

CULTURAL CENTRE for FREUDIAN STUDIES and RESEARCH  
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NEWSLETTER

No. 10

MARCH / APRIL 1988

Texts sent for publication in the Newsletter must reach us by the 20th of June or the 20th of August for the next two issues respectively. Please send contributions to M. Dury's address, 69 Foyle road, London SE3 7RN

## THE FORMULAS OF SEXUATION

(The Newsletter is grateful to Bruce Fink for permission to publish this seminar given at Ivy House on 9/3/88).

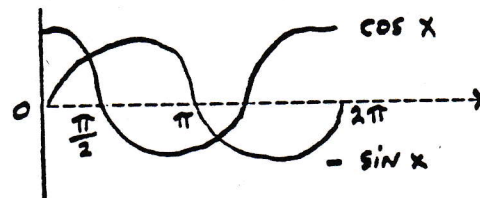
One of Lacan's most seemingly outrageous claims is that 'There's no such thing as a sexual relationship'. For we speak all the time about sexual relationships, and it seems rather far-fetched to sustain that they are simply illusory.

The two terms here which are problematic are 'sexual' and 'relationship':

For 'sexual' here indicates that we are talking about relationships between men in so far as they are men, *qua* masculine, and women in so far as they are women. There are plenty of other sorts of relationships between men and women: you may have a relationship with the man or woman who lives next door to you insofar as you are neighbours, send your children to the same school, etc. You may even make love at times, which may involve a relationship between bodies of two anatomically different sexes, but in psychoanalysis, biology never has the last word concerning masculinity and femininity. Nor does bodily contact mean that the partners are thereby related in so far as they are masculine and feminine.

And we have to consider what Lacan means when he uses the term 'relationship' (*rapport*). We might think that we would have something along the lines of a relationship between men and women if we could define them in terms of one another, if, for example, 2 times women = man; or if they could be defined in terms of a simple inversion, like activity/passivity (which was Freud's version albeit unsatisfactory even to his mind). We might even hope to associate masculinity with a sin curve and femininity with a cosin curve, for that would allow us to write something we might take to be a sexual relationship as follows:

$$\sin^2 x + \cos^2 x = 1$$



Here, despite the heterogeneity of the masculine and feminine curves, despite their phase-lag, we can combine them in such a way as to make them equal one. But according to Lacan, no such equation is possible: nothing which would qualify as a true relationship between the sexes can be written.

For there is always some sort of mediation: a third term must be introduced in defining masculinity and femininity: the phallus. Not the male sexual organ, but rather the symbol or signifier 'phallus' in Freud's work; in Lacan's, the phallic function.

We might also think that if we could define men and women in the same way with respect to the phallus, we could then say that they occupy analogous positions - that they are looking for the same things; putting them more or less in the position of the masses in their relation to the leader that Freud proposes in his book Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego.

But there is no such parallel relationship in relation to the phallus for men and women. Let us see how Lacan lays out the dissymmetry:

$$\begin{array}{c} \text{Men} \\ \exists x \overline{\exists x} \\ \forall x \exists x \end{array}$$

$$\begin{array}{c} \text{Women} \\ \exists x \overline{\exists x} \\ \forall x \exists x \end{array}$$

In order to understand these formula we must first decipher what  $\exists x$  refers to, seeing as how it appears in each and everyone of them. Lacan calls it the phallic function and says at one point that this function amounts to castration. (Ou pire). He claims, however, at the same time not to know what castration is! He makes a sort of disclaimer, predicting that in his saying that it's castration, his public will think they have understood the whole situation, whereas to his mind castration is extremely complicated. Lacan gives a thoroughly contradictory or at least alternative reading of the phallic function in other texts, at times even seeming to move back and forth between readings.

$\exists x$  = symbolic castration

Our first gloss in any case will be as follows:  $\exists x$  not negativised means 'falls under the blow of castration'. The castration in question here, in the formulas  $\forall x \exists x$  and  $\forall x \exists x$ , we'll take to be symbolic castration, i.e. as the subject's alienation in language, generally represented as  $\$$ , applying equally to men and women.

$\overline{\exists x}$  = Foreclosure of the phallic function.

$\overline{\exists x}$  does not have the same meaning by any means, at least not when it comes to women. We are tipped off as to the unusual status of this negation, as we know that for Lacan the phallus cannot be negativised - the phallus in so far as symbol can in no sense suffer negativisation. When Lacan discusses this formula, he talks at times about the 'impossibility of the inscription of the phallic function.' The negation involved in this upper tier of Lacan's formulas immediately invokes the question of writing, postulating a level at which the phallic function can in no way, shape or form be founded or inscribed. The phallic function is inoperative here: it is foreclosed. The negation involved here is one which has to do with the real.

In discussing the formula  $\overline{\exists x} \exists x$  Lacan says that a woman, for obvious reasons, cannot be castrated in the real: she does not have the real organ in question and thus cannot lose it in the real. This is fairly mysterious as a reading of this formula - which we might otherwise be inclined to read as 'no woman escapes castration', 'not a single woman ever escapes castration'. Perhaps we can postulate that here Lacan meets Freud, agreeing in a sense that a woman is always already castrated in the real, has always already been deprived of or lost the penis, explaining her uncastratability at that level. But the point is open to a variety of interpretations. There is a symbolic interpretation of this formula as well, which we shall come to further on.

$\overline{\forall x}$  in the formula for men can less clearly be situated solely in the real: on the one hand we can read it as stating that 'there exists at least one man who has in fact been castrated', whose real organs have been cut off. This would be the mythic father of the primal horde who is killed: he is emasculated by the sons, in other words, killed qua masculine.

This interpretation would allow us to situate  $\overline{\forall x}$  as bearing upon the real, the real organs, but does not account for the foreclusive nature of the negation involved here: whereas Lacan describes the bar over the quantifier as discordance, he describes that over the phallic function as foreclosure, and foreclosure generally implies the exclusion of something symbolic from the symbolic register itself.

