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## Dancing beyond the Mirror Stage: Jacques Lacan and the Embodied Sinthome

Megan Sherritt, *The University of Western Ontario*

Supervisor: Pero, Allan, *The University of Western Ontario*

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in Theory and Criticism

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## Abstract

“Dancing beyond the Mirror Stage” brings Lacanian psychoanalytic theory and dance into conversation and explores what each can offer the other. Jacques Lacan, a French psychoanalyst, argues that James Joyce prevented psychosis by creating, via his writing, what Lacan terms a *sinthome*. Lacan defines psychosis as the separation of the rings that comprise the psyche—the real, the imaginary, and the symbolic—in which the imaginary ring threatens to slip away. Lacan argues that this *sinthome* is a fourth element in the psyche that works on the body (which shapes the imaginary) by contacting the real, keeping the imaginary in place and the psyche connected. At the end of his seminar on Joyce, Lacan comments that dance does not work on the body in the same manner. This dissertation scrutinizes that statement; intuitively, dance seems to involve the body more than writing does. I begin by unravelling Lacan’s understanding of the *sinthome* to show the key element for Joyce is how his writing plays with and binds elements of the real. I then turn to theories of dance, looking at what dance is and arguing that contrary to Lacan’s statement, dance can be *sinthome*. In fact, dance may be the art most likely to produce a *sinthome* because it is more closely connected to the imaginary (via the body) and the real. In other words, dance, like psychoanalysis, can help people contain intrusions of the real, then teach people who cannot play (because they feel intruded upon), how to play, producing a space of creativity. Thus, not only is dance like psychoanalysis but psychoanalysis might be more like (or need to be more like) dance. Therefore, having established dance can be a *sinthome*, I look at the implication of this conclusion—and the possibilities this offers—for both dance and psychoanalysis.

## Keywords

Jacques Lacan, psychoanalysis, psychoanalytic theory, dance, *sinthome*, psychosis, creativity, possibility, play, real, symbolic, imaginary

## Summary for Lay Audience

When it comes to psychosis, psychoanalysis and dance work the same: both teach someone who cannot play (because they feel intruded upon), how to play, by helping them contain those feelings of intrusion. Jacques Lacan, a French psychoanalyst, identifies the author James Joyce as having prevented psychosis through his writing; that is, Lacan argues Joyce's use of language helped him maintain a "normal" existence despite showing tendencies towards psychosis. I argue that writing was only the method through which Joyce worked, but the key element was play. For that reason, contrary to a comment Lacan makes suggesting dance cannot operate on the body in the same manner as writing does for Joyce, I argue dance may work similarly to Joyce's writing in that Joyce uses his writing to play with metre, tone, rhythm, and cadence; in other words, Joyce employs the elements of language that go beyond words and meaning to create order in the chaos of his mind. These elements not only exist within dance, but dance is also the art that both contains the elements Joyce plays with and teaches someone how to play if one cannot. Having determined dance can function similarly to the way writing did for Joyce, I then look to what this can tell us about—and the possibilities for—both psychoanalysis and dance, ultimately concluding that psychoanalysis and dance both offer the chance to open to possibilities that might otherwise seem impossible.

## Acknowledgments

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## Chapter 1 Warming Up

### 1 Psychoanalysis and Dance

Psychoanalysis is often considered more an art than a science, yet the relationship between the arts and psychoanalysis—or how they relate to each other—is rarely a topic of scholarly study. Furthermore, when art *is* examined in relation to psychoanalysis, certain art forms take precedence. Dance is often overlooked. Yet, I propose there is a unique relationship among dance, the psyche, and psychoanalysis and that a deeper understanding of dance can help us understand Jacques Lacan’s ideas of psychic integrity; additionally, looking at Lacan’s theory of psychosis (or psychic fragmentation) can strengthen this knowledge of dance and its relation to psychic integrity. In this dissertation, I undertake this analysis, and I begin by looking at Lacanian psychoanalysis. I first explore how Lacan understands the mind in psychosis. Using his own concepts, I argue that Lacan, who in *Seminar 23* suggests that the art of writing—when employed as poetic language—prevents the author James Joyce from falling into psychosis, downplays a key component of the relationship between Joyce’s writing and forestalling psychosis. I support my argument with additional contemporary psychoanalytic concepts and then look to dance, arguing that contrary to what Lacan intimates, dance is unique among the arts as it alone encompasses the qualities that he identifies as those that can support an ongoing integration of the psyche when it threatens to splinter. As such, dance, in a sense, thereby parallels the psychoanalytic process and can help one come to embody a new subjectivity.

#### 1.1 The Joycean Sinthome

Lacan argues that Joyce’s writing establishes a “sinthome,” or a fourth element holding together the Borromean knot that Lacan uses to represent the psyche. This knot is the knot of three (supposed-to-be) interconnected registers of the psyche: the real, the symbolic, and the imaginary. The three-element Borromean knot’s construction is such that if one link breaks, then all three registers are set free, which leads to psychosis. In such cases, a fourth element—the sinthome—is needed. Lacan argues that this sinthome

works on the body (which is the site of the imaginary, or fantasy) by contacting the real (that which resists meaning or understanding) and tying everything to the symbolic (the site of law, language, and the social). For Lacan, Joyce is the paradigmatic example of someone who knots his own sinthome (via the poetic language of his writing).

For Lacan, the real plays a vital role in both psychic disunity and in psychic health; not only does the real relate to trauma that insists upon the psyche in psychosis and cannot be symbolized, but it also brings the three registers of the psyche into harmony:

“Between the two poles constituted by the body and language, the real is what establishes an accord.”<sup>1</sup> Additionally, the real is necessarily tied to the symbolic; the real is the surplus that cannot be contained within the symbolic but which, nonetheless, is required for the symbolic to exist. In other words, although the real may contribute to psychosis for some, the healthy psyche must also incorporate the real. In his seminar on the sinthome, Lacan proposes that it is through writing that Joyce reaches the real. As Deborah Gutermann-Jacquet explains, “it becomes a writing of the real that brings the body into play: its weight, its wounds, and its secretions, in a dimension that is ultimately less one of exhibition than experience. . . . And the writing itself becomes a corporeality.”<sup>2</sup> This writing is, moreover, the writing of the letter (a writing which exists “outside the signifying chain and thus outside meaning”<sup>3</sup> one that appears in poetic

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<sup>1</sup> *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book 23: The Sinthome*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. A. R. Price (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2016), 29.

<sup>2</sup> “The Impossible-to-Write and the Unreadable: On the Relationships between Literature and the Lacanian Real,” *Recherches en psychanalyse* 19, no. 1 (2015): 47, <https://www.cairn.info/revue-recherches-en-psychanalyse-2015-1-page-43a.htm>.

<sup>3</sup> Graciela Prieto, “Writing the Subject’s Knot,” *Recherches en psychanalyse* 12, no. 2 (2011): 173, <https://doi.org/10.3917/rep.012.0170>. Furthermore, Lacan argues, “My idea of the written . . . is the return of the repressed” because “it’s as a letter that I most frequently see the signifier coming back, the repressed signifier.” Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book 19: . . . Or Worse*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. A. R. Price. (Oxford: Polity Press, 2018), 16. This

language but also in the fragmented language of Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*). Indeed, this conception of the letter plays a central role throughout Lacan's own work. For example, in *Seminar 15* on the psychoanalytic act, he delves into the worlds of letters and logic to explain how the psyche works, and he chooses those elements precisely because they reside outside meaning. They transcend the limits of the signifier<sup>4</sup> and show logic "as having carried to its most advanced point the very task that [Lacan] has proposed as crucial for psychoanalysts: the exclusion from its premises of the *subject supposed to know*."<sup>5</sup>

To Lacan then, Joyce's writing brings the real, that part of his psyche that resists meaning and precludes knowledge, into play. The real is important for Joyce because of the confusion around his own body (the imaginary): in terms of the symbolic order, his upbringing was such that the body as imaginary became a problem, and the registers of the psyche weakened to the point of rupture, which would have resulted in psychosis were it not for Joyce's ability to use writing to maintain contact between the real and the imaginary. As I will argue, this rupture, when not maintained by an artificial means (the *sinthome*), causes the symbolic to lose its playful dimension: it loses its ability to account for and cope with the real. For example, in psychosis, the signifier of words becomes more important than the signified, and language becomes more concrete. For Joyce, this

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connection between the letter and non-meaning is important when it comes to understanding Lacan's conception of psychosis.

<sup>4</sup> See *Seminar 19*, 128. Lacan argues, "there are two horizons of the signifier." Beyond these horizons lie the "maternal," "material," and "mathematical." Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Cormac Gallagher, "A Reading of *The Psychoanalytic Act* (1967–1968)," *The Letter: Irish Journal for Lacanian Psychoanalysis* 18 (Spring 2000): 11, [http://www.lacaninireland.com/web/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/Spring\\_2000-A-READING-OF-THE-PSYCHOANALYTIC-ACT-1967-1968-Cormac-Gallagher.pdf](http://www.lacaninireland.com/web/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/Spring_2000-A-READING-OF-THE-PSYCHOANALYTIC-ACT-1967-1968-Cormac-Gallagher.pdf).

meant Joyce would no longer have access to the imaginary: the real would, in effect, become *too* real. Lacan outlines how he sees the beginnings of psychosis in Joyce:

After all, psychology is nothing else but the confused image that we have of our body, but this confused image is not without entailed *affects*, to call a spade a spade. It is precisely in imagining this psychical relationship that something of the psyche is affected, that it reacts, and that it is not detached, in contrast to what Joyce testifies to after having received the strikes of the cane from his four or five classmates. In Joyce, there is only something that asks simply to take its leave, to be divested of like a fruit peel. . . . To have a relationship with one's own body as though it were foreign is certainly a possibility, one that is expressed by the use of the verb *to have*. One has one's body. To no extent is it something that one *is*. This is what makes one believe in the soul, and there is no reason to stop there.<sup>6</sup>

In other words, for Joyce the real intrudes, which causes the rings of the psyche to sever from each other, allowing the body (the imaginary) to “take its leave.” The *reality* of his body becomes foreign to him, and he creates a new reality through his writing.<sup>7</sup> In a healthy psyche the real is often experienced in the body and is contained within the psyche via the symbolic. Since one cannot directly symbolize the real, language—particularly metaphor—allows one to articulate something around the real so that the real is less intrusive. The symbolic reacts to the intrusion of the real by establishing a meaning where none exists.

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<sup>6</sup> *Seminar 23*, 129.

<sup>7</sup> Joyce, however, is “*non-triggered*”—a term proposed by Darian Leader; see Darian Leader and Judy Groves, *Lacan for Beginners*, ed. R. Appignanesi (Cambridge: Icon Books, 1995), 167—so while in psychosis, reality is foreclosed, for Joyce reality is only absent *within* his writing. The worlds that he depicts in his writing and through his characters reveal what his psychosis would look like *if* he, himself, were psychotic. After all, it is *Stephen's* body that peels away in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, not Joyce's. See Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (New York: Penguin Books, 1993), 161. Lacan is aware of this (at least on some level): the section wherein he discusses Joyce leaving his body is, in fact, about the book.

The violence of trauma and its relation to the body are essential for understanding Lacan's image of Joyce as a "non-triggered" psychotic. Lacan's understanding of psychosis draws on the work of Sigmund Freud. Freud conceptualizes psychosis as a disturbance between the ego and the external world (reality): the ego is dragged from reality and then creates a new reality in an attempt to repair this ruptured relationship to reality. This second step, however—the creation of a new reality—is never fully successful. In psychic terms, reality continues to force itself upon the mind; in Lacanian terms, the real persists and insists upon us. The symbolic fails to create a meaning, and thus, the real's continued insistence necessarily shows effect in the imaginary. This pressure or persistence of the real creates anxiety around the body, which only furthers the desire to flee reality.<sup>8</sup> Riccardo Lombardi emphasizes the importance of the body as it relates to Freud's version of psychosis. Lombardi postulates, "if owning the body leads to the birth of the 'person' together with the first expressions of mental functioning correlated with the sense organs, then conversely, the negation of the body in psychosis gives rise to depersonalization,"<sup>9</sup> or, in other words, in psychosis one is absent the relationship with one's body in the same way that Lacan recognizes Joyce taking leave of his body, thrusting the subject into a world of unreality.

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<sup>8</sup> See Freud, "Neurosis and Psychosis," in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume 19 (1923–1925): The Ego and the Id and Other Works*, ed. and trans. James Strachey and Anna Freud, 147–54 (London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psychoanalysis, 1961) and "The Loss of Reality in Neurosis and Psychosis," in *ibid.*, 181–88 for the development of Freud's thoughts regarding psychosis. He later, in "Fetishism," also argues that psychosis differs from neurosis because in psychosis *all* of the person disavows a part of reality so that part of reality is utterly absent, whereas in neurosis, the rejected part of reality is only disavowed by *part* of person. "Fetishism," in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume 21: The Future of an Illusion, Civilization and Its Discontents, and Other Works*, ed. James Strachey and Anna Freud, trans. Joan Riviere (London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psychoanalysis, 1961), 156.

<sup>9</sup> *Body-Mind Dissociation in Psychoanalysis: Development after Bion* (New York: Routledge, 2017), 72.

Lacan's early ideas about acting versus doing, the letter and his mathemes, and set theory and logic also impinge on his conceptualization regarding the mechanisms responsible for the integrity of the psyche. Inherent in all these ideas are the concepts of limits and gaps. Lacan argues that the four-term knot, that is, the Borromean knot of the psyche held together by the sinthome, "accounts not only for the limitation of the symptom but also for what means that it is by tying itself to the body, i.e., the imaginary, and by thus tying itself to the real, and to the unconscious as a third term, that the symptom takes on its limits. It is because it meets the limits that one can speak in terms of the knot."<sup>10</sup>

Furthermore, the real, for Lacan, is inaccessible because the symbolic itself is limited in its ability to contact the imaginary and the real: "Everything that is written reinforces the wall. . . . Beyond the wall there is only, to the best of our knowledge, the real that is signalled precisely by the impossible, the impossibility of reaching it beyond the wall. It no less remains that this is the real."<sup>11</sup> By using letters (rather than words), mathemes, and the logic of math, Lacan illustrates how limits develop out of a hole<sup>12</sup>—or how the concept of the number one rests on the concept of zero, the hole, the lack, the gap, or, even, "the delicate position of the analyst who is in the middle [of the imaginary, real,

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<sup>10</sup> Lacan, "Joyce the Symptom," in *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book 23: The Sinthome*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. A. R. Price (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2016), 148. Originally presented to the 5th International Joyce Symposium, Paris, France, 16 June 1975.

<sup>11</sup> *Seminar 19*, 60–61.

<sup>12</sup> "On the basis of what is involved in the place where a hole is made, in this something that, if you want a figuration, I would represent as being the foundation of *Yad'lun*, there can only be Oneness in the figure of a bag, which is a bag with a hole in it. Nothing is One that doesn't come out of this bag, or which does not go back into the bag. This is the original ground, to take it intuitively, of the One." *Seminar 19*, 127. A. R. Price explains, "The written form of *Yad'lun* is an attempt to capture a concentrated pronunciation of *Ya de l'Un*, itself an informal contraction of *Il y a de l'Un*. Thus, not only does the content of the expression indicate the prominence of the One, but its very form presents as a unitary element." A. R. Price, Translator's Notes to *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book 19: . . . Or Worse*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. A. R. Price (Oxford: Polity Press, 2018), 239n1 to chap. 9.

symbolic inscribed in enjoyment, knowledge, and truth] where there is the void, the hole, the place of desire.”<sup>13</sup> This void operates similarly to Lacan’s mirror stage, as I will explain more fully in the second chapter. The introduction of this void institutes the belief that wholeness must exist—if only one could fill that void—and it is this non-existent (or imaginary) wholeness that we attempt to re-create when operating within the phallic function. The basic idea of the phallic function is that “there is some One” *not* subject to the phallic function and that each of us believes we can be that exception, that “one.” In the desire to become that one, we find that this desire is insatiable. We seek the *objet petit a*, the object of desire that structures the divided self, believing it will fill this lack in ourselves. We believe there exists an “Other of the Other,”<sup>14</sup> but this is pure fantasy; in truth, we find we can never fill that void to establish a wholeness.<sup>15</sup> Thus, the only way to escape the phallic function is to act in conformity with one’s own desire and embrace (by

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<sup>13</sup> *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book 15: The Psychoanalytic Act*, trans. Cormac Gallagher, IV 9, <http://www.lacaninireland.com/web/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/Book-15-The-Psychoanalytical-Act.pdf>.

<sup>14</sup> *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book 20: Encore, On Feminine Sexuality, the Limits of Love and Knowledge*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Bruce Fink. (New York: Norton, 1999), 81. My understanding is that the belief in the Other of the Other is the belief that there is a “total and complete symbolic order” or meaning that can attached to the real. Jacques-Alain Miller, “The Other without Other,” (Presentation, 11th Congress of the New Lacanian School, Athens, Greece, May 19, 2013), <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5d52d51fc078720001362276/t/5e2c3c4d86eb9b2324b41773/1579957327732/20130519+Other+of+the+Other+Miller+HB10+JAM+Athens+FINAL.pdf>. The Other of the Other’s non-existence is thus why there is a void.

<sup>15</sup> In my view, this belief in wholeness can be summarized using Leo Bersani’s concluding words in his work with Adam Phillips: “what may be the most profound ‘mistake’ inherent in being human: that of preferring our opposition to the world we live in over our correspondence, our ‘friendly accord’ with it.” *intimacies*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 125.

occupying<sup>16</sup>) that lack just as Joyce comes to embrace the lack through the signs and symbols in his work. The process of occupying the lack characterizes what Lacan calls the psychoanalytic act, and the psychoanalytic act is more difficult—and crucial—in psychosis because “the signifier and the signified present themselves in completely divided form.”<sup>17</sup> Thus, to Lacan, Joyce is accepting the division and revelling in the confusion in meaning and sense. The division exists whether one believes it exists or not; as a result, it is necessary to accept this division if one is to find a way to find a way to live despite the threat of the psyche’s disintegration.

To this end, the psychoanalytic act is essential. This gap between zero and one also exists between the act and the doing as Lacan outlines in *Seminar 15*, and the moment of the “psychoanalytic act” is the moment that establishes psychoanalysis as “the connection between an act and a doing.”<sup>18</sup> While the act, as the assertion, is a fiction—the point where the analysand sees a “self” that is whole and internally coherent—the “psychoanalytic act” differs from an ordinary action because at its centre is “this acceptance of being rejected like the o-object [or the *objet a*].”<sup>19</sup> In other words, the psychoanalytic act has no “actor” and “takes the place of an assertion whose subject it

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<sup>16</sup> Occupying the lack does not mean filling the lack. It means occupying the lack as a lack. Alenka Zupančič analogously describes what I mean by stating, “there is a place that is ‘occupied by the lack’ which is ‘full of the lack.’” *Ethics of the Real* (London: Verso, 2000), 242.

<sup>17</sup> *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book 3: The Psychoses*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Russell Grigg (New York: Norton, 1997), 268.

<sup>18</sup> *Seminar 15*, VII 8. Lacan subsequently argues this is important: “It must all the same be noted that this gap, which still remains between the act and the doing, is what is at stake.” *Ibid.*, VII 10. This is also highlighted by the fact it is impossible to say *whose* act the psychoanalytic act is: the analysand’s or the analyst’s. The act itself exists in a gap wherein the analysand becomes analyst and is an act without a subject, an idea I will return to later.

<sup>19</sup> *Seminar 15*, XV 14. The o-object is also the *objet [petit] a*. Lacan’s terminology changes throughout his seminars (and depending on translation).



changes.”<sup>20</sup> The psychoanalytic act, then, can help us understand the difference between the neurotic and the psychotic psyche. At the end of the act, the psyche retains its empty centre but without the *objet a*, which is Lacan’s term for the object cause of desire or the object of desire (for the other); the rejection of the *objet a* (o-object) is also the acceptance of the gap or void. In psychosis the *objet a* does not operate as the cause of desire that is then limited by the symbolic and the phallic function; instead, the *objet a*, for the psychotic, exists *only* in the real and is therefore what impinges on the psychotic and overwhelms him.

## 1.2 Dancing with Lacan

Given the significance of the body in both Joyce’s writing and in Lacan’s psychoanalytic theory regarding the *sinthome*, it is curious that Lacan privileges poetic writing as the means of maintaining a connection with the body. Other arts—particularly dance—would intuitively act on the body more because they directly employ the body. Yet, Lacan specifically dismisses dance, arguing that it *does not* work on the body.<sup>21</sup> Joyce’s writing and the unstructured speech of psychoanalysis both, Lacan contends, work on the body through processes that reside within the symbolic; his suggestion at the end of *Seminar 23* that dance, perhaps surprisingly, does not work on the body as such is made presumably because he believes the real “is accessed via the symbolic. We access this real in and through the impossible that is defined only by the *symbolic*.”<sup>22</sup> Yet dance, like all art, can only exist within the symbolic, which I will explore in-depth in chapter four.

One potential reason for the privileged position Lacan gives to writing is explained by Lacan himself: “Writing is of interest to me because I think that it was through little bits of writing that, historically speaking, we entered the real, that is, that we stopped

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<sup>20</sup> *Seminar 15*, Annex III 1.

<sup>21</sup> “There is something that one may be quite surprised not to see serving the body as such even more, and that is dance.” Lacan, *Seminar 23*, 133.

<sup>22</sup> Lacan, *Seminar 19*, 122; my italics.

imagining. The real is upheld by writing little mathematical letters.”<sup>23</sup> This, too, may be why poetry “does something”: it challenges the imagination as “with just one letter, one goes from the fiction of being to the existence of the body marked by the letter, the existence of suffering and of *jouissance*.”<sup>24</sup> Additionally, Gutermann-Jacquet suggests, “Joyce . . . found a solution . . . by making a name for himself. This name holds him together and holds his body together.”<sup>25</sup> That is to say, regardless of whether one focuses on Joyce’s use of letters or his creating a name for himself, most scholars argue Joyce employs the symbolic to contact the real.

Joyce’s work helps Lacan theorize how one can use language to maintain psychic integrity; thus, according to Lacan, Joyce’s writing provides a means of organizing experience so that it is not overwhelming. In other words, Joyce’s writing can be understood as a utilitarian practice. This practice is important to psychoanalysis because for Lacan, psychoanalysis is about learning to cope in a world structured by the symbolic in a way that one can still be an individual. By occupying the position of the *objet a*, the psychoanalyst is the support for the subject. As a result, psychoanalysis is a function not a thing. As Paul Verhaeghe reminds us, “Lacan stated it is impossible to *be* an analyst, the only thing you can do is to function as such for somebody during a limited time.”<sup>26</sup> Thus, according to Lacan, both Joyce’s writing and the psychoanalyst operate to allow

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<sup>23</sup> Lacan, *Seminar 23*, 54.

<sup>24</sup> Gutermann-Jacquet, “The Impossible-to-Write,” 47.

<sup>25</sup> “The Impossible-to-Write,” 43. This became important to remember later on because Lacan argues that psychosis is related to the missing primordial signifier, that of the “name of the father.” “It’s a mechanism [the “as if” mechanism] of imaginary compensation — you can verify the usefulness of the distinction between the three registers — for the absent Oedipus complex, which would have given him virility in the form, not of the paternal image, but of the signifier, the *name of the father*.” Lacan, *Seminar 3*, 193.

<sup>26</sup> “From Impossibility to Inability: Lacan’s Theory on the Four Discourses,” *The Letter: Irish Journal for Lacanian Psychoanalysis* 3 (Spring 1995): 96.

one (Joyce himself or the analysand in psychoanalysis) to come to the truth of one's own desire.<sup>27</sup>

My argument contends that dance not only provides the same thing as Joyce's writing does (as per Lacan) but also that dance also offers something more than writing does; in short, dance illuminates the gaps in Lacan's own theory. Lacan, I argue, misidentifies the nature of Joyce's work. Like studies that prove correlation only, Lacan's study of Joyce captures an element connected to Joyce's writing but not caused by it, an element that permits Joyce to maintain his psychic integrity. That element, I suggest, is play, and Joyce plays with what he knows best: writing. Writing, however, does not have to be inherently playful; dance, on the other hand, is deliberately playful and operates more fully within the intertwined relationship between the body and the symbolic. In other words, dance can be used to integrate the mind and protect the mind from the effects of the real, while Joyce's writing is merely a reflection of an already integrated mind, albeit a mind that in different circumstances may have fallen into psychosis. Why do I think dance can integrate the mind? One reason is that dance is more distant from the symbolic yet still within it. In this way, dance allows one to play more effectively with the limits of the symbolic and of language: for example, Carrie Rohman argues that Isadora Duncan, in her dancing, "was speaking in her own language";<sup>28</sup> thus, even dance shows how one can take the conventional elements of the symbolic and mould them to support a subject.

To this end, my dissertation brings dance into conversation with Lacan's mirror stage as the inception of the ego (as object). A rigorous examination of Lacan's notions of limits, boundaries, gaps, and the *sinthome* demonstrates the characteristics of Joyce's writing that create the *sinthome*; I then apply the resulting, more detailed understanding to the

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<sup>27</sup> The *sinthome* and the psychoanalytic act both relate to desire and *jouissance*—which I will look at more in depth subsequently—but they are not analogous. The psychoanalytic act is not an instantiation of the *sinthome* even though it maintains some of its features. This is more important later, and I will explicitly make clear the differences between the two.

<sup>28</sup> *Choreographies of the Living* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 27.

sinthome to show that dance operates on the body in a way that Lacan neglects, both as a sinthome and as something “more than” a sinthome. Dance alone, as an “embodied sinthome,” can act on all registers of the psyche, tightening the knot even as it establishes or maintains psychic integrity. The ability to establish a sinthome is the “more than” I referred to earlier: Joyce could maintain psychic integrity through the act of writing, but dance is better situated to teach one how to establish and maintain psychic integrity.

I will thus address how dance has the potential to embrace and limit the effects of an innate lack in the subject by exploring the implications of how dance interacts with the three registers of the psyche, particularly with the real. Lacan argues “mathematization alone reaches a real . . . a real that has nothing to do with what traditional knowledge has served as a basis for, which is not what the latter believes it to be — namely, reality — but rather fantasy. The real, I will say, is the mystery of the speaking body, the mystery of the unconscious.”<sup>29</sup> Paul Valéry, critic and poet, relates dance to “the mystery of the body,”<sup>30</sup> yet he makes no connection between his use of this phrase and Lacan’s “mystery of the speaking body” (which is also the mystery of the “*parlêtre*”); nonetheless, Valéry sets up a parallel that suggests an intimate connection exists between dance and the *parlêtre*. Thus, it stands to reason that dance can help one avert psychosis by breaking through the real to suture the imaginary to the real and keep the symbolic connected to both.

Although many of the ideas I put forth already appear in Lacan’s seminars, by using dance, I want to think through how his ideas apply not only to dance but also for a wider population. Furthermore, I contend that these ideas are still relevant and needed today. Of course, some theorists have already explored the body in psychoanalysis or “read” a specific type of dance via psychoanalytic theory, but I want to push their insights further by turning more squarely to dance as a site to think about psychoanalysis and the body, offering new ways of understanding both dance and psychoanalytic practice.

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<sup>29</sup> *Seminar 20*, 131.

<sup>30</sup> “Philosophy of the Dance,” *Salmagundi* 33/34 (Spring–Summer 1976): 70.

Additionally, when looked at through the lens of Lacanian psychoanalysis, dance can be seen as offering a more radical way of being in the world, one that can potentially shift the symbolic order itself, something that is especially urgent in our time of societal division, conflict, and polarization that strikes me as psychotic. As we try to grapple with the unravelling of society, unless we have a way of understanding the role of symbolic order, we only reinforce the status quo. We risk thinking we are changing things, only to have them return to the way they were.

### 1.3 What is Dance?

Psychology, psychoanalysis, and philosophy are fields that rarely have much to say about dance. Furthermore, in the collaborations that do exist, there is a multitude of (sometimes incompatible) opinions regarding what dance is and how to understand it, yet shifting our relationship to dance could have important theoretical implications for both psychoanalysis and dance itself. Although psychoanalytic theory occasionally touches on the relationship of art or creativity to the psyche, dance itself is often excluded from the categories of art. Instead, theorists often only use dance as a metaphor for what occurs in psychoanalysis; Jon Sletvold, for example, refers to the psychoanalytic process as a “therapeutic dance” and movement as “emotional language.”<sup>31</sup> Lacan even falls prey to this use of dance as a metaphor, both for women’s actions in attracting men,<sup>32</sup> and to describe the contradictions within the psychoanalytic act.<sup>33</sup>

There are nascent moves towards collaboration though: one excellent start that brings dance theory and Lacanian psychoanalysis into interdisciplinary conversation appears in

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<sup>31</sup> *The Embodied Analyst: From Freud and Reich to Relationality* (London: Routledge, 2014), 166, 103. Likewise, Lombardi refers only to the motion of the body that enables language; he suggests for some, the purpose of psychoanalysis is to “compile a dictionary that will enable the anarchic body to express itself symbolically.” *Mind-Body Dissociation*, 73.

<sup>32</sup> See *Seminar 19*, 164.

<sup>33</sup> *Seminar 15*, XV 15.

the work of Fran de Cuyper and Dries Dulsster.<sup>34</sup> De Cuyper and Dulsster look at dance in relation to the Borromean knot and the sinthome—the same concepts I explore—to identify the function of dance for the professional dancer, positing that Vaslav Nijinsky—who suffered from schizophrenia—found a sinthome through his dancing, at least until such time as something frayed or severed the knot. They speak to dancers, to learn what function dance has, what it means to individual dancers, and how dancers experience dance. Overall, they posit that three essential elements of dance make it a sinthome. First, dance contains both pleasure and suffering in the dancer’s life; this “intrinsic division” is like a symptom, the necessary symptom that “does not stop being written,”<sup>35</sup> in which dancers are trapped. For de Cuyper and Dulsster, this dichotomy is one of the ways dance contains a paradox,<sup>36</sup> but one in which each element connects to the other, something I will later discuss as essential to the sinthome. Second, de Cuyper and Dulsster argue that dance offers a “movement vocabulary,” which they describe as a way of communicating

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<sup>34</sup> “The Dancing Being,” trans. Dries Dulsster, unpublished. Translation in author’s possession. Original published in Dutch as “Le dansète: Over psychoanalyse en dans,” *Psychoanalytische Perspectieven* 36, no. 3 (2018): 249–64, <https://biblio.ugent.be/publication/8580920/file/8580921>. The translated article is unpublished, and thus, I cannot provide accurate page numbers. While de Cuyper and Dulsster offer some suggestions for further research, their work, too, reveals the numerous ways that dance is understood. While their look at how various *dancers* understand what they do through dance is interesting, it is not helpful for coming to a theoretical understanding of dance or of its relationship to the psyche. Writing, too, is understood differently by different writers. This does not make writing more or less prone to becoming a sinthome, it just describes how we search for meanings, potentially where none exist (or at least where no conscious ones exist) and, therefore, belongs more to science and the belief there is a subject supposed to know (an idea I take up later). In relation to Joyce, Lacan suggests that Joyce did not understand what he was doing psychically, i.e., fashioning a sinthome, while writing. See *Seminar 23*, 99, 123.

<sup>35</sup> *Seminar 20*, 97.

<sup>36</sup> This paradox is later explained by discussing how dance is simultaneously a defence against *jouissance* and a mode through which to experience *jouissance*.

what cannot be said. Third, dance is an art, one which not only allows the dancer to shape what she cannot grasp, but one that also acts as a container for the real within the body. Together, these qualities create levels within dance: on a primary level, dance is purposeless, possessing a beauty that has no meaning but nevertheless affects the dancers; on a secondary level, dance communicates to an audience, and in this way, a dancer puts ineffable experience into a type of language. The authors argue the primary level is what makes dance a *sinthome*: its effect is non-interpretable because each dancer will respond to different movements in different ways, so each solution is unique. Since dancers have no control over the affects that arise from the movement, they are simultaneously controlled by them and able to contain them. As a result, dancers can contain the real without ascribing a meaning to their experience; they can exist as what de Cuyper and Dulsster term *dansêtres*, as dancing beings driven by idiosyncratic encounters with the real within that body, coping with these encounters in a way that makes it possible for them to maintain the connections of the psyche. The term *dansêtre*, the authors suggest, is comparable to Lacan's concept of the *parlêtre*, the speaking being controlled by the unconscious as revealed through the *lalangue* of language. De Cuyper and Dulsster then suggest dance also ties to Lacan's concept of *escabeau* because the dance itself creates a social bond as the singular dance is disseminated to others.

De Cuyper and Dulsster's article is pivotal for starting a conversation. However, although they suggest there is a potential relationship between Lacan's concept of *parlêtre* and dance in that dance allows one to confront and cope with the real, they end their article by inviting "others to study and question dance further" as further scholarship "can lead to important implications for psychoanalytically oriented dance therapeutic practice." I think de Cuyper and Dulsster offer some crucial insights into dance—ones I will return to later—yet I also believe I can push their argument farther. They do not fully develop their ideas despite the suggestion there are important implications that derive from their thesis. Thus, they leave the reader with both the idea that the creation of *sinthome* can be taught, but without explaining how, and the (I suggest, misguided) idea that the ineffable can then be spoken. Beyond their conclusions, I argue that although the implications of their argument are important, the experience of the real will always remain ineffable,

which is partly why their implications are important. Nonetheless, this is one essential contribution to the interdisciplinary conversations that need to happen.

## 1.4 Benefits of Collaboration

Although hypotheses exist regarding the origins of the psychoses, the precise “causes of these devastating diseases are still unknown”<sup>37</sup> and treatments can, so far, only “increase adaptive functioning.”<sup>38</sup> Most researchers suggest a confluence of biological and environmental factors, with genetics potentially playing a role.<sup>39</sup> Regardless of if biological maladaptation or genetic influences contribute to the development of schizophrenia, the primary treatment employs medications that manage symptoms yet

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<sup>37</sup> Eugenia Tomasella, et. al., “Deletion of Dopamine D<sub>2</sub> Receptors from Parvalbumin Interneurons in Mouse Causes Schizophrenia-like Phenotypes,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* 115, no. 13 (2018): 3476–81, <https://doi.org/10.1073/PNAS.1719897115>. The current hypotheses regarding schizophrenia are further along than those for psychosis in general, although there is still no definitive cause: all hypotheses involve excess of the neurotransmitter dopamine. The dopaminergic hypothesis suggests the genesis is a dopamine imbalance among the regions of the brain. The glutamate hypothesis suggests that glutamatergic dysfunction causes the imbalances in dopamine. The serotonin hypothesis suggests that serotonin hyperactivity causes glutamatergic dysfunction, which in turn causes dopamine imbalances. For more, see *ibid.*; Stephen M. Stahl, “Beyond the Dopamine Hypothesis of Schizophrenia to Three Neural Networks of Psychosis: Dopamine, Serotonin, and Glutamate,” *CNS Spectrums* 23 (2018): 187–89, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1092852918001013>; and Shahid Rasool, et. al., “Schizophrenia: An Overview,” *Clinical Practice* 15, no. 5 (2018): 847–51, <https://www.openaccessjournals.com/articles/schizophrenia-an-overview.pdf>. Yet, the geneses of these processes are unknown: even if a dopamine imbalance exists, for example, what is the cause for that imbalance in the absence of any specific genetic link?

<sup>38</sup> Rasool, et. al., “Schizophrenia,” 850.

<sup>39</sup> Rasool, et. al. cite that schizophrenia occurs only in one percent of the general populations but that increases to ten percent among people who have a first degree relative with schizophrenia. “Schizophrenia,” 848.



also cause significant side effects, including some that may be long-lasting and non-reversible if medication is ever discontinued (such as tardive dyskinesia, which is the uncontrollable movement of the mouth area), and three-quarters of patients stop taking drugs due to the various side effects.<sup>40</sup> Thus, more understanding of the psychological processes that exist in psychosis (or pre-psychosis) is necessary. To this end, my research expands on the ideas I have presented in this chapter to do the “work” of analysis: I apply these ideas to dance, exploring how psychoanalysis and dance share features and, therefore, can benefit from collaboration. If dance does work on the body, then dance may offer ideas for a new philosophy of dance and for the mechanisms that can help prevent psychosis or, at least, maintain a psychic integrity.

An important note is that my project is concerned primarily with what professional or formal dancing and dance training (even if that training is for recreational purposes) can teach us about the functioning of the psyche and how dance operates as an art. With this proviso in mind, I am not thinking about unstructured or social dancing, but dance as an art that is experienced as an art. Ellen Winner argues that art is a socially constructed concept and is “not about an experience, it is an experience.”<sup>41</sup> Thus, art is not a tangible (artwork) object that predominates, but the experience of an “artwork”; this allows “art” to “change over time and over culture.”<sup>42</sup> While I explore ballet for the most part, my argument applies beyond ballet to all forms of dance when coupled with formal training. Furthermore, I refer directly to Lacan’s concept of psychosis as “the emergence of a

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<sup>40</sup> Jeffrey J. Magnavita, et. al., “Personality Disorders,” in *Psychopathology: From Science to Clinical Practice*, ed. Louis G. Castonguay and Thomas F. Oltmanns (New York: Guilford Press, 2016), 283–84.

<sup>41</sup> *How Art Works: A Psychological Exploration* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 4.

<sup>42</sup> *How Art Works*, 15. In other words, it matters more what we experience as art than what is objectively considered art. *Ibid.*, 16. In this sense, we can link Winner’s idea to Winnicott’s notion of cultural experience (play) or his third way of being/potential space, for he emphasizes that culture is not an object, but an *experience*. Winnicott, *Playing and Reality* (New York: Routledge Classics, 2005): 133.

signifier that is primordial but excluded for the subject.”<sup>43</sup> This signifier is what structures how we understand and operate within the world. Lacan identifies this primordial signifier as the name-of-the-father, which is related to the Oedipus complex, but, I argue, he also recognizes that the Oedipus complex established this primordial signifier during his time and that as society changes, the primordial signifier that structures our psyche may change as well. Lacan’s point, however, is that there is a lack of a primordial signifier that characterizes the psychoses.

## 1.5 Summary and Choreographic Development

To summarize: in this thesis, I look to philosophy, psychology, psychoanalytic theory, and dance theory to identify the relationship between dance and psychoanalysis, specifically the relationship of dance to the Lacanian real, a relationship that, as I further posit, suggests that contrary to a statement Lacan makes, dance does work on the body and can act as a *sinthome*. Furthermore, dance works on the body more effectively than writing because dance is not primarily utilitarian but is instead both affective and playful. It eschews the concept of subject-supposed-to-know, and it operates within the body to establish an intertwined relationship among the imaginary, the real, and the symbolic. In other words, dance embodies the *sinthome* or is an embodied *sinthome*. Lacan conceptualizes the *sinthome* as connecting the registers of the psyche; therefore, his conceptualization does not eliminate the body but rather, the *sinthomic* link cannot occur without it (in the form of the imaginary ring). Dance uses the body to tap into the real in the same way that Joyce’s language does: Joyce uses the language that resonates in the body rather than the language that is communicative. Dance as an embodied *sinthome* thus means dance has a more direct connection to pleasure, specifically the pleasure associated with the *sinthome*: the feminine *jouissance*. I explore these implications in a way that reconceptualizes and extends Lacanian ideas, structuring my argument in the following way:

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<sup>43</sup> *Seminar 3*, 305.

Chapter two offers an overview of the existing literature on Lacan and contains sections on Lacanian psychoanalysis, covering Lacan's understanding of the psyche and its functioning in neurosis and psychosis, of psychosis and its relationship to Joyce, and *jouissance* and its connection to psychosis before, finally, considering the sinthome, focusing on its role, mechanism, and location and how these aspects reveal something about the psychic disturbance that the sinthome prevents.

Chapter three introduces the psychoanalytic concepts that I contend exist within Lacan's concept of the sinthome, but which Lacan never discusses. I explain how these concepts fit within Lacanian theory and their importance for advancing Lacanian thought. The chapter ends with a reinterpretation of the Joyce's sinthome and how the additional concepts I add to Lacanian theory can be seen operating within the sinthome and contributing to it more so than language or writing.

Chapter four focuses on dance, first looking at dance in theory in relation to philosophy, aesthetics, and psychological/psychoanalytic theory, before looking at dance specifically in relation to the psychoanalytic ideas discussed in chapters two and three. In general, I explore dance's relationship to mirroring and play. I look at how dance is play; given that play is integral to the psyche, not only can dance operate in the same way that poetics does for Joyce, but dance also has additional elements that make it more germane for psychic integrity and being a sinthome. Using psychoanalytic concepts to explore dance, I will confirm dance as an art, an art that is unlike the other arts in that it not only does it offer an expression and experience of creativity, but it also has embedded in it, elements that can support the development of the ability to play, the play that is necessary for creativity.

Chapter five looks at the implications of my argument both for psychoanalysis and for dance. In terms of psychoanalysis, this section will discuss how my theoretical argument regarding dance's role as a sinthome can offer practical insights into how one prevents (or treats) pre-psychosis in general. In other words, having used Lacanian psychoanalytic theory to develop a comprehensive theory of dance and its potential as a sinthome, I then reverse this process, using the new understanding of dance to reconceptualize and extend

Lacanian ideas and challenge traditional readings of his theory. That is, this chapter will explore what dance's relationship to the sinthome suggests about the use of play, affect, and the body within a traditional psychoanalytic setting and the influence this has on understanding Lacanian psychoanalysis as well as contemporary psychoanalytic theory. I then look to the implications of seeing dance as a sinthome means for dance as an art. I maintain that if dance can create a sinthome, then the concept of dance and its place within the arts can be radically redefined and its aesthetics more fully understood.

Chapter six extends these implications to discuss how my analysis of dance and (Lacanian) psychoanalysis shows that dance often parallels psychoanalysis, and I examine more in depth dance's ability to create the possibility of impossibility (and maintain a connection to the real). I also extend my argument beyond dance and psychosis to encompass the benefits for everyone, then briefly touch on where that leaves us and what research remains to be done, before consolidating my ideas in the conclusion.

## Chapter 2 Lacanian Theory

### 2 Setting the Bar(re)

If dance is a potential sinthome, then it is important to understand the elements that Lacan suggests comprise the psyche and how the sinthome operates to keep the psyche intact. This chapter also overviews the other Lacanian concepts associated with the sinthome and my argument for how one can read Lacan's later theory as merely an extension of and not an overturning of his earlier theorizing about psychosis and the psyche.

#### 2.1 The Registers

The concept through which I am exploring the connection between dance and the psyche is Lacan's depiction of the psyche as three interlocking rings or registers—the imaginary, the symbolic, and the real—fashioned in a Borromean knot. The Borromean knot as a representation of the psyche is a later development in Lacanian theory. In his formulation, Lacan suggests the three rings are knotted in such a way that should any ring of the psyche break, the entire psychic structure falls apart. Just as at the core of every knot we find an empty space, so it is in the psyche: the configuration of the rings is such that there is a hole at the centre of the psyche. This hole is ontological in nature, one we all share; this hole or lack plays an important role in Lacan's understanding not only of neurosis but also, by extension, psychosis and the sinthome. Because of this hole at the centre of our psyches, we feel incomplete. Therefore, we spend our lives trying to fill that hole through an imaginary identification with the other. Philippe Van Haute, for example, depicts how the lack creates desire, but “it [the subject when first confronted with desire] has not the least idea what that desire wants—*Che vuoi?*—and it responds to this problem with the phantasy . . . the desire of the Other.”<sup>44</sup> For Lacan, this desire for wholeness creates an imaginary world wherein one has “the utmost certainty in his lived

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<sup>44</sup> *Against Adaptation: Lacan's "Subversion" of the Subject*, trans. Paul Crowe and Miranda Vanker (New York: Other Press, 2002), 249.

experience.”<sup>45</sup> That is to say, the Other structures the neurotic existence but only insofar as the subject believes in a false wholeness: we cannot accept our non-whole selves; we want to be complete.

Each ring plays an equal role in the psyche. First, the imaginary register acts as a support, allowing one to cope with reality, and is a necessary precondition for the emergence of the subject. Understanding this region of the psyche requires looking at Lacan’s idea of the mirror stage: the stage that shapes the imaginary and initially takes place wherein a baby perceives herself in the mirror. The image has a constancy and consistency that the baby, who still lacks motor control, does not have. This experience, then, sets up a split in the subject: the ideal image in the mirror and the “self” that is, in reality, fragmented and subject to needs and urges over which it had no control. Lacan refers to this latter representation as the “body in bits and pieces.”<sup>46</sup> The mirror stage, therefore, creates the imaginary order as the ego is established. In seeing oneself in the mirror, the baby then develops a representation of the “I,” which is really the ideal-ego, the imago of perfection that the child cannot equal but an image that comes to define its life. This stage, however, ushers in a dependence: the child is now dependent on the other for a sense of self (as the child is held to the mirror). As Lionel Bailly explains, “At the Mirror Stage, through a dialectic of identification with its mirror image, the baby begins to build up its ego or Ideal-I through a projection of ideas upon the object in the mirror. In building conceptions upon something that is both inherently false and powerful — an image — the imaginary is programmed from the start to be a realm of illusion, and to have a force of fascination and seduction.”<sup>47</sup> That is to say, this stage sets up “imaginary

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<sup>45</sup> *Seminar 3*, 69.

<sup>46</sup> Lacan, “Some Reflections on the Ego,” *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 34 (1953): 13. Lacan also refers to this as a “fragmented image of the body.” “The Mirror Stage as Formative of the *I* Function,” in *Écrits*, trans. Bruce Fink (New York: W. W. Norton, 2006), 78.

<sup>47</sup> *Lacan: A Beginner’s Guide* (London: Oneworld Publication, 2009), 92.

identification,”<sup>48</sup> making one believe a “true self” exists even though it does not.<sup>49</sup> The mirror stage, thus, establishes a belief in a pre-existing unity that contrasts a now-existing disunity, whereas in reality, the “unorganized image only comes after the mirror stage so as to represent what came before.”<sup>50</sup> This introduces not only the belief that one can become whole again<sup>51</sup> but also the fear that one is in “constant danger of sliding back again into the chaos from which he started.”<sup>52</sup> Thus, the mirror stage also sets up a fundamental anxiety because the image the child sees contrasts the inner, felt reality.

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<sup>48</sup> *Seminar 19*, 147.

<sup>49</sup> This is also Lacan’s criticism of Winnicott: Winnicott sees “mirroring” as a route to the true self, a self which Lacan denies exists. As Turkle emphasizes about Lacan’s work, “the complex chains of associations that constitute meaning for each individual lead to no final endpoint or core self.” *Life on the Screen: Identity in the Age of the Internet* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995), 178. The mirror, for Lacan, inaugurates the divided subject—divided between the ego-ideal and ideal-ego—and establishes the foundation for all psychic disturbances, disturbances that can only be removed by rejecting the concept of the ego and embracing the lack at the centre of the subject. I will discuss this further subsequently, especially as regards Winnicott’s concept of mirroring, a concept that illustrates, I suggest, how the mirror stage’s function is not static.

<sup>50</sup> Jane Gallop, “Lacan’s ‘Mirror Stage’: Where to Begin,” in “A Special Issue from the Center for Twentieth Century Studies,” special issue, *SubStance* 11/12, no. 4/1 (1982): 121, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3684185>.

<sup>51</sup> Lacan repeatedly contests the idea of a being able to create a “one” throughout his later seminars. He refers to the unary trait as support of the imaginary identification; the unary trait is the pure difference of signification: it is different from other signifiers and, thereby, suggests there is an exception to the rule: I can be the one who is whole, for example. It institutes an “imaginary identification [that] operates through a symbolic mark” *Seminar 19*, 147. Thus, it links the registers of the psyche together, illustrating why the lack of the unary trait (the lack of the name-of-the-father) threatens the integrity of the psyche.

