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### The Cambridge Companion to Lacan

This collection of specially commissioned essays by academics and practicing psychoanalysts explores key dimensions of Jacques Lacan's life and works. Lacan is renowned as a theoretician of psychoanalysis whose work is influential in many countries. He refashioned psychoanalysis in the name of philosophy and linguistics at a time when it was undergoing a certain intellectual decline. Advocating a "return to Freud," by which he meant a close reading in the original of Freud's works, he stressed the idea that the Unconscious functions "like a language." All essays in this *Companion* focus on key terms in Lacan's often difficult and idiosyncratic developments of psychoanalysis. This volume will bring fresh, accessible perspectives to the work of this formidable and influential thinker. These essays, supported by a useful chronology and guide to further reading, will prove invaluable to students and teachers alike.

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*Than They Send? A Meditation on the Loneliness of the Sexes* (1996, published in the UK as *Why Do Women Write More Letters Than They Post?*), *Promises Lovers Make When It Gets Late* (1997), and *Freud's Footnotes* (2000).

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## P R E F A C E

After Freud, Lacan is arguably the most important theoretician of psychoanalysis. Like Freud, he has been endlessly discussed, and his controversial personality, his arcane style, and his huge claims on culture, ethics, philosophy, and sexuality, not to mention his unorthodox methods of teaching and of carrying out treatment, have elicited emphatic rejections as well as adulatory commendations. The controversy has not abated since his death in 1981 at the age of eighty. This may be due to the fact that his influence has not been limited to France, his native country, a country in which, thanks to his relentless efforts at pedagogy, the number of psychoanalysts per capita is the highest in the world. His teachings and philosophy have spread worldwide, first to Latin countries like Italy, Spain, Argentina, Brazil, then to North America, before reaching Asian countries, especially China. This has happened precisely at a time when one can observe a general decline in traditional psychoanalytic practice throughout the world.

Lacan was one of the first theoreticians of psychoanalysis to take note of what Herbert Marcuse has called the “obsolescence” of psychoanalysis, an obsolescence that was perceptible by the middle of last century and undeniable by the end of the century, when psychoanalysis had been incorporated and trivialized by popular culture on the one hand, while caught between incompatible scientific claims and aims on the other, tempted either by biological neuro-scientism or adaptive psychological meliorism. Lacan’s originality consisted in refusing to “modernize” psychoanalysis by updating medical treatment or relying on new chemical drugs or even using a simplified therapy, allegedly more adapted to the needs of modern society. Instead, he raised the stakes, firmly positing post-Freudian psychoanalysis first as a therapy based on a particular use of language in which the analyst’s measured silence would call up radical otherness, then as a rigorous discourse that could only find true conceptual bearings in the writings of its inventor and that would benefit from new scientific advances in domains like linguistics, mathematics, or symbolic logics. He saw the unconscious not as a dark

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dungeon full of libidinal imps hiding behind rational volition and planning unwholesome incursions, but as the “discourse of the Other,” that is, as a systemic social formation, a hoard of words, names, and sentences out of which collective utterances are made; this hoard of words also accounts for my own singularity, thanks to the agency of the specific condensation of signifiers that appears as a symptom, that is, *my* symptom.

