



THE FALL OF THE OTHER

13TH June 2020

Opening

Joanne Conway

I am delighted to welcome you this morning to this seminar of *ICLO-Society of the New Lacanian School*. My name is Joanne Conway and I am current Chair of ICLO.

Over the past weeks you may have attended some of the seminars that ICLO has presented and hosted and I am very happy to welcome you once again or indeed for the first time.

As I said ICLO is a Society of the *New Lacanian School* which is one of the 7 Schools of the *World Association of Psychoanalysis*.

The New Lacanian School comprises of Groups, Societies and Initiatives from all across Europe and beyond, in Israel, Quebec and Australia, and it is this diversity of members, groups, and societies that in part make up the particularity, richness and animation of the NLS.

I wanted to briefly introduce the concept of the School for those of you unfamiliar with it in terms of the Lacanian Orientation of Psychoanalysis. The question *What is a School?* is one that could take us a year to answer – but in brief let us say that the School is not a building, an geographical address or a legal or bureaucratic concern – but rather in the Lacanian orientation it consists we could say – of the gathering of the singular desires of psychoanalysts, each one in their singular relation to the analytic cause, a gathering into a community, a collective formation, concerned with the transmission of psychoanalysis, its teaching, the furtherance of the Lacanian field and the continued research into the crucial problems of psychoanalysis across all of the countries that make up the School. The School is concerned with the formation of psychoanalysts and demonstration of the consequence/ experience of the end of analysis via the device of the Pass.

These singular desires knotted to the School are manifest in the holding of conferences, seminars, congresses, the forming of cartels, publications, teaching and the political, in terms of the sustained effort of the promotion and safeguarding of psychoanalysis in the current times where the concept of the non-standard, the singular and the unconscious is under constant threat.

The reason that I am speaking about the School this morning is not without cause. I am delighted and honoured to say that we have with us this morning the very real presence of the School via the presence of Alexandre Stevens, albeit in a virtual embodiment this morning! Alexandre is the incoming President of the NLS and his working with us this morning demonstrates very clearly the presence and animation of the School in the work of ICLO and indeed all its groupings throughout its field.

Alexandre was to have been with us in Dublin in May this year for the *Annual Study Day* of ICLO. The annual Study Day of ICLO is always oriented toward the theme of the NLS Congress. World events, irruption of this real under the S1 Covid-19 resulted in the cancellation of both the congress and ICLO's Study day.

A hole in the calendar of ICLOs activities emerged. And as we know psychoanalysis tries to find ways to make do with holes, to treat holes via the signifier. And so the Bureau of ICLO and the Study Day committee that was no longer a Study Day Committee, wanted to do something with this hole to invent something – and Alexandre kindly agreed to be a part of this event today, which is not an attempt to substitute one thing with another but rather to find a way to say something of the real that has emerged and touched each one in a very singular way. So it is from here that the theme and title of the **Fall of the Other** emerged.

In closing I wanted to mention a very peculiar thing that happened in planning for today. Usually as you know on committees a title is found and with it is an orientation in terms of a description/blurb of the event. We found a title and from there spent weeks reading, writing, rewriting and producing various versions of a, lets say descriptor or orientation for the event. Nothing we produced fit, nothing seemed to say *it*, whatever it was. And so we decided to leave a space, a gap under the title – and invited each speaker today to respond in their own singular way to this signifier the *Fall of the Other*.

It is only at this moment that I can read perhaps *après coup* the impasse that the committee encountered, something of an impossibility of naming in universal, collective terms a real that each encountered, an impossibility to know ahead of time what the Fall of the Other counts as for each one. It is perhaps only in this moment of coming together in our solitude that something of this can be said and worked on.

The Fall of the Other

Alexandre Stevens

To prepare for this seminar, I started working with two texts from Jacques-Alain Miller on the latest Lacan, *The Space of a Lapsus* and *The Space of a Hallucination*. The two are published in French and English in TLR, *The Lacanian Revue*, Issue 6. But I will first take a detour through other texts. I have considered several kinds of falls of the Other.

1. The Other of knowledge

“Everyone is mad, that is to say delusional.”¹ Lacan writes this in a brief text when the University of Vincennes-Paris VIII was put in difficulties. It seems to me that we can say that this statement by Lacan testifies to a fall of the Other. Jacques-Alain Miller comments on this sentence in his lesson of May 28, 2008 and in the following two lessons.² He emphasises that this sentence questions logic and indicates that knowledge may well be nothing but delusion. It is a way of bringing down the Other, the Other of knowledge in any case.

In another text, Miller also speaks of the fall of the Other of knowledge. It is in his paper *In the Direction of Adolescence*,³ when he says: “There is there a fall of the big Other of knowledge”⁴ I quote him: “The

¹ J. Lacan, *Transfert à St Denis ?* Ornicar 17/18, 1979, p. 278.