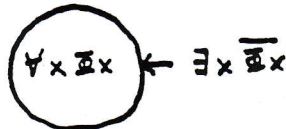
## Men

Every man; all men

To account for the foreclusive nature of this negation, let us begin by taking up the two formulas in the male camp.  $\forall x \overline{\forall x}$  is to read, on at least one level, as 'every man falls under the blow of castration', in other words, 'all men are subject to symbolic castration'.

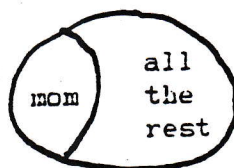
At least one.

The 'at least one' asserted in the formula above it,  $\exists x \overline{\forall x}$ , which Lacan claims corresponds to necessity in modal logic, can then be read as setting a limit to the universal, 'every man'. there is one man - and this time we'll give an interpretation which concerns the symbolic register - who is not subject to symbolic castration. He is the exception who proves the rule - as Pierce says, 'a rule has no meaning without a limit' - and we can represent him as the border around a topological space:

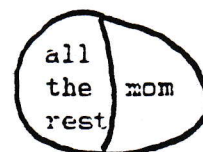


While all men are marked by symbolic castration, there nonetheless exists or persists one man to whom the phallic function does not apply, one man who was never put into his place by succumbing to symbolic castration. He is not subject to the law; he is his own law. He is not constrained to try to escape the grasp of the law, to break the law so as to jouir. he comes to serve as the very foundation of the law for the sons after they murder him. As the father of the primal horde, he controls all the women. He has access to his sisters, his daughters and even to his mother; he is the father for whom nothing is off-limits, nothing is prohibited. He is the father who, in a sense, never had a father; he is the man to whom no one ever said NO! He is the only one for whom the set of all women exists, as he has access to them all without exception; all women are for him on a par; they can be grouped into one and the same class.

Lacan, however, never uses a universal when it comes to providing mathemes to describe women. This has to do with their own structure, which is different from men's, but we can also note that as far as the men one actually comes across are concerned ( $\forall x \exists x$ ). the set of all women does not exist, for women break down into at least two different categories: their mother and all the rest. Whereas we can talk about all women for the primal father: there is always a subdivision for all other men:



or  
even



The mother can absolutely not be grouped with all other women, though obviously a man's relationships with all other women will be heavily coloured by his relation with his mother. The primal father is not assumed to enjoy himself more with his mother because she is his mother - perhaps we shouldn't even talk about his having one. She is virtually undistinguishable from all other women, and that is why Lacan mentions Oedipus here: his wife was his mother!. He thus fits the bill here as one who, at least momentarily, was not subject to symbolic castration. He of course suffers for that transgression: he is led to blind himself, and clearly his gesture of destroying his eyes can be seen as a form of real castration, of castration in the real.

Mathemes.

Oedipus allows us to glimpse some of the duplicity of Lacan's matheme  $\phi x$ . Lacan, we might say, doesn't know how to leave alone well enough. Whenever he introduces a new symbol with a specific meaning, he keeps coming back to it, almost obsessively, developing it by accretion with the most varied glosses. If at first he takes it to operate in the symbolic register, the next gloss will concern the real, the third, the imaginary, and the fourth will have to do with something else altogether. The result is a sort of sedimentation of multiple meanings, all of which have to be kept in mind, but which must all be separated and laid out individually, if one is to use them for any particular purpose.

It seems to me that this is intimately related, in fact, to the nature of Lacan's mathemes; for on the one hand, whatever matheme one chooses, some of the meaning Lacan meant to attribute to it gets lost in the process of translation, commentary and explanation: inevitably so. The only thing which is integrally transmitted is the inscription itself, the formula or symbol. Had Lacan developed an algebra with a complete set of rules, there would then have been severe limits set as to the kinds of things one could write using his symbols; but as such a set of rules was never spelled out, as his symbols are simply buoyed up by his many-levelled discourse about them, their interpretation remains to some extent wide open.

### Trans-miss(ability).

But while Lacan's goal of integral transmissability is satisfied only by the literality of his mathemes - only the letter of his formulas being preserved 100% - they at the same time allowed him a starting point for virtually limitless commentary. Their written aspect allowed him to leave aside the first glosses he'd given them, providing a springboard for further reflection; he devoted a lot of time to drawing out what we might call the unintentional consequences of the graphs he drew and the formulas he wrote: consequences related to their very literality.

So while it is clear that the meaning of Lacan's mathemes is in no sense integrally transmittable, the written formulas themselves are, and we have to try and preserve something of their hieroglyphic nature - allowing us a type of access to non-sense, to something beyond the register of meaning - even while we try to take them apart little by little to understand the many different strata of meaning.

### Real and Symbolic castration.

Oedipus, insofar as he can be situated at  $\overline{\text{p}}\text{x}$ , thus did not at first succumb to symbolic castration - he said no to the phallic function, refusing to be like other men in yielding to their fathers' castration threats, giving up their mothers and finding other women to cathect. But, reading  $\overline{\text{p}}\text{x}$  as real castration, castration of the testicles, we see that Oedipus did succumb to castration in the real.  $\overline{\text{p}}\text{x}$ , in this sense, is the representative of the phallus in the real, i.e. the penis or male genitalia in general, and  $\overline{\text{p}}\text{x}$  thus designates anatomical emasculation - as we already pointed out in the case of women:  $\overline{\text{p}}\text{p}\text{x}$ , where we saw that no woman can be really castrated.

We can easily see in the case of the primal father, how these two glosses go hand in hand: whereas the omnipotent father of the primal horde gets murdered by the sons, thereby being emasculated on the level of the real, he is even more powerful after his death as father; he becomes the basis of the law, he becomes God for his henceforth guilty sons. In the symbolic register he is absolutely uncastratable, bringing the law to bear upon each and every one of his sons.

Every man is defined by both formulas.

Now part of the originality of Lacan's use of these quantifiers is that he gives one interpretation of them in terms of quantity, but another which introduces a different paradigm. For we can sustain here that each and every man taken alone is defined by both of these formulae, not simply by the universal stipulating that all men fall under the blow of castration. A man is entirely determined by the phallic function, and yet every man is still in some sense a little Oedipus: he wants what the primal father had; he wants his mother to be accessible to him just as every woman was accessible to the father of the primal horde.