Lacan has often been called a “philosopher of psychoanalysis” but it is clear that he could never have achieved the radical re-foundation of psychoanalysis he envisaged if he had not been a psychiatrist first, someone who had been trained in the French school that produced Charcot, Janet, Babinski, and Gatian de Clérambault – the latter still claimed as a “master” by Lacan in 1966, next to the only other “master” he named, the Russian-born philosopher Alexandre Kojève. It is because of a solid clinical base in the reality of hospitalized madness that Lacan was able to make inroads into Hegel’s speculative philosophy, just as it is because of his training as a philosopher that he was able to denounce the lack of culture and conceptual rigor among his contemporaries who were active in psychiatry or in psychoanalysis. The outcome of this double postulation was the relentless exploration of a single field, that of the speaking id – in other words, the interaction between the suffering body in its manifold symptoms and the suffering mind when it stumbles in parapraxes and unconscious delusions. True to this central insight, Lacan always considered that the body and the “soul” (let us not forget that “psychoanalysis” etymologically at least implies addressing the diseases of the soul) were connected not via Descartes’ pineal gland but simply by language. Lacan is often associated with a “linguistic turn” in psychoanalysis, that is to say, a turning away from biology in therapy and metapsychology so as to stress the element of language as dominant both in clinical practice and in theory. The linguistic turn initiated by Lacan was prompted by a refusal of the psychologization of psychoanalysis that dominated at the time of Freud’s death, especially under the influence of Freud’s daughter Anna (Lacan’s *bête noire*). In that sense, what he did for post-Freudianism was parallel to the revision of Husserlian phenomenology accomplished by Heidegger – who also exerted a lasting influence on Lacan. However, Heidegger’s vision of a poetic language leading to a site where ontology turns into language was soon replaced by a more technical perspective that freely adapted Ferdinand de Saussure’s structural linguistics to sharpen and systematize Freudian insights into language. Saussurean linguistics is not the only science adduced by Lacan, who peppered his seminars with references to anthropology, comparative religion, logic, mathematics, topology, or set theory. One may say that there is a very strong myth of science in Lacan, although this science is not at all identical with the science that Freud took as a model.

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His aim was thus to revitalize psychoanalysis by epistemology, which evokes another important theoretician of psychoanalysis who attempted to provide the same type of conceptual clarification, but within the field mapped out by Melanie Klein, W. R. Bion (1897–1979, Lacan’s exact contemporary). Like Bion, Lacan invented idiosyncratic concepts made up of elements that he borrowed from different traditions, but his references remained Freudian. Like Bion, he believed that he needed to formalize his concepts in a particular theoretical shorthand (Bion used Greek letters and a conceptual grid appended to all his books, while Lacan invented a whole battery of schemata, “graphs,” and “mathemes”) in order to transmit them as faithfully as possible. Like Bion, he stressed the need for a different method of training and a new pedagogy; he saw himself more as a “teacher” who would form a new generation of intelligent psychoanalysts. Lacan took very seriously Freud’s admonitions against the medicalization of psychoanalysis in *The Question of Lay Analysis* (1926). There, Freud advises his ideal students to take up not only psychiatry and sexology, but also “the history of civilization, mythology, psychology, the psychology of religions, literary history and literary criticism” (*SE* 20, p. 246). Indeed, a mere glance at Freud’s library suggests that he was not only interested in technical books on psychiatry and psychology, but was also a voracious reader in the fields of world literature, archaeology, ancient history, and mythology. As Lacan explains, psychoanalysis should belong to the “liberal arts” and avoid reductive scientism or medical normativization (*E/S*, p. 76). Such a view should force a psychoanalyst to realize that the objects of the “talking cure,” that is, my symptoms, resemble the study of cultural history – as Lacan develops it, these are the “monuments” of my body, the “archival documents” of my childhood memories, the “semantic evolution” of my idioms and personal style, the “traditions” and “legends” that carry my heroic stories, and finally the distortions and obliterations rendered necessary by the need to “finish the story” and make it somewhat palatable (*E/S*, p. 50).

This literary or humanistic drift, as well as his original practice of variable (in fact, much shorter) sessions, led Lacan into a series of battles with the International Psychoanalytic Association until he decided to found his own school. This complex institutional history is not finished, which makes it hard, even today, to find the required distance and to keep the institutional and ideological detachment needed just to introduce Lacan’s works, while not losing the enthusiasm and passions he elicited. Since we are reaching the date of a quarter of a century after a personality’s death, a clear discussion of his works, free of jargon and prejudice seems possible. As most contributions in this volume will show, there is still a lot to untangle and explicate in Lacan’s complex theories. If Lacan is difficult, he is perhaps not so difficult.

