

Colette Soler, *Lacan Reading Joyce*, trans. Devra Simiu, Routledge, 2018 (Dipanjan Maitra)

[...] the style of the Seminar borrows nothing from the style of the Joyceans so attached to each word, so concerned with each detail, so devoted to elucidating each point and tracing each of Joyce's allusions. On the contrary, *The Sinthome*, there is no fascination whatsoever with the text of the author who is his object; nor will one find anything that resembles a proper literary analysis.¹

Says Colette Soler in her *Lacan Reading Joyce* (Routledge, 2018) translated from the French by Devra Simiu from her 2015 book, *Lacan, lecteur de Joyce* (2015). This is welcome addition for her English readers who after some hiatus following *What Lacan Said About Women* (2006) have been greeted by several swift translations of Soler's works in recent years: *Lacan: The Unconscious Reinvented* (2014), *Lacanian Affects* (2015), and the recent *Humanisation?* (2018). The present volume, a commentary on Lacan's late engagement with Joyce must surely be seen alongside Robert Harari's *How James Joyce Made His Name: A Reading of the Final Lacan* (Other Press, 2002) and Raul Moncayo's reading companion, *Lalangue, Sinthome, Jouissance and Nomination* (Karnac, 2017), which have enriched our understanding of Lacan's challenging twenty-third seminar *Le Sinthome* (1975-1976), long available in Jacques-Alain Miller's established version (Seuil, 2005) and in numerous bootleg English versions available online ever since until Adrian Price's 2016 translation of the seminar, *The Sinthome* (Polity) filled the gap.

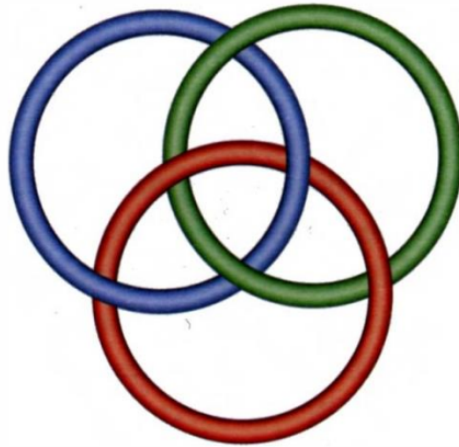
Although Lacan's references to self-exiled Irish modernist James Joyce (1882-1941) go back at least as early as his second seminar in the session on "The Purloined Letter" (1954-1955), the years 1975-1976 provide us with the richest source of Lacan's thoughts on Joyce². This is exactly the period Soler decides to focus on in her book.

The year 1975 saw Lacan delivering the keynote lecture at the International James Joyce Symposium in Paris, at Joyce scholar, translator and Lacanian Jacques Aubert's insistence. The relevant texts from this

¹ Colette Soler, *Lacan Reading Joyce* (New York & London: Routledge, 2018), 4.

² See Lacan's second and twenty-third seminars, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book II, 1954-1955: The Ego in Freud's Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis*, trans. S. Tomaselli (W.W. Norton & Co., 1988) and *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book XXIII, 1975-1976: The Sinthome*, trans. Adrian R. Price (Cambridge: Polity, 2016)

period are many, while those with the most direct references to Joyce's works are "Joyce the Symptom I" (Lacan's lecture at the Symposium), "Joyce the Symptom II" (a later, markedly different version of the lecture with almost untranslatable puns), "On James Joyce as Symptom" delivered at Nice in 1976³. These shorter texts help illuminate, problematize Lacan's seminar for the session 1975-1976, entitled *Le Sinthome*— marking a major shift in his clinical apparatus by naming a fourth register of the unconscious after the real, the symbolic and the imaginary, namely the *sinthome*. The word "sinthome," an old spelling for "symptom" in French that Rabelais (also a physician) is said to have used, immediately brings in many associations. Lacan himself delineates several: sin, St. Thomas, home/home rule (as a reference to the Irish Home Rule movement, Joyce commented on) etc.⁴ But as Soler notes here, from the previous seminar on *R.S.I.* (1974-1975) onward, Lacan had been hinting at the possibility of a fourth Borromean ring to form a chain of four. The fourth ring, in seminar XXIII is now posited as the Sinthome, one that can act as a *suppléance* that can help re-knot a "fault" in the RSI (See figs. 1 and 2).



