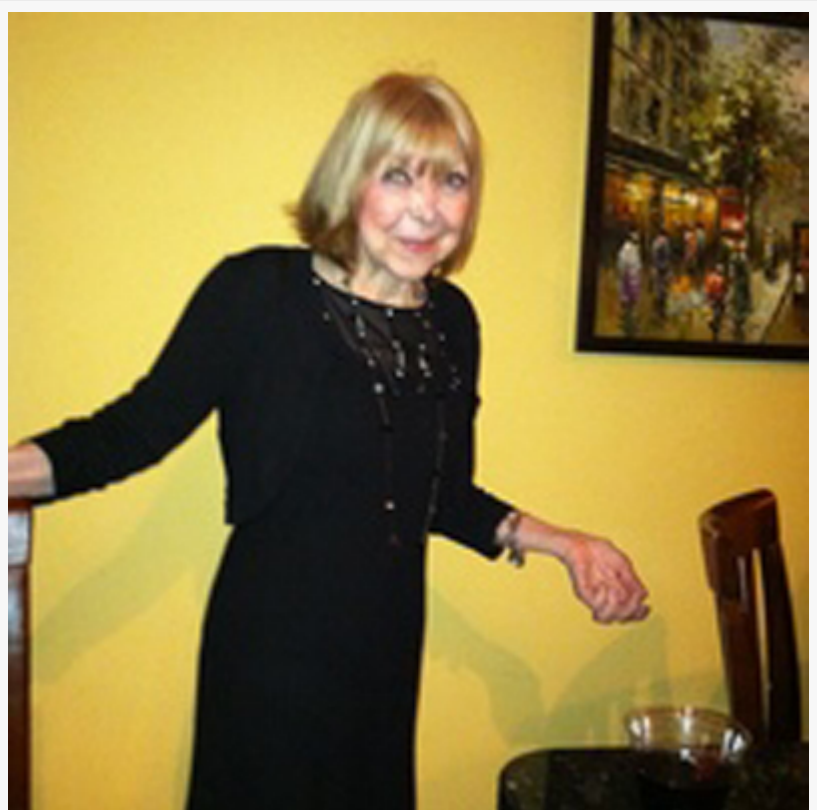


Lacanian Psychoanalyst and Author Ellie Ragland to be Featured on Close Up Radio

COLUMBIA, MO, UNITED STATES, December 2, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Ellie Ragland is a psychoanalyst who is renowned for her expertise in Jacques Lacan's rethinking and reorienting of Psychoanalysis which Freud discovered and named as such in 1896 in "Heredity and the Aetiology of the Neuroses" (SE, vol. III). Ragland began to read Lacan in 1972 when a colleague returned from France and threw two volumes of the *Œcrits* on her desk, saying that since she had done her dissertation at the University of Michigan on the interface of psychoanalysis and literature, she would surely be interested in this new and difficult teaching being disseminated in Paris in yearly oral Seminars.



Ellie Ragland has become a prominent figure in psychoanalysis by focusing particularly on Lacan's reorientation of Freud's thought. Her first book, published in 1976, used the psychoanalytical theory of reader response which did not include Lacan. During the period from 1972 on she had the privilege of reading much of Lacan's material before most Anglophones because she is bilingual in French. She had also encountered psychoanalysis as a graduate student in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Currently, she is a member of the Lacanian Compass which was founded in 2016 as a non-profit corporation whose goal matches the one Ragland set forth in 1986 as nearly the only voice on Lacan in the USA; to clarify Lacan's theories, starting with the basic ones on the structures of the mirror stage and the Father's Name signifying function. In his copious writing, Lacan was the first thinker to make clinical and theoretical sense of the cause of psychosis, a theory opposed to the biological ones in which he had been trained as a psychiatrist. Like Freud, also trained as a psychiatrist, Lacan rejected the medical direction of psychoanalytic thinking. In *Jacques Lacan and the Philosophy of Psychoanalysis* (1986), Ragland

published the first book in the Anglophone world elucidating the theories Lacan's teaching set forth. Two books on him had appeared before hers, one translating some of his case studies (1980) and another, called a square-bracketed guide to his *Œcrits* (1982), neither book explaining his theories.

The Lacanian Compass is a member of the New Lacanian School, not an institution, created in 2003 by Jacques-Alain Miller. The Compass group describes their existence as "dedicated to promoting and developing the Lacanian orientation of psychoanalysis in the USA by reconsidering and elaborating Freud as Lacan and Jacques-Alain Miller have done and are doing," linking analytic theory and clinical practice to fostering the training and supervision of psychoanalysts. The Compass works together with the World Association of Psychoanalysis of which Ellie is also a member. The WAP was founded in 1992 by Miller, the inheritor and editor of Lacan's *nachlass*, including his twenty-seven Seminars.