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One might distinguish between three types of difficulty. The first is stylistic: Lacan is a notoriously obscure writer who loves witty epigrams, puns, drawn-out metaphors, recondite allusions, baroque disquisitions, and paradoxical pronouncements. As early as 1938, the editors of an encyclopedia felt the need to rewrite his scientific contribution several times. The second is genetic: Lacan's concepts were elaborated (often in groups and seminars) over five decades of intense research and experimentation; they thus underwent important transformations, which is why a good "introductory dictionary" to his concepts has been obliged to distinguish historical layers and periods when discussing terms like "desire," "jouissance," the "phallus," the "*objet a*" – to name only fundamental concepts. A loaded term like the "big Other" (*le grand Autre*) will not carry the same meaning in 1955 as in 1970, for instance, and it would be very hard to reintroduce the "barred Other" or the "jouissance of the Other" into the canonical texts from 1953 or 1957. Lacan, on the other hand, would claim that he had never swerved from a straight route, and thanks to Jacques-Alain Miller's clever use of structural schemata and thematic recurrences, managed to make *Écrits*, a collection of very different texts written from 1936 to 1966, look almost like a coherent system. A third difficulty will hence be more contextual than conceptual: given the high frequency of references to other writers and Lacan's close association with thinkers as diverse as Claude Lévi-Strauss, Roman Jakobson, Martin Heidegger, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Françoise Dolto, Jean Genet, Philippe Sollers, or Julia Kristeva, not to mention the younger philosophers and mathematicians he worked with in the seventies, quite often one needs to reconstruct a whole intellectual atmosphere to read a single seminar. It is not only the fact that his work presupposes the kind of familiarity with the history of philosophy that most French students are forcefully fed at high-school level, but also that the network of his arcane references would imply a whole education of its own. Thus it is not only a knowledge of Aristotle, Kant, and de Sade that will be needed to grasp the intricacies of a really "seminal" text like *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis* but also, for instance, an idea of twelfth-century courtly love, a familiarity with the writings of female mystics, or with Bataille's concept of *dépense*.

However, a number of recent guides, introductions, dictionaries, commentaries, close readings of individual texts, and seminars have paved the way to a more realistic appraisal of Lacan's work. The time of simple exegesis has passed; we do not need yet another account of Saussure's binaries or a summary of ternaries like Imaginary, Symbolic, and Real. Although these notions obviously need to be understood, what matters today is how productive they are. It is less a matter of defining deliberately elusive concepts like "the Other" than of understanding their dynamic usage in several contexts.

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Indeed, by a curious twist, Lacan's fortune in the English-speaking world was due to literary critics or to writers dealing with visual culture, who saw, for instance, in the theory of the gaze developed in *Seminar XI* the best way of talking about film, more often than not in the context of the American *film noir*. The impact of a philosopher like Slavoj Žižek on cultural studies has systematized the theories of a later Lacan, more gnomic and paradoxical, who could be adduced to address issues of post-communism, racism, terrorism, and the political upheavals of a world undergoing a fast and painful globalization.

What was lost as a consequence, or seen as dated at best, was the reference to a psychoanalytic "experience" that is recurrent in Lacan's texts. After I had asserted that some knowledge of Freud was a prerequisite for understanding Lacan, and that Lacan himself would spend a lot of time seeing patients, one of my students noted that she had forgotten when reading Lacan and Žižek that one could indulge in such an old-fashioned thing as having people lying upon a couch to chat to a psychoanalyst. She cried out in desperation: "I thought that this was only done in the nineteenth century!" Indeed, all this may send us back to a superannuated mythology, what with the beard, the quizzical stare behind glasses, the fat cigar, strange clothes, and sick jokes, not to mention the Bela Lugosi accent from Transylvania that is absolutely necessary for pseudo-Viennese jokes like "Vat is dhere between Fear and Sex? . . . – *Fünf!*" – a mythology to which Lacan added his own bizarre arithmetic, claiming that he could only count to four in his interlocked Borromean knots. For those who may not know German, *vier*, pronounced like "fear," is four, *fünf* is five, and *sechs* (pronounced "zex" or, in Austrian German, "sex") is six. But even jokes force us to revisit the same ground, and lead us to explore anew the crucial interaction between the clinical and the theoretical. This is why the majority of contributors to this volume are psychoanalysts who also teach and write. By exploring Lacanian concepts such as the "mirror stage," the "letter," the "mathemes," the "symptom," "desire," "jouissance," "the phallus," or the "formulas of sexuation," they will guide us on the many paths of Lacan's map of the modern soul. In their different ways and styles, they remind us that if the unconscious exists, it is not simply located in our brains, in packs of neurons or chemical reactions triggered by hormones, but more fundamentally, because we are born into language and are therefore what Lacan called "*parlêtres*" – speaking, suffering, and desiring beings.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

*Note:* English translations quoting texts without any mention of a published English-language translation are from the French original and provided by the contributors.