<sup>52</sup> Gallop, “Lacan’s ‘Mirror Stage,’” 123. This is also relevant to Lacan’s argument against science, which he sees as purely theology in *Seminar 15*. Science, he argues, assumes there is a knowledge to be found that pre-exists the subject. I will expand on this point later.

Although the mirror stage is often considered a stage that a child passes through in a developmental sense, it is also possible to understand it as a theatrical stage. It is a structure upon which a person's life exists, and in that vein, the experience of the mirror stage and its effects recur throughout one's life: re-experiencing the feeling of disunity leads us to (once more) structure ourselves in relation to the other. To Lacan, the mirror stage sets up the common neurotic condition, and only three conditions exist: neurosis, psychosis, and perversion. There is no "normal." The most common condition, the one colloquially considered "normal," is neurosis. Understanding the mirror stage as a structure upon which neurosis plays out, however, also suggests that the mirror can then also be used to disrupt this process.

If we return to the Borromean knot, the symbolic ring is related to speech, language, and signification; language resides in the symbolic, and signifiers are what give experience a contextual frame. The symbolic order also gives rise to the Oedipus complex, wherein the subject represses the real and assumes the phallic function as a universal symptom. We—as humans—cannot escape the symbolic; we entered it with the development of language, and the symbolic ushers in a concomitant belief that one can master reality: "due to speaking everything succeeds."<sup>53</sup> The symbolic structures our communal existence; therefore, although we initially entered it via language, today everyone, including those without language (babies, for example), necessarily exists within the symbolic and must accommodate to it.

The real, for Lacan, corresponds to what one is neither able to symbolize nor represent (for example, a trauma), and the irruption of the real into reality is conceived as "tuché" (a missed encounter with the real, missed because a true encounter would require symbolization).<sup>54</sup> Élisabeth Roudinesco describes this as "a remainder impossible to

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<sup>53</sup> *Seminar 20*, 56.

<sup>54</sup> *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book 11: The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: W. W. Norton, 1998), 53–64. For more on the Real and the relation between the psychic registers, see *The Seminar of Jacques*



symbolize,”<sup>55</sup> and Cormac Gallagher argues that Lacan’s original definition of the real is “what can be neither imagined nor understood.”<sup>56</sup> That said, once Lacan starts to conceptualize the psyche with a triadic structure, he begins to define the real positively as “the objects that cause desire – objects that act directly on the subject without the mediation of language or image and are characterised by their relationship to orifices, or better holes, that enclose nothings in the body.”<sup>57</sup> This register is the hardest to describe because to describe it requires the language of the symbolic, yet however impossible it is to represent symbolically, it still exists precisely as what cannot be captured by the symbolic. Raul Moncayo, in his analysis of Lacan’s *Seminar 23*, writes:

From the point of view of the Real, listening is not listening but hearing, seeing is not seeing but rather insight and realisation, green is not green but the taste that is neither in the tongue nor in the object, red is not red but a cool heat, and black is not black but the non-black in the sense of the uncanny sound or shadow. Finally, last but not least, the sense of smell is not small in importance and the nose knows despite the apparent absence of matter in the air.<sup>58</sup>

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*Lacan Book 22: R. S. I.*, trans. Cormac Gallagher, <http://www.lacaninireland.com/web/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/RSI-Complete-With-Diagrams.pdf>.

<sup>55</sup> *Lacan: In spite of Everything*, trans. Gregory Elliott (New York: Verso, 2014), 87.

<sup>56</sup> “Nets to Knots: The Odyssey to a Beyond of Barbarism,” *The Letter, Irish Journal for Lacanian Psychoanalysis* 35 (Autumn 2005): 10, [http://www.lacaninireland.com/web/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/Aut\\_2005-NETS-TO-KNOTS-THE-ODYSSEY-TO-A-BEYOND-OF-BARBARISM-Cormac-Gallagher.pdf](http://www.lacaninireland.com/web/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/Aut_2005-NETS-TO-KNOTS-THE-ODYSSEY-TO-A-BEYOND-OF-BARBARISM-Cormac-Gallagher.pdf).

<sup>57</sup> Gallagher, “Nets to Knots,” 11.

<sup>58</sup> *Lalangue, Sinthome, Jouissance, and Nomination: A Reading Companion and Commentary on Lacan’s Seminar XXIII on the Sinthome* (London: Karnac Books, 2016), 46.

The real is what the body knows and cannot symbolize: it is how a smell can evoke feelings or a sound can trigger flashbacks without connections to the stories or narratives that would make these bodily experiences understandable.<sup>59</sup> This is the realm of the presentational, and the real consists of the elements that, despite their insistence upon us, we cannot represent. It is a real that is the real of the drives, both the life and death drives, and there is something within the drives that insists. This real cannot be symbolized; it “only can be pondered qua impossible.”<sup>60</sup>

As Lacan states, “In-*sisting* outside the imaginary and the symbolic, the real butts into, plays into, something that is the order of limitation. Once it has been tied to the other two in the Borromean fashion, from that moment forth the two others resist it. This is a way of saying that the real only enjoys ex-sistence to the extent that it encounters, with the symbolic and the imaginary, a point of arrest.”<sup>61</sup> In other words, the real cannot be expressed in language; in a sense, then, it does not exist, since existence is related to what is speakable—Lacan says the real exists only as experience—but rather it ex-sists: it persists in that its insistence is from *outside* (of the boundaries of the symbolic order).

The three rings of the psyche work together: they not only limit each other, but jointly they also establish a coherent psychic reality. As Van Haute argues, the registers only work together and “can only be thought in their mutual implication. The imaginary refers to the order of the signifier (the symbolic) as its condition of possibility, while conversely, the symbolic can only graft itself onto the body on the bases of a constitutive

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<sup>59</sup> Trauma studies are invaluable for helping to conceptualize the real, but they have their limits. The real is not merely an external event that is non-symbolizable and results in “symptoms.” Nonetheless these studies can also help illuminate the effects of the real and how they arise *in* the body as (potentially) overwhelming sensations.

<sup>60</sup> *Seminar 23*, 106. Zupančič describes this impossibility as “a stumbling block” or “something that interrupts a process.” *The Odd One In: On Comedy* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008), 162.

<sup>61</sup> *Seminar 23*, 38.

reference to the imaginary and the mirror-stage.”<sup>62</sup> The real, then, is explained thus: “when we convey meaning through speech (the symbolic order), the forms through which content is conveyed – the human voice that delivers it; the syntactical form that constructs it; the diction, metre, rhythm, the poetics of form – operate . . . in the domain of the real.”<sup>63</sup> The symbolic (and thus the imaginary) rely on the real. In my understanding, each region cannot exist without the others because the others operate as limits; each register has its primary function as well as a corollary responsibility of limiting the expression of the other registers so (in a healthy psyche) no single register’s contents can overwhelm the subject. Therefore, there is no dominant register within the (average) psyche, although in any situation one register may appear to take primacy over the others.

## 2.2 Psychosis

The registers of the psyche are essential in Lacan’s understanding of psychosis because the symptoms of psychosis, or at least of schizophrenia, overwhelmingly exist in the symbolic. When Lacan begins to explore psychosis, he writes of Daniel Paul Schreber and discusses how “the psychotic is inhabited, possessed, by language,”<sup>64</sup> and when he much later starts to write of the *sinthome*—the element that allows Joyce to avoid psychosis—he focuses on the neologisms, fragmented writing, and imposed words of Joyce as a (supposed) compensation for a psyche that shows evidence of possible psychosis.<sup>65</sup>

Lacan’s emphasis on language (that is, the symbolic) arises in part because of his understanding of the relationship between psychosis and the metaphor of the name-of-

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<sup>62</sup> *Against Adaptation*, 292.

<sup>63</sup> Christopher Bollas, “Character and Interformality,” in *The Christopher Bollas Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 239.

<sup>64</sup> *Seminar 3*, 250.

<sup>65</sup> See *Seminar 23*.

the-father, the metaphor that structures one's being and represents the function of castration. In his conceptualization of psychic functioning, normality is perforce neurosis, of living within the metaphor of the Oedipus complex, which is also living according to the law of the (big O) Other. The Oedipus complex involves the acceptance of the authority of a certain metaphor, that of the name-of-the-father. This metaphor is the rule of law and ties desire to the law. The name-of-the-father, as metaphor, "knots the registers,"<sup>66</sup> allowing one to exist within the world by repressing its formative function, that is, by repressing the knowledge of the phallic function as formative. Through repression, one can live under the paradoxical illusion that there is a wholeness to the subject, even as the phallic function constitutes the lack or desire to attain that wholeness. Lacan argues that without this metaphor or the existence of the name-of-the-father, "the collision and explosion of the situation as a whole" cannot be prevented.<sup>67</sup> In neurosis, this metaphor is repressed yet still exists, thereby avoiding this "collision and explosion."

By contrast, psychosis is a "nihilation,"<sup>68</sup> or "foreclosure"<sup>69</sup> of the name-of-the-father signifier, of this metaphor: "It can thus happen that something primordial regarding the subject's being does not enter into symbolization and is not repressed, but rejected."<sup>70</sup> This foreclosure is not conscious because "the Law is there precisely from the beginning, it has always been there, and human sexuality must realize itself through it and by means of it,"<sup>71</sup> but it is a foreclosure, nonetheless. The foreclosure is unconscious precisely because the only way one could consciously reject the metaphor of the phallic function would be to accept its existence, which then means one is still operating according to it.

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<sup>66</sup> Julieta De Battista, "Lacanian Concept of Desire in Analytic Clinic of Psychosis," *Frontiers in Psychology* 8 (2017): 2, <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2017.00563>.

<sup>67</sup> *Seminar 3*, 96.

<sup>68</sup> *Seminar 3*, 205.

<sup>69</sup> *Seminar 19*, 14.

<sup>70</sup> *Seminar 3*, 81.

<sup>71</sup> *Seminar 3*, 83.

The *need* of the psychotic, if he is to live in reality, is to be the exception to the name-of-the-father: the one who can step outside of the metaphor. Lacan goes on to argue that the nihilation of the name-of-the-father results in “the emergence in reality of an enormous meaning that . . . cannot be tied to anything, since it has never entered into the system of symbolization.”<sup>72</sup> The collision thus ensues, and this “imaginary cataclysm”<sup>73</sup> effects the “entire signifying apparatus – dissociation, fragmentation, mobilization of the signifier as speech, ejaculatory speech that is insignificant or too significant, laden with no-meaningfulness, the decomposition of internal discourse, which marks the entire structure of psychosis.”<sup>74</sup> Todd McGowan describes this process as the subject being overwhelmed by “the law’s own obscenity . . . where the subject cannot experience” the missing structure that correlates with the loss of the name-of-the-father.<sup>75</sup> In other words, the real overwhelms the subject because the law of the symbolic is not tied to the real as a limit.

Therefore, the real has a significant place in Lacan’s theory of psychosis despite his and subsequent theorists’ emphasis on the symbolic. The real is intimately tied to the symbolic realm: the primordial metaphor is missing in psychosis, and in compensation, psychosis evokes a focus on metonymy instead of metaphor. Metaphor is the symptom that is interpreted by the analyst, and metonymy is the sliding of the signifier under the signifying chain. In other words, metonymy is the continual movement of the signifiers that displaces meaning; our symptoms are the metaphors we create to cope with this lack of meaning in the signifier itself. In psychosis, with the primordial metaphor missing, meaning—and any metaphoric possibilities—of the signifier is effaced, and in its place exists only a concretization of language. Metonymy (desire) continues to operate but

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<sup>72</sup> *Seminar 3*, 85.

<sup>73</sup> *Seminar 3*, 321.

<sup>74</sup> *Seminar 3*, 321.

<sup>75</sup> “The Psychosis of Freedom: Law in Modernity,” in *Lacan on Psychosis*, ed. Jon Mills and David L. Downing (London: Routledge, 2018), 51.

cannot be symbolized. In other words, the real ex-sists within the symbolic, causing a rent that allows the imaginary to slide away.<sup>76</sup>

The imaginary, therefore, is relevant as well. The breach of the real into the symbolic results in the phenomenon of an imaginary that “asks simply to take its leave.”<sup>77</sup> I argue, however, that the imaginary slips away in psychosis not as cause of but concurrent with foreclosure. As Van Haute argues in the passage previously mentioned, if there is no symbolic, then there is no “condition of [the imaginary’s] possibility,” but if there is no imaginary, then there is no way for symbolic to operate because it can only operate with “reference to the imaginary and the mirror stage.”<sup>78</sup> Each relies on the other, and one can only think of either in relation to the other. I posit that although the symbolic appears to be primary within Lacan’s conceptualization of psychosis, this is only because a diagnosis of psychosis requires the existence of a disorder of language.<sup>79</sup> The other two registers still bear upon psychosis in ways that are less obvious. Lacan himself tells us that the registers are “equivalent to one another. They are constituted by something that is reproduced in all three of them.”<sup>80</sup> Far from undoing his previous thoughts,<sup>81</sup> this shift in Lacan’s thinking (to focus on the symbolic) incorporates the symptoms of psychosis and

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<sup>76</sup> “Ex-sists” meaning that it exists and is external to the symbolic, intruding as if from the outside.

<sup>77</sup> *Seminar 23*, 129.

<sup>78</sup> *Against Adaptation*, 292.

<sup>79</sup> *Seminar 3*, 92.

<sup>80</sup> *Seminar 23*, 37–38.

<sup>81</sup> See Stijn Vanheule, *The Subject of Psychosis: A Lacanian Perspective* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011). In this work, Vanheule argues Lacanian thought exists as four “eras,” representing “shifts in [Lacan’s] conception of psychosis” and his changing ideas over time from the imaginary (including the mirror stage) to the symbolic (with a focus on metaphor and metonym as well as foreclosure), incorporating the real (object a, jouissance), until the final era: the era of the sinthome.

his understanding of psychosis as foreclosure (a symbolic process): he was *adding* the symbolic (and eventually the real) to his earlier understandings of psychosis rather than ignoring or moving away from the imaginary. Even when his focus is on the symbolic (and the real), the imaginary is still very much a part of his theorizing: it is, after, the imaginary (the body) that threatens to leave in psychosis. Thus, just as the registers “can only be thought in their mutual implication,”<sup>82</sup> understanding psychosis also entails looking at the registers’ interdependence. The real emerges, and since the real cannot be symbolized, it threatens the psychic “edifice” to the point of negation of the body.<sup>83</sup>

Bollas describes the interrelation between the imaginary and the symbolic (within psychosis) in this manner:

Body change—the way the person moves and gestures—is a very important feature of this alteration of the self. I think the schizophrenic’s relation to his body indicates that the I—the speaker of being—has departed. What remains is purely automatic body knowledge—the person knows how to open a door, sit in a chair, or shake hands—and actions become android-like. This substitution for the human dimension is a crucial aspect of the schizophrenic’s voyage.<sup>84</sup>

The speaker of being, as the *parlêtre*, is what disappears in schizophrenia. This process, according to Julieta de Battista, results—paradoxically—in a focus on the body,<sup>85</sup> even as the body slips away into an “android-like” nature. The body slipping away is a mechanism designed to protect the imaginary due to the intrusion (or in-sistence) of the

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<sup>82</sup> Van Haute, *Against Adaptation*, 292.

<sup>83</sup> *Seminar 3*, 81; Lacan, *Seminar 23*, 129; Lombardi, *Body-Mind Dissociation*, 72.

<sup>84</sup> *When the Sun Bursts: The Enigma of Schizophrenia* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2016), 76.

<sup>85</sup> “Lacanian Concept of Desire,” 3.

real: “the self cannot be damaged if it is not there to begin with.”<sup>86</sup> To put this another way, Bollas argues,

Lacan makes a seminal distinction in his theory of psychosis. He maintains that the psychotic refuses the Symbolic order and collapses into the Imaginary—the preverbal mental world of the infant self. In my view, the schizophrenic who unconsciously employs metosexuality as a solution is operating at the manic level, as the controller of both the Imaginary and the Symbolic orders. By achieving this form of transcendence, he controls the universe of imagination and speech.<sup>87</sup>

Although Lacan’s later seminars suggest the psychotic does not collapse into the imaginary so much as the imaginary takes flight, the idea is that symbolic meanings disappear, leaving only the concrete things that the person cannot distinguish from herself.

The psychotic process, then, raises questions of existence. As Michele Ribolsi, Jasper Feyaerts, and Stijn Vanheule note, foreclosure of the name-of-the-father means “a framework for addressing a question of existence remains lacking” due to the lack of metaphorization, which means that one cannot generate meaning or a feeling of identity; this inability “has drastic effects: the articulation of the subject is rendered chaotic; the

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<sup>86</sup> Bollas, *When the Sun Bursts*, 95.

<sup>87</sup> *When the Sun Bursts*, 99. Metosexuality is Bollas’s term to describe the schizophrenic’s attitude of merger, or the return to a fusion of father-mother-infant that creates a “thingness” of the world in which the schizophrenic merges and becomes an inanimate part, creating a non-human world. Metasexuation is (or can be read as) evidence of the foreclosure of the name-of-the-father. It is the eradication of sexual difference, i.e., the beyond of sexuality. In Lacanian theory this can be understood as a failure of feminine *jouissance* in that it is a form “beyond” sexuality but a broken form: it, according to Bollas, “join[s] two eras and two selves into one” without joining the two forms themselves. There is an internalized division that structures the psyche, which Bollas argues leads to a desire for union. Ibid. “Schizophrenic metasexuality finds bliss in the transcendental incorporative amalgamation of opposition.” Ibid, 100.



subject is not named in relation to maternal desire; and in relation to questions of existence a gaping hole remains.”<sup>88</sup> This is why the emphasis in psychosis, I argue, on the orifices and “empty bags,” those structures that mimic the gaping hole of existence. Unlike the neurotic who views the hole metaphorically as something that can be filled, the psychotic eradicates the hole itself in that it becomes just another instance of a thing. In this way the psychotic also eradicates the lack of meaning that permeates existence.

If psychosis is the insistence of the real into the symbolic, an irruption that causes a break in the psychic structure, there are two other elements that belong to the real that are important to understand: *objet a* and *jouissance*. *Objet a* represents the object of desire that someone who is neurotic uses to fill the hole of desire—the ontological lack—at the centre of the psyche, which implies that it touches on all three registers of the psyche: the real, the symbolic, and the imaginary. Nonetheless, *objet a* itself “is that part of the real that resists symbolisation.”<sup>89</sup> According to Van Haute, “The real, finally, refers to what in principle cannot be integrated into this dynamic, and the object *a* is a permanent memorial to this impossibility, so that the three orders revolve, as it were, around the object *a* as a sort of vacuum-point holding them together.”<sup>90</sup> The *objet a* is the representation of those elements of the real that Gallagher, as I mentioned earlier, says cause desire and are “characterised by their relationship to orifices.”<sup>91</sup> In neurosis, the metaphor of the name-of-the-father is repressed, which sets in motion the Oedipus complex as the subject tries to complete the self by filling the empty space with the *objet a*. The subject, in other words, is constituted by the repeated attempts to decipher the

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<sup>88</sup> “Metaphor in Psychosis: On the Possible Convergence of Lacanian Theory and Neuro-Scientific Research,” *Frontiers in Psychology* 6 (3 June 2015): 5–6, <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2015.00664>.

<sup>89</sup> Paul Verhaeghe and Frédéric Declercq, “Lacan’s Analytic Goal: *Le Sinthome* or the Feminine Way,” *Psychoanalytische Perspectieven* 34, no. 4 (2016): 10.

<sup>90</sup> *Against Adaptation*, 292.

<sup>91</sup> “Nets to Knots,” 11.

desire of the other. In psychosis, however, the foreclosure of the name-of-the-father signifier “is a rejection of the ontological necessity of the object’s loss.”<sup>92</sup> Therefore, unlike the neurotic, the psychotic does not believe in (that is, understand) a lack at the centre of its being: the maternal desire is not subsumed by the signifier of the phallus, and as a result, the desire of the other cannot be symbolized.<sup>93</sup> The psychotic recognizes neither the lack in the self nor the lack in the other, and as Van Haute argues, the psychotic “thus has no grasp of the constant sliding of meaning under or along the chain of signifiers.”<sup>94</sup> This troubled relation to signification does not mean the psychotic is not subject to desire, but that the psychotic, in not recognizing a lack, has no need to try to fill the empty space with the *objet a*. Conversely, desire in psychosis is “a not symbolized desire, without the reference that introduces the phallus as a signifier of the lack.”<sup>95</sup> This is the desire to merge disparate objects or opposites or what Alenka Zupančič references as the “psychotic falling of the subject into the object.”<sup>96</sup> The *objet a* for the psychotic does not cause desire but exists *as* real; Lacan states the psychotic has the *objet a* “in his

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<sup>92</sup> McGowan, “The Psychosis of Freedom,” 53.

<sup>93</sup> See *Seminar 20*, 126–27 for how desire operates in neurosis.

<sup>94</sup> *Against Adaptation*, 232.

<sup>95</sup> De Battista “Lacanian Concept of Desire,” 2. In using de Battista’s argument, I am accepting that desire exists for the psychotic—as characterized by (a broken) *feminine* jouissance—and am disagreeing with Roudinesco who argues that “[anxiety] arises when the lack of the object, necessary to the expression of desire, is lacking to the extent that it fastens the subject to an unnameable real that escapes and threatens it. This ‘lack of the lack’ suffocates desire and is then translated into fantasies of self-destruction: chaos, imaginary fusion with the maternal body, hallucinations, spectres of insects, images of dislocation or castration.” *Lacan in spite of Everything*, 77.

<sup>96</sup> *The Odd One In*, 181. Zupančič’s statement here is just a passing reference that describes what comedic repetition is *not*; to me, this explains succinctly the merging with the object in psychosis: the object is not a cause of desire but that which consumes me or which I am a part of.

pocket.”<sup>97</sup> If *objet a* is the surplus *jouissance* that is what cannot be accounted for the symbolic, then for this neurotic, this becomes metaphorical and structures the search for wholeness, but for the psychotic the *objet a* is part of what impinges and insists upon him; the *objet a* exists *only* as its real (i.e., only in the real) without covering it over with the symbolic or our imaginary (re)creation of a wholeness.

Without the symbolic working on *objet a*, the *jouissance* of the psychotic differs, too. *Jouissance* is Lacan’s concept describing what is beyond human limits, beyond the law and beyond the pleasure principle.<sup>98</sup> *Jouissance* proper (or the phallic *jouissance*, the *jouissance* that operates in neurosis) is an orientation to the other that accepts there is a one (or a wholeness) to be had, which is a product of the Oedipus complex and castration: *jouissance* is the experience of the subject who wants to achieve oneness and relies on the imaginary to do this, for example, by believing that there is the category of Woman — with a capital W — that can make one whole, therefore repeating the (mathematical) expression  $(1-) + a + a + a + a$  in the attempts to create a “true” one<sup>99</sup> or by providing obstacles to the repetition of this equation rather than accepting there is an ontological lack in oneself. Van Haute describes how “the institution of the primacy of sexuality (of the phallus) is equiprimordial with the acceptance of the metaphor of the Name-of-the-Father and with entry into the symbolic.”<sup>100</sup> Since the metaphor of the

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<sup>97</sup> The French is “. . . qu’il a sa causes dans sa poche, c’est par ça qu’il et un fou.” “Petit discours aux psychiatres de Sainte-Anne,” November 10, 1967, unpublished, available:

<http://www.psychasoc.com/Textes/Petit-discours-aux-psychiatres-de-Sainte-Anne>.

<sup>98</sup> *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book 7: The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Dennis Porter (New York: Routledge, 2008), 235–52; see Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, ed. and trans. James Strachey (New York: W. W. Norton, 1961) for more on the pleasure principle.

<sup>99</sup> The idea is the subject (the negative one) searches for the object *a* to create a one without the negative, i.e., to create a whole. In mathematical terms, the expression  $(1-) + a . . .$  is thought to be the left half of the equation,  $(1-) + a + a . . . = +1$ .

<sup>100</sup> *Against Adaptation*, 295.

name-of-the-father is foreclosed in psychosis, phallic *jouissance* is foreclosed too, and “the psychotic problematic is not characterized by a conflict within the order of sexuality as such.”<sup>101</sup> In Lacanian logic, Lacan locates phallic *jouissance* as the universal affirmative of all S are P: all speaking beings are submitted to the phallic function. He then appears to situate feminine *jouissance* in contradiction to phallic *jouissance* as the particular negative of some S are not P: some women are not submitted to the phallic function. Yet the two versions of *jouissance* are *not* in contradiction because they both hold the same truth value: the phallic function is the condition of all humans, *and* there is a *jouissance* “beyond” of the phallus that supplements it as a *jouissance* of absence. If we accept that there are two versions of *jouissance*, however, what can Lacan mean by his statement, “Were there another *jouissance* than phallic *jouissance*, it shouldn’t be/could never fail” to be that one?<sup>102</sup> Potentially, we should read this as it (that is, feminine *jouissance*) does not exist because it cannot be symbolized, yet it does exist (in a way) because people experience it. Feminine *jouissance*, then, is directly connected to the real in that something exists that should not exist because we cannot conceive of it, yet it nonetheless exists because the real exists even if we do not believe in it. Lacan uses logic to show the necessity versus contingency of *jouissance*. Phallic *jouissance* is necessary, but feminine *jouissance* is contingent: in the conditional if-then structure, the antecedent can be false and the consequent true (just the consequent cannot be false if the antecedent is true). In other words, if A exists then B must also exist, but B can exist in the absence of A. Thus, it can be false that there is another *jouissance*—because there cannot be another, no other exists in the symbolic—but it can still be true that it shouldn’t be/could never fail to be that one—the feminine *jouissance*. Feminine *jouissance* thus has a logical possibility of existence despite being impossible and exists insofar as it is “extra”; thus, Lacan can say that feminine *jouissance* ex-sists—it persists because of its relationship to

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<sup>101</sup> Van Haute, *Against Adaptation*, 295. Again, this is because in psychosis, one subsumes the divisions into a new metasexuality that incorporates both father and mother and thereby annuls any conflict.

<sup>102</sup> *Seminar 20*, 59.

the real, to an external that insists upon it. It is produced because of the being that is “opposed” (in opposition to) the being that loves God so as to love ourselves; it is produced because of the being of signifierness, whose locus is the locus the Other, which is also where the father function is inscribed — which is beyond the “set” of men.<sup>103</sup> Both this “extra” of feminine *jouissance* and the relationship of the word ex-sists (as opposed to exists) to ecstasy are yet other reasons why many attribute a belief in “God” to Lacan.<sup>104</sup> Feminine *jouissance* is described as that of mystics and the *jouissance* of a religious ecstasy—a *jouissance* that is beyond (the phallus), and thus appears (to some) to enter the realm of God.<sup>105</sup>

This feminine *jouissance* is embodied. Lacan makes this clear when he refers to the statue of Saint Theresa by Gian Lorenzo Bernini—he refers to how one can “immediately understand that she’s coming”<sup>106</sup>—but this *jouissance* is not something that can be subsumed by the symbolic. Nothing can be known about it; it can only be experienced: “There is a *jouissance* that is hers about which she herself perhaps knows nothing if not

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<sup>103</sup> Lacan’s references to the set of men and feminine *jouissance* do not map onto the sexual division of men and women, but he uses the (no longer helpful) term “men” to demarcate those who are subject to the phallic *jouissance*.

<sup>104</sup> Slavoj Žižek and others, however, make a more compelling argument that God exists for Lacan irrespective of religion: God is an instance of a structuring law that, therefore, has no existence (in reality). “The Big Other Doesn’t Exist,” *Journal of European Psychoanalysis* no. 5 (1997), <http://www.psychomedia.it/jep/number5/zizek.htm>. See also Adrian Johnston, “Lacan and Monotheism: Not Your Father’s Atheism,” *Problemi International* 3, no. 3 (2019): 109–41, [https://problemi.si/issues/p2019-3/06problemi\\_international\\_2019\\_3\\_johnston.pdf](https://problemi.si/issues/p2019-3/06problemi_international_2019_3_johnston.pdf).

<sup>105</sup> Lacan’s interest in religion is not because he believes in God but because Catholicism—the only true religion according to him—is the only religion that accepts there is a real rather than just things we have yet to understand but that belong to the symbolic. See Lacan, *The Triumph of Religion*, trans. Bruce Fink (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013).

<sup>106</sup> *Seminar 20*, 76.

that she experience it – that much she knows.”<sup>107</sup> This *jouissance* has nothing to do with the phallus or the pleasure of the organ—men and women can experience the feminine *jouissance*—it is a pleasure beyond the phallus, beyond signification: a pleasure associated with the real playing out in the body.<sup>108</sup>

Returning to the registers: The interdependence of the rings is why psychosis is a problem—the rings detach—yet readings of Lacan suggest he privileges the symbolic, a suggestion that arises despite his comment about the body. Nevertheless, when Lacan speaks of Joyce writing of his body as “something that asks simply to takes its leave, to be divested of like a fruit peel,”<sup>109</sup> he recognizes this impulse as an un-triggered psychotic element of Joyce, an indication of the fraying of the registers. Lacan, however, notes that despite this impulse, Joyce remains within reality precisely because of his works, those creations that knit a *sinthome* and that permit him to live within a symbolic structured by the name-of-the-father despite not having this primordial signifier available to support his psyche. Instead, the *sinthome* becomes the support, allowing him to live according to a *jouissance* that differs from the phallic *jouissance*. Thus, the *sinthome* is not a prescription for psychoanalysts to “write” generally. The *sinthome* and its attendant feminine *jouissance* do not function as the ideal alternative to the phallic function as others espouse;<sup>110</sup> the concept of the *sinthome* is only an indication of the necessity of

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<sup>107</sup> *Seminar 20*, 74.

<sup>108</sup> Lorenzo Chiesa notes that “if feminine *jouissance* lies ‘beyond the phallus,’ it inevitably follows that it must be seen as somehow *nonsexual*, i.e., as not subjected to the *jouissance* of the organ.” *The Not-Two: Logic and God in Lacan* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2016), 10. Being beyond the phallus, beyond the organ, however, does not mean it is beyond the body entirely.

<sup>109</sup> *Seminar 23*, 128.

<sup>110</sup> For example, see Verhaeghe and Declercq, “Lacan’s Analytic Goal” or Paul Verhaeghe, “Lacan’s Answer to Alienation: Separation,” *Crisis & Critique* 6, no. 1 (2019): 365–88, <http://crisiscritique.org/april2019/paul.pdf>. The feminine *jouissance* is attendant to the phallic *jouissance*; it should not be conceived in opposition to the phallic *jouissance* since it cannot exist without it.

*jouissance* and how that may *have* to take a different form when the phallic *jouissance* is an impossibility. The weakness with interpretations of Lacan's theory that idealize the sinthome is that the feminine *jouissance* becomes a goal in itself: these interpretations take the idea that we are all living too much in the imaginary if we are trying to fill the hole within ourselves and posit that we should all be aiming for the personal experience inherent in the feminine *jouissance* that accompanies the sinthome. While the premise is correct,<sup>111</sup> the conclusion about the sinthome is erroneous. The sinthome that connects his psyche and makes living possible for Joyce is not the ideal and making it into one only perpetuates the belief in mastery. The sinthome is not only a lot of work, but it is the product of a mind that, according to Lacan would otherwise have succumbed to the hallucinations, paranoias, and the imposed speech of psychosis.

## 2.3 Sinthome

Although Lacan originally suggests that the Oedipus complex could be a sinthome, the discussion of *objet a* and *jouissance* suggests, instead, that the Oedipus complex is a symptom, grounded in reality and defining a neurotic (or common) way of coping with reality: "the signifier of the Name-of-the-Father is expected to take the place of the lack in the Other and to knot the registers of the Real, the Symbolic and the Imaginary in such

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<sup>111</sup> In reality, it is not the imaginary as based on the mirror (in the mirror stage) that is the enemy, but the concomitant anticipation of a belief in mastery.

a way that the *jouissance* is forbidden.”<sup>112</sup> This process allows one to function in the world with the registers of the psyche intact.<sup>113</sup>

The *sinthome*, on the other hand, is a concept that Lacan uses to describe how the real and the symbolic remain connected to keep the imaginary from “slid[ing] away”<sup>114</sup> when the registers are not held together by this metaphor. Graciela Prieto defines the *sinthome* as “no longer either a message or a metaphor but the *jouissance* of an element of the unconscious, an arbitrary element, which Lacan calls a letter because it is outside the signifying chain and thus outside meaning.”<sup>115</sup> In this definition, Prieto draws out the *sinthome*’s relationship to the real: the element of the unconscious to which it connects is not a word but a letter, something that on its own has no meaning. Without a meaning, it cannot itself be analyzed because there is no meaning within the letter, only the response (as *jouissance*) to the phonation of the voice that is manifest in the body and touches on the real, and as Mari Ruti emphasizes, “a direct encounter with the real . . . is unsustainable . . . too much *jouissance* destroys the subject.”<sup>116</sup> The *sinthome*, therefore, is what allows one—Joyce is Lacan’s example—to live as if one were non-psychotic. For Lacan, the *sinthome* is what enables Joyce to live with untriggered psychosis.

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<sup>112</sup> Verhaeghe and Declercq, “Lacan’s Analytic Goal,” 20.

<sup>113</sup> Lacan does suggest the Oedipus complex could be a *sinthome*. *Seminar 23*, 11. However, as he developed his theory it becomes clearer that the Oedipus complex, in its relation to the name-of-the-father, does not fit the definition of a *sinthome*. Rather, it is a symptom that supports the signifier so that one can be perceived as a subject, and, thus, it establishes a division of the subject “between the symbolic and the symptom,” producing the master’s discourse. *Seminar 23*, 14. The *sinthome*, however, establishes something akin to the analyst’s discourse; I will elaborate on this point later.

<sup>114</sup> *Seminar 23*, 131.

<sup>115</sup> “Writing the Subject’s Knot,” 173.

<sup>116</sup> “When the Cure Is That There Is No Cure: Mourning and Creativity,” (presentation, Centre for the Study of Theory and Criticism Speaker Series, University of Western Ontario, February 5, 2021), MPEG-4 movie, 00:16:39.



To Lacan, Joyce's work reveals "the consequences that results from the mistake in the knot, namely, that the unconscious is tied to the real";<sup>117</sup> In other words, Joyce "cancelled his subscription to the unconscious."<sup>118</sup> That is, Joyce's writing is for Lacan an index of psychosis, but since it is confined to his writing, he posits that Joyce somehow managed to live without the metaphoric name-of-the-father yet *without* falling into psychosis. This sinthomic link then changes the structure of the psyche. Whereas the intact psyche centres around a hole or lack, the psyche held together with the sinthome is de-centred, giving rise to an "unknown" knowledge that reveals itself through its effects. The sinthome differs from the symptom, as I will argue subsequently, that materializes between the symbolic and the real because in Joyce there is a "fault [in the knot], which conscience turns into a sin."<sup>119</sup> This "fault" that differs from the "slip" that (usually) results in the universal symptom mentioned previously as submission to the phallic function.<sup>120</sup> This symptom is acquired when entering the symbolic; therefore, everyone is to some extent subject to this fissure.

The standard interpretation of Lacan's twenty-third seminar is that Joyce used writing to break down language, creating a sinthome in which "metaphor no longer functions" and is, instead, replaced by "forms of nomination that create language capable of detaching itself from conventional sense";<sup>121</sup> in other words, Joyce "makes a (N)ame (of the

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<sup>117</sup> *Seminar 23*, 134.

<sup>118</sup> Lacan, "Joyce the Symptom," 144.

<sup>119</sup> *Seminar 23*, 80.

<sup>120</sup> Lacan asks if the fault relates to the slip, stating the query is valid because of the "equivocation of the word." *Seminar 23*, 80. He does not directly answer this and, initially, refers to the psychosis (particularly telepathy) as Joyce's "own symptom." *Ibid.*, 79. I argue they are different.

<sup>121</sup> Sheldon Brivic, review of *How James Joyce Made His Name*, by Roberto Harari, *James Joyce Quarterly* 40, no. 4 (2003): 854–55, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25478003>. Brivic is reviewing Harari's argument, not making his own. See also Roberto Harari, *How James Joyce Made His Name: A Reading of the Final Lacan* (New York: Other Press, 2002).

Father) for himself through his endless writing.”<sup>122</sup> Throughout *Seminar 23*, Lacan walks his students through the process of his own thought, showing that Joyce’s works first appear to express the “symptom” (of psychosis) via language—in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, for example—then become the vehicle for transforming that symptom into a sinthome by stitching together the real and the symbolic. The focus on language makes sense given Lacan’s prior seminar on psychosis. In *Seminar 3*, Lacan proclaims that the psychotic’s contribution to understanding psychosis is that psychoanalysis approaches the subject in psychosis through speech, “the same register in which the phenomenon [of psychosis] appears to us” and “creates all the richness of the phenomenology of psychosis.”<sup>123</sup> This speech also implies a message or communicative aspect—even if a failed communicative aspect—and, for Lacan, makes the other—the big O other—speak.<sup>124</sup> Speech, Lacan posits, does not just “speak to” but also “speaks of” an other as an object.<sup>125</sup>

What Joyce’s work reveals is what happens when this fault continues to grow and impinge on the real and the body (the imaginary). This fault never results solely in coded messages that an analyst can interpret through the subject’s use of language; rather it also produces a relationship to the “*vie de langage*”<sup>126</sup> that involves the drives. The interpretation cannot be of someone’s words, but of the effects of the word in the body.

Simply put, the sinthome is a fourth element added to the Borromean knot (i.e., to one’s psyche) that results in an individual subjectivity wherein one gains knowledge of the *individual* truth of one’s desire and reconnects to one’s body by opening oneself “to the

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<sup>122</sup> Geoff Boucher, “Joyce: Lacan’s Sphinx,” in *The Literary Lacan: From Literature to Lituraterre and Beyond*, ed. Santanu Biswas (Calcutta, India: Seagull Books, 2012), 148.

<sup>123</sup> *Seminar 3*, 36.

<sup>124</sup> *Seminar 3*, 37.

<sup>125</sup> *Seminar 3*, 38.

<sup>126</sup> *Seminar 23*, 128.

real through the imaginary.”<sup>127</sup> This furthermore produces a *jouissance* different from the phallic *jouissance*, one that is “the idiosyncratic *jouissance* of a particular subject.”<sup>128</sup>

The sinthome, then, is related to Lacan’s concept of feminine *jouissance*—or the *jouissance* that accepts the not-whole of the Other (as of the self) and imagines a *jouissance* that is “beyond” the phallus—and a *jouissance* Lacan suggests characterizes Joyce because Joyce imagines himself as not subject to the phallic function. Rather than living in accordance with the (imaginary) desire of the other, the sinthome permits one to access a different desire, the *feminine jouissance*. It, however, supplements phallic *jouissance* rather than complementing it: if it complemented phallic *jouissance* it would further contribute to the fantasy of wholeness by suggesting that together phallic and feminine *jouissance* could create a One.<sup>129</sup> The result of this different orientation to the phallic function, however, is that there is no dichotomy because there is no neat and tidy psychic function that separates the two types of *jouissance* such as we create (imagine) by focusing on biological sex or socially constructed gender. Therefore, in returning to an earlier point, we can say that feminine *jouissance* simultaneously does not exist because it cannot be symbolized and nevertheless does exist because people experience it. Feminine *jouissance* thus has a logical possibility of existence and exists insofar as it is “extra.”

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<sup>127</sup> Juliet Flower MacCannell, “The Real Imaginary,” *Journal of the Jan Van Eyck Circle for Lacanian Ideology Critique* 1 (2008): 55, <http://www.lineofbeauty.org/index.php/S/issue/view/7>.

<sup>128</sup> Verhaeghe and Declercq, “Lacan’s Analytic Goal,” 13.

<sup>129</sup> This, I think, is what Zupančič is saying when she writes of how the temptation to recognize the other as an answer to our prayers “immediately closes the accidentally produced way out of the impossibility involved in the relation between demand and its satisfaction, and it closes it precisely by transforming this impossibility into a possibility.” *The Odd One In*, 134–35. In other words, we close the gap created by making it into something that can possibly be filled. It takes the pleasure produced in the encounter with the other, the *supplementary* pleasure, and turns it into a complement.

Finally, for Lacan the sinthome has a relation to the real because “the thing that causes the problems that is also the condition of possibility.”<sup>130</sup> In his understanding, psychosis results from a split caused by the intrusion of the real, which affects possibility, so Joyce’s sinthome uses the real, employing the elements of the real to invent a way to live within the symbolic. The sinthome mediates the relationship between the real and the symbolic (indeed, among all three registers) from within the imaginary, to be able to limit the registers and distinguish them, all while making feminine *jouissance* possible. In psychosis, the subject “cancels” its subscription to the unconscious and recognizes no Other and, in so doing, cancels his subscription to the phallic *jouissance*.

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<sup>130</sup> Ryan Engley and Todd McGowan, “The Real,” in *Why Theory*, August 22, 2020, podcast, 1:07:37. Engley and McGowan are discussing the concept of the third for Lacan, which I address later, and they suggest that the real is the *sine qua non* of sense, that you can only derive meaning with the “stumbling block” of sense (i.e., the real).

## Chapter 3 Beyond Lacan

### 3 Extending Lacanian Ideas

Lacan suggests Joyce's use of language to establish a *sinthome* is apt because it sheds light on the way schizophrenic symptoms predominate within the realm of language. As we have already seen, he also suggests that Joyce "makes a name for himself" by bypassing the name-of-the-father while nonetheless making use of it. Lacan, however, is using Joyce to support his theory. It is *possible* language is essential to the creation of a *sinthome*, but there are other interpretations of Joyce's writing as *sinthomic* that argue that there are other key elements constitutive to Joyce's forestalling his collapse into psychosis. I propose that although Lacan's concepts offer a framework for looking at *dance* as a *sinthome*, to enhance this framework, concepts developed by others—but which nonetheless, I argue, fit within Lacanian theory—can offer additional insights and move Lacanian thought forward.

#### 3.1 Mirroring

D. W. Winnicott, for example, develops thoughts on the mirror stage. What Winnicott adds that is relevant for my argument here is that he argues the mirror stage can be re-created or re-done within the psychoanalytic encounter.<sup>131</sup> This insight is consistent with my earlier contention that the mirror stage is not a one-time event, but is necessarily recursive. You will recall that Lacan disagrees with Winnicott's version of the mirror stage, yet the latter acknowledges that he was influenced by former in developing his version of the mirror stage.<sup>132</sup> I suggest these two versions of the mirror stage can be brought into a useful, tension-filled co-existence. The "true self"<sup>133</sup> Lacan dislikes in

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<sup>131</sup> *Playing and Reality*, 158.

<sup>132</sup> Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*, 149.

<sup>133</sup> The "True Self" does not have a definition *per se* but is Winnicott's recognition that there is a counterpart to the "False Self," which is the part of the self "turned outwards and . . . related to the world." Winnicott, "On the Contribution of Direct Child Observation to Psycho-Analysis

Winnicott's mirror image does not have to be understood as a "whole" self necessarily; it can be seen as a process for understanding the self as it is: divided and with a lack at the centre of its being. Looking closely at Lacan's and Winnicott's theories, we notice that Winnicott's concept of "true self," while anathema to Lacan's mirror stage, is not that different from Lacan's later theorization of the subject whose psyche is held together by a *sinthome*. I understand the "true self" to be a personal, interior aspect to the self that does not (necessarily) reflect the ethos of a world structured by the name-of-the-father. This version of the self, it seems to me, is highly analogous to the *sinthome* as what "is singular to each individual":<sup>134</sup> a personalized solution that allows one to exist in the world, even when that world—for that individual—lacks a structuring law.

For Winnicott, the mother is the mirror, and when the baby looks into the mother's face, the baby genuinely sees itself—at least in the "good enough" version of parenting.<sup>135</sup> This reflection helps the baby organize its experience; however, when the mother's answering gestures do not mirror the baby's, mirrors become more like Lacan's mirror: "a thing to be looked at but not to be looked into."<sup>136</sup> This shift in focus suggests that the mirror stage is the stage in which a baby comes to organize experience and introduces the baby to a "true self" as it comes to see itself in the (m)other. An important aspect of mirroring

(1957)," in *The Maturation Processes and the Facilitating Environment* (London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psychoanalysis, 1965), 140.

<sup>134</sup> Lacan, "Joyce the Symptom," 147.

<sup>135</sup> The concept of the "good enough" mother refers to the mother who adapts to the child's needs almost completely at birth and gradually adapts less, helping the growing child to cope with failure. The "good enough" mother will necessarily fail/frustrate the child, but the "good enough" mother makes failure bearable. *Playing and Reality*, 14. This process does not have to reside in the biological mother; it is a function that can be fulfilled by anyone someone who is consistently in the child's life.

<sup>136</sup> Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*, 152.

as done by a parent is that mirroring needs to be “marked.” In other words, the mirror (parent) can reflect what is occurring in the baby, but cannot take on the same depth of experience. The mirror needs “empathic containment”;<sup>137</sup> the parents, that is to say, cannot take on the emotion of the child—the parents cannot be inconsolable if the child is, for example—but must contain that affect: the parents see, contain, and (markedly) reflect in a way that psychically helps nourish and sustain the child.

## 3.2 Play

Another concept that I think is relevant to Lacan’s argument, but one which he never fully explores, is that of play. That said, Lacan was nevertheless aware of the importance of play to psychoanalysis. As Sherry Turkle writes, “For Lacan himself, wit, word games, jokes, mythology making, the material of the poet, were all part of a kind of play that is inseparable from what is most serious about the psychoanalytic enterprise . . . subvert[ing] the line between work and play.”<sup>138</sup> To see the importance of play more

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<sup>137</sup> This is an extension of both Winnicott’s concept of the holding and Bion’s concepts of container and contained and how with psychotic patients, one of the analyst’s functions is to contain the mental (dys)functioning of the analysand in order understand something the patients may not understand themselves, or to help transform beta bits into alpha elements (components of and for thought) via the alpha function. See Wilfred R. Bion, *Experiences in Groups and Other Papers* (London: Routledge, 1961) and Wilfred, R. Bion, *Learning from Experience* (New York: Basic Books, 1962). I will return to this.

<sup>138</sup> *Psychoanalytic Politics: Jacques Lacan and Freud’s French Revolution*, 2nd ed. (New York: Guilford Press, 1992), 233. The full quote about the importance of subverting the line between work and play is: “if analysts do not subvert the line between work and play, they are doing neither science nor poetry, and if analysts do not subvert the line between science and poetry, they are not psychoanalysts at all.” Ibid.

directly, Winnicott is again of use. Winnicott offers a look at play, an element that he sees as essential for psychoanalysis to have effect.<sup>139</sup> Playing, according to Winnicott,

*has a place and a time. It is not inside by any use of the word (and it is unfortunately true that the word inside has very many and various uses in psychoanalytic discussion). Nor it is outside, that is to say, it is not a part of the repudiated world, the not-me, that which the individual has to recognize (with whatever difficulty and even pain) as truly external, outside magical control. To control what is outside one has to do things, not simply to think or to wish, and doing things takes time. Playing is doing.*<sup>140</sup>

Playing is doing also in the sense that this is a playing with reality so to understand it and its limitations.<sup>141</sup> For most people, playing helps them to exist within the symbolic under the law of the name-of-the-father, yet doing, for Lacan, is also related to the psychoanalytic act that creates a new organizational structure. The analyst's discourse puts the analyst in the position of the *objet a*, and in the psychoanalytic act, the analysand rejects the *objet a* (of the analyst), inserting their own desire into that position of lack (thereby recognizing a lack) and becoming the analyst.

