stake is not to let oneself be trapped in [a TV news] loop. Let’s apply the analytic art of reading, [...] in order to read one has to cut somewhere, [...] reading is related to castration. One reads from the cut, one reads from isolating a signifier from the chain.” In order to read, one has to cut somewhere. It may, in fact, take a bit of time to find the best cut, but each cut provides a reference point that can be used to take one’s measure from. What counts is that the cut is an act, and what matters is that the cutter takes responsibility for the act.

In my own recent experience as an analysand, I have come to understand the cut as an act of harvesting the  $S_1$ s that make up the ‘envelope of the symptom.’ The analytic act snips the link between the  $S_1$  and the  $S_2$ s that then fall away, unable any longer to sustain the pathways of *jouissance* and crumbling away as their corner stone no longer functions. In one of her testimonies to the pass, Anna Aromi spoke of a ‘subterranean fire’ that crept forward, sweeping away the semblances of her life. She continued “In my experience, the pass was constituted out of fresh signifiers. They seeped out and let libido flow from signifiers freshly cut from the drive, I dare put it that way” (173). If the cut returns the subject to the opacity of its *jouissance*, can we say that the UK as a country has been left to face the opacity of a societal *jouissance*? Although not a subject in analysis, it seems reasonable to say that new signifiers are necessary, and will have to be ‘cut from the drive’ in order to recover a libido that can be turned towards sublimation rather than violence.

The process of writing this article engaged me in thinking not only about clinical practice and experience as an analysand, but also of the experience of working in a School (especially the cartel, but also the congresses, the work of reading and translating) in a particular moment in the history, well, of the world – global history as experienced especially in the UK and Europe. Lacanian psychoanalysts have always been interested in the form of the School as vital to the clinical work itself, there has always been a thread of interest that links the singular subject to the context in which she lives her life. It is another distinctive mark of Lacanian psychoanalysis (you can read the history of the birth of Lacanianism in Roudinesco, 1990) and consult some documents (including the minutes of the meeting of the IPA recording the decision) relating to some of the particularities of context and their effects on psychoanalysis in *Television*, edited by Joan Copjec (1990). It is still, now, vital to also find ways to speak about how the clinic and the school work in relation to the context of democracy in which they sit as we go through a shift which can be summed up as ‘globalisation.’

A second point that is brought out is the vital part played by signifiers in directing the death drive. The way we speak about our practice, and the habits we establish to sustain that practice matter. I hope that the examples from Margaret Little and Lucia Tower illustrate how Lacan learned not only from his own practice but by paying close attention to those around him. These examples, which are referred to in *Seminar X* are still useful to learn from and help us to be more precise when we speak about ‘the cut.’

The cut is a signifier particular to Lacan, and particular to the psychoanalysis that follows from the tradition of his work and his thinking. The cut is a tool in addition to ‘interpretation.’ Its invention is linked with the variable length session, and can be reinforced by the end of the session, but it is not exactly the same thing as the end of a session, and can be achieved in different ways – the analyst is free in her tactics, within the limits of the particular transference, under the direction of the overall politics.

I will end with a quote from Jacques-Alain Miller which brings our discussion of the cut into relation with the concept of castration. Castration is a refusal of jouissance on one level, and an invitation for its transformation on another level. The new symptomatisation of jouissance that is produced by the analytical cuts calls for new interpretations and constructions by the analysand who is, by now, able to respond to the law of desire. New signifiers can be cut into, or grafted onto the drive, and where jouissance once was, the enlightened analysand can come to take responsibility for her desire.

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“So castration is a refusal of *jouissance*, following which *jouissance* would not take place. Here Lacan introduces a dialectical reasoning: *jouissance* has to be refused in order to be attained. It must not take place, in order to occur. We could think this is a ruse of *jouissance*, as Hegel speaks about the ruses of reason. What is in fact at stake is that castration is a displacement of *jouissance*, that *jouissance* has to be refused on a certain plane in order to be attained at the level of the law. Let us say that it has to be refused in the real in order to be attained under the aegis of the symbolic. What Lacan calls the law of desire is precisely this refusal of *jouissance* in the real, the passage of *jouissance* to the lower plane. This is in fact what is reflected by the paternal metaphor, which is the translation in Oedipal terms of the process of repression. It can be generalised by saying that ultimately the essential operator of repression is language itself, speech, which effectuates the passage of *jouissance* to the lower level, in the sense that it prevents its advent. And the price of this process, the result of this process of repression, as Freud explains it, is precisely the symptom. The price of repression is the formation of symptoms as sign of and substitute for a *jouissance* that has not come to pass. In other words, the legalisation of *jouissance* is paid for by symptomisation” (Miller 2018, 36.)