² J.-A. Miller, *Course of 28/05/2008*, pp. 13-14.

³ J.-A. Miller, *In the direction of Adolescence*, Paper presented at the 3rd Study Day of the Institute of the Child, on 21st March, 2015, published in English in TLR 4, pp. 23-33.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

consequence of the virtual world in which adolescents live (...) is that knowledge, which was formerly deposited in adults – these speaking beings who were educators, including parents, whose mediation was needed in order to gain access to knowledge – is now available automatically via a simple request put to a machine.”⁵ That is the fall of the Other of knowledge, with “an autoerotics of knowledge.”⁶ Previously, usually, knowledge rather included an erotic link to the Other.

I think we can draw some conclusions from this proposal by Jacques-Alain Miller. This fall from the Other gives way to knowledge without criticism, without foundation, that is to say without Other, a knowledge that circulates automatically through internet, which responds with a single click, thus filling a void in the subject via autoerotic as well as automatic satisfaction. This leaves room for all possible conspiracy theories.

I heard an enlightening example in this regard. A secondary school principal, who is in analysis with me, told me of her surprise after the Islamist attacks in Brussels in March 2016 - it was shortly after the attacks in Paris. Following these events, she organised in the different classes of her school a series of debates on these events. This school receives many children recently arrived in Belgium, but not many of them come from Muslim countries. These debates had a very positive effect on the students. But two days later, a majority of them began to believe in the various conspiracy theories circulating on the internet at the time. The transference to teachers, the power of the knowledge transmitted, the quality of the debates could not prevent that the knowledge taken automatically from the internet became dominant. Knowledge was no longer held in the great Other, but was accessible directly for the enjoyment of everyone. You could say that the knowledge transmitted on the internet is also a big Other. It is true, but it operates as a mad great Other, even as the Other of an obscure *jouissance*.

2. “Everyone is mad that is to say delusional.”⁷

I come back to this paradoxical assertion of Lacan. Miller adds another signification to be read in this sentence. Saying that everyone is mad, is not the same as saying that everyone is psychotic. But that supports on the one hand that vis-a-vis a subject, were he psychotic, which is concerned with the truth, one can say, I am also delusional. Obviously there is no need to enter into a community with the patient and have the idea that psychosis is only a semblance. No, psychosis is real, but if one emphasises the real of psychosis one becomes a clinician, which is not quite the same thing as a psychoanalyst. It is therefore better to consider that everyone, analysts and analysands, is concerned with the relation to truth and to the object *a* and *jouissance*.

‘Me also I am delusional,’ we can find another echo of this in the last lesson of Lacan’s Seminar XIX “...or Worse,” entitled *Bodies Captured by Discourse*. Lacan has this surprising sentence: “We are brothers with our patient in that, like him, we are sons of discourse.”⁸ It is related to the object little *a*, that we are brothers. This is how we have “to accustom us to this désêtre, this deserted Being.”⁹ We are made of the same soil, but with each its own singularity, its own uniqueness. This has nothing to do with the notion of brother as in an ideology of brotherhood, which is always based on segregation, as Lacan also says in the Seminar *The*

⁵ J.-A. Miller, *In the direction of Adolescence*, TLR 4, p. 27.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ J. Lacan, *Transfert à St Denis ?* Ornicar 17/18, 1979, p. 278.

⁸ J. Lacan, *Seminar XIX, “...or Worse”*, p. 210.

⁹ J. Lacan, *ibid*.

Other Side of Psychoanalysis.¹⁰ It is from this kind of segregation, “which is rooted (...) in the fraternity of bodies” that Lacan announced the rise of racism — it was in 1972. “You have not heard the last of this”¹¹ concludes him — these are the last words of “...or Worse”. A rejection, a refusal, of Otherness, of the difference, in the other.

3. The fall of the Other and the body

What also interested me was the link between the fall of the Other, or his absence, and the body.

In a text from 1977 on one of Lacan's patients presentation,¹² Jacques-Alain Miller argues, from Lacan's indications, cases where the subject has no effective connection with the Other. This is particularly the case of a young woman who presents herself in great difficulty in the bond to the other which she expresses thus: “I always have problems with my employers, I do not accept they gives me orders (...), that schedules (horaire) are imposed on me, (...) I tear up my wage slip (fiche de paie), I have no reference, (...) I have no more place [in society], I am neither a real nor a false patient, I had identified myself with several people who do not look like me.” She is a mother and would like to look like a mother, but the mentioning of her child does not catch her. She floats in her discourse, she is in a sort of perpetual semblance. “I would like to live like a coat,” she said too. And Lacan adds: “This person has no idea what body she has to put under this dress.”¹³ It is a ‘disease of mentality’ (*maladie de la mentalité*), Miller concludes. These ‘diseases of mentality’ are to be distinguished from the ‘diseases of the Other,’ of which paranoid certainty is the most flagrant example in the field of psychoses.