Playing, too, involves the body<sup>142</sup> (and thus the imaginary), but it must, however, never become too real: play requires boundaries, and those boundaries must be marked. For example, when play becomes too real, play becomes a threat. The child (or playmate) no longer acts as a lion, but *is* a lion. Without a marked quality, what could have been a fun game that only brushed against the enjoyment of danger becomes a frightful reality. As a

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<sup>139</sup> *Playing and Reality*, 68. For Winnicott, playing as a doing is also related to mirroring and is always a creative act. See "Playing: Its Theoretical Status in the Clinical Situation," *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 49 (1968): 591–99.

<sup>140</sup> *Playing and Reality*, 55.

<sup>141</sup> Hanna Segal, *Dream, Phantasy and Art* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 79.

<sup>142</sup> Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*, 69.



result, the child does not develop a way to play healthily. In terms of psychosis, there is often a focus on making things concrete, but in so doing, this “forecloses play” by severing access to illusion or, rather, by allowing the body to escape.<sup>143</sup> This, I suggest, is the element of “precariousness” that Winnicott defines as characteristic of play.<sup>144</sup> The anxiety informing precariousness makes the boundaries of play, in time and space, necessary: as Phillips argues, one of Freud’s great teachings was how “we are at our most insistent about boundaries when we sense their precariousness.”<sup>145</sup> Boundaries are needed for one to feel safe enough to explore. Knowing that there is a limit to exploration, then one can freely explore. When boundaries are not firm but precarious then there arises an insistence on stricter boundaries, and often the boundaries one establishes to deal with this precariousness are more stringent than they need to be. Having such stringent boundaries closes off creativity because it limits the play sphere. The boundaries are what allow for the child to be able to play, despite play’s connection to fright; they turn what might otherwise be an overwhelming situation into something enjoyable, and all the more enjoyable because it could be otherwise.

The risk of play turning into a frightful reality also brings play into a relationship with existence. As Bollas explains when discussing the thought of psychoanalyst R. D. Laing, the questions of existence that plague someone in psychosis are indicative of an inability “to play with reality,”<sup>146</sup> and that playing with reality is crucial for dealing with it: fantasy is the support of reality, and playing is how the imaginary works with the symbolic to produce meaning and bind the real. We see this phenomenon often in children when they

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<sup>143</sup> Philip M. Bromberg, “Hope When There Is No Hope: Discussion of Jill Scharff’s Case Presentation,” *Psychoanalytic Inquiry* 21, no. 4 (2001): 525, <https://doi.org/10.1080/07351692109348955>.

<sup>144</sup> *Playing and Reality*, 64.

<sup>145</sup> Bersani and Phillips, *intimacies*, 90. This is often seen in children who lack rules and develop a strong superego in the service of maintaining safety.

<sup>146</sup> Bollas, *When the Sun Burst*, 164.

recreate in play moments of an injury or illness. For example, my niece once broke her collarbone. After it healed, as we played, she would direct me to pretend I had broken my collarbone. We played out the trips to the hospital and the wearing of a sling, until one day, it no longer appeared as part of her play. What was a frightening experience was re-enacted in a playful way that contained it—she was able to work through the experience without attempting to undo it— and relegate it to the past. Nonetheless, play like this still contains the risk of fright—because the original experience was frightful—and this tension is what allows the repetition of the play to contain the fear as the child then can work through the original incident.

This reading of play aligns with philosophical ideas of play as well. Johan Huizinga, in his look at play in culture, discusses the boundaries of play and describes play as an absorbing, *aesthetic* activity that occurs “quite consciously outside ‘ordinary’ life” yet within limits of time and space, and involves both repetition and a “tension, . . . uncertainty, chanciness.”<sup>147</sup> Play’s existence within the limits of time and space is what makes it “distinct” from reality (or “ordinary life”), and play is intimately connected to seriousness in that one often turns into the other.<sup>148</sup> Play always contains antithetical elements, ones that become more agonistic when play occurs in groups or as the element of competition is added.<sup>149</sup> It is unexplainable by logic,<sup>150</sup> yet is an intrinsic and undeniable part of all epochs and forms of life.

### 3.3 Potential Space

The tension that Huizinga sees in play, alongside the precariousness that Winnicott sees, point to the importance of play for the development of creativity, and for Winnicott,

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<sup>147</sup> *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-Element in Culture* (London: Routledge, 1949), 13, 10. See pages 1–24 for more on the nature of play.

<sup>148</sup> Huizinga, *Homo Ludens*, 8–9.

<sup>149</sup> Huizinga, *Homo Ludens*, 47. See 115 for how these antagonistic properties operate.

<sup>150</sup> Huizinga, *Homo Ludens*, 213.

playing involves a “potential space” whence creativity arises. This is the area of experiencing that “is at the interplay between there being nothing but me and there being objects and phenomena outside omnipotent control.”<sup>151</sup> Yet this space, as Thomas H. Ogden outlines, is only ever a *potential* space and not an actual space. It is only a hypothetical possibility that “embodies the never-challenged paradox: The infant and mother are one, and the infant and mother are two.”<sup>152</sup> It is a space “between the symbol and the symbolized,<sup>153</sup> or the space that “both separates and joins two people or entities,”<sup>154</sup> and without this space the child remains within a concrete reality rather than moving towards a process of metaphorization. In this sense, the potential space is similar to the feminine *jouissance*: it, too, does not exist because it cannot be symbolized, yet because another *jouissance* exists—the phallic *jouissance*—it conditions a logical possibility of existence. In this case, the potential space is beyond the boundaries of the mother and/or infant or the symbol and/or symbolic. It cannot be spoken of, but it exists because people experience it.

Ogden describes how the failure of the potential space results in a failure to play. There then exists only fantasy, and things are “imprisoned in the realm of fantasy objects as things in themselves” wherein a person “becomes more and more imprisoned in the realm of the thing itself.”<sup>155</sup> At its most extreme, Ogden states that the failure to play leads to

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<sup>151</sup> Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*, 135.

<sup>152</sup> “Thomas Ogden: On Potential Space,” in *In One’s Bones: The Clinical Genius of Winnicott*, ed. Dodi Goldman (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 2013), 228.

<sup>153</sup> Ogden, “On Potential Space,” 236.

<sup>154</sup> Deborah Anna Leupniz, “Thinking in the Space Between Winnicott and Lacan,” *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 90, no. 5 (2009): 960. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1745-8315.2009.00156.x>

<sup>155</sup> “On Potential Space,” 231.

the “foreclosure of the possibility of generating both realistic and fantastic meanings,”<sup>156</sup> recalling (perhaps unconsciously) Lacan’s concept of foreclosure.

If we return to the mirror, the boundaries of the mirror and play can, therefore, be thought to encompass their own “potential space.” They are not dualities playing off one another but a triad of subject-space-mirror or subject-play-other. This space in the middle is not a purely safe space but one that holds simultaneously the paradox of pleasure and fear.

### 3.4 Dreams of Containing the Real

As I have shown, the possibilities of play and for making use of the potential space relies on boundaries. Boundaries are also import for Wilfred R. Bion’s psychoanalytic understanding of the role of dreams and nightmares. Psychosis can be conceptualized as a living nightmare, and, therefore, Bion’s theory—alongside Philip M. Bromberg’s and Ogden’s theories of dreams—can also help conceptualize Joyce’s *sinthome*. J. S. Grotstein offers this summary of Bion, which illustrates the importance of dreaming: “Psychopathology is essentially the result of impaired dreaming. . . . The significance of the analyst’s interpretations of unconscious phantasies (including dreams) is . . . to *acknowledge* their reparative mythic function and . . . to restore their . . . containing function.”<sup>157</sup> He concludes that Bion “hints at” the idea that those who suffer from psychosis suffer from “*defective dreaming*.”<sup>158</sup> This aligns with Bromberg’s theory of dreaming in general, which posits dreams (and nightmares) help us maintain a connection to reality because they operate unconsciously to bind experience that may otherwise overwhelm us. The dream is a dissociative experience that exists “to contain and hold, as a separate reality, *unprocessed experience* that is not safely containable at that

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<sup>156</sup> “On Potential Space,” 235.

<sup>157</sup> “What Does It Mean to Dream? Bion’s Theory of Dreaming,” in *A Beam of Intense Darkness: Wilfred Bion’s Legacy to Psychoanalysis* (London: Karnac Books, 2007), 25–26.

<sup>158</sup> “What Does It Mean to Dream?,” 268.

moment.”<sup>159</sup> Grotstein suggests that with the psychotic, Bion’s goal of analysis is to create the possibility for metaphor or to institute a containing function,<sup>160</sup> which is, essentially, my argument regarding Lacan’s *sinthome*, but for the pre-psychotic. This *possibility* (for metaphor) is also discussed by Jonathan Lear: that is, psychoanalysis is not tied to making meaning (or *a* meaning) but to opening up possibility,<sup>161</sup> including the possibility that there is an unknown that will always escape meaning or, as applied to Lacan, that we can accept our lack.

In this way, dreams have the purpose of binding the real; dreams become a container, in Bromberg’s parlance, for the affects that reveal the real, and the analyst’s work is that of containing, of helping the analysand by holding the effects of the real until the analysand can learn to do this on her own, which only occurs as “the experience of the struggle in the here and now [feels] increasingly safer to the patient.”<sup>162</sup> Essential to this understanding this process are Bion’s concepts of the alpha-function ( $\alpha$ -function) and beta-elements ( $\beta$ -elements).  $\beta$ -elements are the sense impressions that the infant experiences as bad objects and needs to expel (by projection, into the mother).<sup>163</sup> The  $\alpha$ -function is the function by which the mother (in the non-pathological scenario) accepts the infant’s projections of  $\beta$ -elements and processes them to make sense of these  $\beta$ -

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<sup>159</sup> Philip M. Bromberg, “Bringing in the Dreamer: Some Reflections on Dreamwork, Surprise, and Analytic Process,” *Contemporary Psychoanalysis* 36, no. 4 (200): 694, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00107530.2000.10745795>. Bromberg is here discussing using dreams in psychoanalysis, suggesting that night dreams are an everyday experience of dissociation.

<sup>160</sup> Grotstein, “What Does It Mean to Dream?,” 268.

<sup>161</sup> *Wisdom Won from Illness: Essays in Philosophy and Psychoanalysis* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017).

<sup>162</sup> “Bringing in the Dreamer,” 690.

<sup>163</sup> Bion’s theory rests heavily on Melanie Klein’s theory of projective identification. See Melanie Klein, “Notes on Some Schizoid Mechanisms,” *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 27 (1946): 99–110, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3330415/pdf/160.pdf>.

elements for the infant, turning them into alpha-elements ( $\alpha$ -elements), which are those elements that can then be thought of and, thus, worked through. Analysis helps institute Bion's  $\alpha$ -function, which turns the  $\beta$ -elements into "elements of experience . . . that may be linked in the process of dreaming, thinking and remembering."<sup>164</sup> The containing function allows for dialogue between the dreaming-self and the dreamer-self to develop, which Bromberg argues is a creative, interpersonal process.<sup>165</sup> This is also, then, the development of a dialogue that ensures there is no failure (or that remedies a failure) of the potential space.

Limiting or binding psychotic mental processes has an uncanny analogy in the holding of paradoxes, paradoxes that one finds in the act of dreaming. For example, Ogden explains how "dreaming involves a form of psychological work in which there takes place a generative conversation between preconscious aspects of the mind and disturbing thoughts, feelings and fantasies that are precluded from, yet pressing towards conscious awareness (the dynamic unconscious)."<sup>166</sup> In this sense, dreams—in containing the real and permitting its continued existence but in a limited way—create a sense of order, an order that allows someone to exist and operate successfully within the symbolic despite the threat of the real. Perhaps the best illustration of this phenomenon is that of John Nash, the brilliant mathematician who suffered from paranoid schizophrenia in the 1950s and 1960s but went on to receive the Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences in 1994 for his early contributions to the field. In the 1970s his illness appeared to be in remission despite his refusal to continue taking anti-psychotic medication. In Sylvia Nasar's biography, she quotes Nash about his certainty that he will not relapse: "It's like a continuous process rather than just waking up from a dream . . . When I dream . . . it sometimes happens that I go back to the system of delusions that's typical of how I was

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<sup>164</sup> Thomas H. Ogden, "On Holding and Containing, Being and Dreaming," *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 85, no. 6 (2004): 1356, <https://doi.org/10.1516/T41H-DGUX-9JY4-GQC7>.

<sup>165</sup> "Bringing in the Dreamer," 690.

<sup>166</sup> "On Holding and Containing," 1355.

. . . and then I wake up and then I'm rational again.”<sup>167</sup> In other words, Nash's chaotic dreams contribute to the order in his waking life.

Order is an important element within play as well. Huizinga defined one of the positive features of play as how “it creates order, *is* order. Into an imperfect world and into the confusion of life, it brings a temporary, a limited perfect.”<sup>168</sup> Although I am skeptical that play “brings . . . a limited perfect”—its connection to both pleasure and fright suggests “perfect” is the wrong word—I do agree the aspects of play being limited and temporary contribute to play's ability to bind the real and create order. When the psychotic aspects of the subject—the in-sistence of the real—can be bound (between book covers, in a dance, in dreams), then the subject has found a way to “control their own mental processes.”<sup>169</sup> The “order,” then, is a part of what is necessary to embody one's fragmented subject.

In other words, for most of us, dreams act as a protectant: they bind (and thereby contain) the processed and non-processable elements of our experience and transform them in a way that allows us to live with them.<sup>170</sup> Bromberg sees dreaming (or the “dream space”) as analogous to Winnicott's transitional space, which represents “our attempts to symbolize in language what we cannot yet fully comprehend.”<sup>171</sup> Dreams may be a way

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<sup>167</sup> *A Beautiful Mind* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2011), 389.

<sup>168</sup> *Homo Ludens*, 10.

<sup>169</sup> Bollas, *When the Sun Bursts*, 123.

<sup>170</sup> John E. Mack, for example, in his overview on dreams and psychosis within psychoanalytic thinking, writes that both John Frosch and M. Katan posit dreams that contain content that later appears in delusions “may reflect an effort to prevent the illness or master the conflict.” Mack, “Dreams and Psychosis,” *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association* 17, no. 1 (1969): 208, <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F000306516901700110>.

<sup>171</sup> Philip M. Bromberg, “On Being One's Dream: Some Reflections on Robert Bosnake's ‘Embodied Imagination,’” *Contemporary Psychoanalysis* 39, no. 4 (2003): 699, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00107530.2003.10747229>.

that many people—unconsciously—bind the real, bracketing it off in its own space, so to live with the real while not having it overwhelm them or intrude upon them during daytime hours. This process is what makes dreams useful to analysis as well: the analyst and analysand can work together to explore these split-off states of the self and bring about the bodily experience and affect of the dream and then integrate those into the analysand's everyday being. In part, this occurs as the analysand uses the analyst as a container.

Furthermore, it is not just the binding of our affect and sensory experiences that is important but also Bromberg's understanding of Winnicott's potential (transitional) space as “not just a *conceptual* departure from Freud but a huge *experiential and aesthetic leap*.”<sup>172</sup> Bromberg thus links dreaming to creativity. Winnicott brought the importance of creativity into the clinic by being creative himself and reconceptualizing Freud. His concept of the potential space is the place of creativity, and creativity is a third way to be, a way that is not purely internal nor external. The potential space, for Bromberg, is also the dream space,<sup>173</sup> and once the dissociations of dreams are integrated into the self, one meets the definition of health, which he sees as “the ability to stand in the spaces between realities without losing any of them. This is . . . what creativity is all about—the capacity to feel like one self while being many.”<sup>174</sup> Mari Ruti characterizes creativity for Lacan (at times) as “an art of living,” and she argues this capacity for creativity expands if we can accept our lack.<sup>175</sup> For Ruti, this creativity is tied to self-fashioning, and not only requires the other but is also as much about the other as about the subject. Additionally, creativity

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<sup>172</sup> “Hidden in Plain Sight: Thoughts on Imagination and the Lived Unconscious,” *Psychoanalytic Dialogues* 23, no. 1 (2013): 3, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10481885.2013.754275>.

<sup>173</sup> “On Being One's Dream,” 699.

<sup>174</sup> “Shadow and Substance: A Relational Perspective on Clinical Process,” *Psychoanalytic Psychology* 10, no. 2 (1993): 166, <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0079464>.

<sup>175</sup> “When the Cure Is That There Is No Cure,” 00:06:40.



requires fashioning a new object by using the *objet a*.<sup>176</sup> Thus, creativity requires one to play (Winnicott) or dream (Bromberg, Ogden) in order to relate to an object in a new way.

In psychosis, however, one has experiences that cannot be dreamt.<sup>177</sup> People have experiences, instead, that are comparable to night terrors or what Ogden refers to as “undreamt dreams.”<sup>178</sup> In Lacanian terms, in psychosis, the real intrudes into reality and is not able to be bound, by dreams or anything else. The place of undreamt dreams, in contrast to the dream space, is a place “where there is neither imagination nor reality”<sup>179</sup> and, thereby, no creativity. Rather than dissociation being bound by dreams, one lives in a state of dissociation in which, as I previously explained, “everything is concretized,” a state that also “forecloses play.”<sup>180</sup> Crucially, this is where the *sinthome* comes in. Whereas others read the *sinthome* as a creative act, I argue the *sinthome* is a *possibility*. It is the possibility of play, the possibility of metaphor, and the possibility *for* a creative act. If it is a creative act in its own right, it is not a creative act in the sense we normally understand that term, with its relation to the symbolic wherein creativity “is seen as a symbolic re-creation” as one’s inner experience is translated into the world of external

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<sup>176</sup> For Ruti, the *objet a* has another side beyond its role is causing and supporting our desire; it can also “serve creative capacities.” “When the Cure Is That There Is No Cure,” 00:15:25.

<sup>177</sup> Thomas H. Ogden, *This Art of Psychoanalysis: Dreaming Undreamt Dreams and Interrupted Cries* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 24.

<sup>178</sup> *This Art of Psychoanalysis*, 24. This relates directly to psychosis because Ogden also holds that this “undreamable experience” is then held in “psychologically split-off states such as pockets of autism or psychosis, psychosomatic disorders and severe perversions.” *Ibid.*

<sup>179</sup> Thomas H. Ogden, “On Not Being Able to Dream.” *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 84, no. 1 (2003): 23, <https://doi.org/10.1516/1D1W-025P-10VJ-TMRW>.

<sup>180</sup> Bromberg, “Hope When There Is No Hope,” 525.

objects and communicates a meaning.<sup>181</sup> Rather, it is a necessary act borne of the real, with no meaning inherent within it.

### 3.5 Reinterpreting Joyce's Sinthome

So far, I have outlined the Lacanian concepts related to the sinthome and offered additional concepts that I suggest are essential elements of the sinthome, elements Lacan hints at, but never fully explicates. Now, I want to consider how focusing on these additional elements allows for a reinterpretation of the sinthome while maintaining that Joyce's solution was sinthomic. Although Lacan describes Joyce as using language (writing) to create his sinthome, I argue that Joyce finds a way to "bracket" the insistence (or ex-sistence) of the real so that he can maintain an ordinary life while playing with language. Joyce plays with the *real* aspects of language, its tone and rhythm and meter—and in a way that allows his work to operate as a mirror and work on the body,<sup>182</sup> ultimately creating the sinthome Lacan describes as a personalized symptom, or the "idiosyncratic jouissance of a particular subject."<sup>183</sup> The result is, however, that Joyce is still ultimately a little different. Rather than living as a neurotic who continues to try to complete the self by filling the hole in the psyche with the *objet a*, he—as Lacan contends—subscribes to a different *jouissance*: the feminine *jouissance*. While the triggered psychotic will not be able to live easily in the world structured by a primordial

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<sup>181</sup> Ronald Turco, "Psychoanalysis and Creativity: Beyond Freud and Waelder," *Journal of the American Academy of Psychoanalysis* 29, no. 4 (2001): 547, <https://doi.org/10.1521/jaap.29.4.543.21550>.

<sup>182</sup> Gilbert J. Rose writes of how, "in poetry, as many poets testify, the physical experience comes first in both making poetry and enjoying it." "Implicit 'Motion' in Non-Verbal Art: Transmission and Transformation of Affect," *International Journal of Applied Psychoanalytic Studies* 9, no. 4 (2012): 290, <https://doi.org/10.1002/aps.311>. Rose is writing of an implicit motion inherent in music and art; I am linking this to Joyce as his writing becomes progressively more like poetry over time.

<sup>183</sup> Verhaeghe and Declercq, "Lacan's Analytic Goal," 13.

metaphor, Joyce finds a way to do just that without accepting the metaphor of the name-of-the-father. In other words, by employing the letter and relying on, yet binding, homophony, sound, rhythm, and the (object) voice—the elements of speech that have no meaning on their own or the “drive-invested fragments” of language<sup>184</sup>—Joyce plays with what is ineffable within language itself.

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<sup>184</sup> Sara Beardsworth, “The Early View of Psychoanalysis and Art,” in *Julia Kristeva: Psychoanalysis and Modernity* (Albany: State University of New York, 2004), 47.

## Chapter 4 Analyzing Dance

### 4 Dance in Theory and within (Lacanian) Psychoanalytic Theory

What, then, is dance, where does it fit within Lacan's Borromean knot, and how is it related to the *sinthome*? This chapter begins by looking at dance, how others have addressed it within psychology, philosophy, and aesthetics. I then theorize how to understand dance within the Lacanian registers of the psyche and the expanded concepts that I have established also contribute to the *sinthome*, to the mirror stage, and to subjectivity. Finally, I explore how dance, inherently, contains the same elements that characterize Joyce's writing. The goal is to think through how dance may help one to accept the ontologically de-centred subject, to accept and inhabit the lack at one's centre. In other words, dance, as an art, not only embraces creativity, but develops the possibility for it. Dance offers a different way of being in a manner that parallels the psychoanalytic process. Dance is hard—like analysis. Yet, there is always a risk that one avoids the hard work. Rather than stepping into the space and learning one's own body, one may focus on emulating the other or aiming for technical perfection, or one may obsess about how one looks in the mirror. Yet, the fact dance and accepting one's own body within dance is arduous has value: "the difficulty of digging is an important constraint."<sup>185</sup> Difficulty is a necessary part of the *sinthome* or the analytic process: those who think they can actively pursue the *sinthome* are looking for easy solutions, solutions that will inevitably turn to an attempt at mastery. The *sinthome* is borne of necessity and is painful, even as the

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<sup>185</sup> Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and The Teachings of Plants* (Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions, 2013), 179. Kimmerer is referencing an entirely different constraint that nonetheless dovetails nicely with my argument. She is referring to harvesting, here specifically to harvesting leeks, and how although a sharp knife rather than her trowel would speed up the process, it would also facilitate taking too much, thereby increasing the chance of extinction of the leek population. The "difficulty of digging" is what permits a continued healthy crop.

result may be beautiful. Additionally, because the *sinthome* is hard work, it supplements the constraints of dance in binding the real. The result is that the beauty in dance *derives* from the hard work that allows one to take dance's relationship to the real, the real that threatens to overwhelm, and transform that relationship into an art.

## 4.1 Dance in Theory

Dance is the regrettably neglected art. Although Plato considered dance important,<sup>186</sup> arguing it could “permanently stabilize the Greek psyche” by instilling within it respect for tradition with an element of creativity that allows for adaptation,<sup>187</sup> most other philosophers who look at the arts rarely focus on dance alone.<sup>188</sup> Myriad proposals exist accounting for this neglect. Francis Sparshott suggests “there is something in dance that resists the preferred methods of aesthetics and of philosophy in general,”<sup>189</sup> whereas Gabriele Brandstetter posits that dance has historically been seen as action-oriented and,

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<sup>186</sup> Dance is in Plato's view is important in so far as it is an essential element for proper harmony. Graham Pont, “Plato's Philosophy of Dance,” in *Dance, Spectacle, and the Body Politick 1250-1750*, ed. Jennifer Nevile (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), 267.

<sup>187</sup> Pont, “Plato's Philosophy of Dance”, 278. This is not what my argument will involve; Plato's “adaptation” is more akin to accept the status quo while ensuring society is not stagnant.

<sup>188</sup> For more see Bojana Cvejić who in outlining three problems *for* philosophy of dance points out that philosophers, including Kant, Hegel, Schelling, and even Nietzsche, fail to investigate dance as an art within their philosophies. It is not until later that there are “a small number of serious attempts to investigate it philosophically.” “From Odd Encounters to a Prospective Influence: Dance-Philosophy,” *Performance Philosophy* 1, no. 1 (2005): 7, <https://doi.org/10.21476/PP.2015.1129>.

<sup>189</sup> “The Philosophy of Dance: Bodies in Motion, Bodies at Rest,” in *The Blackwell Guide to Aesthetics*, ed. Peter Kivy (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 276.

therefore, opposed to the theoretically oriented discipline of theory; hence, it is left out of philosophical discussions.<sup>190</sup>

Philosophy, for example, tends to exclude dance from its purview as anything other than metaphor either by focusing on the layers of meaning it offers<sup>191</sup> or by using dance as a metaphor in the same way psychoanalytic theory does: by suggesting it represents thought or unconscious processes.<sup>192</sup> This focus on dance as metaphor occurs even when philosophy ventures into aesthetics. Despite important attempts to link philosophy and dance, most often dance is merely neglected by philosophy, even in the realms that would seem most pertinent to dance. For example, although Anna Pakes acknowledges that phenomenology would seem to be a good framework for understanding dance because it offers insights relevant to dance, she adds that “Husserl’s phenomenology does not directly address the phenomena of dance and performance, and indeed barely touches at all on art and aesthetics.”<sup>193</sup> One reason, Pakes suggests, that phenomenology is not employed as a framework for understanding dance is that focusing on the sensations of dancing or of watching dance can prompt the conclusion that dance is not one thing, or its

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<sup>190</sup> “Dis/Balances. Dance and Theory,” in *Dance [and] Theory*, ed. Gabriele Brandstetter and Gabriele Klein (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2014), 197–98.

<sup>191</sup> For example, Henrietta Bannerman describes one of Martha Graham’s signature moves as a metaphor for “emotional suffering . . . which is meaningful on many levels.” “Visible Symbols: Dance and Its Modes of Representation,” in *Thinking through Dance: The Philosophy of Dance Performance and Practices*, ed. Jenny Bunker, Anna Pakes, and Bonnie Rowell (Hampshire, UK: Dance Books, 2013), 190.

<sup>192</sup> For example, Catherine Botha argues that in Alain Badiou’s works on dance, dance is only a metaphor of thought. “Dance and/as Art: Considering Nietzsche and Badiou,” in *Thinking through Dance: The Philosophy of Dance Performance and Practices*, ed. Jenny Bunker, Anna Pakes, and Bonnie Rowell (Hampshire, UK: Dance Books, 2013), 224.

<sup>193</sup> “Phenomenology and Dance: Husserlian Meditations,” *Dance Research Journal* 43, no. 2 (Winter 2011): 35, <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/473152>.

essence is whatever one wishes it to be and, thus, cannot be a sufficiently defined area of study.<sup>194</sup>

Additionally, when (non-dance) theorists contemplate dance, it is often brushed aside or considered together with the “arts” and subsumed under arguments that focus on music or the visual arts. In Leo Tolstoy’s famous treatise on art—*What is Art?*—dance only makes cameo appearances, often only within a focus on a different art form.<sup>195</sup> Only Friedrich Nietzsche, according to Janet O’Shea, gives “sustained attention to dance” in classical Western philosophy, although as she explains, dance is more valued in the philosophies of other cultures, even as those philosophies tend to integrate it into the theatrical arts in general.<sup>196</sup> Alternatively, dance is also (mis)appropriated in the pursuit of other philosophical purposes: Catherina Botha, for examples, comments that “in Badiou’s inaesthetic approach, dance is denied artistic status, acting instead only as the metaphor of thought.”<sup>197</sup> Other theorists focus on how dance offers layers of meaning<sup>198</sup> or use dance to describe a different, unrelated, processes such as how people interact in

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<sup>194</sup> “If this were true, there would be no possibility of discussing, researching, or writing about particular dances, since they would be nothing beyond the individual subject’s experience—no shared dance world in which to participate. Dance would be locked into the private world of an individual’s consciousness.” “Phenomenology and Dance,” 38.

<sup>195</sup> See Tolstoy, *What Is Art?*, trans. Aylmer Maude (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1904).

<sup>196</sup> “Root/Roots of Dance Studies,” in *The Routledge Dance Studies Reader*, 2nd ed., ed. Alexandra Carter and Janet O’Shea (New York: Routledge, 2010), 9.

<sup>197</sup> “Dance and/as Art,” 224.

<sup>198</sup> One example previously mentioned is Bannerman description of Martha Graham’s signature moves as a metaphor for “emotional suffering . . . which is meaningful on many levels.” “Visible Symbols,” 190.

relationship.<sup>199</sup> This use of dance as metaphor occurs even when philosophy ventures into art directly—despite Valéry’s attempt to “fathom the mystery of the body” in dance.<sup>200</sup> Trevor Whittock, for example, argues that the meaning to be found in dance derives from its non-verbal metaphors.<sup>201</sup>

Even though theorists from dance and philosophy have expressed frustration with the lack of rigour and consensus about the theoretical status of dance in itself, largely with the objective of encouraging future research and engagement,<sup>202</sup> these same theorists generally only offer cursory speculation about why dance is neglected, rather than take up the challenge of bringing these fields together.<sup>203</sup> For example, Sparshott suggests that

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<sup>199</sup> See Carole M. Pistole, “Dance as a Metaphor: Complexities and Extensions in Psychotherapy,” *Psychotherapy* 40, no. 3 (October 2003): 232–41, <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-3204.40.3.232>.

<sup>200</sup> “Philosophy of the Dance,” 70

<sup>201</sup> “The Role of Metaphor in Dance,” *British Journal of Aesthetics* 32, no. 3 (July 1992): 242–49, <https://doi.org/10.1093/bjaesthetics/32.3.242>.

<sup>202</sup> For example, Pakes argues that “restlessly probing this tension” between dance and philosophy can enable greater understanding. “Phenomenology and Dance,” 45. Claire Colebrook, on the other hand, suggests that dance cannot be included within philosophy as we currently understand it; she encourages dance theorists to develop a new style of philosophy. “How Can We Tell the Dancer from the Dance?: The Subject of Dance and the Subject of Philosophy,” *Topoi* 24 (2005): 5, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11245-004-4157-7>.

<sup>203</sup> There are works on psychology and dance, such as the development of dance therapies; however, the accompanying theory is focused more on the relationship between movement and emotion rather than on how dance relates to overall psychic functioning. Furthermore, it is not focused on dance as an art or a practice but as a technique that draws on someone’s intuitive movements. In other words, these therapies are using rhythmic movement as a framework for establishing a connection with a person’s intuitive and unconscious affects spontaneously, rather than drawing on dance as a discipline. The methods of dance therapy differ widely and are not codified (and, curiously, do not always involve movement).



“one possible reason why theorists have found little to say about dance could be that people resort to dancing and gesturing when the meaning they wish to convey cannot or must not be put into words.”<sup>204</sup> He also suggests that philosophy overlooks dance because dance’s principal medium is the body, which is something common to everyone. This assertion thus dismisses the challenges and complexity of dance with the assumption that if everyone has a body, then everyone can dance.<sup>205</sup>

The neglect of dance and belief that theory opposes dance dovetails into Claire Colebrook’s belief that our current understanding of philosophy cannot accommodate dance; she urges dance theorists to develop a new philosophy.<sup>206</sup> Pakes agrees that philosophy cannot accommodate dance, at least not well. In *Choreography Invisible*, she looks at the ontology of dance (and dance does have an ontology). Rather than existing purely in its ephemerality, dance straddles the divide of the ephemeral and the concrete. Although dependent on the body, dance nonetheless exists beyond the body.<sup>207</sup> Pakes explains the common view of the binary where things are either ephemeral or concrete physical objects—a view which eliminates dance because it does not fit neatly into either category—and she wants to disrupt this conception by exploring dance as “structures of action.”<sup>208</sup> Pakes investigates “dance works,” exploring their ontology and definition, and her book contains ambiguity between product and process and between the concrete and the abstract, pointing out the difficulties philosophy has in conceptualizing dance while simultaneously holding that we cannot deny dances “are still real.”<sup>209</sup> Notwithstanding

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<sup>204</sup> “The Philosophy of Dance,” 277.

<sup>205</sup> “The Philosophy of Dance,” 278.

<sup>206</sup> “How Can We Tell the Dancer from the Dance?,” 5.

<sup>207</sup> This reliance on the body, however, often results in the lower valuation of dance in the art world because it contributes to the problem of identity over time.

<sup>208</sup> *Choreography Invisible: The Disappearing Work of Dance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 6, 7.

<sup>209</sup> *Choreography Invisible*, 286.

the excellent works that explore dance and its various aspects, it is nonetheless obvious that dance is a “problem” within theories of art and aesthetics. The resultant neglect of dance naturally leads to a disunity in thought about dance, and consequently, there is no consensus about what dance is or, as Sparshott frames it, “no determinate answer” about the conditions for identifying dancing or assessing if two dances are the same.<sup>210</sup>

In psychoanalytic theory, dance is often a metaphor for what happens within psychoanalysis, but this metaphor does not rely on the use of a cogent dance theory; instead, theorists argue that the process of psychoanalysis entails a *pas de deux* or a back-and-forth that occurs between the analyst and analysand.<sup>211</sup> Likewise, psychological research often glosses over dance but unlike philosophy or psychoanalysis, rarely mentions this oversight. Instead, psychology mainly focuses on the visual arts or music when it investigates the influence of arts on psychological functioning. For example, psychologist Ellen Winner explores and synthesizes the research into brain functioning and art. Although she wants her argument to apply to all art forms and contemplates how “the human mind cannot help but see a similarity across all of the so very different kinds of things that we can all agree are art—a symphony, a painting, a sculpture, a *dance*, a play, a cathedral, a film,”<sup>212</sup> within her work, she focuses on music and visual arts, with brief explorations into the literary arts and theatre, but none into dance.<sup>213</sup> When she does

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<sup>210</sup> “The Philosophy of Dance,” 276.

<sup>211</sup> See Danielle Knafo, *Dancing with the Unconscious: The Art of Psychoanalysis and the Psychoanalysis of Art* (New York: Routledge, 2012) and Danielle Knafo, “Dancing with the Unconscious: The Art of Psychoanalysis,” *Psychoanalytic Inquiry* 32, no. 3 (2012): 275–91, <https://doi.org/10.1080/07351690.2011.609081>.

<sup>212</sup> *How Art Works*, 26; my italics.

<sup>213</sup> The index to Winner’s book offers support for my statement. While music and the visual arts are listed separately and have multiple subsections related to them, dance does not even receive its own entry. The sole reference I have found is to ballet, when Winner writes about the riots that followed the first performance of “Igor Stravinsky’s ballet *The Rite of Spring*.” *How Art Works*, 8. What is curious to me about this is that Stravinsky was the composer, and it is generally

mention dance, she generally refers to dance creation—that is, to choreography—not to dance as a performance art.<sup>214</sup> Whether this is a conscious oversight or not, it speaks to the lack of psychological studies within the arts that focus on dance.

One of the more common themes found in discussions of dance theory is the contention that dance is an “ephemeral” art because “there is something vital about dance . . . that disappears as it is being performed.”<sup>215</sup> Others refer to dance as the art that “disappears” or is fleeting. Pakes, for example, states that dance is “inherently ephemeral” and “lost when forgotten.”<sup>216</sup> Yet she also writes, “dancers often seek to embody something that pre-exists and survives beyond their particular act of dancing.”<sup>217</sup> This *something* is often connected to that fleeting element and becomes the subject of research itself. For example, Melissa Park, a researcher at McGill University in Quebec, is engaged in

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assumed the riots had to do with the music not the dance. See Jad Abumrad and Robert Krulwich, “Musical Language,” in Radiolab, produced by WNYC Studios, podcast, 59:55, <https://www.wnycstudios.org/podcasts/radiolab/episodes/91512-musical-language>. What is even *more* curious to me is that Vaslav Nijinsky choreographed this ballet—Nijinsky, who struggled with schizophrenia and becomes an important part of my argument later.

<sup>214</sup> See *How Art Works*. Within this work Winner also discusses José Ortega y Gasset, for example, who writes about art and its relationship to the unreal image, which is relevant for my argument. *Ibid.*, 12. However, nowhere within the work Winner cites does dance appear. See José Ortega y Gasset, “The Dehumanization of Art,” trans. Helene Weyl, in *The Dehumanization of Art and Other Essay on Art, Culture, and Literature*, 2nd ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1968), 3–54.

<sup>215</sup> Aili Bresnahan, “The Philosophy of Dance,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (Stanford University, 1997–), article published January 12, 2015; last modified July 30, 2020, §1.2, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2020/entries/dance/>.

<sup>216</sup> *Choreography Invisible*, 1, 242.

<sup>217</sup> *Choreography Invisible*, 5–6.

searching for and capturing this ephemeral element of dance to help construct narratives and develop body-based approaches for mental health care.<sup>218</sup> Park’s research illustrates of what Bojana Cvejić argues about how “disappearance, loss, lack and absence have been the notions through which dance scholars in the past decade have examined movement with bodily presence, regarding it as that which disappears and marks the passing of time” and that this is a way to deal with “what appears abstract and elusive” within dance.<sup>219</sup>

For some, especially those trying to pin down this elusive element, dance’s ephemerality is negative. Graham McFee, for example, argues this aspect of dance is irrelevant to understanding the nature of dance and is purely a remnant of the current inability to preserve or recreate dances, which makes studying dance difficult because it requires access to the constantly changing performance.<sup>220</sup> Alternatively, Renee M. Conroy argues that many dancers view this aspect as something to value because it elevates the importance of live performance and, therefore, the importance of dance as an art because it implies a that dancers, collectively, value flexibility and continual growth and development.<sup>221</sup> Intuitively the argument about dance’s ephemerality seems logical: a dance itself is fleeting and, therefore, whatever elements exist in it would conceivably end when the dance does. I, however, suggest that dance is aethereal rather than ephemeral. Looking at dance does suggest there is something about it that makes it difficult to theorize, possibly because of its *distance* from the symbolic, but that something is not “fleeting,” even if the performance of a dance itself is fleeting. The steps

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<sup>218</sup> “Research and Community Building: How Data Can Bring Dance Back into Society,” webinar presented by the National Centre for Dance Therapy, Montreal, QC, April 13, 2021, zoom.

<sup>219</sup> “From Odd Encounters,” 11.

<sup>220</sup> *The Philosophical Aesthetics of Dance: Identity, Performance and Understanding* (Hampshire, UK: Dance Books, 2011), 97.

<sup>221</sup> “Dance,” in *The Continuum Companion to Aesthetics*, ed. Anna Christina Ribeiro (London: Continuum, 2012), 160.

themselves are fleeting, but dance contains an element that subsists across dances and dance forms and remain within the dancer even when not dancing. I contend the element that others see as ephemeral is a tenuous connection to the real, and that connection is simultaneously impossible to represent yet permanent. Although it cannot be adequately described via the language of the symbolic, it can nonetheless be felt and experienced by those who dance. Thus, the temporal aspects of dance are actually what contribute to what remains as much as to what disappears. If the present affects the past and the logical evidence for any conclusion remains unfounded until that conclusion is acted upon (and if irrationality is therefore necessary for rationality, and any act—including the psychoanalytic act—requires a leap of faith that one’s albeit false certainty of action will be true), then dance is a way to change the past and affect the future. Part of what remains in the “fleeting” movement of dance is its effects. Dance, then, has a retroactive element built into it. When one dances, one can create change, which can—like psychoanalysis, “change” the past, so what appears to be fleeting, in fact has lasting effect.<sup>222</sup>

Another reason for the muddling of dance theory is that, as Lear identifies, “philosophy is concerned less with actuality than with possibility and necessity: less with what is or will be, more with what might or must be.”<sup>223</sup> Dance, however, is an actuality and only exists (in its steps and movement) as it is danced, which is why the emphasis on the disappearing nature of dance. Once a dance ends, one cannot sit and stare at it and ponder it like one can a piece of visual art. One cannot read the score to search for clues as to its nature as one might do with music. One is left without a physical object to contemplate.<sup>224</sup> Another possibility regarding the neglect of dance is that it is often seen

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<sup>222</sup> The relationship to Lacan’s concepts of retroaction and anticipation is significant, and I do not development that relationship entirely here. There is also a connection to logical time that I will bring out later, but that too, I never fully develop and deserves more attention that I give to it.

<sup>223</sup> Lear, *Wisdom Won from Illness*, 132.

<sup>224</sup> Indeed, there is no shared form of dance notation. Two early proponents of a shared notation systems were Rudolf von Laban and Margaret Morris. Laban developed “labanotation,” an “alphabet” system that “spells” out the movements. John Hodgson, *Mastering Movement: The*

as an activity for which the only prerequisite is a body; therefore, as I mentioned previously, this belief sets up the corollary belief that since everyone has a body, everyone can dance, which relegates dance to mere recreation or commonplace activity.<sup>225</sup> Unfortunately, this sentiment of dance as available to everyone informs how dance is presented in popular culture. Not only does it appear in the plethora of popular movies or fiction that depict dance,<sup>226</sup> but it also shapes dance scholarship. Kimerer L. LaMothe offers an important understanding of dance as related to the creation of a self, yet for her, dancing is an emergent phenomenon that means that any movement *could* be dance if said movement “encourage[s] a conscious participation in the ongoing rhythms of bodily becoming.”<sup>227</sup> If this is true, if everyone can dance or every movement can be

*Life and Work of Rudolf Laban* (New York: Routledge, 2001). Morris outlined her system, which uses more abstract symbols, in *The Notation of Movement* (London: K. Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1928). Others have also developed notations (including Nijinsky), but there is no common system.

<sup>225</sup> Sparshott, “The Philosophy of the Dance,” 278. Sparshott later adds, however, a notable question: “if we dismiss [forms of dance] as mere recreation, the effect of our dismissal vanishes when we inquire into the significance of recreation itself.” *Ibid.*, 285.

<sup>226</sup> The list of movies is long and includes films such as such as *Dirty Dancing*, directed by Emile Ardolino (1987; Montreal, QC: Alliance Films, 1987), DVD; *Shall We Dance*, directed by Peter Chelsom (2004; Los Angeles: Miramax Films, 2004), DVD; *Coyote Ugly*, directed by David McNally (2000; Burbank, CA: Touchstone Pictures, 2000), DVD; *Take the Lead*, directed by Liz Friedlander (2006; Burbank, CA: Warner Home Video, 2006), DVD; and my personal favourite, *Happy Feet*, directed by George Miller (2006; Burbank, CA: Warner Home Video, 2007), DVD, because why restrict dancing to a human endeavour? Even penguins can dance. One fictional literary example is from Lloyd Jones, *Here at the End of the World We Learn to Dance* (New York: Dial Press, 2008): 22.

<sup>227</sup> *Why We Dance: A Philosophy of Bodily Becoming* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), 7.

dance, then dance has no particular need of a philosophy or aesthetic theory. Dance is not an art, but an amusement or diversion that can be dismissed by theorists and philosophers because it lacks complexity, standards, or objectivity.

Needless to say, dance as inconsequential or trivial is not my view nor a universally held view, but it is a common one. It is not surprising, then, that among those who do engage in the theory of dance, almost anything goes. Theorists have described dance as “a confrontation with life as a plane of open and divergent becomings,”<sup>228</sup> “a healing of the self’s divisions,”<sup>229</sup> communication,<sup>230</sup> affective movement,<sup>231</sup> a non-human art,<sup>232</sup> and the “sensation of time and energy.”<sup>233</sup> Some consider this fragmentation of ideas inevitable. Brandstetter, for example, argues that “a reliable, stable meta-position for a systematic view of the relationship between dance, theory and praxis cannot be achieved. . . . A dis/balance, a loss of control, is always looming on the horizon.”<sup>234</sup> Likewise, O’Shea, commenting on modern dance theory, states, “recent work suggests a diversification or even a fragmentation of interest that *necessarily* accompanies the development of the field.”<sup>235</sup> This assertion does make sense to the extent that arguing dance has only *one* interpretation is to place it too fully and rigidly within the symbolic.

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<sup>228</sup> Colebrook, “How Can We Tell the Dancer from the Dance?,” 5.

<sup>229</sup> Steven Bruhm, “Dance Divisions,” (draft of a paper presented at ‘Seeing Things’: Interdisciplinary Symposium on Literature and the Visual, University of Tours, France, 2001), 1–2.

<sup>230</sup> Bannerman, “Visible Symbols,” 187–89; Sparshott, “The Philosophy of the Dance,” 277; Bruhm, however, adds, “dance is not only founded on textual narrative, it telegraphs to others the degree to which human behaviour itself is a textual narrative.” “Dance Divisions,” 3.

<sup>231</sup> Sparshott, “The Philosophy of Dance,” 281.

<sup>232</sup> Rohman, *Choreographies of the Living*, 3.

<sup>233</sup> Valéry, “Philosophy of the Dance,” 72.

<sup>234</sup> “Dis/Balances,” 200.

<sup>235</sup> “Root/Roots of Dance Studies,” 14; my italics.

For example, if dance *is* communication,<sup>236</sup> then it is not a *shared* communication, nor a (necessarily) conscious one. If dance is intended as communication, is that an element of the choreographer or the dancer? The dancer cannot, like a speaker, assume that the other—the audience—will understand any message the dancer intends, and if it is the choreographer who intends the message, then the message is first interpreted by the dancer before being communicated outwards again. Furthermore, if dance is communication, is it not solely communication, nor even always communication.

Susan Leigh Foster offers the following table outlining four dance projects and what each project entails.<sup>237</sup>

**Table 1**

Trope	Choreographic mode of representation	Choreographic example	Historical example
Metaphor	Resemblance	Hay	Late Renaissance, European court spectacles
Metonymy	Imitation	Balanchine	Neoclassical proscenium theatre ballet
Synecdoche	Replication	Graham	American expressionist modern dance
Irony	Reflection	Cunningham	Contemporary post-expressionism experimental dance

What strikes me in this chart is that each project is very different, and each project

<sup>236</sup> This idea is one help by Agnes De Mille, for example, who espouses, “art is communication on the deepest and most lasting level.” Agnes de Mille, “Art Is: Excerpt from *The Book of the Dance*,” in *Leaps in the Dark: Art and the World*, ed. Mindy Aloof (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2011): 183.

<sup>237</sup> *Reading Dancing: Bodies and Subjects in Contemporary American Dance*. (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1986), 236n1.



reveals different assumptions underlying it regarding the nature of the body, the self/subject, and the dancer. What this also suggests is that for dance to be seen as communication, it must be a communication from the choreographer, not from the dancer nor from the dance itself. This confusion, therefore, lays bare that, to an extent, what is inherent in dance and (what I will shortly argue) is essential for its role as a *sinthome*, is the ability to hold this dialectic, these opposing interpretations, knowing that *all* are true, yet none are true.

David Best alleges the lack of consensus regarding dance is a consequence of an underlying belief that dance is emotional, and, therefore, subjective; the fallacy here—he suggests—is that this view assumes “reasoning is inappropriate, irrelevant or incoherent” when looking at dance aesthetically, which thereby implies one can neither theorize about nor “intelligibly [discuss]” it.<sup>238</sup> Yet, dance, in part, has an affective or emotional dimension, and despite this, scholars do attempt to discuss dance seriously. The predicament within dance theory is more that all theories are plausible based on the characterization of dance as subjective and emotional and, therefore, irrational, or uninterpretable. Best, however, points out that although dance may not have a singular response or interpretation, it does have limits regarding what one can appropriately say about it;<sup>239</sup> he suggests that the emotional nature of dance should not overshadow any attempt to imagine it theoretically: body and mind must co-exist. This dissertation takes Best’s suggestion as a challenge to bring together the disparate ideas about dance so they *can* co-exist.