We could talk here about the primal identification with the father, the oral incorporative identification which is the first of the three identifications Freud lays out in his chapter on identification in Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego, or a primary link with the Name of the Father. Whatever the case may be, this incestuous desire, repressed with the dissolution of the Oedipus complex, remains, like all other repressed wishes, eternally intact in the unconscious. He may come to successfully substitute other women for his mother, but it doesn't stop him from wanting his mother, on some level, all the same.

'Il y a de l'Un' and  $\exists x \bar{x}$ .

Let me point out in passing the affinity between this  $\exists x \bar{x}$  and Lacan's 'il y a' expressions, especially his 'il y a de l'Un'. If castration can be conceived of as something which decompletes, fractures or fractionalises this positing that there is such a thing as One, then this affirmation of the existence of oneness or of the One as such is tantamount to an assertion of the existence of something which comes before castration or something which is somehow beyond castration - in any case, a scene or a locus or a postulated temporal moment where castration is inoperative, does not come into play. Castration, in a Lacanian perspective, is always the position from which we evaluate what might have been before and what will have been at some later time. The necessity associated with the affirmation that there is such a thing as One - its apodictic nature - points, it seems to me, to the impossibility of conceiving how we got where we are now without that postulate, without that existence. The type of one implied here would seem to be the one of unity, of a whole - a sort of mythical unity preceding the constitution of the subject as manque-à-être, as a want-to-be, in other words as lacking, or as missing something.

For the primal father nothing lacks.

Women.

Let us have a look now at the side of the equations dealing with women. Any of you familiar with Jacqueline Rose's translations of Lacan's work on Feminine Sexuality will already have noticed that I do not follow her translation of 'il y a de l'Un' - for which she provides the ambiguous phrase 'There is something of One'. We shall see if we can improve on this and other translations.

'Pas-tout'.

This is particularly important for the phrase 'pas-tout'. If we translate Lacan's pas-tout as meaning 'not all' or 'not every', we obviously capture one of its possible meanings in French, but we haven't in any sense accounted either for Lacan's introduction of a new way of writing negation in logic, or for his reinterpretation of the quantifiers as not concerning quantity.

If we say 'Not every woman is B' or 'Not all women are B' what is to stop us from simply writing that as:

$$\sim \forall x (Ex)$$

using the tilde, classical logic's sign of negation?

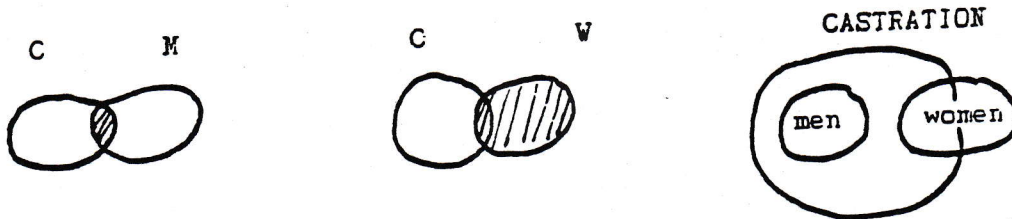
The key here seems to me to understand the pas-tout as: not the whole of, not entirely, not completely.

Given any woman x, she isn't entirely determined by the phallic function: part of her falls under the blow of castration - and it is this part of her, determined by her relation to the phallus, which is in question when we talk about phallic jouissance, the kind of jouissance common to both men and women which revolves around the phallus.

So given any woman x, part of her is determined by the phallic function, but not all of her. When Lacan says 'La femme n'est pas toute', rather than translate: 'Women aren't all' or 'women aren't everything', something a guy might tell a friend of his disappointed or disabused by love - it seems to me that we have to say 'women are not whole', women are neither wholly determined by the phallic function, nor wholly free of it: they are neither entirely under the sway of castration nor entirely exempt from it.

In contrast to men who are determined by castration from top to bottom, so to speak. Lacan's universal for men can be read as saying that men are wholly, entirely and completely under the sway of castration (though of course there is nonetheless that part of every man which protests, which says no to castration). Lacan moves away from a dialectic of all and some to one of parts and wholes.

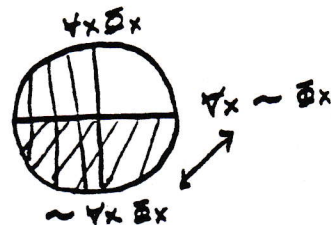
Coming back to women we can now say that given any woman x, part of her is capable of another kind of jouissance, what Lacan calls 'l'Autre jouissance', an Other jouissance. I'll explain what this might be a bit further on. For the moment let us represent the relation between castration and men and women, as follows:



The Difference between  $\forall x \phi x$  and  $\exists x \bar{\phi} x$ .

We have gone a long way towards distinguishing  $\forall x \phi x$  and  $\exists x \bar{\phi} x$ . Had we taken Lacan's bars of negation as equivalent to classical logic's negative sign ( $\sim$ ), we would have been forced to equate these two mathemes. The formulas for men and women would have been identical, with a simple displacement in the table. We have shown that  $\phi x$  works solely in the symbolic register while its negation or foreclosure can be situated now in the symbolic, now in the real - we could no doubt characterise it as something of a border phenomenon. And whereas  $\exists x \bar{\phi} x$  positively declares the existence of something which evades castration's grasp,  $\forall x \phi x$  posits that not all of woman can be inscribed in the realm of castration, carefully avoiding the question of existence. Peircian logic shows that neither a universal affirmative nor a universal negative implies existence:

Peirce's circle



Both mathemes argue for something outside of or beyond castration, but in very different ways. Whereas one asserts the existence of something beyond, the other doesn't even really go so far as to suggest the possibility of a beyond, contenting itself with denying a type of totalisation, denying the possibility of totalisation.

$\bar{\forall} x \phi x$ .