This case leads us to see a whole series of other cases from this perspective and especially a certain number of cases of ordinary psychosis which only remain attached to the Other by semblants and which can completely fall off if a semblant, held as a substitute for the paternal function, fails. This testifies, says J.-A. Miller in this same text, to “the emancipation of the imaginary relationship, [of] reversibility $a-a'$, distraught at being no longer subjected to symbolic scansion.” The imaginary is no longer sustained by the symbolic.

Joyce

In a sense, this is also what happens to Joyce in the little incident described in “Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man” and which Lacan comments on in his Seminar XXIII, *The Sinthome*. It is the sequence where, after being beaten by his comrades, he surprises himself with what he feels. I quote him: “while the scenes of that malignant episode were still passing sharply and swiftly before his mind he wondered why he bore no malice now to those who had tormented him. He had not forgotten a whit of their cowards and cruelty but the memory of it called forth no anger from him. (...) He had felt that some power was divesting him of that sudden woven anger as easily as a fruit is divested of its soft ripe peel.”¹⁴

I bring this situation closer to the case of the patient presentation because in this woman, like in Joyce, the imaginary is separated from the symbolic. The Other no longer regulates the relationship with the body.

¹⁰ J. Lacan, Seminar XVII, “The Other Side of Psychoanalysis”, p. 114.

¹¹ J. Lacan, Seminar XIX, “...or Worse”, p. 211.

¹² J.-A. Miller, “Teachings of the Case Presentations”, in *Returning to Freud – Clinical Psychoanalysis in the School of Lacan – Selections’* : 1980 : Stuart Schneiderman (Ed).

¹³ My translation.

¹⁴ J. Joyce, *Portrait of the artist...*, pp. 75-77.

Lacan specifies this about the incident that Joyce relates: “So, what meaning is to be given to what Joyce gives us an account of? It’s not simply a matter of his relationship with his body, but, if I may say so, the psychology of this relationship. After all, psychology is nothing else but the confused image that we have of our body. It is precisely in imagining this psychical relationship that something of the psyche is affected (...) is not detached, in contrast to what Joyce testifies (...)”¹⁵

Lacan calls this “*idea of the self, the self as a body*”¹⁶: the Ego. It is in Joyce a disconnected ego, separate from the Other. It is a form of fall from the Other. It is the speech that captures the bodies, according to the title of the last session of Seminar XIX that I quoted earlier, *Bodies Captured by Discourse*.

4. “The Space of a Hallucination”

In his text *The Space of a Hallucination*, Jacques-Alain Miller develops the passage from the unconscious as history to the real unconscious. The first one “supposes, in its different formulations, supremacy of the true over the real.”¹⁷ (..) This theory also implies — says Miller — that the unconscious unfolds as history in communication with the Other.”¹⁸ It implies the Other, the presence of the Other.

The theory of the unconscious of the later Lacan is no longer developed on the basis of hysteria, and therefore on the basis of history; Lacan uses a neologism: *hystory*, with the “y” of hysteria— but on the basis of psychosis. History supposes a symbolisation. This is what is called into question with hallucination. Miller takes the example of the hallucination of the Wolf Man. Freud's reporting of this hallucination of the sectioned finger shows two things, which Miller notes: firstly, there is a temporal discontinuity in this experience and, secondly, there is a break with the Other. Here, it is clearly a moment of the fall of the Other when the real emerges. This fall of the Other is expressed as follows: “He didn’t feel any pain but a great deal of anxiety. He did not have the heart (*le coeur*) to say anything to the maid who was only a few steps away from him — and Miller adds — *This is the cut with the Other expressed psychologically.*”¹⁹

It is in the elements which indicate a temporal break, a discontinuity, and also in the reaction of the subject who at this moment remains frozen in silence, that Lacan sees the irruption of a real. This finger cut in hallucination is a small phenomenon without Other. It does not fit into historization and appears as a sequence cut off from the rest, which arises only for him. Miller says in the other text also published in the same issue, *The Space of a Lapsus*, but on the same phenomenon in the case of the Wolf Man : “*In the account of the subject’s hallucinatory mutilation, you can see that he is cut off from his relation with the Other. It is in a way his alone, for self (pour lui tout seul, pour son soi): self knows (on le sait, soi).*”²⁰

5. “The Space of a Lapsus”

This formula “*Self knows this*”²¹ is the one that Lacan uses in the *Preface to the English Edition of Seminar XI* referring to the real unconscious. The approach to the question by means of hallucination and of psychosis rather than through hysteria, allows us to grasp another approach to the unconscious. Jacques-Alain Miller

¹⁵ J. Lacan, Seminar XXIII, “The Sinthome”, p. 129.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ J.-A. Miller, *The Space of a Hallucination*, TLR 6, p. 87.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 89.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 101.