Despite this lack of consensus within dance theory generally, the theories themselves often provide useful concepts. Both Valéry and Merce Cunningham outline how dance

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<sup>238</sup> “The Aesthetics of Dance,” *Dance Research Journal* 7, no. 2 (1975): 12, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1477820>.

<sup>239</sup> “The Aesthetics of Dance,” 12.

exists only in space and time: “in dancing . . . space and time cannot be disconnected.”<sup>240</sup> Additionally, John Hodgson, in his examination of Rudolf von Laban (a choreographer and theorist who attempted to develop a shared dance notation), shows how Laban understood dance as unique among the arts. Dance is “unlike the other arts since it is plastic and self-expressive in a way that they are not. It is in the original art form out of which the other arts have grown. . . . It will reveal all kind and side of individuality.”<sup>241</sup> Thus, dance is—according to this idea of Laban’s—capable of helping someone live individually, rather than by governed by the desire of the Other.

Laban’s idea is useful, and I suggest what helps one to live individually within dance is a consequence of what is unique about dance internally: it, like Joyce’s writing and psychoanalysis, can support someone while he or she develops the *courage* to approach, touch, and bind the real so as to (consequently) play with the real.<sup>242</sup> In touching the real and binding it, then, dance can help redefine the subject in its relation to desire. That is, in dancing, one touches and binds the real, situating dance as a possible *sinthome* that can move the centre of one’s being away from the lack or gap created by the overlap of the

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<sup>240</sup> Merce Cunningham, “Space, Time, and Dance,” in *Trans/Formations* 1, no. 3, (1952): 150–51, n.p., <https://www.mercecunningham.org/the-work/writings/space-time-and-dance/>. See also Valéry, “Philosophy of the Dance,” 65.

<sup>241</sup> *Mastering Movement*, 133. This, I suggest, is very different from what Bruhm identifies as dance’s ability to “perform the ontological work of making self-presence possible,” which he sees as healing of the self’s divisions. “Dance Divisions,” 1–2. Bruhm’s interpretation of (modern, twentieth-century) dance does not account for individuality outside of the phallic function so much as restoring one to a cultural normativity.

<sup>242</sup> Rose offers a version of this argument, suggesting the “arts may act as a prosthetic device and support where deficiencies exist.” *Between Couch and Piano: Psychoanalysis, Music, Art and Neuroscience* (New York: Brenner-Routledge, 2004), 119. I, however, offer a different idea of how this works from Rose, believing the arts cannot eliminate deficiencies, or restore a wholeness, but provide, using Bersani’s words, an “impersonal relationality.” Bersani and Phillips, *intimacies*, 123.

symbolic, real, and imaginary: one no longer has to fill the gap but can occupy it as a part of oneself.

In order to touch the real, one must make use of the body, for the real plays out within the body. Dance, by necessity, incorporates the body. Lacan, although critical of phenomenology at times, identifies the contribution phenomenology offers for understanding how we exist in the world. He uses Maurice Merleau-Ponty's idea of how we experience perception through the body, and how that experience influences (or contributes to) what we perceive, for example.<sup>243</sup> Merleau-Ponty thus offers Lacan support for the concept of the real, or for something that cannot now or ever be understood or "known" by science in that Merleau-Ponty's work captures the element that accounts for the fact that "a painting has an effect on the subject which goes far beyond the production of ocular images."<sup>244</sup> In *Seminar 11* Lacan speaks of something new (and valuable) in Merleau-Ponty's work: the division between the eye and the gaze, that is, the invisible. Charles Shepherdson posits that the value for Lacan is that this division suggests a gaze that "precedes [the visible], a gaze that *opens* the domain of visibility."<sup>245</sup> Shepherdson adds that for Lacan, then, "the experience of being under the gaze, and more precisely the satisfaction that attends it, is precisely the experience of the scopophilic drive, that primordial experience which is always a possibility of the subject, but one in which desire is lost, and the subject moves toward its own annihilation,"<sup>246</sup> meaning that rather

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<sup>243</sup> Stijn Vanheule, "A Lacanian Perspective on Psychotic Hallucinations," *Theory & Psychology* 21, no. 1 (2011): 90, <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0959354310369275>.

<sup>244</sup> Cormac Gallagher, "'Despair, Despair, despair . . . spare!': Affect in Lacanian Theory and Practice," (paper presented to the 4th annual conference of Universities Association for Psychoanalytic Studies Canterbury, May 17–18, 1997), [http://www.lacaninireland.com/web/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/Aut\\_1997-DESPAIR.SPARE-AFFECT-IN-LACANIAN-THEORY-AND-PRACTICE-Cormac-Gallagher.pdf](http://www.lacaninireland.com/web/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/Aut_1997-DESPAIR.SPARE-AFFECT-IN-LACANIAN-THEORY-AND-PRACTICE-Cormac-Gallagher.pdf).

<sup>245</sup> "A Pound of Flesh: Lacan's Reading of *The Visible and the Invisible*," *Diacritics* 27, no. 4 (1997): 77, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1566262>.

<sup>246</sup> "A Pound of Flesh," 85.

than the gaze coming from the Other, the gaze is the means of the annihilation of the subject, which would make this gaze the means for us to “die differently,”<sup>247</sup> to die in such a way that allows the subject to re-emerge reconstituted. Therefore, as one dances and uses the body, one uses the real within the body to develop as an individual; rather than clinging to knowledge, or the subject supposed to know, one can come to a subjective truth.

## 4.2 Dance within the Lacanian Registers

Looking to dance in relation to the registers of the psyche, it is evident that dance touches on all three registers of the Lacanian psyche. Harry Slochower argues, “the distinguishing character of art”—and here, he is encompassing all the arts—“consists in that it communicates by *the language of the senses*, that is by *the body* and its movement in its *corporeal* polysemic guises. It is in its *materialization* through imagery that art assumes *its identity*.”<sup>248</sup> This, therefore, brings the registers of the psyche into play in the symbolic (language) and the imaginary (the body). The real comes in because if a part of what makes art art is a bodily connection,<sup>249</sup> and the real is the unrepresentable elements of experience that are often—and especially in psychosis—played out in the body, then dance seems ideally suited as an art, more so than Joyce’s *lalangue*, to re-create the connection among real, the symbolic, and the imaginary.

Dance, like all art, takes place only in the symbolic, as does all of life. I mentioned previously that the reason dance may be the best art form for creating a *sinthome* is

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<sup>247</sup> Zupančič, *What is Sex?*, 106.

<sup>248</sup> “Psychoanalysis and Art: Their Body Language,” *American Imago* 43, no. 1 (Spring 1986): 3, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26303862>.

<sup>249</sup> Winner, in a different context, argues that art that is emotionally arousing—and therefore, more affective—is so because of a connection to movement. She uses music as her example, and writes, “music makes us feel like moving. . . . Moving in these ways . . . may intensify the emotions we feel.” *How Art Works*, 87. Rose, too, would accept this as his focus in on the power of the implicit motion in art. See *Between Couch and Piano*.

because it is simultaneously distant from the symbolic (from the language we often come to see as defining the symbolic) yet still within it. The connection to the symbolic means dance also has a (tenuous) connection to meaning as well. Although there is no obvious or straightforward translation of a dance into meaning, dances are created with a meaning in mind, even if the creation of a dance for a certain purpose “does not preclude the possibility that the intention need not be the only intention with which a work is created.”<sup>250</sup> Furthermore, there are, as Best argues, limits to the possible interpretation of a dance that exist in relation to the audience’s expectation and the “context of the particular situation.”<sup>251</sup> Something, therefore, limits the interpretations of a dance, suggesting that dance, too, is contained by the symbolic and not merely the real being played out in the body.

Regarding the imaginary, dance, stripped down, *always* involves the body, a body that is clearly linked to the Lacanian imaginary. Foster notes in her work how the choreography of Merce Cunningham exudes this quality of the imaginary, taking it to its extreme: Cunningham’s dance “acknowledges no ‘natural’ connection between movement and feeling . . . it suggests that the dance could simply be about human bodies and nothing more.”<sup>252</sup> Additionally, dance is performance, which deeply connects to how one presents oneself to others—or how one imagines oneself, either as an image for others or as the figure of the dance separate from the dancer. The imaginary in dance, thereby, is a continual oscillation between the fragmented body and the image one projects of coherence.

As we know, the instrument of dance is the body. The body is essential to dance and encourages a feminine *jouissance* or access to the mystery of the speaking body. In dance, the dancer must learn to work within the limits of the body—his or her individual body. As Agnes de Mille writes, “one cannot summon from outer space a dream body

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<sup>250</sup> Botha, “Dance And/As Art,” 237.

<sup>251</sup> “The Aesthetics of Dance,” 14.

<sup>252</sup> Foster, *Reading Dancing*, xiv.

capable of anything—or even exactly what one wishes. In the matter of one’s own body one has obviously even less choice and must make do.”<sup>253</sup> It is through the elements that comprise the dancer’s life—classes, rehearsals, and performances—dancers “come to understand who they are when they dance,”<sup>254</sup> a sentiment echoed by Hodgson who linked movement to the ability to “come to terms with ourselves as well as gaining insight into the nature of our being, our condition, relationships with others and our place in the universe.”<sup>255</sup> The dancer, choreographer, and director Bob Fosse, I suggest, epitomizes the nature of coming to terms with our own bodies; he used the limitations of his body to develop his own style of dance and embrace a different relationship to himself. Fosse clearly articulates how, as he matured, he came to move away from the neurotic position in society: “as I got older, I dropped the hero-worship thing. I didn’t want to emulate anyone. Just wanted to do the things I was capable of doing—and have some fun doing them.”<sup>256</sup>

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<sup>253</sup> “Rhythm in My Blood,” in *Dance in American: A Reader’s Anthology*, ed. Mindy Aloff (New York: The Library of America, 2018), 213. This is not an easy lesson to learn or accept. Carolyn Soutar writes of Rudolf Nureyev: “He wanted perfection, but knew his body couldn’t deliver perfection, so that’s why he got so frustrated.” *The Real Nureyev: An Intimate Memoir of Ballet’s Greatest Hero* (New York: Thomas Dunne, 2006), 72.

<sup>254</sup> Foster, *Reading Dance*, 49.

<sup>255</sup> *Mastering Movement*, 178.

<sup>256</sup> Viola Hegyi Swisher, “Bob Fosse Translates *Sweet Charity* from Stage to Screen,” *Dance Magazine*, February 1969. This is true, in terms of accepting the limits of the body, for Wendy Whelan, former principal dancer with the New York City Ballet. She was diagnosed with scoliosis early in her training, and although she received treatment, she nonetheless developed a curved back that ultimately became an aspect of her individual style. See *Restless Creature: Wendy Whelan*, directed by Linda Saffire and Adam Schlesinger (2016; Pleasantville, NY: Abramorama, 2017), DVD.

Dance also a part of the real. Lacan relates the real to the “mystery of the speaking body, the mystery of the unconscious.”<sup>257</sup> Valéry, similarly, relates dance to “the mystery of the body,”<sup>258</sup> thus suggesting it is related to what is ineffable or mysterious and cannot be understood in Lacanian logic. Furthermore, the real of language, for Lacan, is the resonance and tone among the other elements of language that exist over and above simple words and that are not only related to communication. In dance, rhythm, vibration, (im)pulses and physical sensations all combine as essential elements of the dance. While some of these elements can be controlled or choreographed, others only appear within the act of dancing. The real can intrude on the dance and/or be made into the dance. Edward Denby writes that there is a risk in dance that “is part of the rhythm. One steps out of and into balance; one keeps doing it, and step by step the mass of the body moves about. But the action is more fun and the risk increases when dancers step to a rhythmic beat of music.”<sup>259</sup> In other words, dance forces one to confront the real, both in how it uses elements of the real and in how these elements regularly threaten or in-sist upon the dance.

Additionally, dance has a connection both to stillness and silence. Felicia McCarren compares the silence in dance to that of the hysteric,<sup>260</sup> yet the comparison tends to undermine dance as a topic of philosophical and psychological concern despite McCarren’s penetrating observation that this silence is a *chosen* silence that “has the

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<sup>257</sup> *Seminar 20*, 131.

<sup>258</sup> “Philosophy of the Dance,” 70.

<sup>259</sup> “Form in Motion and in Thought,” *Salmagundi* 33/34 (Spring–Summer 1976): 115, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40546927>. This potential loss of balance—or the “intolerable tension between ‘about to fall’ and ‘not falling’” is also seen by Rose as one of the central dynamics of dance. *Between Couch and Piano*, 146.

<sup>260</sup> *Dance Pathologies: Performance, Poetics, Medicine*. (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), 38.

power . . . of validating the mute expressiveness of the body.”<sup>261</sup> Yet, it is this chosen silence of dance that provides an important connection to Lacan because he, in a way, sees Joyce as having *chosen* a silence: “The tongue that I have called *lalinglish* has all sorts of resources for saying *on a à dire*. *I have to tell* . . . There is also the fact that one can equally separate out the negation in the form *I don’t*, which means *I abstain* from doing this or that. *I don’t talk*, which means *I choose not to speak*. To speak what? In Joyce’s case it was Gaelic.”<sup>262</sup> Furthermore, Lacan’s argument regarding the use of the sinthome focuses on non-speech, the non-speech of Joyce that works on the body. This suggests that silence—the silence associated with the dancer as opposed to the hysteric—is not always pathological (although it is an element of the real that can lead to a psychopathology if not bound). While Joyce’s non-speech is not silence, it does bear a relationship to silence. For Jacques-Alain Miller, “Resonance is a property of speech that consists in making heard what is not said. [Lacan] calls resonance a metonymic property of speech. The poetic is metonymic. Interpretation doesn’t speak in this regard, and is thus silent. But at the same time that it doesn’t speak, it makes heard, there is it is noisy. It is all the more noisy indirectly for being silent.”<sup>263</sup> This type of silence is connected to the body.<sup>264</sup> For Lacan, Joyce’s writing is efficacious for him because of its reliance on the phonation of the voice that manifests in the body and touches on the real. The sinthomic connection Joyce makes between the registers illustrates what Clive Thomson reveals to be paramount for understanding Lacan: “the triad of the signifier, the speaking body (or body event), and spoken savoir – are intimately and intricately

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<sup>261</sup> *Dance Pathologies*, 17.

<sup>262</sup> *Seminar 23*, 114.

<sup>263</sup> “The Written in Speech,” *Courtil Papers* 12 (2003): 14.

<sup>264</sup> Mladen Dolar’s conceptualization of silence as “uncanny” and “like death” is relevant here: silence resonates in the body in that it contrasts the voice as “the first sign of life.” *A Voice and Nothing More* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006), 14.



interconnected.”<sup>265</sup> Silence is not merely pathological; it is purely a recognition that something exists beyond the symbolic. In relation to dance this may explain why there are so many contradicting interpretations of dance as an art: each *adds* meanings where none exists because sitting in the space of a lack (or the space of uncertainty) is too difficult for some.

### 4.3 Dance and Psychosis

Dance is often portrayed as something that can fill the hole, creating a “whole” person; in other words, it is often deeply connected to the phallic fantasy. One of the most common tropes found in films that depict dance is that of dance as the mechanism for overcoming obstacles. Dancers find their individuality, but not the individuality that a *sinthome* would suggest, but the individuality that exists within the phallic function. This takes various forms. Dance in *Billy Elliot*,<sup>266</sup> for example, is both a way to live according to oneself rather than one’s father and the route to a fulfilling life. I could offer multiple other examples, but I already have (see footnote 226), and my point is that often dance becomes a vehicle to create a film that only supports the phallic function. Even those films that aim to show something different—the pain of dance and the work it involves—inevitably shore up the phallic function or suggest that the desire to dance may lead to mental illness in the pursuit of perfection.

Yet, dance is also linked to severe mental issues in a different way: *Black Swan* and *The Red Shoes*<sup>267</sup> ostensibly depict dance as an obsession that leads to psychosis and, ultimately, the sacrifice of the self, that is, death via suicide. I discuss these films more at

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<sup>265</sup> “I Speak with My Body: My Body Speaks Me: The Speaking Body, Jouissance and *savoir parlé* in ‘Encore.’” In The «Mystery of the Speaking Body» II, *Heterity* 9 (2010): 53, <https://champlacanian.net/public/docu/2/heterite9.pdf>.

<sup>266</sup> *Billy Elliott*, directed by Stephen Daldry (2000; Los Angeles: Universal Focus, 2001), DVD.

<sup>267</sup> *Black Swan*, directed by Darren Aronofsky (2010; Los Angeles, CA: Fox Searchlight, 2011), DVD; *The Red Shoes*, directed by Michael Powell and Eric Pressburger (1948; London: ITV Global Entertainment, 2010), DVD.

the conclusion of this chapter, but unless one explores the films closely, they can mistakenly be read as showing the demands of dance as causing the fracturing of the self and loss of reality, ending in a denial of desire. Because these films require deliberate engagement with them to read them any other way, most audiences fail to see beyond that trope and dance is then seen as a (possible) contributor to severe mental disturbance.

Well-known examples of psychosis in real-life dancers intensify the connection to the real and the threat of (mental) disbalance. Vaslav Nijinsky is probably the best-known dancer who suffered from schizophrenia. As I have already discussed, De Cuyper and Dulsster suggest that dancing was a *sinthome* for Nijinsky, delaying his psychotic break. Regardless of how one sees dance operating in Nijinsky's life, Nijinsky does link psychosis and dance in the modern imagination. His dancing always seemed in "excess," but it is his choreography that clearly illustrates an excess *jouissance*: in *L'Après midi d'un faune*, he masturbates onstage, and *The Rite of Spring* depicts sacrifice through dance. I suggest that the reaction to his dances—the audience of *The Rite of Spring* incited a riot—are indications of how Nijinsky's choreography reveal too much of the real and indicate the beginnings of Nijinsky's psychosis.<sup>268</sup> He may have attempted to develop a *sinthome*, but his works show a mind that continually disentangled until it could no longer be stitched together. De Cuyper and Dulsster do not explain why Nijinsky's lost his *sinthome*, but Murray Jackson offers one idea: Nijinsky's dancing "contained a displacement of his aggressiveness" and ensured "public adulation."<sup>269</sup> Only

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<sup>268</sup> As I will explain later, this is very different from the (impossible) ethical act that is a "purposeless" sacrifice of life that cannot be explained; *The Rite of Spring* depicts sacrifice for the other. Additionally, as I previously noted, the riot is often assumed to be the result of Igor Stravinsky's score, but Daniel K. L. Chua clarifies it was the choreography. Stravinsky did, however, establish the sacrificial theme and have a hand in the choreography. "Rioting with Stravinsky: A Particular Analysis of the 'Rite of Spring,'" *Music Analysis* 26, no. 1/2 (2007): 59–109, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25171386>.

<sup>269</sup> "Vaslav Nijinsky: Living for the Eyes of the Other," in *Creativity and Psychotic States in Exceptional People: The Work of Murray Jackson*, edited by Jeanne Magagna (New York:

once he could no longer dance did he descend into psychosis. More specifically, after the loss of his brother and after Sergey Diaghilev fired him from the *Ballet Russes*, Nijinsky did not have the support that he needed to use dance as a *sinthome*. However, I suggest that his dancing (and choreography) revealed the real even as it continued to intrude: in sum, you can see the psychosis in his dance. Dance for him was not about creating a *sinthome*—unless it was only ever a failed attempt—but about an attempt to wholly belong to the symbolic and be the *objet a* for others (and use others as his own *objet a*). It was a failed attempt to pretend he was not psychotic and embrace narcissism.

The common tropes of dance alongside the instances of mental illness and dance in real dancers may suggest that dance is ill-suited as a *sinthome* as it encourages a commitment that leads to mental breakdown rather than helping to keep the psyche intact. Although Nijinsky's efforts to avoid psychosis may have failed, I do assert that dance is ideally suited for this bringing of order to the apparent chaos of psychosis, in part because of its deep connection to the body. Dance requires a body. Joyce's writing may have effects in the body, but it can exist without a body. Dance cannot. As Rohman reminds us, "for the dancer, the body itself is the medium, the body itself or biology itself inhabits the sensations, the vibratory, the forces of the earth and the cosmos, the affective."<sup>270</sup> The remainder of this chapter outlines how dance embodies the elements of the *sinthome* I identified previously, and ends with an illustration of what this means, as shown in two distinct dance films, films that show what dance can offer.

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Routledge, 2015), 62; Jeanne Magagna and Murray Jackson, Introduction to *Creativity and Psychotic States in Exceptional People: The Work of Murray Jackson*, by Murray Jackson, ed. Jeanne Magagna, 2.

<sup>270</sup> *Choreographies of the Living*, 106.

## 4.4 Dance, the Mirror Stage, and Potential Space

The acceptance of our divisions, I argue, is contingent upon the use of the mirror in dance, a use that is as ubiquitous as it is controversial, and one that allows us to reconceptualize the mirror stage as a process that does not present an image of the ideal-ego, but instead as a stage that forces one both to confront the “body in bits and pieces” and to accept it as such.

Dance, purposefully and consistently, re-enacts the mirror stage: dance—more often than not—occurs in front of mirrors and, as Sparshott notes, “dancers in practice are, as it were, haunted by virtual mirrors even when not surrounded by actual mirrors, as they habitually are.”<sup>271</sup> This contention may not intuitively offer support for the acceptance of a divided subject; indeed, it seems to suggest the mirror perpetuates neurosis as the dancer perpetually inhabits a relationship to oneself that is “always mediated through a totalizing image which has come from outside.”<sup>272</sup> Likewise, dancers, in relying on the body, may come to be seen *as* the body, which theoretically could suggest that dance may precipitate psychosis by setting up a divided and concrete self. In other words, *others*, audiences, see dancers as the parts of the body that constitute the dancers rather than *seeing* the dancers (as subjects). This may reinforce the fragmentation of the person and concomitantly usher in dissociation if “the mind excludes the body for fear that the body could exclude the mind.”<sup>273</sup>

Another interpretation of mirrors in dance is possible, however. Mirrors can reflect one’s fragmentation without reifying it. Joyce’s writing employs the letter and the fragments of

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<sup>271</sup> “The Philosophy of Dance,” 280.

<sup>272</sup> Gallop, “Lacan’s Mirror Stage,” 120. Gallop is not referring to dance here, just what happens in the mirror stage proper.

<sup>273</sup> Lombardi, *Body-Mind Dissociation*, 120. Lombardi is not relating his comment to dance; rather, he is writing specifically about the negation of the body in psychosis. *I* am suggesting that this negation of the body could be precipitated by an “other” who sees the dancers only as the body in parts.

language; dancing forces one to confront the “body in bits and pieces.” In other words, as the practising dancer is surrounded by mirrors, the mirror stage, re-created in the studio, may have a different function from the original mirror stage, one that aligns with Joyce’s use of fragmented language. In dance, mirrors occupy a large space, not of the dance itself, necessarily, but of the rehearsal and the training as “dancers . . . scrutinise themselves by watching their performed movements in the ever-present mirrors.”<sup>274</sup> Carolyn Soutar writes of this as well: “You must constantly keep looking in the mirror that surrounds you: check the line of your arms, your shoulders, the height of your legs, the angle of your head and neck. You must do this daily, whether for performance or for rehearsals. Then, whether a star or a new member of the company, you must allow whoever is taking class, be they a fellow dancer, the ballet master or mistress or a guest, to correct and advise you, no matter who you are.”<sup>275</sup> The mirror is not just for the dancer to see herself, but also for others to keep her grounded and aware of her body.

The importance of mirror in dance cannot be underestimated. Mirrors are so ubiquitous that occasionally they become a part of the dance itself. Both Jerome Robbins and Savion Glover used mirrors in their choreographies, Glover bringing the mirror in to *Bring in Da Noise, Bring in da Funk* and Robbins using the audience as an invisible mirror in his interpretation of *Afternoon of a Faun*. For Robbins, especially, mirrors relate to the different parts of the self. Even before he choreographs using the mirror, he sees mirrors as revealing his masks, his different selves: “The evil, the good, the bad, the smiling, sneering, artistic, malicious, destructive benevolent, rapacious, egotistical, sacrificing and selfish are all my selves . . . all me.”<sup>276</sup> In Robbins case, mirrors reveal the divisions of the self in a way that the subject can accept that each different image, each “mask,” is nonetheless “me.” Mirrors, then, do not have to divide the subject into an ego-ideal and

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<sup>274</sup> Helen Thomas, *The Body, Dance and Cultural Theory* (London: Palgrave, 2003), 98.

<sup>275</sup> *The Real Nureyev*, 50.

<sup>276</sup> “My Selves: An Attempt to Express My Character as I See It” in *Jerome Robbins, by Himself: Selections from His Letters, Journals, Drawings, Photographs, and an Unfinished Memoir*, ed. Amanda Vaill (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2019): 20.

ideal-ego and create a longing for a whole, but can allow the “body in bits and pieces” to exist *as* a body in bits and pieces.

James M. Glass refers to the delusions of schizophrenia as “the internal mirror of political authoritarianism”<sup>277</sup> yet also argues that “in psychoanalysis, the analyst becomes the mirror for an underlying emotional logic informing all speech acts in the therapeutic situation. . . . Countertransference . . . represents a profound communication, a joining of the self on a level that is unspoken but essential to the outcome of the entire process.”<sup>278</sup> Glass’s changing concept of the mirror suggest to me that the support offered to Joyce by writing and to others through analysis, the support that allows one to accept the divided subject, can be provided via the mirror stage and may also be offered by dance: all of these elements—dance, poetic writing, psychoanalysis—may employ a type of mirroring that subverts the effects of the original mirror stage. It does not create the desire for a whole but offers an image of a connection of disparate parts, thereby confronting the reality that the body only exists in multiplicity. The experience of the mirror in dance may then be likened to what Bromberg refers to as an “experience of our connection with the rest of humanity.”<sup>279</sup> It’s not a “wholeness” in the sense of being whole in oneself, but that through connection, each aspect of oneself can be seen in the world and, thus, come to be held as a conglomerate of disparate parts within the dancer. Ellie Ragland-Sullivan reminds readers that “Lacan defined the voice as a Real object. . . . Not only do voice and language inhabit different registers of meaning, so do the eye and the gaze, breast and

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<sup>277</sup> *Delusion: Internal Dimensions of Political Life* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), xiii. His statement also relates to ambivalence, as Glass also writes about this “authoritarianism,” “what is remarkable about delusional knowledge is its refusal to consider any aspect of experience that might involve feelings of ambivalence. Delusion provides a certain, often unbreakable identity. . . . It destroys freedom and possibility.” Ibid.

<sup>278</sup> *Delusion*, 89.

<sup>279</sup> “On Being One’s Dreams,” 704.

hunger or desire, and so on.”<sup>280</sup> Might there not be reason to believe the same is true of the body and dance? Certainly Colebrook offers some insight here: “the image of the dancer is the image of a body that is not [sic] longer *its self* (personal, intentional, located in time) but is dance itself: the dancer dances upon the surface that separates actual from virtual, here from eternity, the particular from the singular.”<sup>281</sup> Although I disagree with Colebrook’s notion that the dancer becomes the dance, she nevertheless offers the crucial idea of dance functioning as the *image* of a body.

Theoretically, then, in the act of dancing, one must persistently confront one’s own image; in this sense, dance has the potential to re-enact and remedy the mirror stage: mirroring in dance (like in psychoanalysis) also acts as repetition. There is a space between the mirror and the dancer that permits an intermediate region (or a potential space) that allows for Freud’s working through, not just a repetition that maintains a symptom. Of course, however, the reality of that process is more complex. Steven Bruhm articulates this complexity when he discusses the ballet *The Red Shoes*: “In the ballet, she [Vicky] sees her dancing self—her ideal self—reflected in the Shoemaker’s window. But while this mirror moment inaugurates the irrevocable separation between the subject and the ego, it also confuses the two: the self in the mirror *is* me, the ideal dancing reflection *is* Vicky.”<sup>282</sup> Although Vicky’s split seems to lead to death, it is possible, that in confusing the separation of the subject and ego, this re-enactment of the mirror stage changes the function and effect of the mirror stage. The initial moment may reveal a body in bits and pieces and establish a desire for wholeness, but by constantly confronting the body, dance—as it takes place surrounded by mirrors—may allow one to come to terms with this fragmentation of the subject and to recognize—and accept—the lack within. The image in the mirror would no longer present an image “at odds with the direct

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<sup>280</sup> “Psychosis Adumbrated: Lacan and Sublimation of the Sexual Divide in Joyce’s *Exiles*,” in “Joyce between Genders: Laconian Views,” special issue, *James Joyce Quarterly* 29, no. 1 (Fall, 1991): 50, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25485238>.

<sup>281</sup> “How Can We Tell the Dancer from the Dance?,” 5.

<sup>282</sup> “Dance Divisions,” 10. See also, *The Red Shoes*.

experience of motor incapacity and nursling dependence”<sup>283</sup> that in its anxiety-producing state causes the narcissism of “her own capacity to ‘triumph over’ herself” but instead offers a way to realize one’s objectification, or something that acts as a necessary precondition for the “ethical subject.”<sup>284</sup>

Working at the level of the real, then, means the mirroring aspect of dance may be able to re-connect the imaginary register that threatens to slip away in psychosis. Lacan refers to how the *sinthome* structures the subject’s psyche differently from the neurotic psyche and how analysis, or rather the analyst, supports this movement as well. Regarding psychoanalysis, he asserts, “at the end of the analytic act, there is on the stage, this stage which is structuring, but only at this level, the *o*, at this extreme point that we know to be at the end of the destiny of the hero of tragedy. He is no longer any more than that.”<sup>285</sup> In this way, one can imagine psychoanalysis itself as a stage that re-creates the mirror stage but occasions a revolution in the understanding of the subject.<sup>286</sup> This shift provides a different view because it means one sees the lack rather than identifying with it or desiring to fill it. The shift allows one to remain in one’s body; one can establish the embodied *sinthome*. For Joyce, this process rests on the *use* of this fragmentation, not *of* the body, but of the letter and its elements that resonate *within* the body. In dance, the body is the vehicle for this resonance, but it is still a resonance *within* the body not of it. Julia Kristeva argues that the mirror (stage) produces spatial intuition and permits the formation of objects detached from semiotic chora, the chora being “a non-expressive totality formed by the drives and their stases in a motility that is as full of movement as it

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<sup>283</sup> Beardsworth, “The Early View of Psychoanalysis and Art,” 38.

<sup>284</sup> Zupančič, *Ethics of the Real* (London: Verso, 2000), 153, 103–4.

<sup>285</sup> Lacan, *Seminar 15*, X 13.

<sup>286</sup> This revolution, however, is one that *does not* threaten a return to the master’s discourse because it also changes the centre.



is regulated.”<sup>287</sup> This chora is not a sign or a signifier but is generated in order to attain a signifying position, and its regulation is not by a law but an “ordering” via the mother’s body. The mirror in dance may likewise produce this ordering without the need for the (m)other.

While the mirror, as Deborah Anna Leupniz asserts, is deceptive in that it reverses right and left,<sup>288</sup> this is also what makes the mirror useful. The mirror does not offer an accurate depiction of the subject; it—like the subject—holds paradoxes and allows access to the subject as the subject is, not merely as an image of the ideal-ego (which is really a creation of the mind and not depicted in the mirror). The mirror can provide evidence that there is a split subject, in that the image forces one to confront the disconnection between the imagined self and the actual self or the divisions within the self, leading potentially to an acceptance of these divisions. Bollas, when working with schizophrenic children, notes how images that make them believe they are not whole often scare children, but when accompanied by proof they still exist, these images can then be assimilated into their consciousness: when children visited a local pool, they feared the water initially because images of themselves within it appeared fragmented and distorted, but “by repeatedly putting their bodies in and out of the water and repeatedly finding themselves still intact, the children began to trust their senses, our reasoning, and thus the evidence provided by reality.”<sup>289</sup> Experiencing one’s fragmentation and acknowledging that one has survived it is important for providing a way to live with trauma because, as Gilbert J. Rose argues, “without the observing ego’s capacity to reflect on what one is experiencing on a primal, often somatic, level there is no possibility of representing the trauma to oneself. . . . Without self-witnessing and self-representation, the massive overstimulation that the individual has undergone can only exist as a wordless emptiness, or else as chaos

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<sup>287</sup> *Revolution in Poetic Language*, trans. Margaret Waller (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), 25.

<sup>288</sup> “Thinking in the Space between Winnicott and Lacan,” 961.

<sup>289</sup> *When the Sun Bursts*, 19–20.

that at best can only remain sequestered.”<sup>290</sup> Self-witnessing is important when thinking of psychosis because the experience of psychosis is a trauma. Sensations, affects, thoughts, and perceptions in-sist on the person and such overstimulation can easily overwhelm someone. Often this results in these sensations being separated into a different “reality”: hearing voices or losing all sense of time and existing apart from the external reality others share. The mirror is one way to recognize the divisions, allowing one to contain them and come to accept their existence even when paradoxical.

Rose writes of music, not dance or even the arts in general, but his argument is still relevant. He comments, “it is possible to consider that the most important fact about music—its basic ingredient—is not so much sound as movement.”<sup>291</sup> This puts music into the realm of dance when one considers the only necessity for dance is movement: dance is still dance in silence, but not in (complete) stillness. In this sense, then, Rose’s entire argument can be applied to dance. His thesis is that is that music helps us to grow and develop because it encourages the psychic (re)integration of thought and feeling, using implicit motion and bypassing language. What I add, beyond the focus on dance, is the focus on the artist or dancer whereas Rose looks at music primarily from the perspective of the listener: he explores the mechanisms of music on the listener; I explore the mechanisms of dance on the dancer, the equivalent to the one playing a Mozart sonata or singing Handel’s *Messiah*, for example. Rose also foreshadows my conclusion regarding dance’s relationship to the real when he writes, “By enabling the person to recognize and feel what had been unformed and therefore inexpressible,” which in Lacanian terms would be the real, “as if by a responsive empathic presence, it helps repair the loss or damage to a reflective inner ‘other.’”<sup>292</sup>

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<sup>290</sup> *Between Couch and Piano*, 120–21.

<sup>291</sup> *Between Couch and Piano*, 102.

<sup>292</sup> *Between Couch and Piano*, 121.

## 4.5 Dance and Play

Space for play is potential space: it is the chance to *learn* to play, so that one can develop creativity, the feminine *jouissance*, or the alternative approach to life that characterizes Joyce. There are several ways to explore the connection between dance and play. Huizinga comments that “dancing is a particular and particularly perfect form of playing”;<sup>293</sup> how might we understand this in terms of the elements of dance previously discussed? One way is to focus on dance’s relationship to space and time. This relationship is significant because dance only exists as it is danced: it is an “elusive presence, dance as the fleeting track of an always irretrievable, never fully translatable motion.”<sup>294</sup> One of the threats in psychosis is the loss of a sense of oneself. R. D. Laing writes, “under usual circumstances, the physical birth of a new organism into the world inaugurates rapidly ongoing processes whereby within an amazingly short time the infant *feels* real and alive and has a *sense* of being and entity, with a continuity in time and a location in space.”<sup>295</sup> In psychosis, however, this sense of feeling alive fails to occur, and if the *sinthome* can help alleviate or repair the loss of reality, then it can only do so by creating those senses of continuity and location. Dance can help, then, because it only exists in space and time; it can, therefore, provide the experience of these elements when they do not arise developmentally.

Karmen MacKendrick offers an example of how time operates in dance:

Dance’s eternity, the return’s opposition to time introduced by the structure of time in dance, is the sense of dance as *suspended* time—that paradoxical combination of stillness and movement at once. The sense of suspension, both felt and willed, both

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<sup>293</sup> *Homo Ludens*, 165.

<sup>294</sup> André Lepecki, “Inscribing Dance,” in *Of the Presence of the Body: Essays on Dance and Performance Theory*, ed. André Lepecki (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2004), 127.

<sup>295</sup> *The Divided Self* (Harmondsworth, UK: Pelican, 1965), 41.

gratified and desired (drawing us into our delight to a possibility of great pleasure), is the sense of a fermata, a sense of being taking outside of time, *held* there, which nonetheless can only occur in time, and which would lose its vitality and its affirmative quality if it were not part of a passage.<sup>296</sup>

Dance's existence in time is a playful one. Dance exists *in* time but strives for existence *beyond* time. A dance nevertheless must end, cementing its relation to the realities of time. At the same time, the *dancer* must be "in" time, not only rhythmically but also physically and mentally. Jason Sermonia, a dancer who has worked on Broadway and at the Stratford Festival, suggests dancers must be present while doing the current step if he expects know what is coming next.<sup>297</sup> The same is true of space. The dance exists in psychical space even as it depicts an imaginary space.

Dance also plays with the boundaries of the registers that comprise the psyche and can be understood as a potential space: Winnicott's "dangerous and thrilling border territory" wherein culture is located<sup>298</sup> or, in other words, the "intermediate area of experiencing."<sup>299</sup> As a potential space, dance is "the instrument both of closure and of a fearful new openness."<sup>300</sup> It is a form of poetry that plays with limits as it exists in the symbolic yet

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<sup>296</sup> "Embodying Transgression," in *Of the Presence of the Body: Essays on Dance and Performance Theory*, ed. André Lepecki (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2004): 153.

<sup>297</sup> Jason Sermonia, *Stratford Festival* dance workshop, September 26, 2021, virtual.

<sup>298</sup> Malcolm Bowie, "Psychoanalysis and Art: The Winnicott Legacy," in *Art, Creativity, Living*, ed. Lesley Caldwell (New York: Routledge, 2000), 16.

<sup>299</sup> Bowie, "Psychoanalysis and Art," 16.

<sup>300</sup> Bowie, "Psychoanalysis and Art," 14 This, too, relates Winnicott's potential space back to the analyst who is not a subject supposed to know but an *instrument* of psychoanalysis. "Psychoanalysis let us start then from what is for the moment our only firm point: that it takes place with a psychoanalyst. 'With' must be understood here in the instrumental sense." *Seminar 15*, VI 4.

relies on the imaginary (the body) and touches on the real. Because it relies on the body, dance creates a “deferring motion of the signifier”—it plays with the symbolic—a motion that “both mimics and casts . . . presence as slippery movement, presence as that which will not be pinned down.”<sup>301</sup> To dance, one must learn to embody (and play with) the limits as well as the divisions of the self in the same way the analyst learns to play with reality in the analytic setting.

## 4.6 Dancing to Contain or Bind the Real

Another aspect of Joyce’s works is that although they involve the symbolic, they emphasize the language of the symbolic and the play of language’s rhythm, tone, and resonance in the body. This language is inherent in writing, even if not everyone can capture it like Joyce does: in all language there is an internal rhythm and movement that plays out in the body and captures something of the real. As I suggested previously, Joyce takes these elements of the real, elements that by their very nature are frightening because they are unformulated and not able to be symbolized, and he binds them, containing their ability to insist upon the symbolic. The real is thereby contained, in Joyce’s case contained between the covers of a book, and this is only possible because of Joyce’s ability to play with the fact the symbolic contains the real, a real felt in the body (the imaginary).

This “binding” of the real, I suggest, is a part of what Lacan describes as making a hole in the real to establish a *sinthome*. It is this binding that permits play. Dance plays with limits—limits that are not intrinsic to dance itself—and breaks away from “useful” action, thereby embracing play, and it permits this play because it binds the real in both space and time and in the dance. Bollas describes the “schizophrenic position” thus: “a self’s embedment in the solace of the quotidian is breached, and consciousness is confronted with both the complexity of thought processes and the raw materials of unconscious function.”<sup>302</sup> This position is akin to the real intruding into the symbolic, yet

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<sup>301</sup> Lepecki, “Inscribing Dance,” 138.

<sup>302</sup> *When the Sun Bursts*, 4.

Bollas also writes of how sometimes a person can restore the psychotic self to an everyday self that appears non-psychotic by “control[ling] their own mental processes.”<sup>303</sup> If this is achievable by the creation of limits within which the real is given free play or the space in which to exist but which then also quells the real’s insistence upon the psyche, then this not only situates Joyce’s work in a “potential space”—a space that allows for play<sup>304</sup>—but it also provide a reason to think this is possible in dance. Since dance, too, exists in a potential space, it plays with limits by binding the real aspects of the psyche as they are played out in the body. Yet at the same time, the mind (and unconscious) reacts to certain movements. Dance’s requirement for focus, however, allows one to experience those reactions in a contained and safe (enough) manner. One movement flows from the next, with the next movement forcing your attention to it, so whatever movement may have triggered a potentially overwhelming moment, it is soon over. Sensations, over time, no longer overwhelm but pass quickly and are manageable. This process allows one to see oneself differently—not deceptively, just from a new angle, one in which the psyche is no longer necessarily centred around a lack but around the knot-hole associated with the *sinthome*.

The mirror’s reparative function, I believe, is in part achieved by the mirror providing “empathic containment.” The mirror may be deceptive, but in its distortion of reality it merely reflects to the subject an image of the self without any motivation or commentary or involvement. For example, one sees the “sloppy” turnout in the mirror, but the mirror does not make that judgment; it just shows the turnout as it is. In music this may work similarly: “In philosopher Stephen Davies’ words, sadness from music lacks ‘life implications.’ Sadness from music is pure and unadulterated; sadness from life events is tinged with anxiety because we know we need to figure out how to cope.”<sup>305</sup> This example from Winner demonstrates how music mirrors our emotions, but in a way that

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<sup>303</sup> *When the Sun Bursts*, 123.

<sup>304</sup> Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*, 146.

<sup>305</sup> Winner, *How Art Works*, 54.

makes them more manageable precisely because they are marked; as a result, they cannot become too overwhelming, too *real*. She goes on to speculate that this may be why people consider emotions more extreme “when these emotions are reactions to life events as opposed to reactions to music.”<sup>306</sup> In effect, the mirroring of our emotions can produce the distance necessary to contend with our reactions to those emotions. The gap between the mirror and the self is a space of potential, a space wherein a new way of living becomes a possibility because the reflection is experienced as “marked,” and the space acts as a container and becomes a threshold for new ways of being. This space, then, becomes a creative space and allows one to develop a form of self-recognition as fragmented without the blandishments of creating a “whole” subject and allows one to accept the fundamental split in one’s subjectivity because “it’s in the mirror that they see both the ideal versions of themselves they hope to show the public as well as their own failings.”<sup>307</sup>

#### 4.7 Dance as *Dansêtre*: Feminine Jouissance, Paradoxes, Gaps

In the forward to Rose’s work on music and psychoanalysis, Jonathan D. Kramer writes that “musical calm . . . comes not from a maximum of order but from a balanced admixture of (mostly) order and (some) disorder, or regularity and irregularity, of predictability and surprise.”<sup>308</sup> The need for a balance between order and disorder applies to dance as well. Dance, as mentioned, establishes order by binding the real, yet it still

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<sup>306</sup> *How Art Works*, 54.

<sup>307</sup> Alastair Macaulay, “The Many Faces of ‘Black Swan’ Deconstructed,” review of *Black Swan*, directed by Darren Aronofsky, *The New York Times*, February 9, 2011, <https://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/10/arts/dance/10swan.html>. This is taken from a review of the movie, *Black Swan*, which (purportedly) depicts dance and psychosis; however, the movie which brings this aspect of the mirror into relief is only using it as an aspect of dance in general.

<sup>308</sup> “A Musician Lists to a Psychoanalyst Listening to Music,” forward to *Between Couch and Piano*, by Gilbert J. Rose (New York: Brunner-Routledge, 2004), xvii.

risks becoming a frightening experience as it constantly straddles the border of balance/disbalance, tension/release, body/mirror image, and play/fright. Because the order it brings can never be “pure,” it inevitably contains the possibility of becoming a frightening experience, just as creating a *sinthome* was frightening for Joyce, according to Lacan. In *Seminar 23*, Lacan answers the question of Joyce’s madness by suggesting that Joyce’s writing illustrates “how a certain relationship with speech is increasingly imposed upon him.”<sup>309</sup> A connection between art as a vehicle for managing the drives and madness, however, may relate to all art, not just dance.

Yet here, too, dance seems to have a quality not found within the other arts, or at least not seen to the same degree, and one that links this back to the importance of play. Huizinga asks, “who can deny that in all these concepts—challenge, danger, contest, etc.—we are very close to the play sphere?,” and he situates them all within “a single field of action where something is at stake.”<sup>310</sup> He then also suggests dance “is . . . the purest and most perfect form of play that exists,” and the relationship between dance and play “is one of direct participation, almost of essential identity.”<sup>311</sup> The deep connection of dance to play, therefore, means that dance is both pleasurable and frightening and that in dance something is at “stake.”<sup>312</sup> Lombardi offers an illustration of how the simultaneous

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<sup>309</sup> *Seminar 23*, 79. Lacan elaborates by discussing how Joyce imposes his own fracturing on language, which hints at how the fragmentation of language creates the *sinthome*. This fragmentation implies that play creates the “order” Huizinga theorizes by using a semblance of the structure of the symbolic. Winner also suggests this when she writes “non-representational art evokes emotion through some kind of structural isomorphism (as in a line that appears to be striving upward, expressing striving). It would be hard to imagine a structural isomorphism in art that would be perceived to be lacking in structure.” *How Art Works*, 159.

<sup>310</sup> *Homo Ludens*, 40.

<sup>311</sup> *Homo Ludens*, 164–65.

<sup>312</sup> That something is at stake, once again, returns to Lacan and the importance of the gap between the act and the doing. “It must all the same be noted that this gap, which still remains between the act and the doing, is what is at stake.” *Seminar 15*, VII 8.



existence of pleasure and fright may have positive consequences if we can hold this dialectic: “only the toleration of the sense of powerlessness that comes from letting ourselves down into our bodily nature can give us a non-mechanistic sense to our thinking and become a decisive stimulus to live and to personal creativity.”<sup>313</sup> The psychology of art also reveals a connection of art to paradox. Winner describes a study wherein images of what people would normally consider disgusting were shown to participants and labeled art or not. Those who were told they were images of art “experienced a combination of both positive and negative emotions,” which suggests to her “the make-believe art frame provides psychological detachment, or distance, so that we can enjoy the experience of what we would avoid at all costs in our actual non-fictional lives.”<sup>314</sup>

This insight is crucial to Lacan’s work because—as Bollas describes—the schizophrenic is “unsure of how to be receptive to the thingness of the world, or to play with reality”,<sup>315</sup> this inability to play equates to an inability to develop or identify with a feminine *jouissance*, too. For Joyce shows the connection of feminine *jouissance* to play when he reaches a feminine *jouissance* only through the play of language. He stops the play of signifiers that characterize a phallic *jouissance* and inaugurates a playing with the real. If we keep the connection between psychoanalysis and the sinthome forefront, then the importance of play is brought into even greater relief. Winnicott states, “psychotherapy has to do with two people playing together,”<sup>316</sup> yet as Bollas recognizes, there are people who cannot play. Winnicott knows this too, and adds, “the corollary of this is that when playing is not possible then the work done by the therapist is directed towards bringing

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<sup>313</sup> *Body-Mind Dissociation*, 26. Lombardi is not writing of dance, only of the role of the body within optimal psychic functioning.

<sup>314</sup> *How Art Works*, 91, 94–95.

<sup>315</sup> *When the Sun Bursts*, 164.