Ragland has established herself as a deeply influential voice in bringing attention to Lacan's use of the theories of the linguists, Ferdinand de Saussure, Roman Jakobson and others to show that the human psyche is constructed by language, not biology or neurology. Lacan demonstrated that language divides the human subject's thinking into two sometimes disconnected parts, the signifier (sounds), determining the signifieds (meaning). Language creates an unconscious memory bank that causes dreams and inserts enigmatic places in one's grasp of the knowledge her discourse creates. Insofar as language itself is divided between sound and meaning, this structure is imposed on human mentality to construct the speaking subject as split. Lacan teaches the psychoanalytic truth, that one is divided between sound and meaning, conscious and unconscious thought, although individuals tend to think of themselves as whole identities. The orientation of Lacan's thinking makes sense of Freud's focus on the unconscious that reveals itself in dreams, thus demonstrating that it is itself a body of knowledge, structured, Lacan proposed, like a language that functions as do metaphor (substitution) and metonymy (contiguity).

Ellie pursued a PhD in French language and literature, although she'd only had Latin in high school. She said she had been inspired by her grandmother's telling her to learn French because it was a "romantic" language, the grandmother not realizing that the "romance" languages come from Latin (Rome as a base). Ellie other courses were on Comparative Literature, Italian and Romance Linguistics. Graduating from Michigan with the only PhD with High Honors (in all areas) ever granted, Ellie turned her attention to the relationship between psychoanalysis and language. She was also fluent in German because she had lived there for a long period. With this background, she was able to show Anglophones how they had misread and misinterpreted Freud by their interpretations of his second topography-- id, ego and superego—leading them to interpret him as a proponent of ego psychology. By dismissing his first topography—unconscious, pre-conscious and conscious—they dismissed his discovery of the unconscious mind.

As a young student, Lacan won a national prize for his accomplishments in the German

language; thus, he read Freud easily in German and presented what he considered the true meaning of psychoanalysis--a new path for old ideas. In his Seminars from 1953 to 1980, Lacan gradually moved from the linguistic aspects of subjectivity wherein conscious language carries unconscious residues that often seem mysterious to speakers, to mathematical topology. In his "Rome Discourse," delivered in 1953, he had already begun to develop the connections between inner and outer "being" by showing their structures as separate, yet connected, as in the Möbius strip (8) and the torus, a circle surrounding itself like the handle on a coffee mug. These ideas were not analogies or metaphors, Lacan argued, but the very structures of the conscious/unconscious psyche itself. Ragland has worked with Lacan's topological thinking from 1972 on, understanding that he presents the psyche as being neither linear nor developmental: Rather, it exists on different levels and planes simultaneously. In his famous Schema L graph drawn in his second Seminar in 1954-55, Lacan depicted the identificatory ego (moi) and the speaking subject (je) as structurally divided, although connected in neighborhoods of thought and speech that seem unrelated. But, by following the logic of topology, he argued that certain invariant properties co-exist, no matter how dissimilar or distorted they may seem: They are joined in unexpected spatial ways and places, as is the Borromean knot that evolves as a three-part structure, although it is initially formed from a set of circles that are binarily linked.

In the picture he elaborates of the mind as functioning like a Borromean knot--three interlinked circles that are separate, although dependent, nonetheless, upon one another for their existence. One circle is the Imaginary aspect of thought (ego, body image) while another is the Symbolic order of language, law and convention. These interact with a register that only Lacan has enabled listeners and readers to understand, the Real order of the drives and the traumata that punch holes in the middle of being and thinking. The three circles, knotted together, surround an object at their center that Lacan named the object a; this concept refers to the "objects" that first cause desire (lack/want): the breast, the feces, the urinary flow, the (imaginary) phallus, the voice, the gaze and the nothing or the void.

Ragland began her scholarly work by publishing a book on the French comic writer François Rabelais, after having published several articles on the pedagogical importance of the professor's heeding the student's initial answers, waiting for the student to develop her or his thinking before asking him to bow to a master qua university discourse. Ragland's critical innovation in Rabelais and Panurge: a psychological approach to literary character was her argument that reading is a subjective experience, that the reader has a response to the author's words that constitutes the initial meaning of the text for her. By joining psychoanalysis to literature, Ragland's was developing a new trend in critical thought. The theory of reader response was first advanced by Norman Holland, who later hired Dr. Ragland at the University of Florida in his psychoanalytic institute for the study of the arts: Holland's idea of the dynamics of reader response was based on his psychoanalytic training at the Boston Psychoanalytic Institute.

Ragland had started to read Lacan in 1972, the year she received her PhD. She was pleased to learn that in his final teaching, he moved from the topology of surfaces in the 1960s to the

topology of knots in the 1970s. He demonstrated this by focusing on the Borromean knot whose three interjoined circles represent how the mentality of human subjectivity is constructed in a multi-layered way: identifications (I), language (S), and the drives (R) intersect. Lacan developed the Borromean clinic to validate his theory that one learns, hears, subjectively, not objectively as today's empirical science would have us believe.