- AE* Jacques Lacan, *Autres écrits*, edited by Jacques-Alain Miller (Paris: Seuil, 2001).
- E* Jacques Lacan, *Écrits* (Paris: Seuil, 1966).
- E/S* Jacques Lacan, *Écrits, A Selection*, translated by Alan Sheridan (London: Tavistock Publications, 1977).
- PP* Jacques Lacan, *De la psychose paranoïaque dans ses rapports avec la personnalité, suivi de Premiers écrits sur la paranoïa* (Paris: Seuil, 1975).
- S I* Jacques Lacan, *Seminar I, Freud's Papers on Technique*, edited by Jacques-Alain Miller, translated and annotated by John Forrester (New York: Norton, 1998).
- S II* Jacques Lacan, *Seminar II, The Ego in Freud's Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis*, edited by Jacques-Alain Miller, translated by Sylvana Tomaselli and annotated by John Forrester (New York: Norton, 1998).
- S III* Jacques Lacan, *Seminar III, Psychoses*, edited by Jacques-Alain Miller, translated and annotated by Russell Grigg (New York: Norton, 1993).
- S VII* Jacques Lacan, *Seminar VII, The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, edited by Jacques-Alain Miller, translated and annotated by Dennis Porter (New York: Norton, 1992).
- S XI* Jacques Lacan, *Seminar XI, The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, edited by Jacques-Alain Miller, translated by Alan Sheridan (London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1977).

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- S XX Jacques Lacan, *On Feminine Sexuality, the Limits of Love and Knowledge 1972–1973. Encore, the Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XX*, edited by Jacques-Alain Miller, translated and annotated by Bruce Fink (New York: Norton, 1998).
- SE Sigmund Freud, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, translated from the German under the general editorship of James Strachey, in collaboration with Anna Freud, Alix Strachey, and Alan Tyson, 24 vols. (London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1955).
- T *Television*. Edited by Joan Copjec, translated by Denis Hollier, Rosalind Krauss, and Annette Michelson, and *A Challenge to the Psychoanalytic Establishment*, translated by Jeffrey Mehlman (New York: Norton, 1990).



## CHRONOLOGY OF LACAN'S LIFE

- 1901     *13 April* Birth of Jacques-Marie Emile Lacan, the first child of Alfred Lacan (1873–1960) and Emilie Baudry (1876–1948). The middle-class Roman Catholic family has settled at 95 boulevard Beaumarchais in Paris. The father is overseeing a prosperous food business that his family started a century earlier with a reputed vinegar company, expanding later into the commerce of pickled goods, mustard, brandy, rum, and coffee.
- 1902     Birth of Raymond, Lacan's brother, who dies two years later.
- 1903     *25 December* Birth of Madeleine, Lacan's sister.
- 1907     Lacan enters the very select Collège Stanislas, a Marist college catering to the Parisian bourgeoisie, a year earlier than Charles de Gaulle, who is a student there in 1908–9. At Collège Stanislas, Lacan receives a solid primary and secondary education with a strong religious and traditionalist emphasis. He completes his studies in 1919.
- 25 December* Birth of Marc-Marie, Lacan's second brother.
- 1915     During the war, Alfred Lacan is drafted as a sergeant, and parts of the Collège Stanislas are converted into a hospital for wounded soldiers. Lacan starts reading Spinoza.
- 1917–8   Lacan is taught philosophy by Jean Baruzi, a remarkable Catholic thinker who wrote a dissertation on Saint John of the Cross.
- 1918     Lacan loses his virginity and starts frequenting intellectual bookshops like Adrienne Monnier's Maison des amis des livres and Sylvia Beach's Shakespeare and Company at rue de l'Odéon. New interests in Dadaism and the avant-garde.
- 1919     *Autumn* Lacan enters the Paris medical faculty and studies medicine.
- 1920     Lacan meets André Breton and acquaints himself with the Surrealist movement.