<sup>316</sup> “Playing,” 591.

the patient from a state of not being able to play into a state of being able to play.”<sup>317</sup> What Winnicott describes as the development of being able to play incorporates what dance offers: an experience of transitional phenomena, a potential space, and a mirror that provides an image of oneself that is marked so as to reduce the impact of the real.<sup>318</sup> In other words, it is conceivable that if one cannot play, dance can teach you how.

Dancing always involves play, and what is singular to dance as an art is that not only *is* it (a form of) play, but it can teach one to play if that ability has been lost or has never existed. In other words, not everyone suffers from defective dreaming (psychosis), but dance can help one to dream by creating limits and introducing play. Once one can play, then other work can happen, the work that embraces creativity. Even in doing someone else’s steps, the dancer must occupy a place of play because the choreographer had to be playful in developing the sequences of those steps. Being thrust into a position of someone else’s play, introduces the idea of play for a dancer who may otherwise be unable to play. As the dancer continues dancing, over the years, as the dancer repeats the process of confronting play—just as the dancer repeats the confrontation of the image in the mirror and the containing of sensations—the dancer absorbs this, working through what it means to play and potentially learning to play, not just with the steps but also with the body sensations (the effects of the real and the drives) and the lack.

The peril and anxiety that Winnicott describes applies to dance as well, but beyond embodying this precariousness, dance first develops one’s ability to risk playing with it. Although Adam Phillips’s argument suggests, in general, “art helps us to be as mad as we need to be to feel fully alive,”<sup>319</sup> I argue that unlike the other arts dance *teaches* one how

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<sup>317</sup> “Playing,” 591.

<sup>318</sup> Here, Winner’s example of José Ortega y Gasset’s comment about art having an unreal quality comes back into play: if art is artistic only in that it is not real, he is drawing out the element of art that makes it markedly different from reality—even when that art (portraiture in his example) is meant to depict something real. *How Art Works*, 12.

<sup>319</sup> *Unforbidden Pleasures* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2016), 20.

to play to hold the precariousness, and only then can one explore it creatively. Dance teaches one how to play through creative engagement, and it is that engagement that is liable to become frightening. For example, Sparshott contends that dance is the art that threatens the core of what art is; in all the other arts, art and artist are separate, but one cannot separate the dancer from the dance so easily.<sup>320</sup> If we keep Sparshott's insight in mind, the paradox of play being both enjoyable and frightening may be explained by the fact that through play we step outside the phallic function to find that other *jouissance*, the *jouissance* of the body. The other *jouissance* is frightening because in turning to the *jouissance* of the body, we potentially release ourselves from the constraints of phallic *jouissance* that structure the psyche: we threaten to subvert the integrity of the psychic structure. The threat of subversion is not the whole story though. Phillips reminds us, "it is in art we recover real pleasure, we recover what morality forces us to give up."<sup>321</sup> Dance, as an art, can then establish this connection to that *real* pleasure, the pleasure that is also a part of the other *jouissance*, so one can live with the symbolic maintaining a connection both to the imaginary and the real.

In this way, dance can encourage the development of a feminine *jouissance* and, therefore, seems closely linked to extant theories of dance in their emphases on a *jouissance*, albeit the phallic *jouissance*. André Lepecki, for example, writes that when Jacques Derrida writes of dance, he suggests (women's) dance "is outside any economy of exchange and within the play of eternal deferral, eternal distance, and detour that is the play of *différance*, the play of the trace."<sup>322</sup> The "play of *différance*" is thereby a playing with the repetition that characterizes phallic *jouissance*. Within this repetition, however, is a different repetition, one that creates a surplus *jouissance*. Zupančič identifies this phenomenon as "a repetition of the inherent gap or interval between its terms," and through *this* repetition comes the element of surprise—or the "safe surprise" on which I

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<sup>320</sup> "The Philosophy of Dance," 280.

<sup>321</sup> *Unforbidden Pleasures*, 4.

<sup>322</sup> Lepecki, "Inscribing Dance," 135.

will later elaborate.<sup>323</sup> When Lacan claims that the unary trait supports the mirror stage,<sup>324</sup> he refers to that very trait that is “an operation”<sup>325</sup> that creates the “one of repetition,” or how one comes to see oneself as a subject with a “*like* or . . . *type*.”<sup>326</sup> The unary trait is a underlying trait, however, of other signifiers; it is what unites all into the Other. It is the *différance*.<sup>327</sup> Lorenzo Chiesa states that “what is being counted by the unary trait is the possibility of the real.”<sup>328</sup> Therefore, when dance plays with *différance*, it plays with the real.

Another reason to relate dance to feminine *jouissance* is offered by Rohman; Rohman sees modern dance as an “eruption of the animal into Western dance practice.”<sup>329</sup> While her contention does not unambiguously evoke dance’s relation to feminine *jouissance*, it nonetheless links dance to something beyond the symbolic. However, dance *as* feminine *jouissance* is not tenable; rather, dance, in its links to paradox and the playing with the real and the limits of the psychic registers, creates a new relationship to phallic

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<sup>323</sup> *The Odd One In*, 167.

<sup>324</sup> *Seminar 19*, 147.

<sup>325</sup> Lorenzo Chiesa, “Count-as-One, Forming-into-One, Unary Trait, S<sub>1</sub>,” *Cosmos and History: The Journal of Natural and Social Philosophy* 2, no. 1/2 (2006): 75, <https://cosmosandhistory.org/index.php/journal/article/view/29/57>.

<sup>326</sup> *Seminar 19*, 147.

<sup>327</sup> *Différance*—marked by a silence “a”—is a “playing” itself, that marks off and incorporates ambiguity and limitation. *Différance* is also linked to Winnicott’s potential space in that it “is located . . . *between* speech and writing, and beyond the tranquil familiarity which links us to one and the other.” Jacques Derrida, “Différance,” in *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 5. It is a “not” or a presence that makes possible nominal effect yet cannot itself be named: it produces difference without being a part of that difference.

<sup>328</sup> “Count-as-One,” 82.

<sup>329</sup> *Choreographies of the Living*, 41.

*jouissance*, allowing access to a feminine *jouissance*. To put that another way and tie it back to Derrida's *différance*, dance as play is the condition for the distinction between the two *jouissances*.

Paradox is also what ties dance to feminine *jouissance* and the gap or lack in the subject. Dance, I argue, necessarily crosses a threshold to exist in the gap because dance must embrace multiple paradoxes, and this process has echoes in the philosophy of pleasure. Adam Phillips writes about “the pleasure of what Empson called ‘straddling the contradictions,’” a pleasure that does *not* consist of mastery.<sup>330</sup> For Lacan, mastery pertains to the master's discourse, which is one of his four discourses discussed in *Seminar 17*, and relates to the act that Lacan refutes as a fiction, the act related to science that presupposes a subject supposed to know. The act of science conforms to a belief that everything can be known; there is no real, only elements beyond our grasp currently, or experiences we cannot explain *yet*. In contrast, “quite precisely located at the opposite pole of the master's discourse” is the analyst's discourse,<sup>331</sup> which is essential for the psychoanalytic act. Lacan argues the psychoanalytic is not an act of science—because it is impossible and is where drive and desire unite in the real—but an act of logic,<sup>332</sup> for “if there is something which most . . . instinctively repels the psychoanalyst, it is that knowing everything about psychoanalysis . . . qualifies the psychoanalyst.”<sup>333</sup> Whereas science is concerned with knowledge (it manipulates symbols to derive conclusions that it then accepts as fact, facts purportedly without a subjectivity attached or facts that exist apart from and regardless of us), logic's concern is truth, particularly a subjective truth. Lacan, in his discussion of logic illustrates that logic contains inherent divisions, for

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<sup>330</sup> *Unforbidden Pleasures*, 186.

<sup>331</sup> *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book 17: The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Russell Grigg (New York: W. W. Norton, 2017), 87.

<sup>332</sup> For a clearer understanding of this idea of the psychoanalytic act as an act of logic, see Gallagher, “A Reading,” 10–11.

<sup>333</sup> *Seminar 15*, XIV 11.

although it may appear that “all S are P” and “no S is not P” are equivalent, for Lacan they indicate a divided form as the latter states something very different from the former. In other words, there is no relation of the psychoanalytic act to the master’s discourse: “No one is in a position to master what is at stake, which is nothing other than the interference of the function of the subject in this act.”<sup>334</sup> The psychoanalytic act is not a “knowing” that permits one to become a psychoanalyst, but a paradigm shift related to the development of a subject that knows that it cannot know, or a subject that accepts it is divided. Furthermore, the psychoanalytic act and, by extension, the analyst’s discourse tie directly to feminine *jouissance*: the analyst’s discourse reveals that sex is the index of the unconscious. The unconscious as sexuated in nature, but in a way that does not align with biological sex or constructions of gender. Rather the unconscious arises as an *ontological* question of how to be a woman or man, but fails to fully represent an answer.

The analyst’s discourse is not just turning from the hysteric’s discourse while maintaining a centre—it changes that centre: a true subversion.<sup>335</sup> Rather than a search for mastery, the analyst’s discourse reveals there is something beyond knowledge by producing a break or discontinuity because of its emphasis on the *lalangue* rather than language, which is the equivalent of looking at the sexual relationship via set theory and Aristotelian logic rather than the grammar of writing. Psychoanalysis does not depend on a mastery of its subject matter outside of experience, but it does depend on the experience of the real and on logic, the field “in which the subject supposed to know is nothing,” and “because there is nothing there,” psychoanalysts “are between the two, finding support in logic on the one hand, on our experience on the other.”<sup>336</sup> This “between the two” is also the location of “woman”: “she [woman] is located between the 1 and the 0.”<sup>337</sup>

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<sup>334</sup> *Seminar 15*, XV 16

<sup>335</sup> This is an important point. I will return to the hysteric’s discourse and its relation to Joyce briefly in my conclusion.

<sup>336</sup> *Seminar 15*, X 15.

<sup>337</sup> *Seminar 19*, 181.

Valéry offer one idea of how to tie the analyst's discourse and the psychoanalytic act to dance in a way that does not rely on mastery when he offers the valuable insight into where dance fits among the arts; he argues the limits of dance are not intrinsic to it. That is, a dance ends not because of any inherent limitation, but because of the limits of the music, or of the human body. In this regard, dance breaks away from and "opposes ordinary useful action."<sup>338</sup> Colebrook also identifies a related element that is unique to dance among the other aesthetic endeavours: "Dancing—unlike writing a novel that would have an external object of completion—is, at each moment of its actualisation a dance; one does not have to wait until the completion of the performance to produce a dance."<sup>339</sup> In this sense, then, where the limits are the zero and one, and the gap is what occurs between, dance occupies that gap, and the dancer would embody the paradox that confronts the psychoanalyst. Lacan argues that the only one who can "know" there is "no subject supposed to know" is the analyst, yet the analyst is nevertheless tasked with becoming the *désêtre*, the loss of being in which she would function as the *objet a* of the analysand. This is "an act that is out of synch since he is not the subject supposed to know, since he cannot be it" yet who nonetheless becomes that which he should not know. This inhabiting of a paradox ties dance to the gap, not necessarily in a pathological way, but in a way that one comes to inhabit the lack, just as the psychoanalytic act inaugurates the analyst in the position of *objet a* and as Joyce's writing provides access to the mystery of the speaking body, or the *parlêtre*, by creating a *sinthome*. Zupančič proposes "the subject is not simply an object among many objects, it is also the form of existence of the contradiction, antagonism, at work in the very essence of objects as objects."<sup>340</sup> Dance in its holding of the paradox embodies the "existence of the contradiction" and, thereby, supports an acknowledgement of the "contradiction in reality

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<sup>338</sup> "Philosophy of the Dance," 71–72.

<sup>339</sup> "How Can We Tell the Dancer from the Dance," 7.

<sup>340</sup> *What Is Sex?*, 122.

itself.”<sup>341</sup> This also relates to dance under David Best’s view. The dichotomy of body and mind leads some to suggest the necessity of the body for dance erases any aspect of the mind, yet Best argues there *is*—and must be—a “logical relation between the dance and our emotional response to it.”<sup>342</sup> In other words, we must hold this relation in tension. He points out that the more one studies and understands the art form and its context, “the greater one’s possibility of coming to appreciate the complexity of a certain interpretation.”<sup>343</sup> Nonetheless, he does not say dance is purely logical; rather, it rests upon experience as well, the experience of the art itself: “to talk of the sadness of Mozart’s 40th Symphony is to talk of a feeling which can be expressed and experienced *only* through that particular piece of music.”<sup>344</sup> Thus, dance is the intersection between the body and language—or the imaginary and the symbolic—it is not *of* either of them, but it does incorporate both.<sup>345</sup>

Dance connects to affect through the individual body; Foster argues the body “seems to maintain a closer connection the unconscious feeling portion of the self than to the rational conscious self. . . . It expresses the passionate, ineffable, libidinal, and unconscious aspects of human experience in dialectical opposition to speech.”<sup>346</sup> All of

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<sup>341</sup> Zupančič, *What Is Sex?*, 121

<sup>342</sup> “The Aesthetics of Dance,” 14.

<sup>343</sup> “The Aesthetics of Dance,” 14.

<sup>344</sup> “The Aesthetics of Dance,” 15.

<sup>345</sup> I am indebted to Dolar and his discussion of the voice for enhancing my understanding of dance as this curious (and paradoxical or ambiguous, in his words) point of intersection. See, *A Voice and Nothing More*, 73.

<sup>346</sup> *Reading Dance*, 50. This is in Lacanian thought, too: “‘I speak with my body,’ he [Lacan] often said, ‘And this without knowing it. I therefore always say more than I know.’” Roudinesco, *Lacan: In spite of Everything*, 14. Despite the focus on speech in psychoanalysis and its regular dismissal of the body (see Lombardi, *Body-Mind Dissociation*), Lombardi calls for a return to the body; this idea of the body revealing something inexpressible in speech exists in psychoanalytic thought from Freud to the present day. There is an idea, currently, that within analysis the



this is only possible because of the relationship of dance to the body. Helen Thomas notes that “if the symbolic order is associated with ‘the law of the father’ (phallogentrism), then the semiotic is associated with the feminine (maternal body). The feminine (in a deconstructionist, not biological sense) is located in the semiotic chora, relegated to the margins of the logocentric, phallogentric symbolic order. It is from this space of endless possibilities, which cannot be contained by the rational structure of language, that there is the potential to disrupt, challenge, break out of or destabilise the dominant symbolic order.”<sup>347</sup> Thus, developing a *sinthome*, a way to live without the phallic function or the name-of-the-father, requires the body, for it is in the (maternal) body one locates the chora. Dances *relies* on the body, and through the chora provides a link to the feminine (*jouissance*); dance challenges one to accept the drives and their stasis that comprise the chora, thereby allowing one to access the beyond of the symbolic order, and this beyond is what Joyce touches in his writing. Lear argues, “part of what it is to constitute oneself as a lover, subjectively understood, is to determine for oneself what it is to be a lover. And that, in turn, requires that one continually be able to notice, react to, and appropriate one’s own emerging impulses, thoughts, and feelings to a life so constituted.”<sup>348</sup> Lacan contends that Joyce, unlike everyone else, did have a sexual relationship (with Nora). Therefore, replace “as a lover, subjectively understood” with “within feminine *jouissance*,” and it becomes clear how necessary the body is.

It is this particular spatio-temporal relation to the body that gives rise to a *jouissance* that is not phallic: in dance “our sense of distance as the openness of space is intensified by

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analysis and often comes to know more about the analyst than the analyst knows of herself, all because it is revealed through an unconscious bodily “speech.”

<sup>347</sup> *The Body, Dance and Cultural Theory*, 169.

<sup>348</sup> *Wisdom Won from Illness*, 155. It is possible to make this substitution because of Lacan’s argument regarding Joyce. Joyce, via his relationship to feminine *jouissance*, has a sexual relationship with Nora, unlike those subject to the phallic *jouissance*. See Lacan, *Seminar 23*.

the very moment that slices across distance to no purpose but joy, refusing the meaning of distance [and thereby occupying the openness of space—or the gap] by refusing a teleological spatiality.”<sup>349</sup> De Cuyper and Dulsster, too, seem to suggest dance allows one to occupy this gap. They write about a repetition in dance that circles around the empty space: “A dichotomy can thus be detected, on one side a meaningfulness and on the other side something that seems to escape language. However, these two forms appear to circle around a communal emptiness but represent two levels of what seem to be an attempt to master this void.”<sup>350</sup> The choice of the word “master” is perhaps unfortunate, yet the sentiment De Cuyper and Dulsster express is relevant. Hodgson, for instance, writes how the dancer, via rhythm, “expresses the invisible centre of the through-process.”<sup>351</sup> Dance, then, makes manifest the gap. The dancer thereby changes the structure that creates the gap, and in doing so, establishes a new relationship to said gap.

Dance embodies many paradoxes, not just the previously discussed ones of pleasure and fright; for example, another paradox manifests in the body which holds the tension and its release that exist in rhythm.<sup>352</sup> McCarren offers an illustration of yet another paradox: the paradox within dance of its visuality and its silence. “The silence is the one that has the power—in some contexts—of validating the mute expressiveness of the body, allying to it and thus commenting on contemporary symptomatology.”<sup>353</sup> MacKendrick, too, provides an example of a paradox dance holds: “surely some of the intensity of our pleasure in movement derives from the longing it creates in us, not only to move with it,

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<sup>349</sup> MacKendrick, “Embodying Transgression,” 149.

<sup>350</sup> “The Dancing Being.”

<sup>351</sup> *Mastering Movement*, 31.

<sup>352</sup> “Rhythm, Laban defines as the ‘alternate of opposite happening’—organized tension and relaxation of tension—each with its own effect.” Hodgson, *Mastering Movement*, 187.

<sup>353</sup> *Dance Pathologies*, 38. This is where McCarren relates dance’s silence to the silence of the hysteric, which albeit an idea I disagree with, contains an important illustration of the paradox of dance.

but to hold it—to have it move before us yet remain, to have it remain still.”<sup>354</sup> This longing is very different from a longing to be whole or the longing structured by the desire of the other. It is a longing based in the occupying the space of paradox, and it may explain how it is one step outside phallic function to find that other *jouissance*, the *jouissance* of the body or that “real pleasure” that Phillips’s identifies.<sup>355</sup> The symbolic does not permit the sexual relation, but via art, we may reach or experience feminine *jouissance*.

#### 4.8 Dancing with the Real in *Black Swan* and *The Red Shoes*

Earlier in this chapter I referenced the link between dance and psychosis in the popular imagination, suggesting that two films that *seem* to suggest dance causes psychosis in fact have alternative readings that break both the bond of dance and psychosis and the belief that dance is the ultimate experience that will make one “whole”—or cause madness. How else can we read these films? I argue that both *The Red Shoes* and *Black Swan* depict dance alongside pathology yet use this connection to suggest dance can create an alternative to the phallic function when the phallic function is not available. In *The Red Shoes*, Vicky is under the tutelage of a demanding ballet master who requires complete loyalty to him and to her art. When she falls in love with Julian Craster, the composer of the ballet she is slated to star in (*The Red Shoes*), Julian is fired, and Vicky’s decision to remain with him means she, too, leaves the company; however, she remains torn between her love for ballet and her love for Julian, eventually returning to the ballet (thus leaving Julian) and its red shoes. The mirror scene that Bruhm discusses (see chapter 4.4), and which I referred to previously, is a representation of this split. This split is deepened by the film’s ambiguous ending: Vicky falls (leaps) from the balcony in front of a train, but whether this act was of her own volition or the result of being possessed by the red shoes

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<sup>354</sup> “Embodying Transgression,” 143.

<sup>355</sup> *Unforbidden Pleasures*, 4.

is entirely unclear.<sup>356</sup> In a Lacanian sense, this “act” leaves audiences with the question of whether Vicky’s death is caused by the red shoes, that is, an external force, or if directors Michael Powell and Eric Pressburger depict an encounter with the real of desire via her death. This question is no longer asked about the film, however; whereas the film once was about “dying for art,” people have come to view it as Vicky jumping to her death to escape from the desire of the Other.<sup>357</sup>

The ending of *Black Swan* depicts something similar. *Black Swan* is a film that centres on a dance company preparing to stage *Swan Lake*, and on the surface, the main character, Nina, develops psychosis. I will explain more about the film soon, but the important point right now is the ending. During the final performance of the ballet (as depicted within the film), the main character Nina rushes off stage to her dressing room to prepare to dance as the Black Swan. While there, she fights with her friend/rival Lily—who threatens to take her place in the ballet—and her dressing room mirror breaks. Nina then stabs Lily with a shard of the mirror. Yet, this newly broken mirror is the same mirror the former principal dancer broke after being told her career was over, which is the event that vaulted Nina into the starring role of *Swan Lake*: ultimately, the fight with Lily was a hallucination, and Nina did not stab Lily, but herself. As she runs back to finish the performance (and the film), she dances unlike she has ever danced before: beyond the technical prowess she previously displayed, she now also embodies a relationship to her

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<sup>356</sup> The agency involved in the fall becomes even less clear when contrasted with the novel developed from the screenplay of the film. In the novel, Vicky leaps to her death; in the film, she leaps onto the railing of the balcony, but then falls more than leaps from the railing.

<sup>357</sup> Adrienne L. McLean, “The Red Shoes Revisited,” *Dance Chronicle* 11, no. 1 (1998): 43–44, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1567717>. “Dying for art” is how director Michael Powell characterizes the film. I imagine this evolution in audience response is even more true today and may be an indicator of the beginnings of a cultural shift that now sees the world as more psychotic and goal directed. In a world where everything has become about having a political or social meaning and purpose, a film that depicts “dying for art” (or encountering the real of one’s desire and surrendering to it) can only be misunderstood.

body as sexual and powerful. The ballet ends with the Nina as the White Swan falling to her death; as the others rush to Nina to congratulate her on her performance, they notice a blood stain growing on Nina's costume. The film ends with the enigmatic words of Nina: "It was perfect."<sup>358</sup>

Alastair Macaulay notes in his review of the film that "its nightmarish view of both ballet and women is not one I'm keen to see again" with Nina as "too much a victim,"<sup>359</sup> and Roger Ebert writes of how the film details "singleminded professionalism in the pursuit of a career, leading to the destruction of personal lives."<sup>360</sup> Furthermore, both films have engendered ensuing discussions about the ambiguity of the endings: Did she or didn't she kill herself? Did the shoes kill Vicky? Did she fall? Is Nina's death just another hallucination? Those who look at *Black Swan* psychoanalytically most often regard Nina's death as either submitting to the phallic function or trying to escape it.<sup>361</sup>

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<sup>358</sup> *Black Swan*, 01:42:40.

<sup>359</sup> "The Many Faces of 'Black Swan.'" "

<sup>360</sup> "She Became Perfect in Every Area except Life," review of *Black Swan*, directed by Darren Aronofsky, RogerEbert.com, December 01, 2010, accessed May 6, 2021, <https://www.rogerebert.com/reviews/black-swan-2010>.

<sup>361</sup> Charlotte Gough suggests Nina (and Vicky) are "ultimately transformed into the patriarchally conditioned personas they strive to perfect and perform." "The Ballerina Body-Horror: Spectatorship, Female Subjectivity and the Abject in Dario Argento's *Suspiria* (1977)," *Irish Gothic Journal; Dublin* 17 (Autumn 2018): 64–65, <https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/ballerina-body-horror-spectatorship-female/docview/2138048991/se-2>. Although Julie Sexeny and Ben Tyrer suggest *Black Swan* could have a relation to the *sinthome*, in the end both deny this as well. Sexeny laments the "persistence of the male fantasy" and questions, "why is it that we need to be reminded every ten years or so that women can't be allowed to express and survive their destructiveness?" "Identification and Mutual Recognition in Darren Aronofsky's *Black Swan*," in *Embodied Encounters: New Approaches to Psychoanalysis and Cinema*, ed. Agnieszka Piotrowska (New York: Routledge, 2015), 58. Tyrer offers a reading that suggests the *Black Swan* (role) is Nina's *sinthome*, yet then adds that, "she is denied this feminine logic – and with that her *sinthome* – and her insistence on transcendence pushes her back towards the White

Nonetheless, there is another way to read the ending. The ending reminds us of the end of *The Red Shoes*, and the ambiguity of both endings is part of the films' genius. The endings frustrate viewers by refusing what they want (which is really the endings they *think* will occur right up until these endings do not appear: the ones they can pan as chauvinistic or the fairy-tale endings),<sup>362</sup> yet the ambiguity of the endings opens the possibility for alternative readings. It does not matter what the "truth" is; what matters is that the films permit the possibilities that both characters commit the ultimate ethical act.<sup>363</sup>

I am not arguing that one cannot support either reading and audiences are left completely in the dark, however. There is enough evidence for Lacanian readings of both films to suggest dance—for both Vicky and Nina—is what allows them to develop a *sinthome*, with the films ending in ethical acts.

Throughout *The Red Shoes*, Vicky hallucinates that her boyfriend becomes the demanding ballet master or the choreographer. How the red shoes seem to "possess" her and the (her) confusion between her image and her dancing self only add to the psychotic elements within the film. Bruhm notes that the latter idea—"to dance within the specular economy"—is precursor to the final act (of death) in that this action is also "to dance

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Swan: towards the beyond and into death." "An Atheist's Guide to Feminine Jouissance: On *Black Swan* and the Other Satisfaction," in *ibid.*, 144.

<sup>362</sup> What these *desires* fail to account for is the idea of what that might look like, especially the fairy tale ending. Does Nina go on dancing, but just with a newfound passion (and therefore cede her subject to what others want of her)? Does Vicky choose Julian or dance (since she can't choose both), which only means she ends up losing her reason for living?

<sup>363</sup> For reasons I will explain later, I'm using "ethical act" rather than "psychoanalytic act" here and am relying on Zupančič's work in *Ethics of the Real*. While the ethical act can be read as analogous to the psychoanalytic act, I think there is one significant difference that I will address in chapter five.

oneself toward that very dissolution of self that is also the most private aspect of the self. Simply put, to dance is to enter death.”<sup>364</sup> If dancing is what Vicky dies for, then the only way she can come to that “act” is by coming to see the truth of her desire by confronting the real.

The idea of dance as a *sinthome* is perhaps more apparent in Aronofsky’s film *Black Swan*. *Black Swan* is a psychological thriller set in the world of ballet. The protagonist Nina Sayers is a technically brilliant dancer who wants the lead in the ballet the company is preparing for: *Swan Lake*; however, although she embodies the quality of the White Swan, she lacks the “passion” or “emotion” required for the sister role of the Black Swan. The director encourages Nina to get in touch with her dark side, and she ultimately wins the role of Swan Queen (which requires her to dance both parts). Yet, she still lacks the darkness of the Black Swan. As Nina works to get more in touch with her dark side, she begins to hallucinate, and she becomes paranoid that her fellow dancer—and main rival/friend—wants to take over the role. As the film progresses, fantasy and reality blur for both the characters and the viewer.

The image (in the mirror) plays a role too. Nina enters her mother’s room and is confronted by images of her (Nina) as a dancer; she then sees how her dancing has always been her mother’s desire, the *real* of that is too much. Dance becomes enmeshed with a traumatic real. Images and hallucinations threaten to overtake her. Images, via the mirrors in the film, ultimately take on lives of their own, threatening a break within Nina’s psyche. At one point, she sees (hallucinates) the word “whore,” written on a bathroom mirror. One hallucination also reveals an image of her (Nina) as the Black Swan—the uncontrolled, uncontrollable subject of deception and sexuality—in opposition to the innocence and purity of the White Swan (of *Swan Lake*). The film thus incorporates the hallucination, fragmentation, and metasexuation, that accompany the

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<sup>364</sup> Bruhm, “Dance Divisions,” 11.

psychotic's return to the body.<sup>365</sup> Yet, dance, as Nina's entire psychic structure threatens collapse, becomes her sinthome, and we see this in the ending that depicts the ethical act. It is because she can create a sinthome as the real intrudes that the "act" can occur in the end. She is not *only* overwhelmed by hallucinations and body sensations, but she also plays with them: we see her almost orgasmic pleasure as she (bodily) "transforms" into the Black Swan; we witness the development of her ability to play as she metamorphosizes from a technically brilliant dancer into one who is not afraid to go beyond the steps. Through all these moments that suggest a sinthome, we also see how psychosis threatens at every turn, yet in the end, Nina becomes the object of the ethical act.

*The Red Shoes* and *Black Swan* stand out because of this connection to a successful (ethical) act. Unlike the films that show dance as engendering subjects who remain with the phallic fantasy, *The Red Shoes* and *Black Swan* depict the pain, work, and ultimate impossibility inherent in becoming a subject *not* subject to the phallic function. Nina does not create a sinthome easily (nor, for that matter, did Joyce). The film depicts the moments wherein she starts to create one as she starts to get in touch with the qualities of the Black Swan through her play—whether that be playing with dance as more than a technical exercise or through her sexual awakening with Lily—but is consistently thwarted in her efforts as she is continuously interpolated into the symbolic. Her (m)other's desire is simultaneous why Nina needs a sinthome and what contributes to the agony of creating one. McGowan perceives this: Nina's "self-wounding" is how she separates from her mother and refuses her role as fulfilling her mother's desire and instead "insists upon her

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<sup>365</sup> These elements of schizophrenia and psychosis as per Christopher Bollas. See *When the Sun Bursts*, 103–10. That the film circles around the ballet *Swan Lake* is highly relevant: if the psychotic is characterized by an internalized division that structures the psyche (*When the Sun Bursts*, 99–100), then the plot of *Swan Lake* parallels this externally as the Black Swan betrays the White Swan, and there is a battle of good versus evil. The suicide of the White Swan (rather than the death of Nina) can also be read as an ethical act, a reading that I am not pursuing here but that furthers the parallels of the ballet portrayed in the film to the structure of the film itself.



own enjoyment.”<sup>366</sup> Insisting on her own enjoyment allows Nina to create a *sinthome* and, thus, partake in the ultimate (ethical) act. Nina is not pursued to her death by her *desire* for perfection. Vicky is not led to her death by her shoes. Neither die as a sacrifice intended to remove the (inner) pathological.<sup>367</sup> Both deaths are instances of non-agency that ultimately result in becoming subjects; Vicky and Nina—to use Zupančič’s words—“annihilate that which – in the Other, in the symbolic order – gave [their] being[s] identity, status, support and meaning.”<sup>368</sup> There is no agent of the ethical act. It is an “impossible” act: it has no subject. Nina and Vicky “insist upon [their] own enjoyment, which the self-destruction makes possible,”<sup>369</sup> placing themselves in the position to commit the impossible act. The ambiguity of the endings foregrounds this aspect of the act. Audiences are often stuck in the binary of did she or did she not, but really, at the point of the act, there is no “she.” The endings depict the “death” of the self as composed by the Other as a visual death that plays out the ultimate ethical act of becoming a real subject. Early in the film, Nina states, “I just want to be perfect”; in the final scene, she repeats this before ultimately turning the “I” into “it”: “it was perfect.”<sup>370</sup> This change

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<sup>366</sup> In her self-mutilation, Nina “breaks this imaginary bond. She is no longer within the complementary relation with her mother because she has destroyed the imaginary wholeness of her own body.” Todd McGowan, “The Desert of the Real,” in *Blackwell Companion to Literary Studies and Psychoanalysis*, ed. Laura Markus and Anghi Murkherjee (New York: Blackwell, 2014), 284.

<sup>367</sup> Zupančič differentiates two types of suicide, with the second type being a part of the ethical act I associate with Nina and Vicky’s deaths. The first she explains “obeys the logic of sacrifice” and is that of “infinite ‘purification,’ or the death of the pathological within the self as part of the effort “to preserve the consistency of the big Other.” See *Ethics of the Real*, 83–84.

<sup>368</sup> *Ethics of the Real*, 84.

<sup>369</sup> McGowan, “The Desert of the Real,” 284.

<sup>370</sup> Potentially at least. There is a ton of disagreement about what the last line is, with some (mostly amateur) film critics suggesting the film portrays the problems of dance’s demand for perfection. They suggest the film ends with “I was perfect.” The contrast between Nina’s earlier desire to be perfect and the phrase “it was perfect” makes more sense though. Nina wanted to be

draws out the link to the ethical act that has no subject. The change also makes Nina's death "impossible" in Zupančič's understanding. Therefore, like Joyce's feminine *jouissance*, Nina's death is the impossible that happens and an instance of the real in which Nina comes to "act in conformity to what threw [her] 'out of joint.'"<sup>371</sup>

## 4.9 Pas (de) deux

Dance, as an art, may then establish this connection to that *real* pleasure, the pleasure of the other *jouissance*, so one can live within the symbolic while maintaining a connection to the imaginary and the real. And it may do this by teaching the dancer to live the paradox,<sup>372</sup> which Zupančič posits as restorative, in a sense:

Contradiction is not simply something that we have to accept and 'make do with'; it can become, and be 'used' as, the source of emancipation from the very logic dictated by this contradiction. This is what analysis ideally leads to: contradiction does not simply disappear, but the way it functions in the discourse structuring our reality changes radically. And this happens as a result of our fully and actively *engaging in the contradiction*, taking our place in it.<sup>373</sup>

What dance does is what psychoanalysis does: it allows the index person (the dancer or analysand) not just to see the contradictions but also to see that both sides of those contradictions are simultaneously true; the paradox is not just accepted, but embraced and

perfect but could never live up to that desire of the Other; she achieves "perfection" only by surrendering to the drive of her own desire and undergoing the impossible act.

<sup>371</sup> Zupančič, *Ethics of the Real*, 235.

<sup>372</sup> To live the paradox, I suggest, is to think the paradox as per Zupančič. Thinking a paradox, she writes, is not to think about it or "stare at it with fascination," but to think it, which is also to think the real. *What is Sex?*, 123.

<sup>373</sup> *What is Sex?*, 72.

permitted to exist in a way that recognizes it and uses it, but uses it without reducing it to something that is purely utilitarian; the paradox becomes the means for a creative imagining regarding how one can occupy the emptiness at the core of one's being. Dance, thereby, permits health according to Bromberg's definition that I previously cited: "the ability to stand in the spaces between realities without losing any of them . . . This is what . . . creativity is really all about – the capacity to feel like one self while being many."<sup>374</sup>

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<sup>374</sup> "Shadow and Substance," 166.

## Chapter 5 Reverberations of the Embodied Sinthome

### 5 Shifting the Conversation

What is the value of looking at dance using Lacanian concepts and his idea of the sinthome? Dance as a bodily instantiation of the sinthome has significant practical and theoretical implications for both psychoanalysis and dance, and for understanding the techniques of analysis itself; some of these implications are new and others are views proffered before but now refined with new support or new understanding: looking at dance through the Lacanian lens of the imaginary, symbolic, and real, and seeing its potential as a sinthome provides more support for previous and pre-existing ideas, which may make those ideas more accessible to new audiences.

#### 5.1 Implications for (Lacanian) Psychoanalytic Theory

Seeing dance as embracing the possibilities of the sinthome, then, offers insight into psychoanalytic theory and practice, and in particular, dance as seen via Lacan's registers of the psyche and the sinthome produces an alternative way to understand Lacan's arguments and what they mean for his more general theory of psychoanalysis.

##### 5.1.1 Symptoms and/or Sinthome

When Lacan writes that dance does not work on the body, he seems to imply dance cannot match Joyce's works when it comes to creating a sinthome, but maybe what Lacan means is that dance contrasts writing because dance cannot speak of the symptom. Dance's "ciphers" do not reveal a (psychotic) symptom, only help create a sinthome. Lacan in his seminar on the sinthome first employs the term "symptom" when he speaks of Joyce. Later, he introduces the sinthome. Not all critics comment on the change in the term, and those who do often suggest is speaking of the same phenomenon both times, merely refining his language.<sup>375</sup> Yet Lacan, I believe, uses two terms intentionally

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<sup>375</sup> See, for example, Oren Gozlan, "Transsexual Surgery: A Novel Reminder and a Navel Remainder," *International Forum of Psychoanalysis* 20, no. 1 (2011): 45–52, <https://doi.org>

because he is explaining two different concepts and processes. Roberto Harari links the *sinthome* to Joyce's "making a name" for himself. This (self)nomination is distinct from the naming subsumed under the name-of-the-father (and related to creationism): each "relates to the emergence of a new concept."<sup>376</sup> Language (or speech) is necessary for revealing the symptom because only metaphor can reveal the symptom as it imposes a meaning on the metonymic chain, and metaphor requires language. Joyce's *Portrait* reveals for Lacan how Joyce forecloses on the name-of-the-father, but it is *Finnegans Wake* that Lacan sees as emblematic of the *sinthome*, that is, Joyce's works first reveal the (psychotic) "symptom," then Joyce transforms this symptom into a *sinthome* using the real within symbolic.

Essential to understanding the symptom is an understanding of the real as opposed to reality because the symptom supports reality. Lacan emphasizes this distinction in *Seminar 20* when he talks about *jouissance* and reality, and he references Freud's comment that there is a *Lust-Ich* before a *Real-Ich*, which one could misunderstand as a *jouissance* that exists prior to reality. Although Lacan emphasizes that one can only approach reality through *jouissance* (and believes at this time that as speaking beings we can only approach *jouissance* through language), this only means that *jouissance* (or the *Lust-Ich*) may be *primary*, but not first: once we begin to think, *jouissance* is what occupies us. The apparatus of *jouissance* (language) that permits thought, however, makes the *real* impossible: it fails to symbolize the real and leads to repression.<sup>377</sup> As a

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[/10.1080/0803706X.2010.537695](#) or Prieto, "Writing the Subject's Knot." Gozlan posits the difference between the symptom and *sinthome* is merely our relationship to a behaviour; Prieto argues the definition of symptom changes with the introduction of the term *sinthome*.

<sup>376</sup> *How James Joyce Made His Name*, 50–54.

<sup>377</sup> Turkle further suggests this "impossible" is what Lacan believes that "both [analysts and poets] are trying to grab hold of" in their use of language, but this "can lead to a kind of delirium." *Psychoanalytic Politics*, 236.

result, “*reality itself can function as an escape from encountering the Real.*”<sup>378</sup> We rely on the fantasy that supports our reality to deal with reality rather than face the real embedded within reality. The imaginary and symbolic work together to produce meaning, keeping the real repressed. Nonetheless, the real (and its associated *jouissance*) exists whether it is seen in the ecstatic pleasure of Nina’s dying as the White Swan or Bernini’s sculpture of Saint Theresa.<sup>379</sup> The symbolic, however, obscures this type of *jouissance*. The development of language produces a belief in the ability to master reality and cover the real; “due to speaking, everything succeeds” Lacan posits,<sup>380</sup> yet Lacan also tells us that what this success, in reality, equates to, is making sure the sexual relationship fails “in the male manner.”<sup>381</sup>

Lacan refers to the Oedipus complex as the symptom that holds the three registers of the psyche together: “the Oedipus complex is, as such, a symptom. Everything is sustained in so far as the Name-of-the-Father is also the Father of the Name.”<sup>382</sup> This gives this idea of the symptom as grounded in reality and the phallic function more clarity because it suggests “the signifier of the Name-of-the-Father is expected to take the place of the lack in the Other and to knot the registers of the Real, the Symbolic and the Imaginary in such a way that the *jouissance* is forbidden.”<sup>383</sup> Although Lacan suggests the Oedipus complex could be a *sinthome* when he mentions “the father is a symptom, or a *sinthome*, as you wish,”<sup>384</sup> as he develops his theory it becomes clearer that the Oedipus complex, in its relation to the name-of-the-father, does not fit the definition of a *sinthome*. Rather, it is a symptom that supports the signifier so that one can be perceived as a subject, and, thus, it

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<sup>378</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *How to Read Lacan* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2007), 57.

<sup>379</sup> See Lacan’s discussion of the sculpture in *Seminar 20*, 76

<sup>380</sup> *Seminar 20*, 56.

<sup>381</sup> *Seminar 20*, 56.

<sup>382</sup> *Seminar 23*, 13.

<sup>383</sup> Verhaeghe and Declercq, “Lacan’s Analytical Goal,” 20.

<sup>384</sup> *Seminar 23*, 11.

establishes a division of the subject “between the symbolic and the symptom”<sup>385</sup> and produces the master’s discourse.

In Lacanian terms, the sinthome, originally described as the “fourth ring”<sup>386</sup> in the Borromean knot, is a “buckle”<sup>387</sup> that “enables the symbolic, the imaginary, and the real to go on holding together.”<sup>388</sup> Although this sounds like the symptom that supports the symbolic, the sinthome has a very different function. Contrary to the symptom that reinforces the master’s discourse, the sinthome establishes something akin to the analyst’s discourse. The symptom emerges from an identification with the lack in the subject—it represses our knowledge of this lack by causing the desire for objects to fill the lack. The sinthome, on the other hand, relates to an identification with the lack in the other. As a buckle, the sinthome allows one, as Lacan illustrates via Joyce, to imagine oneself as not subject to the phallic function. It thus provides a means by which a subject can come to a kind of truth about a symptom that he or she can live with by permitting questions of meaning and truth without the phallic signifier. Lacan, in a lecture delivered at the Joyce symposium, states that the sinthome “is what is singular to each individual,”<sup>389</sup> and it is through the creation of the sinthome that “[Joyce] is one who has earned the privilege of having reached the extreme point of embodying the symptom in himself, by which he eludes any possible death, on account of being reduced to a structure that is the very structure of LOM,”<sup>390</sup> for “it is only as a concrete self that the universal comes to its own truth [as ultimately empty] via the gap of self-

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<sup>385</sup> *Seminar 23*, 14.

<sup>386</sup> *Seminar 23*, 12.

<sup>387</sup> *Seminar 23*, 72.

<sup>388</sup> *Seminar 23*, 77.

<sup>389</sup> “Joyce the Symptom,” 147.

<sup>390</sup> “Joyce the Symptom,” 147. LOM should be read as “l’homme.”

consciousness.”<sup>391</sup> Joyce’s *sinthome*, then, differs from a symptom in that Joyce, in his works, “target[s] what presents itself in the first instance as a symptom”<sup>392</sup> and turns it into a *sinthome*. The symptom is tied to the unconscious that Lacan argues is “structured like a language” and is, therefore, reliant on the other; the unconscious is based upon the desire of the other. The *sinthome*, however, is not a symptom because the *sinthome* reflects the individual unconscious Lacan does not believe exists and relates, likewise, to the feminine *jouissance* that “shouldn’t be.”<sup>393</sup> Therefore, more than just ensuring the registers of the psyche remain connected, the *sinthome* also regulates the subject in such a way that identification with the feminine *jouissance* becomes possible.

What dance adds to this is an understanding of how this operates, and looking at dance reveals more clearly the importance of the drives in the creation of the *sinthome* over the method of writing in which the drives appear in Joyce. Accepting dance can form a *sinthome* challenges the indispensability of writing for the *sinthome* and clarifies the difference between the symptom and *sinthome*. Dance as a symptom is dancing to please the other or to fulfill the “self.” Dance as *sinthome* is far more nuanced and complex; it draws out the connection to a “beyond” of language. Specifically, dance as a *sinthome* exposes the role of the real (and, therefore, of the drives) in the *sinthome*. Applying this back to Lacan, one can see how the drives need to be bound using play, specifically

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<sup>391</sup> Zupančič, *The Odd One In*, 38. This is to say that in the concrete instance of Joyce, the universal comes to the truth of the lack of a universal “out there”; Joyce shows that rather than something that exists outside and lives beyond us, “*something of our life lives on its own as we speak*”; that is, there is a real. *Ibid.*, 218.

<sup>392</sup> *Seminar 23*, 14. A symptom, however, only in that it reveals the foreclosure of the name-of-the-father, not in that it acts as a defence against the repressed name-of-the-father.

<sup>393</sup> *Seminar 20*, 59. Ryan Engley and Todd McGowan explain how Lacan castigates Carl Jung for his idea of the “collective unconscious” because there is no duality within the unconscious and assuming a collective unconscious implies the existence of a private unconscious, yet the unconscious—at least until Joyce—is merely an effect of a discourse with the other.

“Unconscious (Aphorism 5),” in *Why Theory*, March 10, 2020, podcast, 33:20



playing with the real. It is, after all, the irruption of the real that causes the rings to detach in the first place. Zupančič outlines how in Lacanian thought, the death drive “refers to an excess of life itself,”<sup>394</sup> or a surplus. Death does not (only) exist in opposition to life but is in life as its “inherent negativity and internal presupposition.”<sup>395</sup> Thus, the death drive is the only drive for Lacan, and its “‘aim’ is the repetition of the lack of being in the very midst of being.”<sup>396</sup> This repetition, however, also has a split: for “excess excitation exists only in and through repetition,” and, therefore, repetition not only binds excess but also produces that excess.<sup>397</sup> The search for the *objet a* is a desire to limit the satisfaction and fill the gap, to become a whole, yet the repetition of this search paradoxically encourages further repetition of the lack because although one never attains the *objet a*, one attains a sort of satisfaction nonetheless: the satisfaction of the repetition of the lack, which is the satisfaction of the drive, not the satisfaction of desire. I suggest this means we get what we need—satisfaction of the drive—not what we desire. Until we come to create a new signifier—via the ethic act, for example—and “*die differently*,”<sup>398</sup> we repeat the “fatigue of life”<sup>399</sup> through the repetition of desire and the search for wholeness. Only by playing with the repetition of the lack and coming to see the lack as one that *cannot* be filled by another does one limit the *effect* of the real (of the drive) and identify with the other *jouissance*. For the psychotic who is not searching for wholeness, however, the sinthome becomes the means for the possibility to accept and inhabit the lack by moving the centre of the psyche away from the knot-hole as it reconnects the psyche from the location of the other *jouissance*. The sinthome offers a drive-infested identification with a *jouissance*

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<sup>394</sup> *Why Psychoanalysis: Three Interventions* (Gothenburg, SE: Nordic Summer University Press, 2008), 55.

<sup>395</sup> Zupančič, *What Is Sex?*, 101.

<sup>396</sup> Zupančič, *What Is Sex?*, 104.

<sup>397</sup> Zupančič, *What Is Sex?*, 112.

<sup>398</sup> Zupančič, *What Is Sex?*, 106.

<sup>399</sup> Zupančič, *What Is Sex?*, 106.

in which one *is* rather than *does*: one lets go of the other. Additionally, as the sinthome ties itself to the imaginary and the real, it embodies a shift that permits identification not with the not-whole, but the knot-hole.

### 5.1.2 Silencing the Voice

Additionally, the interpretation of Lacan's sinthome as a function of speech and language, can now be seen as a misrecognition of Lacan's argument. Joyce's speech differs from the dialectical speech of everyday; it is a speech that relies on the voice, which Mladen Dolar explains belong neither to language nor to the body yet is common to both.<sup>400</sup> Lacan associates the voice with *objet a*, making it "an area of analytic impossibility" or a "theoretical resistance"<sup>401</sup> that both constitutes the subject and "at the same time defines it as lack."<sup>402</sup> *Objet a* likewise includes silence: Darian Leader posits there is a "split between voice and sound"<sup>403</sup> in Lacan, and the voice is "isolated from any particular sensory modality and semantic field."<sup>404</sup> Joyce, in breaking down language, was not using speech and the semantic field, but the silence between words and the metonymic properties of speech to create a language to give voice to the unspeakable.<sup>405</sup>

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<sup>400</sup> *A Voice and Nothing More*, 73

<sup>401</sup> Alice Lagaay, "Between Sound and Silence: Voice in the History of Psychoanalysis," *e-pisteme* 1, no. 1 (2008): 60, [https://research.ncl.ac.uk/e-pisteme/issues/issue01/contents/e-pisteme%20Vol.%201\(1\)%20-%20Alice%20Lagaay%20\(Full%20Text\).pdf](https://research.ncl.ac.uk/e-pisteme/issues/issue01/contents/e-pisteme%20Vol.%201(1)%20-%20Alice%20Lagaay%20(Full%20Text).pdf).