Looking now at the other formula defining femininity, we can provide a gloss involving the symbolic register as follows: there has never been a woman for whom the phallic function is totally inoperative. As in the case of men  $\exists x \bar{\phi} x$  provided a limit for  $\forall x \phi x$ , so  $\bar{\forall} x \phi x$  here constitutes a limit for  $\forall x \phi x$ : if not all of a woman comes under the sway of castration, one could be led to suppose that in fact none of her does. For this 'not all of a woman' can be construed in two different ways: 'some but not all of a woman' or 'not all and perhaps even none of a woman'. Interpreting  $\forall x$  as the whole of x,  $\bar{\forall} x$  allows us to write  $\bar{\forall} x \phi x$  for a woman alongside  $\forall x \phi x$ , the conjunction asserting that not all of a woman comes under the sway of castration and in fact none of her does.

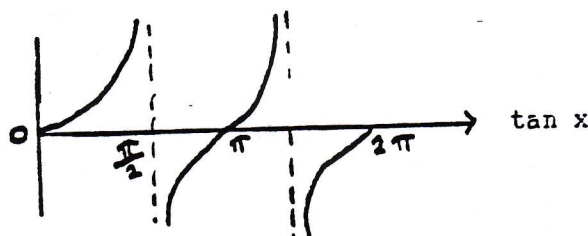


But since Lacan provides  $\overline{\exists x \overline{\forall x}}$  as the other matheme defining women, this possibility is ruled out. There is no such woman for whom castration is totally out of the question - no woman is totally uncastratable. There is no exception allowed here, as was the case in the men's camp.

Viewing  $\exists x$  again for a moment as the real penis, and  $\overline{\forall x}$  as anatomical castration, our first gloss was that no woman can be really castrated, as she doesn't have the appropriate organs to begin with. But nevertheless, there is not one single woman who totally escapes symbolic castration. And yet woman is not entirely ruled by the phallus. She thus seems to be essentially dual in nature as does her jouissance.

**No existential quantifier for the Other jouissance.**

However, Lacan does not go quite as far as that, for this Other jouissance is never given an existential quantifier concerning it, as is done in the case of men. He never says there is an Other jouissance or that this other hypothetical part of woman exists: he says we are led to postulate it, to think it, in much the same way that Parmenides and Plato were burdened with the task of thinking non-being, or trying to figure out what kind of status to assign to non-being. The fact that there is phallic jouissance obliges us to think that there may be some other type of jouissance, and Lacan refers to the passage in Ovid's Metamorphoses, where Jupiter says to Juno that there is no doubt in his mind that the voluptuousness or pleasure she experiences is greater than a man's (Book III, lines 320 ff), and calls upon Tiresias, who was transformed into a woman for 7-8 years, to corroborate his belief. Lacan remarks that though many women analysts have broached the question, the debate has never gotten beyond the untenable distinction between clitoral and vaginal orgasm. Lacan suggests that while we cannot positively assert the existence of other jouissance, we can speculate to some extent about its nature.



**Phallic Jouissance = Organ Pleasure.**

Whereas phallic jouissance is, according to Lacan, the jouissance of the sexual organs, of the genitalia, be it a man's or a woman's - and let me just mention in passing that this is the gloss he provides in 1971-73 which is somewhat revised later - Lacan uses the expression corporal jouissance to talk about this Other jouissance, implying pleasure which is more diffuse, widespread, and all-encompassing, something which brings more of the body - if not all of the body - into play.

## The contingency of the Other jouissance.

The Other jouissance implied in the formula 'not all of x such that  $\phi$  of x' is considered by Lacan to be contingent - a woman doesn't necessarily experience this Other jouissance. But it seems that some of them do, and perhaps all of them can potentially. Assuming we recall that not everyone who can be situated on the right hand side of our first table is biologically speaking a woman! Women who, from an anatomical point of view, are women, may well have a masculine structure, and vice versa.

## Ecstasy.

The main example Lacan provides in discussing this Other jouissance is that of saints and mysticism. He suggests that it's no accident that women analysts haven't breathed a word about this Other jouissance, because nothing can be said about it. The traces we seem to have of it in mysticism point to the ineffability of this Other jouissance. The Greek  $\epsilon\kappa\tau\rho\alpha\iota\sigma\iota\varsigma$ , which came to refer to ecstatic states of mind and the like, originally meant something more like standing outside, or stepping-outside-oneself, and is closely related, etymologically speaking, to the term existence. We might propose that this Other jouissance, insofar as it takes the form of ecstasy or mystical rapture, be thought of as ex-sisting, as somehow insisting from the outside - the outside being defined as that which does not fall under the reign of the phallus, under the reign of logos.

## Phallic jouissance for men, Other jouissance for women?

The question then, is why that should stop us from asserting that there is such a thing as a sexual relationship. Why couldn't there be a specifically male jouissance and a specifically female jouissance - everyone would have their own, and everybody would be happy, no? Well for one thing, whereas phallic jouissance is sexual, the Other jouissance is not - it seems to directly concern the Other and the body, but it is not sexual in Lacan's mind.

And the fact is that jouissance is never all that pleasant to begin with - it is really rather bothersome, involving the type of excitation which Freud claimed man automatically tries to discharge, and which Lacan claims man is able to avoid at times by sleeping - sleeping involving disconnecting oneself from one's bodily jouissance. And what's more, this Other jouissance isn't simply another jouissance, an extra one which maybe one experiences or maybe one doesn't : it colours all jouissance; in its turn it becomes the central (or ex-centric) reference point of all jouissance. Were there nothing but phallic jouissance for both men and women, maybe a sexual relationship could exist. But according to Lacan, this Other jouissance is indecent, unbecoming to a sexual relationship. It is precisely because this Other jouissance speaks - or announces itself - that a sexual relationship does not exist.

The fact is that phallic jouissance itself does not in any sense remain unscathed by the ex-sistence of this Other one. The very fact that we talk about non-being, about something which supposedly is not, has repercussions on being. Being itself is affected by the uncanny status which non-being takes on in the discourse about it. According to Lacan, the very lack of this Other jouissance, its very inexistence, makes the axe fall on phallic jouissance. His axe image in Encore is no accident: this Other jouissance somehow takes the phallus out of phallic jouissance, shows up its limitation, its dependence on castration, its lack: it always leaves something to be desired.