²⁰ J.-A. Miller, *The Space of a Lapsus*, TLR 6, p. 81.

²¹ J. Lacan, *Preface to the English Edition of Seminar XI*, TLR 6, p. 23.

comments this last text of Lacan which would remain very obscure for us if we did not have these comments in his text *The Space of a Lapsus*.

While the unconscious for Freud, and also for Lacan before this very last part of his teaching, is an unconscious not only interpretable, but also which interprets, in this last text of Lacan it is the reverse that we observe: a real unconscious which opposes to any interpretation.

The classic, transference unconscious is always connected to the Other. The Freudian unconscious of the formations of the unconscious implies a knowledge already there, the interpretation of which must reveal the meaning which is the meaning of the repetition (*automaton*, says Lacan) of the trauma. The Lacanian unconscious of *Seminar XI* and of the Subject-supposed-to-Know implies a knowledge to be produced in the elaboration and which introduces an encounter effect (*tuché* say Lacan) for the subject. These are the differences between the Freudian and the Lacanian unconscious. But these variants of the unconscious always refer to an Other: that of interpretation, the S_2 which will respond to the S_1 . In the Seminar *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis* it is extremely clear: the unconscious is the discourse of the master whose upper floor clearly shows this articulation S_1 - S_2 . Without Other there is no unconscious, no classical unconscious, no transference unconscious.

Moreover, this can be a limit to psychoanalysis. I am thinking of a subject whose case I was told about in supervision. He had come to analysis because his link to women was not supported by speech. He was surprised by the fact that, regarding the woman with whom he lived, he had sexual desire but he had no desire to speak with her; from this point of view he expected nothing. The other doesn't interest him. And he came for analysis, he spoke, but he paid little attention to the interventions of his analyst who was the third one. We understood that he would leave him without difficulty soon. It was not really a transference, rather a very floating link. He is looking for something and he comes to see an analyst. But with a floating transference, a weak link with the Other. It is a cynical attitude. And the cynic is one who does not enter into the transference, who does without the Other or who rejects it. It is a radical figure of the fall of the Other.

So the classic unconscious and the transference imply, require the Other. One can say that the entry into analysis goes through a hystericization of the discourse, with an address to the Other. The "*analytic experience begins with the subject's hystericization*" recalls Jacques-Alain Miller: "*The analyst only appears as the means by which the unconscious shifts from the real to the symbolic.*"²² To enter into the transference process.

The real unconscious of which Lacan speaks in this last text is the opposite to the classical conception. He is alone, without Other. I quote Lacan: "When the (...) space of a lapsus, has no further meaningful scope (or interpretation), only then is one certain of being in the unconscious. Self knows this (*On le sait, soi*)."²³ I refer you to Miller's commentary. Alone, without interpretation and without Other. This is another form of the fall of the Other, which opens up to the Pass.

6. The fall of the Other and the Pass

²² J.-A. Miller, *The Speaking Being and the Pass*, TLR 6, p. 143.

²³ J. Lacan, op. cit., 23.

In the Pass considered from the *Proposition of 9th October*, that is to say as crossing or traversing of the fundamental fantasy, the fall of the Other is this crossing itself. It is the fall of the Other of the Subject-supposed-to-Know. As Jacques-Alain Miller says in his course ²⁴: “*What is agalma in the Other, that is to say the precious thing, becomes palea when it is extracted from the Other. (...) [The] crossing through the fantasy results in the fact that the object has found itself undressed from its agalmatic clothing to find its foundation of palea.*” It is the *sicut palea* of Saint Thomas, like manure, the waste coming in the place of the object which causes desire. It is therefore a form of fall of the Other.

With Lacan's last text, this *Preface to the English Edition of Seminar XI*, the end of analysis and the Pass are displaced from the crossing through the fantasy towards the *sinthome*. The fall of the Other is no less present there, since at the end, each AS (Analyst of the School) testifies, in one way or another, to a formula, a name, a letter without meaning which comes to say the residue to which she or he is reduced. Out of meaning, as when Lacan speaks of the real unconscious, an S_1 alone, all by itself. An S_1 excluding interpretation. It is a fall of the Other, an S_1 without S_2 .