<sup>402</sup> Lagaay, "Between Sound and Silence," 59.

<sup>403</sup> "Psychoanalysis and the Voice," *The Centre for Freudian Analysis and Research Web Journal* 16 (2005): 6, <https://cfar.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/voice.pdf>.

<sup>404</sup> "Psychoanalysis and the Voice," 8. This is an early version of the voice for Lacan, prior to its connection to *objet a*, yet it is still relevant as this understanding of the voice is the voice as Lacan initially spoke of it: the voice in psychosis. The voice that reveals a presence via absence.

<sup>405</sup> Bollas writes that in schizophrenia, "the past is a dream, and the self does not want to remember it or speak it because this turns the dream into a nightmare." *Catch Them Before They Fall* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 78. Speech is imposed on the psychotic, it is not used by the

Dance is speechless. It is silent; therefore, it is related to the voice that is divorced from any acoustic element. This suggests that language specifically is not a requirement of the *sinthome*; rather, the *sinthome* requires some aspect of the symbolic; what is the missing component in psychosis is the containment and limiting ability of the symbolic as it bears on the real. What dance offers is a non-linguistic, non-speaking version of Joyce's *sinthome*, bolstered by the added element of teaching: dance *teaches* one to play (whereas Joyce shows he can play with words, speech, and the symbolic without guidance). Dance also offers access to the real, access confined within a space and time wherein if the real is too much, the dancer can revert to the learned moves to lessen the intensity of the sensations or affect, to rein them in. Dance does not require speech, nor even sound, yet is intimately connected to the real. Furthermore, what dance does require is rhythm. Bruce Perry studies rhythm and has argued that to change neural pathways or regulate dysregulation in the brain's neural networks, one needs rhythm because "repetitive and rhythmic activity becomes an evocative cue that elicits a sensation of safety. Rhythm is regulating."<sup>406</sup> As Perry points out, external stimuli are first experienced within the body in either the brainstem or diencephalon, and these areas are also essential to stress responses within the body; therefore, this area becomes an important part of any understanding of psychosis. This ties back to dance if we think of Aristotle's definition of dance as what "imitates character, emotion, and action by rhythmical movement."<sup>407</sup>

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psychotic; rather, the voice becomes the way to "make language possible." Boucher, "Joyce: Lacan's Sphinx," 140.

<sup>406</sup> "The Neurosequential Model of Therapeutics: An Interview with Bruce Perry," interview by Laurie MacKinnon, *The Australian and New Zealand Journal of Family Therapy* 33, no. 3 (2012): 214, <https://doi.org/10.1017/aft.2012.26>.

<sup>407</sup> *Poetics*, translated by S. H. Butcher (New York: Hill and Wang: 1961), 50.

Lacanian theory conveys this when Lacan asserts, “I speak with my body.”<sup>408</sup> While the *parlêtre* is associated with the phallic jouissance, and “forges a belief in itself as master of its being,” the speech of the *parlêtre* nonetheless contains “elements that do not make sense . . . but [that] as ciphers of jouissance have a profound effect on the body of the subject.”<sup>409</sup> Dance, then, is speech in the sense that it, too, contains a real and, therefore, aligns with the voice that resides in a gap itself,<sup>410</sup> the voice that “brings to the foreground, *but in a movement of suspension, of retreat*, that of which the speaker has no knowledge.”<sup>411</sup> So when someone dances, or “speaks with the body,” they are using the symbolic to contact the real, and when they “speak” the “ciphers of jouissance in the body,” they employ the voice (the real), thus “castrating” the *parlêtre*;<sup>412</sup> the movement in dance aligns with the movement of suspension and retreat of the voice. It showcases the gaps in the symbolic, gaps that support the symbolic.<sup>413</sup>

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<sup>408</sup> *Seminar 19*, 119.

<sup>409</sup> Esther Faye, “Psychoanalytic Desire and the Speaking Body,” paper presented at Lacan Circle of Melbourne/Australian Centre for Psychoanalysis Colloquium, Treacy Conference Centre, Melbourne, Australia, September 2016, 6, 2, <https://www.academia.edu/41706776/Psychdesireandspeakingbody>.

<sup>410</sup> “Voice deserves to be inscribed as a third term between the function of speech and the field of language.” Jacques-Alain Miller, “Jacques Lacan and the Voice,” in *The Later Lacan: An Introduction*, ed. Véronique Voruz and Bogdan Wolf (New York: State University of New York Press, 2007), 140.

<sup>411</sup> Lagaay, “Between Sound and Silence,” 57–58.

<sup>412</sup> Faye, “Psychoanalytic Desire and the Speaking Body,” 7. Faye writes of castrating the *parlêtre* so the speaking body can access the *real* jouissance.

<sup>413</sup> Todd McGowen argues that it is the imaginary that forces us to see what is present in the symbolic rather than to see the gaps that hold the symbolic together; he encourages us to consider the “role absence plays in forming the symbolic structure.” Ryan Engley and Todd McGowen, “Symbolic Order,” in *Why Theory*, September 6, 2020, podcast, 00:17:01. This then ties to the real being what is present in its absence.

Speech—at least verbalized speech—is not always possible for someone who is psychotic, or even for others who due to trauma, for example, are confronted with the limits of the symbolic, but as previously cited, Lacan himself believes, “I speak with my body.”<sup>414</sup> The speech Lacan deems necessary for psychoanalysis does not, therefore, necessarily need to be verbal. I have previously argued that silence has benefits and may even provide an indirect access to a thing-in-itself, or for the purposes of this dissertation, an individual as one is without the fantasy of the ideal ego.<sup>415</sup> Although verbal speech has its place—psychoanalysis is the “talking cure” after all—the senses of safety, of trust, and of being seen are what the psychotic needs first.<sup>416</sup> The psychotic fears annihilation. The real that intrudes not only disrupts the symbolic and imaginary but also threatens to cause a permanent rift among them. Lacan recognizes this when he notes the importance of Joyce writing about his body” divested of like a fruit peel.”<sup>417</sup> The theorists and psychoanalysts who work most closely with schizophrenia also recognize this. Laing, for example, emphasizes how “the schizophrenic has to be known without being destroyed.”<sup>418</sup> Bollas, too, addresses how the treatment of psychosis requires addressing this loss of the imaginary (body): “One aim of analysis, therefore, is to ease the defenses employed by the schizophrenic against the fantasy of annihilation and to replace them with nurturant realities that offset anxiety with assurances, both from the clinician and

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<sup>414</sup> *Seminar 19*, 119.

<sup>415</sup> “Silent Spaces: Allowing Objects to Talk,” *Open Philosophy* 2, no. 1 (2019): 347–56.

<sup>416</sup> This is my understanding after having read the work of multiple analysts who work with psychotics. Bollas writes of how in order to avert a psychotic break, the patient needs a sense of trust in the analyst. *Catch Them Before They Fall*, 33. Nancy McWilliams emphasizes the role of safety. *Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy: A Practitioners Guide* (New York: Guilford Press, 2004), 76. Being seen and validated are inherent in all psychanalytic treatment, but Bollas is the one who best emphasizes (for me) how this is true for the psychotic too; see, for example, his brief reminiscence of a patient, Mark. *When the Sun Bursts*, 175.

<sup>417</sup> *Seminar 23*, 129.

<sup>418</sup> *The Divided Self*, 34.

from the person's own strengthened self."<sup>419</sup> The sense of safety and the sense of being seen are, however, primarily felt senses. An analyst may say, "I understand" or "I see you,"<sup>420</sup> but unless and until an analysand feels this, the words are useless.

In trying to express our inner lives, each of us learns how sometimes language is a hindrance: people use words to rationalize their behaviours and their repetitions even though these ways of being are causing pain or problems in their lives. People also use words to divert attention from what is really important. An analysand may speak of something in an attempt to avoid speaking of feelings, choosing to philosophize instead, or an analysand may speak purely to fill the space of an uncomfortable (uncanny) silence.<sup>421</sup> Words are resistances, and we use them to deny, to defend, and to deflect: words can be obfuscatory. Accepting and employing silence, the silence of the (real in the) body, allows the analyst to circumvent speech, which can thereby enhance the recognition of the analysand's inner word and contribute to the necessary safe environment.

This, then, challenges one of the basic notions of Lacanian psychoanalysis: the silent analyst.<sup>422</sup> If the analyst is to be the *sinthome*,<sup>423</sup> even if the analyst, as I argue below is only *part* of the *sinthome*, then the analyst must actively be that *sinthome*. This is especially true in preventing psychosis: the analyst must mirror the (pre)psychotic, and in the process, teach him or her to be one's own *sinthome*. The analyst must teach play and

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<sup>419</sup> *When the Sun Bursts*, 172.

<sup>420</sup> These are common phrases of validation in various psychotherapies and psychoanalyses, although Lacan likely would not endorse anything so direct.

<sup>421</sup> Ed Pluth and Cindy Zeiher suggest the uncanny quality of silence is the silence used within analysis and corresponds to the silence of the silence analyst. *On Silence: Holding the Voice Hostage* (Cham, CH: Palgrave MacMillan, 2019), 42.

<sup>422</sup> Lacanian psychoanalysis is characterized (or stereotyped) by this, but it is important to note that Lacan, himself, was not always silent.

<sup>423</sup> *Seminar 23*, 116.

model containment and the holding of paradox, not just listen to the analysand. Only once the analysand has learned to take on some of these tasks herself can the analyst then remain more silent. Silence, however, can be used to attune to the psychotic's inner world if that is its explicit purpose. Bollas, in treating one of his analysands, spent the better part of the first year in silence developing "shared emotional experiences" (albeit "nascent").<sup>424</sup> He posits his analysand, when she spoke, did not realize she was speaking aloud. The time spent in silent with her allowed her to come to understand he would not intrude on her (as the real, to use Lacan's word, had); it provided her with the safety to see that she could hear without hearing voices, see without hallucinating. The silence here, however, belongs to the psychotic, not to the psychoanalyst, just as the silence belongs to the dancer.<sup>425</sup> Silence, in this respect, then illustrates a paradox itself in that it is both necessary and dangerous. It is one example of how the analyst can teach the analysand how to accept seeming incongruencies as simultaneously true. With the psychotic, this process is merely an extension of what Jessica Benjamin describes as the process of "recognition and destruction" that occurs within psychoanalysis all the time. She writes of how this paradoxical process of intersubjectivity alongside the intrapsychic entails "the effort to share the productions of fantasy" and how this sharing "changes the status of fantasy itself, moving from inner reality to intersubjective communication."<sup>426</sup> Although she does not write of silence, her argument shows that silence (at times) is

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<sup>424</sup> *When the Sun Bursts*, 66–70.

<sup>425</sup> This silence is a silence that is very different from the silence Pluth and Zeiher see within the Lacanian perspective on the apophatic discourse, the silence that aims to find the point of the silence that is supposed to exist beyond discourse, beyond language, the silence that is envisioned to overcome castration. *On Silence*, 6–29. That silence demands something—it is a silence "available only within language." *Ibid.*, 21. Silence in that realm would be akin to desiring a *sinthome*. The silence I refer to here is a silence that *must* exist in order to let the analysand "speak."

<sup>426</sup> "Recognition and Destruction: An Outline of Intersubjectivity," in *Relational Psychoanalysis: The Emergence of a Tradition*, ed. Stephen A. Mitchell and Lewis Aron (New York: Routledge, 1999), 198.

necessary for this process; it may be that for someone at risk of psychosis, the process of a shared communication is essential as Benjamin states; however, the traditional methods of psychoanalysis needs to change to incorporate the real.

The relevance to Lacanian psychoanalysis in particular—although this can also apply to general psychoanalytic practice—is that psychoanalysis is not entirely dependent on speech or working through for its efficacy. Not everyone believes a *sinthome* can occur without the “working through” of the symptom. Judith Herman, for example, writes of how recovery from trauma has always entailed the “recovery and cathartic reliving of traumatic memories.”<sup>427</sup> For the psychotic, any “symptom” is only revealing a foreclosure; thus, that symptom may not be available for working through. Dance however, stitches together the psyche without having to gain knowledge of the attendant aspects of a symptom or even of the real that threaten to overwhelm. Whereas Lacanian psychoanalysis cannot help those who cannot articulate the symptom, dance offers ideas of how a *sinthome* can develop even in absence of the ability to articulate the symptom. Recent psychoanalytic theory supports this contention, particularly the theory of Bollas, who works extensively with psychotic patients, spending the time to attune to what arises in the consulting room as it is articulated, not in words, but in the pulsations, vibrations, and resonances of the (often) silent analysand.<sup>428</sup>

### 5.1.3 Mirroring/Divisions

Being the mirror, I have argued, is a significant part of attuning to the analysand’s non-verbal communications.<sup>429</sup> Freud and Lacan (to a degree) believe the analyst to be a blank

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<sup>427</sup> *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence—From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror* (New York: Basic Books, 2015), 25.

<sup>428</sup> See *When the Sun Bursts*. Dr. Mark Egit also comments that the “language” in psychoanalysis is not necessary language proper, but often the “language of affect.” Mark Egit, email message to the author, September 17, 2020.

<sup>429</sup> Similar to the problems I comment on about the silent Lacanian, there is a concurrent issue of the mirror in Lacanian analysis. Lacan (and Freud) used their patients to assess their ideas as



screen, in essence, the “empty” mirror; however, the mirror does not have to be empty, and one can form a relationship with the image in the mirror, but not one that is as antagonistic as in the mirror stage. When explaining how his mirror stage differs from Lacan’s, Winnicott writes, “in individual emotional development the precursor of the mirror is the mother’s face.”<sup>430</sup> Thus, when the relationship between mother and baby goes awry, when something happens that does not result in a subject who has access to or can avail of the potential space between the mother and child, the mirror in the dance mimics the mirror of the analyst and offers another medium for creating a space for play. If attuned to the analysand, the analyst becomes a mirror, presenting back (reflecting) to the analysand an image of himself. This idea has appeared in psychoanalytic theorizing from the start: often an analyst will use the same words as the analysand or call attention to a slip or comment an analysand makes unconsciously, believing the words an analysand chooses contain pathways to the unconscious. There is, however, an implication of this that is not always recognized: the analyst will see the analysand as they are, “good, “bad,” etc., and by bringing these elements to consciousness, the analyst can help the analysand see her internal fragmentation. For example, if an analysand only recognizes herself as “bad” and accepts the negative projections of others, the analyst has a broader view and can see the “good” parts of the analysand as well—those parts that the analyst cannot mirror linguistically because the analysand does not speak of these parts, or even realize they exist—by taking the time to attune to the inner world of the analysand and accepting the sensations of the analysand as they occur within the analyst. Perhaps, then, the radical reformulation of love that Leo Bersani writes we need (via psychoanalysis), the one grounded in “*impersonal narcissism*,” is to see someone as they

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worthy—they used the patients as the mirrors for themselves rather than becoming the mirror for their patients that is needed when working with psychotics.

<sup>430</sup> *Playing and Reality*, 149.

are, period.<sup>431</sup> So that “love” means (to the person “loved”) that someone truly *sees* me. Most people see others as they imagine others to be—this is the self as seen in Lacan’s mirror stage: the self as I imagine myself to be. Truly seeing someone requires a disinterested reflection. Truly seeing someone is akin to the reflection of the mirror in dance, the reflection that shows the bodily position without commenting on it. Thus, Bersani’s “impersonal narcissism”<sup>432</sup> is “impersonal” because it is not an image of the self that is anything more than seen. It is not judged, it is not appreciated, it is not fantasized about: the analyst has no motive, but just “sees” the (psychotic) analysand as she is, fragmented, chaotic, and worthy of attention.

This process of mirroring the unseen aspects of the analysand requires the analyst to accept division within herself so that the feelings that arise in analysis can be contained: Lombardi writes, “Similarly”—and here he is referencing the film *Alien*—“the analyst who is not prepared to cognize as her own the new feeling that is being activated by the analytic relationship is in danger of being the object of an alienating laceration on the part of her sensations.”<sup>433</sup> In other words, when fully attuned to the analysand, an analyst will experience the analysand’s sensations, the same sensations that threaten to overwhelm the analysand. The analyst must recognize the sensations felt within the analyst are not just the analysand’s but also belong to the analyst. The analyst must own them in the sense that these sensations—these remnants of the real—can only be felt by the analyst if those sensations, too, are a part of him or her and are not only located in the analysand.

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<sup>431</sup> Bersani and Phillips, *intimacies*, 56. I suspect Bersani would disagree. His project is to argue for bringing narcissism back into love, so that we acknowledge the love of the other (as a “potential self”) is self-love. *Ibid.*, 124. I, however, think to see someone as a “potential self” requires that I see the person at that person is in his similarities to me, the similarities that are not incidentals but indicative of our humanness.

<sup>432</sup> Bersani and Phillips, *intimacies*, 85.

<sup>433</sup> *Mind-Body Dissociation*, 175. Zupančič also comments on *Alien*; writing specifically on *Alien 3*, she argues the suicide depicted in that film is a sacrifice that only strengthens the big Other and is thereby distinct from the “death” of the ethical act. *Ethics of the Real*, 83–85.

Lombardi details how “the analyst is thus called upon to be aware of his internal reactions even outside his office, bearing in mind that they can perfectly well show up when he least expects them. Well beyond our conscious will, the experience we have with our analysands accompanies us continuously, and the related emotional working through is continuous, active, and intense.”<sup>434</sup> In other words, this must be an active process for the analyst. The analyst must *actively* support the creation of a sinthome just as the dancer is actively supported while learning to dance.

Lacan declares, “For a circle to be thinkable, we have to flesh it out, that is, we have to give it consistency. We have to imagine that it is supported by something physical. Moreover, this is where we meet the following—only the body can be pondered.”<sup>435</sup> Thus, the analyst supports the formation of the sinthome by offering the physical support, or the apparatus, for the formation of the sinthome. The analyst’s function is therefore—this argument relying on Andrew J. Lewis’s exposition on the significance of writing for Joyce in grappling with his “psychotic fragmentation,” the “discarding [of] his body like a peel of a fruit,” and the “loss of function of the body as a container, a means of demarcating the inner from the outer”<sup>436</sup>—to provide that container until the analysand is able to do this alone. The analysand’s transferences to the analyst are not just feelings; they also include bodily sensations: the analyst must contain and hold these sensations until such time as the analysand is ready to reclaim them. Laing writes of how for the (potential) psychotic “external events no longer affect him in the same way as they do others: it is not that they affect him less; on the contrary, frequently they affect him more. It is frequently not the case that he is becoming ‘indifferent’ and ‘withdrawn’. It may, however, be that the world of his experience comes to be one he can no longer share with other people.”<sup>437</sup> Attuning, then, to that experience and approaching it with curiosity as if

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<sup>434</sup> *Mind-Body Dissociation*, 36–37.

<sup>435</sup> *Seminar 23*, 68.

<sup>436</sup> “Stabilisation of Ego Identifications in Psychosis,” *Analysis* 12 (2003): 68, 66, 67.

<sup>437</sup> *The Divided Self*, 43.

it were shareable with the psychotic becomes important for the creation of the *sinthome*. Miller explains how “all analysis can do is to accord to the pulsation of the speaking body in order to insinuate itself into the symptom. When one analyses the unconscious, the meaning of interpretation is the truth. When one analyses the speaking body, the meaning of interpretation is *jouissance*.”<sup>438</sup> Then, when one analyses the *dansêtre*,<sup>439</sup> one analyses the real of that speaking body, and the (non)meaning of interpretation is the *other jouissance*, the feminine *jouissance*.<sup>440</sup> The analyst must allow the analysand to understand or accept the real of his drives *as jouissance*, even if, as Chiesa writes, that means “pleasure in pain”<sup>441</sup> as the drives include the death drive. And that involves accepting the real as it arises, or in the case of the psychotic, as it in-sists in reality, something that dance does through its ability to contain the real in space and time.

#### 5.1.4 Lacan’s Place in Contemporary Theory

Although Lacan is often positioned as outside of contemporary analytic theory,<sup>442</sup> there are many ways that his theory contributes to today’s psychoanalytic thinking. In fact,

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<sup>438</sup> “The Unconscious and the Speaking Body,” trans. A. R. Price, paper presented at the 9th Congress of the World Association of Psychoanalysis Congress, Paris, France, April 2014, para. 34, <https://wapol.org/en/articulos/Template.asp?intTipoPagina=4&intPublicacion=13&intEdicion=9&intIdiomaPublicacion=2&intArticulo=2742&intIdiomaArticulo=2>.

<sup>439</sup> De Cuyper and Dulsster, “The Dancing Being.”

<sup>440</sup> If the *parlêtre* is tied to phallic *jouissance*, the *dansêtre* permits feminine *jouissance*.

<sup>441</sup> *Subjectivity and Otherness: A Philosophical Reading of Lacan* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 2007), 184. This pleasure in pain also incorporates the fact that the *sinthome* requires one to remain true to one’s desire, but with *objet a* at the centre of the knot, trying to fill the lack that is desire, one can only remain true to desire if one incorporates the full force of the real, which is also the pain of the analysand in the analyst’s discourse.

<sup>442</sup> However, Stephen A. Mitchell and Margaret J. Black describe Lacanian psychoanalysis as one of the “contemporary revisionist Freudian approaches,” meaning Lacan is categorized into contemporary psychoanalytic thought: although he keeps many of Freud’s concepts (in words),

Lacan can be seen as codifying what known or inherent in the arts and leading the way (offering the spaces to step into) for others.

For example, Ryan Engley and Todd McGowan, while discussing the real, propose that for Lacan (in *Seminar 22*), the real begins with the number three because every duality always makes present a third.<sup>443</sup> This third is easily analogous to potential space, or that which appears between the duality of mother-baby. This space only opens when one (mother-baby) becomes two (mother and baby). As previously discussed, Ogden takes up this idea to suggest the dream space is a potential space. Subsequently, Benjamin, likewise, takes up the concept of the third as a “quality of mental space.”<sup>444</sup> Benjamin, however, intentionally contrasts her concept of thirdness from Lacan’s, which she characterizes as “recognition through speech,”<sup>445</sup> yet the manner in which she describes this thirdness, to me, echoes Lacan’s ideas about the *sinthome*. In her view, thirdness is “a deep structure of accommodation to otherness,” and it “begins with the early non-

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he radically reconceptualizes them. *Freud and Beyond: A History of Modern Psychoanalytic Thought* (New York: Basic Books, 1995), xx; also see chapter 7.

<sup>443</sup> “The Real,” 1:05:00. Engley and McGowan’s discussion rests on McGowan’s unpublished and unavailable translation of *Seminar 22*. For Gallagher’s translation see Lacan, *Seminar 22*, X.

<sup>444</sup> “Intersubjectivity, Thirdness, and Mutual Recognition,” paper presented at the Institute for Contemporary Psychoanalysis, Los Angeles, 2007, 1, <https://icpla.edu/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Benjamin-J.-2007-ICP-Presentation-Thirdness-present-send.pdf>.

<sup>445</sup> “Intersubjectivity,” 3. This is also, I note, accepting the third is the symbolic, which directly contradicts Engley and McGowan (and Lacan’s) explicit argument that the third appears with the real. Benjamin, however, does explicitly state elsewhere that the concept of the third in psychoanalysis is indebted to Lacan. Jessica Benjamin, “Two-Way Streets: Recognition of Difference and the Intersubjective Third,” *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, 17, no. 1 (2006): 125, <https://doi.org/10.1215/10407391-2005-006>.

verbal experience of sharing a pattern, a dance, with another person.”<sup>446</sup> This is to say that for Benjamin, thirdness, is a space that accommodates otherness and is primordial nascent pre-symbolic thirdness (a primordial non-signifier in my understanding, in contrast to Lacan’s primordial signifier of the name-of-the-father, which Benjamin’s theory suggests would only arise) based on rhythmicity inherent in the one (of mother and baby); this is made manifest by how if the mother adjusts herself to accommodate the baby’s needs, the baby adjusts to match the mother’s needs.<sup>447</sup> Therefore, one could potentially see in dance a primordial (non-)signifier related to the nascent thirdness that arises when someone is teaching dance, and student and teacher each accommodate to the limits of the other’s body in order to create a shared dance. Scholars may often see Lacan’s (recognized) contribution to thirdness as related to the symbolic (i.e., the-name-of-the-father), but in relation to the *sinthome* and psychoanalysis with the psychotic, I think Lacan shows that he, too, offers an alternative concept of the third that relates to the *possibility* for the name-of-the-father. Benjamin’s primordial (non-signifier) is the necessary precondition for the thirdness she writes about as being a moral “law” that respects difference; dance’s primordial (non-)signifier would then be the (necessary) precondition for possibility, which I explore further in chapter six.

Furthermore, Winnicott may be the analyst best known for using and exploring play, but Lacan’s theory has a place for play too, one that is underacknowledged. Lacan and Winnicott worked at the same time, and Lacan’s *sinthome* hints at the importance of play. Whereas Winnicott forefronts on the possibilities of play explicitly, Lacan’s *sinthome* merely reveals Joyce’s play, thus raising the importance of *learning* to play. The inability to play has become an important theoretical concept with Mary Target and Peter Fonagy’s ideas about the pretend mode. They, like Lacan—and perhaps only thanks to Lacan—identify the importance of play. For them, it is a developmental construct that

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<sup>446</sup> “Intersubjectivity,” 16, 7.

<sup>447</sup> Benjamin, “Intersubjectivity,” 7–8.

later contributes to an ability to mentalize the thoughts, feelings, and motivations of oneself and others.<sup>448</sup>

Lacan does not receive fair play in psychoanalytic history or circles today. Analysts explicitly make a distinction (at least in theory) between contemporary psychoanalysis and Freudian or Lacanian psychoanalysis. Lacan resigned from the Paris Psychoanalytic Association in 1953 and, after forming the French Psychoanalytic Association, Lacan's own devotees abandoned him and formed yet another organization.<sup>449</sup> Today, many see Lacan as esoteric or eccentric and his works are more often read, or read more in depth, in theory classes than training classes. Psychoanalysts often malign him as hard to understand and irrelevant. Yet, many of the elements I see in Lacanian theory are elements that are central in contemporary psychoanalysis.<sup>450</sup>

Furthermore, Lacan proved himself to be ahead of neuroscience. The minimal knowledge that exists regarding, for example, schizophrenia's causes suggests that even if schizophrenia involves excess dopamine,<sup>451</sup> we are still in need of an explanation for *why*

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<sup>448</sup> Peter Fonagy and Mary Target introduced “pretend mode” in a series of papers. See Peter Fonagy and Mary Target, “Playing with Reality: I. Theory of Mind and the Normal Development of Psychic Reality,” *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 77 (1996): 217–33; Mary Target and Peter Fonagy, “Playing with Reality: II. The Development of Psychic Reality from a Theoretical Perspective,” *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 77 (1996): 459–79; Peter Fonagy and Mary Target, “Playing with Reality,” *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 88 (2007): 928–29, <https://doi.org/10.1516/4774-6173-241T-7225>.

<sup>449</sup> Monique David-Menard, “Lacanian Against Lacan,” trans. Brian Massumi, *Social Text* 6 (Autumn 1982): 86–87, <https://doi.org/10.2307/466618>.

<sup>450</sup> Accusations of Lacan as irrelevant or obscure contradict what I see as the genius of Lacan: you have to work to make sense of his seminars, and that “sense” is often an individual sense, which—to my mind—shows that when he presents his seminars, he is also offering (or attempting to offer) the experience of psychoanalysis.

<sup>451</sup> See Tomasella, et. al., “Deletion of Dopamine D<sub>2</sub> Receptors.”

dopamine exists in excess: if only ten percent of people with a first degree relative with schizophrenia also develop schizophrenia, then the reasons it develops are more complex than mere biology or genetics suggests. Lacan may not have had the biological information now available regarding psychosis, but his understanding of psychosis does not contradict the medical model. Additionally, contemporary psychoanalysts have postulated that play and psychosis are intricately linked.<sup>452</sup> Specifically, the idea is that psychosis is correlated with an inability to mentalize (or think about other people's and one's own states of mind), and this inability arises due to poor attachment or caregiver neglect.<sup>453</sup> In someone without psychosis, the secure attachment between caregiver and infant permits the development of mentalization by providing an environment in which one can play with self-experience.<sup>454</sup> What is not acknowledged in this literature about the value of play is Lacan's contribution. Lacan's concept of the *sinthome*, I suggest, is intimately connected to the ability to play (as are his ideas of the unconscious).

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<sup>452</sup> Fonagy and Target use their concept of pretend mode to understand psychosis. They note that in psychosis the child is unable to recognize that he or she can only "know" the inner states of one's own body. Being able to recognize this association is a developmental achievement linked to the ability to operate in "pretend mode," suggesting that play is a developmental milestone that if not reached, can have as one of the consequences an overwhelming feeling of "impingement by other minds." "Playing with Reality," 928–29.

<sup>453</sup> Benjamin K. Brent, et. al., "Mentalization-Based Treatment for Psychosis: Linking an Attachment-Based Model to the Psychotherapy for Impaired Mental State Understanding in People with Psychosis," *Israel Journal of Psychiatry*, 51, no. 1 (2014): 18–19, [https://doctorsonly.co.il/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/04\\_Mentalization-based.pdf](https://doctorsonly.co.il/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/04_Mentalization-based.pdf).

<sup>454</sup> Martin Debbané, "Attachment, Neurobiology, and Mentalizing along the Psychosis Continuum," *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience*, 10 (2016): 1–22, <https://doi.org/10.3389/fnhum.2016.00406>.



### 5.1.5 Sinthomic Discourse

Lacan also has a place in contemporary psychoanalysis if we recognize his study of Joyce as an uncovering of a new discourse, which I propose to term the sinthomic discourse.<sup>455</sup> I have been writing about the sinthome in relation to the ethical act. I have deliberately used that term because when we consider the psychotic does not operate in the same manner as the neurotic (due to the non-existence of the Other), then the sinthome cannot generate the psychoanalytic act *per se*, but it can lead to something analogous to it. The ethical act and the psychoanalytic act are both impossible acts without subjects of those acts, and both entail the creation of re-constituted subjects.<sup>456</sup> Additionally, both require a “moment of concluding” and leap of faith in which the analysand finds himself in an act for which its logical conclusion depends on factors that remain undetermined until the act itself.<sup>457</sup> They are acts that require the false certainty that the subsequent action will be “true,” or an action that is entirely a being. One, however, relies on a confrontation with the *objet a* (the psychoanalytic act), whereas the other (the ethical act) is broader and relies on the binding of the *objet a* as real.

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<sup>455</sup> As far as I can tell, Daniel Bristow coined the term *sinthomic discourse*, using it once to describe a part of what makes up Lacan’s style in leading his seminars: Bristow suggests Lacan’s style “combines the *work* of (his, i.e., Lacan’s) psychological practice and the *play* of his *sinthomic* discourse.” *Joyce and Lacan: Reading, Writing, and Psychoanalysis* (London, Routledge, 2017), 29. I am using the term differently, to describe not Lacan’s style, but a discourse that functions within the analytic clinic. My hypothesis is that the sinthomic discourse is *not* a discourse in addition to the Lacan’s four discourses. It changes the terms, as I explain subsequently. Rather, it either a sub-discourse of the analyst’s discourse—one that needs to pre-exist the analyst’s discourse for the psychotic analysand to reach the point of the end of analysis—or a broader discourse that has the analyst’s discourse as a more specific example.

<sup>456</sup> Both also provide access to the feminine *jouissance* in that they leave the subject enduring her own *jouissance*. In the psychoanalytic act, one must make his own something that was of the other, and in the ethical act, one comes to not be overwhelmed with the real.

<sup>457</sup> See Jacques Lacan, “Logical Time and the Assertion of Anticipated Certainty: A New Sophism,” *Newsletter of the Freudian Field* 2, no. 2 (1998): 4–22.

Lacan's four discourses of the master, university, hysteric, and analyst helped him articulate the subject's relationship to desire when structured by the symbolic and under the name-on-the-father. If the psychotic does not recognize or "know" there is a hole or constitutive lack but only experiences it, that is, if the psychotic does not cover over the hole caused by the real because the real has in-sisted too much, then the analyst *cannot* be the *objet a* for the (psychotic) analysand. If the analyst were to take up the position of the *objet a*, she would risk causing (or worsening) a psychotic break. Rather, the analyst needs a new position: the analyst has to take the place of the non-existent sinthome until such a time that the analysand can "act" and become his own sinthome through objectification, not as the *objet a* but through the embodiment of the feminine jouissance or that of (the universal/impossible) Woman, which allows the (psychotic) analysand to stop fearing the object (as opposed to wanting the object) but nonetheless to *be* the object in a way that avoids the object having to consume him or merge with him. To put that more clearly, for the pre-psychotic, the analyst is not the equivalent of the *objet a*, nor can she take the place of what appears in the gap (in the case for the sinthomic discourse this would be between the imaginary and the real, the feminine jouissance); rather, the analyst takes the place of the structure that exist around this gap: the sinthome. The analyst cannot take the place of the feminine *jouissance* because, of course, it does not exist; rather, the analyst takes the place of the sinthome<sup>458</sup> to bind the real and permit the identification with the impossible *jouissance*. Nonetheless, in performing as a sinthome, the psychoanalyst is the support for the subject just as the analyst is when occupying the position of the *objet a* for the analysand in the analytic discourse.

## 5.2 Implications for Psychoanalytic Practice

My argument then is important for psychoanalysis more generally because it declares that there *is* a place for psychoanalysis in contemporary society. As governments and people turn to quick fixes, what is often lost is the development of the safe space in which to experience the real. Intensive short-term dynamic psychotherapy (ISTDP), for example,

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<sup>458</sup> Lacan, *Seminar 23*, 166.

negates the necessity of both a safe space and a potential space. By regulating therapist behaviour (and removing any chance for spontaneous behaviour), ISTDP does not allow for ambiguity or play.<sup>459</sup> Furthermore, the theory behind the technique is that effective treatment relies on addressing unprocessed rage or guilt that are “unprocessed attachment trauma linked feeling.”<sup>460</sup> Although short-term therapies may offer immediate relief, they ignore individuality and often focus on returning people to functioning with a symbolic that operates according to the master signifier. Instead, what is needed (especially in the treatment of psychosis) is a process that recognizes and values the diversity of experience, seeking to attune to those experiences and help one bear them.

### 5.2.1 The Return of the Real (Dancing) Body

One of the significant implications for psychoanalysis in general, one that relates to a change that other theorists press for is the return of the body to psychoanalysis.<sup>461</sup> However, the call, given what dance and the *sinthome* show, should be for bringing in the real, the real as it plays out *within* the body, allowing a therapeutic experience without having to rely (solely) on words. Lacan focuses on language because that is how we make sense of the world.<sup>462</sup> When you come across something there is no language for, it can be confusing and overwhelming. We use language to create meaning and to make sense of things. It provides context and, therefore, creates a boundary. Joyce found language

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<sup>459</sup> For more on ISTDP see Allan Abbass, *Reaching Through Resistance: Advanced Psychotherapy Techniques* (Kansas City, MO: Seven Leaves Press, 2015), 247.

<sup>460</sup> Allan Abbass, email message to the author, July 27, 2017.

<sup>461</sup> Lombardi, for example, advocates for bringing the body into psychoanalysis because it is the resonances in the body that the analyst can (interpret and) mirror back to the analysand when speech fails. Lombardi, *Body-Mind Dissociation*.

<sup>462</sup> Lacan also focuses on language because Joyce dealt with the intrusion of imposed speech: through the “intermediary of writing.” *Seminar 23*, 79. It is not that Lacan does not recognize the real within Joyce’s works; it is merely, at least in my understanding, that Joyce used writing to reach this real, and Lacan’s concern in his seminar is what Joyce’s experience can tell us.

wanting, so he created his own. Dance *is not* language, yet it, too, can help contain the real, a real that is also revealed outside of the language, in movement, breath, the voice, rhythm, and tone. A real that the analyst may only recognize by attuning to the pulsations of the moving body, or the *dansêtre*. We do not have to know the real (and in fact cannot know the real), but we need to know it is manageable, that it will not completely overturn or destroy the symbolic.

Being an analysand requires an ability (or abilities) not everyone has at the best of times let alone when the real is impinging and in-sisting upon someone: one must delve in, understand, and integrate new information. If dance shows it is possible to provide a “safe” and contained access to the real, then psychoanalysis can learn from dance how to bring the real into the psychoanalytic clinic with those same parameters. In psychosis, a general integrative ability is missing. Dance provides the support for integrating the real, and an attunement to the real can help one comes to terms with that real as it manifests in the body. Kazimierz Dabrowski positions this as a developmental process: “the shaping of personality is a manifestation of the conscious incorporation of that which is conflicting, that which is ‘pathological,’ into the process of development.”<sup>463</sup> Dabrowski does not focus on the psychotic, but the importance of accepting conflict within the psyche is paramount and becomes the foundation for this theory of positive disintegration, a theory that outlines personality development.

Rose ties the idea of integration to aesthetics and asks, “Is it possible through aesthetic experience, either actively creating it or responding to it, to reach new level of integration of the personality without the intermediation of language?”<sup>464</sup> Dance shows this is

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<sup>463</sup> *Personality Shaping through Positive Disintegration* (Otto, NC: Red Pill Press, 2015), 234.

The real, however, is not pathological in the normal everyday sense of that word; rather, Dabrowski is referencing, as this quote shows, the conflicting developmental elements, which he argues serve a purpose and are “commonly indicative of positive human developmental possibilities.” *Ibid.*, 179.

<sup>464</sup> *Between Couch and Piano*, 130. Rose mentions responding to art, not just participating in it. Although outside the scope of this dissertation, there is a question related to dance about what it

possible, not, however, by “integrating” disparate elements of the personality to create a “whole” and thereby merely repeating the master’s discourse and reinforcing the phallic *jouissance*, by integrating the acceptance of a lack. The movement and rhythm (and their attendant affects), for example, of dance not only provide access to the real but also provide escape, through containment and the offering of alternative affective responses. It is this “escape” (into fantasy) that potentially allows the sinthome to mediate within the imaginary in order to connect the psyche.<sup>465</sup> By mediating within the imaginary, the sinthome avoids the concurrent belief in mastery that often accompanies the imaginary (as in the mirror stage) because this flight into fantasy (via dance, for example) also uses the real of the body without repressing that real and without that real becoming

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offers not just to the dancer but to the audience. One possibility is that the dance audience is a witness to the experience of the real. This is an idea that needs to be developed further; however, there is scant research into dance audiences. One of the few existing studies posits “dance constructs a close relationship with spectators, which involves their ‘inner dancer.’” Dee Reynolds, “‘Glitz and Glamour’ or Atomic Arrangement: What Do Dance Audiences Want?,” *Dance Research* 28, no. 1 (2010): 30, <https://doi.org/10.3366/drs.2010.0003>. Another suggests there is a relationship between audience engagement and “underlying neurophysiological events.” Corinne Jola, Shantel Ehrenberg, and Dee Reynolds, “The Experience of Watching Dance: Phenomenological-Neuroscience Duets.” *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences* 11 (2012): 18, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11097-010-9191-x>. Matthew Reason and Dee Reynolds suggest that audiences have kinesthetic responses to watching dance: they imagine oneself dancing and engaging with the effort; alternatively, they may see dance as escape, and have sensory and embodied responses to it. In other words, when we watch dance, we have kinesthetic experiences, and these experiences “can be described as an affect.” Matthew Reason and Dee Reynolds, “Kinesthesia, Empathy, and Related Pleasure: An Inquiry into Audience Experiences of Watching Dance,” *Dance Research* 42, no. 2 (2010): 72, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23266898>. What is missing is research into the relationship between the *dancer* and the audience.

<sup>465</sup> This, then, is the escape from the overwhelming aspects of the real that parallels how reality acts as an escape from the real for the neurotic as Žižek describes. See *How to Read Lacan*, 57.

overwhelming. Thus, dance can provide a “supported psyche.” When you dance, all attention must be directed to the dance. Dance provides a focus that limits the mind’s ability to dissociate or take flight into the imaginary.

Furthermore, dance creates material via play. LaMothe hypothesizes, “to dance is not only to invite movement impulses, it is to play with the movements”; this then links to creativity, a creativity that is first and foremost a creativity that affects each person individually as “we can and may grow a lived sense of how actively to invite impulses to move by attuning ourselves to the sensations occurring within and around us. Our experience of our (selves as) bodily selves shifts.”<sup>466</sup> Dance creates steps and movements, and it creates body sensations and expressions of the real, sensations and expressions felt within a defined space and time (i.e., that are contained) and that can be assimilated, integrated and experienced, not as a part of a whole, but as part of a fragmented self. This aligns with Lacan’s understanding of the impossibility of wholeness. Van Haute writes,

There is an ‘incommensurability’ between the human subject and its drives, such that it can never really live in peace with them, and in this sense, a harmonious relation with oneself and with one’s environment is denied to humans in principle. Neurosis and psychic suffering in general thus cannot simply be understood as difficulties in ‘adapting,’ since the relations of the subject to itself and to its environment are basically marked by the impossibility of adaptation—that is precisely what constitutes our humanity. This, in turn, implies that the aim of psychoanalytic cure cannot be thought of in terms of the repair of a lost harmony or lost coadaptation.<sup>467</sup>

Rather, the sense of “cure” in analysis is accepting and occupying a lack, not identifying with it; in other words, the “cure” is in accepting the lack of harmony and adaptation,

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<sup>466</sup> *Why We Dance*, 6, 5. She also adds, “*the movements we make make us.*” Ibid., 4; italics in the original.

<sup>467</sup> *Against Adaptation*, 287–88.

recognizing there will always be a split between the subject and the drives.<sup>468</sup> Dance, by teaching one how to co-exist with part of the real related to the drives can make other experiences of the real less unbearable. In this way, dance teaches resilience, resilience as understood by Lear, which requires hope in the face of loss.<sup>469</sup> Dance teaches us how to hold the real and because a dance always ends, it comes with an acknowledgment that things will not always be this way: the real can be experienced and lived with because it exists within a defined space and time. It ends. If it ends in dance, maybe it will not always intrude in life either. This permits the cultivation of resilience: both the tolerance to endure the in-sistence of the real (momentarily) and the hope that the in-sistence will pass, as well as the ability to flourish when the threat is no longer there. Thus, dance has something to teach us about how to accept that the contradictory and paradoxical parts of the self all belong to the same psyche: *this* is the integration of the acceptance of, rather than the identification with, a lack.

Bringing in the real and the acceptance of fragmentation therefore requires a different technique than what Lacan exercised when he kept patients waiting indefinitely or

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<sup>468</sup> The use of “cure” here does not suggest Lacan believes psychoanalysis can eliminate people’s problems. Lacan never endorsed the idea of a psychoanalytic cure. Rather, as Turkle writes, “According to Lacan’s way of looking at things, if anything that a medically oriented person would call a cure comes at all in psychoanalysis, it comes *par surcroît*, as a kind of bonus or secondary gain.” *Psychoanalytic Politics*, 115. To put that another way: “For Lacan, the goal of psychoanalysis is the bringing to awareness of underlying contradictions (what Lacan calls ‘the truth of the subject’), which can never be confused with the acceptance of social norms.” *Ibid.*, 145.

<sup>469</sup> See *Radical Hope: Ethics in the Face of Cultural Devastation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006). Resilience here is not just being able to endure suffering while it lasts but also maintaining an ability (or the courage) to envision new possibilities beyond the suffering.

abruptly ended their sessions.<sup>470</sup> The “bracketing” or “binding” or “containing” elements of psychoanalysis are not just a function of the other (the analyst) but of the environment: thus, the frame of psychoanalysis matters. Psychoanalysis often “works” not just because of the consistency of the analyst and the binding of the analysand’s “real” but also due to the consistency of the situation that reduces the force of said real. It also means Lacan is only capturing part of the situation when he states the psychoanalyst not psychoanalysis is the *sinthome*. The two necessarily co-exist. The analyst must act to contain the real of the analysand by holding the analysand’s unfelt and unspoken affects, sensations, and thoughts, but the environment of psychoanalysis, with its regular meetings and consistent frame, also provides support by creating a dedicated time and place in which it is safe to feel those sensations and affects. Bollas writes, regarding the non-psychotic who experiences disappointment, “Most people will rebound, but not all. Some are hijacked by a shock in the past that becomes an eternal present. The self is suspended, remaining on a constant watch, and this means they can no longer inhabit everyday reality. Past-present-future ceases to have any meaning. The temporal structures of being are lost”;<sup>471</sup> he also describes this as how “something in the psychotic spatio-temporal calibration of the self’s requirements for functioning is derailed.”<sup>472</sup> Thus, space-time becomes ever

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<sup>470</sup> Turkle, *Psychoanalytic Politics*, 98. I am not, here, castigating Lacan for his technique. There is (good) justification for his technique, and for some (the high-functioning neurotics that comprised most of his patients) his technique may have been useful (and necessary).

<sup>471</sup> *When the Sun Bursts*, 178–79.

<sup>472</sup> *When the Sun Bursts*, 178. Engley describes the real as what “curves signification around it” without being a part of that signification, and McGowan elaborates on this, positing that for Lacan the “change in space and time [when near a black hole] is the real.” Engley and McGowan, “The Real,” 00:50:21, 00:52:00. In other words, the in-sistence of the real is fundamental for the forms of *our* (i.e., human) pure intuition required for experience. Immanuel Kant argues that a pure intuition, consisting of space and time, exists and describes what is left of an object if we remove our cognitions and our sensibilities of it. This can be accessed *a priori* and, in principle, makes *a priori* knowledge possible. This intuition (in addition to the understanding) is necessary for us to have experience. Transcendental Aesthetic (as in the second edition), in *Critique of Pure*



more important: the psychotic needs “a restoration of human temporality.”<sup>473</sup> Lacan, however, did not always offer the environmental aspect of containment. He notoriously ended sessions whenever he wanted so as to prompt an analysand to recognize something of importance had just occurred, and he would keep analysands waiting for hours—if he saw them at all—so that they would not get too comfortable.<sup>474</sup> Bollas suggests that different analytic schools correspond to techniques that work best for different types of patients, with Lacanian psychoanalysis best suited to the obsessional<sup>475</sup> *not* the psychotic, despite Lacan’s attempt to understand psychosis theoretically.<sup>476</sup>

It may be that it is with regards to psychosis that psychoanalysis can learn most from dance. Dance allows one to experience affect, and “affect . . . represents an extremely

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*Reason*, trans. and ed. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood, (Cambridge: University Press, 1998), 172–92; Appendix on the Amphiboly of the Concepts of Reflection through the Confusion of the Empirical Use of the Understanding with the Transcendental, in *ibid.*, 366–83. The psychotic, however, gives us insight into this real, and how, in “possible worlds,” other pure intuitions could exist; however, given our restrictions of space and time, we cannot image what this experience would be like just as we cannot imagine the square root of negative one.

<sup>473</sup> Bollas, *When the Sun Bursts*, 179.

<sup>474</sup> Again, Lacan was not working only with psychotics; his variable sessions had an underlying theoretical foundation: “Lacan saw patients for varying amounts of time and sometimes for as little as ten minutes. His belief is strong that in analysis, nothing should be routine or predictable, and this includes the duration of a session.” Turkle, *Psychoanalytic Politics*, 98. Nonetheless, these “unorthodox practices” also precipitated his resignation from the International Psychoanalytic Association. David-Menard, “Lacanian Against Lacan,” 86.

<sup>475</sup> *Catch Them Before They Fall*, 110.