## Phallic jouissance at fault.

The Other jouissance is thus in a sense to blame for the very insufficiency of phallic jouissance - it would have been so much better were it not for this Other jouissance showing up and ruining everything. Yet it is phallic jouissance which ultimately bears the blame for the inexistence of the Other jouissance: phallic jouissance is both at fault and defective, or inadequate. Once another jouissance has been envisaged, the blame can only be borne by the one we have, so to speak, at hand.

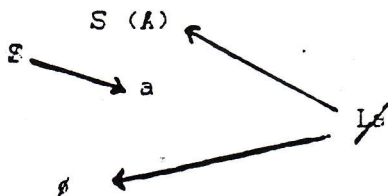
Phallic jouissance may in a sense be thought of as the kind of jouissance allowed by the superego: in a Freudian perspective, it would be the product of the Oedipal complex in boys, which prohibits a boy's jouissance of his mother, permitting only organ pleasure. At the same time it is subject to a sort of imperative: it has to be, it should be - one must experience jouissance - and Lacan defines the superego as that instance or agency which commands you to jouir. You'd better do it, or else! This Other jouissance takes the edge off phallic jouissance, takes some of the fun out of it, turning it into an obligation, a should. Phallic jouissance is regulated, channeled, quartered off to the appropriate erogenous zones, cloistered, limited, stamped, and even ordained: it gets the Good Housekeeping seal of approval!

Phallic jouissance and secondary repression, Other jouissance and primal repression.

Phallic jouissance is related to everyday repression; the other one seems to be related to primal repression and has to be kept under strict tabs. For man, the transgression of the incest taboo no doubt tends towards this other jouissance. Instead of involving simply organ pleasure, it goes against the superego's imperatives, perhaps allowing him a type of enjoyment of the body - the body being par excellence the locus of the Other - an enjoyment of the Other's body, of the body invested by the Other which is usually beyond his reach. This Other enjoyment would perhaps make society untenable and life as we know it unbearable. That is the real stuff, nonetheless - that is what unconscious desire is after. But it would not be by releasing it that a sexual relationship would come into being. If this Other jouissance did not exist in the first place, then there might be such an animal.

A psychological phase difference.

Let us put it differently: if there were to be a sexual relationship, men and women would have to relate to each other directly in some way - as men and women per se. But Freud already tells us, in describing the different kinds of things men and women are looking for in each other, that 'one forms the impression that the love of man and the love of woman are separated by a psychological phase-difference'. Woman appears on love relationships only in the guise of the mother, and she isn't satisfied until she turns her husband into a son and mothers him; he loves her for that, but it is really only his son who gets what the father wanted - the conquest of his mother's love.



Lacan spells out this phase-difference in a rather different way from Freud, explaining that man's sexual partner is object (a), and that sexuality for the man is thus wrapped up in the fantasy of the fundamental phantasy -  $S' \langle \rangle a$ . I will not try to explain exactly what that means here; let me only juxtapose it with what Lacan says about women - on the one hand, women are always to some extent tied to the phallus, but on the other hand they are drawn towards the signifier of the lack in the Other - which is to say that they are somehow related to the Other's very incompleteness, the Other as locus of language, as the supposed completeness of language or of the symbolic itself.

Now, symbolic castration for Lacan is tantamount to the fact that a human being is subjected to and dominated by the signifier, to a language which is already there before his birth and in which he must find a place for himself. Lacan claims that speaking beings are split because they speak, that repression takes place owing to man's use of the signifier.

But if women have a different relationship to language as the Other, to the Other of Language, then it seems that they must be subjected to the signifier, castrated, in a slightly different way; or we might suppose that they are not completely castrated, some part of them remaining inviolate, intact. What is striking in this respect is that in Freud, the evident asymmetry of the Oedipal and castration complexes in boys and girls leads to an important result: for girls, the superego is much milder, much less developed and all-powerful than in boys. For it is the repression ensuing upon the dissolution of the Oedipal complex - in other words the moment at which the child finally rejects the loved parent of the opposite sex in order to find a partner of the opposite sex - which, to Freud's mind, leads to the institution of an internalised prohibiting agency, and whereas for boys the Oedipal complex precedes the castration complex and is brutally undone by the latter at around the age of four, for girls the castration complex leads naturally to the Oedipal complex which may well remain largely intact until rather late in life. According to Freud, repression is thus much less operative in girls, their moral agency is weaker, and their capacity for sublimation quite inferior to that seen in boys.

**Alienation: castration is the same for everyone.**

Lacan's logic of the signifier, spelled out in two operations he terms alienation and separation (elaborated in The position of the Unconscious and in Seminar XI) would lead us to think that symbolic castration must necessarily be the same for both sexes as they are split in the same way as speaking beings. But Lacan also sustains that the 'signifier is first of all imperative', it commands (Encore, p. 33). In other words, the signifier first and foremost has a role akin to what we said earlier about the superego which says 'jouis!' - or else! If we are to believe Freud concerning the developmental asymmetry of boys and girls, if we are to believe that girls are less encumbered with this function of the signifier than boys are, then they are split differently by the signifier - and the role for them of the 'Master signifier',  $S_1$ , must be somewhat displaced when compared with men. Which is perhaps why we find  $S_1$  in the hysteric's discourse in the position of the other, and the barred or split subject,  $\$$ , in the position of agent. But this is a point which would have to be explored at great length.

If we can sustain that man's sexual partner is object (a), we could perhaps say that woman's partner is  $S \langle \rangle a$  or  $S_1$ . Which explains in a sense the privileged relation of women saints to God, for it seems that religious ecstasy is far more common in women than in men. But this too would have to be developed at great length.

I will only mention here that if their sexual partners had been identical, that is if object (a) functioned as partner for both, at least their sexual desire would be structured in some sort of parallel way, and we could try to envisage a sexual relationship between them on that basis. But whereas man's jouissance is sexual, and all sexual jouissance is phallic, woman's jouissance is asexual, her partner being a signifier: that designating the lack in the Other - the Other as non-sexed.

### Having and Being.

Let us return for a moment to the interpretation of  $\overline{p}$  as representing castration in the real. Here we can say that all men have a penis and there is at least one man, the quintessential father, who brandishes the knife, threatening to castrate his sons. In other words, the threat of castration - supposedly taken seriously by little boys upon the sight of female genitals - is embodied in the belief in a father who means business.