In the first Pass testimony of Florencia Shanahan, we understand a form of “*Self knows this.*” At the beginning of her testimony, she spoke of the last analysis session: “*A smile on my face, joy in my body, I said to the analyst: “If someone told me this, I wouldn't believe it.” Without expecting any answer, I heard myself say: “Then I will have to tell it myself” (...) to allow an inventing, a lodging of what has not yet been thought.*”²⁵ We hear in these sentences a self, herself, — “*I will have to tell it myself*” — without Other — she said “*Without expecting any answer*” (from the Other then).

In the testimonies of the AS we find these inventions without Other, thus signalling an S_1 without any additional interpretation. It is, in Florencia's testimony, it seems to me, the *ring*, both without image and with a black hole photographed, also a letter and the void. It is both a fabric of meanings and one that has no meaning, except to designate a point: “*on fire*”— which indicates a drive style. It is without Other, it is a fall from the Other. The opening on what Florencia named “*a possible that had not existed until then: a writing without history, without script.*” Without history, without script... it is without a previous Other. These are my comments, Florencia may perhaps tell us her opinion later.

I think we can find this kind of signs of a fall of the Other in many testimonies of the Analysts of the School. It is Dominique Holvoet who finishes his testimony on the extracted lying truth.²⁶ For Domenico Cosenza it is a dream that comes to say his position in existence, with the formula *The Sound of the Earth*, rustling of the earth and of *lalangue*.²⁷ For Véronique Voruz it is at the end, a name, a S_1 alone which names a style, remainder of the singular *jouissance*: she can return to the mountains without anxiety and has the following dream: “*I walk on a mountain, I climb taking shortcuts.(...) I turn down and I see a torn leg emerging from a pile of stones.*” This is a subjectivation of the original accident from which an S_1 is deduced: *à l'arrache*, which names too a drive style.²⁸

I must however add that for the Analysts of the School who have thus met this point where the Other of the guarantee fails, leaving them on the verge of this singular subjective solitude, there is then an address to the

²⁴ J.-A., Miller, Course “Réponses du Réel”, Lesson of 21/3/1984, p 170 — My translation.

²⁵ F. F.C. Shanahan, “First Testimony: Dejar que pase...”, Ghent, 29/09/19, in TLR 8.

²⁶ D. Holvoet, First testimony, “C'est arraché”, published in *La Cause du désir*, n° 93, p. 140.

²⁷ D. Cosenza, The Pass between interpretation and event, Ghent, 29/09/2019, in TLR 8.

²⁸ V. Voruz, First testimony “Se séparer sans s'arracher”, Presented at *Question d'École*, Paris, 23 January 2016, published in *La Cause du désir*, n° 92 — March 2016.

Other. This fall from the Other does not leave them in a cynical position. On the contrary since they testify in the procedure of the Pass first, and then in the School. Another form of the address is thus constituted, a new Other. It is then not without Other.

7. The Other that does not exist

One word remains to be said about the Other which does not exist on which Jacques-Alain Miller delivered a year-long course with Eric Laurent²⁹ and which Laurent takes up in a recent text published in LRO (Lacanian Revue Online), *The Other that Does not Exist and its Scientific Committees*.³⁰ In a way, we know that the Other is only a semblance³¹ and the responses of science, as we see today, are very varied and without any guarantee. For example, everything and its opposite has been said on the usefulness or not of masks, on the value of tests, on statistics and figures of the epidemic.

As Eric Laurent states: “It is from the inexistence of the Other that would guarantee the real of science that another real arises for the subject who lives in language.”³² Anxiety, affects and passions are signs of this real that strikes everyone. The subjects, disoriented, disjointed can then be ready to believe anything, such as conspiracy theories or extremist ideologies, in an attempt to reconstruct a link to others. It is also there that psychoanalysis has a political responsibility to respond to the point where the discourse of science leaves the subject in disarray.

I know that my two colleagues of this debate will continue also on that point.

The Fall of the Other – in a Time of Material Comforts

Alan Rowan

It is in his seminar *Desire and It's Interpretation* (1958/59) that Lacan first stated, “there is no Other of the Other” adding “this is the big secret of psychoanalysis if I may say so” (p.298). However, up to that moment Lacan had posited the opposite, namely that an Other of the Other existed, in the form of the Name-of-the-Father, I quote: “the Name-of-the-Father [is] the signifier of the Other qua locus of the law” (*On a question ...* p. 485). Here is a vision where the “no” of the father establishes a first law from which flow the laws of language and a world that works on the basis of “some things are right others wrong”, or to put this in other terms, a civilisation based on the rule of law, and one should add, proscribed forms of jouissance for civilisation organises jouissance. In 1963, in his introduction to a Seminar he was unable to give, Lacan dealt a final blow to this Name-of-the-Father by pluralising it, meaning there are rather and only “Names-of-the-Father” as variable and contingent symbolic devices that can be put to use in giving the subject a “place-name”, to which, In 1978, Lacan arguably gave us the final term in this series of developments, by stating:

²⁹ J.-A. Miller, *The Other that doesn't exist and its ethical committees*, 1996-97, first lesson published in *Almanac*, Issue 1, Giep-NLS.