<sup>476</sup> This is not to say that Lacan nor current Lacanian analysts do not treat psychosis; I only intend to point out that this theory predominantly applies to neuroses.

deranging eruption of the real within the symbolic,”<sup>477</sup> suggesting that affect and the in-sistence of the real within psychosis are closely linked. Although some theorists argue Lacan does not have a fully developed theory of affects,<sup>478</sup> I would argue he does, one deeply embedded in this theory of the registers of the psyche, particularly in his understanding of the real: affects are irruptions of the real that we *attempt* to express via the symbolic. Thus, affects have an important role in the psyche and also in the arts. Slochower supports the idea of psychoanalytic technique needing to incorporate learnings from the arts when he names the task of psychoanalysis as “to approximate that affect which art produces, [to] ‘imitate’ . . . the vibrations and oscillation it sets in motion by the springs of the artist’s creativity.”<sup>479</sup> It is through creation—inherent in dance, and in art—that an analyst can work with someone who cannot articulate a symptom, when not everything has been repressed or can be ameliorated by “remembering, repeating, and working through.”<sup>480</sup> Analysis cannot change anything,<sup>481</sup> but what it can do is reveal

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<sup>477</sup> *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book 6: Desire and Its Interpretation*, trans. Cormac Gallagher, 97, <http://www.lacanireland.com/web/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/Book-06-Desire-and-its-interpretation.pdf>.

<sup>478</sup> For example, Jean Laplanche argues that Lacan rejects affect as it is subsumed by representation. *The Unconscious and the Id* (London: Rebus Press, 1999), 18.

<sup>479</sup> “Psychoanalysis and Art,” 3.

<sup>480</sup> Sigmund Freud, “Remembering, Repeating, and Working-Through: Further Recommendations on the Technique of Psycho-Analysis II,” in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume 12, (1911–1913): Case History of Schreber, Papers on Technique and Other Works*, ed. and trans. by James Strachey and Anna Freud, 145–56 (London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psychoanalysis, 1950).

<sup>481</sup> This may be a surprising comment to some who enter therapy expecting to be “cured,” but Lacan and Freud specifically focus on uncovering the unconscious and how that informs the present, how we respond to events in the present based on unconscious motivations informed by the past. Therefore, analysis cannot change anything—the past cannot be changed—analysis can, however, help someone see these unconscious motivations, and thereby the person can see things differently (or act differently) in the present.

what is, thereby shifting the relationship to our symptoms. Like the mirror in dance, analysis cannot change the past or who someone is; it can, however, lay bare what we cannot see and, therefore, cannot acknowledge about ourselves. And, paradoxically, laying that bare, changes not just the analysand, but also the analyst.

### 5.2.2 Extending Tradition

One can also see psychoanalysis, if we focus on play from Winnicott *through* Lacan to the present day, as a more formal way to bring to people what most cultures have always known: the importance of play in learning and existing within a culture subsumed under a primordial signifier. Psychoanalysis may formulize and formalize these traditional ideas, but the element of play found in dance and other cultural traditions, has *always* been helpful and a part of “healing rituals.” Therefore, psychoanalysis is not esoteric or “unreal,” but an ontological practice that is deeply connected to the real.

## 5.3 Implications for Dance

Looking at dance through a psychoanalytic lens does not just offer new insights for psychoanalysis but also for dance. Dance as seen as embodying the *sinthome* in its creating connections between the real, the imaginary, and the symbolic encourages a reconceptualization of dance, of where it fits among the arts, and of its aesthetic value.

### 5.3.1 Dance as an Art

The biggest implication may be for dance theory. Dance is no longer “ineffable,”<sup>482</sup> and by seeing dance and its relation to the Lacanian concepts of the imaginary, symbolic, and real, there is now a language for talking *about* dance, even if that language is not as precise as one might like. This does not mean dance is communication; dance is still (silent) movement bounded within space and time, yet dance does express something, something that changes with each dancer, but something everyone can relate to and therefore something one can communication *about*: it expresses elements of the real in a

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<sup>482</sup> Maxine Sheets-Johnstone, *The Phenomenology of Dance* (London: Dance Books, 1996), 50.

manageable way, limiting those elements and playing with them to reduce the effects of them by bringing the paradoxes of the subject to the fore as dance threatens a disbalance,<sup>483</sup> which is one way dance also incarnates Lacan's real. Turkle writes, "trying to describe the real in words is itself a paradox because definitionally the real lies beyond language. It is defined within the linguistic system as something beyond and outside of it."<sup>484</sup> The real and dance can both be talked about within the symbolic; nonetheless the symbolic will always fail to fully account for both.

Dance, therefore, rightfully belongs within the arts and can—and should—receive the same attention the other arts received. Dance can move beyond its marginal status because while all the arts have the same possibilities for being used as a *sinthome*,<sup>485</sup> none of the other arts inherently contain the elements that exist within dance purely by definition: the intertwining of the imaginary, symbolic, and real amid a structure that limits the real while teaching one to play with that real. This intertwining thereby allows one to inhabit the potential (middle) space between the imaginary and real that holds the paradox of pleasure and fear.<sup>486</sup>

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<sup>483</sup> Brandstetter, "Dis/Balances."

<sup>484</sup> *Psychoanalytic Politics*, 58–59.

<sup>485</sup> Jacques-Alain Miller, for example, asks readers to consider "whether music, painting, the fine arts, have their Joyce." "The Unconscious and the Speaking Body," para. 29.

<sup>486</sup> Vocal music is the art that comes the closest. It, too, uses the real as it is played out in the body via the vibrations of its vocalizations. Whether vocal music contains the possibilities of the *sinthome* is something that I do not explore here but that nonetheless deserves some thought. Dolar might suggest vocal music differs because this is the voice as "the core of a fantasy that the singing voice might cure the wound inflicted by culture, restore the loss that we suffered by the assumption of the symbolic order." *A Voice and Nothing More*, 31. He elaborates on this in a footnote: music "takes the object of the drive as the object of immediate enjoyment. . . Its aesthetic pleasure reinserts enjoyment into the boundaries of the pleasure principle." *Ibid.*, 197n12.

### 5.3.2 Aesthetics

For aesthetics, since dance incorporates the three registers (even if unconsciously), dance therefore also encompasses humanity or what it means to be not just the subject of an analytic discourse that Lacan attributes to the being that “speaks without knowing it,”<sup>487</sup> but also an individual subject. Dance is not more “animal” than the other arts or merely communication via metaphor, for example,<sup>488</sup> its value is that it takes who we are and elevates it to an art—strengthening those bonds that keep us human. It is something beautiful that at its core reflects who we are—all of who we are, including reflecting the lack within the psyche and our internal paradoxes—and its reflection of the fragmentation of the subject forces a confrontation with this fact in a marked way that demonstrates and reveals dance can operate as a sinthome. The beauty of dance then, and its aesthetic value, can be found not in its lines or visual appeal but in dance’s connection to the real: the dancer, while dancing, experiences that which scares us, which threatens to overwhelm us, and for which we have no words. When watching dance, we therefore see in this “other”—the dancer—this encounter with the real as it is turned into something manageable.

### 5.3.3 Dance as an Embodied Sinthome

Dance cannot be a symptom for the psychotic because that would mean it relates to the name-of-the-father or the primordial metaphor, yet the psychotic has foreclosed on that metaphor. Dance can nonetheless help knit a sinthome. A sinthome is “is what is singular to each individual,”<sup>489</sup> and therefore, the sinthome does not rely on metaphor. Dance, likewise, does not rely on a primordial metaphor that structures the symbolic, yet it can

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<sup>487</sup> *Seminar 19*, 119. Lacan goes on to remark, “I speak with my body and I do so unbeknownst to myself. Thus I always say more than I know.” *Ibid.* In other words, he relates the body to speech act of parapraxis or aligns movement with act of speaking, which reveals the unconscious via “slips.”

<sup>488</sup> Rohman, *Choreographies of the Living*; Whittock, “The Role of Metaphor in Dance.”

<sup>489</sup> Lacan, “Joyce the Symptom,” 147.

work to connect the registers of the psyche and bring one to a new relationship with the subject. The subject of the dance, then, can learn to exist *in* reality, the world, without the expectation of an attendant mastery.

My argument also suggests not just that dance can help someone create a *sinthome*, but that dance *is* that *sinthome*. For example, John Joseph Martin writes of dance both as play and performance and suggests play is not wasteful: “in play, aside from its immediate satisfactions, the child learns skills and adaptations, both physical and emotional, which develop enormously his capacity for meeting the problems of practical life.”<sup>490</sup> In other words, play is helpful and healing. The idea of dance as healing, therefore, is not new. But the idea of dance as a *sinthome* is a different concept. Dance does not *heal* or create a wholeness wherein something was lacking; dance, rather, allows one to exist with the lack, de-centring the psyche, so that one has a different relationship to it. It does not heal in the sense that it can fill, undo, or cover over a hole any more than dance can heal a physical wound. Rather, dance permits existence despite those wounds and allows one to come to terms with them, so one is not constantly overwhelmed by reality.

Lacan says the site of the *sinthome* matters, that it must be at the site of the rupture. As seen in Joyce’s works or even in Schreber’s case, the real, rather than being restrained by the symbolic law (the-name-of-the-father) erupts and pours forth into the symbolic as fragmented sentences, neologisms, etc. The focus on the symbolic effects, however, discounts that psychosis is also characterized by depersonalization and not feeling one is or has a body—in other words, the real infringes on the imaginary as well. As I have argued, Joyce’s *sinthome* relied on the real and its effects in the body; therefore, in knotting his *sinthome*, he brought the three registers together by tying the real to the imaginary that threatened to slip away, only thereby keeping the symbolic intact. Furthermore, weaving, for Lacan, is a part of the process Joyce undertakes in his writing, using text to weave a *sinthome* that holds the registers of his psyche together: “A text, as

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<sup>490</sup> *The Dance in Theory* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Book Co., 1989), 11.

the name indicates, can only be woven by tying knots.”<sup>491</sup> Joyce, in tying knots, therefore weaves a *sinthome*, weaving his own world. Although Lacan focuses on text, Valéry notes, “the dancer is in another world . . . one that she weaves.”<sup>492</sup> Dancers, like Joyce, weave their own *imaginary* worlds; therefore, the dancer who weaves her own world may also fashion a *sinthome* and create the possibility of existing within the symbolic but outside of the phallic function. It takes us beyond the phallic *jouissance* in that in dance “we are always exceeded by that work, that it is always in excess of our comprehension, and this is its joy and its terror.”<sup>493</sup> Dance, therefore, epitomizes Zupančič’s understanding of the death drive of the “excess of life” that exists within life.<sup>494</sup> But being excess, and in excess of our comprehension, may seem to suggest we can never grasp dance: it appears to fall into the fallacy Best illustrates in splitting the rational and emotional.<sup>495</sup> Yet, it is really drawing out that dance is reaching towards “what exceeds us” while remaining firmly bound to reality, bound within the limits of time and space, and bound “to matter [and] the human body with its limited manoeuvrability.”<sup>496</sup>

Furthermore, if writing is seen as “playing” with presence, and absence, and the “delight-in-motion of dance” is like the “play-of-words” in literature,<sup>497</sup> then Joyce not only weaves a *sinthome* but also embodies movement in his texts via the constant back-and-

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<sup>491</sup> *Seminar 19*, 150.

<sup>492</sup> “Philosophy of the Dance,” 70.

<sup>493</sup> MacKendrick, “Embodying Transgression,” 150.

<sup>494</sup> *Why Psychoanalysis*, 55.

<sup>495</sup> “Aesthetics of Dance,” 13.

<sup>496</sup> Huizinga, *Homo Ludens*, 166.

<sup>497</sup> MacKendrick, “Embodying Transgression,” 143.

forth or circling in on itself apparent in his use of language.<sup>498</sup> Therefore, Joyce is not writing, but employing words to contact the elements more readily available via dance: he uses words to mirror himself, to play with the real as it appears in the symbolic and as he experiences it in the body, and to bind these experiences so they do not have to exist by insisting upon him. He inhabits the potential space of fear-pleasure that is characteristic of the paradox that is play. Lacan states, “the equivocal is all we have as a weapon against the symptom.”<sup>499</sup> If the equivocal—the expression capable of having more than one meaning—is a weapon against the symptom, then dance is a bodily instantiation of the equivocal as *sinthome*: an embodied *sinthome* as weapon against the irruption of the real, seen in the paradoxes that mean a definitive theory of dance involves an elusiveness, which nevertheless entails “releasing the subject from his fixed position.”<sup>500</sup> Dance, then, is an embodied practice of putting the oscillation between being and meaning to work. Zupančič notes that human condition is “the zone where the two realms [of biological and symbolic or nature and culture] overlap” and cautions that the crucial element of this is that intersection of the realms “is generative of both sides that overlap in it.”<sup>501</sup> She goes on to add that “the nature of this intersection is such that we can precisely not see it as an intersection; we cannot put a finger on it and say: *Voilà*, it is here that ‘nature is becoming ‘culture.’”<sup>502</sup> Perhaps this idea is best illustrated with dance: dance is often believed not to have an ontology as it derives from the “rhythm within us,” yet dance *is* (also) culture. There is no point of dance as nature turning into culture: it is both concepts and the difference between the two. Crystal Pite, in a 2019

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<sup>498</sup> *Finnegans Wake*, for example, ends at the beginning. James Joyce, *Finnegans Wake* (London: Faber and Faber, 1957). Perhaps the novel is circling around an emptiness, the same way that De Cuyper and Dulsster suggest characterizes dance. “The Dancing Being.”

<sup>499</sup> *Seminar 23*, 9.

<sup>500</sup> Prieto, “Writing the Subject’s Knot,” 181.

<sup>501</sup> *The Odd One In*, 214.

<sup>502</sup> *The Odd One In*, 215



commission for the Paris Opera Ballet entitled *Body and Soul*,<sup>503</sup> offers a dance that embraces the intersection between nature and culture; this dance shows paradoxes, meaninglessness, and play all by taking, as she explains in a pre-talk to the filmed version of her dance, a “scrap of text”<sup>504</sup> and transforming it into a theme of conflict and connectedness that runs throughout the work. She, in effect, illustrates the paradoxical situation that the *sinthome* permits: the holding of seemingly incompatible ideas simultaneously. The same movement or the same basic idea of movement (e.g., left, right, left, right, left; chin, forehead, chest; neck, mouth, hip; etc.) has multiple manifestations in the body: In part one of her work, conflict predominates, conflict between individuals, between groups, etc.; at 33:45 the external conflict becomes external connection. At 43:40, that conflict and connection is moved to the internal. The show notes describe this by stating: “as the performance progresses, the script’s meaning morphs and deepens with each iteration,”<sup>505</sup> or as Charlie Smith writes, “*Body and Soul* explores how the meaning of these words can change depending on how they are embodied by the dancers and presented by the narrator. In one scene, Pite says, the words play out like a large protest scene. By the third section, the dancers are swarming as nonhuman creatures in the natural world.”<sup>506</sup>

Pite juxtaposes conflict and connectedness explicitly in her talk, yet the tension between the two is evident throughout the movements: even the conflict shows connection in the repeated and shared movements. The beauty of her work comes in the entwining of the

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<sup>503</sup> Crystal Pite, *Body and Soul*, performed by the Paris Opera Ballet, recorded November 2019 at Palais Garnier, Paris, streamed online February 17–23, 2021.

<sup>504</sup> *Body and Soul: In Collaboration*, pre-talk, produced by Collide Entertainment and Kidd Pivot, directed by Tommy Pascal (Vancouver, BC), film, streamed online February 17–23, 2021.

<sup>505</sup> National Arts Centre, “Crystal Pite’s *Body and Soul*,” show notes, <https://nac-cna.ca/en/event/28009>.

<sup>506</sup> “Crystal Pite’s *Body and Soul*, Created with Paris Opera Ballet, Coming to Canadian Screens,” *The Georgia Straight*, February 10, 2021, <https://www.straight.com/arts/crystal-pites-body-and-soul-created-with-paris-opera-ballet-coming-to-canadian-screens>.

two. What was once a mechanized, robotic like movement of conflict becomes imbued with a sense of humanity, or human connection. Furthermore, as all movements come from that same “scrap of text,” the moments of their disconnection nonetheless partake of a connection.

Pite is explicit about her goals:

As a creator, I am mainly inspired by the same two things: conflict and connectedness. And conflict provides a kind uh of vital tension. So I’m trying to harness the thing that emerges when two contrasting ideas collide. And this can happen within a body or between two bodies or even in the very subject of a work. But connectedness is what I’m truly seeking. All the things that I make comes out of the desire to connect with people and to connect people to each other. So this performance—Body and Soul—explores conflict and connectedness through what I like to think of as a series of duets. They’re duets between two individuals. Duets between two groups of people. Duets between an individual and a group. Duets between two beings. Duets between physical language and spoken language. Duets between body and soul.<sup>507</sup>

Her reference to herself as a creator is notable here as well. She later adds, “The things that we make, they change us, they deepen us, and they teach us. So, it’s so important for me to have these artistic experiences, to create things with people that I love and that I trust and that I admire.”<sup>508</sup> I suggest Pite, in bridging conflict and connectedness and in providing a place both elements can co-exist, creates a sinthomic dance. Her work, therefore, exposed how the sinthome, as a creation, also changes and deepens its creators.

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<sup>507</sup> *Body and Soul: In Collaboration*, 2:50-4:00.

<sup>508</sup> *Body and Soul: In Collaboration*, 15:35-15:58.

Verhaeghe and Declercq propose the sinthome is a *creatio ex nihilo* of “a new signifier” created “as it builds upon the lack of the Other.”<sup>509</sup> The sinthomic dance, likewise, does not offer knowledge or purport to explain a symptom or reality; rather, it *creates* content.

Bersani refers to an analytic exchange between Lacan and Suzanne Hommel in which a gesture from Lacan provides a defining moment in Hommel’s analysis.<sup>510</sup> Bersani then comments on this moment’s lack: Lacan does not offer an analysis, nor does the gesture “cure” Hommel of her symptom. Lacan does, however, *add* a physical element.<sup>511</sup>

Bersani interprets this gesture (as does Hommel) as therapeutic in that it offered warmth “and the sense of having been the vehicle for a moral interpellation” to everyone.<sup>512</sup> This, however, is the meaning the analysand and Bersani add to the gesture. The gesture itself, as Bersani admits, does not give Hommel knowledge, nor does it contain a meaning inherent within itself. It is a gesture that creates a content.

Hommel received solace from this gesture, and therefore, with dance as a way of creating content, and by so doing potentially fashioning a sinthome, the person who stands to gain the most, at least from a practical perspective, is the dancer who opens to new possibilities regarding the self and may shift one’s (bodily) self as LaMothe writes.<sup>513</sup> Nonetheless, arguing that dance contains all of the elements that are necessary for a sinthome does not change dance. Seeing dance’s relation to the sinthome only allows one to appreciate dance more fully. Furthermore, this does not mean a dancer is healthier than

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<sup>509</sup> “Lacan’s Analytic Goal,” 20.

<sup>510</sup> *Receptive Bodies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018), 51–53; see also Hommel’s account: “A Story From Lacan’s Practice,” LacanOnline, YouTube video, 01:02, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player\\_embedded&v=VA-SXCGwLvY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=VA-SXCGwLvY). The gesture from Lacan is also an example of reflecting in a marked way an analysand’s unconscious communication: Hommel refers to “Gestapo,” and Lacan turns it into “geste à peau.”

<sup>511</sup> Bersani, *Receptive Bodies*, 53.

<sup>512</sup> *Receptive Bodies*, 53.

<sup>513</sup> *Why We Dance*, 5.

others nor does it mean a dancer will or must create a sinthome. The plethora of fictional depictions of dance and its relation to psychosis or madness<sup>514</sup> may also be capturing something true of dance. Dance is often related to madness, and previously mentioned, and Nijinsky did succumb to psychosis.<sup>515</sup> While dance contains the elements necessary for a sinthome, dance is not sufficient if one cannot or will not engage those elements.

When someone does engage those elements, however, dance becomes a sinthome, an embodied sinthome that is a singular solution. Sergei Polunin offers a good example of how dance can work individually to help someone maintain a grip on reality when the real threatens too much. Polunin, a Ukrainian dancer, as a child moves with his mother across Ukraine for dance, then to England to attend the Royal Ballet School.<sup>516</sup> Dance was thrust upon him by his mother (to offer him opportunity beyond poverty), and he suggests dance is ambivalent for him: he “hated the fact that [he] had to dance” and describes “feeling like a prisoner to your body, to the urge to dance,” yet he also describes dance as “who I am.”<sup>517</sup> Polunin is known as the “bad boy” of ballet—or at least *was* known as that.<sup>518</sup> His time at the Royal Ballet—wherein he became the

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<sup>514</sup> For example, in *Black Swan*, (ballerina) Nina manifests psychosis. Similarly, *The Red Shoes* ends with (ballerina) Vicky jumping in front of a train.

<sup>515</sup> As did Joyce’s daughter, Lucia.

<sup>516</sup> His move to the ballet school in Kiev (from Kherson) at age nine broke apart his family: to afford the school, his mother moved with him while his father (who drew the short straw) moved to Portugal to work for tuition money. As Polunin notes in his documentary, “I didn’t see him for six years.” *Dancer*, directed by Steve Cantor (London: Sundance Selects, BBC Films, and Magnolia Mae Films, 2016), DVD, 00:19:55.

<sup>517</sup> *Dancer*, 00:46:20, 00:47:20, 00:10:04.

<sup>518</sup> See, as a brief sampling, Annabel Sampson, “Ballet’s Baddest Boy Sergei Polunin on Why He Feels ‘Free’ at Last,” *Tatler*, May 27, 2021, <https://www.tatler.com/article/sergei-polunin-dancer-interview-autobiography-free-a-life-in-images-and-words>; Elizabeth Zimmer, “Dancer Ogles and Celebrates Sergei Polunin, the Bad Boy of Ballet,” *The Village Voice*, September 15, 2016, <https://www.villagevoice.com/2016/09/15/dancer-ogles-and-celebrates-sergei-polunin-the-bad>

youngest ever principal dancer—is filled with unravelling. He parties too hard, dances high on drugs, and is known for being unpredictable and missing rehearsals. He also internally suffers. He knows he needs help,<sup>519</sup> and his friends comment, “he’s always suffered silently” and note that when he realized his dancing would not bring his parents together, “things started to slowly crumble in his head.”<sup>520</sup> At the same time, those around him see his dancing, and the attention it gave him, as “a kind of substitute for what he couldn’t get because he was away from home.”<sup>521</sup> He quits the Royal Ballet at twenty-two, and ends up in Russia, where he has to start all over again. He again suffers and fights with himself every time he goes on stage, eventually deciding to quite dance altogether, with his video of dancing to “Take Me to Church” intended to be the end of his dancing.<sup>522</sup> Yet, two months later he dances again, and appears to grow progressively more psychotic: he tattoos Vladimir Putin on his chest, he tweets about drugs and sex, tweets his support of Putin and Donald Trump; he appears to unravel more and more. Why do I think dancing is his *sinthome*, if he enacts a mental breakdown in the public eye? Because he comes back: despite the real threatening to overwhelm him and the moments when he shows how overwhelmed he is, he finds a way to capture and bind the real. Dance, for him, functions the way the interpersonal or intrapersonal dyad does to

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-boy-of-ballet/; Roslyn Sulcas, “Sergei Polunin, Ballet’s Bad Boy, Has a Change of Heart,” The New York Times, September 1, 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/04/arts/dance/sergei-polunin-ballets-bad-boy-has-a-change-of-heart.html>.

<sup>519</sup> *Dancer*, 00:26:55, 00:35:16.

<sup>520</sup> *Dancer*, 00:26:55, 00:35:00.

<sup>521</sup> *Dancer*, 00:35:34.

<sup>522</sup> See David LaChapelle, dir., “Sergei Polunin, ‘Take Me to Church,’ by Hozier,” chor. Jade Hale-Christofi, February 9, 2015, video, 04:07, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c-tW0CkvdDI>. Significantly for my argument, the choreography of “Take Me to Church,” done by his friend, is intended to capture what Polunin has been through and his torment. 01:02:36.

produce Bion's alpha function. The proof: Polunin is currently in the process of having his Putin tattoo removed; he has become a father himself; and he has found that place where he can exist with the real.

We can easily read Polunin as akin to Joyce. Polunin himself talks about dancing as an attempt to bring his family back together, and he hid his lack of a family from his fellow dancers.<sup>523</sup> He is tormented in ways that he could recognize—explicitly stating “I want some help”<sup>524</sup>—but could not (initially) manage. Additionally, as quoted previously, he feels a prisoner to dance and his body. He suffers a setback when he comes to realize—like Nina in *Black Swan*—that ballet “has been his mother's choice, not his.”<sup>525</sup> Yet despite the torment and suffering, he cannot let dance go. He walks away only to be drawn back to it.<sup>526</sup> The entire experience threatens to overwhelm him, yet he is driven to continue. He comes to see the division in himself in a new way that allows him to play with the real—showcasing it through his art—and, thereby, containing it. The other correlation to Joyce is that he shows just how difficult it is to establish a *sinthome*. To be psychotic is to have (and receive) information without meaning; this intrusion of the real threatens to overwhelm one, but to *make* meaning is a fraught endeavour as well: once something has meaning, there is the possibility of the loss of that meaning, which can likewise be overwhelming. Both Joyce and Polunin depict the inherent terror of this duality, and through their different arts, show how to stand in the space between meaning and loss of meaning. The *sinthome* created through their *efforts* helps them to mitigate the bind of all or none: their art offers the *possibility* of meaning, without ascribing a

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<sup>523</sup> *Dancer*, 00:22:45, 00:27:13.

<sup>524</sup> *Dancer*, 00:35:16.

<sup>525</sup> Julie Kavanagh, “Sergei Polunin's Dance Mom: What Happened when Galina Polunina Finally Saw Her Son Dance,” *The New Yorker*, September 29, 2016, <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/culture-desk/sergei-polunins-dance-mom>.

<sup>526</sup> Polunin thinks in leaving, he can “get a normal life”: “I thought I could just walk away . . . it would be easy.” *Dancer*, 01:04:46, 01:11:29.

meaning. Mary Adams pens that “placing *Finnegans Wake* in a timeless dream world gave Joyce space, but within a carefully boundaried structure.”<sup>527</sup> Space, that is, to escape and bind his psychosis. For Polunin, that space arises in his dance. The decision to give up dance and the dancing of his madness in “Take Me to Church” start off a process that culminates in the dance as his *sinthome*.

### 5.3.4 Dance Therapy

There is a final implication, one not related specifically to either dance or to psychoanalysis, yet one which can easily be overlooked unless and until these two fields are brought together. The current realm of “dance therapy” is irrelevant—and possibly harmful, at least for the psychotic. Dance therapy as it currently exists is focused primarily on self-directed movement, yet it is not “movement therapy” that is important (or the most important) for the psychotic<sup>528</sup> but the learning, play, mirroring, and rhythm as well as the concomitant binding (in space and time) that comes with dance. Movement is necessary, for example with its associated rhythms, but it is not sufficient. Also important is having a structure that not only allows focus but also provides a container. Occupational therapy (OT) as used to treat PTSD after the world wars incorporated this aspect. Although occupational therapy did not (necessarily) use dance, it did employ basket weaving and other artistic or craft pursuits, pursuits that require active teaching and supervision, pursuits that relate to the body and its attendant affects, not just to

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<sup>527</sup> “The Beauty of *Finnegans Wake*. Remembering and Re-Imagining: A Return to the Father,” *British Journal of Psychotherapy* 34, no. 3 (2018): 467, <https://doi.org/10.1111/bjp.12379>.

Adam’s article is also useful in thinking about psychosis in relation to mirroring and the *sinthome*’s potential connection to Kristeva’s *chora*: Adams notes the recurrence of the mother image in Joyce’s works and his lack of acknowledgement of her (in reality) after her death.

<sup>528</sup> Dance therapy is not ostensibly for the psychotic, so one may accuse me of offering undeserved criticism to dance therapy. In reality, however, dance therapy is used for related disorders such as eating disorders, PTSD, and dementia.

thoughts.<sup>529</sup> While dance, on my argument, is still the best medium for this type of activity, OT (as originally conceived) understood the purpose of structured learning that incorporated play, an element that has been lost today (not only in OT but also in dance therapy, art therapy, music therapy, etc.) Today, the main element of OT and other artistically based therapies is the play element; however, in dance when considered as an art rather than as movement, there is an intention that is missing from play therapies. Kathleen Matuska writes of the evolution of OT, arguing that currently, the occupational therapist “helps her clients think about ways to engage in the occupations they once enjoyed and focuses her intervention on their goals.”<sup>530</sup> In other words, OT has gone back to the basic idea of incorporating the “self” of a person, but without the emphasis on the teaching and support that accompanied the original conception of OT. Like much of our world, the “occupation” is focused more on how someone can be productive or return to previous functioning than about arousing “new lines of thought,”<sup>531</sup> or accepting a lack. Yet it is arousing new lines of thought that *is* the creativity needed in the world. Among psychotherapists today (and the governments who regulate and often fund them) there is dispute regarding the best treatments. Often people focus on finding effective short-term therapies that return people to “proper” functioning based on rating scales, yet this this is

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<sup>529</sup> Susan E. Tracy, writing in 1910 of the precursor to occupational therapy—“invalid occupation,”—posits, “perhaps the most essential element in the success either of an occupation room in an institution or in the use of manual work as a therapeutic agent with the individual patient in the home or elsewhere outside of institutions is the teacher on the one hand, or the nurse on the other. Leadership and example are necessary. . . . It is futile to put work into the hands of the sick and expect them to create an interest in it.” *Studies in Invalid Occupation: A Manual for Nurses and Attendants* (Boston: Witcomb and Barrows, 1910), 5.

<sup>530</sup> “Three Generations of Occupational Therapy,” *OT Practice*, November 20, 2010, 11–12.

<sup>531</sup> Tracy, *Studies in Invalid Occupation*, 2.



the “displacement of flesh and blood references.”<sup>532</sup> The focus on evidence-based therapies also erases the creative element in psychoanalysis, which permits flexibility to turn chaos into something new, something that is essential when society is becoming psychotic.

Although OT as originally conceived may not have the effectiveness studies to back it up like today’s practice does, it developed out of “a concept of free and pleasant and profitable *occupation—including recreation and any form of helpful enjoyment as the leading principle*,” suggesting that there was something specific to this content that mattered.<sup>533</sup> The difference, however, between these forms of therapy and the ideas originally behind occupational therapy is that the learning aspect is lost. Adolf Meyer emphasises that occupational therapy (during his time) is “all a problem [for the therapist] of being true to one’s nature and opportunities and of *teaching* others to do the same with themselves.”<sup>534</sup> The loss of this teaching is also seen in the developmental trajectory of music therapy or art therapy, for example, or even, as it pertains to my topic, dance therapy or therapies that involve writing. There is no longer any guidance; there is

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<sup>532</sup> Evelyn Fox Keller, *Secrets of Life Secrets of Death: Essays on Language, Gender and Science* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 52. Keller’s looking at science through psychoanalysis and arguing that science removes the female and plays out the male (phallic) fantasy.

<sup>533</sup> Adolf Meyer, “The Philosophy of Occupation Therapy,” *Archives of Occupational Therapy* 1, no. 1 (1922): 2, [https://journals.lww.com/ajpmr/Citation/1922/02000/The\\_Philosophy\\_of\\_Occupation\\_Therapy.1.aspx](https://journals.lww.com/ajpmr/Citation/1922/02000/The_Philosophy_of_Occupation_Therapy.1.aspx). Meyer goes on to suggest that what is specific to the content is a rhythm, a (defined) time, and success in a *finished* production. *Ibid.*, 8. He also postulates that within a “frame of rhythm and order or time,” the occupational therapist “naturally begins with a natural simple regime of *pleasurable* ease, the creation of an orderly *rhythm* in the atmosphere . . . perhaps with some music and restful dance and play, and with some glimpses of activities which any one can hope to achieve and derive satisfaction from.” *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>534</sup> “The Philosophy of Occupation Therapy,” 7; my italics.

no longer a container; there is no longer the binding of space and time.<sup>535</sup> MacKendrick writes, within dance “stillness plays the role that silence plays for literary language. Movement is ‘joined’ to movement in a more *intentional*, self-conscious way than in our less attentive everyday somatic motion; yet it is precisely this jointure that allows division—into steps (sometimes, in classical ballet, formally identifiable), into shorter phrases and longer variations.”<sup>536</sup> “Free movement” (or “free expression” if outside the dance therapy construct) already requires a connected psyche. If one of the rings of the psyche is threatening to leave, thereby risking the dismantling of the entire psychic apparatus, then free movement may be too real; if one does not have what Joyce had—a pre-existing ability to play—then one cannot move freely. There is nothing to act as a container and nothing to stop the in-sistence of the real, so in these cases, free movement cannot help and may even harm. Rather than non-directed free movement and play (the current understanding rests on false premises), learning how to play by watching or following others, having a “safe” place to begin to play and to come recognize and accept our internal divisions and lack are what matter most.

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<sup>535</sup> GoodTherapy describes “expressive arts therapy” as a therapy in which one is encouraged “to explore their responses, reactions, and insights through pictures, sounds, explorations, and encounters with an art process. . . . A person who utilizes expressive arts therapy is not required to have any artistic ability. Rather, it is through the use of the individual’s senses that the imagination can process, flourish, and support healing.” “Expressive Arts Therapy,” GoodTherapy, last modified July 27, 2015, <https://www.goodtherapy.org/learn-about-therapy/types/expressive-arts-therapy>. This definition reflects the other various definition across different art therapy organizations. It does not mention creation through active learning (requiring active teaching). If we think of Winnicott’s squiggle game with children, he leads the activity; the game is a *structured* form of play that he participates in himself to help his patients learn to play.

<sup>536</sup> “Embodying Transgression,” 145; my italics.

## Chapter 6 Possibilities

### 6 Dancing in Time with Psychoanalysis

LaMothe avers that “every leg or fin or wing represents a trajectory of movement that not only represents a given set of possibilities, but opens onto further possibilities.”<sup>537</sup> Lear espouses that one of the goals of psychoanalysis is opening up possibilities, citing an example of a patient who “in grasping the constricted nature of the possibilities that she [the patient] has mistaken for reality, she opens up new possibilities for life.”<sup>538</sup> In opening up possibilities, dance and psychoanalysis parallel each other and, thus, confirm a relationship between them, one that offers enormous potential. These possibilities are the possibilities of making the impossible, possible.

#### 6.1 Bearing the *Real*/ Real and Living with(in) the Gap

The “incommensurability” that Van Haute references as entrenched within the subject<sup>539</sup> is brought to the fore in the psychotic. The in-sistence of the real threatens the entire psychic structure, and the triggered psychotic has nothing to support the symbolic. Thus, the pre-psychotic needs to develop a personal structure that bypasses the (name-of-the-father) symbolic structure yet without entirely foreclosing on its possibilities: finding a way to live beyond the phallic *jouissance*. Although Lacan argues that “psychoanalysis, when it succeeds, proves that the Name-of-the-Father can just as well be bypassed,”<sup>540</sup> he does not mean that it can be erased. The *possibility* of the name-of-the-father is still a condition for the *sinthome*. Indeed, Lacan explicitly states, “One can just as well bypass it, on the condition that one makes use of it.”<sup>541</sup> Making use of the name-of-the father

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<sup>537</sup> *Why We Dance*, 50.

<sup>538</sup> *Freud*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2015), 413.

<sup>539</sup> *Against Adaptation*, 287.

<sup>540</sup> *Seminar 23*, 116.

<sup>541</sup> *Seminar 23*, 116.

implies that it still exists, but as a “non-conditioned element”<sup>542</sup> in the psychic structure. For one to use the *sinthome* to reach a *jouissance* beyond the phallus, one must still be submitted to the phallic function,<sup>543</sup> for there is no beyond without the original set. As Moncayo writes, “What generates this transformation is something internal to the phallic function of castration that both permits and forbids phallic *jouissance* and causes a movement beyond it.”<sup>544</sup> For Joyce, the name-of-the-father becomes something that he has to re-conceptualize because of the threatened loss of the imaginary. This reconceptualization, as Chiesa writes, means the law provided by the name-of-the-father, the regulation required for someone to operate in the world that includes a symbolic, becomes a law “carried out by the *sinthome* itself.”<sup>545</sup> In other words, the *sinthome* creates its own law, not the name-of-the-father, but a law that nonetheless allows one to operate within the symbolic. The *sinthome* becomes the support for a psychic structure no longer centred around the lack, creating a psyche that lives with the fragmentation of the subject rather than seeking to become whole.

Bersani muses, “perhaps the therapeutic secret of psychoanalysis lies in its willingness to entertain any possibility of behaviour or thought as only possibility. It aims to free desiring fantasies from psychological constraints, thereby treating the unconscious not as the determinant depth of being but, instead, as de-realized being, as never more than potential being.”<sup>546</sup> For Lacan, this might equate to not being able to have what we desire, only what we need as I described earlier. Fulfilling our desire as occasioned by *objet a* is

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<sup>542</sup> *Seminar 23*, 117.

<sup>543</sup> Chiesa argues differently, and while the feminine *jouissance* still depends on the phallic *jouissance*, he nonetheless holds that it does so “without being ‘beyond’ the phallus.” *Subjectivity and Otherness*, 187. This disagreement, I suspect, is that Chiesa takes the phallus too literally as an organ rather than as a signifier and component of fantasy.

<sup>544</sup> *Lalangue, Sinthome, Jouissance, and Nomination*, 51.

<sup>545</sup> *Subjectivity and Otherness*, 189.

<sup>546</sup> Bersani and Phillips, *intimacies*, 28.

an impossibility, yet within the repetition of searching for the *objet a*, there is another repetition: the repetition of the gap between each repetition.<sup>547</sup> Although we can never fulfill our desire, the drive that circles it is nonetheless satisfied. Thus, despite how the lack occasions the belief in the possibility of achieving that desire and creating a whole, the gap between each repetition offer the new possibilities. In a symptom, the repetition is merely the repetition of the search for the whole, but the repetition of the gap ensures that within each repetition is there is always the chance of surprise. Psychoanalysis, in Bersani's thought, may free us from the limit of repetition of representation, freeing us, thereby, to accept the gap of repetition and, thereby, the impossibility of possibility. It also can increase the capacity for creativity, as this capacity "increases when we accept the loss of ideal solutions and begin instead to search for ways to fashion a livable life within our lack" as the rupture "opens to possibilities of being."<sup>548</sup> If the psychotic is to live effectively, then he needs to bind the psyche together, and he does so in a way that shift's the psyche's centre. For the analysand/analyst, freedom from the incessant demand of desire is gained by making the unconscious conscious (that is, through psychoanalysis to the point of the psychoanalytic act). This creates a revolution into the psychoanalytic discourse as the subject sees how she or he strives to be whole, and upon that seeing, can choose differently. Psychoanalysis with neurotics opens possibilities.<sup>549</sup> Making the unconscious conscious assists in this revolution, but the subject always risks sliding back

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<sup>547</sup> Zupančič explains that Lacan's two types of repetition, *automaton* and *tyche*, can only co-exist, and within the *tyche* of repetition, one finds "the locus of surprise of repetition, of the Real encountered in it." *The Odd One In*, 167. Furthermore, "the drive is satisfied through being thwarted, without attaining its end . . . nevertheless it does not miss its aim . . . the aim is merely the path taken." Dolar, *A Voice and Nothing More*, 74.

<sup>548</sup> Ruti, "When the Cure Is That There Is No Cure," 00:05:36.

<sup>549</sup> Lear considers the neurotic as "constrained," and the analyst "opens up for the analysand the possibility of new forms of relating to the analyst, and thus to people in his environment." *Wisdom Won from Illness*, 182–83.

into the master's discourse; however, because the subject is now conscious, he can avert (or try to avert) a return to the master's discourse.

Psychoanalysis with the neurotic, however, aims to effect this revolution through verbalized speech, but not everyone can tolerate analysis in which “not only must the analyst survive the patient, but the patient must survive the analyst” in order to “facilitate the survival of the relationship, or third, as a safe environment.”<sup>550</sup> In psychosis, verbalized speech creates a “nightmare,”<sup>551</sup> so trying to work within that medium is fraught; rather, the process for the psychotic to live within the symbolic is different yet somewhat analogous to the neurotic's process in that it produces the psychoanalytic act with a difference: an ethical act supported by the *sinthome*. The *sinthome* then obviates the risk of returning to the master's discourse, which is an impossibility for the psychotic because the *sinthome* does not institute the name-of-the-father but rather allows one to exist without it. One exists “beyond” the set of men subject to the phallic function but allowing for (only) the possibility of the phallic function. What dance shows is that even when someone cannot tolerate analysis, for example because of psychosis, there is a practice that can encourage the development of a *sinthome* (without relying on a subject's internal will and resources to make use of the drives, such as Lacan shows in Joyce). The elements that Lacan pinpoints as useful for Joyce are accessible via dance: structured play and limited contact with the real, developed through an alternate understanding of the mirror stage. Dance reveals the possibility that those who do not have the ability to survive or endure psychoanalysis can nonetheless work through some of their experience to see the paradoxes and the truth of their contradictions and accept the drives of the real. Thus, not only does dance emerge from the shadows of the other arts and find a place of its own, but dance also then provides a new way to think about psychoanalysis and how it

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<sup>550</sup> Jessica Benjamin, “Where's the Gap and What's the Difference? The Relational View of Intersubjectivity, Multiple Selves, and Enactment,” *Contemporary Psychoanalysis* 46, no. 1 (2010): 117, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00107530.2010.10746042>.

<sup>551</sup> Bollas, *Catch Them Before They Fall*, 78.

can be enriched and diversified: how it can expand its participant population without losing its core elements or insights.

For the psychotic (or un-triggered psychotic) in particular, traditional psychoanalysis has too often failed. One implication of that is there is an assumption that insight-oriented practices are not for everyone because people need a base level of security, safety, and functioning first. Yet, psychoanalysis, by teaching play in the same way as dance does, has benefits even for those who do not fit the stereotype of the traditional analytic client. One theorist who has also successfully treated psychotics comments that the key to treatment is to understand and mirror the psychotic's internal world: "How did they perceive the world? Once this was grasped, the first step was to mirror this back to them so that, at the very least, they experienced someone understanding their world view."<sup>552</sup> Dance offers this mirror directly and visually, and analysis offers this indirectly and, more often than not, through words. Although using psychoanalysis to explore dance offers new ways to think of dance, and although looking at what dance is offers new ways to think of psychoanalysis, it is not always a question of what one practice can take or learn from another. It is also the recognition that despite their seeming incongruity, the two often employ the same mechanisms, even if for different ends. Both dance and psychoanalysis use "aethereal" elements to help someone connect with the real of the drive and desire. The parallelism between the two is why my argument is dance specific. Other arts create a product—they produce what can more easily be co-opted by the master's discourse—whereas dance creates a content. Dance itself, however, is a function, just as psychoanalysis is, not a thing. Dance is not a piece of music or an artwork with a defined end; rather, it, intrinsically, leads one to the ultimate act, and thereby, dance requires a leap of faith.<sup>553</sup>

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<sup>552</sup> Bollas, *When the Sun Bursts*, 40.

<sup>553</sup> Zupančič suggests that analysis "replaces hope with courage." "Too Much of Not Enough: An Interview with Alenka Zupančič," interview with Cassandra B. Seltman, *Los Angeles Review of Books*, March 9, 2018, <https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/too-much-of-not-enough-an-interview-with-alenka-zupancic>. Maybe what dance shows is that neither dance nor analysis "replaces hope

In general, the common interpretation of the *sinthome* focuses too much on its relation to language. Lacan's seminar on Joyce does focus on Joyce's use of language, but what Lacan intimates is that the *sinthome* does not rely on a conventional use of language, but on the real element of the voice as expressed via *lalangue* and felt in the body. Joyce does not use language to support the real but uses the elements of the real—including the voice of language—to create a *sinthome* that can mediate among the registers of the psyche to support a subject. Notwithstanding Joyce, these elements that Joyce found through poetic language are present more innately in dance. They are also the elements that characterize analysis when and if it culminates in the psychoanalytic act, the act that Lacan wants to differentiate from both the act and the doing.<sup>554</sup> The doing of the analysand rests on a non-relation to the signifier; this doing appears through free association that works via transference to reveal a knowledge, but this knowledge is knowledge without a subject.<sup>555</sup> The psychoanalytic act, then—that is, the moment the analysand passes to analyst—is a failed act (in the scientific understanding of an act), but because it fails, it is therefore

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with courage," full stop, but "replaces hope with the courage to reach a conclusion for which the evidence will only exist retroactively." In other words, the courage to become a subject (through the act).

<sup>554</sup> The psychoanalytic act does not form a *sinthome*, but there is, I argue, a close relation to the *sinthome*. Both result in an acceptance of uncertainty and non-knowledge and establish a different way to exist in the world.

<sup>555</sup> Acquiring knowledge is, for Lacan, related to the master's discourse, and this acquisition strengthens the phallic *jouissance*. Analysis subverts this discourse because of its delayed and deferred meaning: each time in analysis when one thinks one "knows," new information puts that belief into question, and one slowly learns that desiring knowledge is not only futile but tragic. Adam Phillips writes, "But the tragic hero, as Lacan intimates in his reference to Oedipus, may be precisely the one who *cedes his desire by transforming it into a desire for knowledge*. He gives up on what he originally wanted, and wants knowledge instead." *Missing Out: In Praise of the Unlived Life* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2013), 148.



successful.<sup>556</sup> It starts with the “falsified subject supposed to know,” but at the end, it constitutes a “subject which is not in the act” in that the psychoanalytic act restores the **o**—the lack—at the level of the subject supposed to know. Lacan is saying that the psychoanalytic act starts with the “announcement” and, therefore, with a subject supposed to know (that is, a subject who “knows” what a psychoanalyst or what psychoanalysis is) but then fails as an act of knowledge as the now-analyst identifies with the “residue” of the subject supposed to know, or, rather, identifies with the “**o**-object.”<sup>557</sup> The “knowledge” of the analyst becomes the recognition that there is no *objet a*, just the real of the drive that structures the gap. This privileges psychoanalysis because it, then, “constitutes the connection between an act and a doing.”<sup>558</sup> This psychoanalytic act is, therefore, the recognition of a limit and the accepting of a “constitutive division” within oneself.<sup>559</sup>

This division, particularly within the psychotic, can only be tolerated because of the analyst’s containing capacity.<sup>560</sup> The analyst listens and hears the analysand and provides a safe space to (re)experience “unorganized levels of fluid, untranslatable, and potentially explosive sensations,”<sup>561</sup> which the analyst “by means of internal containment”<sup>562</sup> (as she experiences these sensations too), “cool[s] down.”<sup>563</sup> All art, according to Rose, entails a containing aspect: “art provides a holding presence of reliably balanced tension and

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<sup>556</sup> “There is nothing so successful as failure with respect to the act.” Lacan, *Seminar 15*, V 3.

<sup>557</sup> Lacan, *Seminar 15*, X 11.

<sup>558</sup> Lacan, *Seminar 15*, VII 8.

<sup>559</sup> Lacan, *Seminar 15*, XIII 4.

<sup>560</sup> Bollas also posits that when someone is in breakdown, “the analyst, in the transference, is the arrival of the mother-as-container.” *Catch Them Before They Fall*, 128.

<sup>561</sup> Lombardi, *Mind-Body Dissociation*, 35.