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<sup>1</sup> *Scilicet* is important in the history of the psychoanalytic movement because of the major texts of Lacan that featured in each of its issues: “Proposition of 9 October on the Psychoanalyst of the School” (issue 1); “Radiophonie” (issue 2/3); “L’*étourdit*” (issue 4); “...ou pire” (issue 5) and finally the lectures and interviews that Lacan gave at Yale University, Columbia University, and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1975 (issue 6/7). In 2006, *Scilicet* was revived for the preparatory work of the fifth congress of the World Association of Psychoanalysis in Rome on “The Name-of-the-Father.” A second volume, for the sixth congress in Buenos Aires, appeared in print as “The Objects *a* in the Psychoanalytic Experience”, published by the Collection rue Huysmans (2008). This was followed by “*Semblants and Sinthome*”, the 2010 Paris congress, and then “The Symbolic Order in the Twenty-First Century” (Buenos Aires, 2012).

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Mair, an ‘unemployed gardener’, shot Jo Cox twice in the head, once in the chest with a sawn-off .22 hunting rifle before stabbing her 15 times whilst saying “This is for Britain”, “keep Britain independent”, and “Britain first.” He was sentenced at the Old Bailey to life imprisonment, 23 November 2016 at the end of a trial in which he had made no effort to defend himself.

<sup>3</sup> This was a phrase used by Professor Michael Dougan’s intervention on 22 June 2016, Liverpool University. The transcript and video can be found online via Liverpool University or YouTube. “I have just watched with increasing dismay as this referendum debate has unfolded. I have to say although the remain campaign have not exactly covered themselves in glory at points with their use of dodgy statistics, I think the leave campaign has degenerated in to dishonesty really on an industrial scale. There is no other way to put it, on an industrial scale.

What I have found particularly difficult ... I have dared to say some of these things are not true, some of these things are not actually accurate and I found myself ... being treated with personal insults about my credibility and my competence and so on.” he goes on to compare this with an argument between ‘creationists’ and ‘evolutionists.’ Transcription and video are available online, at <https://news.liverpool.ac.uk/2016/06/22/transcript-professor-michael-dougan-eu-referendum/>

<sup>4</sup> *The Guardian* reminds us that “although people are experiencing less crime, high-harm incidents, including offences involving knives and firearms, are on the rise. In 2017 there was a 22% increase in knife crime and an 11% rise in gun crime, according to offences recorded by the police. These crimes don’t occur very often, but they do attract a lot of media attention.” (27 April 2018).

“Meanwhile the British are keeping count of what for the past five years they have called ‘hate crimes’, aggressions motivated by racial motives, religion, sexual orientation, or disability. The category is new and comprises, for 80% of the tally, aggressions with racial overtones. They usually increase after terrorist attacks, but it should be noted that they peaked after the Brexit referendum.” [2] Eric Laurent, “New Incarnations of the Desire for Democracy in Europe”, published in two parts in French, in *Lacan Quotidien* No. 746, 25 October and LQ No. 747 27 October 2017.

Travis A., “Hate crime surged in England and Wales after terrorist attacks”, *The Guardian*, October 17, 2017  
“Violent crime in England and Wales is rising at an accelerating pace, according to police figures showing a 22% increase in knife crime and 11% rise in gun crime.” (26 April 2018).

<sup>5</sup> YouTube: “Prof Michael Dougan: What is the future for Britain in Europe after the Referendum?” SOAS, given on 25 October 2016, (posted 3 Nov 2016), and introduced by Dr Dan Plesch Centre for International Studies and Diplomacy. Dr Plesch said “diplomats have to be prepared for the unlikely, but you can tell one thing, the British Foreign Ministry wasn’t prepared for the Brexit Vote, because they were forbidden by legal, by diktat of the Prime minister of the time to do any preparations whatsoever, for that event, which kind of doesn’t sit well with all the energy we are supposed to spend on contingency planning and the like, so we’re now in diplomatic uncharted waters ...” (about 2 minutes into the video).

<sup>6</sup> YouTube “David Cameron sings to himself after announcing resignation date – BBC News”, published 11 July 2016.

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