³⁰ E. Laurent, *The Other that Does not Exist and its Scientific Committees*, LRO. Available online: <http://www.thelacanianreviews.com/the-other/>

³¹ Cf. J.-A. Miller quoted by E. Laurent, op.cit.

³² E. Laurent, op. cit.

“He [Freud] thought that all is but a dream and that everyone (if one can say such a thing), that everyone is delusional” (*There Are Four Discourses, Culture/Clinic, p.3*). In other words, and decisively, Lacan is stating here, not that we are all clinically mad/psychotic, but that our world is made up of semblants (necessary fictions if you like) and today as J-A Miller has pointed out, we are more than ever aware that they are shaking, that they are unstable. I will come back to this, but for now I would like to quote the first verse of W.B. Yeats’ poem “The Second Coming”

Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.

It is a verse that seems to me to capture well something of the current pandemic times we find ourselves in, further inflamed - especially in American, by the eruption of protests against police brutality and for greater social justice especially for black people. And yet, Yeats wrote this poem in 1919, and so we might say that our semblants, in one form or another, have in fact been shaking for quite some time. In writing this poem Yeats was responding to a world that had indeed become dark and uncertain, the First World War with its devastating loss of life had just ended, the Irish Civil War was beginning and the so-called Spanish Flu was ravaging many parts of Europe, from which his pregnant wife, in 1919, nearly died.

In fact it is important to make a more general point here, there never was any “good old days” for if religion and loyalty to a Monarch brought with it strong patriarchal social rules and roles there was also a lot of cruelty and exploitation, with religion exploiting “Hell” as a fear worse than death itself, while loyalty to “King and country” was enforced at great cost that included, for example, the subjection of women, child-labour, the stoking of nationalism and hatred for “the enemy” as well processes of segregation and hatred directed towards other denigrated outgroups (e.g. Jews, the colonised and enslaved, etc.).

Indeed, one can say here that psychoanalysis opposes all utopian dreams, which whether revolutionary or based on some notion of tradition evoke nothing other than the Discourse of the Master, something that we therefor seek to understand, or more precisely to read or analyse in terms of their effect on the subject and more generally on the social bond. In other words, we can ask, what are some of the main effects on us - contemporary with this “fall of the Other” that we can highlight here today. In fact, instead of “fall’ we should perhaps speak here of a “slow decline” especially as already in 1938 Lacan had spoken of the “the decline of the paternal imago” linked to the “absent, humiliated, divided or sham” father leading in turn to an increase in what he then termed “character neuroses” (*Family Complex, p. 44*).

In a seminar entitled “The Other who does not exist and his ethical committees”, given by Eric Laurent and Jacques-Alain Miller in 1996, Miller states that our contemporary immersion in semblants, I quote: “makes of the real a question for everyone. A question about which it would not be too much to say that it takes shape against a background of anxiety” (p. 18). There is no longer present any guarantee of the symbolic order, something Miller says marks a shift from Freud’s civilisation of discontent to our own globalised one

which is better termed “the epoch of the impasse” (p. 22). There is no better way to grasp this than to note how today the logic of what happens in our world is ever more governed by the twin discourses of science and capitalism. This combination produces endless new product within an endless cause-effect chain from which, and this is crucial, the human subject is largely eliminated. In other words, both science and capitalism are headless, meaning what it makes sense to do, or do next, does not and cannot take account of human good (e.g. the next discovery/manipulation of nature, the next profit opportunity) except by virtue of imposing on this combination, ethical committees and think tanks that argue over what is best, while invariably displaying a “light touch” when it comes to controls. It hardly needs to be said in this time of the pandemic, but this objectifying logic, which elides the subject, has been going on for a long time: exploiting nature to the extent that human life is itself now put at risk with, for example, the potential effects of climate change posing a far greater risk in both scale and danger than the current pandemic.