³ Lacan, Jacques. "Joyce le Symptôme," *Autres écrits* (Paris: Seuil, 2001), 565-571. See also, Lacan, Jacques. "Joyce the Symptom," *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book XXIII, 1975-1976: The Sinthome*, trans. Adrian R. Price (Cambridge: Polity, 2016), 141-148. For Lacan's presentation at Nice see Richard Klein's excellent bilingual website, Lacan, Jacques. "La conférence « De James Joyce comme symptôme » le 24 janvier 1976 à Nice," https://www.freud2lacan.com/docs/NICE_1976-Bilingual.pdf

⁴ *The Sinthome*, 6

Figure 1: The three Lacanian registers of the unconscious, the Real, the Symbolic and the Imaginary (RSI) depicted here with three equivalent Borromean rings. Since the rings are equivalent, there is no inherent hierarchy between them. (*The Sinthome*, 48)

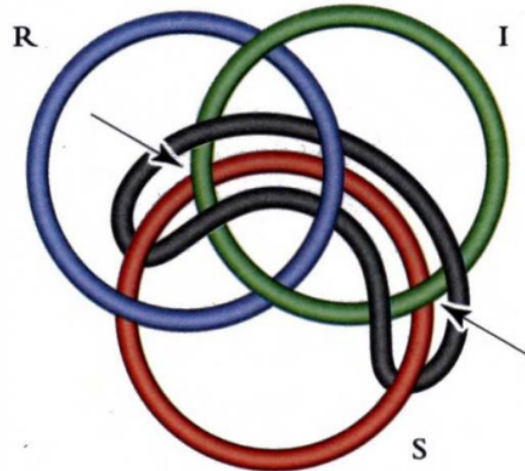


Figure 2: The Sinthome (in black), a fourth ring, helping repair a “fault” in knotting. The Sinthome here, depicted here helps re-knot a disintegrating RSI. (*The Sinthome*, 77)

Lacan approached the construction of the sinthome in the seminar via the writings of James Joyce, especially *Finnegans Wake* (1939). As a result, Joyce, his life and works form a major component of the seminar with Jacques Aubert delivering his informed readings for several sessions as well. The significance of the seminar has of course not been restricted to Joycean or for that matter even psychoanalytical circles. However, as a commentary (however non-literary, to quote Soler) on Joyce, whose works have spawned one of the largest academic communities in the world with multiple, regular journals, symposiums dedicated exclusively to his work, the seminar and the shorter texts have understandably inspired several dissertations, monographs and multiple commentaries. As Jean-Michel

Rabaté, himself the author of three influential studies⁵ of Joyce inspired by Lacan notes, we are perhaps witnessing only the start of a long series of works, commentaries on Joyce/Lacan interphase:

As a growing number of scholars have begun to realize, following Jacques Aubert's inroads into Lacanian readings, Lacan's terms provide a strong frame of reference allowing for a general assessment of Joyce's works. In France and Latin America, thousands of new readers have discovered the pleasure and hardships of a textual battle with the intricacies of *Finnegans Wake*, spurred on by the influential readings provided by Lacan's seminar in the middle of the seventies.⁶

Indeed, if one were to take even a cursory look at literature around the Joyce/Lacan interphase from the side of Joyceans, one would have to take note of a plethora of critical voices— Sheldon Brivic's two important studies: *The Veil of Signs: Joyce, Lacan, and Perception* (1991) and *Joyce through Lacan and Žižek: Explorations* (2008), Garry Leonard's *Reading Dubliners Again: A Lacanian Perspective* (1993), Christine van Boheemen's *Joyce, Derrida, Lacan and the Trauma of History* (1999), Luke Thurston's *James Joyce and the Problem of Psychoanalysis* (2004) and even recent studies such as, Ehsan Azari's *Lacan and the Destiny of Literature: Desire, Jouissance and the Sinthome in Shakespeare, Donne, Joyce and Ashbery* (2009) or Daniel Bristow's *Joyce and Lacan: Reading, Writing, and Psychoanalysis* (2016). Not every analysis has been laudatory of the interphase. Geert Lernout's *The French Joyce* (1991) though not dedicated to Lacan exclusively, is largely critical of his approach and alert to Lacan's reading of Joyce.