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- 1921 Lacan is discharged from military service because of excessive thinness.  
*7 December* Lacan hears the lecture on Joyce's *Ulysses* by Valéry Larbaud with readings from the text, an event organized by La maison des amis des livres, and at which James Joyce is present.
- 1925 *January 20* Madeleine, Lacan's sister, marries Jacques Houlon. Soon after, they move to Indochina.
- 1926 *4 November* The first French Freudian society, the Société psychanalytique de Paris, is created. By a curious coincidence, it is the day of Lacan's first clinical presentation in front of Théophile Alajouanine and other doctors. Lacan co-authors his first paper with Alajouanine and Delafontaine on the Parinaud syndrome, published in the *Revue neurologique*.
- 1927–8 Clinical training in psychiatry at the Clinique des maladies mentales et de l'encéphale, a service linked with the Sainte-Anne hospital in Paris and directed by Henri Claude.
- 1928 Lacan co-authors with M. Trénel an article on "Abasia in a case of war trauma" in the *Revue neurologique*. He publishes with J. Lévy-Valensi and M. Meignant a paper on "hallucinatory delirium." Altogether, between 1928 and 1930, he co-authors five more neurological studies based on psychiatric cases. Engagement to Marie-Thérèse Bergerot, to whom he will dedicate his 1932 doctoral thesis with a line of thanks in Greek, the other dedicatee being his brother. Clinical training at the Paris Police Special Infirmary for the Insane under the supervision of Gaëtan Gatian de Clérambault, whose unconventional style of teaching will exert a lasting influence on Lacan.
- 1929 In spite of Lacan's disapproval, his brother enters the Benedictine order at the abbey of Hautecombe on the Lake Bourget. He takes his vows on 8 September 1931, and changes his first name to Marc-François.
- 1929–31 Clinical training at the Hospital Henri Rousselle.
- 1930 *July* Arranges to meet Salvador Dalí who has published "The rotten donkey" in July 1930. His poetic praise of paranoia has attracted Lacan's attention. Lacan and Salvador Dalí remain friends all their lives. Friendship with the novelist Pierre Drieu La Rochelle. From 1929 to 1933 Lacan is the lover of Olesia Sienkiewicz, Drieu's estranged second wife.  
*August–September* Lacan takes a two-month training course at the Burghölzli clinic in Zürich.

## CHRONOLOGY

- 1931     18 June Lacan examines Marguerite Pantaine-Anzieu, who has been admitted to Sainte-Anne hospital after stabbing the actress Huguette Duflos. Lacan calls her Aimée and makes her case the cornerstone of his doctoral dissertation.
- 1932     Publication of Lacan's translation of Freud's "Some neurotic mechanisms in jealousy, paranoia and homosexuality" for the *Revue française de psychanalyse*.  
 June Lacan begins his analysis with Rudolph Loewenstein.  
 November Lacan defends his thesis on paranoia, published as *De la psychose paranoïaque dans ses rapports avec la personnalité* (Paris: Le François, 1932).
- 1933     Lacan publishes a sonnet, "Hiatus Irrationalis," in *Le Phare de Neuilly* 3/4. He meets Marie-Louise Blondin, the sister of his friend Sylvain Blondin.  
 October Lacan attends Alexander Kojève's seminar on Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* at the Ecole pratique des hautes études. There he meets Georges Bataille and Raymond Queneau, both of whom will remain friends. He publishes "The problem of style and the psychiatric conception of paranoid forms of experience" and "Motivations of paranoid crime: the crime of the Papin sisters" in the Surrealist journal *Le Minotaure* 1 and 3/4.
- 1934     Lacan sees his first patient.  
 29 January Marriage with Marie-Louise Blondin.  
 November Lacan becomes a candidate member of the Société psychanalytique de Paris.
- 1936     3 August Lacan attends the 14th congress of the International Psychoanalytic Association at Marienbad, where he presents his paper on the mirror stage. After ten minutes, he is brutally interrupted by Ernest Jones. Quite upset, Lacan leaves the conference. He will never submit his text for publication.
- 1937     8 January Birth of Caroline, first child of Lacan and Marie-Louise Blondin.
- 1938     Lacan writes a long article on the family for the *Encyclopédie française*. The essay, commissioned by Henri Wallon and Lucien Febvre, is found too dense and has to be rewritten several times. Its final title is "Family complexes in the formation of the individual. An attempt at analysis of a function in psychology" ("Les Complexes familiaux dans la formation de l'individu. Essai d'analyse d'une fonction en psychologie", *AE*, pp. 23–84).