A second and related impasse concerns what one could call “our way of life” which is everywhere becoming more unstable as what was once known as “the working class” morphs into the class of the indebted precariat who swells the ranks of the economically marginalised. In other words, in the face of the automation that is coming, (e.g. transport employs around 13 million people in the US or close to 10% of the working population – though accountancy and other “high level” professions are also disappearing) what will human life become? Here Zygmunt Bauman has provocatively argued that we are at a point where so-called progress entails the production not only of more and more “material waste” but also “human waste”. What he means by this are, simply, humans who are “excess to requirements”, not the unemployed of old but the permanently redundant, those who cannot find a socially acceptable and secure identity within a world increasingly run by computers and thus are in danger of ending up in “new and segregated ghettos”, or as stateless and placeless refugees in a world where new territories to emigrate to - no longer provide a solution. It is an image of an inhospitable and even hostile symbolic world for many millions of people, a dismantling of the social collective by virtue of which the outcome can hardly be considered stable. Is it any wonder then, to also note here, that for years now the WHO has consistently reported on what they term a global epidemic of depression and anxiety which disproportionately affects the so-called developed world?

Such macro effects also of course have more intimate effects, for example, on family bonds and the disappearing institution of marriage, the latter being increasingly replaced by serial monogamy (e.g. over 25% of married Americans have been married two or more times). In his paper, *The Unconscious and the Speaking Body* (2014) Miller, for example, comments on how pornography which today is pervasive on the internet introduces something new in our social regime of sexuality whereby the readymade, as in all-readymade fantasy scene, is always just a click away. It is, Miller argues, an example of “no regulation”, representing rather a call to what he terms “infracture”. A constant push to jouissance that is moreover solitary, a drive satisfaction drained of meaning, something that appears clinically, he says, in a new generation in touch with, I quote: “the disenchantment, brutalisation and banalisation” (p. 30) of the sexual, a place where we can see pornography used as a defence against or refusal of the sexual non-rapport.

This brings me to the fourth point I would like to make correlative to this “fall of the Other” in our contemporary world. Namely, that our identity is increasingly tied to consumption and the act of consuming (as against the work/production ethic of early capitalism), whereby industrial objects, jouissance objects, reach their zenith within our experience. As Jean-Louis Gault in his paper *The Culture of Hypermodern Civilisation and Contemporary Symptoms* has pointed out in a nice alliteration, the impasse occurs here for the subject in so far as these modalities of consumptive jouissance are:

- Anonymous, generalised and mass produced
- Autistic, in that the satisfaction obtained ignores the relation with the other and only minimally depends on the social bond (e.g. getting “high” for many people has this quality)
- Addictive, in so far as the subject becomes fixated to a satisfaction that is stereotypical and repetitive (and today – modes of addictive consumption are just about everywhere) – and,
- A-sexual, in so far as the encounter with the other as radical difference, a body that is sexually other to one’s own, is suppressed.

The fact that we are caught-up in such consumption has several sources though one worth highlighting is that, unlike in Freud’s time the superego no longer prohibits, no longer insists on the renunciation of satisfaction thus supposing a big Other, but rather, as Lacan pointed out, acts as a voice that commands enjoyment – it literally says “Enjoy!” ... it’s your duty. The market and advertising has to some extent understood this (if not necessarily in Lacanian terms, but “you deserve it” comes close!) in that what is always presented to the subject is some version of: the land of milk and honey is just a purchase away - always - which is the trick, in other words this promised satisfaction must feed on precisely dissatisfaction.

Finally, and to finish, I would like to say just a few words about analytic praxis in this time of the “fall of the Other”. In other words, if psychoanalysis is capable of reading the changes in the Other alongside and through their subjective effects it remains one voice among many that challenge us to consider at this point in our globalised history what might be a way forward, a way to avoid the worst, in terms of governance, economics, politics and culture. As for the analytic discourse itself we can say it is against massification emphasising thus singularity and the one-all-alone, as Miller states, we can say here it is in tune with a certain form of “democratic individualism”. In practice it works from alienation to separation in that via an analysis the subject meets there his status as exile in relation to the discourse of the Other - this Other, as we have seen, that doesn’t exist - and if at the end the subject is left with something of his or her symptom, well I quote Miller, “it no longer has any meaning” (2012, p. 135). Beyond this deflation of desire the subject encounters the opaque real of a body jouissance (an enjoying substance), outside meaning, that must be lived as no longer, impossible-to-bear, or to put it more positively lived as a mode of satisfaction.

The Fall of the Other, or its Erosion and the Consent to its (Re)Construction as a Fiction

Howard Rouse

I have also been asked to talk about this syntagma, “the fall of the Other”, and I would like to begin by saying that my first reaction to it was felt in the register of the passions. With some passions, we are already in a realm that presupposes this “fall”, because Lacan of course distinguished between what he calls the passions of being – love, hatred and ignorance – passions that are securely attached to the Other, and what he calls – following a classical nomenclature – the passions of the soul – passions that are just as definitively detached

from the Other. Following JAM's course, *The One All Alone* – which I will talk about a little later – we might even speak of the ontological passions and the henological passions, the passions of the One or existence.