But the fact that there should be so many studies interlinking Lacan with literature, let alone Joyce should not come as a surprise. Lacan's engagement with literary icons goes back to his youth, in his well-documented interest in surrealism and art in Parisian circles. Elisabeth Roudinesco recounts Lacan's association with Shakespeare and Company,

⁵ See Jean-Michel Rabaté, *James Joyce, Authorized Reader* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991); *Joyce upon the Void: Genesis of Doubt* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1991); and *James Joyce and the Politics of Egoism* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

⁶ *James Joyce and the Politics of Egoism*, 5

the famous bookstore-cum-lending library on rue de l'Odéon founded by American expatriate Sylvia Beach and Parisian bookseller Adrienne Monnier:

Jacques, accompanied by Francis Goullin and Robert de Saint Jean, started going to Adrienne Monnier's bookshop, Shakespeare & Co., at 7, rue de l'Odéon. Adrienne Monnier, with her smooth round cheeks and her full, pleated skirts, organized public readings where her customers could meet writers who were already famous, such as Andre Gide, Jules Romains, and Paul Claudel. Lacan was also interested in dadaism and soon discovered the new outlook and early manifestations of surrealism through the review *Littérature*. He met André Breton and Philippe Soupault and listened spellbound, at Shakespeare & Co., to the first readings of James Joyce's *Ulysses*.⁷

Spellbound or not, we now know how Lacan was not only present at the iconic *Ulysses* séance on 7 December 1921 where Valery Larbaud introduced *Ulysses* to Paris, Lacan borrowed books from Shakespeare and Company which were related to Joyce⁸. While Lacan would refer to Joyce multiple times in his seminars, he would recall specifically to this séance in what we call Joyce the Symptom I, from 1975, where he specified his "meeting" with Joyce:

Coming from a fairly sordid background, Stanislas to mention it by name —I had a clerical upbringing, as did Joyce, but the priests were less serious than his, Jesuits, and God knows what he was able to make of that—in short, emerging from this sordid background, it so happens that at seventeen, thanks to the fact that I used to drop by Adrienne Monnier's shop, I met Joyce. So too did I attend, when I was twenty, the first reading of the French translation of *Ulysses* that came out.⁹

Lacan might not be accurate about dates here (when Lacan was seventeen, c. 1918, Joyce had not yet reached Paris, the first French translation of

⁷ Elisabeth Roudinesco, *Jacques Lacan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 12-13.

⁸ Davis, Michael. "Jacques Lacan and Shakespeare and Company." *James Joyce Quarterly*, Vol. 32, No. 3/4, Out of the Archives (Spring - Summer, 1995), 754-758

⁹ *The Sinthome*, 142

Ulysses appeared in 1929 when Lacan was nearing thirty), Lacan is also forging a connection between himself and Joyce via their upbringing: Lacan's Catholic schooling at Collège Stanislas (incidentally, Stanislaus was Joyce's brother's first name and his father John's middle name) and Joyce's initial Jesuit schooling in Ireland. What is also at stake here is Lacan's implicit reference to "heresy," or what Lacan calls "emergence" from a religious background, sordid or otherwise. After all, the word "heresy" could well be a pun on "RSI" in French and derived from αἰρέομαι (literally: I choose) is also a question of choice¹⁰. For Lacan, the heretic is he who *chooses* to use the *sinthome* in the right manner, i.e. one who recognizes the "logic" of one's *sinthome* and manages to use it to reach the real.

However, this by no means exhausts the possibilities of interpreting, explaining a Joycean heresy via Lacan, who for all practical purposes described his ouster from the IPA in 1964 as an "excommunication." This is why, if the reader is looking for an exhaustive reading of *Le Sinthome* she might be better advised to consult Harari's *How James Joyce Made His Name*.¹¹ Soler is careful to isolate only certain key issues here.

What are these issues? Soler specifies a few broad themes of the seminar: the relationship between psychoanalysis and literature for instance. Can this relationship transcend that of "application"? This marks a crucial shift from Freud to Lacan. For Freud, literature, literary artists were seen as precursors to analysts who anticipated "the discovery of the unconscious"¹². In other words, literary works were on the "same level" as that of the formations of the unconscious, which for Lacan did not avoid the "pitfall of applied psychoanalysis":

On this point, Lacan reversed the Freudian perspective: analytic interpretation does not apply in literature. [...] For any work, whether it be poetry or a novel, the text can always be interpreted, that is to say, we can give it meaning. Here psychoanalysis verges on being a hermeneutics.¹³

¹⁰ *The Sinthome*, 7

¹¹ Roberto Harari, *How James Joyce Made His Name*, trans. Luke Thurston (New York: Other Press, 2002)