As I mentioned before, this interpretation of  $\overline{p}$  leads us to interpret  $\overline{p}x$  as meaning that there is not a single woman who is castrated - which is to say that women are not to be defined, from the point of view of the phallic function, as needing or able to be castrated. And it leads us to read  $\sqrt{x}$  as saying that a woman cannot entirely be the phallus, a woman cannot be altogether equated with the phallus, something which men have a tendency to do.

Strangely enough, men, who are supposedly the ones who have the organ standing in for the phallus - the phallus obviously being a symbol rather than the real penis - nonetheless look for it in a woman. The woman for them is the phallus.

According to Lacan, a child wants to be what his or her mother wants -, and as the mother tends towards the phallus, the child wants to be the phallus. Boys realise that their penises do not exactly fit the bill - they have a stand-in for the phallus but they can never be the phallus. Girls on the other hand, thinking they cannot be the phallus for their mothers as they do not have the corresponding organ, hope to get the phallus from someone who does have it. But the phallus being first and foremost a signifier, a man's penis can only be a poor substitute for it. Which is why in love, one gives essentially that which one doesn't have: a man gives a woman something she's looking for, though when you get right down to it, he doesn't really have it: it's simply not a phallus. And a woman, precisely because she doesn't have it, can be thought by men to be it. The discrepancy between what he has and what he'd like to be makes him look elsewhere for the phallus as signifier of his mother's desire. A woman, unencumbered by the organ associated with the phallus, can then be the blank surface upon which he writes his fantasy, can be fantasmatically viewed by him as harboring the phallus, as being the phallus, but in a veiled form.

On this reading,  $\sqrt{x}$  would therefore denote a woman's abdication of her role as a representative of the phallus. A woman could never be the phallus from top to bottom.

Let me remark in passing that we can illustrate the notion that in love one gives what one doesn't have even more simply by pointing out that according to Lacan desire is always based on lack; if in love one gives one's partner one's desire, one thereby offers up to one's partner one's lack - one thus offers up what one does not have.

A quantitative reading: Women, a Finite or Infinite Set?

As you can see, each reading involves its own ambiguities - in this second reading we are led to flipflop from talking about  $\phi x$  as the penis, here  $\forall x\phi x$  and  $\exists x\bar{\phi}x$ , and as the phallus in  $\forall x\phi x$ , and of the relation involved as 'having', here  $\forall x\phi x$ ,  $\exists x\bar{\phi}x$  and  $\exists x\bar{\phi}x$ , and then as 'being' in  $\forall x\phi x$ . In the first reading we can allow a set theoretical reading as well as a quantitative reading, here  $\forall x\phi x$  and  $\exists x\bar{\phi}x$ , but here a set theoretical reading alone:  $\forall x\phi x$ . But Lacan does talk about all women - in other words, quantitatively - from the point of view of the primal father, for whom all women are on a par, the set of all women thus being constructible. He notes that for  $\forall x\phi x$  to necessarily imply an exception - the existence of at least one woman who says no to the phallic function - would require that the number of women in question be finite. If there are two billion women in question, and we affirm that they don't all fall under the phallic function, then in fact there must be at least one who doesn't. But if the number of women in question is infinite, one cannot demonstrate the existence of the exception on the basis of the negation of the universal: not all. At most the exception can be posited as an indeterminate existence: like that of our tangent curve at  $\pi/2$ . Intuitionist logic requires that in order to postulate the existence of something, one must be able to construct it, that is to generate its written formula starting from an axiomatic system. But it is impossible to generate the exception here if the set is infinite: the 'therefore there is at least one' can never be deduced in this situation. (Impossibility of reductio ad absurdum arguments in the case of infinite sets), The Other jouissance, like woman herself, is closely related to the concept of infinity.

I will have to leave aside here for reasons of time an explanation of the two different kinds of negation involved in these formulas - foreclosure and discordance - the question of writing as it comes into play here, and the possibilities offered by the other four formulas immediately suggested by the four at hand:

$$\forall x\bar{\phi}x \quad \exists x\phi x \quad \forall x\phi x \quad \exists x\bar{\phi}x.$$

As is often the case, Lacan's symbols open up new fields of speculation, providing new theoretical tools and vistas.

Love.

We will take a different tack here in concluding: throughout the 1970's, Lacan insists that truth in psychoanalysis primarily concerns the lack of sexual relationship, its absence or impossibility. That truth, closely related to the real towards which an analyst must try to conduct his analysands, is what is most abhorred by the subject, most unacceptable to him. He devotes a great deal of effort to covering over the truth of this lacking relationship.

Now according to Lacan, love is what often comes on the scene to supplement this non-relationship. Love is what allows one to believe that there is such a thing as a sexual relationship, thereby masking its absence. Love is thus symptomatic of the lack of such a relationship. Lacan even goes so far as to say that a man's sexual partner, or lover, represents the real for him - in other words she stands in for the real here, being the living representative of that which for him is impossible, that which for him is unattainable, unavoidable, and/or unbearable.

There is such a thing as a love relationship - in fact there are many different kinds of possible love relationships, and they supplement the lack of a sexual relationship to a greater or a lesser extent. Courtly love, characteristic of certain aristocratic classes in the 11th, 12th and 13th centuries, is taken by Lacan to have been one of the most successful ways of supplementing this lack. What was perhaps so ultimately satisfactory was the inaccessibility of the women courted - the virtual impossibility of attaining one's beloved. This view of courtly love has been disputed by some authors, but it does seem that courtly love granted a preponderant role to a form of sublimated love which could not attain and even avoided striving to attain consummation.

#### Modern love.

Love in our times supplements the non-existence of sexual relationships in a rather different way, as our love objects are rarely wholly inaccessible, though it would be naive to underestimate the number of people who regularly fall in love with people who are already married or are unavailable for a whole variety of reasons; who fall for movie-stars, pop-singers; or who always fall for people way below or way above their own intellectual or socio-cultural level, and who repeatedly and rapidly tire of these people, moving continually from one to the next. This sort of search for the inaccessible can be seen as a symptom just as the search for romantic fusion, the attempt to make one out of two, functions as a symptom. And not simply because of the displacement of emphasis from sex to love: the bottom line being that in so far as they are masculine and feminine, men and women have no direct relation with each other.