<sup>562</sup> Lombardi, *Mind-Body Dissociation*, 35

<sup>563</sup> Lombardi, *Mind-Body Dissociation*, 35

release”;<sup>564</sup> Rose further illustrates this tension and release as “providing an emotionally responsive, witnessing presence. . . . [The] aesthetic emotional experience may encourage one to feel more consciously what was always latent but inexplicable.”<sup>565</sup> Art, specifically dance, allows one to feel, to experience the real and its concomitant affects as they arise. These affects are not just the pleasurable affects we often associate with art, but all affects. Experiencing them in this contained space and for the limited time of the dance, helps one, then, to bring them to consciousness and integrate them into the psyche.

The real manifests for Joyce as the voice of imposed speech: the real is present in a way he cannot represent it in the standard symbolic (the symbolic supported by the unconscious structured by the name-of-the-father), so he instead uses the real to shift the symbolic, splicing and suturing his psychic structure in such a way as to provide a new support for the Borromean knot to hold. It is not the psychoanalytic act exactly, the act which provides this new psychic structure in the case of the neurotic: it adds a term. But it is a way for the psychotic to access the feminine *jouissance* and achieve something comparable to the psychoanalytic act. It is essential to note that Joyce does not choose this. It is not a choice one can make without the imposition of the real. Lacan emphasizes, “Joyce didn’t know he was fashioning the *sinthome*”;<sup>566</sup> rather, the real becomes *too* real and in-sists upon him, threatening the entire edifice of his psyche. Engley and McGowen suggest the real, when it in-sists, forces a change in the symbolic if the entire system is

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<sup>564</sup> *Between Couch and Piano*, 53. Although for Rose, this exists in all art, he focuses on music yet acknowledges that dance and music likely evolved together. *Ibid.*, 53. Furthermore, he accepts that the essential part of music is motion, not sound. *Ibid.*, 134. This suggests that his argument easily transfers to dance and, I contend, that the implicit motion of music may exist only because of the explicit motion of the body (in dance).

<sup>565</sup> *Between Couch and Piano*, 52. This idea can be seen as an implicit mirroring as the aesthetic emotions mirror the inexpressible real.

<sup>566</sup> *Seminar 23*, 99.

not to collapse.<sup>567</sup> In psychosis, the support that is the name-of-the-father is missing, and therefore, the whole symbolic structure threatens to collapse as the real intrudes and the imaginary slips away. For psychotics, then, who cannot structure their existence through the name-of-the-father, they need a singular solution. That solution is the *sinthome*: the structure that connects the registers of the psyche. The absent name-of-the-father becomes a possibility that allows the psychotic to then bypass it and develop a feminine *jouissance*. This *sinthome* is like a symptom only in that it supports *a* symbolic; although the *sinthome* may allow the (non-triggered) psychotic to exist effectively in reality, the symbolic it supports is a different, individual symbolic—a radically shifted symbolic characterized (or identified) by a feminine *jouissance*.

Lacan’s recognition of how we try to fill the lack in ourselves but never succeed and of how we work to shift the master’s discourse, only for it to revolve back is apparent in society today. Lacan’s theory of the *sinthome* brings with it a corollary that the symbolic may not shift when we confront injustice (via, say, the Black Lives Matter movement) or subscribe to a new gender theory, for example. The symbolic only really shifts when threatened by the *real* real.<sup>568</sup> Most of us have found ways to conceal or cope with the

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<sup>567</sup> “The Real,” 00:38:36. Engley and McGowen, however, are applying the *sinthome* to culture more generally, an application that I do not believe can be made without changing the nature of Lacan’s *sinthome*. The symbolic is a totality, and to apply it to cultural movements is to carve the symbolic into separate, discrete entities. For Lacan, support for the symbolic is the name-of-the-father, but he recognizes culture can shift and a new symbolic law can arise; however, whatever the new law is, it still operates as culture not within it.

<sup>568</sup> The *real*, as previously mentioned, is what threatens to overwhelm the subject of psychosis. This argument is a direct response to Engley and McGowan in “Symbolic Order.” In that episode of their podcast, they suggest that the symbolic is a totality that we cannot see; we only see the real as is “irrupts” into it. Their example, however, is how Black Lives Matter disrupts the NBA “symbolic” and causes the symbolic to shift. Yet, having already characterized the symbolic as a totality that we are fully immersed in (00:06:35), there cannot be a separate NBA symbolic. BLM and the NBA all existing within *the* symbolic.

real and are able to “cover over” the cuts threatened by its irruptions. The attempts to shift the symbolic never shift the symbolic; they shift the imaginary but continue to cover over the cuts in the symbolic.<sup>569</sup> For example, Black Lives Matter’s (BLM’s) “irruption” into the NBA<sup>570</sup> does not shift the symbolic any more than recognition within society’s structure of LGBTQ+ rights or gender fluidity shifts the symbolic. These challenges to the status quo are not irruptions of the real. The real cannot be understood by relating it to “love” or “legalized marijuana.” The real is more accurately understood by relating it to the possibility of the square root of -1; it is the possibility of an impossible—possibility that is not itself imaginable except as an abstract concept—whereas legalized marijuana (and love if not embroiled in Lacanian theory) are both imaginable and therefore not real. If the real “does not depend on the idea I have of it,”<sup>571</sup> then only the square root of -1 can encompass that notion. Likewise, BLM’s “irruption” does not shift the symbolic. It only shifts the imaginary, and we can—and do—shift the imaginary often. Even Lacan accepts that his primordial metaphor—the name-of-the-father—may change. When we change the imaginary, however, all we do is revolve the master’s discourse for a short while until we slip back into it. BLM may disrupt the NBA, but months later, any lasting influence has dissipated. LGBTQ+ rights may challenge our notions of white patriarchal heteronormativity, but that does not stop us from seeking the one(s) that we imagine will complete us.

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<sup>569</sup> Engley and McGowan, “The Real,” 00:26:10. Covering over the cuts (the real) in the symbolic is how Engley and McGowan depict the imaginary.

<sup>570</sup> BLM in the NBA, love, and legalized marijuana are all examples that Engley and McGowan use to discuss the real and its relationship to the symbolic.

<sup>571</sup> *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book 21: Les Non Dupes Errent*, trans. Cormac Gallagher, XII 12, <http://www.lacaninireland.com/web/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/Book-21-Les-Non-Dupes-Errent-Part-3.pdf>.

Shifting the symbolic is hard. If we think of the sinthome as permitting what Ogden describes at the growth of the contained and container<sup>572</sup> that allows for play, then that growth can only happen “by having to deal with something that exceeds imagination. . . . It does not happen by straining one’s brain to be imaginative.”<sup>573</sup> Ruti speaks of contacting the “singularity of your being,” which “can feel very risky” as it means opening to the possibility that *jouissance* (elements of the drives and, therefore, of the real) will overwhelm you.<sup>574</sup> Although Ruti suggests one can choose this path, choosing this path is merely falling back into the master’s discourse. Rather, as Joel Faflak proposes, the sinthome “is born of a great deal of pain and suffering, but it’s a necessary creativity to stand in for a loss that is insurmountable.”<sup>575</sup> That loss is the non-existence of the phallic function. Ruti’s suggestion is that the sinthome can undo the phallic function, yet because of its relation to non-triggered psychosis, the sinthome does not “undo” the phallic function but, rather, compensates for a non-existent phallic function. This is not to suggest that creativity cannot arise within the neurotic, nor does it suggest that a pre-disposition to psychosis is necessary for shifting the symbolic. I do, however, argue that the creativity linked to the sinthome is more likely to shift the symbolic because it is a necessary creativity.

Thus, the sinthome is unanalyzable (or cannot or should not be analyzed away): it is a support for the symbolic; to analyze it would take away the support, and no one can live without a symbolic, even a radically shifted one. Attempting to analyze the sinthome only removes the limits on the real that made its existence bearable. The attempt will also

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<sup>572</sup> “On Holding and Containing,” 1359.

<sup>573</sup> Bromberg, “Hidden in Plain Sight,” 8.

<sup>574</sup> “When the Cure Is That There Is No Cure,” 00:33:57.

<sup>575</sup> Faflak, responding to Ruti, “When the Cure Is That There Is No Cure,” 1:00:13. Zupančič, too, warns of thinking one can choose to experience the real. Making the real into a desire is pathological (in my understanding of her argument) and impossible because the real “*does not have a subject.*” *Ethics of the Real*, 237–38.

always fail. The sinthome has no meaning that can be analysed. It conditions the possibility of meaning. It is not a symptom or a thing or a fantasy (or an object): it is a function.

## 6.2 “Shifting” the Symbolic

If the sinthome is not an analyzable symptom, then it is more accurately the *drive* to live when one cannot rely on other means. It is a singular and necessary manoeuvre that radically shifts the symbolic. Lombardi argues metaphorization is not all that psychoanalysis is (or should be): “I propose *a radical shift of emphasis, such that the interest of the body is not limited to its symbolic meaning or to related unconscious phantasies*. In other words, all of psychoanalysis does not come down to mere metaphorization . . . but does instead call for a confrontation with reality, and with that first expression of reality, the body,”<sup>576</sup> or, as I argue, with the real of the body.

The sinthome, thus, is not just another prosthetic for the name-of-the-father, but a shift, reflected (Lacan denies) by the “a” within Lacan’s comment about dance and condensation. Condensation is the shift from *condensation*—from metaphor as support and from identification with the lack—to *condensation*—the *suppléance* that is the support Lacan identifies with the sinthome.<sup>577</sup> This latter support is of feminine *jouissance* and emerges from the identification with the lack in the other. It supports the shifted symbolic, the symbolic that permits the sexual relation / feminine *jouissance* by

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<sup>576</sup> *Body-Mind Dissociation*, 38.

<sup>577</sup> Verhaeghe and Declercq write:

Before [this change to an identification with the symptom, creating a sinthome] the subject situated all *jouissance* on the side of the Other and took a stance against this; . . . after this change, the subject situates *jouissance* in the body, in the Real body. Hence there is no longer a *jouissance* prescribed by the Other, but a *jouissance* entailed in the particular drives of the subject. . . . The identification with the symptom is in this respect not a Symbolic nor an Imaginary one, but a Real identification, functioning as a suppletion (*suppléance*) for the lack of the Other. “Lacan’s Analytic Goal,” 13.

mediating (as a creation, and within the imaginary) among the registers of the psyche. Derrida coined the term *différance* to refer to a “not,” an “impossible presence” that makes possible nominal effects despite itself being un-nameable.<sup>578</sup> It is neither a word nor a concept, but that which produces difference without being a part of it.<sup>579</sup> *Différance* conditions the possibility of language. Dance, then, as *condensation* would condition the possibility of language, of a creation supported, as Shirley Sharon-Zisser argues, “outside sense.”<sup>580</sup> The “a” in condensation, therefore, indicates condensation with a difference (*différance*) and indicates the possibility of condensation, of metaphorization—the possibility that is needed if one is to exist beyond it. Dance, then, becomes *lalangue*, the *lalangue* “that is not language taken as the signifier, but neither is it conceiving language simply under the auspices of sound echoes. It is, rather, *the concept of their very difference, the difference of the two logics, their split and their union in that very divergence.*”<sup>581</sup>

Derrida also remarks, “the a of *différance*, thus, is not heard; it remains silence, secret and discreet as a tomb.”<sup>582</sup> This, then, ties *différance* to the real of the voice, the voice that includes silence; although Derrida uses different language, I suggest the “a” is therefore its tied to the gap between the speech and writing.<sup>583</sup>

Lacan, however, when he speaks of dance as *condensation* suggests that one (surprisingly) cannot find in dance something that serves the body (as *suppléance*). Yet, as Dominique Holvoet remarks, the *a* in condensation is “playing between the signifying

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<sup>578</sup> “*Différance*,” 19.

<sup>579</sup> “*Différance*,” 11.

<sup>580</sup> “Art as Subjective Solution: A Lacanian Theory of Art Therapy,” *International Journal of Art Therapy* 23, no. 1 (2018): 11, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17454832.2017.1324884>.

<sup>581</sup> Dolar, *A Voice and Nothing More*, 143–44.

<sup>582</sup> “*Différance*,” 4.

<sup>583</sup> “*Différance*,” 5.

density of condensation and the dancing aspect implicating the body.”<sup>584</sup> Lacan may not see the possibility of dance, but his use of “condensation” sparks a creativity itself, and is its own *creatio ex nihilo*.

### 6.3 Creating Metaphor

Dance, as a (creative) art, is not just the expression of creativity but also a scaffolding that provides the means for that creativity to emerge or come into being to create that possibility of metaphor needed to exist beyond it. Dance, thus, offers the precondition for creativity and is creative in and of itself. When creativity (or play) is not possible, dance may offer the conditions in which what is initially experienced as threatening can be experienced in a new way. In analysis, Bromberg suggests, the ability of the analyst “to help transmute traumatic affect into the potential for ‘poetry’ . . . depends on a ‘safe-enough’ interpersonal environment.”<sup>585</sup> This “safe-enough” environment, he contends, can only occur in a relationship that contains uncertainty, as uncertainty is the only environment that permits “safe surprises.”<sup>586</sup> These are surprises that are not *so* safe that

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<sup>584</sup> Dominique Holvoet, “Episode 35: Interview with Dominique Holvoet,” interview with Zully Flomenbaum and Sofia Guaraguara, *RadioLacan*, April 25, 2016, <http://www.radiolacan.com/en/topic/792%22%22>; The interview is in French; the beginning of the English translation can be found here: <https://www.amp-nls.org/nls-messenger/10th-congress-of-the-wap-rio-2016-interviews-with-d-holvoet-and-f-anermet/>. The full English translation has since been removed from the website.

<sup>585</sup> Philip M. Bromberg, “One Need Not Be a House to Be Haunted: On Enactment, Dissociation, and the Dread of ‘Not-Me’—A Case Study,” *Psychoanalytic Dialogues* 13, no. 5 (2003): 708, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10481881309348764>; my italics.

<sup>586</sup> Philip M. Bromberg, “Some Potholes on the Royal Road: Or Is It an Abyss?,” *Contemporary Psychoanalysis* 36, no. 5 (2000): 15, <https://irp.cdn-website.com/682fedd7/files/uploaded/Bromberg-Potholes%20on%20the%20Royal%20Road-2000.pdf>. Bromberg’s footnote relates this to aesthetics and Edmund Burke’s thought that “safe shocks” relate to the sublime. See Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the*



nothing unbidden or spontaneous arises, yet are safe enough that whatever arises cannot overwhelm someone. These are also experiences that inherently involve pleasure: being in a safe enough environment, “one’s responses are not entirely predictable and assimilable to internal fantasy.”<sup>587</sup> Dance, as discussed, includes the uncertainty of the bodily reactions to a physical movement, and in this way, it provides a safe enough environment because it provides supports in which one can manage surprises through its use of (physical) mirrors that allows dancers to see the body as well as the boundaries it creates in time and space. Furthermore, because dance, at least initially, means following in someone else’s steps, it helps to guarantee that any “surprises” have been successfully experienced by others, opening the possibility that I (as dancer), too, can accept what comes. The pleasure of these surprises is that the real may no longer insist; instead, one can come to experience the pleasure of the real without fleeing from it or feeling overwhelmed by it.

In analysis, a “safe enough” environment allows for nightmares to become dreams, and dreams are what “allow[] the contained and container to grow, which includes the capacity to bear uncertainty and doubt.”<sup>588</sup> Ogden, describes a patient who initially used “pathological containing” by “directing the play” of analysis in order that no psychological work could occur; he writes, “nothing original could come of it; no new thought could be generated.”<sup>589</sup> As the patient continued her analysis, however, Ogden saw how this “pathological containing function had become the contained,” which led to surprising responses to her from him (in that he treated a dream as a real event, opening

*Beautiful: And Other Pre-Revolutionary Writings*, ed. David Womersley (London: Penguin Books, 1998).

<sup>587</sup> Benjamin, “Recognition and Destruction,” 187.

<sup>588</sup> Ogden, “On Holding and Containing,” 1358.

<sup>589</sup> “On Holding and Containing,” 1361.

up new ideas).<sup>590</sup> Dance is like this: dance directs the person who cannot play; as one only has to “read [the] lines”<sup>591</sup> until a change can occur within the dancer in which the dancer can awaken from the dream or nightmare and experience herself in a novel way. Dance provides the scaffolding and directs the dancer, and only then can the dancer establish a position in which to expand both the container and the contained and, thereby, set up the possibility of metaphor.

Ruti talks of how, for Lacan, creativity can offer a container via the use of the signifier yet adds that playing with the signifier (that is, a form of creativity) “can only emerge when the signifier is animated by the drive energies of the real” and “the more the subject is able to allow jouissance to fill its being . . . the more singular, unique, and creative it will be.”<sup>592</sup> Within language this is a destructive process: language is destroyed to the point it can be reconstituted as something new; this is what Joyce does with language and is why the emphasis on language’s connection to the *sinthome* is specious. Language is not a *sinthome*: the destruction of language, “animated by the drive energies of the real” is how Joyce creates his *sinthome*. This is where dance excels: dance’s inherent connection to the body and its relationship to rhythm necessarily links it to the real and its drives. Miller speaks of the possibility that all arts could be a *sinthome*,<sup>593</sup> but what I think he means is that all arts offer the potential for ameliorating object relations because they create a separation or distance from the object and can “objectify” it. This, however, does not necessarily make any of the arts a *sinthome*; it only suggests that all arts have a relationship to creativity—and the *sinthome* is only one creative possibility—and all arts offer some protection from intrusions of the real. Dance, then, purely by being an art offers protection. Dance, however, does not require one to be creative already; dance, rather, contains its own support for developing a creativity by directing a script (of steps

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<sup>590</sup> “On Holding and Containing,” 1361.

<sup>591</sup> Ogden “On Holding and Containing,” 1361.

<sup>592</sup> “When the Cure Is That There Is No Cure,” 00:23:45, 00:30:09, 00:33:24.

<sup>593</sup> “The Unconscious and the Speaking Body,” para. 29.

that help one connect to the body) for those who dance them. It thus allows for “safe” surprises, by teaching one who cannot dream to open to the possibilities of playing with their dreams.

Dance can do this because it takes elements that exist only in part from within the other arts and brings them together. Thus, the potential for “transmut[ing] traumatic affects into . . . poetry”<sup>594</sup> that Bromberg discusses *is* the sinthome, and for that potential to emerge, one needs the safe-enough environment Bromberg describes: an environment that allows for safe surprises but is not so safe as to obstruct the development of any surprises.<sup>595</sup> This means, essentially, the environment must be one that is precarious yet playful. For the pre-psychotic—the one who needs the sinthome—dance provides this: there is a danger in dance because there is a danger within the body, in its drives and of the real as felt in the body. One of the benefits of dance for someone suffering from schizophrenic symptoms or prodromal syndrome and a distrust of the body and inability to feel the body is that dance requires deliberate attention, yet as Mariah LeFeber discusses, this also is a potential danger because it directs the dancer’s attention to what arises in the body,<sup>596</sup> which can threaten to overwhelm someone already in a precarious position. What dance teaches, however, is how to challenge the belief that whatever arises will overwhelm one. Kristen Lewis points out that the sensations of the body in dance (but also in general) can be split into two concepts: sensing and feeling where sensing is going into the body whereas feeling is the body rising to perception.<sup>597</sup> We can understand the fear of what arises from the body or the belief that the drives and real of the body will overwhelm us as a fear of feeling the body. It is the real irrupting. With dance, one can learn to sense the

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<sup>594</sup> “One Need Not Be a House,” 708.

<sup>595</sup> “Some Potholes on the Royal Road,” 15.

<sup>596</sup> “Theory in Depth: Dance Movement Therapy with Mariah LeFeber,” in *SMART Counsel*, February 21, 2018, podcast, 46:23.

<sup>597</sup> “Dance Theory Lab. Thinker Edition: Embodiment and Theory for Non-Dancers,” workshop, March 7, 2021, virtual.

body and reach into the body to experience those same sensations, knowing that one is in (partial) control of them. It is this element of dance that makes it the creative act related to the *sinthome*; it is this that sets up the possibility of metaphor. According to Ribolsi, Feyaerts, and Vanheule, Lacan “postulated that language makes up the experience of subjectivity and that psychosis is marked by a deficiency in certain metaphor uses” that results in non-meaning and non-identity.<sup>598</sup> Yet to exist in the symbolic without the name-of-the-father, in a way that is non-psychotic, requires the possibility of metaphorization. Just as one needs the possibility of the phallic *jouissance* for the feminine *jouissance*, one needs the possibility of metaphorization to live beyond it. This is important because for many psychotics, “normality” is impossible, yet existence is possible, creating a possibility of the impossible. As Bollas writes of one schizophrenic analysand, “she remained a little odd,” but “was no longer broken.”<sup>599</sup> Psychoanalysis had provided this analysand with the possibility of a contained experience of the real as Bollas attuned to her and acted as a support, mirroring her existence back to her so that she could believe *someone* understood her. The *sinthome* may not get one to a “pure” type of play, but in the struggle to create a *sinthome*, one creates the possibility for play: one sees that one could play (as the analyst or choreographer does) and how one might play, even if one previously has never fully developed the ability to play.

## 6.4 Choreographing a Subject

Bollas argues about the baby’s initial internalization of the mother’s form (before her words) is the first human aesthetic.<sup>600</sup> Bersani characterizes this argument as explaining how we are “choreographed into being”: we incorporate the maternal aesthetic into a distinct way of being as the idea that we are *works* of art and our development parallels

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<sup>598</sup> “Metaphor in Psychosis,” 2–6.

<sup>599</sup> *When the Sun Bursts*, 69

<sup>600</sup> *The Shadow of the Object: Psychoanalysis of the Unthought Known* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), 32–37.

the development of art itself.<sup>601</sup> Bersani writes of how the process of analysis is re-creating the possibilities of *how* we integrate the fragmented elements of the self. It is a new choreography, or a new choreographic process. He elaborates on this to argue that personality is “an aesthetics of handling” the space around us; the analyst, then, is the support to guide the integration of the self. In other words, the analyst is a necessary part for one to be “choreographed into being”: one cannot “choreograph” oneself, yet that is what a culture circling the name-of-the-father, a culture focused on the desire of the Other, an individual culture focused on being “the” exception, attempts to do. With dance, we are (or can be) truly choreographed into being in the way a baby is, or the way someone is in analysis: by being guided and supported as one develops the possibility for a new way to be.

Dance can be a *sinthome* if we accept the *sinthome* as linking the registers in such a way to expose the lack in the psyche while allowing a contained and controlled “*tuché*” (that *missed* encounter with the real) and the development of a feminine *jouissance*. It is *not* a *sinthome* if we see the *sinthome* as slapping/applying a meaning on the real. This is the ambiguity of “condensation.” Metaphor creates that “sense” and “heals” (or can), but dance cannot and will not offer “sense” or “knowledge.”<sup>602</sup> Dance provides a way to experience something that cannot be symbolized, and it provides the support to experience the nonsymbolizable in a contained and playful way (unlike dance therapies that rely on free movement, which can overwhelm). Only then can dance create material, and only then can dance operate (similarly to psychoanalysis) to create a new subject.

## 6.5 Beyond Psychosis

Dance is also not a *sinthome* for all even when it can be a *sinthome*. Not everyone *needs* a *sinthome*. Lacan knows that the rings of the psyche need to operate together if one is to

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<sup>601</sup> *Receptive Bodies*, 54.

<sup>602</sup> In this way, dance is indirectly connected to the “new signifier” of Joyce, which marks his *sinthome* and “has no sense” and is directly connected to the real. Verhaeghe and Declercq, “Lacan’s Analytic Goal,” 19.

live ethically in the world. He does not intend for his study of Joyce to be prescriptive; he is simply interested in understanding the psyche better. To *desire* a sinthome is to merely return to the master's discourse,<sup>603</sup> and to believe dance can be a prescription is to discredit the elements of dance that make it an art. It is possible, however, that dance still has benefits for the neurotic, that it can still supply contained access to the real, etc.; however, with less of a *drive* to live, there is less of a use for dance as a sinthome. Maybe it is then that dance becomes "communication" or representation, for example.

Compare Polunin, (discussed above), to Fosse, who, as I mentioned previously, illustrates the dancer who uses the individual body. For Fosse, dance is an optional support that allows him to experience feminine *jouissance* and, in the process, come to terms with the real. The semi-autobiographical film *All That Jazz*<sup>604</sup> forefronts the way Fosse uses dance to confront the real. It is, however, clear that the imaginary is solidly tied within his psyche: fantasy is clearly at play. *All That Jazz* illustrates Fosse's initial extreme narcissism and repetition of the search for a whole, yet it goes beyond the search for wholeness to depict how "we don't escape the real" regardless of the structure of our psyche.<sup>605</sup> As Joe Gideon (the main character who is the fictionalized Fosse) continues to pursue and sleep with numerous women and chases the highs of drugs and sex, he faces the effects of his hard lifestyle. Death increasingly pursues him, not only in the chest pains that worsens into heart attacks and needed surgery but also in the guise of the angel of death with whom he engages in conversation. As the real continues to force itself upon

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<sup>603</sup> As Zupančič writes: phallogentrism can work splendidly, and much better, if the phallus is not directly named, but reserved for Mysteries." *The Odd One In*, 208.

<sup>604</sup> *All That Jazz*, directed by Bob Fosse (1979; Los Angeles: Twentieth Century Fox and Columbia Pictures, 1979).

<sup>605</sup> The quote, "we don't escape the real," is from a filmic presentation of the Lacanian analytic experience based on the treatment of Betty Milan and her subsequent play and novel about this experience. *Adieu Lacan*, directed by Richard C. Ledes, (2021; New York: Footnote 4, 2021), screened March 5, 2022, 00:15:28, available on Amazon Prime Video, Apple TV, iTunes, and Typhoon.

him, a series of dreams turns into hallucinations. What does Joe (or Fosse) do? He takes the intrusion of the real and comes to play with it, turning it into a musical performance (in the film and, perhaps more poignantly, staging it in the film itself).

Scholars note that Fosse not only uses the real and his own body to propel the dance world forwards but he also transforms and critiques culture. Dennis Bingham writes about how one of the recurring themes in Fosse's work, "since *Cabaret*" is of a "confrontation with the consequences of the values of popular culture."<sup>606</sup> Fosse also changed how we view film. As Fosse "edits for motif . . . for theme and variation, for rhythm, and for point and counterpoint,"<sup>607</sup> he shatters the expectation of linear time, a technique that "has been much imitated by other filmmakers."<sup>608</sup> Fosse, despite not requiring a *sinthome* from dance, nonetheless uses dance creativity. He works within the symbolic and imaginary not to cover over the real as confronted with it, but to "dance" with it in a new way: to create something new, to see things in a new way, and to show us how dance has effects. Fosse using dance this way brings us back to my previous discussion of the Black Lives Matter movement. If we accept BLM as an irruption of the real into the NBA—because as we see from Fosse, the real irrupts for everyone at some point, even if not to the point of overwhelming us—then what appears to happen is we address this crack by covering it with and interpolating it into the symbolic. What psychosis shows us is that covering over the real with the symbolic does not always work as in psychosis there is no possibility of covering over the cut; it is, therefore, by exploring psychosis that we can learn a new way to handle the real, not to fashion a *sinthome* (because we do not *need* one), but to play with the irruption of the real rather than cover over the cut. Dance allows us to see things differently, even when mired in the

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<sup>606</sup> "Escape from Escapism: Bob Fosse and the Hollywood Renaissance," in *The Other Hollywood Renaissance*, ed. Dominic Lennard, R. Barton Palmer, and Murray Pomerance (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020), 129.

<sup>607</sup> Bingham, "Escape from Escapism," 128.

<sup>608</sup> Kevin Winkler, *Big Deal: Bob Fosse and Dance in the American Musical* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 5–6.

symbolic and operating under the name-of-the-father, so we clearly see the culture we are embedded in, then can choose if and how to shift how we do things. Dance gets at what it means to be human, to fully experience our drives without needing to cover them over. Only once we stop covering them over, can we see our lack is what connects us, and therefore, we can effectively operate in reality and not merely via repetition compulsion or according to whatever fantasy we have created. Dance is a cultural creation that relies on the real, linking the two. The creativity of dance for the non-psychotic comes from how dance can show us we are not fated to live according to the desire of the other.

## 6.6 The Next Joyce

My look at dance through a (Lacanian) psychoanalytic lens raises one more question: what are we defending against when we leave dance out of discussions of the arts in general, why do we not talk of dance, or—to put it more psychoanalytically—what would it mean if dance received the same quality and quantity of thought as the other arts? If dance does provide a frame within which one can learn to connect the registers of the psyche, then it is possible theory often avoids looking to dance because looking at dance reveals a “wound”;<sup>609</sup> dance contains something—the real—that we recognize but cannot adequately articulate, acting “as a disturbance of aesthetic appreciation.”<sup>610</sup> In other words, any attempts to think about, theorize about, speak about, and write about dance forces us, just as it forces the dancer and the audience, into a confrontation with the real.

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<sup>609</sup> Ryan Engley and Todd McGowen, “Psychoanalysis and Aesthetics,” in *Why Theory*, podcast, January 7, 2020, podcast, 00:39:29. Engley and McGowan are referring to audience reactions to James Cameron’s *Titanic* and how the “aesthetic quibbles” (39:08) refuse the “fundamental confrontation that the film is asking us to have” (00:39:20) and are “a way of rejecting the wound of art” (00:39:28); they are not linking this to dance.

<sup>610</sup> This disturbance is the disturbance of the object voice that Dolar seeks and that returns to us in psychoanalysis as “the inverted form of our message . . . which was created from a pure voice, *ex nihilo*.” *A Voice and Nothing More*, 4, 161.



Given this scenario, the lack of consistency or the fragmentation within dance studies reveals itself as a defence against the encounter with the real.<sup>611</sup>

The fragmentation that appears both in dance studies and psychosis leads directly to why understanding dance as a *sinthome* and how to translate that into a clinic setting is important. Avoiding the real is impossible—for everyone, but especially for the psychotic. Robert Freedman posits that schizophrenia involves a neuronal process that is defined by a combination of a sensory gating deficit and a miscategorization of sensory data.<sup>612</sup> Sensory gating is the process whereby most people can tune out extraneous stimuli, and with a sensory gating “deficit,” people are particularly sensitive to their environments and notice more stimuli than the average person. In relation to Lacan, I argue that what this means is that given a traumatic environment, someone who has this deficit cannot help but experience far more stimuli, which play out in the body as irruptions of the real. Far from being a “deficit,” however, I see a link between experience that threatens to overwhelm and experience that can be harnessed to challenge the symbolic. In *Hidden Valley Road*, Robert Kolker chronicles the lives of a family in which six of the twelve children develop schizophrenia. He tests (some of) them for their sensory gating abilities. Those with schizophrenia do show a sensory gating deficit, but so does at least one of the others.<sup>613</sup> That “other” is an event coordinator and owns an event-planning company; she also works to challenge the stigma of schizophrenia.

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<sup>611</sup> The fragmentation within dance theory is another way dance parallels psychoanalysis. Since Freud, psychoanalytic theory has fragmented into practices with various focuses, including (among others): ego psychology, relational psychoanalysis, object relations, etc. Rather than acting as (only) a defence, however, I suggest this fragmentation offers different lens through which to see the same phenomenon, something dance does, too, when it embodies communication or representation, for example.

<sup>612</sup> *The Madness within Us: Schizophrenia as a Neuron Process* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 35.

<sup>613</sup> *Hidden Valley Road: Inside the Mind of an American Family* (Toronto: Random House Canada, 2020), 244.

Something, perhaps, protected her from schizophrenia just as Lacan argues something protected Joyce. One theory (mine) is that she found a way to contain her (traumatic and real) experiences.<sup>614</sup> Just as John Frosch argues dreams may presage psychotic breaks and be indications of patients who are attempting to overcome psychotic conflicts,<sup>615</sup> thereby suggesting dreams are also protective because they bind psychotic elements so one can live in reality, this child found a creative way to exist with the real rather than become overwhelmed by it. In other words, the sensory gating deficit is not always a deficit; the same deficiency that is associated with psychosis is also linked to creative achievement and giftedness.<sup>616</sup> We are, after all, all on the spectrum that ranges from neurotic to

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<sup>614</sup> It is interesting (to me) to note that this “other” also took ballet; however, with only the account of her life offered by Kolker, I will not theorize on the role of dance in her life, even if it fits with my argument. She also was in long-term therapy and had someone to help “integrate” her trauma. *Hidden Valley Road*, 150, 193–98.

<sup>615</sup> “Severe Regressive States during Analysis,” *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association* 15, no. 3 (1967): 614, <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F000306516701500307>. Frosch’s belief is in the quality of the dream rather than the content, and he avoids referencing nightmares specifically, instead referring to those dreams that have markedly “real and vivid quality.” *Ibid.*, 611. Mack argues that Frosch suggests dreams in which psychotic material is present and that occur “prior to the onset of psychosis may reflect an effort to prevent the illness or master the conflict.” Mack, “Dream and Psychosis,” 208.

<sup>616</sup> One study has shown that gifted children in fact show *stronger* P50 suppression than their peers, which would suggest my hypothesis is inaccurate. See T. Liu, T. et. al., “Sensory Gating, Inhibition Control and Child Intelligence: An Event-Related Potentials Study,” *Neuroscience* 189 (2011): 250–57, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.neuroscience.2011.05.009>. (P50 is a measurement of sensory gating; stronger P50 suppression correlates to a better ability to filter out stimuli.) This may, however, be a problem with the gifted definition: Darya L. Zabelinea et. al. have shown “leaky” sensory gating may lead to enhanced creativity. “Creativity and Sensory Gating Indexed by the P50: Selective versus Leaky Sensory Gating in Divergent Thinkers and Creative Achievers,” *Neuropsychologia*, 69 (2015): 77–84, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.neuropsychologia.2015.01.034>. The participants for the first study (Liu et. al.) were selected from a “Gifted Youth

psychotic. The consensus is that deficient sensory gating helps one to see more, notice more, and make more connections. In the context of a trauma, this may lead to a psychotic break. If, however, we nurture the abilities to see more before the extra stimuli overwhelm someone, then maybe those same qualities can turn into something that will challenge the symbolic in more a permanent way. If dance as a non-sinthome has value in that we can learn creativity and bring forth new art forms and understandings of the governing structures in our lives, then dance as a sinthome enhances that possibility. On the other hand, if we do not value the irruptions of the real, if we—as a culture, as a world—do not see the promise in those who are pre-psychotic, then we may lose out on a creativity and divergent knowledge that (I claim) is necessary to alter the world in a way that does not always threaten to revolve back into the master’s discourse. We lose out on the next Joyce, for example.

## 6.7 Future Research

Gilbert J. Rose has a baby grand piano in his consulting room. For him, art is an essential element of the psychoanalytic process. Regardless of whether the psychoanalytic process itself entails the use of the piano or not, the piano is always there, if only as an object to think with. Therefore, the idea of dance within the clinic might not be as farfetched as one might imagine.<sup>617</sup> Thus one possibility for future research is how to take the idea of dance as an embodied sinthome and merge the practices of dance and psychoanalysis in a way that maintains the integrity of both.

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Class” that focuses only on scientific domain giftedness and excluded anyone with psychiatric disorders (and were not screened for prior exposure to trauma).

<sup>617</sup> Initially, I had suggested that it is not likely that one could bring dance into the clinic nor that a psychoanalyst would prescribe dance because it goes against the tenets of psychoanalysis in which the patient leads the analyst; I have, however, been challenged on that idea. Maybe it is possible. How to accomplish that though, is something that I cannot cover here—in part because I am still thinking this through myself.

There are also possibilities in exploring the differences between dance forms. As you have seen, I have largely focused on ballet, venturing only occasionally into other modes of dance. Nevertheless, my intention is that one could apply my argument to all forms of dance, or at least all individual forms of dance. (I think partner dancing is something that operates differently, but that, too, is for future study.) Different styles of dance may operate differently and be useful at different points in someone's life (or in the process of creating a *sinthome*). I write on ballet because it *is* very structured at the beginning. Ballet is the form of dance that I see as offering the smoothest transition to learning to play without throwing someone into play in a way that can be scary. Other forms of dance—hip hop, for example, or forms that rely on more improvisation—may be more useful after one starts to learn to play or if, like Joyce, one already knows how to play.

Finally, dance, also, does not guarantee, or even offer the possibility for, a *sinthome* when one is not needed. For dance to be a *sinthome*, one needs a *sinthome*. Dance, as I have shown, can be a *sinthome*, but I focused on the psychotic and found out during my examination that dance can also function analogously to the analyst's discourse. Therefore, dance may lead to an act of becoming a subject regardless of one's initial psychic structure. That is to say, even if one does not need a *sinthome*, dance is still a creative process and can thereby help people to see the symbolic structure they are immersed in more clearly. How exactly this work needs more research, but I suggest that once someone can see the symbolic structure, then they can evaluate it and only then maybe they can *choose* to shift it. Even if still guided by the name-of-the-father, this shift can occur as dance (or analysis) opens to possibilities. The world needs a symbolic, but often one's role within it is determined by the desire of the other. The possibility of dance for the neurotic is that one may see the role of the desire of the other and then see other possibilities, such as the (impossible) possibility of being true to her own desire. This then can help people see the symbolic that they are immersed in and, thus, evaluate it. If more of us can do that by playing with the real—through dance or analysis or however else this might arise—then we *can* shift the symbolic, even if only temporarily and still governed by the name-of-the father or a new law. This shift can then provide (temporary) change, which itself can promote new ideas and further creativity.

We need ways to dance in and open to new possibilities for the world and for creating one's role in it rather than blindly accepting (or seeking) the desire of the other. Yet, we need a symbolic, and we need each other. Without a symbolic there is only chaos or a confusion of voices. Lacan knows how we need all registers of the psyche to work together. He also knows that some people are in danger of having those rings drift apart, and for them, new solutions are essential; for everyone else, dance offers new possibilities *despite* abiding by the law of the name-of-the-father; what dance offer for most people is not essential but is still very much needed.

When De Cuyper and Dulsster write of the power of dance, they refer to dance as a *sinthome* initially occurring as an isolated process, but from there, they argue it is an *escabeau*, or Lacan's stepping stone, in that it creates a social bond once the *dansêtre* "shows himself to others and receives social recognition."<sup>618</sup> They go on to add that it may also help others experience a similar phenomenon, vicariously, by creating material *others* (or at least other dancers) can use to develop their own singularity. While I agree the embodied *sinthome* of dance may create a social bond for the dancer through the recognition from others, I believe that De Cuyper and Dulsster's second point—about it also helping others to develop a *sinthome*—is slightly misguided as not everyone needs a *sinthome*. Where I see the benefit of dance as an *escabeau* in the way they describe is in how dance can be of benefit for those who do not need a *sinthome*—the *sinthomic* discourse does not map well to the culture at large—or those who exists in neurosis not psychosis yet who have to deal with a world that is becoming increasingly fragmented, rigid, and psychotic itself. Dance as a steppingstone would then mean that it helps non-psychotics to reimagine the possibilities, to see more clearly the name-of-the-father and, therefore, to challenge the symbolic structure.

Psychosis and neurosis are often considered to exist on a spectrum, yet for Lacan, there are vastly different. Miller's concept of "ordinary psychosis" has, thus, always seemed a little farfetched to me. However, it may be that ordinary psychosis does exist, *if* we

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<sup>618</sup> "The Dancing Being."

recognize that there is a biological basis for psychosis that does not always manifest based on the environment: that Joyce's father who was not a father to him was the point of foreclosure, but that other people may have fathers who *are* fathers and therefore are protected from psychosis. In this sense, "ordinary psychosis" would be a non-foreclosed name-of-the-father pre-psychosis or, rather, would describes those who never learn to play but are still operating under the name-of-the-father. The subject of this ordinary psychosis would not need a *sinthome*, exactly, but could maybe benefit from an analytic (or dance) environment that offers more support, as the traditional psychoanalytic act may be "impossible" for them (at least initially).

## Chapter 7 Coda

### 7 Weaving an Impossible

Lacan saw how interwoven the three registers of the psyche are; *all* are required equally for the psyche to operate in the more common mode (neurosis). Potentially, Lacan focuses on the real and symbolic because if the imaginary does “slip away,” there is nothing to tie to. However, Lacan’s more important point is how Joyce fashions a knot that keeps all three registers together. Therefore, his focus is not on those lost to psychosis, but those who learn to live when the name-of-the-father is unavailable to them. Therefore, the importance for us about Lacan’s *sinthome* is *not* about preventing psychosis. There are too many unknowns within psychosis, including competing psychological, biological, and familial theories, and it is impossible for anyone “untriggered” to *choose* to create a *sinthome*. Instead, then, Lacan’s ideas are important in that he identifies a *sinthome*, a way those who have foreclosed on the law may be driven to find a new way to live.

Lacan uses Joyce to push forward his own theory; he is *not* analyzing Joyce. That is, he is, I suspect, explaining why the *sinthome* is not the hysteric’s discourse (that is, why Joyce is not hysterical) and how one can nonetheless articulate question of meaning and truth without the signifier. In other words, Joyce shows Lacan how one can maintain a relationship to language without a signifier or phallus to tie it to: Joyce makes language work for him rather than on him. In this way, Lacan uses Joyce to illustrate how to accomplish the psychoanalytic act (or something akin to it—the ethical act as I distinguish it) without the *objet a* as the cause of desire; this, as I have argued, suggests the need for a fifth discourse (or sixth if you include the capitalist discourse), one that does not risk a return to the Master’s discourse (nor, for that matter, any of the others) because it introduces a new term. The analyst occupies the space of the *sinthome* (surrounding the feminine *jouissance*). If the point of analysis is to come to the psychoanalytic act, for the psychotic the *sinthome* is a necessary precondition for any ethical act. The real must be bound before it can be embraced. Once the analysand becomes her own *sinthome*, once the analysand “does” this, she also incarnates herself as

a subject. In other words, the psychotic commits a sort-of psychoanalytic act that does not require the psychoanalytic act, thus the distinction between the ethical act and the psychoanalytic act.

Dancers, however, are not guaranteed mental health nor the ability to knot their own sinthome purely through their participation in dance. This thesis does not argue that dance, unlike writing as shown with Joyce, *will* provide the means for reconnecting and de-centring the psyche; I only argue that the elements that benefit Joyce and that contribute to his sinthome exist inherently within dance more than they exist within writing, and in this way, parallels exist between dance and what happens within the psychoanalytic clinic. The idea of using language—the prototypical example of the symbolic—to deal with the real is a misapplication or misrecognition of Lacanian theory. The real is tied to the symbolic, and dance is a part of the symbolic; dance, however, allows for expression without the demand characteristic of communication that normally accompanies writing. That dance is a sinthome but does not guarantee the formation of one helps us to understanding dance in general, and dance’s ability to link the imaginary, symbolic, and real thereby gives us a language in which to talk about dance. In terms of aesthetics, the highest quality dances would incorporate the three registers of the connected psyche, even if connected via a sinthomic link. The “art” of dance is that it puts us—as dancers or as audience—in contact with the real, a bearable real and a bearable *jouissance*.

Although Lacan does not realize it, dance can help by presenting a new way to identify with the image of oneself. This is, however, also why the mirror is occasionally seen as a “problem”: we see our deficits, and or some people cannot step outside of this belief in the “I.” However, the mirror also offers the chance to step beyond it, to step beyond an ego-ideal and see one’s image with its concomitant yet inherent fragmentation.

Lombardi argues that among psychoanalytic theories of schizophrenia that are still relevant today is Bion’s contention that within personality there is a “distinction between the psychotic and the non-psychotic areas” and both “are present in everyone, from those who are phenomenological psychotic to those who are considered generally sane and



integrated with reality.”<sup>619</sup> Although Bion articulated his idea prior to Lacan’s theorization of the *sinthome*, this idea of everyone having elements of the psychotic psyche within them is decidedly important for understanding my argument about how the *sinthome* is not a solution for all. If we can accept that we are all a little psychotic—in part because the world changes and old explanations no longer work; that we are still internally structured by a symbolic of the law-of-the-father, yet the external world changes, structured by new laws we cannot comprehend—then we can see how the theory behind the *sinthome* may benefit us all. Lear offers a suggestion of how this might appear: “Challenges build up, there is ever more pressure to explain things in the traditional ways, yet there is an inchoate sense that the old ways of explaining are leaving something unsaid. And yet one doesn’t yet have the concepts with which to say it.”<sup>620</sup> Although Lear discusses the Crow and what occurred as their traditional ways of understanding the world were taken from them, the ideas apply equally to us today. We can no longer use our old concepts to explain and understand what is happening in the world. Thus, we need new solutions and ways to envision new possibilities.<sup>621</sup>

This is why dance is important: everything I have argued about the *sinthome* and the necessity of the real and the body as opposed to language—even the concepts of

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<sup>619</sup> Lombardi, *Body-Mind Dissociation*, 9.

<sup>620</sup> *Radical Hope*, 78.

<sup>621</sup> You may be wondering, if life in general is seemingly “psychotic” now, what’s happening in dance? It all comes down to what I have said about how dance *can* be a *sinthome* but does not have to be one; people can remain caught in the image in the mirror or in focusing on perfection. Fashioning a *sinthome*, through dance or any other medium, entails a lot of work and pain and suffering, aspects that we are often inclined to avoid. Mark Morris notes that what is happening in the world is paralleled in the dance world today generally: dance has “reconservatized” and re-established a divide between intellectual and artistic dance opposed to entertainment and a way to kill time—in other words, dance is returning to old concepts rather than working to create new ones. Mark Morris and Wesley Stace, *Out Loud: A Memoir* (New York: Penguin Press, 2019), 330–33.

containing and the potential space that Lacan never mentions—all of those elements are in Lacanian theory. But it was only because I dance that his comment about dance struck me as important, and it was only because I looked at Lacan via dance that I could see the possibilities embedded in his arguments. Dance offers a different relationship to the real and a different way to think, opening us to new possibilities for how to be.

When psychology or psychoanalysis looks to the arts, researchers often ask, what is the purpose or aim or message the art conveys? But what if dance's "purpose" is not to be useful *as* theory (as a method of healing, for example) nor even *in* theory (by making social commentary or giving release, for example)? What if its "use" is that functions as a support to teach us about being human because it encapsulates what it means to experience being human? That is, dance elevates the aspects of the psyche in(to) an art and shows us how to live in possibility without needing to establish meaning. It might be that we see the elements of aesthetics as unity, lines, tones, symmetry, etc., because we are stuck in the symbolic when really aesthetics is closer to what Immanuel Kant argues when he explicates the intuitive aspect of aesthetics: the experience of the raw sense data when removed from our cognition and sensibilities of it<sup>622</sup> or, rather, the beauty of being human with (infinite) possibilities.

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<sup>622</sup> "Transcendental Aesthetic."

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## Curriculum Vitae

**Name:** Megan Sherritt

**Post-secondary Education and Degrees:** University of Western Ontario  
London, Ontario, Canada  
1998–2002 B.A.

The University of Western Ontario  
London, Ontario, Canada  
2003–2004 M.A.

The University of Western Ontario  
London, Ontario, Canada  
2016–2017 M.A.

The University of Western Ontario  
London, Ontario, Canada  
2017–2022 Ph.D.

**Honours and Awards:** Province of Ontario Graduate Scholarship  
2019–2020, 2020–2021

Social Science and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC)  
Doctoral Fellowship  
2021–2022

**Related Work Experience** Teaching Assistant  
The University of Western Ontario  
2016–2020

Research Assistant  
The University of Western Ontario  
2017–2019, 2022

Professor  
Fanshawe College  
2012

**Publications:**  
Sherritt, Megan. “Silent Spaces: Allowing Objects to Talk.” *Open Philosophy* 2, no. 1 (2019): 347–56. <https://doi.org/10.1515/opphil-2019-0028>.

Murray, Kyle B., Ken Mark, and Megan Sherritt. "OQQOQO: Socially Conscious Fashions." Ivey Publishing, 2006. Case Study.