¹² *Lacan Reading Joyce*, 5

¹³ *Ibid*, 5

Soler argues for a psychoanalytic reading that is not a hermeneutics in that it refuses to see all literature as message. Rather, it focuses on the mechanisms of its production, what can also be called the *know-how* of the message. The word “know-how”/savoir-faire is of central importance here. As Soler insists, this is an aspect altogether different from knowledge, unconscious or otherwise. Know-how is geared towards constructing one’s *sinthome*: understanding Joyce’s artistry is to understand how Joyce constructed his *sinthome* to re-knot his RSI. This can be understood from the title of Joyce’s novel itself: *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916) presumes to speak of *the* artist and as Lacan argues, it theorizes what it is to be an artist as well.

This is precisely where one could say Lacan’s “reading” of Joyce and Joycean texts differs from psychoanalytical hermeneutics, and perhaps from his previous readings of literary authors: Poe, Shakespeare, Gide, Claudel, Duras and others. Not a “proper” literary analysis, therefore. Soler calls it a “diagnosis” in the sense that it seeks to unravel Joyce’s uniqueness, the “absolute difference” that his unconscious demonstrates in the know-how producing his works.

In the seminar Lacan himself lays bare the hallmark of a psychoanalytical reading as distinct from traditional literary analysis, close/distant readings. This can be understood from what can be called a practice of “restraint.” Freud, according to Lacan, exercised “restraint” as a literary critic. That is to say, Freud did not attempt any “exhaustive” or totalizing literary analysis. As Lacan observes, this is apparent from Freud’s reluctance to analyze long novels, or writing longer literary studies and restricting himself to shorter articles:

On this score, Freud only wrote articles, and limited articles at that. Besides, apart from Dostoyevsky, he never analyzed a novel in the strict sense. He made a brief allusion to Ibsen’s *Rosmersholm*, but ultimately he contained himself.¹⁴

For the seminar as well as for his short talks on Joyce, Lacan did his homework on the burgeoning field of Joyce Studies with Jacques Aubert but he steered away from psychoanalytical readings of Joyce that had begun

¹⁴ *The Sinthome*, 56

to make an appearance. His well-known jibe at Mark Shechner's *Joyce in Nighttown* (1974)¹⁵ centered precisely on an exhaustive literary analysis:

Unlike *Surface and Symbol* [by Robert M. Adams], this analysis of *Ulysses* [Mark Shechner, *Joyce in Nighttown: A Psychoanalytic Inquiry into 'Ulysses,'* 1974] which naturally is an exhaustive one - because when you analyse a book you can't really stop, can you? - makes an altogether terrifying impression.¹⁶

One could say therefore, as Soler argued, Lacan's engagement with Joyce in the seminar in not being a "proper literary analysis" moves away from interpretation in a sense, perhaps even beyond Freud. In fact, as Soler expertly shows, Lacan seems to have been constantly puncturing some of Freud's narratives, or what she calls Freud's "novel," namely the Oedipus Complex.

Lacan's early move (and one could see this reaching major developments in Seminar V, *Formations of the Unconscious*, 1957-1958) was to reduce the story of the Oedipus Complex to a metaphor: the paternal metaphor or the Name of the Father. Soler says that by Seminar X, *Anxiety* (1962-1963) the Oedipus Complex was already "secondary, a delusion, a comedy, of no use in analysis."¹⁷ By seminar XXIII the paternal metaphor had become a symptom, but one that could be made "use of":

The hypothesis of the unconscious, and Freud underscores this, is something that can only hold up by presupposing the Name-of-the-Father. Presupposing the Name-of-the-Father, which is certainly God, is how psychoanalysis, when it succeeds, proves that the Name-of-the-Father can just as well be bypassed. One can just as well bypass it, on the condition that one make use of it.¹⁸

This apparently puzzling remark can be made sense of in many ways. If the sinthome can act as a *suppléance*, helping to repair, a collapsing RSI verging towards psychosis then a fourth ring is a *supplementary* solution to the

¹⁵ Shechner, Mark. *Ulysses in Nighttown: A Psychoanalytic Inquiry into Ulysses* (Berkeley: University of California Pres, 1974)