#### Symptomatic love and Identification with one's symptom.

The way one loves is thus always a symptom, but a symptom is not necessarily something to worry about or shy away from. For if we understand the end of analysis as an identification, not with one's analyst, but rather with one's symptom, then we can see that at least one component of the end of analysis concerns the acceptance or assumption of one's symptomatic way of supplementing the lack of a sexual relationship, of one's symptomatic way of loving.

She always keeps something in reserve.

To my knowledge, Lacan only once gives an amorous gloss of the formulas of sexualisation which were designed to write the impossibility of sexual relationships. By way of conclusion, I'd like to give Lacan's amorous gloss on the formulas  $\sqrt{x/x}$  and  $\sqrt{x/x}$ :

Whereas in love, a woman wants all of a man for herself, wants a man to be all hers, she always keeps something of herself in reserve, she never gives herself completely to him.

Bruce Fink.

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*Between Perception and Consciousness. (Part II)*

In the following text I want to try and extract some of the salient points of Lacan's work on the relation between signifier and signified (which is signification rather than thing) in his 'early' work: Seminars II + III.

One begins with a division. Primary Process and Secondary Process, signifying chain and discourse, the structured-like-a-language and the structure of language as we speak it, more or less grammatically, these provide the context which ensures that any propositions concerning meaning do not short-circuit themselves from the start in that mirage of false transcendentalism known as the 'Meaning of meaning'.

If one advances, as Lacan does, the proposition that a meaning frames what is brought to light in discourse concerning what there is of being in the place the subject fills with respect to those laws which govern the signifying chain, itself caught in a drive which extends beyond satisfaction, then one may feel duty-bound to provide some useful distinctions regarding this subject. For when is the subject who speaks identical: and to the logical (grammatical) subject of the sentence, which is not necessarily incarnated as an 'I', and to the subject of what is said, its 'content', and to the one who grasps its meaning? Perhaps in some particular form of prayer, but even there never without the guarantee of that Other which first subjected the subject to the fate of its partition into a genitive (subject of ..., analysis, unconscious, etc.). Given this essential distinction one can safely leave the qualification of the term 'subject' to its usage in a context at any one time; but the list: subject, Other is not complete without adding that entity which thinks to master, as much as it estranges, the (WORT- and SACH-) VORSTELLUNGEN of what is of interest to the subject in this world, namely the ego and all that it trails along in the way of (little) others.

These are the terms with which Lacan will show what it means for a subject to come into being, that is, to deliver himself from what will 'mean' by itself, as it were, as a symptom, if a subject does not follow the law of the indivisibility of the signifier (1) to its conclusion in that speech the meanings of which we use to guide our steps in life.

Bringing the advances of linguistics to bear on a study of the speech disorders classified as aphasic proved conclusive in isolating within any signifying unit the two bonds or links ('liens') whose impairment seriously prohibits the subject from producing something meaningful. The POSITIONAL link allows a subject to articulate in a syntactical arrangement what he has chosen from among many terms as his PROPOSITION. The tropes of METONYMY and METAPHOR are indeed well-chosen to illustrate how meaning produced at the level of discourse derives from the laws governing the Primary Process. (2)

Thus, in Lacanian terms, the signification of the phrase 'I want strawberries' can be called metonymic in that the subject aims for what is at stake, limits the sliding of signification, by isolating in the chain some signifier which NAMES, if not directly, then by means of something contiguous or some select part of the whole, those objects/others which are themselves but substitutes, more or less tantalising, literally, for what the subject can never touch again in having presented itself as fragmented, pluralised, from the start. One notes that whatever the antics of the subject on that asymptotic axis which allows him to articulate at all, whether he moves in the direction of all or of nothing, including, excluding, listing, aligning, combining, rearranging, complicating or reducing to heart's content or wit's end, one thing serving until a better one is found, never will the subject produce a meaning in which he can recognise himself, unless he puts himself in play as subject, unless a wedge is driven between the name and the thing.



For of the little that is known about the rewarding meaning that is called metaphoric, itself inconceivable without the basic position outlined above of the subject as separate from the plurality of what presents itself to him simultaneously, it is certain that no spark will cross the gap without the subject himself surrendering his privileged position in relation to the proposition, - attribute or quality, - that nothing of the quality of being captured in a *Vorstellung* can surface in a moment of signification without the subject letting himself be represented by a signifier other than his name at the address of the signifier of the proposition. 'Gerbe' must come in the very place of 'Eooz' (3).

That this is quite different from the position of a subject displaced, if not invaded by a signifier which cannot be made to signify except deliriously, needs to be explained at this very level at which the subject is inserted into the symbolic order to begin his long struggle with the signifier. But at the level of speech, the effects are no less instructive.

When Lacan takes the phrase 'Tu es celui qui me suivras/suivra' (You are the one who will follow me) to show that whether what is understood bears the stamp of a personal summons or raises the fears of persecution attendant on a third person future indicative is directly dependent on the degree to which a subject has assumed the significations knotted by the signifier 'follow' - which is a signifier precisely in so far as it can polarise meanings: follow what?, the leader, my meaning, etc. - he brings out the crucial point that the weight accorded to 'follow' directly determines the accent given to the signifier which supports the place of the grammatical 'you', whether, in effect, the other is invoked, in the form of an address deserving the epithet elective, in the place of the Other, that is, with all signifiers out in the field, or stabilised in a signification which verifies that this other truly has two eyes, a mouth, etc.

Bice Benvenuto has shown the role 'paroles fondatrices' (founding words) of the type 'Tu es cela' (4) play in the insertion of the subject into the symbolic order from which and in which he is called upon to respond. For the analysis reveals, as nothing else the lost subject tries, that from the place in which an 'I' supports a discourse, it is always defined by another, precisely that other whom it can address as 'you' in the place of the Other, the only place from which it is prepared to receive what concerns its own destiny, that, secondly, the signifier at stake in the analysis, the one 'evoked' by the subject in all the ways the analyst must be trained to recognise, is precisely the one by which it was itself 'invoked' in some such form as 'you are the one who will follow me'.