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- Lacan starts a relationship with Sylvia Maklès-Bataille, who has separated from Georges Bataille in 1934.  
*December* Lacan finishes his analysis with Loewenstein and is made a full member of the Société psychanalytique de Paris.
- 1939 *27 August* Birth of Thibaud, second child of Lacan and Marie-Louise Blondin.
- 1940 *June* When the Vichy regime is put in place, the Société psychanalytique de Paris (despite some efforts at imitating the German Psychoanalytic Society) suspends all its activities.  
*26 November* Birth of Sybille Lacan, third child of Lacan and Marie-Louise Blondin.
- 1941 *Spring* Lacan moves to 5 rue de Lille, where his office will be located until his death. After his death, a commemorating plaque was put on the façade.  
*3 July* Birth of Judith Bataille, daughter of Lacan and Sylvia Maklès-Bataille.  
*15 December* Lacan and Marie-Louise Blondin are officially divorced.
- 1944 Lacan meets Jean-Paul Sartre, Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Pablo Picasso. He will remain very close to Merleau-Ponty.
- 1945 *September* Lacan travels to England, where he stays five weeks to study the practice of British psychiatry during the war. He meets W. R. Bion and is very impressed by him. Two years later, writing about this meeting, Lacan will praise the heroism of the British people during the war.
- 1946 The Société psychanalytique de Paris resumes its activities.  
*9 August* Sylvia Maklès-Bataille and Georges Bataille are officially divorced.
- 1948 Lacan becomes a member of the teaching committee of the Société psychanalytique de Paris.  
*21 November* Death of Lacan's mother.
- 1949 Lacan meets Claude Lévi-Strauss. Beginning of a long friendship.  
*17 July* Lacan attends the 16th congress of the International Psychoanalytic Association in Zürich. He presents the second version of his paper on the mirror stage (*E/S*, pp. 1–7). In a climate of ideological war between the British Kleinians and the American “Anna-Freudians” (a clear majority), the French second generation, following the philosophy of Marie Bonaparte, tries to occupy a different space. Dissident

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- luminaries include Daniel Lagache, Sacha Nacht, and Lacan, often assisted by his friend Françoise Dolto. Lacan dominates the French group and gathers around him brilliant theoreticians such as Wladimir Granoff, Serge Leclaire, and François Perrier. He gives a seminar on Freud's Dora case.
- 1951 Lacan introduces psychoanalytical sessions of variable length in his practice, a technical innovation which is condemned as soon as it becomes known to the other members of the Société psychanalytique de Paris. He begins to give weekly seminars at 3 rue de Lille.
- 2 May Lacan reads "Some reflections on the ego" to the members of the British Psycho-Analytical Society. This will be his first publication in English in the *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* (1953).
- 1951–2 Lacan gives a seminar on Freud's Wolf-Man case.
- 1952 Sacha Nacht, then president of the Société psychanalytique de Paris, proposes that a new training institute be established. He resigns as director of the institute in December and Lacan is elected interim director.
- 1952–3 Lacan gives a seminar on Freud's Rat-Man case.
- 1953 20 January Lacan is elected president of the Société psychanalytique de Paris.
- 16 June Lacan resigns as president of the Société psychanalytique de Paris. Creation of the Société française de psychanalyse (SFP) by Daniel Lagache, Françoise Dolto, and Juliette Boutonnier. Soon after, Lacan joins the SFP.
- July The members of the SFP learn that they have been excluded from the International Psycho-Analytical Association. Introduced by Lagache, Lacan gives the opening lecture at the SFP on the three registers of the Imaginary, the Symbolic, and the Real.
- 17 July Lacan and Sylvia Maklès are married.
- 26 September In his "Rome discourse," Lacan presents "Function and field of speech and language in psychoanalysis" (*E/S*, pp. 30–113, original talk in *AE*, pp. 133–64), a veritable manifesto. In this pyrotechnical display showing all the facets of his culture, Lacan introduces the doctrine of the signifier. Among many crucial theoretical pronouncements, the "Rome discourse" justifies the practice of the variable-length session. Françoise Dolto speaks after Lacan and Lagache and expresses her support for the new movement.