I want to refer to two of these latter passions: enthusiasm and bad humour. For my first reaction to this title, “the fall of the Other”, and to the poster that accompanied it – which I am sure you have all seen – was enthusiastic. This enthusiasm corresponded, I think, to a metaphor that Lacan uses in his “Proposition” on the pass in 1967: that of a “door” that is traversed, once the subject's fundamental fantasy has “fallen” or “capsized”, as Lacan puts it, and that leads to the confrontation with an apparently “windowless” real.

This enthusiasm soon gave way, however, to the passion of bad humour; to the “bad mood” that was chosen by ICLO-NLS to advertise my presentation – and I accept wholeheartedly this return of my own message in an inverted form; to what JAM has described as this “touch of the real” that represents “real happiness”; and to what Éric Laurent has defined as this seeming “opposite of enthusiasm” that, in a singular dialectical reversal, permits its own kind of enthusiasm. Bad humour can be encapsulated in the jaculation: “That's not it!”; or, indeed, “That's never it!”. Jouissance never corresponds with, is always disjunct from, desire. And this is what I thought about this syntagma, “the fall of the Other”: “That's not it!”

Why? Very quickly, I want to give two replies.

Firstly, then, I would contend that the Other does not really “fall” in a psychoanalysis. Indeed, in the very year that Lacan speaks about the “fall” or “capsizing” of the Other in the fantasy, 1967, he is also already moving beyond the limitations, the suddenness, I would say, of this metaphor. I will quote just a couple of sentences from the report on the seminar *The Logic of the Fantasy*, that can be found on p. 327 of the *Autres écrits*: “with the reference to jouissance”, Lacan says, “there emerges the only ontics that is admissible to us. But it is no small thing that this is only approached in practice” – in the practice of psychoanalysis – “through the gullies/ravines (*les ravinements*) that it traces in/from the place of the Other”. Lacan's metaphor here is extremely precise. The gullies/ravines of jouissance are precisely traced not through the fall of the Other, but through its erosion. And it is no coincidence that at exactly this point Lacan changes his conception of the Other. This Other is not, as people like to attribute to him, he says, the Other of “spirit”, the signifier, language. Instead, it is the very Other of this Other. The Other, Lacan affirms here for the first time, is the body.

This, then, would be my first response. The Other does not so much fall as erode; and give way through this erosion to the real alterity of the Other as the body.

In order to articulate my second response, I will refer to the end of a class from JAM's course *The One All Alone*, from the 18th May 2011. What Miller says here very much struck and surprised me when I first read it (and I was also struck and surprised by the references to what he says in a number of cartels of the pass, usually in order to explain the reasons for a non-nomination as Analyst of the School).

Miller is speaking here about the passage – the pass, precisely – from the symbolic causality of the fantasy to the real causality of the One, the body and the *sinthome*. Or, again, about the passage – the pass – from the ontology of being to the henology of existence. In the pass, he says, the subject relates what it has been able to do with the lack of being to which it has acceded. There is, we might say, a “fall” or, better, “erosion” of the Other at this level. Beyond the pass, however, Miller continues, what is at stake is the relation with a hole. Once the function of the Other has been eroded, “reduced”, Miller says, it is a question of the One.

The subject now knows how to speak alone, knows that it has reduced the delusion of believing that it is capable of communicating with the Other of truth.

But here is what is really paradoxical. This subject sifted down to its solitude in the beyond of the pass has to present itself in the forms of the pass, and, I quote, “consent to the fiction of the Other of psychoanalysis”. Furthermore, and crucially, it is only this consent – or assent, we might say, following what Lacan himself says about Cardinal Newman’s famous *Grammar of Assent* – it is only this consent or assent to the (re)construction of the fiction of the Other that can properly sustain a psychoanalyst in his or her practice.

This, then, would be my second response. If the first Other of Lacan’s teaching ultimately erodes into the second Other of the jouissance of the speaking body, then this speaking body in its solitude must in turn consent – in every session of pure psychoanalysis, and in every instantiation of applied psychoanalysis – to the (re)construction of an Other of fiction that is radically different in each and every case.

I work a lot with subjects whose connection with the Other is minimal, whose Other has never “fallen” because it has never properly been erected. And, in the uncertain exit from the fall of the social Other that the coronavirus has imposed upon us, one of the things that has most struck me is the encounter with subjects – one in particular – whose precarious construction of an Other has really “fallen” as a consequence of the over-proximity to others that the situation has compelled, and who comes to her sessions in order to be able to begin to possibly (re)construct an Other of fiction. In both instances, my practice has been sustained by something at least resembling the consent that Miller describes.

Perhaps it is here that bad humour can produce its own kind of enthusiasm.