¹⁶ Lacan, 56

¹⁷ *Lacan Reading Joyce*, 9

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 116

problem. In other words, the sinthome can certainly prevent psychosis in a patient but at the same time it changes the equivalent status of the rings (Fig.2). The sinthome can prevent a collapse but in a more radical way it necessitates a re-knotting of the RSI. This is why Soler says that the sinthome is not a simply yes/no binary response to psychosis, but a question of “working with” the RSI so as to produce a re-knotting of the RSI, after they have been unknotted¹⁹. The radical shift in the mechanism of the paternal metaphor can be understood through this non-binary. Will Greenshields puts it succinctly when he notes how the Oedipus Complex now reincarnated as the paternal metaphor becomes the very *condition* of the unconscious:

The hypothesis of the unconscious, and Freud underscores this, is something that can only hold up by presupposing the Name-of-the-Father. Presupposing the Name-of-the-Father, which is certainly God, is how psychoanalysis, when it succeeds, proves that the Name-of-the-Father can just as well be bypassed. One can just as well bypass it, on the condition that one makes use of it.²⁰

This means that the paternal metaphor becomes the very condition for the real, the symbolic and the imaginary to exist. It becomes a structural condition. Thus Lacan contends the only way to “bypass” the Oedipus Complex is to “make use of” it, which means to make use of its structural property. This essentially comes down to converting it to a register of the unconscious as a sinthome, as Greenshields puts it:

The mythical model of the Name-of-the-Father (as that which holds the Other together) is “by-passed,” while “use is made” of the structural function of the Name-of-the-Father (as that which knots RSI), when this responsibility is fulfilled by the sinthome²¹.

This is also how the sinthome attains a fundamental, structural quality. How is it relevant for Joyce? Lacan answered the question in several ways, without directly saying whether Joyce had psychotic tendencies or if indeed

¹⁹ *ibid*, 40

²⁰ Will Greenshields, *Writing the Structures of the Subject: Lacan and Topology* (London: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2017), 116

²¹ *Writing the Structures of the Subject*, 216

if he was verging towards one. In fact, as Soler points out, perhaps a distinction needs to be made between madness, psychosis and delusion. In the seminar, Lacan detects a crucial moment in Joyce's corpus where he sees a failure of the knotting of the RSI.

In Joyce's novel *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916), the protagonist Stephen Dedalus distinguishes himself early with his unusual literary tastes. In one key episode going back to his schooldays, Stephen is surrounded by several of his classmates and led by a boy named Heron and is asked to name his favorite poet. When Stephen mentions Byron and even calls Tennyson (by far the popular choice) a "rhymester" he is promptly beaten up. Stephen's main crime seems to have been to be in support of Byron, who for Heron and others around him was "immoral" and even a "heretic." The link with heresy apart, what Lacan finds relevant here is Stephen's reaction to this treatment:

While he was still repeating the Confiteor amid the indulgent laughter of his hearers and 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 cowardice and cruelty but the memory of it called forth no anger from him. All the descriptions of fierce love and hatred which he had met in books had seemed to him therefore unreal. Even that night as he stumbled homewards along Jones's Road he had felt that some power was divesting him of that suddenwoven anger as easily as a fruit is divested of its soft ripe peel²².

Lacan selects this moment when Stephen realizes that he bears no malice to his tormentors. Stephen's reaction is not that of a masochist since there is no evidence of *jouissance* here. There is no indication that Stephen is probably enjoying being beaten up. Instead, he feels as though some power was "divesting" him of his anger, the way a fruit is separated from its peel. Lacan thinks this is a moment where Stephen's ego slips out of the knotting, as though he feels divested from his body, which for Lacan is a

²²James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, ed. Jeri Johnson (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 69.

marker of the imaginary. Lacan shows it in the form of a “botched link”²³ (Fig.3):

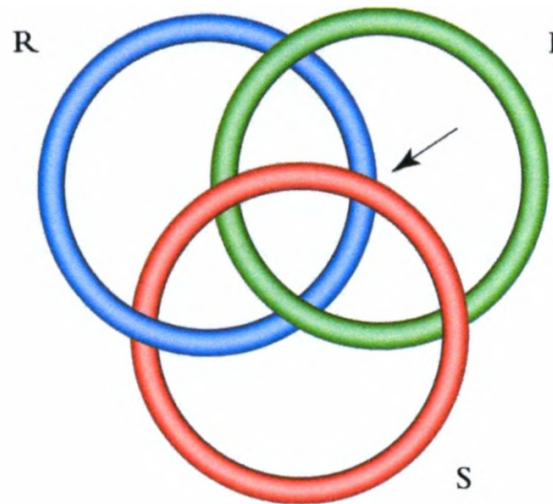


Figure 3: A botched link

When such a botched link appears, the imaginary can slide away:

All that remains to this capital I is for it simply to clear off. It slides away, in just the same way as what Joyce feels after his hiding. It slides, and the imaginary relationship has no locus.²⁴

This sliding of the ego has consequences. Lacan thinks Joyce is “unreadable” because his works do not “stir any sympathy” in us and this is perhaps because the function of the Ego and by implication that of the imaginary in his works is problematic and does not appeal to our ego either. Soler modifies this view slightly: if the Joyce of *Finnegans Wake* is unreadable, he was not always so: the Joyce of *Chamber Music*, *Dubliners*, *Stephen Hero* or *A Portrait* for instance. Was there an “evolution” of some kind then? Soler resolves this conundrum by citing the example of Joyce’s epiphanies: early collection of slips of tongue, shorter scenes from daily life, found phrases, which for Soler, disrupt the meaning of the corpus:

²³ *The Sinthome*, 130

²⁴ *Ibid*,131

[...] I believe that, upon careful inspection, what presents itself as an evolution was in fact there from the beginning. Between the readable poems of his youth and the strange epiphanies from the same period, there is approximately the same relation as between *Portrait* and *Finnegans Wake*: it is the difference between the readable and the enigmatic... However one considers them, these epiphanies are enigmas to the reader; the question of their meaning is unsettled. Thus, from readable to unreadable, there is no diachrony but synchrony. From the beginning the, the epiphanic process attacks the coherence of situations and of discourse.²⁵

But if the *sinthome* is “repairing” a fault, then what is it repairing in Joyce’s case? Traditionally, psychosis is associated with foreclosure, a failure of the paternal metaphor. And certainly, Joyce’s father, John Stanislaus Joyce gave ample evidence to suggest how he was a failing father. Soler goes deep into Joyce’s family history to showcase this. In this, she follows Lacan in deliberately blurring the distinction between Joyce’s fiction and his biography so that Stephen Dedalus becomes a mouthpiece for Joyce. As Lacan says in the seminar: Stephen is the Joyce that Joyce dreams up²⁶. John Joyce’s declining fortunes, “boisterous conviviality” left the Joyce family almost perpetually impoverished, and led to a rapid fall in social, economic and with the death of Parnell, even political ambitions²⁷. However, in one of the more original sections of the book, aptly titled “An Original Diagnosis” Soler absolves John Joyce of having initiated Joyce’s foreclosure. She calls Joyce’s a *de facto foreclosure*:

[...] but *de facto* foreclosure, if the fact is suspended from the said, which does not exist without the saying, this is an enunciative, enacted foreclosure. A foreclosure that is not to be inferred from its effects, as I was saying about the Name of the Father, because it is, so to speak resolute, just as one speaks about resolute desire. To put it rather bluntly, it is not because of the father, but because of the son.²⁸

²⁵ *Lacan Reading Joyce*, 77

²⁶ *The Sinthome*, 53

²⁷ *Lacan Reading Joyce*, 46

²⁸ *Ibid*, 51

For Soler, Joyce's "enunciative foreclosure" is a result of his trying to "decipher his own riddle." This can be attributed to what Lacan in various ways designated as the "singularity" of Joyce's artistry. This singularity can be traced in what Lacan called in "Joyce the Symptom" the presence of Joyce's jouissance in *Finnegans Wake* which made Lacan ask why Joyce published the book in the first place. For Lacan, *Finnegans Wake* expresses the "essence" of Joyce's symptom, and the absolute singularity of it:

The fact that he did publish it is what I should hope, were he still here, would let me convince him that he wanted to be Joyce the Symptom, inasmuch as he offers the apparatus, the essence, and the abstraction, of the symptom. If there is one thing that accounts for the fact noted by Clive Hart - that in following him step by step, by the end one finds oneself tired out by it - then it is precisely that this proves how your own symptom, for you like everyone else, is the only thing that holds any interest for you. The symptom in Joyce is a symptom that concerns you in no respect whatsoever. It is the symptom inasmuch as it stands no chance whatsoever of hooking anything of your unconscious. I think this is the meaning behind what was said by the person who asked me about why he published it.²⁹