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- 18 *November* Lacan starts his public seminar at Sainte-Anne hospital with a close reading of Freud's papers on technique (later *S I*). He also conducts weekly clinical presentations of patients.
- 1954 Lacan visits Carl Gustav Jung in Küssnacht near Zürich. Jung tells Lacan how Freud had declared that he and Jung were "bringing the plague" to America when they reached New York in 1909, an anecdote subsequently often repeated by Lacan.
- 1955 *Easter* Accompanied by his analysand Jean Beaufret, a disciple and translator of Heidegger, Lacan pays a visit to Martin Heidegger in Freiburg and Beaufret acts as an interpreter between the two thinkers.  
*July* The International Psycho-Analytical Association rejects the SFP's petition for affiliation.  
*September* At the occasion of the Cerisy conference devoted to the work of Heidegger, Lacan invites the German philosopher and his wife to spend a few days in his country house at Guitrancourt.  
*7 November* Lacan reads "The Freudian Thing, or the meaning of the return to Freud in psychoanalysis" at the Neuro-psychiatric clinic of Vienna (*E*, pp. 401–36).
- 1956 *Winter* Publication of the first issue of *La Psychanalyse* with Lacan's "Rome discourse" and his translation of the first part of Heidegger's essay "Logos," a commentary on Heraclitus' fragment 50.
- 1957 *9 May* Lacan presents "The agency of the letter in the unconscious; or, Reason since Freud" (*E/S*, pp. 146–78) to a group of philosophy students at the Sorbonne, later published in *La Psychanalyse* (1958). Less Heideggerian and more linguistic, the paper sketches a rhetoric of the unconscious based on the relationship between signifier and signified and generates the algorithms of metaphor and metonymy corresponding to Freud's condensation and displacement.
- 1958 Lacan presents in German "Die Bedeutung des Phallus" ("The signification of the phallus" in *E/S*, pp. 281–91) at the Max-Planck-Institut in Munich.
- 1959 *July* The SFP renews its request for affiliation to the International Psycho-Analytical Association, which nominates a committee to investigate the issue.
- 1960 *15 October* Death of Lacan's father.

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- 1961 *August* A progressive reintegration of the SFP within the International Psycho-Analytical Association is accepted on the condition that Françoise Dolto and Lacan be demoted from their positions as training analysts.
- 1963 *April* Lacan publishes “Kant with Sade” in *Critique*, one of his most important theoretical essays devoted to desire, the law, and perversion (*E*, pp. 765–90).  
*August 2* The International Psycho-Analytical Association reaffirms that the SFP will lose its affiliated status if Lacan remains as a training analyst.  
*19 November* The majority of the SFP analysts accept the International Psycho-Analytical Association’s ultimatum. After ten years of teaching his seminar at Sainte-Anne, Lacan is obliged to stop. He holds a final session on “The names of the father” (*T*, pp. 80–95).
- 1964 *January* Lacan starts his seminar at the Ecole normale supérieure, rue d’Ulm, under the administrative control of the Ecole pratique des hautes études. Claude Lévi-Strauss and Louis Althusser have intervened on his behalf to secure the room. This seminar, devoted to the *Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, finds a broader and more philosophical audience.  
*June* Lacan founds the Ecole française de psychanalyse. His “Act of foundation” dramatizes his sense of heroic solitude (“I hereby found – as alone as I have always been in my relation to the psychoanalytic cause – the Ecole française de psychanalyse, whose direction, concerning which nothing at present prevents me from answering for, I shall undertake during the next four years to assure”). Three months later it changes its name to the Ecole freudienne de Paris. Lacan launches a new associative model for his school; study groups called “cartels,” made up of four or five people, are constituted, including one person who reports on the progress of the group.
- 1965 *19 January* Dissolution of the SFP.  
*June* Lacan arranges a meeting with Marguerite Duras after the publication of *The Ravishing of Lol V. Stein*, a novel that describes psychosis in terms similar to his. When they meet up late one night in a bar, he says to her enthusiastically, so as to congratulate her: “You don’t know what you are saying!”