Now, if the position of the subject with respect to the signifying chain and his position within an order of intersubjectivity are but two aspects of the same thing, the question remains as to the point at which one would cease to speak of a subject as being within a signifying order at all, the point at which there is, not an aphasic weakening of the metonymic or of the metaphoric bond, nor the disconsolate impression of a world which has but little sense on offer, but the rent through which there slips what is truly nameless, the moment in which, if something is spoken, the 'signification refers, not to another signification, but to Signification itself' (Seminar III, p. 43).

When Lacan admits, on p. 304 of Seminar III, to not knowing the exact number of links binding the signifier to the signified needed for the subject to recognise himself in a signification which neither inundates him in that self-referring and irreducible form called intuition nor escapes him altogether in the empty formula, he has just and at length demonstrated the operation which creates precisely such a link.

The Point de Capiton is a metaphoric operation. But the particular signifier which Abner, zealous officer in the service of a Queen he fears for the potential terrors she seems poised to unleash, receives from the high-priest Joad, in the opening scene of Racine's Athalie, has a peculiar beneficial property. It transforms the significations he is captured by, an uncertain, wavering mixture of zeal and multiple fears, into a determined and courageous faith, with which he duly takes his place among the fellow believers. The single fear of a God who can and will exterminate His enemies, has, when assumed by the subject, the effect of dissipating all his other fears.

Lacan does not leave his 'explication de texte' without insisting on the parallel with what happens in the Oedipus, without remarking that in our experience it is a signifier associated with the father which knots together the signifier and signified. One could also point to the fact, seeing in it an antecedent to Lacan's later concern with the paternal metaphor, that the effects of meaning it generates demonstrate those qualities of localising and transforming, in the fullest sense of 'aufhebung', which allow us to describe it as 'phallic'.

If meaning always moves towards being, towards its own closure, if meaning is as much anticipated as mastery in the mirror-stage, and if at some moment in the Oedipus the subject is offered a signifier with which to produce it, what leads him to reject this signifier? Perhaps nothing if not already a signification, one which, far from being anticipated, captivates him, ensconces him in a position he can see no reason in the world to relinquish, like being allowed to imagine himself to be the phallus for Mother, for example.

Schema L, which captures Lacan's concerns at that time and the elements of which we isolated at the beginning, shows particularly clearly the double edge of the imaginary relation through which the relation of subject to Other has to pass, if a subject wants to be able to discover the meanings his givens take on in relation to his destiny (5). For it is these representations of the objects that interest the subject in so far as a counterpart has revealed them to him, this grouping of interests called an ego, that interrupts the flow of what in the symbolic order insists on realising itself as an S (Es), as much, that is, as it gives to this realisation its individual style: there is no short-cut from A to S.

Of the way in which meaning affects those positions the subject takes vis-à-vis the signifier Freud called Verwerfung, Verdrängung and Verneinung, Lacan gives the best example early on in Seminar III, (p. 97). For we repress - acts, discourse, behaviour, - only in the name of a signification we are not prepared to sacrifice to that law of the chain which ordains that we return, give over what we have received to another.

But one could also say that signification is the heart given to that symbolic machine Lacan imagines in Seminar II whose basis consists of a chain of the symbols + and - strung in random succession. For what makes a unit 'significant' (Lacan's words) if not an operation of the subject? For whom does there appear this precise rule or law of succession, this rhythm which constitutes a memory (remembrance rather than reminiscence), if not for a subject who can symbolise, isolate, cut out a grouping larger than the binary structure which determines it, a subject who can count beyond two? Undifferentiated binarism is either the metronome or chaos.

In saying this I am in no way disputing what the whole of Seminar III ceaselessly demonstrates, the predominance of signifier over signified, but merely pointing to what there is of an act, in the ethical sense, in the birth of a subject, to the fact that the subject has to put his heart, his being, his lack back in what yokes him so definitively if he wants the 'significant units' which captivate him to become the signifying units capable of delivering the promise of signification they vehicle.

NOTES.

(1). An inference drawn from Seminar III, p. 237, referring both to the signifier itself and to the signifying chain. Lacan will show later (p. 293 ff.) that a signifier cannot be isolated until it has played its part in producing signification, until a signifying unit is completed. (cf. also Derrida's discussions on the 'letter' in Facteur de la Vérité).

(2). Darian Leader, in his Ivy House talk on Metonymy in Lacan (27-1-88), showed that interrelations between metonymy and metaphor are complex enough for Lacan to have changed his mind in the space of a few pages about identifying the former with the freudian 'displacement' and the latter with 'condensation'. On p. 259 of Seminar III both are taken as metonymical.

(3). 'Sa gerbe n'était point avare, ni haineuse' is the line of Hugo's poem Booz which Lacan uses to illustrate his ideas on Metaphor.

(4). In a talk of that name given at Ivy House on 17-2-88.

(5). The aim of analysis as given in Seminar II on page 374.

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CHILD ANALYSIS WORKING GROUP

The CAWG's interviews with representatives of various theoretical and clinical approaches to the place of the child in psychoanalysis will take place according to the following schedule. The interviews will concern the way the child is viewed by the speakers through their presentation of experience of work with children, or with the effects of child-abuse.

The guests and dates of CAWG's monthly meetings are the following:

25 April 1988 JOHN SOUTHGATE - Founder Member of the Institute for Self-Analysis.

26 May 1988 ALEXANDER NEWMAN - Director of the Squiggle Foundation and Editor of the journal 'Winnicott Studies'.

20 June 1988 JOHN MILLER - Child Psychologist and a Member of the Association of Jungian Analysts.

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The meetings are to be held at 8.30 p.m. - 10.00 p.m., 14 Eton Hall, Eton College Road, N.W.3, except the meeting with Alexander Newman which will take place at 19 Chalcot Road, Primrose Hill, London N.W.1 from 8.30 p.m - 9.45 p.m.

The subscription rate for one term is £15 (£9 for Subscribers to the Centre)

Co-ordinators: Eice Benvenuto and Danuza Machado.

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