As Soler notes, this is also a completely new formulation of the symptom as a concept: from a formation of the unconscious that one could "get rid of" to "cure" a patient, it becomes the distinguishing marker of subjectivity. Lacan seems to imply here that by conveying his own symptom in *Finnegans Wake* Joyce expressed the absolute singularity of his unconscious, so much so that it bore no interest to anyone else but him. Herein lies the singularity of Joyce's artistry, his know-how. This is why Soler notes perceptively that Joyce, despite the failure of his paternal function, does not work for the "family tree" but tries to be the first of a genealogy: "But Joyce did not work for the family tree. Rather, he claims to abolish it, to make himself, paradoxically, the beginning, the origin."³⁰

For other Lacanians too, even those who would differ sharply from Soler's reading of the seminar, such as Jacques-Alain Miller (Soler similarly

²⁹ Lacan, "Joyce the Symptom," 145

³⁰ *Lacan Reading Joyce*, 71

notes how Miller's edition of the seminar edits out crucial paragraphs for no conceivable reason³¹), would also agree that Joyce's craft consisted in "making a name." This is an act of nomination that can make up for faults in the Name of the Father:

Lacan reminded us that Joyce wished to immortalise his name, to make himself a name, immortalising it by making a place for it in universal memory. He refers it to the paternal failure which Joyce suffered from, so that he would have succeeded in making a version of the Name-of-the-Father with his own proper name.³²

Joyce, who famously told his aunt that he wanted "to be famous when I am alive" might have agreed³³.

As already noted, *Lacan Reading Joyce* is not a commentary on every aspect of *The Sinthome*. For instance, Soler has little to say about the topological maneuverings in the seminar. The reader looking to understand Lacan's innovations on this front would be best advised to read Ellie Ragland and Dragan Milovanovic edited *Lacan: Topologically Speaking* (2004), or the writings of Jean-Michel Vappereau.³⁴ While Lacanians or students of psychoanalysis needing an insight into the many labyrinths of Seminar XXIII would be richly rewarded in having a grasp over some of the more challenging concepts (reformulating older ones or introducing new ones), the book would also serve those wanting to follow Lacan's interactions with literary figures. However, one of the main drawbacks of the book is its reluctance to engage with some of the more recent scholarship on Joyce— genetic criticism for instance— which have alerted us to Joyce's own complex negotiations with psychoanalysis and Freud. This would have surely enriched our understanding of a post-Joycean psychoanalysis if taken into account. Not that this is particularly new to Lacanians, Daniel Bristow's 2016 book *Joyce and Lacan: Reading, Writing, and*

³¹ Ibid, 21-22

³² Miller, Jacques-Alain. "Lacan with Joyce." *Psychoanalytical Notebooks: A Review of the London Society of the New Lacanian School*, Issue 13, May 2005, 18.

³³ Quoted in Richard Ellmann, *James Joyce* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 142.

³⁴ See Ellie Ragland and Dragan Milovanovic. *Lacan: Topologically Speaking* (New York: Other Press, 2004). See also Jean-Michel Vappereau's essay in the collection, "Making Rings: The Hole of the Sinthome in the Embedding of the Topology of the Subject," 328-360.

Psychoanalysis (Routledge) refers to Joyce's notes from Freud's case studies, expertly unearthed by Daniel Ferrer.³⁵

In all, the book's main strength lies perhaps in shedding new light on the unique space that Lacan allocated to Joyce in his later teachings. It also helps us see how what Lacan learned from Joyce could be of use to the Lacanian clinic. Patricia Gherovici's recent *Transgender Psychoanalysis* (2017) bears ample evidence to this as well³⁶. But perhaps the most enduring legacy of the book would be its portrayal of some of Lacan's last innovations. Lacan's bold foray into perhaps the most obscure "novel" of the twentieth century to give one final twist to his already dazzling output, in one of his last seminars before his death on 1980 still remains an astonishing feat. In that, as Soler shows, he rivals James Joyce's own decision to devote seventeen of the final nineteen years of his life to a radically obscure, if not alienating last book. Lacan manages to give Joyce a new name, that of a symptom which as he shows ought to change the way we read and approach literature as well.

³⁵ See Daniel Bristow's *Joyce and Lacan: Reading, Writing, and Psychoanalysis* (New York: Routledge), 2016. See also Daniel Ferrer, "The Freudful Couchmare of Λ d: Joyce's Notes on Freud and the Composition of Chapter XVI of "Finnegans Wake," *James Joyce Quarterly*, 22.4, 367–382

³⁶Patricia Gherovici, *Transgender Psychoanalysis: A Lacanian Perspective on Sexual Difference* (London and New York: Routledge, 2017).