Ragland's personal journey in psychoanalysis was ignited during her time at the University of Michigan where she was inspired by being introduced to Professor Frederick Wyatt from Austria who was teaching psychoanalysis at Michigan. He served on her dissertation committee, offering the support that validated her interpretation of Rabelais by combining literature and psychoanalysis. Dr. Wyatt authenticated what was to become a lifelong passion for Ellie who, as a graduate student, combined both academic rigor and practical experience by visiting a psychoanalyst. She did not want to have psychotherapy or analysis at that point but went to an analyst whom her fiancé had located for the purpose of asking for his advice on getting the fiancé's father to quit objecting to their marriage because she wasn't Jewish. The analyst made a short shrift of the fiancé but taught her something that sustains her thinking: that labels given to us throughout our lives can be re-examined and restructured. Ragland said, "My experience in psychoanalysis taught me that we're not confined to embodying the identities that others have constructed for us." This dialectical process between the analyst and analysand is what Freud named "transference."

Ellie's early encounter with psychoanalysis laid the foundation for her dedication to clinical practice, as well as pedagogy. Through reading Lacan's writings on psychoanalysis, starting with the *Œcrits* in 1972, she discovered a radically new way of thinking that illuminated already existing theories, all seeking to unfold the meaning of self, identity, human behavior, truth and knowledge. Her encounter with clinical, as well as theoretical analysis, has inspired an illustrious writing career, alongside a busy psychoanalytic practice.

Ragland has published a plethora of work addressing Lacan's complex psychoanalytic theories. Her tireless productions have made Lacan's ideas accessible to English-speaking audiences. She has organized study groups (cartels), conferences and studied for years in Paris herself. Her work stood out early on and led some ambitious others to try to prevent her success. But her unflagging and unyielding commitment to elucidating Lacan's dense teaching enabled her to publish the first book in the Anglophone world on his theories that she read in French. Lacan's teaching includes linguistics, philosophy, theology, anthropology, mathematics and many other fields, making him a modern polymath. Ragland's success has been supported by her having the privilege of working with Lacan's son-in-law and successor Jacques-Alain Miller who has himself given thirty Seminars explaining psychoanalysis, from 1981 to 2011. They are only now being published, the first one forthcoming in Dutch. Contemporary psychoanalysis in the world bases itself on the teachings of Freud, Lacan and Miller. The USA is intellectually behind in this field, not only because of the misinterpretations of Freud at the base of their practice(s), but also because the US is generally monolingual and not necessarily interested in turning to other cultures for answers to eternal problems.

Other notable books by Ragland include *Lacan and the Subject of Language*, *Essays on the Pleasures of Death: From Freud to Lacan*, *Critical Essays on JACQUES LACAN*, *Lacan: Topologically Speaking*, *The Logic of Sexuation: From Aristotle to Lacan*, *Jacques Lacan and the Logic of Structure: Topology and language in psychoanalysis*. She is currently finishing *Lacan and Hysteria: The Logic of Paradox*, forthcoming in two volumes: This book lays out a large critique of the DSM system (1952-2022), as well as presenting Lacan's logic of the structure of hysteria, one of the four discourse structures he named. Ragland also edited the first English-language journal on Lacan, *Newsletter of the Freudian Field* and a second one, *(Re)-Turn: A Journal of Lacanian Studies*.

Today, Ragland continues to write and practice and remains a key figure in the future of psychoanalytic thought and praxis. Her work keeps on advancing discussions in scholarly and analytic circles, as well as including practical forms for understanding the critical intersections of language, identity, societal constructs and the Real of symptoms and drives. Her efforts grow ever stronger in producing worldwide results that are leading to a rethinking of psycho-analysis in the ongoing dialogues on mental health around the world. Her work validates psychoanalytic perspectives far beyond the N. American mainstream medicalized psychiatric approaches and beyond the psychological concepts of the "self" that dismiss the impact of language and desire on the being one calls his or her identity.

Ellie Ragland's story is one of passion, discovery and an unyielding pursuit of knowledge about, and understanding of, her own subjectivity. Her hope is to continue to inspire future generations of psychoanalysts who will not think that "being/identity" is determined by biology (such as the brain), or that it can be easily changed through pop psychology or psychiatric meds. One can engage deeply with the questions Lacanian psychoanalysis has brought to the mainstream of world intellectual thinking and actions regarding the human condition. It is a matter of pinpointing and then, focusing on one's desire that is commensurate with a lack-in-being, something the USA calls "will-power."

Close Up Radio will feature Ellie Ragland in an interview with Doug Llewelyn on Wednesday, December 4th at 3pm EST; with Jim Masters on Wednesday, December 11th at 3pm EST; with Doug Llewelyn on Wednesday December 18th at 3pm EST; and with Jim Masters on Thursday, December 19th at 3pm EST

Listen to the show on [BlogTalkRadio](#)

If you have any questions for our guest, please call (347) 996-3389

For more information about Ellie Ragland, please visit <https://english.missouri.edu/people/ragland>

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