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- 1966 *January* First issue of the *Cahiers pour l'analyse*, a review produced by younger epistemologists of the Ecole normale supérieure who publish serious articles on Lacan's concepts.  
*February–March* Lacan gives a series of lectures at six North American universities, including Columbia, Harvard, and MIT.  
*18–21 October* Lacan attends an international symposium entitled “The Languages of Criticism and the Sciences of Man” at Johns Hopkins University. He participates actively in the debate on Structuralism and presents his paper “Of structure as an inmixing of an Otherness prerequisite to any subject whatever.” In a text as dense as its title, Lacan quotes Frege and Russell, explaining that his motto that the unconscious is “structured as a language” is in fact a tautology, since “structured” and “as a language” are synonymous. He states memorably: “The best image to sum up the unconscious is Baltimore in the early morning.”  
*November* Publication of *Ecrits*. Surprisingly, the thick (924 pages) book sells very well.  
*December* Marriage of Judith Lacan and Jacques-Alain Miller.
- 1967 *9 October* Lacan launches the new procedure of the “pass” (*la passe*) as a final examination allowing one to become a training analyst in his school.
- 1968 *Autumn* Publication of the first issue of *Scilicet*, a journal whose motto is “You can know what the Ecole freudienne de Paris thinks” and in which all articles are unsigned except Lacan's.  
*December* The department of psychoanalysis is created at the University of Vincennes (later Paris VIII) with Serge Leclaire as its director.
- 1969 *March* The introduction of the practice of the “pass” as a sort of final examination provokes a rebellion at the Ecole freudienne de Paris and a splinter group is created by Lacanian “barons” such as François Périer and Piera Aulagnier.  
*November* Having been forced to leave the Ecole normale supérieure, Lacan now holds his weekly seminar at the law faculty on the place du Panthéon. It draws even bigger crowds.
- 1970 *September* Leclaire resigns as head of the department of psychoanalysis of Paris VIII and Jean Clavreul replaces him.
- 1972 *9 February* Lacan introduces the Borromean knot during his seminar, and starts pondering ways in which three interlocking circles can be tied together.



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- 1973 Publication of *Seminar XI*, the first of a series edited by Jacques-Alain Miller, at Editions du Seuil.  
*March* Prodded by a growing number of feminists among his students, Lacan introduces in his seminar the “formulas of sexuation,” which demonstrate that sexuality is not determined by biology, since another, so-called “feminine” position (i.e. not determined by the phallus) is also available to all speaking subjects next to the phallic law giving access to universality.  
*30 May* Death of Caroline Lacan-Roger in a road accident.
- 1974 The department of psychoanalysis is reorganized with Jacques-Alain Miller as its director.
- 1975 First issue of the journal *Ornicar?* It publishes Lacanian articles and the texts of some seminars.  
*16 June* Invited by Jacques Aubert, Lacan gives the opening lecture at the Paris International James Joyce Symposium. He proposes the idea of “Joyce le sinthome.”  
*November–December* Second lecture tour in the United States. Lacan goes to Yale, Columbia, and MIT, where he has discussions with Quine and Chomsky.
- 1978 *Autumn* After a minor car accident, Lacan appears tired and is often silent for long periods of time even in his seminars, in which his discourse tends to be replaced by mute demonstrations of new twists on Borromean knots.
- 1979 Creation of the Fondation du champ freudien, directed by Judith Miller.
- 1980 *January* Lacan dissolves the Ecole freudienne de Paris by a “Letter of Dissolution” mailed to all members and dated 5 January 1980. It presents Lacan as a “père sévère” (strict father) who can “persévérer” (persevere) alone. All the members of the school are invited to write a letter directly to him if they want to follow him in the creation of a new institution. He mentions the price Freud has “had to pay for having permitted the psychoanalytic group to win over discourse, becoming a church” (*T*, p. 130). The Cause freudienne is created.  
*12–15 July* Lacan presides at the first International Conference of the Fondation du champ freudien in Caracas.  
*October* Creation of the Ecole de la cause freudienne.
- 1981 *9 September* Death of Lacan in Paris at the age of eighty, from complications of cancer of the colon.

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- 1985 Jacques-Alain Miller wins a legal battle confirming his rights as editor of Lacan's *Seminars* and sole literary executor. Twenty years after Lacan's death, France has the highest ratio of psychoanalysts per capita in the world, with some five thousand analysts. There are more than twenty psychoanalytic associations in France, at least fifteen of which are Lacanian in their inspiration.